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*Meir Kahane: The Public Life and Political Thought of an American Jewish Radical* by Shaul Magid (review)

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mutually exclusive forces. In contrast, Zionist thinkers developed ideas of redemption that offered national movements as the ideal path toward cosmopolitan objectives. Many of the figures included in this study held these opposing forces together in their visions for the future. Certainly, the historical success of these objectives is a topic of debate. Nevertheless, *Zionism's Redemptions* serves as a site to study the complicated relationship between striving for humanistic ends and advancing a nationalist agenda.

This book thus sets the foundation for engaging the relationship of nationalist ideologies and redemptive religious traditions. One area that could have been explored further, or perhaps will serve as a rich potential future project, is the question of the politics of the language of redemption itself. By this, I mean the specific function of this terminology within different Zionist camps. Why did this concept emerge as a primary battleground for articulating contested visions of Jewish nationalism? What were the stakes of projecting so many different visions of the future onto the shared language of salvation and redemption? Readers of this excellent book will be left with plenty of generative questions like this one for scholars to consider.

Now more than ever, we need conversation partners that acknowledge the tensions between these poles, while also recognizing the potential avenues for particular and universal visions of the future to complement one another. Scholars of nationalism and religion will surely build on this innovative study to seek new historical and contemporary answers to a set of deeply enduring political and cultural tendencies.

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Shaul Magid. *Meir Kahane: The Public Life and Political Thought of an American Jewish Radical*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021. 296 pp.

When Rabbi Meir Kahane (1932–1990) founded the militant Jewish Defense League (JDL) in 1968 as a response to the showdown between advocates of community control in New York City’s public schools, who were mostly Black—as were the students—and the union membership of the United Federation of Teachers, who were mostly white and Jewish, in the legendary Ocean Hill-Brownsville strike of that same year, the slogan “Never Again!” became the organization’s rallying cry. This call to arms, which directly invoked the destruction of European Jewry to galvanize American Jews to reject the communal politics that Kahane considered feckless, pathetic, and emasculating, was not merely symbolic. Rather, Kahane hoped, American Jewish activists would take one page out of the confrontational playbook of the Black Panthers and Young Lords and another out of the performative playbook of the Yippies and embrace a politics that expressed *hadar* (Jewish

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pride) through physical toughness to defend Jews in their neighborhoods and to counteract the lure of assimilation, in short, to write a script for Jewish survival in urban America. In *Meir Kahane: The Public Life and Political Thought of an American Jewish Radical*, Shaul Magid seeks to restore Kahane and his ideas to the postwar American landscape, to explain his militancy, and, in so doing, to unsettle the narrative of American Jewish history that has been characterized by a preoccupation with the “cult of synthesis”—Jonathan Sarna’s phrase—the belief that the American Jewish experience has been a triumph of consensus between liberal American and Jewish values. Magid also wants to redress the misconception that American Jewish radicalism only lived among activists on the Left. In fact, it was postwar America that nurtured Kahane’s right-wing radicalism. Though Kahane was disavowed by most, but not all, American Jewish leaders before his immigration to Israel in 1971, and though his party, Kach, was ultimately barred from the Knesset, his views, argues Magid, have had a profound afterlife in contemporary Jewish life. (The fact that Oztmah Yehudit/Jewish Power, the heir apparent to Kach, won six seats in the 2022 Knesset elections, proves Magid’s point.) *Meir Kahane* is thus not only a cultural biography of Kahane, but also a cautionary exposé of his ideas’ lasting influence.

A scholar of Jewish thought, Magid chose to narrate Kahane’s life by examining his somewhat unsystematic, even contradictory, ideas through six chapters, “Liberalism,” “Radicalism,” “Race and Racism,” “Communism,” “Zionism,” and “Militant Post-Zionist Apocalypticism.” In Magid’s analysis, their overarching consistency was Kahane’s critique of postwar American Jewish “liberalism,” and the book successfully roots Kahane’s preoccupations with Jewish survival in the American Diaspora and his program for transforming what he viewed as a doomed secular Zionist project in Israel as a response to this critique. Born in 1932, reared in an Orthodox home, and educated until he was thirteen at a Mir yeshiva, Kahane’s childhood was informed by the Holocaust consciousness that pervaded his Borough Park survivor neighborhood. Kahane studied law at New York University, worked as a journalist, founded a Jewish summer camp that taught martial arts, and, engaging with the issues that rocked American and Jewish society in the 1960s (civil rights and racial reckoning, anticommunism, Israel’s victory in 1967, the plight of Soviet Jewry, and urban decay), fashioned himself as an activist prophet against the American Jewish establishment.

Kahane embraced violence as a necessary means to effect social change. “Every Jew a .22” was his brand (8) and he and his squad of disenfranchised street Jews reacted to the political crises of their day by creating citizens’ patrols to protect elderly, poor Jews on Brooklyn’s streets, threatening to meet a Black nationalist activist demanding reparations at Temple Emanu-El with lead pipes, disrupting performances of Soviet dancers, breaking into Jewish communal leadership meetings, and taking out hyperbolic ads critical of the Jewish establishment’s alleged failure to defend Jewish interests during World War II. (“They walk in the paths of those whose timidity helped to bury our brothers and sisters less than thirty years ago,” 58–59) In 1972, the JDL’s intoxication with violence led to the death of a secretary of impresario Sol Hurok, who represented Soviet artists. This act of terror marked the JDL’s undoing in the United States.

