INTRODUCTION

A century and a half ago, Søren Kierkegaard issued a powerful indictment against one of the main pillars of modern intellectual life. Caught in the throes of spiritual turmoil, the Danish philosopher took aim at the kind of historical thinking that reduced human experience to a long series of disconnected moments. This modern mode of thinking reached its most offensive, Kierkegaard lamented, when applied to the personality of Jesus. He had thorough contempt for the efforts of European historians of his day to attempt a reconstruction of the life of the “historical Jesus,” whom they portrayed as a decidedly human figure born and raised in first-century Palestine. Against the historians, Kierkegaard insisted that:

one can “know” nothing at all about “Christ”; He is the paradox, the object of faith, existing only for faith. But all historical communication is communication of “knowledge,” hence from history one can learn nothing about Christ. . . . History makes out Christ to be another than He truly is, and so one learns to know a lot about—Christ? No, not about Christ, for about Him nothing can be known, He can only be believed.1

Kierkegaard feared that the most sacred and transcendent of realms had been infected by a destructive contagion: historicism and the practice of modern critical history. The historian’s careful measurement of change over time—for instance, in depicting the history of Christianity after Jesus—obscured for him far more than it illuminated. Indeed, Kierkegaard felt compelled to emphasize again and again that, in matters pertaining to the divinity of Christ, “the 1,800 years (or if there were 18,000 of them) have nothing whatever to do with the case.”2

Powerful and poignant as it was, Kierkegaard’s plaint was hardly the first and surely not the last of its kind. Criticism of modern historical thinking has been almost as common as the thinking itself. Frequently, it has been trained on “the quest of the Historical Jesus,” as in Albert Schweitzer’s well-known book of that (English) title from 1906. Schweitzer was far more immersed in and sympathetic to historical scholarship on Jesus than Kierkegaard. But at the end of the day, the renowned missionary-physician arrived at a conclusion not altogether dissimilar: namely, “it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time and can help it.”3

But what exactly was so distasteful or unsettling about modern historical thinking? What prompted scholars of different disciplines and denom-
In the first instance, it was history’s ubiquity. Friedrich Nietzsche bemoaned this fact in his 1874 essay “On the Use and Abuse of History” when he wrote of the dangerous “surfeit of history.” A half century later, Ernst Troeltsch, the German Protestant theologian, called attention to “the historicization of all our knowledge and perception.” Both Nietzsche and Troeltsch realized that one could hardly think of an event from the past without relying on the causal logic of modern historicism. This logic dictated that each event be understood as an individual unit, assessed on its own terms and according to its own unique development. Caught in the fast-moving current of history, events floated like petrified wood, drifting in no particular pattern or direction. Each discrete event had its own distinct properties; the aggregate of such events yielded no coherent design.

This state of fragmentation pointed up another major concern issuing from historicism: the problem of relativism. According to their critics, historians went about evaluating each event on its own terms, but never set in place any overarching standard, or Archimedean point, of measurement. In the first place, they were captives of their own context, and thus incapable of achieving anything but a relativist or relational perspective on the past. Constrained by such a perspective, they produced an endless string of historical pearls, each carefully polished and catalogued, but at the same time constant reminders of a certain fall from a state of wholeness. In this fallen state, it was no longer possible to assert spiritual or moral truths with certainty. For example, while one might be able to adduce historical evidence to prove the existence of an individual named Jesus, one could never marshal comparable evidence to prove the existence of the mythic Christ of faith.

In the language of historicism’s critics, this condition marked a descent from supernaturalism into “naturalism.” Following centuries of tumultuous theological struggle, modern historians now asserted their right to displace God as the primary causal force in history. Borrowing liberally from natural scientific models, they anchored historical causation in a wide array of natural or human forces. The result, according to Ernst Troeltsch, was a steadfast alliance “between naturalism and historicism . . . the two great scholarly creations of the modern world.”

