Philogoyyism

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I am happy to be a Jewish Israeli who prefers to be liked by others, but I know that a healthy person ought not to overly worry whether they are liked by others. As my friend Eli Schonfeld says, "The 'Jewish Question' is not a *Jewish* question." Let non-Jews worry about it. As a Jew, I think I should worry about philogoyyism. How ought I relate to non-Jews?[1]

The question is new. For at least two millennia Jews indeed had to worry about what non-Jews thought of them. Even today Jewry's enemies force themselves upon our attention, be it through plain old-fashioned Jew-hatred, widespread Muslim antisemitism, or the immoral stupidity of so-called progressive forces that identify with Hamas. Anti-Zionists (Jewish and non-Jewish), unless they reject all nationalisms, are culpably ignorant and thus immoral. In practical terms they must be opposed and resisted, of course, but they do not represent a threat to *Judaism*.

The real threat to Judaism today comes from within, from circles that take advantage of current recrudescent Jew-hatred to justify disdain for and often hatred of *goyyim* (Gentiles).[2] There are, of course other internal threats: "*Gedolim*" who urge their followers to reject army service in Israel is one that particularly outrages me, but I see it as a temporary problem. As soon as our government stops underwriting draft evasion more and more young haredim will choose to get a modern education and to serve Israeli society in a variety of ways, including through enlistment.

What do I mean by "philogoyyism"? Historically, as the old *Jewish* joke has it, antisemitism has meant disliking Jews more than is *really* necessary. Its opposite, philosemitism, has not meant liking Jews more than is really necessary. For me, philosemitism need not mean admiring or loving Jews more than other people. Ideally, it should mean treating Jews no differently than one treats other people. That is what I mean by "philogoyyism": treating goyyim the way the Torah treats them—as human beings created in the image of God. Some goyyim (like some Jews) are likeable, some (like some Jews) are impossible, both without respect to their Jewishness or their goyyism.

What does the Torah teach us about the nature of Jews vis-à-vis the nature of goyyim? Nothing. There are no passages in the Torah that impute to the Jews as such characteristics missing in other

peoples. The Torah is careful to delineate family trees, of course, but that may be only to emphasize, as R. Josef Kafih pointed out, that we are all descended from the same antecedents (Adam and Eve, Noah and Mrs. Noah), and are all of us are thus cousins.[3] Before Sinai, all human beings are Noahides, including the Patriarchs and their descendants. Indeed, the Torah seems to go out of its way to emphasize that the future messiah would descend from two non-Jewish women (Tamar and Ruth).

The issue of philogoyyism is particularly pressing today in Israel. Our government is dominated by parties that deny that Jews and non-Jews are equally created fully in the image of God and are equally beloved by God. These parties represent a trend in Judaism that clearly exists (sadly), but they present it as the only legitimate form of Judaism. That is false. It is also dangerous to Israeli democracy.

The doctrine of the chosen people, while certainly central to Jewish self-understanding, is not unique to the Jews.[4] The Jews, however, may be the only people to ground their chosenness in a covenant with God.[5] Why did God enter into the covenant with the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants? There is surprisingly little discussion of this point in the Torah itself. There are many iterations of the idea that God chose the Jews ("How odd of God to choose the Jews…not so odd, the goyyim annoyed Him") out of love for their ancestors, but why did God love their ancestors? That is a question that generated an on-going debate between Judah Halevi and his followers and Maimonides and his followers.[6]

The Torah teaches that the Jews were God's *am segulah*, treasured (chosen) people. What does it say about the "unchosen"? About the vast run of humanity, the Torah has little to say. There are clearly "others," first and foremost those who are to be exterminated: the seven Canaanite nations and Amalek.[7] Other others include those with whom Israelites may not marry (Moabites and Amonites). There are other others, of course, about whom the Torah does not have much to say, beyond acknowledging their existence: Edomites and Egyptians primarily. There are also Abraham's other progeny, Ishmael assuredly, but also those born to him after Sarah's death by his wife Keturah. Here it is very useful to bring into play Jacob Kaminsky's distinction between the elect (God's chosen people), the "anti-elect" (Amalek and the "Seven Nations"), and the vast run of humanity whom Kaminsky calls the "non-elect."[8]

Alexander Altmann put this matter well:

