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**Lisa Moses Leff**, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006. xiii + 327 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$60.00 US (cl). ISBN 0-8047-5251-6.

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For observers of modern Jewish life, it has long seemed ironic that an organization called the World Jewish Congress is led by Edgar M. Bronfman, a Canadian-Jewish businessman so removed from the tradition of his ancestors that he named one of his sons (Edgar Jr.) after himself.[1] However, as readers of Lisa Moses Leff's smart new study will discover, the paradox of Bronfman's leadership of such an organization (which aims to protect Jews in countries where they experience antisemitism) is more apparent than real. In fact, Leff argues, since international Jewish defense groups were created in the nineteenth century, they have been led precisely by those Jews who were most assimilated, and thus most invested in demonstrating their acceptance of Western liberal norms. Leff's thought-provoking arguments offer a fresh perspective not only on French-Jewish history, but on the history of secularism and of national identity in France more generally.

*Sacred Bonds* focuses on the heyday of the idea of international solidarity among Jews, from 1840 until the end of the nineteenth century. Leff defines solidarity as a movement by "highly assimilated Western Jews...to help Jews elsewhere to fight oppression" (p. 1). Proponents of this movement were inspired by "Enlightenment universalism, eighteenth-century political messianism, and the imperial 'civilizing mission,'" and saw their efforts to help foreign Jews as a step towards fraternity among all inhabitants of the globe. Leff notes that this movement was especially strong in France, where the Revolution made Jews particularly attached to universal values. To Leff, solidarity was not a continuation of Old Regime particularism, but an effort to demonstrate fidelity to new values like "tolerance, equality and freedom" (p. 2). The end of solidarity's golden age came, she argues, with the rise of modern antisemitism.

Leff's book begins with a beautifully written introduction, situating her arguments within recent scholarship on French Jewry, on national identity in France, on nineteenth-century battles between secularism and Catholicism, and on colonialism. Her assessment of existing literature is unusually generous; though many of her arguments are quite innovative, she focuses on how her work "extends" and "nuances" that of others. Leff disagrees with the model of Jewish assimilation presented by Arthur Hertzberg and Hannah Arendt, which suggested that Jews became less Jewish as they became more French.[2] She situates herself not as a lone revisionist, but as part of a growing movement to offer a more "nuanced model of Jewish integration," one which acknowledges that emancipation did not erase Jewish identities (p. 4).[3] To support this point, she draws upon scholarship by historians such as William Sewell and Caroline Ford, who have argued that it was possible both to become "French" and to maintain local identities.[4] Leff contends, however, that existing work on both Jewish and national identities in France does not account for why a movement of internationalism emerged during a process of national integration. In addition to her arguments about identity and integration, Leff also seeks to revise the history of state secularism in France. In her view, looking at its construction from a Jewish perspective "challenges our basic understanding of what [its] proponents...demanded of religions" (p. 10).

The book is organized into two parts. The first covers the period before Jewish internationalism arose, from the Revolution to the 1840s. Chapter one focuses on the treatment of Jews in Napoleonic France.

The story it traces, while familiar to students of French Judaism, is not necessarily known by other French historians. Indeed, though Jewish historians consider Napoleon's 1807 Sanhedrin to be a turning point in modern Jewish history, many Napoleonic scholars do not even afford it even a passing glance; a recent conference announced on H-France to commemorate the bicentennial of 1807 did not feature a single paper on Napoleon and the Jews.[5] Leff's discussion here is essentially synthetic, but she offers an original gloss on how the Napoleonic synthesis (to use Paula Hyman's phrase) made Judaism "essential to the creation of citizens." When the Constituent Assembly granted Jews equal citizenship, it made clear that it was doing so in their capacity as individuals and that their religion was not the concern of the state. In contrast, Leff notes, Napoleon created an official state Judaism through the consistory system, thus making a public form of Judaism "necessary for...regenerating the Jews" (p. 38).[6]

Chapter two emphasizes that the struggle for Jewish emancipation did not end after Jews received citizenship in 1791; many elements of Old Regime discrimination persisted. Although the Revolution formally abolished corporations, Jews were still often treated as a group. They continued to be held responsible for debts contracted by the prerevolutionary Jewish *communautés*; in 1808, the Infamous Decree barred Jews of the East from borrowing and lending money until 1818; well into the nineteenth century, Jews had to take a special oath, the humiliating *more judaico*, when testifying in court. As the Bourbon Restoration began, Adolphe Crémieux and other Jewish leaders argued that it was illegal to have laws defining a class of citizens and treating them differentially. Leff points out that this desire to be treated equally should not be interpreted as embarrassment at being identified as Jewish nor as a willingness to strictly demarcate a public civic sphere from a private religious one. She argues that, in keeping with the Napoleonic framework, Jews wanted to build publicly visible religious institutions to help create "a new, more just relationship between religions and the state" (p. 56).