Kahane's militancy (and racist views) in Israel were, in Magid's interpretation, shaped less by his adopted country than by the ideas he had nurtured in the United States. Preoccupied with maintaining Jewish difference whether in the Diaspora or in the sovereign Jewish state, Kahane raged against secular Zionism's "normalcy," "Hellenization," and Westernization. Confronting the issue of Arab nationalism, which he considered legitimate, Kahane concluded that the only way to protect the Jewish integrity of Israel was to reject democracy—itsself a product of political Zionism's infatuation with normalizing Jewish life—and to expel the Arabs. Exploring what he calls Kahane's militant post-Zionist apocalypticism, Magid shows that Kahane's deployment of violence only increased as he justified it religiously in his later years. Punishing gentiles was a holy act, necessary to stay the internalization of gentile values and the collective assimilation of the Jews even in the Land of Israel.

Magid's claim that "understanding Kahane is understanding Kahane as an American Jew" (191) is unquestionably right. But his decision to organize the book around Kahane's ideas, rather than through a more conventional chronological and historical treatment of those ideas, makes the narrative repetitive; the author also assumes too much familiarity with postwar New York Jewish history and post-1967 Israeli history. Most problematic is that Magid does not define liberalism, so central to the book's argument, in a consistent manner. A term notable for its slipperiness, liberalism can mean support for the rule of law and the democratic process, concern for inclusive social welfare politics, support for free-market economics, a defense of individual civil liberties, and more. To my mind and relying on Ezra Mendelsohn's classic *On Modern Jewish Politics* (1993), Kahane was not so much an anti-"liberal," but an integral, ethnic *nationalist* who rejected the goals of integrationism and the moderate tactics of diplomacy and adherence to the rule of law. Kahane was similar in type, for example, to the integral nationalist Roman Dmowski, who deployed xenophobia, militarism, and a thuggish populist politics of the street in interwar Poland. Kahane's integral Jewish nationalism, performed in the style of the 1960s' "adversary culture," was indelibly shaped by the intergenerational trauma of the Holocaust and the breakdown of civil society in postwar racially mixed urban America. In the same manner as Dmowski (and Jabotinsky and many a secular Zionist), Kahane rejected the ethos of Western integrationism and created a nationalist narrative that glorified militant biblical heroes like Samson, Bar Kokhba, and the Maccabees. As Magid shows, in Israel, Kahane could live the biblical fantasies that were shaped in the United States on biblical ground. However, Magid does not explore whether Kahane's Manichean views of essentialist Jewish righteousness pitted against gentile evil owed a debt not only to his Mir Musar background, but also to the very *American* ideas of manifest destiny, exceptionalism, and white privilege. Kahane's embrace of violence was nurtured by the long, sorry history of American vigilantism.

*Meir Kahane* is an important corrective to historiographical assumptions that the radicalism of the American 1960s only swung Left and that Kahane's racist anti-Arab positions were a product of the Israeli context. Read together with *Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist: An American Story* (1995) by former JDL member Yossi Klein Halevi—who thoroughly rejected his youthful militant past—and

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Michael Staub's *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (2004), Magid's thoughtful analysis illustrates that post-Holocaust Jewish politics could take many pathways, some humanistic-universalistic, others xenophobic-particularistic. Whether one likes them or not, they are all Jewish.

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Liora R. Halperin. *The Oldest Guard: Forging the Zionist Settler Past*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021. 368 pp.

Since Yael Zerubavel's seminal study of Zionist collective memory and commemoration, *Recovered Roots* (1995), scholars have paid growing attention to "memory struggles" in Israeli society. The controversies over the representation of the past are always, at least partly, related to contemporary conflicts over interests, resources, and ideologies. In that body of scholarship, the main axis of struggles has been the challenging of the hegemonic memory of the Ashkenazic secularist Labor Zionist movement by various forces: Palestinians, Mizrahi Jews, religious Zionists, and others.

Liora Halperin's excellent study directs our attention to a forgotten intra-Zionist struggle that seemingly has lost its relevance—the one between the collective ethos of immigrant settlers who came mainly in the 1880s and the 1890s (known in Zionist vocabulary as the First Aliyah), emphasizing private enterprise, reliance on a native labor force, and explicit religiosity, and the subsequent wave arriving between 1904 and 1914 (known as the Second Aliyah), that was collectivist in its ideological orientation, promoted a discourse of (intra-Jewish) class struggle, whose leaders advocated exclusive Jewish labor, and was frequently secularist or even antireligious. It is the second wave that became dominant in shaping both the discourse and the practice of the colonizing efforts in Palestine for many decades.

The tension between these groups and their public representation is at the center of the book. By analyzing diverse commemorative practices between the 1920s and the 1960s, Halperin's book traces the construction of the "First Aliyah" as a distinct category, the various meanings ascribed to it by different political actors, and the political roles this commemoration served.

The book both reflects and promotes two emerging scholarly trends. First, it contextualizes the study of Zionist commemoration within the paradigm of settler colonialism, and originally illustrates how this commemoration has been shaped by the settler-colonial character of Zionism. This is done by drawing parallel lines between the commemorative discourse that evolved around late nineteenth-century Zionist settlers and their agricultural colonies (known in Hebrew as *moshavot*), and the commemoration of other communities of European settler colonies, such as those that emerged in North America and Australia. Creatively borrowing analytical and theoretical concepts from scholars of settler