> [Judaism,] it may be said, in general, is intolerant of Israelites falling away from the God of the Fathers and of the Covenant. It shows no trace of intolerance of heathens following their customs and traditions. Ruth the Moabite is welcomed as a proselyte, but Orpah, her sister-in-law is not reproved because of her return to her native paganism. David and Solomon extended their kingdoms far beyond the Israelite borders, but they did not impose their religion on the subjugated peoples.[9]

The Biblical story opens, of course, with the creation of all that is. Abraham, the progenitor of those whom we now call Jews, does not show up until 20 generations have passed. For many traditionally oriented Jews today (influenced by R. Judah Halevi and those who follow him), Abraham was literally and specifically chosen by God. For Maimonides and those who follow him, on the other hand, Abraham chose God.[10]

Returning to Halevi, Abraham belonged by descent to a special subset of humanity capable of achieving prophecy. This special subset of humanity continued to develop through Abraham (but not through his brother Haran, or his nephew Lot, or the children of his second wife, Keturah), through

Isaac (but not through his brother Ishmael), and through Jacob (but not through his brother Esau) and finally to all of Jacob's descendants, the children of Israel/Jacob.[11]

The Torah itself seems to support a view later to be held by Maimonides rather than that later to be held by Judah Halevi. The clearest expression of this might be Dt. 7:6–8:

> For you are a people consecrated to the Lord your God: of all the peoples on earth the Lord your God chose you to be His treasured people. It is not because you are the most numerous of peoples that the Lord set His heart on you and chose you—indeed, you are the smallest of peoples; but it was because the Lord favored you and kept the oath He made to your fathers that the Lord freed you with a mighty hand and rescued you from the house of bondage, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.[12]

God chose Israel as a special treasure for no characteristic of theirs, but, rather, to keep a promise made to the Patriarchs, their ancestors. This and similar verses can be read differently, but this seems to be the simple sense, and it is certainly the way that Maimonides (but not Halevi![13]) read them.

Thus, for example, in *Guide* iii.51 we find Maimonides stating:

> It is also the plane our Patriarchs reached, coming so close to God that He became known to the world through them: *The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob*…This is my universal name (Ex. 3:15). One result of this union of their minds with thoughts of God is His eternal covenant with each of them: *I shall remember my covenant with Jacob [---and also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham shall I remember]* (Lev. 26:42). For these four—the Patriarchs and our Teacher Moses—were plainly united with God by love and knowledge of Him, as our texts proclaim. Another result was his Supernal providence over them and their seed after them…[14]

For Maimonides the election of Israel is a consequence of the antecedent covenant made by God with the Patriarchs. This covenant is a consequence of their love and knowledge of God, not a consequence of any special characteristic found in the Jewish people—*zekhut avot* (ancestral merit) indeed!

So what is the relationship between the efforts of the Patriarchs and the Jewish People? Maimonides continues (p. 521):

> For the object of their efforts, lifelong, was to found a nation that knew and served God: *For I have know him, that he may charge [his children and his house after him to keep the way of the Lord, by doing right and justice]* (Gen. 18:19). Their every endeavor, you can see was devoted to spreading monotheism through the world, guiding people to the love of God. So they **earned** the rank they reached [emphasis added].

In this crucial passage Maimonides informs us that the object of the Patriarchs was to found a nation that knew and served God, a nation educated *to keep the way of the Lord by doing right and justice*. The overall aim of the Patriarchs, and one assumes Maimonides held, of the Jewish people

also, was to spread monotheism throughout the world. We also learned that the Patriarchs earned their rank; it was not inherited as Halevi would have it. So, too, their descendants have to justify their chosenness by **earning** it.

This is a doctrine of election far from those of Halevi, Zohar, Kabbalah, and of far too many Jews today.

It turns out that Bible (and rabbinic texts) do not offer clear answers to questions concerning the reason for election and the nature of the Jewish people. This is not surprising: These texts are not overtly theological in nature and rarely address abstract theological issues straightforwardly, if at all. Was the Torah given to Israel in consequence of God's choice or was the giving of the Torah the mechanism of God's choosing (as Halevi and Zohar would have it)? Deuteronomy (7:6–8) as we just saw appears to answer that question by de-linking God's choice to some quality of the Jewish people. Others could have been chosen but weren't. On this view, The Torah is a record of what "happened to happen," not a record of what had to happen.[15]

Election—Torah

The Book of Genesis is largely devoted to the history of God's relationship with the Patriarchs, but the reason behind that relationship is never made clear. God chooses Abraham by commanding: "Go forth…" (Gen. 12:1) but no explanation for that choice is found.

