

Introduction

Abdelwahab Meddeb,
Benjamin Stora



Parallel Memories

I grew up in a traditional religious household in the section of Tunis near al-Zaytuna Mosque, a hive of Qur'anic activity. My grandfather and my father, ulema and *mudarri*, promulgated their doctrinal authority from their pulpit at the Great Mosque, built in the mid-ninth century. Its *mihrab* was redone in the Hispano-Moorish style by an Andalusian architect expelled from Spain in 1609, along with the rest of the Moriscos. Like so many others, he found refuge and a new home in Tunis. My father's colleagues met at our home for seminars to study the hadith and the *tafsir*. From my father I learned the Qur'an, starting at age four or five. During the month of Ramadan, I went every evening to al-Zaytuna Mosque for the supererogatory prayers, the *tarawih*. There, for nearly an hour every night, part of the Qur'an was recited: the goal was to read the entire Book during the holy month.

I mention all these details to convey the idea that my ear, my body, my senses, and my mind were permeated with the scansion of the Qur'an, the modulation of the prayers and scriptures. In summer we lived at the seaside resort of La Marsa. I would go past the synagogue located behind the town hall, near the market in Marsa-Résidence, where many Jews lived. The murmur of Jewish prayers sent shivers through me. That recitation, barely chanted, heads swaying to its rhythm, reminded me of the Qur'anic readings I heard at home or at al-Zaytuna Mosque. Such proximity, such similarity, confused me: I wondered where identity and difference lay. Was this the same prayer in a different language? These Jews, whom I saw on a daily basis, bore within themselves what made them similar to me and also what made them different. It was that difference in resemblance that confused me.

In the early 1960s, having reached adolescence, I rediscovered the same proximity, the same resemblance, when I saw Jews walking along the avenues downtown. They were so close, and at the same time they embodied the ideal of modernity and of Europe. By virtue of their urban presence, I perceived them as Tunisians who had completed

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their modernization/Westernization. They became an object of fascination for me and a figure of identification, possessing what Jacques Derrida would call an “unfaithful faithfulness”: unfaithful to that part of their tradition that made them unsuited for evolution and freedom, they were faithful to what in the same tradition resisted as a trace. Through them, I saw fulfilled the possibility of being in the world and of still perpetuating what resists and what remains of the origin. In short, I told myself that, whether one is a Jew or a Muslim, it is possible to be Tunisian and modern. Evolution was not mere betrayal. That is what the Jews’ presence evoked for me in Tunis, where, moreover, they exemplified *joie de vivre*, hedonism, a positive diversity. Bringing with them the Mediterranean habitus, they drew Tunis northward and made it the sister city of Rome or Athens. They enacted the pleasures of days and nights spent on terraces, in cafés, in bars, in restaurants. After the Jews left, Tunis began to drift to the East and became the little sister of post-Nasserian Cairo.

What I also found formative, performative, and stimulating was the participation of brilliant Jewish intellectuals in the discussions that followed showings at the film library. It was through them that I discovered that cinema is one of the fine arts, a synthesis of the entire corpus of literary, pictorial, and musical works, lying somewhere between theater, opera, the novel, painting, philosophy, semiotics, history, and anthropology. Let me add to that the role played for my generation by the Jewish teachers we had at secondary school, then at university. They spoke to us as Tunisians who were agents of modernity. I am thinking especially of Marcel Maarek, a mathematics professor; of Jean-Pierre Darmon and Juliette Bessis, professors of history; and of so many others, including Boulakia, Naccache, Perez, Bellaïche, Slama, Valensi, and Sebag. We perceived them as teachers but also as peers, allies, elders, friends, who initiated us into critical thinking, into freedom, and helped us to mold ourselves through self-awareness.”

Abdelwahab Meddeb



I was born in Constantine in the large Jewish quarter called the Charrah. In the twelve years I lived in that city, I have no memory of ever entering a European apartment. People always say it is difficult to gain entry to the homes of Muslims, that they form a closed society, but I remember things differently. The music and the prayers of the religious holidays, Mawlid or Ramadan, have stayed with me. The Jewish quarter overlapped with the Arab quarter, so that we knew the rhythm of their lives, and they the rhythm of ours. You heard prayers when you passed the mosques, and these prayers had the same resonance as those at synagogue. And yet, the Jews of Constantine felt French and had distanced themselves from the “natives,” even if they tended to “go native” (*vivre à l’indigène*). “Going native” was in fact a time-honored expres-

sion. For the religious holidays, at Passover, my maternal grandparents adopted “native dress”; we ate on the floor, seated on ottomans, and they recited the Haggadah as their ancestors had done.

