

Introduction

1. Prof. Salo Wittmeyer Baron, *Ghetto and Emancipation*, Menorah Journal 14, 1928

Surely it is time to break with the lachrymose theory of pre-Revolutionary woe, and to adopt a view more in accord with historic truth.

2. Prof. Salo Wittmeyer Baron, *Ghetto and Emancipation*, Menorah Journal 14, 1928

First of all, it is certainly significant that despite minor attacks, periodic pogroms, and organized campaigns of conversion, the numbers of Jewry during the last centuries preceding Emancipation increased much more rapidly than the Gentile population.* The Jewish population in the middle of the seventeenth century probably did not exceed 650,000 out of the more than 100,000,000 inhabitants in Europe. In 1900 the Jewish population of Europe exceeded 8,500,000 while the general population was about 400,000,000. That is, the Jewish rate of increase from 1650 down to the beginning of the twentieth century (when the mass of Jewry was still unemancipated) was three times the rate of Gentile increase. Furthermore, in the same period European Jewry built the great American center.

* Pre-Revolutionary population figures given here are by no means certain. I arrived at them after a careful study of all available source material. It is impossible, of course, to give these sources here or to explain the methods of textual criticism and synthesis used in arriving at the conclusions. It has long been apparent, however, that figures given by our classic histories are far from reasonably exact, which is all that mine pretend to be.

3. Prof. Salo Wittmeyer Baron, *Ghetto and Emancipation*, Menorah Journal 14, 1928

What of the economic situation of the Jew? Despite all the restrictions placed on his activities, it is no exaggeration to say that the average Jewish income much surpassed the average Christian income in pre-Revolutionary times. This is hard to prove, and certainly excessive wealth was rare except among high nobles and clergy. But is it not remarkable that the most typical ghetto in the world, the Frankfort Judengasse, produced in the pre-Emancipation period the greatest banking house of history? And even before Rothschild's day, such Central European *Hofjuden* as the Oppenheimers and Wertheimers, and such West European bankers as the Pintos, Modonas and others, were not far behind rich Christians in their financial power.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the very restrictive legislation proved in the long run highly beneficial to Jewish economic development. It forced them into the money trade, and throughout the Middle Ages trained them in individual enterprise without guild backing, compelled them to set up wide international contacts (the banking house of Lopez was established by five brothers in Lisbon, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Antwerp and London), and equipped them with vast sums of ready cash. With the dawn of early capitalism, and the need for ready money for the new manufactures and international trading ventures, the Jew fitted readily into the new economic structure.

4. Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade*, pg. 103

Indeed your Gd was never pleased with you. While he sought to do well by you, you did evil before him. Therefore he has forgotten you and no longer desires you, for you have been "stiff-necked" with him. He has separated himself from you and has shown favor to us and has taken us as his portion.

5. Leviticus 26:44; Deuteronomy 31:21

But even then, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not have rejected them and I will not have found them disgusting, to destroy them, to nullify My covenant with them. For I am Hashem, their Gd.

And it will be, when many ills and troubles befall him, and this song [=the Torah] shall be a witness before him [=the nation], for it shall not be forgotten from his descendants...

6. Rabbi Moses Nachmanides (13th century Spain), Commentary to Genesis 32:26

The entire event hinted to the generations of his descendants. There would be a generation among Jacob's seed over whom Esau would triumph to the point of crushing their seed. There was such a generation in the days of the sages of the mishnah, like that of Rabbi Yehudah ben Bava and his peers... and there would be other generations when they would act thus to us, and even worse. We have suffered all of it, and it has passed over us, as is hinted in, "And Jacob emerged, complete."

7. Rabbeinu Nisim (14th century Spain), Derashot haRan 1

Doubtless, those righteous people, unique in those generations, benefited from the division of the nations and empires. When a nation in one empire oppressed them, they wandered to another land where they could worship Gd as they wished, as happens for us in our exile today. When forced assimilation was renewed in the Land of Yishmael, their refugees fled to another land, and from there to Yishmael. This provides some life in the time of our troubles and enslavement.

8. Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi (11th century Spain), Kuzari 4:23 (Hirschfeld translation)

Gd has a secret and wise design concerning us, which should be compared to the wisdom hidden in the seed which falls into the ground, where it undergoes an external transformation into earth, water and dirt, without leaving a trace for him who looks down upon it. It is, however, the seed itself which transforms earth and water into its own substance...

9. Prof. Salo Wittmeyer Baron, *Newer Emphases in Jewish History*, Jewish Social Studies 25:4 (1963)

All my life I have been struggling against the hitherto dominant 'lachrymose conception of Jewish history' because I have felt that an over-emphasis on Jewish suffering distorted the whole picture of the Jewish historic evolution and, at the same time, badly served a generation which had become impatient with the nightmare of endless persecutions and massacres.

The Rise of the Persian Empire

10. The Assyrians

- Conquest of Israel (Late 8th century BCE, historical count)
- Conquest of Thebes (Mid-7th century BCE)
- Defeated by Babylon, Medea and Scythia (612 BCE)

11. The Babylonians

- Conquest of Israel (Early 6th century BCE)
- Secular account: Persians conquer the Medes (550 BCE), Persians conquer Babylon (539 BCE)
- Tanach account: Persians and Medes conquer the Babylonians

The Story of Cyrus

12. Ezra 1:1-4, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled, the Lord roused the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation throughout his realm by word of mouth and in writing as follows:

"Thus said King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord Gd of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has charged me with building Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Anyone of you of all His people—may his Gd be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the Lord Gd of Israel, the Gd that is in Jerusalem; and all who stay behind, wherever he may be living, let the people of his place assist him with silver, gold, goods, and livestock, besides the freewill offering to the House of Gd that is in Jerusalem."

13. Ezra 6:3-5, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued an order concerning the House of Gd in Jerusalem: 'Let the house be rebuilt, a place for offering sacrifices, with a base built up high. Let it be sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide, with a course of unused timber for each three courses of hewn stone. The expenses shall be paid by the palace. And the gold and silver vessels of the House of Gd which Nevuchadnezzar had taken away from the temple in Jerusalem and transported to Babylon shall be returned, and let each go back to the temple in Jerusalem where it belongs; you shall deposit it in the House of Gd.'

14. Ezra 1:5-11, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

So the chiefs of the clans of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites, all whose spirit had been roused by Gd, got ready to go up to build the House of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.

All their neighbors supported them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with livestock, and with precious objects, besides what had been given as a freewill offering.

King Cyrus of Persia released the vessels of the Lord's house which Nevuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his god. These King Cyrus of Persia released through the office of Mithredath the treasurer, who gave an inventory of them to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. This is the inventory: 30 gold basins, 1,000 silver basins, 29 knives, 30 gold bowls, 410 silver double bowls, 1,000 other vessels; in all, 5,400 gold and silver vessels. Sheshbazzar brought all these back when the exiles came back from Babylon to Jerusalem.

15. The return of the Temple vessels

<http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/873680/>

Mindreading a Philo-Semite

16. Elias Bickerman, *The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1*, Journal of Biblical Literature 65:3 (1946)

Since there was a return from the Captivity under Cyrus, the king must have issued a proclamation summoning the Exiles to go back to Jerusalem. But it is another question whether the text of the proclamation is trustworthy as given by the Chronicler or has been more or less altered from its original form by the hagiographer.

17. Jeremiah 25:8-12, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

Assuredly, thus said the Lord of Hosts: Because you would not listen to My words, I am going to send for all the peoples of the north—declares the Lord—and for My servant, King Nevuchadrezzar of Babylon, and bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all those nations roundabout... This whole land shall be a desolate ruin. And those nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. When the seventy years are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation and the land of the Chaldeans for their sins—declares the Lord—and I will make it a desolation for all time.