The ancestral patrimony is not raised in a passage from Deuteronomy dealing with what came to be called the election of Israel, 14:1–2:

> You are children of the Lord your God. You shall not gash yourselves or shave the front of your heads because of the dead. For you are a people consecrated to the Lord your God: the Lord your God chose you from among all other peoples on earth to be His treasured people.

That these verses teach that God chose Israel from among all the nations is clear. Why? These verses do not tell us.

Similarly, in a further passage in Deuteronomy (26:16–19):

> The Lord your God commands you this day to observe these laws and rules; observe them faithfully with all your heart and soul. You have affirmed this day that the Lord is your God, that you will walk in His ways, that you will observe His laws and commandments and rules, and that you will obey Him. And the Lord has affirmed this day that you are, as He promised you, His treasured people who shall observe all His commandments, and that He will set you, in fame and renown and glory, high above all the nations that He has made; and that you shall be, as He promised, a holy people to the Lord your God.

“High above all the nations (*elyon al kol ha-goyyim)*”—many will want to read that as a claim of Israel’s inherent superiority. Nevertheless, the verse itself speaks of superiority in fame, renown, and glory, nothing else. Here the connection between election and obedience to the commandments is made clear.

The prophet Amos seemed to be conflicted about the nature of the election of Israel. On the hand one, he wrote (1:1–2):

> Hear this word, O people of Israel,
> That the Lord has spoken concerning you,
> Concerning the whole family that I brought up from the land of Egypt: You alone have I singled out
> Of all the families of the earth—
> That is why I will call you to account
> For all your iniquities.

On the other hand, six chapters on, he states (9:7):

> To Me, O Israelites, you are
> Just like the Ethiopians
> —declares the Lord.
> True, I brought Israel up
> From the land of Egypt,
> But also the Philistines from Caphtor
> And the Arameans from Kir.

But the following verse makes clear that unlike the Philistines and Arameans,

> Behold, the Lord God has His eye
> Upon the sinful kingdom:
> I will wipe it off
> The face of the earth!
> But, I will not wholly wipe out
> The House of Jacob
> —declares the Lord.

For Amos, being the apple of God’s eye, as it were, can have negative consequences—unique attention and unique punishment—but the House of Jacob will never be wiped out.

One thing is clear from this brief survey: There is no obvious biblical doctrine of election. Given the nature of the Bible itself, this is not surprising, even if it would surprise many Jews today.

Continuing with the issue of theological surprises, there is very little doubt that most Jews raised in a traditional context would be surprised to discover that rabbinic texts contain a variety of positions concerning God's choice of Israel.[16] Many of them would be even more surprised to discover that many such texts imply the view (later adopted by Maimonides) that God might have chosen other nations, and that the choice of Israel reflects no special qualities found in the Jewish people.

This may be the message of the following oft-cited passage (AZ 2b): "R. Johanan says: This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, offered the Torah to every nation and every tongue, but none accepted it, until He came to Israel who received it." The point of this passage is not to teach history, but to praise the ancient Israelites, who accepted the Torah unconditionally.[17] However, the praise makes no sense had the Torah been predestined for the Jews.

Menachem Hirshman has analyzed in detail the many texts that ask why Torah was given in the Wilderness of Sinai as opposed to the Land of Israel. Hirshman demonstrates that these texts teach that God chose to do so in order that the Torah could have been available to all the nations.[18] It should be no surprise that thinkers who hold such a view expect the Torah to be accepted by all nations in the fullness of time.[19]

These few paragraphs do not do justice to the rich variety of rabbinic opinions on the nature of the election of the Jews. What they do indicate is that the variety of opinions available to the post-rabbinic Jewish tradition is certainly more variegated than many Jews today have become accustomed to think. This is particularly true in Israel, among Orthodox religious Zionists who are raised to believe that Halevy, Zohar, Ramban, Maharal, and following them Rav Kook, represent "authentic" Orthodox Judaism. It is equally true among Haredim, whose Judaism is deeply inflected by Kabbalah (obviously in the case of Hasidim, but no less so in the case of non-Hasidim for whom Reb Haim Volozhin's *Nefesh Ha-Hayyim* is a core text).

Election—Liturgy

The Jewish liturgy may be no more interested than the Bible in theological consistency, but it surely emphasizes the election of Israel in the context of God's love for the Jewish people.