I was never surprised to see women in “native dress.” My maternal grandmother herself dressed that way. She spoke only Arabic, and that was the language I used to communicate with her. And the Muslim woman who came to the house on Saturday to do the ironing and, as Shabbat required, to turn on the lights and light the stove, removed her veil as soon as she arrived. I spoke to her a great deal, in both French and Arabic. I also had fun with Smail and Sebti, the two Muslim employees in my father’s semolina business. So we were close.

Things went no further, however, even in Constantine, despite what some have said. To be sure, there was undoubtedly more permeability there than elsewhere, at least in the public space, between the Jewish and Muslim communities—some twenty thousand and some sixty thousand people, respectively, out of a population of a hundred thousand, where Europeans were in the minority. But in Constantine, as elsewhere, segregation between communities prevailed and, as is well known, later caused problems in that country. The Jews lived among themselves, with their own customs and beliefs; the Muslims and the Europeans did the same. There was not really any exchange in the private sphere. And Diderot public school, not far from Grand Street, where I lived in the heart of the Charrah, was not very integrated. In my class, I remember about five Muslim students to about twenty Jews and five or six Europeans. That attests to the legal, political, social, and economic inequalities in colonial Algeria in the 1950s.

In the end, what did we have in common, Jews and Muslims? Languages (Arabic and French), a temporality marked by a liturgical rhythm, musical affinities, culinary traditions, and also the market and the streets. The women, veiled all in black, whom I encountered there personified in my eyes a pious Islam attached to tradition. Around me I saw a Judeo-Muslim life. I even participated in it, speaking Arabic with my mother (“give me water,” “go buy some bread,” “go tell your father”), the language of everyday life. But I felt French. That was the important thing. To be and appear *like* the French. The desire to imitate and to assimilate was very strong, to the great dismay of the city’s rabbis, who warned of the risks of the community’s dissolution. Ultimately, it was through my different relationship to Arabness and to Islam that the feeling of belonging to France took root.”

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Benjamin Stora

Memories at work

We have chosen to evoke these parallel memories because they form the preamble for the historian's task: two lines of reconstituted memories illuminated by the present, as memories are. They might run along parallel paths, right next to each other, but would they ever meet? The practice of history, of deconstructing memorial representations, of rooting out nostalgia, can account for a complex, fluctuating reality based on these memories (and never without them). That practice can resituate differences and conflicts but also points of intersection and mutual influences. The lines are never clear or sharp, the parallels never strict. They sometimes veer off course, cross, and even blur.

This book, in which we conceal neither the dark days nor the joyous hours, has the humble ambition of making contemporary research available to readers in order to propose a synthesis of the memories on both sides. It will serve as a preamble. The intention is that it will be continued, that it will prompt exchanges and dialogue. Our wish is to give the researcher's laboratory the opportunity to contribute toward the citizen's common sense. Then each side will be in a position to make a final assessment of the contentious issues, reaching a compromise that will allow them to work toward a reconciliation (without necessarily obscuring what is irreconcilable). Our ambition is also to make available to the authorities in the countries concerned the pedagogical material that will allow them to bring the education systems closer together, to establish the learning fundamentals of mutual acknowledgment, long anticipated and still unrealized.

This material, secreted by human lives poised between peace and violence, makes possible the ethics of *substitution*. In reading this encyclopedic survey, every Jew will be able to put himself in the place of the Muslim, and every Muslim in the place of the Jew. Both sides will be able to suspend exclusivism, to reverse the conventional hierarchies, and to experience the dialectic of identity and difference as if from the inside.

In this book, we have not sought to present a Judeo-Muslim history that would be convergent from the start. But we have gathered together some of the most eminent specialists in the world to restore a *relationship* between Jews and Muslims as it took root over the course of their history. We were determined to escape the distortions that isolate both groups. We were therefore intent on crossing borders to break free of the constraints of communitarianism and nationalism, and to situate that relationship on the horizon of universal history, where it had its beginning. We have taken care to ensure that the focus remains on the state of knowledge, while avoiding the pitfalls and prejudices that sometimes get in the way of a scholarly appraisal of both Islam and Judaism.

