

# Notes

## Introduction

1. A good example for this kind of approach is Nathan Katz's approach, as it finds expression in various of his contributions. See, From Legend to History in the Ancient World, *Shofar* 17,3, 1999, pp. 7–22; The State of the Art of Hindu-Jewish Dialogue, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Nathan Katz et al., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, pp. 113–126.
2. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/17/nyregion/orthodox-jews-in-brooklyn-burn-banned-wigs.html>, dated May 17, 2004.
3. Avoda Zara is also considered as relevant to problems of Jewish identity, as discussed with reference to specific cases featured in the chapter on Jewish identity.

## 1 Situating the Project: Personal and Collective Dimensions

1. See Katz, From Legend to History in the Ancient World, *Shofar* 17,3, 1999, pp. 7–22.
2. See Meir Bar Ilan, India and the Land of Israel: Between Jews and Indians in Ancient Times, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 4, 2001, pp. 39–77.
3. The volume appeared as Alon Goshen-Gottstein and Eugene Korn (eds.), *Jewish Theology and World Religions*, Littman Library, Oxford, 2012. My paper on Hinduism in that volume is Encountering Hinduism: Thinking Through *Avodah Zarah*, pp. 263–298. This essay provides an overview of many of the theses in the present book and even more so of some of the key theses of *Same God, Other god*. The conference that ultimately led to that volume, as well as to the present volume, was hosted at Scranton University by Marc Shapiro. Without his support and partnership, the reader of the present volume might have been reading some other scholarly publication.
4. Nathan Katz made a contribution to the Scranton conference that expressed this awareness. However, his own contribution focused more upon the history of the Jews in India than upon the theological dimensions of the encounter and the broader challenges it presents.
5. Asymmetry of some kind is a feature of most relations between different religions. The asymmetry may stem from different levels of need or interest, as in the case of Judaism and Christianity, or from varying political and power relations that make the encounter more urgent or more problematic, for one side or the other. Hindu-Christian relations certainly suffer from asymmetry, marked as they are by colonial history and the hegemony of certain forms of discourse in theological and academic circles.

6. References for what follows may be found in Yulia Egorova, Describing the “Other,” Describing the “Self”: Jews, Hindu Reforms, and Indian Nationalists, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin*, ed. N. Katz et al., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, pp. 197–211. See also Alan Brill’s post, <http://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2013/11/11/some-modern-hindu-approaches-to-judaism/>.
7. See also the comments by Radhakrishnan, brought by Brill. <https://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2013/11/11/some-modern-hindu-approaches-to-judaism/>.
8. 1824–1883, to be distinguished from his namesake, born in 1930, who has played an important role in Hindu-Jewish relations, as we shall see later in our study.
9. See Egorova, Describing the “Other,” p. 202.
10. The comparative study of religion provides an academic venue for recognizing Judaism’s distinctiveness. However, unless Judaism is studied on its own account and in relation to living Jewish communities, reference to Judaism, even in a comparative context, ends up either perpetuating Christian stereotypes or identifying Judaism with the Old Testament. See references to Dasgupta in Brill’s post. That reading Judaism in terms of the Old Testament alone can nevertheless yield perceptive insights emerges from the discussion of Soderblom, in a later chapter of the present work.
11. See Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi and His Jewish Friends*, Macmillan Academic, Basingstoke, 1992, and more recently Shimon Lev, *Soulmates: The Story of Mahatma Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach*, Orient BlackSwan, Hyderabad, 2012. Gandhi’s friendship with Jews revolved around idealism, common battles, and the struggles of Jews and Indians for survival and independence. There is almost nothing of a specifically religious character that would allow his friendships, especially with Kallenbach, to be classified as an encounter between Judaism and Hinduism. See Chatterjee, p. 170, and compare p. 55. This is due to the persons with whom he formed friendships. The Jews he encountered were not particularly observant and hence most of the exchanges involving Gandhi and Jews relate to Zionism, rather than to Judaism. This also accounts for how Judaism at times is viewed by Gandhi through unflattering Christian stereotypes. Thus, in writing on Jewish responses to Nazism, Gandhi evokes the stereotypes of Jewish vengefulness and the “eye for eye” attitude, contrasted with Christian love. See Chatterjee, pp. 168–169 and Shimon Lev, Gandhi’s Attitude to the Shoah, *Haya Haya* 9, 2012, p. 20 [Hebrew], citing *Harijan*, 12.12.1939. See also Gandhi’s spiritualizing the Land of Israel out of its concrete existence, Lev, *Soulmates*, p. 139.
12. Anna Guttman’s *Writing Indians and Jews: Metaphorics of Jewishness in South Asian Literature*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2013, leads us to the conclusion that in colonial and postcolonial Indian literature the figure of the Jew is quite present. But, as in the case of Gandhi, awareness of the Jew has little to do with awareness of Judaism.
13. To further complicate matters, much of the attention of Hindu intelligentsia in the earlier part of the twentieth century was focused on the Jewish problem and the Zionist movement, not leaving much room for a self-standing appreciation of Judaism. Rabindranath Tagore seems to be one figure who may have had a broader appreciation of Judaism, alongside his support for the Zionist movement. This is in part based on personal relationships, but also on the fact that he was a more cosmopolitan figure, and visited major Jewish communities in the United States. See Shimon Lev, Tagore, Jews and Zionism, *Mabu’a* 49, 2008, pp. 11–23 [Hebrew].
14. Still, the state of awareness of Judaism as a self-standing religion leaves much to be desired. The Satya Sai Baba movement is a case in point. This Hindu guru, who

passed away in 2011 and who was one of India's most popular gurus and who had thousands of Jewish followers, devised an interreligious symbol for his movement. Significantly, Judaism is not represented in this symbol. The underlying reasoning seems to, once again, appeal to Judaism's indistinguishability from Christianity. Later verbal communication attempts to correct this imbalance. See Charlene Leslie-Chaden, *A Compendium of the Teachings of S.S.S.B.*, Sai Towers Publishing, Bangalore, 2004, p. 296. See further <http://bdsteel.tripod.com/More/Relknow.htm>. His American followers seem to have attempted to correct this imbalance, by providing a digest view of Judaism, culled from several introductory works, as part of their theory of the unity of all religions. See [http://www.region7saicenters.org/saidocuments/Unity\\_of\\_Faiths\\_Judaism.pdf](http://www.region7saicenters.org/saidocuments/Unity_of_Faiths_Judaism.pdf). Perhaps even more disgraceful is the absence of Judaism from the museum of world religions in Puttaparthi, part of the Satya Sai Baba complex, where even the smallest animistic religions are featured. Whatever this may say about this particular movement, populated as it is by thousands of Jewish members, it is also a testimony to the broader lack of awareness of Judaism as a distinct religion in the Indian subcontinent. I might add that a parallel museological exhibit, prepared by the Swaminarayan movement, in their Akshardham complex in Gandhinagar, Gujarat (and now in New Delhi, though I have not visited it), does present Judaism as a world religion. Both museological exhibits seek to portray their respective faith traditions (Satya Sai Baba and Swaminarayan Hinduisms) as a kind of culmination of all world religions. The difference in the presentation of Judaism can therefore not be ascribed to the purpose of the exhibit.

## 2 The Hindu-Jewish Encounter: The Present Context

1. I therefore find it difficult to accept Nathan Katz's broad generalization that "Hindu-Jewish dialogue is not some new fad; it is truly an ancient encounter that dates back more than two millennia" (see Nathan Katz, *The State of the Art of Hindu-Jewish Dialogue*, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin*, ed. Nathan Katz et al., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, p. 124). While it is true that some kind of encounter can be traced over millennia, this statement ignores the novelty of the present situation and its particular challenges. These challenges are new and can draw only minimal guidance or inspiration from the meager contact that has taken place over the centuries. I believe it is more helpful to the present enterprise if its radical novelty can be highlighted rather than the continuity of the encounter over the millennia.
2. There seems to be only one Jewish personality of any significance on the religious horizons of classical India, and his Jewishness is ethnic rather than specifically religious. See chapter 4.
3. Nathan Katz repeats the claim for a symmetrical encounter in three different places (which are essentially the same piece). See Nathan Katz, *The State of the Art of Hindu-Jewish Dialogue*, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Nathan Katz et al., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, pp. 113–126, which repeats claims made previously in *How the Hindu-Jewish Encounter Reconfigures Interreligious Dialogue*, *Shofar* 16,1, 1997, pp. 28–42. The thesis is repeated again in *The Hindu-Jewish Encounter and the Future*, *The Fifty Eighth Century: A Jewish Renewal Sourcebook*, ed. Shohama Wiener, Jason Aaronson, Northvale, NJ, 1996, pp. 331–343. Katz's description of a symmetrical dialogue grows out of his work on Indian Jews, but it is only appropriate, in terms of my own presentation, for the