A text well known to all Jews who attend traditional services on the three pilgrim festivals and on the High Holy Days states:

> You have chosen us from among all nations, loved us, desired us above all other tongues; You have sanctified us with your commandments and brought us close, our King, to your worship; you have called us by your great and holy name…

Here we see God's love for the Jewish people and the election of Israel directly connected. Sanctification by the commandments,[20] the privilege of worshiping God, and having God's name (El) made part of the peoples' name (Isra***el***) all appear to be consequences of that election, even if we are not told why God loved the Jews.

The motif of love finds emphatic expression in a central place in the daily liturgy, the blessing preceding the recitation of the Shema:

> With great love have you loved us, our Lord and God, with great and boundless compassion have you been compassionate to us. Our Father and King, because of our ancestors who trusted in you… Blessed are you, Lord, who chooses his people of Israel in love.

Here the motif of ancestral merit takes pride of place. Followers of both Halevi and Maimonides accept this idea. For Halevi the patriarchs of the Jewish people were chosen for God's special interest because of their descent—no one else could have been chosen. For Maimonides it was the historically contingent fact that Abraham chose God and raised a son and grandson who followed in his footsteps that gained for them the special merit in light of which God promised to elect their progeny.

We have examined examples from the liturgy expressing God's special love for the Jewish people. However, the liturgy also teaches that God is concerned with the well-being of all human beings, apportioning reward and punishment to them all. Thus, for example, in a hymn traditionally given pride of place in the Ashkenazic liturgy of the High Holy Days ("*Unetanah Tokef*") we find:

> We acclaim this day's pure sanctity, its awesome power. This day, Lord, Your dominion is deeply felt. Compassion and truth, its foundations, are perceived. In truth do You judge and prosecute, discern motives and bear witness, record and seal, count and measure, remembering all that we have forgotten. You open the Book of Remembrance and it speaks for itself, for every man has signed it with his deeds. The great shofar is sounded. A still, small voice is heard. This day even angels are alarmed, seized with fear and trembling as they declare: "The day of judgment is here!" For even the hosts of heaven are judged. This day all who walk the earth [*kol ba'ei olam*] pass before You as a flock of sheep. And like a shepherd who gathers his flock, bringing them under his staff, You bring everything that lives before You for review. You determine the life and decree the destiny of every creature.[21]

Despite what many traditionalist Jews mistakenly believe,[22] this hymn means what it says: On Rosh ha-Shanah God examines and judges *all* human beings, Jew and non-Jew.

This duality, God's particular love for the Jewish people, allied with concern for all humanity, finds dramatic expression in one of the core elements of the Jewish liturgy, the *aleinu* prayer, the first paragraph of which emphasizes the election of Israel while the second anticipates a universalist messianic era.

Election—Judah Halevi and Maimonides

Judah Halevi and Maimonides essayed answers to the question why God chose the Jews, answers that reflect very different understandings of what the Jewish religion actually is.[23] For Halevi, God really had no choice, as it were, in the matter of choosing the Jewish people: The choice of the Patriarchs and their descendants after them was determined by their special qualities. As noted above, for Maimonides God did not choose the Jews; rather, the Jews (or, more precisely, their progenitor, Abraham) chose God. The covenant with Abraham's descendants was both a fulfillment of a divine promise made to Abraham and a reward to him for having chosen God. As we have seen, the Torah itself offers no conclusive support to either view.

Maimonides and Halevi *et al.* all agree that the nation that came to be called Jewish was chosen by God. For Halevi, this is a function of the special nature of the Jewish people, determined from creation. For Maimonides this is basically a function of an historically contingent event; it did not have to be the ancestor of the Jews who rediscovered God.

The Bible is, of course, a complex document, but until the Book of Ezra there appear to be no texts that clearly support Halevi over Maimonides, i.e., that support the claim that the Jewish people are in some inherent fashion innately superior to non-Jews, to the other.[24] Indeed, Christine Hayes, in an important article,[25] opines that

> The rabbis seem eager to disassociate themselves from Ezran holy seed rhetoric and related Second Temple traditions that denounced even casual interethnic unions as capital crimes, subject to the vengeance of zealots. They rule that those who read a universal prohibition of intermarriage into the Bible are to be severely suppressed (M. *Megillah* 4:9). The rabbis' failure to take up Ezra's ban on foreign wives and their children—indeed, their very reversal of this program by allowing conversion—is all the more remarkable in light of the rabbis' general perception and presentation of themselves as Ezra's (indirect) successors.