We therefore cover the entire geographical space where that relationship found expression, following the historical phases it passed through. Do we need to point out that this relationship was at its most intense at the very moment when Islam

came into being? We find in Medina, in the third decade of the seventh century, the matrix in which that relationship took shape, through attraction and repulsion, alliances and separations, similarities and dissimilarities, identity and difference, friendship and enmity, convergence and divergence, hospitality and hostility, receptiveness and rejection, recognition and refusal, confirmation and repudiation. Living in close proximity, each of the two communities constituted for the other the challenge of alterity, which could escalate into violence.

Do we need to reaffirm from the outset that Islam in its early days attempted to bring about a convergence with Judaism, before later distinguishing itself from that religion? Did not the Muslims first turn toward Jerusalem to pray? It was through the connection to Ishmael that the figure of Abraham was revived, reoriented toward Mecca, to give a scriptural foundation to the Arabian backdrop. And so reconstructed myth encountered history. That new Islamic assertiveness would turn violent in the Medinese context, where the battle against the Jews was fueled by two motives. The first was political: it belonged to the strategy of founding a new city,

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which required ending the hegemony of the tribes. The second motive purported to be theological: it took the form of a Qur’anic restaging of the biblical scene that depicted the disobedient “children of Israel” incurring God’s wrath.

This same structure would adapt to the vagaries of history, through the tension between religion and politics and the contribution to civilization. Over the course of centuries, this structure came to have a place in a region that ranged from Arabia to Andalusia and included Syria, Egypt, and the Maghreb. We follow its permutations from Baghdad to Delhi, taking a detour through Isfahan and Istanbul. We rediscover it in more recent times, active in diasporas across Europe and America.

This history of the *relationship* between Jews and Muslims has until now been underestimated, as a result of the various Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. It has occupied only a discreet place in the field of studies devoted to these two large communities, because it was considered almost nonexistent after the recent division between them. It is time to atone for that neglect by undertaking a polyphonous inscription of that relationship.

A shared life

This book is in the first place a *reunion*, a *restoration* of the ancient historical bonds established between Jews and Muslims for more than fourteen centuries, from the first appearance of the Qur’an to our own time—fourteen centuries of passions

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and oppressions, of sometimes tragic, sometimes auspicious relations. We give a detailed and systematic description, adhering to the current state of research, of the social and cultural historical processes at work in the two communities. Different aspects of the lives of these communities are evoked: the *dhimma*, the legal status granted to the Jews in Islamic countries; shared ways of life and different cultures in the Islamic world; community and religious structures; relations with other worlds, the Christian world in particular; and the economic activities of the different social groups. The various realms of daily life are also discussed within the particular register of reciprocal representations.

Readers will therefore span the history of the many countries where, for a long time, Muslims and Jews lived side by side, face-to-face, together or separate: three continents, east to west, north to south, from Morocco to Iran and India, from al-Andalus to Yemen, from Algeria to Egypt and Mesopotamia, from Asia Minor to the Balkans. They will discover the metamorphoses that the Muslims and Jews underwent, voluntarily or by force, from the building of the Muslim empires to the arrival of the European colonial powers; the problems in assimilating to the dominant culture; the upheavals in the modes of organization of the communities; their demographic growth; evolutions in professional activities; their cultural and political rise or decline. This book appeals to real history and does not remain obsessed with the myths that have influenced behaviors. As a result, representations of the other shift, and the dynamics of history is restored.

At a time when this relationship is faring poorly—very poorly—it is out of the question to dissimulate the religious conflicts and also those that arose within political and social history. We situate the following contributions at the center of that tragic scene. We have endeavored to make possible a disinterested, balanced, calm history, something that seemed impossible at first glance. But that history is not constituted solely of conflicts. It has also had its moments of *convivencia*: not only through what can rightly be called the “Andalusian myth” personified by Ibn Naghrela, Jewish poet and scholar, man of the pen and of the sword, the first vizier and the leader of the Muslim armies in the Zirid principality of Granada, but also in twelfth-century Abbasid Baghdad, where Benjamin of Tudela bore witness to the glory of his coreligionists, and in Ayyubid Cairo, where Maimonides brilliantly saw to the material and spiritual prosperity of his community. Maimonides’s son even went so far as to adapt the Sufi system of Islamic mysticism to the faith of his fathers.