Troeltsch was keenly aware of the dangers of this double-barreled assault on transcendent values. He was present and vocal at a particularly acute moment of anti-historicist distress after the First World War. He knew well that the devastation of the war must be assessed not only in the massive loss of life, but also in the staggering blow to epistemological confidence. And so it was in this period that Troeltsch surveyed the universe around him and declared a “crisis of historicism.” This call in 1922 resonated throughout intellectual circles in Weimar Germany, from the

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reactionary right to the radical left. As we shall see in due course, the “crisis of historicism” came to be seen as a major symptom of the broader malaise of modernity that so characterized the Weimar sensibility and stimulated its frenetic political and cultural activity. A decade after Troeltsch, another Protestant theologian and historian, Karl Heussi, was still attempting to get a firm grasp on this social and intellectual crisis. Heussi’s 1932 book, *Die Krisis des Historismus* offered a detailed analysis of objections raised to historicism, while also containing a glimmer of hope that historicism and systematic theology need not stand in diametric opposition.\(^{11}\)

Clearly, the Weimar milieu, with its mix of social instability and intellectual audacity, was fertile ground for the kind of debate that ensued over the “crisis of historicism.” And yet, if anything, the long and dark decades after the Weimar republic have presented even more formidable challenges to historicism.\(^{12}\) The Holocaust triggered its own epistemological upheaval, leading many to question the value or even possibility of historical representation (preeminently of the Holocaust itself).\(^{13}\) Meanwhile, the prominence of post-structuralist literary theories over the past several decades has done little to affirm, and much to call into question, the value of the historian’s contextualizing methods. When faced with these methods, post-structuralist critics have often seemed “uncertain and confused, overcome by what appears to them an infinite array of possible contextual relations, each equally fulfilling the claim to stand as ‘the context.’”\(^{14}\) In this regard, post-structuralism has had the effect—consistent with its own skepticism of foundationalist claims—of highlighting the very relativism to which anti-historicists have taken frequent and vociferous exception.

**II**

So the old problems of historical relativism and fragmentation have not disappeared. They are with us today. At the same time, we find ourselves more deeply saturated in an historicist mindset than ever. I am reminded of this paradox by a controversy that recently broke out in the Jewish community of Los Angeles.

During the Passover holiday of April 2001, Rabbi David Wolpe of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles ignited a firestorm by delivering a sermon that called into question the historical authenticity of the biblical account of the Exodus story. The rabbi pointed out that there was no persuasive historical or archaeological evidence to validate the tale of Israelites escaping the clutches of Pharaoh’s army across the Red Sea. By extension, it was not clear that the Israelites had ever been in Egypt as slaves.
Wolpe’s sermon stunned his audience, some of whom deemed his words sacrilegious and others of whom regarded them as intellectually courageous. Soon enough, news of the address spilled out beyond the synagogue’s walls, due in no small measure to front-page exposure in the Los Angeles Times under the headline “Doubting the Story of Exodus.” At both local and national levels, the sermon provoked fiercely divergent reactions. One supporter, writing in a local Jewish paper, insisted that “defending a rabbi in the 21st century for saying the Exodus story isn’t factual is like defending him for saying the earth isn’t flat.” Modern notions of Judaism had moved far away from “a literal understanding of the Torah.” Meanwhile, a detractor in the same paper declared simply that “if the Exodus did not occur, there is no Judaism.” According to this writer, “logic and common sense” dictate that the Exodus story is more than a fairy tale. Otherwise, why would Jews have continued to repeat it in ritual fashion for three thousand years?

For many observers from the scholarly world, the wider rift opened by this Passover sermon—if not its content—came as a considerable surprise. For years, historical and archaeological research has challenged the veracity of the Exodus story. One journalist surveying the state of the field in 1993 concluded that “there isn’t a shred of hard evidence—not a single potsherd unearthed or one Hebrew letter scratched into a stone—to prove that the Israelites were ever slaves in Egypt, or that they ever wandered in the desert.” To be sure, not all scholars would accept this sweeping assertion or the claim that the absence of hard and fast evidence attesting to their presence means that there were no Israelites in Egypt. But ongoing research by archaeologists, including a number of prominent Israelis, has added more fuel to the fire. Their work calls into question not only the presence of Israelites in Egypt, but also the claim that the post-Exodus Israelites went on to conquer Canaan.

In drawing upon this search, David Wolpe was not seeking to unhinge the faith commitments of Jews. Rather, he hoped to confront head-on the brittleness of literalist readings of the Bible, and in doing so, to “maintain the Jewish tradition of sustaining faith by seeking truth.” Whether he succeeded in this task is a matter of opinion. Differences on the question of how to read the Bible have left deep denominational tracks in European and now American Judaism. Rabbi Wolpe’s own Conservative affiliation, anchored in a healthy respect for modern scholarship, led him to a stance that was fundamentally unacceptable to the vast majority of Orthodox Jews. At the same time, his words revealed that the gap between academy and community was quite substantial: what many scholars had taken for granted for years was nothing short of scandalous to many in his lay audience.