18. Isaiah 44:24-45:3, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

Thus said the Lord, your Redeemer, Who formed you in the womb: It is I, the Lord, who made everything, Who alone stretched out the heavens And unaided spread out the earth; Who annul the omens of diviners, And make fools of the augurs; Who turn sages back And make nonsense of their knowledge; But confirm the word of My servant And fulfill the prediction of My messengers. It is I who say of Jerusalem, "It shall be inhabited," And of the towns of Judah, "They shall be rebuilt; And I will restore their ruined places." [I,] who said to the deep, "Be dry; I will dry up your floods," Am the same who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd; He shall fulfill all My purposes! He shall say of Jerusalem, 'She shall be rebuilt,' And to the Temple: 'You shall be founded again.'"

Thus said the Lord to Cyrus, His anointed one— Whose right hand He has grasped, Treading down nations before him, Ungirding the loins of kings, Opening doors before him And letting no gate stay shut: I will march before you And level the hills that loom up; I will shatter doors of bronze And cut down iron bars. I will give you treasures concealed in the dark And secret hoards— So that you may know that it is I the Lord, The Gd of Israel, who call you by name...

19. An introduction to Isaiah <http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/891725/>

The Cyrus Cylinder, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



20. Professor Lucas Schulte, *Good Public Relations: What Persian Propaganda Tells Us About the 'Nehemiah Memoir'* <http://asorblog.org/2016/11/02/what-persian-propaganda-tells-us/>

Inscriptions ranging from the first Persian king, Cyrus, through Artaxerxes in the book of Nehemiah, reveal elements in common in both Babylonian and Egyptian texts. The Cyrus Cylinder describes a Babylonian god, Marduk, choosing Cyrus to rule kindly over the Babylonians as "King of Babylon." This inscription demonstrates important Persian propaganda innovation: they used the language (in this case, Babylonian cuneiform), inscription style (foundational cylinders that had been used for centuries), local gods (Marduk and Nabu), and the local royal title ("King of Babylon") of their subject peoples. No previous kings in the ancient Near East had used this combination of methods! Chapters 40-55 of the book of Isaiah depict a similar image of Cyrus in a Judean religious context: [Gd] gives Cyrus authority over Judah and the nations, and Cyrus is even given the royal title of "messiah."

21. Isaiah 45:4, Adapted from the JPS 1985 edition

For the sake of My servant Jacob, Israel My chosen one, I call you by name, I hail you by title, though you have not known Me.

22. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam, 12th century Egypt), *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:45

The first prophetic level is for Divine aid to accompany a person, moving and energizing him to a great positive deed, like saving an important group from evildoers, or saving a great, important person, or benefiting a large number of people. He will find something moving him to action; this is called "the spirit of Gd." Regarding one who is accompanied by this, the text will say, "the spirit of Gd was powerful upon him," or "the spirit of Gd clothed him," or "the spirit of Gd rested upon him," or "Gd was with him," and similar expressions. This was the level of all of the Jewish judges, regarding whom the Torah said in general that Gd established judges for them, and Gd was with the judge and He rescued them. This is also the level of all of the distinguished counselors of Israel... None of these [examples of those who experienced *ruach hakodesh*] was moved to state anything. The purpose of this force is to awaken the strengthened person to a specific action. And it is not for any action that might be at hand, but to help the oppressed, a great person or a community, or to prevent an event that would lead to that [oppression].

23. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (19th century Germany), *Commentary to Exodus* 25:39

Regarding the king of Assyria, Kings II 19:7 says, "I will place a spirit in him... and he will return to his land." Regarding Cyrus, "Gd awakened the spirit of Cyrus" to allow Israel to ascend to Jerusalem... In all of these verses, the spirit is not the intellectual foundation, but the force moving the will to a deed that is ethically good or bad.