We could cite other examples of *convivencia*. Let us confine ourselves to Moshe ibn Ezra’s ringing paean in the eleventh century to the Arabic language, which, according to him, contains an “innate” poetic energy (an energy that, in every other language, has to be acquired), and which contains, as well, a philosophical and scientific memory, the legacy of the nations that converged in Arabic through the phenomenon of translation. In short, the Jewish thinker tells us that Arabic is the vehicle of civilization. Let us add what the Muslims, in the voice of Ibn ‘Arabi (twelfth

to thirteenth centuries), say about the Jew. Taking the philological approach to the extreme, the great master of Sufism grants a spiritual dimension to etymology. He traces the word *yahūdi* (Jew) back to the verbal root *h.w.d.*, whose primary meaning is “to come to repentance, to return to one’s duty,” and whose secondary sense is “to speak softly.” The Andalusian mystic thus confirms the Jew in his dual aspiration: to be both ethical and humble. Ibn ‘Arabi even goes so far as to violate the fundamental rule of philology so as to reinforce his “spiritual” etymology, connecting the word “Jew” to a second verbal root: *h.d.y.* He thereby reveals the proximity of that word to the Qur’anic term *hudan*, “direction par excellence,” which, within the horizon of Islamic scriptures, refers to nothing other than the Qur’an itself. Ibn ‘Arabi seems to be suggesting that the Jew was already on the right path that the Muslim was being told to walk. It is as if he anticipated, by his own methods, the idea Hegel would later formulate in a completely different context: that Islam is simply the universalization of Judaism.

We shall not forget that some Jews shared the dark night of colonialism with their conquered Muslim compatriots. Nor shall we forget the part the Jews played in the modernization of their countries, whether by participating in the establishment of the press, theater, and even caricature as a form of political protest (here we are thinking of the Egyptian Jew Abu Naddara) or in the emergence of an awareness of the national patrimony. Consider, for example, that the restoration of the Islamic monuments of Cairo was conceived and overseen by Max Herz, a Hungarian Jewish architect and a naturalized Egyptian. Herz earned the title of pasha, which, let us note, honored merit apart from any privilege of wealth or bloodline.

In the age of reform, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Muslim elites—from Istanbul to Jerusalem and from Tunis to Cairo—sought to adopt the notion of enlightened citizenship, based on the principles of positive law. That weakened the edifice of the shari‘a, religious law, by reorienting personal status toward equality, without distinction of gender, ethnicity, or religion. Within that context, the Jew Israël Wolfinson, alias Abu Dhu‘ayb, who held the chair in Semitic languages at the Academy of Sciences in Cairo, brought out a monograph on Maimonides written in Arabic. In his *Musa Ibn Maymun, Hayatuhu wa Musannafatuhu* (*Life and Works of Maimonides*; Cairo, 1936), Abu Dhu‘ayb spoke as a Jew to his Egyptian fellow citizens, Christian and Muslim. He demonstrated that the medieval Jewish author was of concern to them, in the first place because he wrote in Arabic and because he dealt with theological questions that could clarify some of their own dogmas, while at the same time informing them about their Jewish compatriots’ faith. In short, Wolfinson’s aim was to provide Jewish sustenance for the nascent consciousness about national heritage, which is plural and bears within it the diverse legacy of internal otherness.

In addition, we shall note the Muslims who defended Jews when they were being crushed by the Nazi machine. Muslim Arabs used their political sovereignty (how-

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ever relative during the protectorate) to shield their Jewish subjects. Such was the case for Mohammed V in Morocco and also for Moncef Bey in Tunisia, though he maintained ambiguous relations with the German authorities. Other Muslims, ordinary citizens, unconditionally rescued Jews. We are thinking especially of the Tunisian Khaled Abdelwahab, who in early 1943 alerted a Jewish family under threat, helped them to flee Mahdia, and provided them with safe haven for four months on his isolated farm. Let us also mention the case of Albanian families who took in and supported without compensation Jewish families targeted by the Nazi laws in early 1944. They were honored by Yad Vashem with the title “Righteous among the Nations.”

