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# Ambiguous and Interminable Emancipation

ON NOVEMBER 13, 1934, NAHUM GOLDMANN, a diplomat representing three prominent Jewish organizations, met with Benito Mussolini, Italy's Fascist dictator, to request his assistance to avert some of the looming threats to Jews across Europe. At the end of the conversation Mussolini, a truculent opponent of democracy, asked Goldmann a pointed question: "Why have Jews everywhere always been such dogged supporters of formal democracy?"<sup>1</sup> Acutely aware that this was "a very delicate point," Goldmann thoughtfully answered: "Democracy brought the Jews emancipation and civil rights, and they are naturally thankful to it."<sup>2</sup>

This book is a history of the Jews' "emancipation and civil rights." It analyzes the complex and multidirectional process whereby Jews acquired civil and political rights and came to exercise citizenship's prerogatives. The book is primarily concerned with Europe yet also examines North Africa and the Middle East, the United States and Israel. It assesses the transition from late medieval institutions and the ways in which rights were acquired; the limitations of rights as well as continuing forms of state and non-state discrimination; and, in some cases, the revocation and subsequent restoration of rights. The book is primarily a legal and political history focused on the process of gaining, exercising, retaining, and, where lost, recovering rights, as well as the tensions between laws and their implementation.

The term "emancipation" has been historically polysemous, denoting the inclusion of the excluded and the elevation of the oppressed. It has been applied to the manumission of slaves, the liberation of serfs, the equalization of workers and women, and the release from persecution or disabilities of adherents of dissenting religions. The emancipation of Jews has affinities to all those acceptations, but it is directly linked to the last. The very term "emancipation"

came to be widely applied to Jews after “Catholic emancipation” in England (1829). For the purposes of this book, “Jewish emancipation” concerns first and foremost the Jews’ inclusion, elevation, or equalization as a distinct religious group. European polities had engaged in destructive wars and systematic persecution over religion for centuries; to endeavor to erect multiconfessional societies, first through various forms of toleration, then through equality, was a historic achievement. Only in the twentieth century did emancipation come to designate alterations in the Jews’ status as a “nation” or a “race.”<sup>3</sup>

Emancipation included civil and political rights. Civil rights comprised residence and occupation, property ownership, and freedom of worship, as well as serving as a witness in court, swearing an oath, and having juridical standing to bring a lawsuit. Political rights denoted appointment to the civil service, holding elected office, and exercising the franchise.

For the purposes of this book emancipation designates the acquisition, loss, or recovery of any of those rights. In some cases, the full range of civil and political rights was at stake; in others exclusively political rights; in still others only one right. Equality requires the ability to exercise all rights; inequality results from the deprivation of even one right. I use “emancipation” as an elastic term to delineate a protracted and variegated process whose myriad installments ranged from the maximal to the minimal.

My aim in writing a study of emancipation is to redirect the focus of modern Jewish history. I want to point the camera lens to this neglected yet foundational event of the past four and a half centuries. The two colossal events of the mid-twentieth century, the Holocaust and the State of Israel’s foundation, have obstructed our field of vision and overwhelmed our cognitive capacities. We have largely lost sight and comprehension of the *longue durée* of modern Jewish history, the contours of the last half millennium.

The murder of six million Jews and the establishment of a Jewish state were events of monumental importance. They deserve the libraries of books and mountains of articles devoted to them, as well as those yet to come. Yet a narrative of Jewish history that focuses on or concludes in 1933–45 or 1948, whether it construes those events as accidental or inevitable, is fundamentally problematic. We are now in the twenty-first century; history has not ceased. Those two events mark neither the consummation nor the culmination of modern Jewish history. In fact, both are part and parcel of the long history of Jewish emancipation. They were reactions to, indeed developments from, emancipation. In philosophical parlance, they were epiphenomena. Emancipation was, and remains, the principal event.