- meeting of Jews and Hindus in the diaspora. It does not describe what I consider to be the most important encounter, namely the encounter of Jews with Hinduism in India itself. The issue of symmetry, or lack thereof, would be one important point concerning which the present book takes issue with Katz's earlier work.
4. Indeed, these meetings were organized by the World Council of Religious Leaders, an organization whose stated goal is to bring together leadership of all world religions.
  5. On Shmuel Hugo Bergman, see Miriam Dean-Otting, Hugo Bergman, Leo Baeck, and Martin Buber, Jewish Perspectives on Hinduism and Buddhism, *Journal of Indo Judaic Studies*, 1,2, 1999, pp. 7–26.
  6. About half a dozen figures may be considered in this class. These include Mirra Alfassa, the Mother at Pondicherry's Aurobindo Ashram; Paul Brunton, who brought Ramana Maharshi to world attention, as did another Jewish disciple, S. S. Cohen; Maurice Frydman, known as Swami Bharatananda; and Swami Vijayananda, whom we shall study extensively later in this work.
  7. It is interesting to note how this fact registers on the Jewish side. Arye Kaplan claims that 75 percent of members in some ashrams are Jewish. See Arye Kaplan, *Jewish Meditation: A Practical Guide*, Schocken, New York, 1985, p. vi. The sense that Jews are losing membership to Hindu movements thus looms large for Jewish educators who are aware of the Hindu movements. Tomer Persico suggests that Kaplan shapes his Jewish meditation along the lines of, and in response to, the kind of meditation that was most widely practiced in the 70s, namely mantra meditation. See Tomer Persico, "Jewish Meditation": *The Development of a Modern Form of Spiritual Practice in Contemporary Judaism*, PhD thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2012, pp. 385–389.
  8. Daria Maoz, Every Age and Its Backpack, *From India Till Here*, ed. Elhanan Nir, Rubin Mass, Jerusalem, 2006, pp. 107–125 [Hebrew].
  9. *From India Till Here*, ed. Elhanan Nir.
  10. Dori Hanemman, What Does India Add to the Torah of the Land of Israel, *From India Till Here*, ed. Elhanan Nir, pp. 75–87.
  11. See Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961.
  12. These are listed in Alan Brill's presentation of Eastern Religions in his *Judaism and World Religions: Encountering Christianity, Islam and Eastern Traditions*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, pp. 210–212. For a discussion of Benjamin of Tudela's possible travels to India, see Richard Marks, Hindus and Hinduism in Medieval Jewish Literature, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin*, ed. Nathan Katz et al., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, pp. 65–67.
  13. On the psychological dynamics of Israeli travel to India and on profiling parts of Indian culture, at the expense of others, see Laurie Patton and Shalom Goldman, Indian Love Call: Israelis, Orthodoxy and Indian Culture, *Judaism* 50,3, 2001, pp. 351–361. See also Daria Maoz, When Images Become "True": The Israeli Backpacking Experience in India, *Karmic Passages, Israeli Scholarship on India*, ed. David Shulman and Shalva Weil, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 214–231.
  14. There is one kind of encounter that I do not engage in the present study, even though it also constitutes a site of encounter, in many ways the most challenging. I shall not enter the issue of mixed Jewish-Hindu marriages. The focus of the present work is encounters that take place from the starting position of committed religious identities, meeting across the boundaries of recognized religions. Interreligious marriage, more often than not, is only secondarily a religious encounter, with its primary

driving motivation coming from the social and affective dimensions of the individuals' lives. Consequently, it is nearly impossible to practice interreligious marriage while remaining fully faithful to one's tradition. On the phenomenon of Jewish-Hindu mixed marriages see Jeremy Caplan, *Om Shalomers Come of Age*, <http://forward.com/articles/6137/om-shalomers-come-of-age/>.

15. Margaret Chatterjee seems to be the only Indian author to have undertaken a serious study of some aspects of Jewish and Israeli reality. In any event, she is the only one who has written about the Israeli side of things. Significantly, she is the only Indian author to have contributed to Hananya Goodman's, *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1994. In conversation with friends she has resisted revealing her own religious background, and her Jewish identity cannot be discounted.
16. See David Shulman and Shalva Weil's prelude to *Karmic Passages, Israeli Scholarship on India*, pp. 1–7.
17. Introduction to *Karmic Passages*, p. vii.
18. In the context of the present work, it may not be superfluous to point out that despite the broad interest in India and Hinduism, little academic energy is actually invested in comparative, let alone theologically comparative, studies of Hinduism and Judaism. The only comparative study in *Karmic Passages*, that of Shlomo Biderman (himself a practicing Jew), compares Buddhist and Western notions of compassion, but not specifically Jewish ones. (Biderman's *Philosophical Journeys: India and the West*, Yediot Aharonot Press, Tel Aviv, 2003 [Hebrew] is more balanced in this respect, but does not focus specifically on Jewish-Hindu philosophical comparisons.) The service of Israeli academia to the concerns of the present book is thus less significant than one would hope. Comparative and theological studies, with dialogue in view, seem to be more characteristic of the American academic milieu than they are of the Israeli. This emerges from the various works edited by Nathan Katz, including the volumes of the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* as well as *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century*. Significantly, these give voice to predominantly North American scholarship. Katz's own biographical stake in the theological and comparative enterprise emerges from his biography, *Spiritual Journey Home: Eastern Mysticism to the Western Wall*, Ketav, Jersey City, 2009.

### 3 The Jews of India: What Can We Learn from Them?

1. For a history of ties between Jews and India, see Meir Bar Ilan, *India and the Land of Israel: Between Jews and Indians in Ancient Times*, *Journal of Indo Judaic Studies* 4, 2001, pp. 39–77.
2. See Henry Fischel, *The Contribution of the Cochin Jews to South Indian and Jewish Civilizations*, *Commemoration Volume: Cochin Synagogue Quatercentenary Celebrations*, ed. S. S.Koder, Cochin, 1971, pp. 15–64.
3. It is most interesting to examine bibliographies on Indian Jewry from this perspective. Several bibliographical lists have been published by Nathan Katz. See, *An Annotated Bibliography about Indian Jewry*, *Kol Binah* 8,1, 1991, pp. 6–33; *Bibliography about Indian Jewry*, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* vol. 2, 1999, pp. 113–135, and vol. 3, 2000, pp. 126–132. It is striking how these bibliographies are arranged, and their arrangement accords well with the subject matter of the literature and its own concerns. Most of the materials are in the domain of ethnography and sociology. Materials are broken down according to categories such as Cochin Jews, Iraqi Jews, Bene Israel, etc. There is no halachic discussion, either as part of the

taxonomy or in the titles covered in the bibliographies. Philosophical and ideological analyses are also scarce. Whatever there is, in this respect, is the fruit of Western scholars of religion who engage in comparative studies, not of local Indian Jewry's own intellectual creativity.

4. For a reading of Yom Kippur celebration in these terms, see Shalva Weil, Yom Kippur: The Festival of Closing the Doors, *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism*, ed. Hananya Goodman, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1994, pp. 85–100.
5. See, however, Meir Bar Ilan's attempt to read the caste system into standard rabbinic Judaism. Bar Ilan, India and the Land of Israel, pp. 49–51.
6. See Nathan Katz and Ellen Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochín: Jewish Identity in Hindu India*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1993, p. 249.
7. See Joan Roland, Religious Observances of Bene Israel: Persistence and Refashioning of Tradition, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies*, 3, 2000, p. 41.
8. It is worth noting that within a fairly limited sphere, some Jews could also engage in pilgrimage to sites venerated by Hindus and Muslims as well. See Roland, Religious Observances, p. 31.
9. S. D. Goitein and M. A. Friedman, *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents of the Cairo Genizah (India Book)*, vols.1–3, Leiden, Boston, 2008, p. 25.
10. Much depends, of course, on the exact itinerary of Benjamin and on the identification of the places he visited and the religious communities he encountered. See Richard Marks, Hindus and Hinduism in Medieval Jewish Literature, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin*, ed. Nathan Katz et al., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, pp. 65–67. A later Jewish traveler to India does much the same, in describing what he sees in terms of biblical idolatry. On Jacob Sapir see Richard Marks, Hinduism, Torah and Travel: Jacob Sapir in India, *Shofar* 30,2, 2012, pp. 26–51. Contrast this with the positive application of biblical language by Azriel Carlebach, *India: A Road Journal*, Ayanot, Tel Aviv, 1956 [Hebrew].
11. See Alan Brill, *Judaism and World Religions: Encountering Christianity, Islam and Eastern Traditions*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, pp. 210–212. See also Shirley Berry Isenberg, *India's Bene Israel, a Comprehensive Inquiry and Sourcebook*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1988, p. 87.