Most germane for our purposes is the yawning chasm that this episode revealed between history and faith. Kierkegaard made clear in the mid-nineteenth century that this chasm is a central feature of intellectual life in
the West. The Wolpe controversy demonstrated that the conflict between history and faith is not a Christian problem alone, but an ongoing one in the lives of twenty-first century Jews. After all, Rabbi Wolpe declared to his audience that spiritual truths—the exalted ideals of freedom and justice contained in the Exodus story—were independent of historical facts.21 Ironically, he chose to make the point in decidedly historicist fashion—by summoning up modern scholarly evidence to challenge the historicity of Exodus itself.

And thus we come up again against a curious paradox hinted at above: ambivalence over the utility of history coincides with an unavoidably historicist way of thinking. We yearn to discover a source of meaning for past events that transcends the single historical fact, but are confined by the limitations of our historicist mode of thinking—just as the Kabbalists were constrained in their efforts to decipher the Divine Word by their unavoidable reliance on human language. The roots of this dilemma surfaced well before the Golden Age of Historicism in the nineteenth century; they reach back at least to the seventeenth century when the tools of critical historical scholarship were first applied by figures such as Spinoza and Richard Simon to Holy Scripture, the bedrock of religious faith and authority. The underlying methodological imperative even then was to contextualize—which often meant to dissolve the veneer of transcendence in which sacred texts were wrapped.

Over the course of more than three centuries, the tools of critical history have become ubiquitous. So too has the broader worldview out of which these tools have been forged. This worldview proclaims that human history belongs to a long, undulating, but ultimately chartable current—not to a vast Divine terrain whose grand design eludes full human comprehension. Charting this natural current—noting carefully its width, length, and depth, as well as its frequent bends and curves—has become a main historicist occupation.

In this sense, as a mode of cognition, historicism has been a remarkable success story. It has come to dominate our way of thinking about the past, conditioning us to place the single event in context and then link it to a chain of other contextually bound events. Its ubiquity has also bestowed a dignified status onto a field of inquiry once deemed a second-tier discipline—indeed, once scorned as a “waste of time” by the greatest of medieval Jewish thinkers, Maimonides.

III

The paradoxical coexistence of historicism and anti-historicism is a recurrent theme throughout this book. Anti-historicism has been a constant foil, casting its long shadow over historicism precisely as the latter
climbed to a position of intellectual dominance in the modern West. In this regard, historicism, despite its very considerable success, has never fully vanquished its intellectual opposite. On the contrary, critics can and do still argue that historicism has pushed us to the brink of total relativism—that it has created a world marked by the “end of meaning.”

But can this be so? Does historicism, with its obsessive demand to situate every historical datum in a discrete local context, preclude the prospect of enduring meaning? My personal inclination, which admittedly overlaps with the need for professional self-justification, is to suggest that the study of history can serve a useful and, at times, vital function in illuminating the path from past to present. But I have not stopped wondering about historicism or its discontents since my first encounter with Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor*—that sober and soaring meditation on Jewish history and historians. Soon after reading this book, I decided to undertake graduate studies under Professor Yerushalmi’s supervision. My doctoral research there focused on a group of European-born scholars who moved to Palestine in the 1920s with the hope of erecting a new edifice of Jewish historical research. This cohort of scholars—the founders of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University—seemed to be an ideal case for exploring the space between the poles of history and memory that Yerushalmi traced in *Zakhor*. On the one hand, their years of training in European universities endowed them with a deep appreciation for the historicist craft and creed, as well as for the ethos of scientific labor (*Wissenschaft*) that undergirded both. On the other hand, the Jerusalem scholars often sought to use their historical labor to nurture a new Jewish—or more properly, Zionist—collective memory rooted in the soil of the ancestral Jewish homeland.