Chapter three looks at self-fashioning by young French Jews during the Restoration and July Monarchy. Leff looks at the seeming paradox that highly acculturated Jews made Jewishness a central part of their personas; rather than seeking to minimize their difference from others, they accentuated it. In order to appeal to a contemporary vogue for "exotic" things, Jews such as the novelist Eugénie Foa emphasized their own exoticness, whether in the form of a special moral sensibility or an Oriental racial heritage. Jews adopted race language, Leff argues, to legitimate their right to difference while avoiding potentially inflammatory theological distinctions between Jews and Christians (p. 99). To Léon Halevy, the Jews were a separate race like the Franks or the Gauls; alongside descendants of these groups, they could now contribute to building the French nation. Chapter three also examines how Jews were viewed by young liberals and utopian socialists. Members of the Generation of 1820, Leff contends, wanted to be seen as rejecting their parents' social conventions; to them, their acceptance of Jews and Protestants marked their own progressiveness. The Saint-Simonians, she stresses, were particularly welcoming of Jews, depicting them as representing an authentic ancient holiness missing from the Catholic Church.

The book's second half examines the rise of Jewish internationalism after the 1840s. Leff is not the first scholar to examine French Jews' interactions with coreligionists in the Middle East and North Africa; she acknowledges the excellent work done on the Alliance Israélite Universelle (the most famous solidarity organization of the era) by Aron Rodrigue, Michael Graetz and Michael Laskier.[7] Still, as she explains, while Rodrigue first proposed a number of the ideas which she develops, his focus was on the schools that the Alliance established in Turkey rather than on developments in France itself. In chapter four ("Secularism and the civilizing mission"), Leff does an outstanding job of fleshing out some of Rodrigue's suppositions, showing how the international efforts of French Jews stemmed from metropolitan struggles. She makes particular linkages between their activities and liberals' campaign for state secularism. She notes that French Jews saw their campaigns for the rights of Jews abroad as part of "a broader effort to wrest control over the power to define France's mission away from the Church." In conjunction with anticlerical liberals, Jews sought to "build a new vision for French foreign and colonial policy that used 'civilization' rather than Catholicism as a rallying cry" (p. 119).

Chapter four looks also at the Damascus Affair of 1840, and at Adolphe Crémieux's efforts to extend state secularism to French foreign policy. When Syrian Jews were falsely accused of the ritual murder of a Capuchin friar, Crémieux and other Jewish leaders appealed to a France identified with "humanity, civilization and religion" to protect their coreligionists from "barbarian oriental despots" (p. 122). After the Crimean War, French Jews worked to improve the status of Jews in Ottoman lands, arguing that France "had a mission to promote equal treatment for religious minorities" everywhere (p. 138). Given the "continuing tenuousness" of Jews' status in France itself, Leff maintains, Jews' activities abroad were part of an attempt to cement France's commitment to universalism and thus ensure their own rights (p. 156). She adds that the movement for state secularism was not anti-religious but only anticlerical (p. 155); non-Jewish liberals supported the Alliance even though they were hostile toward Catholic attempts to spread religion abroad.

The central section of the book is chapter five, "The making of modern Jewish solidarity," which focuses on the activism of the Alliance Israélite Universelle after the 1860s. Leff emphasizes again that the movement of Jewish solidarity was not a particularistic one aiming to separate Jews from others, but a universalistic one, "solidified in democratic institutions, intended to redeem the entire world" (p. 168). Based in nineteenth-century interpretations of Judaism, solidarity aimed to carry French revolutionary values to peoples throughout the globe, beginning with Jews.

The Alliance had many successes. Its members built a network of schools and other institutions throughout the Middle East; they also pressed French diplomats to rally their foreign counterparts to implement more universalistic policies in their own countries. The organization's efforts did not always work, however. Chapter Five closes with a discussion of the campaign by Jewish leaders at the Congress of Berlin to secure rights for the persecuted Jews of Romania. In a form of politics analogous to 1970s human rights diplomacy, Leff asserts that they hoped to "make religious freedom and equality key factors in the minds of the diplomats who had the power to determine membership in...the 'family' of nations" (p. 195). However, world leaders did not all agree that democracy required the granting of equality to Jews. And in the late 1870s, this failed campaign sparked "a new form of anti-Jewish politics...that depicted the Alliance's efforts to help the Romanian Jews gain citizenship as a sinister effort to manipulate world leaders" (p. 199).