Separation

This history of relations between Jews and Muslims is being written at a time when these relations have reached a dead end. Whereas most Jews lived in Muslim empires in the Middle Ages, in the Ottoman Empire during the modern period, and, finally, in the Muslim countries that emerged from the European colonies after World War II, they left these regions en masse, in wave upon wave, in the 1950s and 1960s. Is the famous Crémieux Decree of September 1870 ultimately behind the Jews’ mass departure for the West? We know that this decree, which granted French nationality to the Jews of Algeria but not to the Muslims, deeply divided Algerian society, pitting one group against the other. Its impact on the Muslim world as a whole is perceptible even now.

Separation may have come as a result of France’s foreign intervention. But a little-known episode in the war of colonial conquest that the French army waged against Emir Abd al-Qadir in the 1830s gives a different, less simple view. Algerian Jews, wishing to shed their condition as *dhimmi* when the French arrived in Mascara, were slaughtered by Arab cavalymen. But the Jews later returned to this city, which had become Emir Abd al-Qadir’s capital. This attitude marks all the ambiguity of the relationship that had been established over long centuries between the Jewish and Muslim communities. The Jews truly had the desire for emancipation, for equality, but they also wished to remain attached to the traditional practices—religious, cultural, linguistic—of a life in common. This wavering on the part of the Jews of Mascara was symptomatic of their divided feelings toward the East and the West. We know that the passion for equality prevailed over the force of tradition and that, en masse, the Jews of Algeria would choose France after 1870, leaving behind their condition as “natives.” Different questions would later affect both communities “from the inside,” questions turned inward and no longer concerned solely with their interrelationship. In the early twentieth century, nationalism was everywhere the order of the day. For the Jews, the Zionist movement, which began in Central Europe, raised questions about the need for a Jewish state, the permanence of Jewish identity, assimilation,

the relationship the Diaspora Jews would maintain with Palestine—and then with the State of Israel—and the role of religion in defining Jewish nationalism. For the Muslims, the anticolonial nationalism that developed after the foreign invasions prompted inquiries as well. Arab nationalism, which combined references to Islam, republicanism, and socialism, took root among the urban elites in the societies of the Maghreb and the Mashriq. This reclaiming of identities would lead to divisions. Not all the definitions of nationalism coming from the West were positive: the ideas of European totalitarianism (from the struggle against democracy to the single-party cult) would also win followers. Against the backdrop of an ancient anti-Judaism based on religion, the racial ideologies conveyed by Nazism would find an audience. Anti-Semitic theories of a “Jewish conspiracy” would persist and even thrive in ultra-nationalism and political Islamism.

At the same time, Muslim societies entered political modernity by wresting themselves from colonial rule. During the establishment of the new nation-states, priority was given to the economy, at the expense of minorities and the fate reserved for them. As this colonial history was coming to an end, most of the Jews from the Muslim countries gradually became integrated into Western culture, even *before* their departure. The old ghetto communities, the *mellahs*, the *hara*, were already being drawn to the West.

In most of the Eastern countries, various historical events would accelerate the separation between the Muslims and the Jews. In Greece during World War II, the extermination of the majority of Jews resulted in the disappearance of Jewish life. In Egypt, the Suez crisis of 1956 emptied the country of its Jews. In Morocco and Tunisia, the Six-Day War of 1967 was the decisive impetus for mass departure. In Algeria, the end of the colonial regime in 1962 led to the extinction of Jewish life. In general, three major events determined the separation of the two communities: World War II and the Shoah; the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the exodus of the Palestinians; and the consequences associated with conflicts with Israel, such as the Suez expedition and the Six-Day War. In other countries, such as Iran and Turkey, the Jewish communities have continued to exist, despite the departure of many of their members.

Returning histories: Identities

The trauma of the exodus has not gone away, however. The Eastern Jews, legally assimilated in the West, united around a set of secularized practices and religious traditions, have a strong sense of being a minority and a profound attachment to democratic principles. But they have never really forgotten the East. Nevertheless, a feeling of unease about, or even rejection of, Islam has spread since the Palestinian Intifadas of the 1990s and 2000s, and since the rapid expansion of Islam, which accompanied Khomeini’s return to Iran in early 1979.