While studying these scholars, I often wondered why virtually none succumbed to a crisis of historicist faith. After all, the European intellectual world in which they were trained was consumed with anxieties about history—and in the very decades in which they were university students. Were there no Jewish historians chastened by Nietzsche’s admonitions in “On the Use and Abuse of History”? Were there no Jewish intellectuals who recoiled from “German fact-grabbing,” as early twentieth-century French sociologists had? Were there no Jewish parallels to the German intellectuals studied by Charles Bambach in his fine book *Heidegger, Dilthey and the Crisis of Historicism* (1995)? With few exceptions (notably Gershom Scholem’s cri de coeur in “From within Reflections on Jewish Studies” from 1944), the transplanted Jerusalem scholars held firm to their historicist faith. My sense is that they did so because historical scholarship had become a way of life, as it had for dedicated researchers of other ethnic or religious groups. But it also struck me that the historical discipline and its methodological protocol provided the Jerusalem schol-
ars—quite like their Zionism—with an anchor of stability, a standard of fixity, as they made the tumultuous physical and cultural journey from Europe to Palestine.

Having completed a study of this group of scholars in 1995, I began to concentrate on a question that took form in the late stages of the first project: where were the Jewish critics of historicism? Here too Yosef Yerushalmi proved to be a prescient guide, outlining a lineage of Jewish anti-historicists (e.g., S. R. Hirsch, S. D. Luzzatto, and Franz Rosenzweig) in some brief, but illuminating pages of *Zakhor.* Surprisingly, few subsequent scholars seized upon Yerushalmi’s opening. To be sure, there is no dearth of research on the history of Jewish historiography, much of it written in the wake of *Zakhor.* There are also interesting new studies of Jewish conceptions of time. And there is a burgeoning scholarly literature on the early twentieth-century German-Jewish intellectuals who appear frequently in these pages. But Jewish anti-historicism, in its German or any other guise, has not received the kind of sustained attention that it deserves.

This book is a first attempt at exploring the phenomenon. Contrary to the initial plan, it does not seek to cover the entirety of anti-historicist expression in modern Jewish thought up to the present. Its mission is more limited: to record the diverse but concerted expressions of anti-historicism by Jewish thinkers during a fateful period of German history extending from the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the first third of the twentieth. This more limited scale reflects a desire to yield a manageable and coherent text. But it also stems from the recognition that anti-historicism—despite its own aspirations—does not operate in an historical vacuum. It too must be situated within a complex and dynamic historical milieu.

The historical milieu of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany is a compelling arena in which to study anti-historicist expression by Jew and non-Jew alike. From the time of Bismarckian unification (1871), one notices a combustible mix of liberal and illiberal forces, of growing military boldness and crushing military defeat, of radical innovation and reactionary conservatism, of messianic optimism and deep *Kulturpessimismus.* In this environment, historical scholarship assumed a position of intellectual centrality, often being called into service to validate the antiquity, virtue, or prowess of the state. Indeed, history had become, in Ernst Troeltsch’s famous phrase, “the leaven, transforming everything and ultimately exploding the very form of earlier theological methods.” Its influence was so great, Troeltsch insisted, that “we are no longer able to think without this method or contrary to it.”

And yet, if historicism had grown from a fragile sapling at the end of the eighteenth century into a sturdy tree by the end of the nineteenth, its
very maturation had sown seeds of discontent. In addition to Nietzsche’s critique of the eviscerating effects of historicism on life, a wide range of European thinkers began to challenge the hegemony of historicism in the turn-of-the-century period. But nowhere, as Søren Kierkegaard had intuited decades earlier in Denmark, were the stakes of historicism’s success as high as in the field of theology. After all, one of the aims of this field was to preserve a realm of inspired faith and sacred scripture removed from historical contingency. Historicism, by contrast, was a relentless encroacher, constantly challenging or subverting the assertion of timeless sanctity.

What complicates the picture of the apparent antagonism between history and theology—much like the relationship between historicism and anti-historicism—was the fact that the two were locked in a tight, if uncomfortable, embrace. Given historicism’s role as a potent leaven, theologians could scarcely avoid absorbing and making use of historical method to clarify their own religious traditions. In doing so, they themselves attested to the fact that history had ceased to be “a handmaiden of theology” and had become “the dominant form of humanistic scholarship” in Europe.33 But with so much to lose, theologians were perforce obliged to attack the frailty and hubris of historical method with particular urgency. One result, as Thomas A. Howard argues in *Religion and the Rise of Historicism*, is that the modern “crisis of historicism stemmed from and found its center of gravity in explicitly theological problems.”34

