

"Napoleon, French Jews, and the Idea of Regeneration"
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Almost two hundred years after his death, Napoleon remains a larger-than-life figure, one whose historical activities have been eclipsed by numerous legends. One version considers Napoleon the world's first Zionist for reportedly seeking to restore Jews to the Holy Land during his 1799 military campaign in the Middle East.¹ The evidence for this interpretation is nebulous, and a number of scholars consider the recently discovered proclamation supposedly proving it to be a forgery.² Even if Napoleon was not a proto-Zionist, he has retained a place in the popular imagination as a great friend of the Jews. This idea has been reinforced by the images that Napoleon commissioned during his reign, portraying himself as Moses bringing law and justice to the Jews, and by his revival in 1807 of the ancient rabbinical institution of the Sanhedrin.

For scholars of Jewish history, Napoleon's reign has generated considerable controversy. Certainly, a calculus of whether Napoleon was "good or bad for the Jews" must include a number of positive things that he did for them. Most notably, as he entered Italy and other territories during his military campaigns, he opened the ghettos that had enclosed Jews. Bringing the decrees of the French National Assembly to

*I am grateful to Jeff Haus, Jennifer Heuer, Lisa Moses Leff, Frances Malino and Dale Van Kley for their suggestions on earlier versions of this essay.

¹See Franz Kobler, *Napoleon and the Jews* (New York: Schocken, 1976); Mordechai Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets Yisrael [Napoleon in the Holy Land]* (Re'ut: Efi Meltser, 2003); see also Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1895), V: pp. 459-460.

²See Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin* (London: Routledge/Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1979), pp. 25 – 27; and the sources listed in Nathan Schur, *Napoleon in the Holy Land* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1999), p. 209n4.

France's neighbors, he ordered that Jews enjoy equal citizenship with others. Napoleon's regime also created the modern consistory system in France, which has offered Jews a clear-cut national standing alongside the Catholic and Protestant communities and remains a central feature of French Jewry.

At the same time, there were more nefarious aspects to Napoleon's treatment of the Jews. Most notably, he reversed the universalism of the French Revolution (the idea that "all men" were considered equal before the law), and made French Jews work to demonstrate their fitness to be equal. Moreover, he often referred to them negatively, calling them "a contemptible and degraded nation... capable of the lowest deeds" and "a vile people, cowardly and cruel."³

How can we explain these apparent contradictions in Napoleon's thinking toward the Jews? Why did he simultaneously style himself their liberator and insist on their depravity? Scholars often answer these questions by referring to the emperor's underlying distrust of Jews, or by speaking of his instrumentalism, his Machiavellian instinct to make all decisions based on how they would affect his power and reputation. Indeed, after reaching a Concordat with the Catholic Church in 1801, Napoleon had famously declared, "They will say I am a papist [but] I am nothing at all. In Egypt I was a

³Cited in *The Mind of Napoleon. A Selection from His Written and Spoken Words*, ed. J. Christopher Herold (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), pp. 110-1 (remarks from 1806 and 1817). For useful overviews of Napoleon's activities with regard to the Jews, see especially Robert Anchel, *Napoléon et les Juifs* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1928); Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin*; Albert Soboul and Bernhard Blumenkranz, eds., *Le Grand Sanhédrin de Napoléon* (Toulouse: E. Privat, 1979) [henceforth "Blumenkranz and Soboul"]; Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 37 – 52 ("The Napoleonic Synthesis"); and also Scott Glotzer, "Napoleon, the Jews, and the Construction of Modern Citizenship in Early Nineteenth Century France" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1997).

Mohammedan; here I will be a Catholic, for the good of the people.”⁴ Even the best studies sometimes interpret Napoleon’s policy toward the Jews as a simple function of his personality, disengaged from longer-term developments.

In this essay, I want to offer a slightly different view of Napoleon’s treatment of the Jews by placing it in the context of debates on Jews in France dating back to the eighteenth century. I shall argue that Napoleon institutionalized a particular version of an idea called regeneration that had circulated since before the Revolution. I also wish to reexamine the actions of French Jewish leaders of the time, too often accused of blind assimilationism for not having objected more strenuously to Napoleon’s initiatives. While French Jews also used this concept of regeneration, they did so for strategic reasons of their own, diverging from Napoleon’s goals.

The status of the Jews had been a very topical issue in late eighteenth-century France and in Western Europe generally. For centuries, Jews had been persecuted in Europe, and Christian governments sought to mark Jews as inferior in order to demonstrate the truth of Christian prophecies. Yet as governments adopted more mercantilist policies in the eighteenth century (those guided by practical economic considerations rather than by religious dogma), intellectuals and policy-makers began to reconsider the status of the Jews. In France, one of the most famous forums where their condition was reconsidered was an essay contest held in the city of Metz (in the eastern region of Lorraine) in 1785-8.

⁴Comments in June 1801, cited in François Furet, *Revolutionary France, 1770 - 1880*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 226.

This contest belonged to an Enlightenment genre of essay contests held on topics of social importance. As Enlightenment philosophers looked for ways to improve society, they reexamined prevailing practices and beliefs on everything from the justice system to economics to sexual morality. The most prestigious contests were held by royal academies, the early modern equivalent of “think tanks”; in early modern France, these were supported by the government rather than being independent bodies. Though formal membership in academies was a high honor generally reserved for scholars from noble backgrounds, their essay contests were open to anyone capable of writing. Some notable eighteenth-century contests included that of the Academy of Dijon in 1750, which launched the career of Jean-Jacques Rousseau with its famous question, “Has the progress of the arts and sciences contributed more to the corruption or to the purification of morals?”; the Academy of Châlons-sur-Marne, which asked in 1776-7 how to eliminate begging; and the Berlin Academy, which asked in 1787-8 how strong should be the extent of paternal authority.

