Introduction:
Transnational Migrations of Identity:
Jews, Muslims, and the Modernity Debate

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The poet Heinrich Heine defined Judaism as a "portable fatherland." Indeed, Judaism took shape as a religion during the diaspora that began with the Babylonian conquest of Judea in the sixth century BCE, informed by a longing for homeland, Temple, and political independence. The state of being in exile not only shapes most of Jewish history, but it also inaugurates the first Jew, Abraham, who is told by God to go forth from his homeland. God, too, in Jewish understanding, resides in exile and awaits redemption.

Islam also begins with migration: the *hijra* from Mecca to Medina, which inaugurates a new phase of Muhammad's career but also of Koranic teachings, with a shift from the pacific teachings of the Meccan era to the more aggressive teachings of the Medinan period in the life of the Prophet. The migration of Islam brought an expansion of its community: Islam is a religion open to all converts, who are united in faith regardless of ethnic background, and its globalized dimensions began early.[1] Mecca may be the religious focus of Islam, but the caliphate was not tied to Mecca, and it shifted from one locale to another, including Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, and Istanbul.

Judaism, too, was shaped primarily by migration, but a migration resulting from defeat and exile, whereas Islam was shaped by a migration through conquest. Jewish self-understanding was long dominated not by social integration but by a sense of being prisoners of war in gentile hands. Jews felt a strong conviction of possessing a separate ethnic and national identity shaped by shared language, calendar, and ritual differences from the majority population and sharpened by a longing for a homeland and religio-political autonomy. In exile, they were accompanied, they believed, by God, who would ultimately bring a redemption that had political as well as religious connotations. For Muslims, by contrast, transnationalism was a sign of power, success, and legitimacy precisely because of its rejection of localized religious beliefs and customs in the name of a universal deity, unifying religious practices, and a religious community that transcended geographic boundaries. Unlike the Jewish God who went into exile with his people, however, Islam's rejection of anthropomorphism does not allow a comparable theological metaphor. Conquests and conversions were taken as markers of success in doing God's will.

The modern period has brought new dimensions to the experience of Jewish and Muslim migrations. Jews had lived in Europe for centuries but had been subjected to regula-

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1. Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, eds., *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

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tory legislation that kept them in a second-class status, a colonized people within Europe. Modernity and concepts of citizenship and equality brought Jews a liberation from colonialist status, and they "migrated" from subservient to equal political and legal status as citizens, at least in theory, thanks to emancipation. Within Germany, the focus of one of the articles in this collection, Jews migrated from villages to cities, from Yiddish to German, from Jewish learning to universities and professional training; assimilation was a migration of language and cultural identity, societal location, and physical home. At the same time, emancipation and subsequent assimilation brought with them increased acts of violence against Jews in Germany during the course of the nineteenth century, escalating with the Weimar democracy and culminating with the Nazi genocide of European Jews.

The racial policies of the Third Reich engineered a forced transfer of populations in Central and Eastern Europe, and the aftermath of World War II saw additional migrations of displaced persons. The independence of former British colonies, plus the request for "guest workers" at European factories after the war, brought a sharp rise in Muslim migrations to Europe, while Jews were almost entirely absent from Europe.[2] Both the rise of European anti-Semitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the postwar tensions over the Muslim presence in Europe, compounded by the wars in Yugoslavia and Turkey's proposed membership in the European Union, have raised questions about the nature of European nationalism and the modernity so proudly hailed for the past two hundred years. Contrasts between Europe and the United States have been drawn sharply over the question of Jews, Muslims, and multiculturalism, yet efforts to uphold American society as a pinnacle of tolerance and as an environment in which difference is extolled and flourishes are being challenged by the Iraq war and by growing awareness of the economic and social consequences of globalization. Meanwhile, the shifts in defining Judaism and Islam as a result of the transnational migrations of the modern era have rarely been examined by scholars in

comparative context, and only occasionally have Judeophobia and Islamophobia been studied together as phenomena with shared political and cultural roots.