If emancipation is so consequential, why have scholars and writers not addressed it? Many scholars have acknowledged emancipation’s undeniable centrality. Salo Baron, the first historian of the Jews appointed at a major American university, wrote in the opening lines of his classic article, “Ghetto and Emancipation” (1928): “The history of the Jews in the last century and a half

has turned about one central fact: that of Emancipation.”<sup>4</sup> Or as David Vital, then at Tel-Aviv University, wrote more recently:

The principal engine of change in the modern history of the Jews of Europe was the revolutionary idea that it might after all be right and proper for them to enjoy full and equal civil and political rights with all other subjects of the several realms they inhabited. All turned, therefore, in the final analysis on the matter of emancipation. . . . No other factor operating upon them in modern times would serve so powerfully to precipitate such revolutionary changes in their mores, their culture, their internal social structure, and, more generally and loosely, their private and collective concerns and expectations.<sup>5</sup>

Despite such pronouncements, much of the attention emancipation receives is limited in scope and implication. Most scholarship focuses on individual cities, regions, or countries; it is neither comparative nor transnational. The scholarship therefore does not impinge upon, let alone substantively alter, received interpretations. The accepted views largely remain what they were almost half a century ago, before a burgeoning scholarship began to reshape the understanding of modern Jewish history.<sup>6</sup>

The reasons for this relative neglect are obvious. As the symbol of modernity, separating the medieval from the modern world, “tradition” from “modernity,” emancipation is more likely to be extolled or excoriated than rigorously studied: it is overdetermined by the Jewish world’s ideological divisions. Those divisions have produced two formidable obstacles to rigorous scholarship.

The first obstacle is that emancipation is held responsible for the dissolution of the communal autonomy or self-government that for millennia had provided diaspora Jewry with a coherent framework for cohesive collective life. From early in the emancipation process Jewish integrationists or emancipationists had celebrated the end of this communal structure and emancipation’s supposedly unqualified benefits. They portrayed emancipation as a form of providential progress from the dark night of persecution and subjugation to the blazing sunlight of toleration and equality.<sup>7</sup>

In marked contrast, Jewish self-segregationists or nationalists held emancipation culpable not only for the end of communal autonomy and self-government but also for its odious result, “assimilation,” a concept they invented and propagated. Zionists, Bundists, and Autonomists regarded emancipation as the cause of all modern Jewry’s agonies and tragedies. They thought emancipation had either coerced or, worse still, seduced Jews to renounce their language, culture, religion, and, ultimately, national life. They cultivated the characteristic fin-de-siècle nationalist invention of a pure essentialist world that had been lost.<sup>8</sup>

The second and even more forbidding obstacle is the supposedly negative verdict of history. For many Jews, the Holocaust unequivocally proclaimed not

just emancipation's calamitous failure in fact but its ineluctable failure in principle. Many Jews wittingly or unwittingly espoused a determinist teleology.<sup>9</sup> In their eyes emancipation engendered the Jews' assimilation, which in turn awakened Christian animus and provoked a new enmity, political and racial anti-Semitism. In a Europe in the grip of aggressive irredentism, ultranationalism, and racism, the old animus and the new enmity joined to produce the Holocaust.

The lesson many Jews and historians of modern Jewry derived from the Holocaust was to repudiate emancipation by making it either culpable for, or complicit in, the Holocaust: they considered Nazism solely vis-à-vis the Jews.<sup>10</sup> That parochial view led them to forget the implications of Nahum Goldmann's answer to Mussolini: democracy was the cause of emancipation, its destruction the essential precondition of emancipation's demolition. Nazi Germany's first step toward racist legislation, persecution, deportation, and mass murder was to raze democracy.<sup>11</sup>

For many this teleology has one additional station, the founding of the State of Israel. There tragedy gave way to triumph, destruction to salvation. Zionism emerged in response to the dual threat of assimilation within and anti-Semitism without. The Jewish state alone rescued European Jewry's surviving remnants. It alone offered all Jews everywhere refuge from the Diaspora (Galut), most immediately those from North Africa (Maghreb) and the Middle East (Mashreq). Israel restored the Jews' national life and pride. For some it opened the path to messianic redemption.<sup>12</sup>