The Jews also fell under the purview of Enlightened thinkers, and in 1785, the Academy of Metz asked, “Are there ways of making the Jews more useful and happier in France?” The idea for the Metz contest stemmed from multiple sources, including an earlier contest held in Strasbourg in 1778 and a literary debate raging about the Jews in eastern France and in Germany. Three men shared the academy’s prize in 1788: Zalkind Hourwitz, a Polish-born Parisian Jew; Claude-Antoine Thiéry, a Protestant lawyer; and the most famous of the laureates, a Catholic priest named Henri-Baptiste Grégoire.⁵ At

⁵On the Metz contest see esp. Abraham Cahen, “L’émancipation des Juifs devant la Société royale des sciences et des arts de Metz en 1787 et M. Roederer,” *Revue des études juives* 1, no. 1 (1880): pp. 83 – 104; and Frances Malino, *A Jew in the French Revolution: The Life of Zalkind Hourwitz* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 14 – 54.

the time of the contest, Grégoire was a parish priest in the small village of Emberménil in rural Lorraine. The fame he garnered from the contest – springing from the novelty of a Catholic priest’s arguing for improving Jews’ status – would boost his reputation, and he would ultimately become one of the most prominent French revolutionaries.

In his prize-winning essay, Grégoire would argue that Jews needed to be “regenerated” physically, morally and politically. What did this term mean? Until the mid-eighteenth century, regeneration was a rare word with only three meanings: two theological ones (baptism and resurrection) and an infrequently used medical one (repair of injured body parts or the flesh). The word was secularized in the second half of the eighteenth century, especially in the new science of natural history (the forerunner of modern biology). In particular, the scientist Buffon's notion of the "degeneration" of species gave rise to a parallel discourse about the degeneration of the French state and culture. Grégoire would take all of these meanings, and cobble them together into an idea of physical, moral and political regeneration. His model would suggest the possibility of remaking humans anew on earth, rather than waiting for divine intervention.⁶

In speaking of the necessity of “regenerating” Jews, Grégoire was adopting a centrist position in existing debates on their status. As I have argued elsewhere, in the eighteenth century, three discourses existed in Europe on the status of the Jews, three ways of thinking about their potential for integration into society. Though these terms

⁶For further background on the idea of regeneration, see Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 57-9 and passim.

were not used during the period, I have labeled them the “impossibilist” discourse, the “unconditionalist” discourse, and the “conditionalist” discourse.⁷ Regeneration would fall into the latter category.

Impossibilists, generally conservative Catholics, argued that Jews were so degenerate that there was no way they could be reformed enough to be included as equals in the state – that it was “impossible” to include them. In contrast to modern anti-Semites, their arguments were not racially based, strictly speaking. Nevertheless, impossibilists argued that Jews were innately corrupt; that they formed a separate “nation” among nations; that they would wreak havoc on society if incorporated into it; and that they could never be assimilated. Johann David Michaelis, a celebrated German scholar who styled himself a Christian expert on the Torah and Talmud, was one of the most notorious impossibilists, making statements such as “the Jewish brain is more harmful and more corrupted than that of other Europeans.” Similar statements abounded in pamphlet literature during the French Revolution. A military officer named De Laissac, for instance, argued that there was no way to improve the Jews: “To achieve this metamorphosis on the Jews of our day, would require a true miracle, and the heavens have long tired of doing anything for this people.”⁸ His comments were echoed in the National Assembly by priests who opposed citizenship for Jews.

By contrast, unconditionalist writers argued that Jews were essentially like everyone else; for them, justice required integrating Jews into society and giving them

⁷Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution*, pp. 62-5 and passim. The information in the next three paragraphs is drawn from ch. 3 of this book.

⁸ Johann David Michaelis, “Arguments against Dohm,” in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 42 – 44; De Laissac, *Lettre à M. Chapelier* (Paris: 1790), 3.

full civic equality without any conditions. Jews who advocated a change in their status naturally took this position, but they were also joined by some influential Gentiles. For instance, the English freethinker John Toland wrote in his 1714 pamphlet *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland* that Jews should be granted equality in European civil society without conditions. He wrote, “My Purpose at present, is to prove, that the *Jews* are so farr from being an Excrescence or Spunge (as some wou’d have it) and a useless member in the Commonwealth, or being ill subjects, and a dangerous people on any account, that they are as obedient, peaceable, useful, and advantageous as any; and even more so than many others”⁹ To him, Jews were as worthy as others, and it was illogical and unfair to deny them the same rights. Pierre-Louis Lacroix, a young lawyer in eastern France, made similar arguments in a famous 1775 test case claiming the rights of Jews to work in all trades.

The conditionalist discourse represented a middle position. Before the Metz contest, its most prominent exponent was Christian Wilhelm Dohm, a Prussian civil servant who wrote the 1781 work *On the Civic Improvement of the Jews* (*Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*). Dohm disagreed with impossibilists, and thought it was important to include Jews in the state. To him, Jews were not innately degenerate; if they had flaws, it was because of the conditions to which persecution had reduced them. Dohm argued that the state would benefit from including Jews who, despite their other flaws, were “honest and industrious.” At the same time, while integrating them into society, Dohm felt it was important to take special measures to improve them. This

⁹John Toland, *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland, On the same foot with all other Nations. Containing also, a Defence of the Jews against All vulgar Prejudices in all Countries* (1714; reprint, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1963), 10-11.

included restricting them from high offices, working to reform their “moral character,” and even hard physical labor to cure them of moral defects.

Grégoire’s text offered another version of the conditionalist discourse – drafted, he argued, even before Dohm’s essay was published.¹⁰ On the one hand, there were many things in his *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des juifs* that warranted his subsequent reputation as “the friend of the Jews.” It was striking that a priest was defending Jews at all, at a time when official Catholic doctrine blamed them for the death of Jesus. Grégoire argued that, though the Jews were the “greatest enemies of my religion,” they also were human beings. He stressed that Jews and Christians belonged to the same family, and that their supposed degeneracy was not innate but resulted from their circumstances: “Any people placed in the same circumstances as the Hebrews . . . would become just like them.” Recounting the long history of Jews’ sufferings in Europe, the abbé denounced their persecutors as unworthy of the name Christian.¹¹

At the same time, Grégoire’s text itself was not a straightforward defense of Jews. To him, Jews shared the blame for their condition: they had become inferior not only because of Christian persecution, but also because of the “ridiculous” teachings of the Talmud. He also warned his readers of the “alarming” speed at which Jews were “multiplying,” called Jews usurers, and portrayed them as driving peasants to immorality. Finally, he did not keep secret his ultimate hope, that Jews would convert to Christianity

¹⁰Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution*, p. 65, citing the first two pages of the manuscript of Grégoire’s first entry in the Metz contest.