Assuming that Hayes is correct, we might have here an example of a rabbinic attempt to resist the conversion of universalist aspects of the Bible to a hard-edged particularism. The very fact that the laws of conversion were codified in Talmud and later codes indicates that the Rabbis resisted Ezra's attempt to harden the distinction between Jew and non-Jew. Non-Jews can become Jews because, in the final analysis, there is no difference between them so far as their humanity is concerned. This is a message which many Jews today would be well advised to learn.

Election Tomorrow—A Modified Maimonideanism

According to the twelfth of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith, Jews are bid to anticipate the coming of the Messiah, "even though he tarries," (as the popular *Ani Ma'amin* poem puts it) and pray for his coming.[26] Why? Not in order to enjoy power and dominion, or this-worldly pleasures, but in order to be free to devote themselves to the Torah *and its wisdom*.[27] Such devotion will make those wise enough to engage in it "worthy of life in the world to come." In such a well-organized and

enlightened world, in which its natural riches are shared among human beings rationally as opposed to selfishly, not only will war disappear, but delicacies will be as common as dust. This is not a function of miracles, but of proper organization and the self-restraint of a population focused on important matters. Is it any wonder that in such a world human beings (not just Jews) will achieve great wisdom? The point of the Messiah's coming is thus to help human beings bring about a peaceful society enjoying the just allocation of resources and devoted to the cultivation of the intellect.[28]

Maimonides brings his most extensive discussion of the messiah to a dramatic summation in "Laws of Kings," xii.4. With this text, he ends the entire *Mishneh Torah*:

> The Sages and Prophets did not long for the days of the Messiah that they might exercise dominion over the world, or rule over the nations, or be exalted by the peoples, and not in order to eat and drink and rejoice, but so that they be free to devote themselves to the Torah **and *its wisdom***, with no one to oppress or disturb them, and thus be worthy of life in the world to come, as we explained in 'Laws Concerning Repentance'. [29] Then there will be neither famine nor war, neither jealousy nor strife. Good things will be abundant, and delicacies as common as dust. The one preoccupation of the whole world will be only to know the Lord. Hence they[30] will be very wise, knowing things now unknown and will apprehend knowledge of their Creator to the utmost capacity of the human mind, as it is written: *For the land shall be full of the knowledge (de'ah) of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* (Isa. 11:9) [emphasis added].[31]

Maimonides provides a parallel description of the messianic world in a very short chapter of the *Guide of the Perplexed* (iii.11; Pines, 440–441). Zev Harvey has pointed out that this chapter of the *Guide* is a kind of poetic and philosophical rendition of the last paragraph of the *Mishneh Torah*, glossing it in the way Maimonides meant it to be read.[32] Here is the chapter in its entirety:

> These great evils that come about because the human individuals who inflict them upon one another because of purposes, desires, opinions, and beliefs, are all of them likewise consequent upon privation. For all of them derive from ignorance, I mean from a privation of knowledge. Just as a blind man, because of absence of sight, does not cease stumbling, being wounded and also wounding others, because he has nobody to guide him on the way, the various sects of men—every individual according to the extent of his ignorance—does to himself and to others great evils from which individuals of the species suffer. If there were knowledge, whose relation to the human form is like that of the faculty of sight to the eye, they would refrain from doing any harm to themselves and to others. For through cognition of the truth, enmity and hatred are removed and the inflicting of harm by people on one another is abolished. It holds out this promise, saying: *And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and so on. And the cow and the bear shall feed, and son on* (Is. 11:6–8). Then it gives the reason for this, saying that the cause of the abolition of these enmities, these discords, and these tyrannies, will be the knowledge that men [*al-nas*] will have then concerning the true reality of the deity. For it says: *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* (Is. 11:9). Know this.

There is, of course, much more to be said about Maimonides' view of the messiah and of the messianic era, but the texts cited here should be enough for me to be able to conclude this essay with the following argument. I assert, following what I learned from Steven Schwarzschild (who always insisted that he was only following Hermann Cohen), if not necessarily from Maimonides himself, that ends should determine means.[33] That being the case, if we can show that Maimonides anticipated a messianic era characterized by enlightenment and (therefore) peace, we can then point out to him (whatever he himself may have thought in the midst of the crusades) that war and discrimination among human beings will never achieve that end. This position is Maimonidean, if not necessarily that of Maimonides himself.[34]