The five articles presented in this special section of *CSSAAME* were originally presented at Dartmouth College. The conference "Orientalism and Fundamentalism in Islamic and Judaic Critique" was held in January 2006 in honor of Sadik J. Al-Azm, emeritus professor of modern European philosophy at the University of Damascus and a leading intellectual in the Arabic world, whose work challenges the complacencies of theory; his contribution is based on the keynote address he delivered at that conference. Several of the other articles were presented at "Transnational Migrations of Identity: Jews, Muslims, and the Modernity Debate," a conference held in February 2007 at Dartmouth. The discussion of name changes in Leo Spitzer's article serves as an emblematic metaphor for the identity conflicts arising from migration. Admission of Jews into European society through adoption of a Germanic name was highly regulated: Jews were required to adopt last names, but Christians had the right to make exclusive claim over certain names. In Africa, European colonialists imposed Christian names that replicated the "branding" of African slaves. Those names were later rejected, with a return to African names, in the quest for authenticity, yet Spitzer makes clear that the quest for authentic identity is ultimately hopelessly entangled in the web of colonization and migration; no return is possible. Assimilation through name change may be an effort to merge with the dominant society, or it may be a veil that conceals acts of resistance.

The era of European emancipation of the Jews raised the question of whether the particularity of Jewishness would have to be eradicated for Jews to win acceptance into European society. That demand raised troubling questions: Were Jews members of a nation or a religion? If they were members of a nation, they would be suspected of dual loyalties, which led many Jews to renounce the ethnic, nationalist component of Jewish identity in favor of a confes-

2. Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora: The Jews in Europe since 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

sional definition of Judaism as a religion, modeled after Protestantism. European Jews began to renounce loyalty to Jews of other countries and assimilate into the political and cultural nations in which they were living. Yet even highly assimilated Jews remained marked as distinct in Europe. The rise of *völkisch* (ethnic, racist) ideology in the late nineteenth century and its important political role in the first half of the twentieth century made assimilation increasingly difficult. Jewish converts to Christianity also came to be rejected as Christianity was increasingly viewed as an Aryan religion, founded by the Aryan Jesus whose goal was the eradication of Judaism.[3]

Tobias Brinkmann examines the great Austrian Jewish writer Joseph Roth, who calls the Jews a "nation beyond the nation," a supranation unrestricted by marks of geography or even names. Jews are in permanent migration, as Brinkmann describes, so that Zionism arose both as a solution to nationalism's inability to cope with Jewish particularity and as a constriction of the Jewish cosmopolitanism that had been made possible by keeping its *Heimat* (home) in the realm of the imaginary.

For Muslims, the state of Pakistan and the state of Israel pose similar dilemmas. Both emerged out of British colonialism as a result of partition, and both have been troubled by nearly constant conflict with neighbors and by internal opposition to the state and a lack of unity in defining the nation: is it rooted in religion, ethnicity, or democracy? Debates over the nature of the Muslim state, as examined by one of its major theorists, Muhammad Iqbal, during the 1930s, have parallels in the debates of Zionists from the same era over the nature of the Jewish state.

While Jews existed as a minority within European states but without a "home" state until 1948, Pakistanis come to Europe from a weak state that seeks both to encourage and exploit emigration. Junaid Rana, a cultural anthropologist who has studied Pakistani migrants to Europe, argues that emigration is not only an economic necessity, the search for living wages, but a necessity of the state, which regulates the legality and illegality of migrants for its own interests.[4] The regulatory mechanisms of the state, according to Rana, protect the privileges of the military and wealthy by creating an economic diaspora even as the state creates a migrant illegality to maintain control over those diasporic workers. Looking at the other side of the migration, Moha Ennaji discusses the political uses of Islamophobia in European countries. That, too, is a transnational phenomenon that rejects geographic boundaries by uniting all Muslims, regardless of country of origin, into a collective and denigrating religious identity. Islamophobia and its consequences for Muslim identity in Europe have strong echoes of European anti-Semitism of the nineteenth century. Yet the migrant workers of Rana's study, for example, are very much geographically bound, since the economic ineptness of the state of Pakistan, he argues, forces migrant workers into a repetitive cycle of migration and return. They are caught between the Islamophobia of the West and the incompetence of their home country, and their cultural and political nationality emerges sui generis, fed by ressentiment as well as by affirmation of religious commitment. In Ennaji's study, too, Moroccan migrants in France are trapped between the Islamophobia of the West and their uncertainty over defining and preserving their national identity outside the physical boundaries of Morocco, especially as the generations of Moroccans born and raised in Europe increase.

