

The Journal of Religion and Culture (JRC) is proudly produced by the Graduate Students
of the Department of Religions and Cultures at Concordia University.

©2025 Journal of Religion and Culture,
Concordia University, Montréal, Québec.

ISSN 1198-6395
Journal of Religion and Culture Volume 30 (2025)

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Patriots without a Homeland: *Hungarian Jewish Orthodoxy from the Emancipation to Holocaust.*

Jehuda Hartman. Translated by Shaul Vardi. Brookline, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2023. 402 pages. USD\$149.00 (hardcover) / USD\$149.00 (eBook).

How does one demarcate acculturation from assimilation? How to understand the spectrum between loyalty to the state as construed by Jewish tradition,¹ and cultural-national identification of religious minorities as part of modernity? Jehuda Hartman helps us consider these questions in his monograph, in relation to Jewish communities of Hungary and its borderlands from the mid-19th century until the sudden crescendo of the Holocaust in 1944. With his careful reading of Hungarian Jewish journalistic sources and rabbinic responsa, he reconsiders the denominational boundaries of schismatic Hungarian Jewry in light of accommodations with modernity and a contributionist sense of acculturation to the emergent Hungarian nation-state.

With reference to important works in the historiography, in the introduction Hartman parses Hungarian-Jewish history as a ‘reverse whiggish’ narrative, from a ‘Golden Age’ to catastrophe. Through his expansive definition of Hungarian Western / Modern Orthodoxy, he indicates that his argument is to reconsider the dividing line of Hungarian Jewry (especially in the realm external to religious observance proper) as being between the ultra-Orthodox and all others. In doing so he employs Shulamit Volkov’s intra-Jewish delineation between “those who were willing to participate in the ‘modernity project’ and those who were not willing to do so.”² Hartman revises the standard historiographical interpretations of Shimon Dubnow and Jacob Katz who draw the dividing line between Orthodoxy and Neologue assimilationists.

1 Regarding loyalty to the state as a social contract, Sean Remz, “The Hungarian-Jewish Social Contract, Its Rupture, and Jewish Death Rituals” *Past Imperfect* 23 (November 2021). <https://doi.org/10.21971/pi29378> <https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/pi/index.php/pi/article/view/29378>

2 Hartman, *Patriots without a Homeland*, 14.

In the Introduction and first two chapters of Part I (on Orthodoxy and Hungarian Nationhood), the author convincingly compares the development of Jewish denominational difference in Hungary with Germany, in response to state demands of modernity. Hartman stresses that the greater demographic weight of Orthodox Jews in Hungary allowed for the unprecedented step of institutional separation of Jewish denominations as of 1868, whereas in Germany a sense of *Ahavat Yisrael* (unconditional love of one's fellow Jew) allowed for a basic unity between Modern (Neo-) Orthodox and Reform. Meanwhile, the social contract of patriotic Jewish assimilation in the Hungarian state was heightened (even in comparison with Germany) by the fact that Jews were helping Hungary modernize simultaneously. Although this was most explicit with the Neologue reformers, it paralleled the patriotism of the Modern / Western Orthodox, and even had the corollary of the ultra-Orthodox using the Hungarian language more than was necessary for survival.

Hartman notes a consistent pattern of Orthodoxy opposing new developments for Jewish civil rights (1867 emancipation, 1895 reception) only based on anxiety over the lowering of social boundaries and its corollaries for strict religious practice. After these rights—especially emancipation—were granted, Orthodox rabbis expressed post facto appreciation.³ He is astute in parsing Chaim Sofer's nuanced, pragmatic explication of the difference between Jewish diasporic loyalty to a host state (as per *dina d'malkhuta dina*—"the law of the land is the law") and Jewish identification with its nationalism, deemed to be both ethnically based and historically contingent.⁴ Chapter 2, "The Good Years of the Monarchy", addresses the myriad demands of Hungarian acculturation in this time of 'tolerant nationalism,' and how the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox rose to the occasion in creatively addressing them, especially vis-à-vis language / education policy and the liturgical honouring of Habsburg royalty. The three chapters following Chapter 2 constitute a salient thematic excursus from the otherwise chronologically structured Part I. Chapter 3 explains the denominationally distinct and intra-Orthodox variable parameters of Hungarian acculturation