Judaism, Maimonides would insist, has something important and valuable to teach the whole world even for those who deny the truth of the Torah as adumbrated in the rabbinic tradition. I refer to aspects of the messianic hope as expressed by Maimonides, especially as that hope was understood by Hermann Cohen and by Steven Schwarzschild after him.[35]

Two aspects of Maimonides' messianic teaching are relevant to us here are: universalism and naturalism. This is not the place to defend an interpretation of Maimonides according to which by the time the messianic process reaches its completion all human beings will worship God from a stance of religious equality.[36] In Maimonides' view, the point of the messianic era is to bring the Torah *lekhol ba'ei olam*, to all human beings. One can easily derive from Maimonides the understanding that the Torah in question is Abrahamic, not Mosaic; i.e., a Torah of ethics, science, and philosophy.[37] Maimonides' messianic naturalism is admitted even by those made uncomfortable by it.[38]

This messianic vision offers us a goal at which to aim, an ideal by which to regulate our behavior. That goal is the realization of the opening chapters of the Bible: *all* human beings are created in the image of God and should be treated, therefore, as Kant would later put it, as ends also, never as means only. Maimonides' naturalism means that this goal can be achieved by human beings, without divine intervention, miraculous or otherwise.

Kant insisted that *ought* implies *can*: if I ought to do something, I must be able to do it. Steven Schwarzschild insisted on a Jewish corollary to that Kantian teaching: If I can achieve some worthwhile goal, then I ought to try to achieve it. Getting ever closer to a messianic world is surely a worthwhile goal. Actually reaching that goal may not be possible, but getting ever closer is.[39] Since we can, we should make every effort to make the world a place in which all human beings are treated as creatures made in the image of God. In effect, Maimonides, Cohen, and Schwarzschild teach us that we ought to devote ourselves to the project of creating a messiah-worthy world.[40]

There is something else that Maimonidean messianic universalism and naturalism teaches us: hope. We can hope for (and work toward) a world in which different nations and cultures can value their own contributions to the human mosaic without diminishing the value of others—without wholly "otherizing" the other. If we can hope, we need not despair; the human condition is not necessarily tragic.[41] That message alone justifies the continued allegiance of the Jewish people to the Torah of Israel and to their destiny.

Notes

[1] This article is derived in large measure from parts of chapter 3 in my *We Are Not Alone: A Maimonidean Theology of the Other* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021). This book will be cited henceforth as WANA. I added new material and removed many footnotes that were of interest primarily to academics as opposed to normal human beings.

[2] For hair-raising contemporary examples of "antigoyyism" see WANA, 1–10.

[3] See Rav Kafih's contribution to Eliezer Ben-Rafael, *Jewish Identities: Fifty Intellectuals Answer Ben-Gurion* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 247–253.

[4] For a study of the surprising number of nations which have seen themselves as "chosen," see Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[5] The doctrine of election is so central that even individuals who deny the existence of a choosing God (such as Mordecai Kaplan, Isaac Deutscher and George Steiner) cannot do without the notion of the Jews as chosen. See WANA, 54–62.

[6] See Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2006) (http://www.littman.co.uk/cat/kellner-maimonides.html).

[7] For sources and discussion, see Kellner, "And Yet, the Texts Remain: The Problem of the Command to Destroy the Canaanites," in Katell Berthelot, Menachem Hirshman, and Josef David (eds.), *The Gift of the Land and the Fate of the Canaanites in Jewish Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 153–179.

[8] See Joel Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007).

[9] Alexander Altmann, "Tolerance and the Jewish Tradition," in *The Robert Waley Cohen Memorial Lecture* (1957): 1–18, p. 6.

[10] Maimonides, "Laws of Idolatry," ch. 1; WANA, 10–16.

[11] Further on Halevi, see WANA, 31–36.

[12] See also Gen. 17: 1–4, Dt. 4: 31–40, and Dt. 10: 14–15. *Zekhut avot* (ancestral merit) is explicitly cited in Dt. 10: 14–15.

[13] So far as I could determine, Halevi pays no special attention to these verses in the *Kuzari*.

[14] I cite from the new translation of Lenn Goodman and Philip Lieberman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024), p. 520. On this translation, see https://traditiononline.org/the-guide-to-the-perplexed-a-new-translation/. There is much to say on Maimonides on love and knowledge of God, but this is hardly the place for it.

[15] See Matanel Bareli and Menachem Kellner, “Maimonides on the Status of Judaism,” Shalom Sadiq and Ehud Krinis (eds.), *Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of Daniel J. Lasker* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2021): 135–161.