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Muslim societies for their part, notwithstanding the persistence of anti-Semitic discourses, have seen a renewal of interest, quiet but real, in protecting the heritage of the Jewish communities. In that spirit, a voluminous book that inventories the synagogues of Tunisia has met with a favorable reception. One of the reasons for that new awareness is that the younger generations are anxious to identify the buried traces of their recent or distant history. In the last few years, academic research in the Arab and Muslim world (for example, the colloquium held in Essaouira, Morocco, in 2011) has occasioned a proliferation of studies, echoes of which can be found in this book. We wish in particular to pay tribute here to André Azoulay, adviser to the king of Morocco, who has encouraged the trend toward acknowledging the Jewish share in the configuration of national identities, not only in his own country but also elsewhere in the Maghreb and the Arab East.

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“This book proposes to span fourteen centuries of shared history and to call into question some of the cultural assumptions we take for granted, particularly concerning the irreducible opposition between the two worlds, Jewish and Muslim.”

ing the irreducible opposition between the two worlds, Jewish and Muslim. In it readers will discover the cultural matrices within which Judeo-Muslim coexistence took shape, and how it abruptly fell apart. The introduction of the weight of history, the analysis of ancient experiments, the contributions that can be discerned in them, and the values inseparable from them, open on vistas that are still of great

relevance today. These have to do with the place of religion in the definition of political ideologies, the status of minorities vis-à-vis all-powerful nation-states, and the persistent traces of vanished cultural universes.

The last part of the book, dealing with the theme of “transversalities,” allows us to understand the place of the Other by surveying the points of convergence. At precise historical moments, the Other ceased, precisely, to be identified as *other* but was rather seen as participating in a common purpose. This is illustrated, for example, in the contacts between Jewish and Muslim scholars in the Middle Ages.

More broadly, this last section shows that the Jewish community under Islamic rule was one minority *among others*. It situates the relationship between Jews and Muslims not within a (potentially antagonistic) duality but rather within a diversity of communities. There are several ways of being Jewish, several ways of being Muslim, several ways of being a minority. Contemporary literature, in particular, has aptly illustrated this dynamic, especially in connection with “Arabness” (*arabité*), another component of identity that is examined and redefined here.

In this collection, not only religious affiliation but also cultural, political, and anthropological identities are considered. In the case of Islam, a pair of adjectives

indicates that distinction: “Muslim” has to do with the religious aspect, “Islamic” with the political, cultural, or contextual. That distinction is respected as often as possible in this book. Unfortunately, that useful duality has no Jewish equivalent. On the religious question in the strict sense, we have sought to achieve a balance, so as not to simplify the complexity of influences. We have endeavored to resituate these two forms of monotheism in terms of the singularity of each religion and also in their proximity to each other. That proximity was manifest from the outset, inasmuch as Judaism and Islam are not only *religions of the Book* but also *religions of law*.

A global, not a local, history

In reality, this book is a global history: it does not confine itself to distant territories. On the contrary, its place is within the heart of a geographical center: the Mediterranean (expanding to the north, east, and south) and, to a lesser extent, the Silk Road, another major axis (with Iran in its trajectory). The relationship between Jews and Muslims has taken different forms everywhere (depending on whether these groups were a minority, subordinated to other powers, sovereign or in expansion, and so on). The forms taken over the course of history tell us about the transformation of empires into nation-states, European ascendancy, the rise of nationalism and the totalitarian peril, the confrontation between the American and Soviet blocs, and globalization.

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The religious dimension of their relationship appears in this book as a prism, casting its lights on the underlying political machinery. The status of a religious minority is always a valuable index by which to assess a society’s operation. This becomes clear in looking at the parallel status of the Jews in the Latin and Islamic medieval worlds, and in the parallel status of minorities under Ottoman, and then colonial, rule. It is also evident in the persistence even today of Ottoman and medieval motifs in the Middle East. Israeli law, for example, inherited some of the Ottoman categories of the *millet*. In addition, Israeli democracy entails the de facto inequality of the Arab Palestinian minority, an inequality that varies depending on whether the person in question is a Christian or a Muslim Arab. It is surprising to note that the equality of citizens affirmed in Israel still retains the traces of an inequality attributable to the status of the *dhimmi*, which is, as it were, now reversed.

This global history indicates that the place of the Other in a society is emblematic of its foundations and also of the global balance of powers that is acting on that society. It tells us, finally, about the identity of each one of us.