¹¹Grégoire, *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des Juifs*, ed. Rita Hermon-Belot (Paris: Flammarion, 1988; originally published Metz, 1789), pp. 94, 67.

if they were treated humanely: “If we encourage the Jews, they will insensibly adopt our way of thinking and acting, our laws, our customs, and our mores.”¹²

Grégoire thus felt it essential to integrate Jews and treat them humanely, but also to regenerate them to make them less “dangerous” to their fellow citizens. In addition to encouraging Jews to weaken their attachment to Judaism and convert, he also believed it was vital to regenerate Jews physically. His remedies included eliminating rules like those of kashrut, which he felt deprived Jews of the nutrients in blood and thus of vital energy; and encouraging them to intermarry, thus ending the “inbreeding” and “race-crossing” which had left them “in general, [with] a pallid face, hooked nose, sunk-in eyes, prominent chin, and strongly pronounced muscles constricting the mouth.”¹³

When the French Revolution broke out in 1789, and the status of Jews became a subject of debate, representatives of all three points of view stepped forward. Conservative Catholic deputies such as the abbé Maury and Bishop La Fare of Nancy made impossibilist arguments in the National Assembly against awarding Jews’ equal citizenship. Jews and their allies made the case for unconditionalism, stressing that new ideals of human rights required treating the Jews exactly the same as their fellow citizens, without any special laws singling them out. Grégoire remained an ally of Jews seeking citizenship; though he retained his views about the necessity of Jews’ improving themselves, he kept this part of his ideas mostly silent during most of the debates about their citizenship. While it took two years for the National Assembly to finally agree to grant citizenship to all Jews, in September 1791 they adopted an unconditionalist

¹²Ibid., pp. 131, 58-61, 189n8, 83-85, 95, 138.

¹³Ibid., pp. 75, 72.

approach, stressing simply that all men were citizens, and that therefore there should be no special discrimination against Jews. Just as there would no longer be – at least in theory - particular laws about other specific groups, Jews would henceforth be treated just as everyone else.¹⁴

After 1791, Jews thus enjoyed complete legal equality. Some scholars have argued that that there was an implicit *quid pro quo* envisioned by the revolutionaries – that they expected Jews would relinquish their religious and cultural particularities in exchange for the gift of citizenship. Certainly, some revolutionaries, including Grégoire, did retain a hope that Jews would become more like other Frenchmen as a result of receiving citizenship. Nevertheless, this hope was not enshrined into law during the Revolution. On the contrary, in 1791 the revolutionaries opted for an unconditionalist position, renouncing the idea of making any special laws targeting Jews. Under the policy of strict equality before the law, Jews would be treated like others.

The Napoleonic era, however, would call this principle into question. Napoleon's relationship to revolutionary values was in fact complicated. Portraying himself as the Revolution's stabilizer rather than its opponent, the general continued the Revolution's wars against its monarchical neighbors as well as the system of universal suffrage which the Jacobins had developed - though the people now had little power in elections other than to endorse his programs. He also continued the Revolution's emphasis on

¹⁴For useful summaries of the Assembly's debates over Jewish citizenship, see Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 314 – 368; Frances Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux: Assimilation and Emancipation in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1978), pp. 40 – 64; idem, *A Jew in the French Revolution*; and Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, pp. 17 – 35. Despite the Revolution's egalitarian ideal, the Assembly retained special laws about the treatment of people of color in the French colonies, and of women (who were denied equal citizenship and even forbidden to attend political clubs).

meritocracy – something which had facilitated his ascent from humble Corsican beginnings to the apex of France’s military. Nevertheless, Napoleon also retreated from many of the Revolution’s most fundamental principles. He restored property qualifications for many positions; he restricted freedom of the press; he reinstated slavery (abolished by the Revolution in 1794); and he reestablished the preeminence of the Catholic Church, under the hierarchical leadership of the Pope (after the Revolution had adopted a policy of dechristianization). Most fundamentally, in 1804 he had himself crowned Emperor of the French, a sharp departure from the republicanism of the Revolution.¹⁵

Napoleon’s actions with regard to the Jews were no less conflicted. In some cases, he continued the Revolution’s egalitarian policy toward the Jews, instituting Jewish emancipation as the law of whatever land he conquered and establishing consistories in his new territories. In other ways, he reversed the Revolution’s policies on Jews. Through the Assembly of Notables and Sanhedrin, and especially the Infamous Decree of 1808, Napoleon would revive the conditionalist model and make it official policy.

What accounts for Napoleon’s turn from revolutionary unconditionalism toward conditionalist principles? In many ways, despite the granting of citizenship to Jews during the Revolution, their status remained unsettled. In 1801 and 1802, the Napoleonic state had reversed the dechristianizing policies of the later Revolution, recognized

¹⁵On Napoleon’s relationship to the French Revolution, see especially Martyn Lyons, *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1994). The Concordat did not reestablish Catholicism as the official state religion, but it recognized that Catholicism was the religion of the “great majority of French citizens” and protected its exercise.