[16] Halevi’s tremendous influence might play a role here. Daniel J. Lasker argues that Halevi carefully avoids showing his readers the wide variety of rabbinic opinions on the nature of election. See p. 187 in Lasker, "R. Judah Halevi as Biblical Exegete in the *Kuzari*," in S. Hopkins *et al.,* (eds.), *Davar Davur Al Ofanav: Mehkarim Be-Parshanut Ha-Mikra Ve-Ha-Koran Bimei Ha-Benayim Mugashim Le-Haggai Ben-Shammai*, (Jerusalem: Makhon Ben-Zvi, 2007), 179–192 (Heb.).

[17] In contrast to the other nations, each of which inquired what would be required of them before accepting the Torah (*Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Yitro, Massekhta Hahodesh*, v). For a more detailed analysis of this text in its context and other relevant texts, see Kellner, *Gam Hem K?eruyim Adam: Ha-Nokhri be-einei ha-Rambam* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2016) 30–37.

[18] Menachem Hirshman, *Torah Lekhol Ba'ei Olam* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad, 1999).

[19] See Kellner and David Gillis, *Maimonides the Universalist: The Ethical Horizons of Mishneh Torah*(London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2020), 277–301.

[20] By which Maimonides means that verses such as Lev. 19: 2 and 11: 44 (calling upon the Jews to be holy) are not positive commandments, but “charges to fulfill the whole Torah, as if He were saying: ‘Be holy by doing all that I have commanded you to do…” (Maimonides, *Book of Commandments*, 4th principle – in the translation of Charles Chavel [London: Soncino, 1967), vol. 2, p. 381]). Nahmanides, in his critical glosses on the *Book of Commandments,* criticizes Maimonides for seeing such verses as generalizations of the commandments as opposed to divine promises, as he takes them to be. Further on this, see Kellner, *Confrontation*, ch. 3 in general, and p. 102 in particular.

[21] See R. Kimelman, “*U-N’Taneh Tokef* as a Midrashic Poem,” in D. Blank (ed.), *The Experience of Jewish Liturgy* (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 115–146, p. 117.

[22] See Kellner, "Monotheism as a Continuing Ethical Challenge to Jews," Y. Tzvi Langermann (ed.), *Monotheism and Ethics: Historical and Contemporary Intersections among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Leiden; Brill, 2012): 75–86, for an analysis of this text and an example of learned Jews who refuse to accept it at face value. For another universalist hymn from the liturgy (*va-ye’etayu*) see *Gam Hem*, p. 37.

[23] For an insightful comparison between Halevi and Maimonides, see David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating its Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). The different views of Maimonides and Halevi about the nature of the Jewish religion reflect different views about God. Halevi’s God is surely “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” while the God of Maimonides is surely that, but also seeks to come as close as possible to “the God of the philosophers.” Further on this, see *Confrontation*, p. 80n.

[24] Apropos Halevi, it is important to recall that his own views on the special nature of the Jewish people bear all the hallmarks of Shi’ite influence. See WANA, 14–15 (notes).

[25] Christine Hayes, "The ‘Other’ in Rabbinic Literature," in C. Fonrobert & M. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 2007), 243–269, pp. 246–247. See further, Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[26] On Maimonides' principles of faith, see Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 10–65, and Kellner, *Must a Jew Believe Anything?* (2nd ed.) (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2006). On the poem *Ani Ma'amin*, see Joshua Berman, *Ani Maamin: Biblical Criticism, Historical Truth, and the Thirteen Principles of Faith* (Jerusalem: Magid, 2020).

[27] I purposefully ignore Maimonides' strict intellectual elitism; the Maimonideanism I propose here is modified.

[28] On this, Eugene Korn (personal communication) comments: "Interesting: The godless Jews wind up more pessimistic than Kohelet, while the antiquated traditional theists wind up the historical optimists. The divide between theistic/atheistic existentialists yields the same results: hope vs pessimism."

[29] "Repentance," ix. 2.

[30] Presumably the inhabitants "of the whole world," the *ba'ei olam* who, Maimonides says, can achieve the highest possible level of sanctity even in this dispensation (see Kellner and Gillis, *Maimonides the Universalist*, ch. 7 and Hirshman, *Torah lekhol ba'ei olam)*. On the textual issues here see: See Kellner, "*Farteitcht un Farbessert* (On 'Correcting' Maimonides)," *Me'orot* [=*Edah Journal*] 6.2 (2007). (http://library.yctorah.org/files/2016/07/Kellner-on-Rambam-FINAL.pdf). Here is a good opportunity to point out that many well-known Maimonidean texts were "translated and improved" over the generations. In addition to my article just cited, see https://traditiononline.org/book-review-kisvei-harambam-writings-of-rabbi-moshe-ben-maimon-the-rambam/ and also the next note.