#### 4 Sarmad the Jew: A Precursor of the Encounter

1. The following discussion extracts a very detailed and textually oriented discussion by Alon Goshen-Gottstein, *Revisiting Sarmad the Jew*, forthcoming.
2. There is no standard edition of the Rubayats in English, and I have counted five different translations. These include Isaac A. Ezekiel, *Sarmad: Jewish Saint of India*, Punjab, Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1966; M. G. Gupta, *Sarmad the Saint: Life and Works*, MG Publishers, Agra, 1991; Zahurul Hassan Sharib, *Sarmad and His Rubaiyat*, Sharib Press, Southampton, UK, 1994; and most recently Paul Smith, *Sarmad: Life and Poems*, Createspace Independent Pub, 2014. One edition is available on the internet. This is Fazl Mahmud Asiri's *Rubaiyat—i—Sarmad*, 1950, available at <http://www.bahaistudies.net/asma/rubaiyat-i-Sarmad.pdf>.
3. The Persian edition is Rahim Razazada Malik (ed.), *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, Teheran, Kitabkhanah-i Tahuri, 1983. English translation David Shea and Anthony Troyer, *Dabistan-i Mazahib or School of Manners*, Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, Paris, 1843.

4. It is worth noting that Akbar's open interreligious court included Jews, who were part of spiritual discussions. See Fischel, below. From Akbar's edicts relating to synagogue building we also learn that they were not simply expatriated theologians from elsewhere, but that they could in theory belong to a Jewish community. Even so, it is striking that a tiny Jewish community would be featured alongside the other prominent religions of India. In terms of Indian knowledge of Judaism, this is very much at odds with the general situation, where Judaism is often not appreciated as a religious tradition in its own right.
5. This matter is treated at length in Katz's presentation, see below.
6. This matter comes up in his poetry. Sarmad writes: "I go to the mosque, but I am no Muslim." See Quatrain 218, p. 351 in the collection translated by Ezekiel.
7. Walter Fischel, *The Bible in Persian Translation*, *Harvard Theological Review* 45,1, 1952, pp. 22–24.
8. Beas, Radha Soami Satsang.
9. Ezekiel, *Sarmad*, pp. 40ff.
10. Ezekiel authored another work for the Radhasoami press on Saint Paltu, 1978. The saint fits even more closely with the Radhasoami worldview and there is no need to affirm his identity in any particular way. Sarmad figures in another Radhasoami publication on Judaism. This is Miriam Bokser Caravella's *The Holy Name: Mysticism in Judaism*, Radha Soami Satsang Beas, New Delhi, 1989. Sarmad is cited there multiple times, and the author is obviously aware of Ezekiel's work. To her credit, while the author acknowledges he was Jewish and as a teacher unknown to "Western Judaism" (p. 17), she never features Sarmad as a specifically Jewish teacher. She cites him as a model for the spiritual life, not for the spiritual life as known and taught in Judaism. Bokser's work is critiqued in a later chapter of the present book.
11. Roger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India*, HarperOne San Francisco, New York, 1994.
12. Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus*, pp. 249–250.
13. The way Kamenetz presents Fischel's thesis takes it beyond Fischel. It is not simply that Sarmad wasn't really converted while contributing intellectually to the *Dabistan* and to the Torah's translation. With this formulation, these activities are *expressions* of his Judaism.
14. Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus*, p. 250.
15. Quatrain 320 in Ezekiel's collection, p. 382. See further Quatrain 314, p. 380. It is interesting to note that a wikipedia article that lists Muslims who converted to Hinduism includes Sarmad. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_converters\\_to\\_Hinduism\\_from\\_Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_converters_to_Hinduism_from_Islam). This list appears in various other places on the web.
16. Nathan Katz, *The Identity of a Mystic: The Case of Sa'id Sarmad, a Jewish-Yogi-Sufi Courtier of the Mughals*, *Numen* 47, 2000, pp. 142–160.
17. Translation based on Asiri, *Rubaiyat—i—Sarmad*, p. vii. Shea and Troyer, *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, p. 293: "I submit to Moses' law; I am of thy religion, and a guardian of the way. I am a Rabbi of the Yahuds, a Kafir, a Muselman." While Judaism is featured in both translations, it is privileged in Shea and Troyer's translation, making it the primary focus.
18. See Maulavi 'Abdu'l Wali, *A Sketch of the Life of Sarmad*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 20, 1924, p. 118.
19. The following text by the contemporary Jesuit Manucci, is brought by Fischel, *Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors*, *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*, 18, 1948–1949, pp. 137–177.

20. Extract from Alamgir Nama of Muhammad Kazim, written in 1688, translated in H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Trubner, London, 1877, vol. 7, p. 179.
21. Penned by a court historian, we can't really take this quote as instructive of Sarmad's own self-identity. It does teach us however that not only was Sarmad viewed as a Jew, and not simply a Muslim, but that his teachings were viewed in relation to Judaism. At the very least, there was nothing in Sarmad's teachings that would belie such an understanding.
22. See Katz's contextualization of such practices in seventeenth-century India, *The Identity of a Mystic*, pp. 158–160.
23. For a summary of this, see Katz, *The Identity of a Mystic*, pp. 153–157.
24. One should note that Sarmad's move from Judaism to Islam occurred in Iran, prior to arriving in India. His mystical breakthrough, finding expression in his practicing nudity, composing poetry, and also in expanding his religious identity to include Hinduism, all took place on Indian soil.

### 5 Judaism(s) and Hinduism(s)

1. See Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs (eds.), *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.
2. See Jacob Neusner, *Judaisms in Modern Times : Toward a General Theory, Major Trends in Formative Judaism 5*, ed. Jacob Neusner, University of America, Lanham, 2002, pp. 209–237.
3. This is not to suggest that other streams of Judaism will take exception to the present work. The differences between various present-day Judaism with reference to the subject matter of the present work is not significant. The only difference would be that some non-Orthodox groups may simply be less concerned with problems of idolatry and identity, as discussed in a later chapter in this volume and in *Same God, Other god*. Lesser concern for these issues does not amount to an alternative strategy for tackling them. Hence, confessing my Orthodox roots has little substantive implications, beyond establishing clarity within the playing field(s) of Judaism.
4. This statement of how to balance competing perspectives and definitions of "Judaism" is made primarily for purposes of theoretical discussion. My discussion of Judaism does not diverge from the common normative view of Judaism.
5. While we do not have an autonomous definition of "Hinduism," unless we resort to geographic definitions of the Middle Ages, recent research suggests that concern for establishing Hindu identity is not a purely modern preoccupation. See Andrew Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2010.
6. Thus, for the past decade or so, one forum in which the encounter between Judaism and Hinduism has been taking place is the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Within that framework one of the program units is titled "Comparative Studies of Judaism and Hinduism." The plural, by means of which both religions are described, is noteworthy. It seeks to get around the problems of definition and to offer a broad perspective from which comparative studies may be carried out. Comparison is one of the historian's tools and the discussions within this group are always historical and descriptive, never theological and normative. This is one of the fora in which models of relations between these two religions can be explored,

but such explorations never carry the theological burden of the encounter between religious traditions and their practitioners. History and its descriptive work can live with the multiplicity of religious forms. It is interesting to contrast this with the name, and the work, of another group of scholars that meets in the margins of the American Academy of Religion. Significantly, that group is called “Society of Hindu-Christian Studies.” There is an overlap in the membership of scholars participating in the work of both groups. It is therefore particularly noteworthy that the theological (Hindu-Christian) work is primarily done under a more unified rubric, while comparativist work (Hindu-Jewish), lives more comfortably with references to the religions in the plural.