This book aims neither to celebrate nor to censure emancipation. I neither idealize emancipation as the pinnacle of progress nor denigrate it as the nadir of egregious error. I offer neither a narrative of triumph nor a chronicle of tragedy. Rather, I endeavor to capture emancipation's inherent ambiguities, its triumph and its tragedy. The triumphs and tragedies were interlocking; each implied the other. There could not have been triumphs without vicissitudes, tragedies without striking successes. Yet even more, I try to capture quotidian and complex political processes that defy hyperbole.

This book emphasizes the "how" of emancipation: it analyzes emancipation as a process. This is a political and legal history that tries to study emancipation's unfolding to describe and define its highly diverse permutations. First and foremost, we need to know precisely what emancipation was.<sup>13</sup> We can only achieve this understanding if we investigate emancipation as part of the larger history of citizenship. The Jews' emancipation cannot be studied in isolation. To cast it as a parochial issue is to misconceive it from the start. We must locate it in its multiple and varied contexts, namely, the individual states in which it developed as well as the transnational patterns that emerged. Furthermore, emancipation was, and remains, an interminable project. It was not a neatly circumscribed or clearly bounded event; it has continued for over five centuries. We must study it from its origins to its recent manifestations.

## *Chronology*

Emancipation was recurring and interminable. Jews began to gain rights neither with the Enlightenment's advocacy of a common humanity nor with the French Revolution's promulgation of citizenship. It did not end with the achievement of emancipation across western and central Europe (England, 1858; Austria-Hungary, 1867; Italy, 1870; Germany, 1870) or eastern Europe (Russia, 1917).<sup>14</sup> Emancipation was neither a one-time, chronologically discrete event nor a linear one.

In Italy Jews gained emancipation five times (1796–99, 1801, 1848, 1870, 1944) and lost it four times (1800, 1813–15, 1848, 1938). In France Jews gained emancipation six times (1790, 1791, 1818, 1870, 1944, 1961) and lost it twice (1808, 1940). In the German states, they attained rights four times (1800–1813, 1848, 1870, 1945) and lost them three times (1815, 1848, 1933–41). In Russia Catherine granted privileges in the 1780s that she and her successors rescinded from the 1790s; Alexander III and Nicholas II restricted or overturned (1881–1914) privileges Alexander II had extended in the 1850s to 1870s; and in the 1920s the Bolsheviks disenfranchised many of the Jews the February 1917 revolution had enfranchised. In the United States Jews struggled to gain political rights in some states in the nineteenth century. In the 1940s to 1960s they campaigned to regain the civil rights they had lost in the first half of the twentieth century.

A chronology of emancipation that starts from 1750 or 1789, and ends in 1870 or 1917, is erroneous. Emancipation started earlier and, significantly, extended later. Indeed, emancipation continues to the present.

In the abstract there is a clear divide between privileges in corporate society and rights in civil society. In a corporate or estate society privileges were group specific. Groups held specific privileges through legislated charters that granted them a defined legal status, for example, nobles, priests, burghers. In contrast, the American and French revolutions introduced universal rights predicated on the liberty and equality of the individual. Civil society emerged when group-specific privileges gave way to uniform rights guaranteeing individual equality.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas privileges in corporate society are conceptually distinct from rights in civil society, historically they were not. Citizenship in civil society emerged from citizenship in corporate society; parity of privileges in corporate society could lead to equality in civil society.

From 1550 Jews in eastern (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) and western Europe (Italian city-states; Bordeaux) began to gain extensive privileges bordering on parity with Christian burghers and merchants. In some cases, there was a direct transition from privileges to rights. From the 1590s Jews in western Europe began to gain civil rights in nascent civil societies (Amsterdam, London).