However, Islamophobia, Mona Abaza argues, is not simply a Western phenomenon, but is strengthened by Islamic regimes that cultivate accusations of Western intolerance of Muslims and assertions that Western societies and orientalists are responsible for spreading falsehoods about Islam. In her close examination of Egyptian cultural politics, she finds both a secular fundamentalism and a religious fundamentalism, each reinforcing its position through acts of public violence. Women and sexuality be-

3. Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

4. Junaid Rana, "Controlling Diaspora: Illegality, 9/11, and Pakistani Labor Migration," *Pakistani Diasporas: Culture, Conflict, Change*, eds. Virinder Kalra and Ali Khan (Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 2009).

come an excuse for political repression by both religious and secular in Egypt, Abaza points out. Religious fundamentalists point to women's shame by insisting on their veiling, while secular fundamentalists strip women naked in public to humiliate them, as happened in May 2005 on the streets of Cairo by pro-government forces. If the veil no longer signifies a code of modesty or protects women from male assault, then both state and religion have abandoned the interests of its members. Given the traditional centrality of gender and sexuality in signifying the nation, the assaults on women's bodies and the massive redefinitions of women's nature and their societal roles provide key insights into the rapidly changing national and religious identities.[5]

Religion plays a central role in transnational identities, creating, in the argument of Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, a transnational civil society that stands as an alternative, or even challenge, to nation-states and their political and cultural interests.[6] Holy sites and religious calendars, churches, synagogues, and mosques provide an international arena "where membership in both the sending and receiving communities is expressed."[7] While religious institutions globalize themselves and their members, the process of globalization also changes religious beliefs, practices, and sources of authority, both textual and human. Given their power to shape subjectivity as well as agency, religions also offer a new sense of history and identity through the timeless nature of sacred calendars and holy places that transcend the history and geography central to national identity. Either religious claims to embody universal and timeless truths and morals can function to permit simultaneous membership in a particular state or religion's universalisms are understood as demanding that particular loyalties to state or ethnicity be relinquished. Here, too, gender plays a central signifying role: wom-

en's bodies become sites of resistance to Islamophobia, through head scarves and veils, and male dominance becomes a vehicle for preserving a loyalty to a universal Islamic authority that supersedes the particular claims of national cultures and state boundaries.[8]

An extraordinary intellectual voice of our era, Al-Azm, in his critique of the contemporary debates, forces us to reconsider our categories and ponder the politics of our arguments. He points to the parodic nature of the Arab responses to Edward Said's critique of orientalism, which occasionally calls itself occidentalism, that make lofty claims on behalf of Arabic creativity or denounce Western creativity as a poor effort to orientalize itself. Certain efforts on the political left to forge sympathetic alliances with Muslims, such as Jean Baudrillard's response to September 11, are mocked by Al-Azm as a "highly refined form of Talibanish occidentalism" (8–9). Intellectual discourse is trapped, Al-Azm is claiming, in nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric. Even Said's enormously popular critique of Western scholarship on Islam is ultimately concerned less with scholarship than with explaining the paradox of American political support for Israel in the face of its dependence on Arab oil. Thus intellectuals at both extremes, religious fundamentalists and the secular Left, are unable to liberate themselves from particular national interests, resentments, and prejudices for a transcendent set of religious values and political goals that will address and resolve the problems confronting us.

In conclusion, these essays grew out of a series of five conferences at Dartmouth that took place from 2005 to 2008 and included "Gendered Intersections: Feminist Scholarship in Islamic and Judaic Studies" (August 2005); "Ink and Blood: Textuality and the Humane in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam" (July 2006); and "The Gaze and the Veil: Surveillance and

5. Beth Baron, *Egypt as Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

6. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997).

7. Peggy Levitt, "'You know, Abraham was really the first immigrant': Transnational Migration and Religion," *International Migration Review* 37 (2003): 855; Levitt, *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape* (New York: New Press, 2007).

8. Christine Delphy, "Gender, Race, and Racism: The Ban of the Islamic Headscarf in France," in *Transnational Migration and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Meenakshi Thapan (London: Sage, 2005), 228–51.

the Legacies of Orientalism" (February 2008). All were made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation, which has long worked to stimulate new areas of research, particularly in ways that can overcome contemporary political tensions and foster greater collegiality across disciplines within the academy, with social and government policy implications to follow. Susannah Heschel is grateful that Constance Buchanan, program officer, and Alison Bernstein, vice president, both of the Ford Foundation, offered her funding that she used to bring together scholars in Jewish studies with scholars in Islamic studies. The goal of these conferences was to reconceptualize the field of Jewish studies by considering how the field might be altered when removed from the hegemonic Christian context of European and American universities. Indeed, we sought to imagine how we might map our scholarship differently within an Islamic context. ⌇