7. While Nicholson’s work makes us aware of earlier foundations, the full-fledged articulation of a unified Hindu identity is a modern project, indeed one that is still underway.
8. For a standard presentation of the etymological development of “Hindu,” see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism>. The earliest uses of “Hindu” are geographic, not religious. It is only in the nineteenth century that “Hindu” and (its orientalist abstraction) “Hinduism” came to designate the religion presently known by that name. For an overview of differing constructions of the identity of Hindu communities, including the formation of contemporary Hindu identity, see Romila Thapar, *Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity*, *Modern Asian Studies*, 23,2, 1989, pp. 209–231. See further, Deepak Sarma, *Hinduism, The Crisis of the Holy*, ed. Alon Goshen-Gottstein, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2014, pp. 111–113.
9. For some authors, Hindu tolerance is constitutive of Hindu identity. See Shakunthala Jagannathan, *Hinduism: An Introduction*, Vakils, Feffer and Simons, Bombay, 1991, p. 1. Hindu tolerance is an interesting point of intersection between the normative (as understood by these authors) and the descriptive, providing us with an important facet that cannot be ignored in an overall appreciation of Hinduism.
10. It should be noted that, unlike the Torah, recognition of the Vedas does not translate into an agreed-upon lifestyle or belief, as prescribed by the Vedas.
11. In the context of work at the United Nations, the Brahma Kumaris have obtained a status independent of Hinduism. An even more extreme expression of this dynamic is the financially motivated attempt by the Ramakrishna Mission to declare itself non-Hindu. Odd as this may seem, it is not equivalent to the hypothetical analogy of Lubavitch hassidim arguing they are not Jewish.
12. These are usually referred to as Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic traditions, owing to a distinction first introduced by M. N. Srinivas in his 1952, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, Asia Publishing House, New York.
13. See Raymond Williams, *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.
14. On media and migration and their effects on Hindu identity, see John Thatamanil, *Managing Multiple Religious and Scholarly Identities: An Argument for a Theological Study of Hinduism*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68,4, 2000, p. 793.
15. I owe much of my understanding of Hinduism in the diaspora to Vasudha Narayanan, who took part in programs I organized in Israel, and who has made diaspora Hinduism a focus of her studies.
16. See Vasudha Narayanan, *Diglossic Hinduism: Liberation and Lentils*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68,4, 2000, p. 767. Of the various essays in this issue of the journal, devoted to the topic of “Who Speaks for Hinduism?” Narayanan’s

contribution is the one that points most strongly to the descriptive pole on the normative-descriptive axis.

17. The view is a philosophical one and could therefore not be inherently limited to a particular religion. For this reason, it is not surprising that the spiritual teachers who come out of this tradition, most of the Hindu teachers known in the West, are comfortable thinking of themselves and of their message as broader than Hinduism itself. Vedanta may be seen as a metareligious language that itself offers a vision of unity of all religions. Hence, the major Hindu contributions to interreligious dialogue and to the Hindu view of other religions draw on a vedantic understanding of religion, seeing it as identical to Hinduism itself. At the same time, the philosophical transreligious language of Vedanta allows religious teachers affiliated with it to present themselves, or their religious system, as being beyond the particularity of a specific religious tradition. One close friend, a swami, grudgingly agreed to my reference to him as my Hindu friend. He preferred to compromise by being labeled my “so-called Hindu friend.” In ways that are hard to grasp for non-Hindus, various religious and spiritual systems could be exported to the West so that they could variously draw upon their Hindu (or Vedic) roots, or disengage themselves from it. To take some popular examples, both Transcendental Meditation and the Art of Living can be marketed as non-religions, while drawing heavily on Hindu resources, ideas, and even practices. It is not only a matter of commercialization and its attendant deceptions. This plays out a great complexity, inherent in the view of Vedanta as simultaneously the fundamental religious understanding within a specific religious tradition and a worldview that transcends the particularity of that religious tradition. Alan Brill, *Judaism and World Religions: Encountering Christianity, Islam and Eastern Traditions*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, p. 233, raises the question of the implications this has for Judaism’s dialogue with Hinduism. If Hinduism is equated with Vedanta, then rather than a dialogue between two religions, we end up with a dialogue between one religion and one metareligious mysticism or philosophy. On Maurice Fluegel, an Orthodox rabbi, and his suggestion of a common essence between Kabbalah and Vedanta, see Brill’s discussion, *Judaism and World Religions*, pp. 212–3. Finally, it should be noted that in contrast to the ambiguity regarding whether or not *Advaita Vedanta* is a religion, the non-vedantic forms of Hinduism are unequivocally religious in character, as the case of ISKCON clearly indicates.
18. The possibility of an all-inclusive Jewish view of religions that would incorporate Hinduism as well has historical precedent. Eliyahu ben Amozegh, in late nineteenth century, developed a system of metaphysics wherein Kabbalah provides the synthesis of all religious systems, including other religions. Ben Amozegh was aware of Hinduism and of its pantheistic views. These were subsumed within his broader kabbalistic schemata. See Moshe Idel, Kabbalah in Elijah Benamozegh’s Thought, appendix to *Elijah ben Amozegh: Israel and Humanity*, translated by Maxwell Luria, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 1994, pp. 363–377. See further Marc Gopin, An Orthodox Embrace of Gentiles: Interfaith Tolerance in the Thought of S. D. Luzzatto and E. Benamozegh, *Modern Judaism* 18, 1998, pp. 173–195.
19. I have been struck time and again by the appeal to vedantic teachings in the discourses of Mata Amritanandamayi (the hugging saint, commonly known as Amma or Ammachi). The teachings of this present-day Hindu guru, probably India’s most popular present-day religious figure, are quite simple, coming as they do from the direct spiritual experience of a person with almost no formal, let alone theological or philosophical, formation. Nevertheless, the form of Hinduism to which she repeatedly appeals is that of Vedanta.

20. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 68, 4, 2000, pp. 705–835.
21. See Brian Smith, Who Does, Can and Should Speak for Hinduism? *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 68,4, 2000, pp. 741–749.
22. Daniel Sperber, in his forthcoming *The Halakhic Status of Hinduism* suggests that this scholarly and elitist perspective is also recognized by halachic authorities and cites Rabbi Menashe Klein's approach to the sheitel crisis as proof. See Klein's discussion in *Or Yisrael* 10,1, 2005, pp.33–35. The issue is clearly conceptualized in Joshua Flug, A Review of the Recent "Sheitel" Controversy, *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 49, 2005, 5–33. Flug devotes much attention to the question of who holds the key to interpretation and even accounts for the changed ruling of Rabbi Elyashiv by appealing to this consideration. See pp. 19–22.
23. An illustration from the life of Swami Vijayananda, whom we shall discuss in detail in a later chapter, is appropriate. Swami Vijayananda, a Jewish doctor who came to India in 1951, became a disciple of Anandamayi Ma and remained in India at her recommendation. While he became a swami, he never converted to Hinduism. In part, this was due to the fact that there is no classical conversion ceremony to Hinduism, but more pointedly, this goes back to Ma's own reticence, apparently influenced by her own conservative Bengali background, to accept non-Hindus as converts. For the Jewish Vijayananda this was most convenient, as he never sought to forego his Jewish identity. As we shall see below, in his own self-understanding, he had never become a Hindu, but only taken up Vedanta as his preferred spiritual path.
24. See Douglas Brooks, Taking Sides and Opening Doors: Authority and Integrity in the Academy's Hinduism, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 68,4, 2000, p. 823. Brooks considers this part of what it means for Hinduism to have become a world religion. Needless to say, the term "world religions" is fraught with difficulties.

## **6 Judaism and Hinduism: Insights from the Comparative Study of Religion**

1. Significantly, the traffic of ideas seems to be mainly a one-way street. As we shall note, this is also characteristic to a large extent of the modern encounter of Jews and Judaism with Hinduism. I am not familiar with any suggestions of specifically Jewish influences on Hindu religious thought. I am not referring to Judaism's indirect influence through Christianity, but to influences that are specifically Jewish and representative of postbiblical Judaism.
2. This field is much indebted to the ongoing efforts of Nathan Katz, who founded the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* and who is also editor in chief of *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007. Participants in various initiatives organized by him show a strong awareness of the novelty of their academic enterprise and of their attempts to define a new field of studies.
3. Idel mentioned, on that occasion, the use of colors in prayer and meditation as an element that made its way into Judaism from Hindu sources. See, Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1988, pp. 107–108. For a recent presentation of Jewish mysticism that makes comparisons with Hinduism, see Idel's introduction to Jewish mysticism in Steven Katz (ed.), *Comparative Mysticism: An Anthology of Original Sources*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 31.