Catholicism and Protestantism, and pledged to pay the salaries of priests and ministers. Jewish institutions, however, remained in disarray. In many places, synagogues were closed; Jewish leaders lost power to collect funds for rabbis' and educators' salaries; and rabbis no longer were able to impose sanctions on Jews who violated religious law. Jewish leaders in the East therefore lobbied Napoleon to recognize and organize Judaism – and especially, to fund its clergy -- as he had for the other religions. Berr Isaac Berr, a prominent Jew from Nancy, wrote of his hopes that soon, “founded on the magnanimous goodness of the august leader of our empire...French Jews would be treated like French Catholics or Protestants.”¹⁶

The pleas of Jewish leaders did not in themselves require Napoleon to turn to conditionalism; the emperor could have recognized Judaism on the same basis as the Christian churches. The ideological climate had shifted considerably since 1789, however, and Jews were far less likely to find favor among Gentiles for the idea that they should have equal citizenship. The regimes that followed the end of the radical Revolution in 1794 had discredited revolutionary ideals like egalitarianism, and French society increasingly reassumed a hierarchical structure. Moreover, a number of unconditionalist allies, such as Jacques-Pierre Brissot (a key revolutionary who had

¹⁶See Berr Isaac Berr, *Lettre du sieur Berr-Isaac-Berr, manufacturier, membre du Conseil municipal de Nancy, à M. Grégoire, Sénateur, à Paris* (Nancy: Imprimerie de P. Barbier, 1806), p. 20; Zosa Szajkowski, “Synagogues During the French Revolution of 1789 - 1800,” in *Jews and the French Revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848* (New York: 1970), pp. 809 – 825; discussions in Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin*, pp. 37-9; and Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, pp. 38-9. On the treatment of Catholicism and Protestantism in the Napoleonic era, see esp. Adrien Dansette, *Religious History of Modern France, vol. I: From the Revolution to the Third Republic* ([New York]: Herder and Herder, 1961), pp. 117 – 168; Robert B. Holtman, *The Napoleonic Revolution* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1967), pp. 121 – 138; and Anthony J. Steinhoff, “Organizing Protestantism in Early 19th-Century Europe: Perspectives From France and Germany,” *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750-1850: Selected Papers* (1999): 131 – 142.

supported Jews' equal rights through the municipality of Paris) had been purged by the Jacobin faction during the Terror because of their association with the Girondin faction. The abbé Grégoire, who was still alive, was more loudly voicing doubts about Jews' willingness to assimilate. In two pamphlets he published in 1806-7, Grégoire showed his increasing frustration that, despite French Jews' emancipation, they had not succeeded in regenerating themselves. Even as he blasted "persecutors of all ranks and of all nations," he argued that Jews' own prejudices accounted for much of their failure to integrate, and he made offhand jabs at Judaism. Mystified that Jews were still attached to the Talmud (a collection "which recalls what Horace said about a few pearls stuck in Eunius's excrement"), Grégoire strongly denounced the "despotism" of French rabbis and community leaders.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the Revolution's granting of citizenship had hardly silenced impossibilists, especially in Alsace. After the Revolution's radicalization in the mid-1790s, their virulence about Jews had even increased. To conservative Catholics, the equality given the Jews represented the worst excesses of a godless Revolution; attacking Jews' emancipated status was both a means to attack the Revolution and an end in itself.¹⁸ By 1806, a number of impossibilist pamphlets or articles appeared, attacking the

¹⁷Grégoire, *Observations nouvelles sur les Juifs, et spécialement sur ceux d'Amsterdam et de Francfort* (n.p.: 1807), pp. 4, 18; Grégoire, *Observations nouvelles sur les Juifs, et spécialement sur ceux d'Allemagne* (n.p.: 1806), pp. 6, 7, 9, and passim.

¹⁸On the link between Jews and counterrevolutionary discourse, see Ouzi Elyada, "La rhétorique antijuive dans la presse contre-révolutionnaire- 1789 -1792", in *L'antisémitisme éclairé. Inclusion et exclusion depuis l'Epoque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus / Inclusion and Exclusion: Perspectives on Jews from the Enlightenment to the Dreyfus Affair*, eds. Ilana Y. Zinguer and Sam W. Bloom (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 141 – 150.

Jews and arguing that it was dangerous to allow them equality.¹⁹ Their authors included Louis de Bonald, a philosopher who wrote in the *Mercure de France* that Alsatian Jews had taken the place of the old aristocracy and were now oppressing local peasants. He insisted that Jews could not be citizens without embracing Christianity. The Emperor also received floods of petitions from non-Jews in Alsace railing against Jewish moneylending.²⁰

Yet circumstances also made pure impossibilism difficult to express. In a famous pamphlet of the time, the lawyer Louis Poujol portrayed Jews as amoral usurers whose religion authorized them to cheat and steal from non-Jews. He argued that Jews had shirked their patriotic duties and done nothing to make themselves worthy of citizenship; revoking their equality was justified until Jews demonstrated that they had changed. Yet even as the revolutionary years had discredited the idea of complete egalitarianism, so too had they made it difficult to argue that any one group was incapable of regeneration. Poujol therefore argued not that the Jews could never be regenerated, but rather that they could not do so if left to their own devices; to him, equal rights were preventing Jews' regeneration by giving them unfettered license to perpetuate their "sordid usury" and "excessive greed." Poujol proposed that, in addition to suspending Jews' citizenship, the government implement an elaborate plan to regenerate them, including everything from eliminating or reducing all debts owed to them to banning Jews from observing kashrut.

¹⁹An excellent bibliography of pamphlets published by and about Jews during the Napoleonic era can be found in Zosa Szajkowski, "Judaica Napoleonica. A Bibliography of Books, Pamphlets and Printed Documents, 1801 - 1815," in *Jews and the French Revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848* (New York: 1970), pp. 971 – 1016.

²⁰Louis de Bonald, "Sur les Juifs," *Mercure de France*, February 8, 1806, 249-267. See discussion in Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin*, pp. 33-7; and Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, pp. 39-40.

