of Egypt." Deut. 7:6-8.

Warrior God

The tribal warrior God will stand by the Chosen People in their holy wars against other nations:

"You shall not be in dread of them; for the Lord your God is in the midst of you, a great and terrible God. The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little.. But the Lord your God will give them over to you, and throw them into great confusion, until they are destroyed. And he will give their kings into your hand, and you shall make their name perish from under heaven; not a man shall be able to stand against you, until you have destroyed them." Deut. 6:21-24.

Ferocity, not tolerance, in His name will be rewarded:

"And if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments which I command you this day, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth." Deut. 28:1.

"The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways." Deut. 28:7.

Superiority of Followers

Chosenness in Deuteronomy causes the national deity to exalt the superiority of His followers. To understand the warrior tone of God in this book, it is important to consider the historical context of its origins. King Josiah of Judah, who reigned approximately 640 to 609 BCE, followed on the heels of Manasseh, a proponent of religious syncretism. In 722 BCE Assyria destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and the ten tribes were deported. In 701 BCE Sennacherib I of Assyria invaded Judah, and thus the southern kingdom became, under Manasseh, a submissive ally of Assyria. The strong foreign influence led to a deterioration of mores in Jerusalem, including a loss of faith in Yahweh, the God who brought the Hebrews out of Egypt and into Canaan. Under Manasseh the foreign sun and astral gods had altars next to that of Yahweh. Asherah, the fertility goddess, had been elevated to Yahweh's consort.

When Josiah came to power, the Yahvists were but a small cult competing for the Jews' attention in a polytheistic environment. Josiah set out to purge Jerusalem, as well as the Judean countryside, of foreign cults. In 621 BCE Hilkiah, the high priest, is said to have discovered in the Temple an ancient manuscript purported to be Moses' last sermon to the Hebrew tribes. The Temple had been undergoing extensive repairs under Josiah's direction. Upon reading the "ancient" document, Josiah concluded that all of Judea's troubles were due to its lapse in Yaweh worship. He instituted sweeping reforms which included the removal of images, idols and fertility symbols from the Temple. He tore down a large effigy of Asherah and destroyed the apartments of the Temple prostitutes who spent their time weaving garments for Asherah. Then he reinstituted observation of Passover and the Sabbath.

Most scholars agree that the "found" book, which came to be called Deuteronomy, was actually written by priests of Josiah's time, perhaps even by Hilkiah himself The seventh century writers focused on the concepts of covenant and Chosen People. The book gave new life to the flagging Yahweh cult and provided spiritual inspiration which saw the Jews through the Babylonian exile. Deuteronomy was wide enough in scope to inspire both those who sought guidance in the form of commandments as well as in spiritual matters. It includes the declaration which would later become the essence of Judaism, the Jewish profession of faith:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." Deut. 6:4-5.

Transformed God

How was the warlike Mosaic God of Deuteronomy transformed into the compassionate God of Second Isaiah? For the seventh century reformers, living in a time of great political insecurity, the tribal God who unifies his people and steers them successfully through wars was just what they needed. Karen Armstrong, in her book *A History of God,* describes the God of Moses as a "brutal, partial and murderous god: a god of war who would be known as Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Armies. He is passionately partisan, has little compassion for anyone but his favorites and is simply a tribal deity."

Moses' God commands the Chosen People to celebrate the superiority of Israel and exclude all other nations from God's love:

"When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them. You shall not make marriages with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire." Deut. 7:1-6.

The Deuteronomist's tone celebrating Israel's chosenness is heady and triumphalist. The theology of election can be manipulated for different purposes, such as creating solidarity among a people. "Like any human idea, the notion of God can be exploited and abused. The myth of a Chosen People and a divine election has often inspired a narrow, tribal theology from the time of the deuteronomist right up to the Jewish, Christian and Muslim fundamentalism that is unhappily rife in our own day," Armstrong notes.

Theories of Election

Theories of election must be qualified by a transcendent perspective, lest they lead to the "holy wars that have scarred the history of monotheism. Instead of making God a symbol to challenge our prejudice and force us to contemplate our own shortcomings, it can be used to endorse our egotistic hatred and make it absolute."

There were other developments among the followers of Yahweh, prior to Josiah's seventh century reforms, which would have a major impact on the development of Judaism. Armstrong speaks of the years 800-200 BCE as the "Axial Age, characterized by a quest for a transcendent element among the major religions. It was during this period

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Confronting the Myth of Jewish "Unity"

by Paul Gottfried

Having heard the protests by American Conservative and Reform Jewish leaders against the suggestion made by Orthodox spokesmen in Israel, that non-Orthodox Jews organize themselves as a separate religion, it is unclear to me why this proposal has produced such outrage.