4. For some theoretical statements of the meaning of the comparative enterprise see K. C. Patton and B. C. Ray, *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in a Postmodern Age*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000.
5. Barbara Holdrege, *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture*, SUNY Press, Albany, New York, 1996. One notes that most of the book highlights fundamental differences between how the two scriptures are understood, owing largely to the difference between the oral (Hindu) and visual (Torah) expressions of the two scriptures. However, the fundamental understandings of scripture and language emerge as common structural ground, which in turn accounts for commonalities such as the theurgic and cosmic applications and expressions of scripture. Holdrege's work presents us with the challenge of considering to what degree the comparative enterprise relies on commonalities or differences in order to be really meaningful. Much of what makes the comparison meaningful is the embodiment of both scriptures in their respective, and similarly structured, communities; see below.
6. This trend may have been launched with the collection of essays *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, edited by Hananya Goodman, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1994. Goodman speaks of resonances between the traditions rather than of historical influences. Nathan Katz quotes Barbara Holdrege's recognition of Goodman's work as one of the fountainheads of the emerging field of Indo-Judaic Studies. See Katz's introduction, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty First Century: A Perspective from the Margin*, p. 4.
7. Similar exercises exist. Some interesting work has been done from this perspective on Jewish and Chinese religions. See Aharon Oppenheimer, *Sino-Judaica: Jews and Chinese in Historical Dialogue*, Tel Aviv University Press, Tel Aviv, 1999. While this work may be inspired by broader globalizing tendencies, reflecting international relations, and commercial interests, on the whole it carries little contemporary impact, in the absence of broad meaningful contact between the cultures and their representatives.
8. Actually, such comparativist exercises already serve the needs of nineteenth-century Jewish Reform theology in the works of David Einhorn and Samuel Hirsch. These authors do not engage Hinduism directly, but do so through treatments of contemporary historians and philosophers. Their purpose is apologetic, seeking to demonstrate Judaism's superiority to all ancient pagan religions, Hinduism included. Their treatment of Hinduism does not stem from a study of Hinduism or its texts. Rather, they view it in light of their a priori criteria for viewing religions. For present purposes, there is little value in their work, except maybe to demonstrate that knowledge of Hinduism as monotheism can be documented among nineteenth-century Jewish writers. See Gershon Greenberg, *Religionswissenschaft and Early Reform Jewish Thought: Samuel Hirsch and David Einhorn*, *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness: Identities, Encounters, Perspectives*, ed. Andreas Gotzmann and Christian Wiese, Brill, Leiden, 2007, pp. 110–144.
9. To a certain extent, the same may be said of the emergence of the academic field of Indo-Judaic Studies in the United States. While the direction may not be as linear as in the case of Israeli travelers to India, the work of Nathan Katz has close associations with his travels and spiritual experiences. See his autobiography, *Spiritual Journey Home: Eastern Mysticism to the Western Wall*, Ketav, Jersey City, 2009.
10. Charles Mopsik, *Union and Unity in the Kabbla*, *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, SUNY Press, New York, 1994, p. 242.
11. For an introduction to the field, see Francis Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, 2010.

12. In the context of a Jewish-Hindu comparative study, see the insightful comments of Braj Sinha, *Divine Anthropos and Cosmic Tree: Hindu and Jewish Mysticism in Comparative Perspective*, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin*, 2007, pp. 106–107. Having made various observations on the place of core common notions in both traditions, Sinha continues to explore the ways in which the two traditions could challenge each other's theological reflections. Such mutual challenging is already an expression of dialogue and encounter and goes beyond the purely descriptive work of the historian of religions. That a descriptive study should move toward reflection upon mutual challenges suggests how close these domains can be.
13. See John Thatamanil, *Managing Multiple Religious and Scholarly Identities: An Argument for a Theological Study of Hinduism*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68,4, 2000, pp. 791–803, especially p. 799ff.
14. Nathan Soderblom, *The Living God: Basal Forms of Personal Religion*. The Gifford lectures, delivered in the University of Edinburgh in the year 1931, London, H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1933. Soderblom's discussion is Chapter 8 of his book, titled *Religion as Revelation in History*, pp. 264–317.
15. Soderblom, *The Living God*, p. 265. Already Swami Vivekananda observed that Judaism and Hinduism are religions that gave birth to other religions. See Yulia Egorova, *Describing the "Other," Describing the "Self": Jews, Hindu Reforms, and Indian Nationalists*, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin*, 2007, p. 200. Egorova references *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1, p. 383. This understanding also made its way to the summits of Hindu-Jewish leadership. See [http://www.millenniumpeacesummit.org/2nd-Hindu-Jewish\\_Summit\\_Report-Final.pdf](http://www.millenniumpeacesummit.org/2nd-Hindu-Jewish_Summit_Report-Final.pdf), p. 10.
16. The historical overview of the respective importance of these religious cultures is a theme to which one returns repeatedly in encounters with individuals. I recall the issue coming up in the course of my exchanges with Swami Vijayananda, which I shall describe in a later chapter. Vijayananda shares Soderblom's perspective, though he probably never read him. The recognition that two religious cultures shaped the course of humanity's religious history means that equal respect needs to be accorded to both. The division between them is geographical. What Judaism did for the West, Hinduism has done for the East. For Vijayananda, the East is the domain of Hinduism and its daughter religions, and there is therefore no need for Judaism, and its daughter religions, to try to leave their religious imprint upon it. This insight may be related to another of Vijayananda's teachings that seekers from the West should not adopt Hindu forms of ritual practice. More on this in the discussion on Vijayananda in a later chapter.
17. The notion of complementarity of religious cultures may also allow us to revisit the problem of lack of symmetry in Jewish-Hindu relations. If we consider the encounter from the perspective of religious cultures, Judaism is being exposed for the first time on a mass scale to Indic religious culture. By contrast, Indic religious culture has been exposed for millennia to the religious cultures that sprang forth from Judaism—Christianity and Islam. This makes the singular contribution of Judaism to Hindu religious culture less easy to define and consequently makes the encounter less challenging, hence less potentially transformative, for Hindu interlocutors of Judaism.
18. Soderblom, *The Living God*, p. 300.
19. Soderblom, *The Living God*, p. 304.
20. On different senses of mitzvah, see Chapter 3 of my forthcoming *Introduction to Judaism, In God's Presence*.

21. Soderblom, *The Living God*, p. 307.
22. One typical example is R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, Athlone Press, London, 1960. Moshe Idel queries the originality of the typology of mystical/prophetic in Zaehner's work. See Kabbalah in Eliyahu ben Amozegh's Thought, appendix to *Elijah ben Amozegh: Israel and Humanity*, translated by Maxwell Luria, Paulist Press, Mahwa, 1994, p. 400, note 39. Idel points to Max Weber's brief contrast of the biblical prophet with the religious reality of India. See Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, translated H. Gerth and D. Martindale, Free Press, Glencoe, 1952, pp. 313–314. While it is possible that we have Weber to thank for this distinction, Weber does not develop a full-blown typology, and the common typology may have its roots in Soderblom's work. Weber's German original appeared in 1921 and Soderblom may have been aware of it.
23. Soderblom, *The Living God*, p. 317.
24. See Sinha, Divine Anthropos and Cosmic Tree, pp. 105–108.
25. Sinha, Divine Anthropos and Cosmic Tree, p. 106.
26. Sinha, Divine Anthropos and Cosmic Tree, p. 107.
27. For what follows, see Barbara Holdrege, What Have Brahmins to Do with Rabbis? Embodied Communities and Paradigms of Religious Traditions, *Shofar* 17,3, 1999, pp. 23–50.
28. Holdrege's methodological attempts to classify Judaism and Hinduism in relation to reigning Protestant paradigms provide, broadly speaking, the methodological and ideological background for those scholars involved in the emerging field of Indo-Judaic studies. This logic governs much of *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin*. Because the editors of this volume took the trouble to ensure that participants in this volume, and in the conference from which it grew, responded to one another's work, Holdrege's earlier work ends up providing the rationale for a broader collective enterprise.
29. See further, Holdrege, What Have Brahmins to Do with Rabbis?, p. 25, note 2.
30. I refer to the forms that have crystallized mainly during the twentieth century, through the encounter with Hindu spiritual teachers, almost all of whom taught under the vedantic umbrella. An important exception is provided by the ISKCON movement. Despite philosophical differences, it too is missionary and transcends traditional ethnic and geographic boundaries. However, it does so while carrying over the orthopraxic dimensions of its form of Hinduism into new social settings, rather than downplaying the orthopraxic dimension of Hinduism in favor of more philosophical and metaphysical emphases.
31. Against this backdrop, it is worth noting the recent work of Elan Divon, *Reaching Beyond the Religious: Seven Universal Wisdom Themes from Seven Thousand Years of Human Experience*, Iuniverse, Bloomington IN, 2010. This book does not fit neatly into one of the categories of the present book. It is best described as a comparative reading of Judaism and Hinduism that highlights ideas, but even more so narratives, in search of common depth structures. These depth structures are then presented as universal wisdom that can speak to anyone, beyond the particularity of the two traditions. The work stakes its own ground and devises its own methodology in what is a crossover between comparative literary and conceptual analysis, and the quest for meaning, wisdom, and spirituality in daily life. One notes that Divon relies exclusively on biblical materials in his presentation of Judaism, hence the heavy reliance on depth narrative structures. His depiction of Hinduism resorts to a broader range of materials. I had initially thought this reflected a particular religious affiliation, such as do the works studied in the Appendix to Chapter 10.