Consistent with that theme, this book will highlight the tension between history and theology in Jewish thought in late Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany. We will note the overlap and occasional contact between the four main Jewish protagonists studied here and a tradition of renowned philosophical critics of historicism (e.g., Nietzsche, Dilthey, Windelband, Rickert, Heidegger). We will also note—and in fact, pay more attention to—a related, though lesser-known tradition, that of theological anti-historicism. This current of dissent, whose origins extend back to (and even beyond) the first wave of opposition to David Friedrich Strauss’s *Life of Jesus* (1835), assumed particular prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Immersed in a world of explosive mobility and growing instability, theologians like Martin Kähler, Franz Overbeck, Friedrich Gogarten, and Karl Barth sought to gain a measure of religious certainty by abandoning the relativist practices of the historian. These theological anti-historicists lamented what Franz Rosenzweig called “the curse of historicity” that cast a pall over modern Western culture.35 In diverse ways, each sought to lift this curse through a mix of recourse to traditional religious authority and more modern intellectual strategies.
INTRODUCTION

Of course, we should not assume that the tension between critical history and traditional religious culture is the exclusive preserve of Europe (or America). It is also present in the cultures of Africa and Asia, and has shown interesting signs of life in the Islamic world of late. It is perhaps a measure of the highly charged nature of this tension for Muslims that recent challenges to the received tradition have come more notably from novelists—for example, Tariq Ali, Kanan Makiya, and Salman Rushdie—than from historians. Notwithstanding their vocation, these writers make clear that the history-faith tension cuts across religious and cultural dividing lines.

Seen from this perspective, our decision to focus on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany may seem a bit parochial. And yet, as we have already suggested, the German context offers a number of unique virtues: first, it was rife with sharp and recurrent debates over historicism; second, proponents of both sides of the divide were unusually articulate in advancing their views; and third, these debates formed part of a larger discursive world to which Christians and Jews both belonged.

In fact, one of the reasons Germany is such an intriguing venue to study is because of the complicated texture of Jewish-Christian interaction. For centuries, and most noticeably from the time of the late eighteenth-century Aufklärung (Enlightenment), Jews and Christians in Germany engaged one another economically and—in intense, thought not always hospitable ways—socially and culturally as well. While there may not have been a full dialogue between equals, as Scholem famously claimed, there was most certainly not silence either. The study of Jewish anti-historicism points to a level of communication between respectful dialogue and icy silence.

To give a sense of that ambivalent cultural register, we can foreshadow here some of the questions that will concern us throughout. If Jewish assimilation in the nineteenth century entailed absorbing the regnant historicist ethos of the day, did movement away from that integrationist goal in the twentieth century—“dissimilation”—require its rejection? Did Jewish anti-historicism coincide with renunciation of the ideal of Bildung—the program of intellectual, moral, and cultural betterment—that many German Jews held sacred? Did it mandate at the same time a renewed commitment to Judaism, understood not in the historicist categories of the nineteenth century, but in self-consciously ahistoricist terms? And so was there not a curious dynamic at work—namely, Jews participating in an impassioned debate over historicism in the broader German milieu even as they sought to disengage from that milieu?

These questions point in divergent directions. On one hand, they assume a centrifugal thrust that pushed Jewish intellectuals, particularly in the Weimar period, away from the German (and German-Jewish) cultural mainstream. On the other, we know full well that there was a high degree
of cultural interaction—to the point of inextricability—between German Jews and their non-Jewish hosts. Rather than regard the two positions as irreconcilable, this book argues that they can and must be understood in tandem, for they reflect the multiplicity, or bi-directionality, of the cultural vectors shaping Jewish life in modern Germany.

In making this point, we tend to avoid use of the term “influence” to describe the continuing process of borrowing, lending, and negotiation between German Jews and non-Jews. Influence often implies the triumph of a dominant cultural group over a more passive recipient. Our own understanding of cultural interaction is far more reciprocal than the model of influence allows, even in a case in which the differential in political power is considerable. One need not deny this differential to appreciate the creative capacity of minority groups like the Jews not only to adopt, but to adapt cultural norms from the host society to their own needs. In this regard, adaptation is not the terminus of cultural activity. Rather, it is a midpoint in a process of give and take that continually redefines the malleable boundaries of Jewish history.