The suggestion seems entirely reasonable, assuming that what separates Jewish congregations is a theological gulf. Since Catholics and various Protestant denominations maintain separate identities as confessional communities, why shouldn't Jews, to the extent they view themselves as religiously divided, do exactly the same? Why should they persist in maintaining a semblance of religious unity with those of radically different beliefs?

There are several conceivable reasons for this pretense of confessional unity by non-Orthodox Jews which the readers of this journal might consider. First, no matter what the American Council for Judaism would like to view as the essence of Jewish life, ethnicity is an unchanging, overshadowing reality for most Jews in most places. As Kevin P. MacDonald demonstrates exhaustively in *A People that Shall Dwell Alone* (Westport, 1994), social and genetic separation from gentiles is a recurrent theme in Rabbinic laws and commentary, indeed this theme can be traced as far back as the age of Ezra and Nehemiah, when severe prohibitions against intermarriage became a defining element of Jewish communal life.

Though Rabbinic laws are concerned about other features of Jewish society as well, separation from alien peoples was inherent in the creation of intricate dietary and dress codes. Such laws keep Jews socially apart from gentiles, who are not even allowed to touch Jewish wine or Jewish milk, unless working under close Jewish supervision. Moreover, Rabbinic and later, Hasidic opinions abound concerning the defectiveness of gentile souls, and thus it is easy to understand the distaste for non-Jews felt by generations of Jews.

Ethnic Zionism

Such attitudes feed easily into ethnic Zionism today shared even by Reform Jews. In this Zionist thinking, well explained by such commentators as Israel Shahak, the gentile remains the perpetual outsider, though the reason publicly stated is that, like blacks, Jews have been victimized and have a special right to cultivate national self-consciousness and identiarian politics This supposedly defensive nationalism is, among other defects, ahistorical: it ignores the significant cultural differences among various Jewish communities, some of which long prohibited intermarriage with each other. Indeed Zionism has become as contrived as black and Hispanic nationalism, assuming a shared national and victimological experience for all members of the ingroup which often conflicts with historical facts. But what makes this ideology work and unify the Jewish ingroup is the usefulness of attributing one's ancestral prejudice to an invariably hostile other.

Because of this presumed outside hostility, American or French Jews are required to think of themselves as Israelis in exile. In the U.S. this siege mentality, largely fueled by Jewish prejudice, takes a second bizarre form, pretending that all American Jews are from Eastern European states and were victims of all the same enemies. Most Jews I have known are of Central, not Eastern, European descent, but, like my family, try to hide this fact by talking about Czarist pogroms and an Ellis Island experience, and sprinkling their remarks with bad Yiddish. Since childhood, I have been painfully aware of the conformism and imposed ethnic consciousness that characterize self-identified American Jews.

Claims to Victimhood

These tendencies explain why American Jews fail to notice the ridiculousness of certain claims to victimhood, which are seen as well-intentioned even if inaccurate. For example, no protest known to me came from the Jewish community when Ed Koch told Israeli Chief Rabbi Meir Laub, a former concentration camp inmate, that he too was "a Holocaust survivor." Surprised by this discovery, Laub asked Koch where he had spent the war years. The former mayor responded quite earnestly: "I survived in New York."

In a widely celebrated Jewish Book of the Month selection, *History of American Anti-Semitism* (New York and London, 1994), Leonard Dinnerstein devotes 700 pages to recounting every alleged example of American anti-Semitism (all of which are attributed to "Christianity"). But Dinnerstein does not mention that most of the exclusions described were equally the fate of non-WASP Christians, and in some cases, even longer. Dinnerstein also leaves out of the account the abundant examples of Christian Philosemitism encountered by American Jews from the colonial period on.

Second, non-Orthodox Jews, up until quite recently, rarely stated in public their theological differences with the Orthodox. Growing up among both groups, I noted that the Orthodox ridiculed the non-Orthodox as lazy Jews who are too self-indulgent to perform Rabbinic Mitzvos, while the other side responded by emphasizing Jewish unity. If theological rancor was expressed by the non-Orthodox, it was directed at Christians, who were alleged to be polytheists and possibly idolaters. This last impression was confirmed dramatically when I read the work of the late German Reform Jewish thinker Leo Baeck. While Baeck argued furiously against the evils of a simplistically presented Pauline Christianity, he showered praise upon the Hasidim and muted his own disagreements with the Orthodox. I raise this point not to belittle Baeck, with many of whose positions I agree, but to underline the problem with non-Orthodox Jewish thinkers who have wrongly desisted from criticizing Orthodox thinking, while exaggerating the faults of Christianity.

Uneasiness by Non-Orthodox

These attitudes may be ethnically driven or based upon an unwillingness to shame other Jews before the gentile

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