The ancien régime persisted and informed the new one in other ways as well. Corporate structures and the confessional state, that is, a state defined by the embrace of one religion, survived well into the nineteenth century, sometimes longer. They became a locus of institutional and ideological opposition to emancipation.

There was no single legal status that characterized Jews across Europe let alone other continents prior to emancipation. In fact, there were multiple points of departure. To posit the existence of a single entity such as the “autonomous community” as characteristic of Jewish life everywhere is to reify the pre-emancipation past.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, one cannot speak of the “ghetto” as representative of that pre-emancipation Jewish life. “Ghetto” versus “emancipation” is an evocative yet false binary. Actual ghettos were the exception rather than the rule. This book has no single background chapter describing the Jews’ status prior to emancipation. Instead, I describe the situation place by place, region by region, polity by polity.

We cannot define emancipation without including the developments of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. They were not precursors or harbingers but integral elements (chapters 1–6).<sup>17</sup>

Emancipation did not end in 1870 or 1917. Although the Minority Rights Treaties (1919–24) that emerged from the wreckage of World War I guaranteed Jews citizenship in the successor states to the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, the states infringed those rights. Hungary was the first, enacting a *numerus clausus* in education (1920). Until 1931, Poland used legislation of the former partitioning powers to impose restrictions. Austria employed a racial definition to prevent former Galician Jews from gaining rights. Romania enacted laws that denied Jews rights in its newly acquired territories. After a decade of acting as the “incubator of nations,” the Soviet government brutally dismantled the institutions that supported Jews as an extraterritorial minority (chapter 22).

The Nazis put the abrogation of emancipation front and center. They abolished German Jews’ political rights in 1933–35 and systematically deprived them of remaining rights until stripping them of state membership at the time of deportation (1941). Nazi Germany’s example encouraged its allied and client states. Poland endeavored to exclude Jews from the economy and educational institutions. Hungary enacted its “First Jew Law” in 1938 aiming to reduce their participation in the economy and followed with more. Romania began to restrict the Jews’ rights from 1934. As part of its “second” Fascist revolution (1938), Italy adopted racial laws excluding Jews from the economy and relegating them to an inferior form of citizenship. Vichy France’s “national revolution” did much the same (chapter 23).

Regaining citizenship in Europe after World War II entailed the restoration of rights, the restitution of property, and the negotiation of reparations. Some issues of property and reparations are still being addressed (chapter 24). The new state of Israel faced the challenge of shaping citizenship for a heteroge-

neous population: Jews from various countries as well as Arabs, Bedouins, and Druze (chapter 26). In the United States Jews campaigned for civil equality (employment, housing, university admissions) for almost two decades (1948–64) (chapter 27).

Equality and the exercise of citizenship were and are, always and everywhere, fragile, subject to substantial infringement if not outright abrogation. The process of emancipation continues into the twenty-first century. Jews everywhere live in the era of Emancipation.

### *Citizenship*

Extending the chronology backward to the sixteenth century reveals something fundamental about the nature of citizenship. Jews were not seeking admission to states possessing fully formed concepts of citizenship. Rather, the states were in formation and defining citizenship and equality. Moreover, they did so largely in relationship to religion.

In Europe religion defined the boundaries of belonging to a polity into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, putatively ethnic or national divisions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were often, at bottom, religious ones.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the formation of citizenship frequently entailed a procession of hierarchically arranged religions. Confessional states first created citizenship for members of the established, public, or dominant religion. Next came dissident or dissenting Christians. Jews were necessarily the problematic last group. In Anglican England Jews followed Protestant dissenters (non-Anglicans) and Catholics. In the Catholic Habsburg Empire, they followed the Eastern Orthodox and Protestants, in Catholic France Protestants (Huguenots). In the “Protestant pluralism” of the thirteen colonies and the United States, Jews and Catholics followed minority Protestants. The Ottoman Empire introduced equality primarily for Christian minorities; Jews were collateral beneficiaries.<sup>19</sup>