In all likelihood, Poujol imagined that the Jews would not fulfill all these conditions, and his proposal was a way of consigning them (at least temporarily) to an inferior position such as they had endured during the Old Regime. Making a pretense of seeking their regeneration prevented him from sounding like someone with no faith in the power of the state to engineer a better society. Poujol's arguments, cunningly expressed in the language of the day, resonated with many of his countrymen; according to Simon Schwarzfuchs, Poujol's pamphlet had an important influence upon Napoleon himself.²¹

Whether by Jews, impossibilists, or neo-impossibilists like Poujol, Napoleon was thus pushed to reconsider the issue of the Jews; his convening of the Assembly of Notables and the Sanhedrin needs to be understood in the context of these ideological tensions, rather than just as a function of personal antipathy toward the Jews. The emperor sympathized with complaints that Jews were "abusing" their fellow citizens through usury, yet he also believed in the possibility of their regeneration. Under his wise and paternal guidance, he felt, he might succeed where others had failed, regenerating Jews and cementing his glory in the annals of history. As Ronald Schechter has argued, Napoleon's earlier liberation of Jewish ghettos in Italy had been "performances," aimed primarily at Gentile audiences. These "dramatically staged liberations" had helped feed the myth of Napoleon as a heroic figure who freed the people of Europe from oppression. Completing their regeneration thus promised to add

²¹ Poujol, *Quelques observations concernant les Juifs en général et plus particulièrement ceux d'Alsace* (Paris: n.p., 1806), pp. 42, 58, 61, 65, 66, 68, 72-3, 130-1 and passim; Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin*, p. 37.

to the image of Napoleon as “a figure who combined the attributes of Moses, the Messiah, and indeed God himself.”²²

Napoleon thus opted for a conditionalist approach to the Jews, casting himself as their great restorer. He would not revoke their citizenship altogether as Poujol wanted, but neither would he simply make them equal to Catholics and Protestants, as Jews wanted. Though some of his advisors voiced concern about reinstating particularistic laws (those targeted at specific groups, instead of at all citizens), in May 1806 Napoleon began by suspending most debts owed to Jews for one year. At a late April meeting of the Council of State (France’s chief administrative body), he had said he did not consider Jews full-fledged Frenchmen, and that they must not be allowed to “strip Alsace.” His May decree accused Jews of usury, and called for an Assembly of their leaders (from France and elsewhere in Europe) to determine how to “replace the shameful resources to which many of them have resorted from generation to generation.”²³

While an overview of what transpired in this Assembly of Notables is offered in the introduction to this volume, it is worth underlining here how the questions that Napoleon posed to the Assembly were cast in conditionalist terms. These questions aimed to verify the compatibility of Jewishness and Frenchness; they implied that Jews would need to defy or alter religious law in case of a conflict with Napoleonic law. Hardly content for the Notables to simply discuss these issues and report back to him, Bonaparte told them the responses he expected to receive. These included their

²²Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 202, 200, 201. See also the images contained in Renée Neher-Bernheim and Elisabeth Revel-Neher, “Une iconographie juive de l’époque du Grand Sanhédrin,” in Blumenkranz and Soboul, pp. 132-148.

²³Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin*, pp. 49, 50, 51.

outlawing polygamy and, in most cases, divorce; encouraging intermarriage; and declaring their kinship with their Gentile brethren. Before recognizing Protestants and Catholics, Napoleon had not called them into a parallel body; only the Jews warranted this kind of scrutiny.²⁴

When he called the Assembly's successor body, the Sanhedrin, in 1807, Napoleon offered further instructions about the kind of regeneration he expected, and the special measures he now planned for the Jews. These included ten-year restrictions on money-lending; as well as a requirement to local governments that, for every two marriages between Jews that they authorized, a third needed to be a Jewish-Christian intermarriage. Napoleon's explanation for convening the Sanhedrin drew heavily on the conditionalist ideas of Grégoire, now a member of the Napoleonic Senate. Grégoire had originally written his Metz contest essay more out of a desire to protect his parishioners from Jews than to simply help the latter group; in a similar vein, Napoleon now declared:

The principal aim in view [in calling the Sanhedrin] was to protect the Jewish people, to come to the help of the countryside and to free some departments from the disgrace of having become vassals to the Jews, as the mortgaging of a great part of the lands of a department to a people, which in its ways and its laws constituted a particular nation within the French nation, is a real vassalage.... The second aim is to weaken, if not to destroy, the Jewish people's inclination to such a great number of practices which are contrary to civilisation, and to the good order of society in all the countries of the world.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 56-7, 82. Napoleon did pose a series of questions to the Catholic bishops from France and Italy who gathered in a Church council in 1810-11, but his approach to them – and the nature of the gathering – was of a different order. In their case, Napoleon was largely concerned with securing obedience from Rome and the Catholic hierarchy after years of Catholic counterrevolution. For more on the background to these councils and Napoleon's interactions with the Catholic clergy, see Dansette, *Religious History of Modern France*, I: pp. 162-4; and Dale Van Kley, "Catholic Conciliar Reform in the Age of Anti-Catholic Revolution: France, Italy and the Netherlands, 1758-1801," in *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe*, James E. Bradley and Dale Van Kley, eds. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 46 - 118.

The evil must be stopped through obstruction; it must be obstructed by the transformation of the Jews.²⁵

In contrast to the unconditionalist emancipation of 1791, the government now mandated that French Jews transform themselves.

Napoleon capped his conditionalist approach to the Jews with three laws in March 1808. To Jews' relief, two of these laws finally placed Judaism alongside other religions by establishing a Jewish consistorial system. A central consistory in Paris would reign over local department consistories; the consistorial system would fall under the purview of the Minister of Religions, helping to monitor Jews and promote their regeneration. The consistory would control Jewish worship in France, and collect funds for religious institutions. Together with Napoleon's reorganization of Catholic and Protestant groups, this new consistory structure would help the emperor survey and control religion within the state.²⁶

Yet even as Jewish consistories were established, Jewish inferiority was institutionalized. The state did not pay the salaries of Jewish clergy as it did for Catholics and Protestants, nor were Jewish consistories funded on an equal basis to the Christian churches. Jews had to pay taxes that funded Catholic worship, and then pay dues again to the Consistory to support Jewish organizations.²⁷ Furthermore, the law specifically

²⁵Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin*, pp. 98, 99. On Grégoire's motives in his original contest entry, see Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution*, ch. 3. The full record of the Sanhedrin's transactions were published in French at the time and translated into English as Diogene Tama, *Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrim : or, Acts of the Assembly of Israelitish Deputies of France and Italy, convoked at Paris by an Imperial and Royal Decree, dated May 30, 1806* (Farnborough, Eng.: Gregg, 1971; originally published London, 1807).