[31] For detailed glosses on this passage see Kellner and Gillis, *Maimonides the Universalist*, ch. 14.

[32] See Zev Harvey, 'Averroes, Maimonides, and the Virtuous State' (Heb.), in

Iyunim bisugyot filosofiyot likhevod shelomoh pines (Jerusalem, 1992), 19–31.

[33] For Schwarzschild on Maimonides' Cohenian messianism, or Maimonidean Cohenianism, see below.

[34] It is also the position of Martin Luther King, Jr.:

> If we don't have good will toward men in this world, we will destroy ourselves. There have always been those who argued that the end justifies the means, that the means really aren't important. But we will never have peace in the world until men everywhere recognize that ends are not cut off from means, because the means represent the ideal in the making, and the end in process, and ultimately you can't reach good ends through evil means, because the means represent the seed and the end represents the tree.

Cited by Jill Lepore in *The New Yorker*, December 12, 2018, p. 30.

[35] I emphasize that I am about to talk about *aspects* of Maimonides' thought. Maimonides the historical figure was a hard-edged intellectual elitist who anticipated the coming of a messianic king. He was no liberal democrat nor a democratic socialist, despite the best efforts of Hermann Cohen and Steven S. Schwarzschild. See Steven Schwarzschild, "The Democratic Socialism of Hermann Cohen," *HUCA* 27 (1965): 417–38 and Schwarzschild's essays on Jewish eschatology in Kellner (ed.), *The Pursuit of the Ideal: Jewish Writings of Steven Schwarzschild*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), chapters 1, 5, 11, and 13.

[36] I have defended this in a series of studies, most recently and most extensively in Kellner and Gillis, *Maimonides the Universalist*, ch. 14.

[37] For an extended discussion of this admittedly gnomic statement, see ch. 15 in Kellner and Gillis.

[38] For an elegant and profound exposition of Maimonides' messianic naturalism, see Kenneth Seeskin, *Jewish Messianic Thoughts in an Age of Despair*.

[39] See Schwarzschild, "The Messianic Doctrine in Contemporary Jewish Thought," in Abraham Millgram (ed.), *Great Jewish Ideas* (Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith Department of Adult Jewish Education, 1974), 237–259. Many of Schwarzschild's ideas, which influenced my presentation here, are found in his "On Jewish Eschatology," *Pursuit of the Ideal*, ch. 11 (209–228).

[40] I found a succinct and to my mind brilliant statement of the position advanced here in an essay by Zev Harvey on views of evil in the philosophic and Kabbalistic traditions:

> The Maimonidean philosophers, unlike the kabbalists and the astrologers, were not primarily concerned about providing comfort as a response to evil. They were more concerned about preventing evil. They were concerned about human responsibility, and the awareness of human responsibility often causes discomfort, not comfort. They insisted that the source of the evils that human beings inflict upon one other is not in some external Satan, but inside the human beings themselves. Since the source of evils is human, we humans can prevent them. We are responsible. One can prevent evils by acting in accordance with reason. One prevents defeat in war not by consulting horoscopes or writing amulets with the names of the proper sefirot on them, but by studying the art of war. Maimonides and his followers sought to understand the psychological and political causes of evil in history in order to determine what actions need to be taken in order to prevent its recurrence. The Kabbalah and Maimonidean philosophy do represent two opposing approaches to the problem of evil in history. If the former tried to comfort the people with myth, the latter tried to improve their situation with reason.

See p. 199 in Warren Zev Harvey, "Two Jewish Approaches to Evil in History," in Steven Katz (ed.), *The Impact of the Holocaust on Jewish Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 194–201. For Hermann Cohen himself, see his *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*, trans. Simon Kaplan (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972), 236–261.

[41] See Seeskin, *Jewish Messianic Thought*, p. 42. See also Kenneth Seeskin, "Maimonides and Hermann Cohen on Messianism," *Maimonidean Studies* 5 (2008): 375–392, p. 382: "At bottom, commitment to a Messiah amounts to the conviction that the way things are, is not the way they have to be."