The Jews’ status vis-à-vis other religions appeared in the built environment: Christian Europe had an ecclesiastical building code. “Public worship” (*exercitium religionis publicum*) was usually reserved for the established or dominant faith. It permitted an ecclesiastical building distinguished by a spire and bells that stood in a visible public space: a street or boulevard, a square, or a piazza. Its adherents could mount public observance such as processions. “Private worship” (*exercitium religionis privatum*) was assigned to a dissenting or inferior confession. It prescribed an ecclesiastical building hidden from the public view: bereft of spire and bells, the building stood in a lane or behind other buildings in a courtyard. Its adherents had to avoid gathering in public view; they were prohibited from mounting public observance. Domestic worship (*devotio domestica*) was granted to the least tolerated of faiths: small groups could worship in an adherent’s home. Synagogues followed this code; I attempt to trace the synagogue’s shifting status.<sup>20</sup>

As Jews gained rights Judaism's status came into play. What was Judaism's status vis-à-vis the established/dominant and dissenting/minority religions? Did it enjoy the same perquisites as other religions? Was it a public organization or a private association? Was it tax exempt? If the state subsidized other religions did it subsidize Judaism? If the state paid pastors' and priests' salaries did it also pay those of rabbis? The equality of Judaism was integral to the Jews' equality. Emancipating the Jews entailed emancipating Judaism.

Two states in Europe created models of citizenship abstracted from birth and religion: the Habsburg Empire did so by reform, France by revolution.<sup>21</sup> Significantly, and not surprisingly, these two states provided the models for legislation emancipating Jews as well. Other states then adapted that legislation to their own political structures.

The Habsburg Joseph II created the model of conditional or incremental emancipation, meaning partial rights given in reward for utility to the state. Joseph II's legislation was inherently ambiguous: it both admitted Jews to existing estates ("into" estates) and deprived them of estate or quasi-estate status ("out of" estates). He gave some Jews rights by admitting them to guilds, that is, they gained estate-specific privileges ("into" estates). He also gave Jews rights by dismantling or reducing the corporate Jewish community's privileges ("out of" estates). In practice, partial emancipation persisted until 1867 when the new Dual Monarchy resolved the fundamental ambiguity of "into" and "out of" estates in favor of the latter (chapters 4, 11, 12, 13, 14).

France created the model of unconditional emancipation, meaning immediate full and equal rights gained through extraction "out of" estates. This legislation was in keeping with the Revolution's general dissolution of estates and corporate bodies, for example, nobility, clergy. France's practice of emancipation was, however, decidedly ambiguous. Sephardic Jews gained rights through the confirmation of their privileges (1790); there was an early reversion to conditional rights (Napoleon, 1808); forms of inequality lingered into the 1830s and 1840s; and the entire process recapitulated itself in Algeria (1830–70), although the Mzabi Saharan Jews did not receive citizenship until 1961 (chapters 7, 9, 17).

Unconditional emancipation or outright abrogation came with seismic events such as revolutions, unifications, wars, and the collapse of democracy that thoroughly transformed the political landscape. Those events were, however, always linked to long-term developments. German unification, for example, completed an ongoing emancipation of almost a century. As is usually the case, a prolonged concatenation of events prepared the way for the seemingly dramatic rupture.

Citizenship in Europe involved two legal traditions. States granted citizenship by residence (*jus soli*) and by descent (*jus sanguinis*). States rarely used exclusively one law. France, for example, oscillated between the two for centuries.<sup>22</sup> To understand the nature of citizenship and the Jews' status, it is im-

perative to know which legal tradition a state employed and precisely how the state defined and deployed it.