²⁶Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin*, 123-4; Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 44-6.

²⁷ See Phyllis Cohen Albert, *The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1977); and Jeffrey Haus, "Liberté, Égalité, Utilité: Jewish Education and State in Nineteenth-Century

invoked the specter of Jewish usury, declaring that only Jews who were not usurers would be eligible for membership in the consistories.

More damagingly, the March legislation included what later became known as the Infamous Decree. In it, Napoleon added additional limits on Jewish loans, restricted Jewish commercial activity, and forbade Jews from hiring substitutes for military service (a possibility otherwise open to anyone with sufficient wealth). As Schwarzfuchs has observed, “This was tantamount to declaring that the Jews would remain on probation until they had proved worthy of a citizenship which they had received nearly seventeen years before....” In another retreat from universalism, Napoleon did not apply these restrictions to all Jews; he exempted the Sephardic Jews in the Southwest, and later those of Paris, since they were deemed more regenerated than the Ashkenazi Jews.²⁸ Special regeneration by the government had become the law of the land.

Given Napoleon’s change of course, modern Jews (especially since the rise of Zionism and in the years since the Shoah) have often been surprised that Jews of Napoleon’s era did not resist more strongly. Indeed, from inside and outside the academy, the Sanhedrin members – especially the traditionalist rabbis amongst them - have often been accused of blind assimilationism. Zionists in particular have mocked the Sanhedrin’s acceptance of Napoleon’s idea that Paris should be the new Jerusalem. In its educational resources on Jewish history, the World Zionist Organization instructs that

The French Jews told the great emperor just what he wanted to hear. All the Jews were cowed.... Defining themselves as "Frenchmen of the Mosaic persuasion,"

France,” *Modern Judaism* 22, no. 1 (2002): pp. 1-27. On exceptions to the state’s paying the salaries of Protestant ministers, see Steinhoff, “Organizing Protestantism.”

²⁸Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin*, pp. 125-131. See also Malino’s comment that “Napoleon had reintroduced and cleverly reversed the whole process of emancipation” (*Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux*, p. 110).

hair-splitting and somersaulting their way out of the situations in which Jewish custom or law contradicted French law, these Jews ripped Judaism from its moorings.

The WZO materials further charge that the Sanhedrin “[took] the Jewish nationalism out of Judaism.” These comments are in keeping with a long tradition in nationalist Jewish history, typified by the nineteenth-century historian Simon Dubnov, who argued that the Sanhedrin members’ “servility amazed even Napoleon's representatives.”²⁹

Some sources from the time seem to reaffirm the idea of naive Jews who agreed that they were degenerate and praised Napoleon no matter what he did. These include a sizable body of patriotic Jewish liturgy praising Napoleon in lavish terms, which tends to reinforce the image of Jews foolishly cheering an anti-Jewish emperor.³⁰ These prayers have sometimes been seen as indicative of Jews’ true feelings since they were written in Hebrew (and thus designed for internal consumption) and since Jews had to push for the right to chant them publicly.³¹

The public statements of the consistory can also make it seem as if Jews embraced conditionalism and the idea of regeneration on the same terms as Gentiles. Consistory records from these years are filled with exhortations to Jews to raise themselves to the level of other citizens, as well as expressions of gratitude to the government for allowing

²⁹Gil Troy, “The Crisis of Emancipation and the Rise of Zionism: Mugged by Modernity,” in *Doing Zionism: World Zionist Organization Department for Zionist Activities*, available at [World Zionist Organization](#) (accessed April 2006); and Simon Dubnov, *History of the Jews. Vol. IV. From Cromwell's Commonwealth to the Napoleonic Era.*, trans. Moshe Spiegel (South Brunswick, NJ: Thomas Yoseloff, 1971), p. 556. Cf. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, pp. 474-499, which views the Assembly/Sanhedrin members as having done their best to defend Jews, while Napoleon tricked them and broke his word.

³⁰See items 164 – 265 in Szajkowski, many of which were used by Ronald Schechter in his “Becoming French: Patriotic Liturgy and the Transformation of Jewish Identity in France, 1706-1815” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1993), and “Translating the Marseillaise: Biblical Republicanism and the Emancipation of Jews in Revolutionary France,” *Past & Present* 143 (May 1994): pp. 108-135.

³¹On Jews’ going to court to secure the right to say these prayers, see Schechter, “Becoming French,” 19-20.

them to regenerate themselves. For instance, in 1809 the central consistory leaders praised “Napoleon the Great” for his “noble design” of regeneration, instructing the local consistories that “It is up to us to work toward achieving his plan.” The next year, the consistory central told the local branches that the traditional Jewish prayer for the sovereign needed to be updated, since it “does not express enough the extent of our love and ... gratitude... for the hero to whom we owe so many good deeds....”³²

Before taking these statements at face value, it is important to consider the context in which they appeared. Napoleon’s regime was notoriously intolerant of dissent; like most French people of the time, Jews realized that it was foolish to defy him openly. As François Delpech has cautioned, “Let us not forget the total power of the Emperor during this period.” Moreover, he notes, “No matter what their reactions were, the Jewish masses were too weak and old-fashioned to play any role whatsoever in influencing the French.”³³

Given these circumstances, Jews did what they could to press their own agenda. Even while using fawning language, they sought to achieve their own goals, often with great creativity. An article written in 1979 by the French scholar and rabbi Charles Touati offers an important correction to popular views of the Sanhedrin rabbis. Touati argues that even though Napoleon handpicked its members, the Sanhedrin’s answers were halakhically sound: the body’s president, Rabbi Joseph David Sinzheim of Strasbourg, was one of the greatest Talmudists of his time. In ceding the authority for

³²See Archives of the Consistoire central des israélites de France (Paris), Registre du correspondance 1808-1810 – CC (1 C 1), May 8, 1809, circular letter to departmental consistories, fol. 35; and February 18, 1810, circular letter to all department consistories, fol. 257.