- In personal communication with him I learned this is mainly due to what he has studied and mastered and does not reflect an ideological or religious choice.
32. I exclude from this summary statement the analyses of individual philosophical motifs in both traditions. There is, in theory, no end to the possibilities of contrasting individual themes and motives in two bodies of religious literature. Several studies explore such comparisons between a Jewish and a Hindu author. However, the significance of such comparisons seems to me limited to the interest they evoke in a particular theme. As they do not appeal to larger issues and broader structures, they contribute more to the understanding of the thought of two individuals than to the understanding of two religious traditions and their relations. An example of such studies is Lyone Fein, *Limit and Its Discontents: The Arising of Desire as Discussed* by Patanjali and Isaac Luria, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 3, 2000, pp. 72–85. One area that holds great promise for comparative purposes is hermeneutics and the approach to scripture. See, recently, Daniel Klein, Rabbi Ishmael, Meet Jaimini: The Thirteen Midot of Interpretation in Light of Comparative Law, *Hakirah* 16, 2013, pp. 91–111. Holdrege’s study of Veda and Torah does not explore this dimension.
  33. See Kathryn McClymond, *Differing Intentions in Vedic and Jewish Sacrifices*, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 4, 2001, pp. 23–38. McClymond is aware of Holdrege’s methodological work and follows it.
  34. See R. Dennis Hudson, *A Hindu Response to the Written Torah*, *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, ed. Hananya Goodman, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1994, pp. 55–84. The result is the opposite of those polemical efforts that identified Judaism and Christianity, to the former’s detriment, discussed earlier.
  35. Melila Hellner-Eshed, *In India Even the Tourists Believe in God*, *From India Till Here*, ed. Elhanan Nir, Rubin Mass, Jerusalem, 2006, pp. 53–60 [Hebrew]. An earlier Jewish visitor to India had a different reaction. See Peretz Hirschbein, *India*, translated by U. Z. Greenberg, Mitzpa, Tel Aviv, 1931, p. 41 [Hebrew]. For him, the high ideals of Tagore and Gandhi cannot be reconciled with the reality of worship and sacrifice.
  36. Hellner plays on the rabbinic epithet of God as place, *Hamakom*.
  37. Selections from Hellner, *In India Even the Tourists Believe in God*, pp. 55–58.
  38. This is equally true of spiritual seekers who approach Kabbalah and Indian-based spiritualities as related commodities in today’s spiritual supermarket. See Véronique Altglas, *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014.
  39. It is even more striking if one sees in the vedantic tradition as much, and possibly more, of a tradition of scriptural interpretation and philosophical reflection as a tradition that is based upon mystical experience. See John Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation and the Human Predicament, an East-West Conversation*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2006, pp. 60–66.
  40. Such work may be ideologically motivated, as are the works by Rosen and Boxer, discussed in an appendix to a later chapter. Or it may be scientifically motivated, as is E. M. Abraham’s work, *A Comparative Survey of Hindu, Christian and Jewish Mysticism*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1995. This reworking of a PhD thesis is based entirely on secondary material and advances discussion little, beyond suggesting basic parallels to the mystical life, seen mainly from the perspective of the Hindu tradition, with which the author seems to have greater familiarity. Some points that are worthy of note are the parallels between sefirot and chakras (pp. 196–197), and the suggested parallels between brahman and ein-sof, considered in terms of their functionality in the philosophical/mystical system.
  41. See note 26.

42. See Diane Sharon, *Mystic Autobiography: A Case Study in Comparative Literary Analysis*, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 1,2, 1999, pp. 27–52. A shorter version appeared as *The Mystic's Experience of God: A Comparison of the Mystical Techniques and Experiences of a 13th Century Jewish Mystic and a 20th Century Indic Yogi*, *The Fifty-Eighth Century, a Jewish Renewal Sourcebook*, ed. Shohama Wiener, Jason Aaronson, Northvale, NJ, 1996, pp. 315–330. The author is a biblical scholar, not a scholar of Kabbalah, and her knowledge, as that of so many of those who refer to Kabbalah in the comparative context, is second hand. Do these early articles grow out of her own personal spiritual experiences with the twentieth-century figure Swami Muktananda, whom she compares to Abulafya (the most readily available Jewish mystic for purposes of comparison with mystic phenomena of other religions)? Other scholars, affiliated with Muktananda, can be found in the Academy. See the work by Douglas Brooks, *Taking Sides and Opening Doors: Authority and Integrity in the Academy's Hinduism*, *JAAR* 68,4, 2000, pp. 817–829.
43. See Appendix to chapter 10.
44. *Ibid.*
45. The author Miriam Bokser Caravella is the daughter of Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser, who was a translator of kabbalistic and mystical materials and who published several important anthologies. His daughter would thus come honestly by her own predisposition to present Judaism in kabbalistic terms. Curiously, as the author seeks to present the Jewish mystical tradition, she draws more heavily on the Hebrew Bible than on any other text. Still, it is significant that in seeking to portray Judaism in light of another religion, she so naturally assumes Jewish mysticism as her address within Judaism.
46. Charles Mopsik's insightful words were already quoted above.
47. See Arthur Green, *Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs: Reflections on a Kabbalistic Symbol in Its Historical Context*, *AJS Review* 26,1, 2002, pp. 1–52.
48. From an autobiographical perspective, I find it very significant that Nathan Katz, in *Spiritual Journey Home*, Ktav, Jersey City, 2009, p. xv, considers this parallel to be the heart of his own spiritual journey. Note, however, that even though Katz is exposed to Hinduism, most of his significant experiences, including initiation, actually take place within a Buddhist context. Thus, it is India that impacts him, more than Hinduism. See p. xii of his introduction. The title of Chapter 6, "Becoming a Hindu in Benares" is therefore really a misnomer.
49. Braj Sinha, *Feminizations of the Divine: Sakti and Shekhinah in Tantra and Kabbalah*, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 10, 2009, pp. 25–45; Neela Bhattacharya Saxena, *Shekhinah on the "Plane of Immanence": An intimation of the Indic Great Mother in the Hebraic Wholly Other*, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 12, 2012, pp. 27–44.
50. Nathan Katz, in the framework of a theoretical statement, with regard to the future of the Jewish-Hindu encounter, suggests that Jewish esotericism has a crucial role in this dialogue. See Katz, *The Hindu-Jewish Encounter and the Future*, *The Fifty Eighth Century: A Jewish Renewal Sourcebook*, ed. Shohama Wiener, p. 337.

## 7 The Passage to India: The Quest for Spirituality

1. See Hugh Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2007, pp. 155–156. See further, Abhik Roy and Michele Hammers, *Swami Vivekananda's Rhetoric of Spiritual Masculinity*, *Western Journal of Communication* 78,4, 2014, pp. 545–562.

2. See Barbara Holdrege, What Have Brahmins to Do with Rabbis? Embodied Communities and Paradigms of Religious Traditions, *Shofar* 17,3, 1999.
3. See *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark Burrows, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, MD, 2005; *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M Schneiders*, ed. Bruce Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert, Paulist Press, Mahwa, 2006.
4. Amma speaks Malayalam only. The comment is therefore relevant to how she is being translated and to the regular use of “Spirituality” in English translations of her discourses.
5. See Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, SUNY Press, Albany, New York, pp. 65–81. Yehuda Halevy’s presentation of Hinduism in *Kuzari* 1, 60–62, relates negatively to Indian religion in precisely these terms, considering the inefficacy of Hindu spirituality. It is rather ironic that today’s Jewish seekers turn to India with a sense of the efficacy of Hindu practice in terms of spirituality, though we must recognize that they refer to the third sense of spirituality in the present discussion.
6. Sandra Schneiders, A Hermeneutical Approach to the Study of Christian Spirituality, *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark Burrows, p. 51.
7. Elhanan Nir, Where Is the Time of No Movement, *From India Till Here*, ed. Elhanan Nir, Rubin Mass, Jerusalem, 2006, p. 12 [Hebrew], my translation.
8. Nir, Where Is the Time of No Movement, pp. 22–23. Judaism represents the return to the world and the spiritual life practiced in the world.
9. I have recently learned of a Safed-based organization that seeks to provide Jewish meditation techniques to alumni of the passage to India, working with meditation techniques derived from the tradition of the Ari. Rabbi Meir Sender has been instrumental in facilitating the work of the Hashra’a Center of Safed.
10. Shalva Weil, The Influence of Indo-Judaic Studies in Israel, or the Saliency of Spirituality, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 7–8, 2004–5, pp. 5–11. The piece was originally intended to serve as Weil’s introduction to the volume *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, hence the first part of its title.
11. Some of these ideas were articulated in my paper “When Will I See the Face of God? On the Experience of God’s Presence in Our Religious World,” *Akdamot* 9, 2000, pp. 119–130 [Hebrew].
12. The maxim is often ascribed to the Zohar; however, as Isaiah Tishby has shown, it does not exist in this form in the Zohar. While the idea has precedents and analogues, the maxim itself seems to have been created by Moses Hayim Luzatto (1707–1746). See Isaiah Tishby, “God, the Torah and Israel Are One”: The Source of the Saying in Ramhal’s Commentary on the *Idra Rabba*, *Kiryat Sefer* 50, 1975, pp. 480–492 [Hebrew]; Bracha Sack, More on the Saying “Kudsha-beik-hu Orayta ve-Yisrael Kola Had,” *Kiryat Sefer* 57, 1982, pp. 179–184 [Hebrew].
13. The practice is shared by Sufism. My impression is that, in quantitative terms, the practice of *japa* is more pervasive than the Sufi practice of *dhikr*. It is more common, takes up more time, is practiced in a broader range of circumstances, and for longer.
14. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is the prime example, teaching meditation as a technique, while divesting it of its religious meaning. While Maharishi did not make a personal God the focus or goal of the system, the Divine, as understood in classical Vedanta, maintains its place of importance in his various writings.
15. My admiring thoughts were, I must admit, somewhat tempered by concern for how realistic were Vinod’s goals. To what extent had he been told too many stories that