### *The Three Regions*

An “east” versus “west” binary has become a commonplace in writing about European Jewish history. Since the fin de siècle, Jews of all persuasions and many historians of modern Jewry contrasted the emancipated “west,” threatened by “assimilation” and the new political and racial anti-Semitism, with the unemancipated “east,” subject to persecution and discrimination, endemic poverty and pogroms. This distinction possessed more verisimilitude than veracity; it was ideological rather than analytical.<sup>23</sup>

We should instead divide Europe into three regions. A tripartite scheme allows us to discern the regions’ distinct political practices and legislative policies as well as the interaction between the regions. This book posits that no one region let alone country can be treated as normative. The venerable tendency of historians to make German Jewry the model for emancipation—an intense and torturous emancipation formative for “modernity”—is untenable.<sup>24</sup> Emancipation comprised a “complex variegated family of instances”: gaining equal rights across Europe’s three regions was fundamentally similar, yet the differences between regions, and the variations among countries, were also fundamental.<sup>25</sup>

#### WESTERN EUROPE (HOLLAND, ENGLAND, FRANCE) (CHAPTERS 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 17, 23, 24)

In southern France, the Netherlands, and England Jews gained civil rights through the circumstances of settlement (chapter 1). The scope of the struggle for rights was therefore narrow: Jews had to mobilize only for political rights. This pattern also applied, mutatis mutandis, to the Dutch and British colonies and to Jamaica, Canada, and the United States (chapter 18). The duration of the struggle for rights was, albeit intense, relatively brief.

Emancipation’s sticking point in France was Alsace. Since France had definitively acquired the entire region only in the seventeenth century, Jews had corporate privileges and an occupational structure characteristic of the Holy Roman Empire that was in tension with their neighbors and France’s laws (chapters 5, 7, 9).

#### CENTRAL EUROPE (GERMAN STATES, HABSBURG EMPIRE) (CHAPTERS 3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23, 24).

From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries polities had enacted “Jewry laws” that imposed an inferior legal status, relegating Jews to the margins of

corporate society and differentiating among them according to their ascribed utility. Some prominent individuals (“Court Jews”) gained extensive privileges. The struggle for rights was broad in scope, encompassing both civil and political rights, and prolonged, lasting for most of a century. Central European states granted conditional or partial emancipation, making additional rights contingent upon “regeneration,” that is, the restructuring of occupations, education, and communal and religious life to promote utility to the state.<sup>26</sup> The state legislated and supervised that regeneration. States granted rights by moving Jews both “into” and “out of” estates. A definitive policy of “out of” estates came only with the seismic events of restructuring (Dual Monarchy, 1867) or unification (Germany, 1870).

A complication peculiar to central Europe was the dualism of local/municipal citizenship (*Stadtsbürgerschaft*; *Heimatrecht*) versus state citizenship (*Staatsbürgerschaft*; *Staatsangehörigkeit*). That dualism was due to the persistence of corporate institutions and informed the emancipation process throughout, assuming ever newer forms. A further complication was the territories that Prussia (Posen) and the Habsburg Empire (Galicia) seized from Poland: these backwaters became testing grounds for legislation (chapters 6, 10).

EASTERN EUROPE (POLISH-LITHUANIAN  
COMMONWEALTH, RUSSIA, CONGRESS POLAND)  
(CHAPTERS 2, 6, 10, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24)

Tsarist Russia found itself in conflict with the structure of the territories it seized in the partitions of Poland (1772, 1793–95), including the Jews’ privileges and the private market town (*shtetl*). As in central Europe, the struggle for rights was broad in scope, encompassing both civil and political rights, and prolonged, lasting for over a century. It also involved far more Jews: sheer numbers became a significant factor.

Russian legislation followed central European models of conditional emancipation that made rights contingent upon regeneration. In adopting central European models, Russia emphasized coercion (“sticks”) over incentives (“carrots”). Moreover, Russian legislation adhered to the policy of moving Jews as individuals “into” estates, in large part because of the estates’ nature. The estates were not direct descendants of medieval or early modern institutions that were independent of, and potentially resistant to, state authority. Rather, the tsarist monarchy devised the estates in the eighteenth century to serve its interests. Finally, in contrast to western and central Europe, where civil rights came first, Jews first gained political rights (Congress Poland, 1861; Russia, 1905) and then civil rights (Congress Poland, 1862; Russia, 1917).