³³François Delpech, “Les Juifs en France et dans l'Empire et la Genèse du Grand Sanhédrin,” in Blumenkranz and Soboul, pp. 1-26 (quotes on pp. 25, 23).

civil and political law to the state, Touati maintains, Sinzheim and the others were not deviating from Jewish tradition. Instead, they were merely following the principle that, outside of a Jewish state, *dina de-malkhuta dina* [the law of the kingdom is the law]. According to Touati, “It is outrageously false to claim that the Great Sanhedrin broke Jews’ ties with their ancestral homeland in order to give them a new one.” Even if the Sanhedrin radically reinterpreted some Talmudic texts, he argues, “that is how *halakha* has proceeded throughout its history....”³⁴

Even in the case of intermarriage, Touati holds, the rabbis of the Sanhedrin did not yield any ground. Napoleon was anxious for them to endorse intermarriage and to declare that it did not violate Jewish law. The rabbis, in response, stated simply that marriages between Jews and Christians were “valid civilly,” and that no *herem* (excommunication) would be imposed against those who contracted them. This was but a clever maneuver on their part, in Touati’s view, since the *herem* had gone out of fashion in Western Europe by this time, seen by Gentiles and Jewish reformers alike as a form of coercion incompatible with modernity. The Sanhedrin rabbis were therefore merely renouncing using an institution that they would not have used anyway. Touati concluded that the Sanhedrin “did not... obsequiously obey the orders of the Emperor.... It based all

³⁴Charles Touati, “Le Grand Sanhédrin de 1807 et le Droit Rabbiniq,” in Blumenkranz and Soboul, pp. 27 – 48 (quotes from pp. 39, 41). See also Jay Berkovitz’s analysis of how “the much-maligned Paris body did not deviate from the Jewish legal tradition to the extent that is generally assumed,” focusing on the way the Sanhedrin portrayed Judaism’s view of Gentiles (Jay R. Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650-1860* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004], pp. 122 – 136; and also Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century France* [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989], esp. pp. 77 - 81). Berkovitz also notes the influence in the Sanhedrin of R. Aaron Worms of Metz (*Rites and Passages*, p. 130 and passim). For a critique of Touati’s position, see Eric Smilévitch, “Halakha et Code Civil: Questions sur le Grand Sanhédrin de Napoléon,” *Pardès* 3 (1986): pp. 9 – 28.

of its decisions on *halakha*, often interpreting it with boldness and a lively intelligence....”³⁵

Touati’s interpretation is bolstered by contemporary evidence. In a Hebrew-language eulogy for Sinzheim in 1812, another rabbi said that he had “not ceded an inch of ground [at the Sanhedrin] except to regain two.”³⁶ Moreover, as other scholars have shown recently, there was debate in the Sanhedrin as Napoleon’s intent to pass special laws about Jews became clearer. The deputies from Bordeaux were particularly uncomfortable with the way all Jews were being tarred with stereotypes long applied only to Ashkenazim, and even more so by the Empire’s move away from Jews’ equality. One deputy to the Sanhedrin, Marc Foi, declared, “The law must apply to all Frenchmen, Jews and Gentiles.”³⁷

Even after the Sanhedrin, Jewish leaders’ public praise for Napoleon - and their use of the term regeneration - did not mean they had become conditionalists like Pujol or even Grégoire. The patriotic liturgy, for its part, could serve as a way of contesting current discourse on the Jews. On the one hand, as Ronald Schechter has argued, the “process of sacralizing Napoleon” in prayer (even if it initially grew out of a sense of compulsion) ultimately made Jews feel more a part of French society, and start believing at least some of what they were chanting. At the same time, Schechter has concluded that

³⁵ Touati, pp. 44-5, 47.

³⁶Touati, pp. 47-8.

³⁷See Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin*, p. 112; and Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux*, pp. 86-7. Szajkowski’s bibliography suggests that one of the men whom Malino says raised objections within the Assembly may have published his concerns (Marqfoy, aîné de Baïonne, *Discours prononcé...sur la nature des réponses à faire aux 4e, 5e et 6e questions proposées à ladite Asemblée par les Commissaires de Sa Majesté Impériale et Royale* [Paris, september 1806], cited in Szajkowski, 980), but I have been unable to locate this pamphlet in American or French library catalogs.

when Jews portrayed Napoleon as the instrument of divine law, they did so not because they confused him with God, but because they wanted to assert God's overriding power; to them, any good works Napoleon may have performed were results of God's working through him. In addition, Jews' prayers for Napoleon served to assert their equal membership in the nation: just like Catholics and Protestants, Jews implied, they were members of the national family, and owed thanks to Napoleon for his support and protection.³⁸

Similarly, even as the term *regeneration* filled Jewish texts of the period, it hardly held the same meaning for Jews as it had for Gentile conditionalists. The concept was now bifurcated: people like Poujol and Napoleon used it to imply that the Jews were still degenerate and needed to redouble their efforts to make themselves worthy of other Frenchmen. For French Jews, in contrast, the term was a positive one, designed to show their patriotic zeal and to demonstrate their continued progress in social integration. This is not to say that French Jewish leaders saw Jews as needing no improvement; on the contrary, this period saw the rise in France of a strong reformist faction seeking to modernize Jews and Judaism. Yet the primary impetus for French reform came not from the critiques of outsiders like Napoleon or Poujol, but from the *haskalah*, the Mendelssohnian reform movement which had been making inroads in France since the late eighteenth century.³⁹

³⁸Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, esp. pp. 230 – 234; and idem, "Translating the Marseillaise."