Chapter six traces the crisis of the solidarity movement in the face of the rise of antisemitism. Edouard Drumont's *La France juive* distorted the goals of solidarity and created a "myth of Jewish power," composed of three parts: Jews' self-separation, their quest for world domination, and their use of the republic as a vehicle for achieving this plan (p. 202). Antisemites twisted Jewish leaders' own words to suggest that the latter forced the French government to defend "Jewish interests" against those of the nation (p. 225). These new attacks made Jewish leaders reluctant to use the language of solidarity, even when their own rights were threatened during the Dreyfus Affair. Where Michael R. Marrus famously accused Franco-Jewish leaders of being so committed to a "politics of assimilation" that they buried their heads in the sand and abandoned Albert Dreyfus, Leff demonstrates that Jews protested actively against his accusers; they were simply more cautious about the language they used than were previous generations. [8] "Given that their actions would most certainly have been used as further evidence of a Jewish conspiracy, their public stance makes a great deal of sense. Such caution should not be confused with passivity...." (pp. 227-8). In fact, Leff notes, only when antisemites made solidarity suspect "did new political strategies, such as Zionism and Jewish socialism, develop among a younger generation" (pp. 229-30).

Leff's book covers familiar territory for scholars of French Jewry, in that many of the writers and statesmen she analyzes are recurring characters in existing studies. [9] What makes her book novel are the questions she asks, and the deep contextualizing of the actions and ideas of these figures within general scholarship on national identity and on colonialism. One might wish that the author had extended her conclusions to the present and analyzed continuities or ruptures between nineteenth-

century solidarity organizations and those like the WJC which still exist today. Nonetheless, the overall arguments of the book—particularly those that concern anticlericalism, national identity, and the rise of modern antisemitism—should be of interest to all historians of modern France. Leff's emphasis on the persistence of Jewish identity even for seemingly assimilated French Jews is a particularly valuable reminder about the possibility of hybrid identities even within the framework of republican universalism. Her arguments about the modernity of Jewish feelings of solidarity, and about the multiple contours of Jewish participation in the construction of republicanism, are also important. Even as the details of the book will be of most interest to specialists in French-Jewish history, Leff's larger insights therefore deserve wide consideration.

## NOTES

[1] Ashkenazi Jews do not traditionally name children for living relatives. In his memoir *The Making of a Jew*, Bronfman acknowledges that “much of [his] life had given secularity new meaning” even as he presents a more complex picture of his Jewish upbringing (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1996), p. xiv.

[2] Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); and Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951).

[3] She states that she is adding to existing works by Phyllis Cohen Albert, “Ethnicity and Jewish Solidarity in Nineteenth-Century France,” in *Mystics, Philosophers and Politicians: Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honor of Alexander Altmann*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Daniel Swetschinski (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982), 249-74; Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1989); idem, *Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France. From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1996); Paula E. Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1991); and Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[4] William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor From the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); and Caroline C. Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[5] See “Napoleon at the Zenith: a Bi-Centennial Seminar,” School of History, University of Liverpool, 11-13 June, 2007, announced on H-France on 19 December 2006 (<https://lists.uakron.edu/sympa/arc/h-france/2006-12/msg00078.html>).

[6] Paula Hyman, “The Napoleonic Synthesis,” in *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 37-52. On Napoleon and state Judaism, see also Jeffrey Haus, “Liberté, Égalité, Utilité: Jewish Education and State in Nineteenth-Century France,” *Modern Judaism* 22: 1 (2002): 1-27.

[7] Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Graetz, *The Jews in*

*Nineteenth-Century France*; and Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

[8] See Michael Marrus's claims about the "tragic blind[ness]" and "lethargy" of the Jewish community in his *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 2, 283 and passim.

[9] See esp. works by Albert, Graetz and Rodrigue cited in n. 3 and 7, along with Pierre Birnbaum, *Les fous de la République: histoire politique des juifs d'Etat de Gambetta à Vichy* (Paris: Fayard, 1992) [translated as *The Jews of the Republic: A Political History of State Jews in France from Gambetta to Vichy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996)].

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