- lacked spiritual realism, leading him to a false expectation of achieving something that could not be all that readily achieved, even if it does exist?
16. Lakh, in Indian english, is 100,000; crore is 10,000,000.
  17. Rivka Miriam, On Two Conflicting Visits to India, *From India Till Here*, ed. Elhanan Nir, Rubin Mass, Jerusalem, 2006, p. 41–42, 45.
  18. Not only the earth, as in Isaiah. Christian liturgy achieves the same by adding the heaven to the earth, filled by God’s glory.
  19. *Tikunei Zohar*, Tikun 57 (91b) and Tikun 70 (122b). This statement is often juxtaposed with the previous paraphrase of Isaiah in hassidic literature. See *Noam Elimelech* on Terumah, *Degel Machane Ephraim* on Beshalach and Re’eh.
  20. Bavli *Yoma* 69b.
  21. Yoel Glick, *Living the Life of Jewish Meditation: A Comprehensive Guide to Practice and Experience* Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock Vermont, 2014.
  22. Full disclosure: Yoel and I are close friends and fellow travelers on the spiritual path, drawing from the same sources. I can only state my hope that this closeness does not prejudice my view of his work.
  23. This is how Glick’s overall teaching method may be characterized. Prior to the publication of this book, Glick has put together a significant body of teachings that follows this pattern. See [daatelson.org](http://daatelson.org).
  24. Glick, *Living the Life of Jewish Meditation*, p. viii.
  25. Though his training with his teacher was not exclusively in Hinduism.
  26. Ramakrishna occupies a place of honor, based on the frequency of citations in his name. The only figure who is mentioned more frequently than Ramakrishna is the Ba’al Shem Tov.
  27. Glick, *Living the Life of Jewish Meditation*, p. ix.
  28. Glick, *Living the Life of Jewish Meditation*, p. xx.
  29. This touches on the question of Glick’s intended audience. Whereas at face value, Glick’s project is most suitable for Jewish seekers who have had exposure to Hinduism, the above discussion suggests Glick is seeking to correct something more fundamental within Judaism, as presently practiced. Accordingly, his project is relevant also, and perhaps especially, for the spiritually devout who may be missing something in their spiritual life. The problems attendant upon addressing a traditional audience emerge in the review of his work by hassidic author Dovid Sears. See <https://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2014/10/27/dovid-searsreview-of-yoel-glick-part-i/and> <https://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2014/10/19/interview-with-yoel-glickpart-2/>.
  30. For a summary statement of this possibility, see Moshe Idel, Reifications of Language in Jewish Mysticism, *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven Katz, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1992, pp. 42–79. I am much struck by the absence of the term “silence” from the index of a work like Idel’s *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988, as well as from all other monographs by him I consulted. Elliot Wolfson’s theoretically dense discussion in *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2005, ends up pointing in the same direction, with some important nuance. It is noteworthy that all theoretical discussion of silence is taken from twentieth-century philosophers and not from the kabbalists themselves.
  31. For one case study of the respective place of speech and silence in the teachings of a Jewish mystic, see Alon Goshen-Gottstein, Speech, Silence, Song: Epistemology and Theodicy in a Teaching of R. Nahman of Breslav, *Philosophia* 30, 2003, pp. 143–187.
  32. At the same time, I know from exchanges with Yoel that his method is not simply eclectic but informed by certain positions that are either historical reconstructions of

- Judaism or broader approaches to issues of comparative religion. These relate to his spiritual perspective both as theoretical preconditions and as theoretical constructs that grow from it. The work before us does not reveal the full extent of Glick's theoretical engagement with some of the issues that are pointed out in my discussion. Glick has made a strategic decision to create a user's manual and to not include in it his theological, historical, or comparative reasoning, at least not in a systematic way. As a matter of fact, I know that he has removed some of those theoretical discussions from his work, given his understanding of the purpose of the present book.
33. This is why I think it is a mistake to read Glick as offering an Advaita Vedanta reading of Judaism, as Alan Brill suggests. See <https://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2014/10/19/interview-with-yoel-glick-part-2/>. Glick's project is the spiritual life as such and not a particular philosophical system.
  34. Glick, *Living the Life of Jewish Meditation*, p. xv.
  35. We noted it above with reference to E. M. Abrahams, *A Comparative Survey of Hindu, Christian and Jewish Mysticism*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1995. Rene Guenon, *Studies in Hinduism*, Sophia Perennis, Hillsdale, 2001, pp. 26–28, offers a detailed parallelism between chakras and sefirot. Guenon presents this as an original observation that had not been previously made. Guenon first published this study in 1933 in *Voile d'Isis* Oct/Nov. 1933. I am grateful to Paul Fenton for drawing my attention to Guenon's work.
  36. See further on this Alan Brill, Hindu Tantra and Kabbalistic Judaism, <https://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2014/10/21/hindu-tantra-and-kabbalistic-judaism/>.
  37. The pattern of relationship between the religions varies from chapter to chapter. To take the extreme cases, the chapter on steadiness of mind is all Hindu, while the discussion of contemplation is devoid of Hindu sources. Glick is served by both traditions as resources, upon which he draws at will. Despite his opening statement, he is not bound to a predefined formula for the interaction of both traditions.
  38. Chapter 8 of his work, with earlier references on p. 51ff. The phenomenon of spiritual borrowing of Hindu practice and converting it to a Jewish spiritual language can be found also in the adaptation of Hindu liturgical musical practices to Jewish worship. Rabbi Andrew Hahn is known as Kirtan Rabbi. His practice is in fact a Jewish musical adaptation of a Hindu form of worship that uses mantric repetition set to music. See [kirtanrabbi.com](http://kirtanrabbi.com). Whereas Glick offers meditation techniques that complement standard liturgical practices, Hahn imports Hindu devotional methods into the heart of Jewish liturgy.
  39. See the discussion of Persico Tomer, "Jewish Meditation": *The Development of a Modern Form of Spiritual Practice in Contemporary Judaism*, PhD thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2012.
  40. Glick, *Living the Life of Jewish Meditation*, p. 93.
  41. There are precedents for this and I believe Amritanandamayi is one such precedent.
  42. Glick never engages the fundamental difference of attitude to the divine name in both traditions, where one tradition makes it the focal point of devotion, while the other avoids reference to the name, as a sign of reverence.
  43. The problem of theological propriety is encountered in several important junctures, where theological formulations proper to Hinduism are deemed, with no argument, not only appropriate to Judaism but as its spiritual quest and the very quest of the spiritual life. This applies to the facility of declaration of the possibility of union with God and to the affirmation of one's own identity with the Divine. See pp. 18 and 48. From this perspective, the first part of Chapter 11, describing union, is particularly

problematic and, not surprisingly, lacks convincing Jewish sources. The same holds true for Chapter 12, where we find a discussion of personal and impersonal meditation, devoid of Jewish sources. I am not sure I would even know how to say in Jewish terms what Glick is saying here.

44. Glick provides a Hebrew version of chanting *kiriye eleison*, claiming this simple prayer is used to evoke the All Merciful's infinite compassion by all of the Abrahamic faiths (p. 103). If so, this would be a common Jewish-Christian-Muslim prayer and a great common ground for interreligious prayer. In fact, it is being introduced from Christianity into Judaism by Glick.
45. Glick, *Living the Life of Jewish Meditation*, p. 114ff.
46. Glick informs me that these practices were devised with theory in view and an attempt to remain faithful to it. In my view, they can be considered independently of their theoretical grounding.
47. Glick, *Living the Life of Jewish Meditation*, p. 59 ff.
48. The theme of loss appears repeatedly, as Glick either projects or recovers biblical motifs that illustrate the spiritual life, as he presents it. See, for example, Glick, *Living the Life of Jewish Meditation*, p. 91.
49. <https://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2014/10/14/interview-with-yoel-glick-part-one/>, question 9. This statement illicitly strong reactions in Sears's review, part 2. Glick seems to have got himself into unnecessary controversy, first, by agreeing to speak in terms that are not common to both traditions and have not been adequately defined (realized, enlightened) and, second, by suggesting there are today enlightened individuals on the Hindu side, and not on the Jewish side. As it is, his project is one of introducing spiritual giants of the two traditions to his audience through their written legacy. Nowhere does Glick refer to a living teacher of either tradition.
50. See N. Wieder, *Islamic Influences on the Jewish Worship*, East-West Library, Oxford, 1947 [Hebrew]; Mordechai Friedman, Abraham Maimuni's Prayer Reforms: Continuation or Revision of His Father's Teachings? *Traditions of Maimonideism*, ed. Carlos Fraenkel, Brill, Leiden, 2009, pp. 139–154; Paul Fenton, Abraham Maimonides (1186–1237): Founding a Mystical Dynasty, *Jewish Mystical Leaders and Leadership in the 13th Century*, ed. M. Idel and M. Ostow, Aronson, Northvale, NJ, 1998, pp. 127–154.