3 Hartman, *Patriots without a Homeland*, 99-102.

4 Hartman, *Patriots without a Homeland*, 53-54.

based on language, name, and patriotic mythmaking at the time of the 1896 Hungarian Millennium celebrations. The subsequent chapter explores the hitherto understudied link between Orthodox patriotism towards Hungary and different forms of engagement with Zionism. Chapter 5 uses rabbinic responsa and Orthodox press to indicate their (historiographically unexpected) cordiality with Hungarian Christians. Chapter 6 describes changes in Orthodox Jewish Hungarian identification after World War I and the Treaty of Trianon, including the ascendance of Jewish and Zionist political organizing in the borderlands that was previously unthinkable given their Magyarized national symbiosis. Hartman attempts to prove that, although attenuated, Jewish patriotic identification with their Hungarian homeland remained rather stable during the interwar period, even on the cusp of World War II.

Part II is broadly concerned with the historical evolution of Hungarian Orthodoxy's responses to antisemitism, expounding upon the traditional formulation of exilic punishment ("because of our sins"), its gradual change through interactions with modernity, and a comparative portrait with Neologue liberals who consistently took great offense at any antisemitic insinuation. The formal split between Orthodoxy and Neologue also manifested in the former sometimes ascribing antisemitism to the hyper-assimilation of the latter, and Neologue questioning the patriotism of the Orthodox, who were clearly able to demonstrate their full Hungarian patriotism and acculturation. (In the years before the Holocaust, there were some resurgences of a traditional formulations of suffering in the context of patriotism, even by some Neologue and non-polarized Orthodox rabbis.) Chapter 9 makes sense of Jewish responses to Magyar antisemitism, differentiating between apologetic, activist, and "common front" approaches, while also emphasizing the end of World War I as the turning point when Modern Orthodox Jews tended to react more strongly and patriotically against antisemitic press and rhetoric. The final chapter unpacks the Orthodox institutional / press discursive strategies (invoking European Enlightenment and its hypocrisy; law and order, etc.) among its adherents as well as the wider Hungarian-Jewish / Hungarian public.

Patriots without a Homeland makes a major contribution in revising the 'standard' historiographical view that the Neologue and Orthodox denominations were ineluctably different in their attitudes towards the Hungarian public / nation-state. Hartman reads critically into the historiographical and Zionist-pedagogical motivations of Jacob Katz's 'standard' view, claiming that Katz may have believed that Orthodox-Hungarian patriotism was mere lip service. He provides enough evidence to convincingly argue that this was not the case, particularly for the Western / Modern Orthodox stream that Katz does not seem to formally distinguish from the Eastern / Ultra-Orthodox. Hartman is painstaking in explicating intra-Orthodox distinctions and tensions, even between the Ultra-Orthodox. But perhaps there could be more use of memoiristic evidence in doing so, and assessment of the role of class difference in mobilizing Hungarian language use and patriotism.

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We would also like to offer our special thanks to:

Dr. Naftali Cohn, our very supportive department Chair; Munit Merid, administrator extraordinaire, without whom we could not have pulled this publication together; Lindsey Jackson, our amazing mentor; Sophie Charest, our incredible designer; and all our referees, readers, and everyone else who gave their time to the publication of this journal.

The Journal of Religion and Culture (JRC) acknowledges that our work takes place on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today. Tiohtià:ke, which has been settled as Montréal, has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations, including Kanien'kehá:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg. This place continues to be the home of many Indigenous peoples, as well as settlers and immigrants representing different cultures, languages, and worldviews. As uninvited guests who call this place home, we respect the continued connections with the past, present, and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the community, and we are grateful for the opportunity to live here. We hope to honour the relational values that Indigenous peoples have centered in their connections with human and ecological worlds, and aim to centre consistent and persistent labour rooted in decolonial and antiracist practices while recognizing and working to change ongoing colonial practices of institutions of higher education.