This view of the elasticity of cultural borders is elaborated in the final chapter of the book. While convention might dictate that it be addressed in the opening chapter, I have followed the wise adage that methodological ruminations are perhaps best left for last—after the evidentiary and conceptual foundation has been laid. Consequently, the book commences in chapter 1 with a discussion of the term historicism and then traces the rise and partial fall of an historicist sensibility in German and German-Jewish culture. Each of the following four chapters focuses on a distinctive Jewish intellectual for whom historicism came to pose a formidable problem to his vision of Judaism. Chapter 2 analyzes the eminent German-Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), who is not usually thought of as a frontline anti-historicist. However, beginning with one of his earliest neo-Kantian writings from 1871, Cohen evinced concern for the atomizing impact of historicism that was reiterated on a number of crucial occasions later in life. The following chapter discusses Cohen’s student and friend Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), who abandoned a career as an historian to become one of the most innovative Jewish thinkers of his time, as well as one of the most trenchant Jewish critics of historicism. Chapter 4 explores the fascinating early career of Leo Strauss (1893–1973), whose conservative critique of Enlightenment politics and epistemology led him to search out a pre-modern intellectual tradition that eluded the clutches of history. The penultimate chapter treats of Isaac Breuer (1883–1946), the idiosyncratic Orthodox thinker who, over the course of a prolific writing career culminating with his 1934 novel Der Neue Kusari, developed the notion that the Jewish people inhabited the realm of Metageschichte (Metahistory).
The temporal boundaries marked by Cohen’s early essay of 1871 and Breuer’s last novel of 1934 delineate a period of heightened agitation over the nature and aims of historicism in German culture. The Jewish figures studied here were eager consumers and producers of that culture, as well as interesting critics of one of its dominant features. They offered diverse strains of criticism of historicism, each of which issued from a peculiar biographical and intellectual point of view. At the same time, these critics shared in the particular malaise over historical thinking, as well as the more general sense of crisis, that affected much of European intellectual culture.

One of the most interesting commonalities that linked these thinkers, and that reveals the importance of contextualizing them within a discrete cultural setting, was their ambivalence toward Zionism. At a time of highly charged polemics among Weimar Jewish intellectuals about the virtues of Zionism vis-à-vis assimilation, the four thinkers all struggled to forge a path that resisted these two perceived extremes. In doing so, they compel us to widen the spectrum of German-Jewish—and more broadly, Diaspora Jewish—identities to allow for an expanded and conflicted middle ground. On a more personal level, they stand as interesting foils to the Jerusalem scholars who were the central figures in my previous book. The choice of the four principals here was not meant to be exhaustive, but rather illustrative. A good number of other Jewish intellectuals in the German sphere might have been as worthy, most notably Leo Baeck, Walter Benjamin, Martin Buber, and Gershom Scholem (all of whom appear in cameo roles). Moreover, there are Jewish thinkers from other cultural spheres who might have fit the bill such as Nachman Krochmal, Ahad Ha-am, Micha Yosef Berdyczewski, and Henri Bergson. Later thinkers like Hannah Arendt, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Baruch Kurzweil, and Yeshayahu Leibowitz might have found a place had the chronological range been expanded. What made the four chosen here so interesting to bring together into conversation was not their univocality, but rather the diverse inflections—political, theological, generational—of their shared anti-historicist language.

Finally, I would be less than ingenuous—and a fool to boot—if I suggested that my interest in these figures and their anti-historicist critique was a matter of dispassionate scholarly concern. “Un historien est toujours obligé de s’investir,” Jean Delumeau has written of his dual commitments as professional historian and Christian. Likewise, my own investment in the phenomenon of Jewish anti-historicism is unmistakably that of a professional historian and of a Jew—and, I must add, of a Jew for whom matters of belief and practice have become more vexing, consuming, and central with the passage of time. The result of this inquiry is far from a definitive resolution of the tension between history and faith; nor
has it allowed me to overcome the periodic desire to leap beyond the historicist mode of cognition that defines my personal and professional being. But it has sensitized me to the inevitability, even desirability, of living with tension. I take some comfort in the fact that Jewish history offers an extended, exhilarating, and at times sad lesson in living in two worlds at once, within two spheres of time, with two visions of history—indeed, with the two dates that appear at the end of these lines as the competing and complementary tempos of the rhythm of life.39

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