³⁹On nineteenth-century French reformers, see Berkovitz's *The Shaping of Jewish Identity and Rites and Passages*. On the *haskalah* and its earlier influence in France, see Jonathan Helfand, "The Symbiotic Relationship between French and Germany Jewry in the Age of Emancipation," *Leo Baeck Year Book* 29 (1984): 331 – 350; Schwarzfuchs, "La Haskalah et le cercle de Metz à la veille de la Révolution," in *Politique et religion dans le judaïsme moderne. Des communautés à l'émancipation. Actes du colloque tenu en Sorbonne les 18 - 19 novembre 1986*, ed. Daniel Tollet (Paris: Presses de l'université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1987), 51 – 62; and Sepinwall, "Strategic Friendships: Jewish Intellectuals, The Abbé Grégoire,

Speaking of regeneration thus had different uses for Jews than it did for Gentiles. Often, it became a useful rhetorical weapon – in the service, paradoxically, of a kind of neo-unconditionalism. Notably, Jews hoped that reminding the government of Napoleon’s insistence on the urgency of Jewish regeneration could help them obtain the same resources that other religious communities were receiving. Often these resources were financial, as when they asked for educational funds and told the Minister of Religion that Napoleon’s “paternal hopes for the regeneration of Israelites will have no effect if we are not given the means to raise our children in the principles of religion and morality.” On other occasions, the consistories used a discourse of regeneration as they lobbied the government to enforce their authority over other Jews. In August 1810, they asked the Minister of Religion “to consider that the Consistory was established to operate the regeneration of Israelites of the empire [but] its means for attaining this goal are only those of moral and religious influence.... They need the assistance of a superior authority to give this influence a certain... force.”⁴⁰ When used by Jews, regeneration thus hardly implied acceptance of the idea of Jews’ degeneracy; it simply showed a willingness to integrate, as well as a canny understanding of the language most likely to persuade government bureaucrats.⁴¹

and the French Revolution,” *Renewing the Past, Reconfiguring Jewish Culture: From Al-Andalus to the Haskalah*, eds. Ross Brann and Adam Sutcliffe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 189 – 212.

⁴⁰CC, 1 C 2, fol. 18v and fol. 5, letters to S/E le ministre des Cultes, September 23, 1810, and August 5, 1810. On the Consistory’s struggles to win government resources to support its work, see especially Jeffrey Haus, “Liberté, Égalité, Utilité: Jewish Education and State in Nineteenth-Century France,” *Modern Judaism* 22, no. 1 (2002): pp. 1-27.

⁴¹On the continued use of regeneration by French Jews in the nineteenth century, see Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity*; and Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990). Even while French Jews’ references to their own regeneration often had

What would be the legacy of the Sanhedrin for French Jews? In some ways, the Napoleonic period would have lasting consequences. An early history of Reform Judaism identified the Sanhedrin as a crucial precursor in its suggesting that France was French Jews' native country, and that rabbis should no longer have jurisdiction in civil or judicial matters. To François Delpech, the Sanhedrin accelerated the cleavage in French Jewry between traditionalists and reformers. For Jay Berkovitz, the Sanhedrin helped forge a "tenuous unity" between French Jews of various backgrounds, bridging their "cultural, ethnic and religious differences."⁴² Meanwhile, the consistorial system has lasted until this day (even if belonging is now voluntary, and if synagogues outside the system, such as those of the Liberal and Masorti movements, are now permitted to exist).

In other ways, however, the Sanhedrin's legacy would be more short-lived. Napoleon's policy of particular laws for the Jews would be reversed quickly. Bonaparte's Bourbon successors (the relatives of the former King, who toppled the emperor in 1814-5 and restored the prerevolutionary French monarchy) let the Infamous Decree lapse in 1818. In 1846, the July monarchy allowed the last vestige of particularistic legislation on the Jews, the *more judaico* (a humiliating oath Jews needed to take in courts of law), to fall into disuse.

unconditionalist intent, they did, as Rodrigue makes clear, use the idea in a more conditionalist sense to apply to Jews in other countries, particularly those of the Levant and North Africa.

⁴² David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism* ([New York]: Ktav Pub. House, 1967; originally published 1907), p. 21; Delpech, "Les Juifs en France," p. 24; Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages*, 137. For a fascinating account of the effect of the Napoleonic period on the identities of the next generation of French Jews, see Maurice Samuels, "The Emperor and the Jews," *Judaism* 54, no. 1/2 (2005): pp. 34 – 45.

The pendulum of French policies on the Jews would swing back toward unconditionalism in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, aside from the notorious exception of the Vichy impossibilists during World War II. Despite France's currently low reputation among American Jews, French Jews have historically enjoyed greater acceptance and social integration than Jews nearly anywhere in the world. While Americans still await even a Jewish Vice President, France has had five Jewish Prime ministers (by Reform standards; three with two Jewish parents, and two with Jewish fathers) and numerous Jewish luminaries in other fields. Nevertheless, American-style "communitarization" (where members of a particular group act as a bloc in public life, rather than as individuals) has always remained suspect in France; Jews are seen as guilty of factionalism when they speak out too strongly as a community, particularly on matters related to Israel.⁴³ Meanwhile, though their numbers remain relatively small, impossibilists – from Jean Marie LePen's National Front to the young Muslim anti-Semites who project their rage at their own exclusion from French society onto the Jews - have not disappeared completely from France. The longterm fate of French-Jewish life in the land of "liberty, equality and fraternity" thus remains to be seen.⁴⁴

⁴³See Pierre Birnbaum, *Jewish Destinies: Citizenship, State, and Community in Modern France* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

⁴⁴For an interesting interpretation of French Jews' current quandary, see Karin Albou's 2005 film *La Petite Jérusalem*. The film's ending suggests that the future for Jews who wish to retain traditional beliefs is in aliyah to Israel, while those Jews who are more flexible about embracing non-Jewish values will still have a home in multicultural Paris.

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