The Ottoman Empire constituted a fourth region of emancipation. An Islamic polity intent on preserving the integrity of religious groups, it shaped its own version of emancipation. By abolishing the centuries-old status of a

tribute-paying inferior (*dhimmi*), the empire granted legal equality to Christians, Jews, and members of other religions (1839, 1856). At the same time, the Ottoman Empire accorded the restructured religious communities (*millets*) authority over education and jurisdiction over personal status, for example, marriage, divorce, burial (chapter 21). The State of Israel inherited Ottoman personal status laws: it rejected civil marriage and gave rabbinic courts control of marriage and divorce (chapter 26).

### *Politics*

Emancipation mobilized Jews politically, consistently and continuously, from its inception until today. Jews were actively engaged in gaining parity and equality from the start. They were tirelessly engaged in defending rights once gained. They were, then, active agents at every stage. A distinct emancipation politics emerged over five centuries.

At least two positions have militated against the proper recognition of emancipation politics. First, many historians emphasized that emancipation was “as much a historic necessity for the modern state as it was for the Jews.”<sup>27</sup> They therefore regarded rulers, bureaucrats, and parliaments as the principal actors. In this interpretation, Jews were either supporting actors or passive beneficiaries.<sup>28</sup>

More influentially, Jewish nationalists and nationalist historians denied the very possibility of diaspora Jewish politics. They asserted that their own movements initiated Jewish politics in modern Europe. Nahum Goldmann claimed, for example, that Chaim Weizmann had “created” Jewish diplomacy.<sup>29</sup> For nationalists “emancipation politics” was not just a solecism but a true oxymoron, a logical and historical impossibility.<sup>30</sup> They coined the term “auto-emancipation” to characterize their agency on behalf of nationalist projects in contrast to the Jews’ putative passivity vis-à-vis “emancipation.”<sup>31</sup>

I have tried to note Jews’ political engagement wherever I found it. Since my emphasis is on the larger process of emancipation it has not been possible to offer a full analysis of emancipation politics let alone a general anatomy of modern Jewish politics. Similarly, I have noted, yet not tried to offer, a detailed account of emancipation’s opponents. I have pointed to the main positions and ideas, but I have not tried to assess persons, parties, or movements. Emancipation politics and emancipation’s opponents are appropriate subjects for another book.

It is important to state explicitly what else this book is not: it is neither a survey of modern Jewish history nor a study of the Jews’ “modernization.” To be sure, as David Vital’s long passage attests, emancipation was the “engine” of momentous changes in every aspect of Jewish life. For my purposes, it is essential to disaggregate emancipation from its consequences, yet also from its causes. I defer consideration of consequences just as I eschew a detailed

examination of emancipation's causes. I offer neither a grand theory of origins nor a sweeping account of ramified results.<sup>32</sup> Emancipation is immense; it invites voluminous treatment; it risks an unreadable tome. To counteract that tendency, I adhere to the counsel I have offered for over three decades to students embarking on research: "choose a broad topic narrowly defined."

### *Conclusion*

Some readers may find this book's conclusions disturbing. Once we realize that emancipation is an interminable process that is an integral aspect of Jews' contemporary experience, we are forced to acknowledge that there are in fact no settled answers to the most pressing political and indeed existential issues of Jewish life. Neither the establishment of the State of Israel nor the flourishing of American Jewry let alone the rebuilding of Jewish life in Europe has definitively answered emancipation's challenges. The larger struggle for political equality and the full exercise of citizenship, for Jews, by Jews, and for other groups, remains pressing. The only thing we can confidently assert is that this struggle is inherently protean: it will be populated by ever new issues and causes, by proponents and opponents whose appearance and actions we cannot predict.