## 8 Saints: Encountering the Divine in Humanity

1. This touches upon the choice of category by means of which we speak of such individuals. I am presently engaged in a project of developing the category of "Religious Genius" as a means of describing exemplary individuals in different religious traditions, with the support of the John Templeton Foundation. Unlike "saints" and other categories, this category is not charged through its use by any particular religious tradition.
2. See Bavli *Hullin* 92a. The text has a very limited echo in later Jewish literature.
3. The matter deserves more detailed investigation. It seems to me that on the whole even in those contexts where non-Jews are seen in a positive light, they are singled out for moral excellence, sometimes even for faithfulness to ritual and the religious life. They are certainly recognized for wisdom. But reference to them as saints, as people of outstanding holiness, enjoying special and close relationships with God, is something one rarely, if ever, comes across. My impression is that this is the case both in relation to Christianity and in relation to Islam, though further study could

- reveal greater recognition of Muslim spiritual excellence, especially in the context of Jewish Sufism.
4. Wisdom is the paradigmatic exception and it provides a framework within which to appreciate members of other religions. A good example of this may be found in R. Yaakov Emden's *Resen Mat'eh*, a revolutionary tractate, in which he assesses Christianity and its founder. Despite saying some of the most positive things ever said about Jesus and Christianity, even Emden does not portray Christians in terms of saintliness. He speaks of them in terms of morality, historical purpose, and wisdom. The vocabulary of *zadikim* is reserved for Jews. One assumes that a person as widely read as Emden could have been exposed not only to the New Testament, which he analyzes in detail in this tractate, but also to the lives of Christians and their moral and spiritual examples. This kind of literature seems to not have made any impression upon even one of the most open-minded of rabbinic authors.
  5. Hindus often translate the native Hindu term *sadhu*, meaning holy man or renunciant as "saint." This intuitive translation, using a term that is heavily charged in light of Christian history and convention, corresponds to our ability to convey the Jewish notion of *zadikim* by the same term. On the challenges associated with "saints," see my concept paper titled "Religious Genius," authored for the above-mentioned project.
  6. This is reflected in Elhanan Nir, Where Is the Time of Non-Movement, *From India Till Here*, ed. E. Nir, Rubin Mass, Jerusalem, 2006, pp. 7–31.
  7. Recognition of this will be expressed in how we dub these individuals. Nir uses classical rabbinic terminology, referring to them as *zadikim*, thereby expressing the recognition that they are of a kind with Jewish saints, can be compared, and that one can learn from the Hindu species of the same genus. It has been noted that one of the characteristics of Azriel Carlebach's *India: A Road Journal*, Ayanot, Tel Aviv, 1956 [Hebrew] is its choice of positive biblical language to describe Hindu religious reality, rather than the potentially more derogatory rabbinic terminology.
  8. As a matter of fact, during the first Hindu-Jewish summit, Israeli Chief Rabbi, Yonah Metzger, visited the Delhi Akshardham complex. It thus made its impact on the margins of the first official encounter between Judaism and Hinduism. The interface between museological, spiritual, and ritual dimensions of this establishment poses interesting challenges, as far as Avoda Zara is concerned, but I imagine that circumstances did not permit the Chief Rabbi a thorough study of the problem.
  9. See Gilbert Rosenthal, "As-If" Theology and Liberal Judaism, *Conservative Judaism* 39,1, 1986, pp. 34–45
  10. On Moses, see my discussion in chapter 8 of *Israel in God's Presence*, forthcoming.
  11. See Rudolf Mach, *Der Zaddik in Talmud und Midrasch*, Brill, Leiden, 1957; E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1975, pp. 487–511; Arthur Green, The Zaddik as *Axis Mundi* in Later Judaism, *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 45,3, 1977, pp. 327–347; Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, Schocken, New York, 1991, Chapter 3; Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1995, Chapter 6.
  12. See the discussion of Maimonides' definition of Avoda Zara in *Same God, Other god*.
  13. The most pronounced case in recent memory are charges leveled by contemporary *mitnagedim* against Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. See also David Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, Littman Library, London, 2001.

14. This is one of the central issues discussed in *Same God, Other god*.
15. See Susan Palmer, Rajneesh Women: Lovers and Leaders in a Utopian Commune, *The Rajneesh Papers: Studies in a New Religious Movement*, ed. Susan Palmer and Arvind Sharma, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1993, pp. 103–136. The author's introduction references additional relevant sources.
16. As one example of many, see <http://www.rickcross.com/reference/saibaba/saibaba7.html>.
17. Another famous swami whose name has been associated with sexual scandals is Swami Muktananda. However, to the best of my knowledge his disciples did not refer to him as bhagwan. Coming to terms with their founder's problematic sexual behavior and transformation of the movement and its orientation are conscious foci of the movements leaders and thinkers. Their response seems to be the opposite of the denial that characterizes other instances. See Gene Thursby, Swami Muktananda and the Seat of Power, *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*, ed. Timothy Miller, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1991, pp. 165–182. See also Douglas Brooks, Taking Sides and Opening Doors: Authority and Integrity in the Academy's Hinduism, *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 68,4, 2000, pp. 817–829. News of such problems associated with one leading contemporary religious figure have reached my ear, but as they are not public I shall not go beyond this basic statement.

## 9 The Wisdom of India: Ancient Images and Contemporary Challenges

1. See Meir Bar Ilan, India and the Land of Israel: Between Jews and Indians in Ancient Times, *Journal of Indo Judaic Studies* 4, 2001.
2. War of the Jews, 7, pp. 323–388 See Frances Schmidt, Between Jews and Greeks: The Indian Model, *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, ed. Hananya Goodman, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1994, pp. 48–53.
3. War of the Jews, 7, pp. 351–356.
4. See Schmidt's entire discussion, Between Jews and Greeks, pp. 41–53.
5. There are very few studies on this issue. I am indebted in what follows to two articles by Richard Marks. The first is Abraham, the Easterners and India: Jewish Interpretation of Genesis 25,6, *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 3, 2000, pp. 49–71; the second is Chapter 3 in *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 57–73, titled Hindus and Hinduism in Medieval Jewish Literature, as well as to Abraham Melamed, The Image of India in Medieval Jewish Culture: Between Adoration and Rejection, *Jewish History* 20, 2006, pp. 299–314 [Hebrew]. My own presentation reworks some of the materials brought by Marks and Melamed, according to my specific thematic focus.
6. Melamed demonstrates how this Muslim view is itself a continuation of older hellenistic views.
7. Or in some cases leads to casting wisdom as a kind of prophecy. See Shem Tov Falaquera, Ethical Epistle, ed. A. M. Haberman, *Kovetz al Yad* 1, Jerusalem, 1936, pp. 76–78, translated by Melamed, p. 21: "I am from the land of India, from the seed of ancient sages. All my ancestors had ancient beliefs, but only I am left, a prophet of wisdom, an old man of cunning."
8. I would suggest this is a more appropriate way of summarizing the data and its nuances, than the repeated emphasis on the ambivalence and tension between

- adoration and rejection that Melamed argues for. I do not find his presentation of such sustained ambivalence justified by the texts.
9. See Marks, Abraham, the Easterners and India, p. 62ff.
  10. The Book of Beliefs and Opinions 3,9.
  11. I find this to be a more compelling reading of Saadia, than the reading of Marks, according to whom Saadia views them as a religious sect that accepts only the prophetic authority of Adam. See Richard Marks, Hindus and Hinduism in Medieval Jewish Literature, p. 59. What we have here is a theoretical construct, and not a view of the historical India, as understood in medieval times. This is no doubt of interest, in and of itself. Hinduism serves as a meaningful theoretical alternative to Christianity and Islam.
  12. Quoted in Richard Marks, Hindus and Hinduism, p. 63.
  13. Kuzari 1,61.
  14. Richard Marks provides a thorough exposition of Halevy's discussion in a chapter of his forthcoming *The Jewish Interest in Hinduism: A History of Ideas from Judah Halevi to Jacob Sapir*. It is worth noting that even though Halevy speaks of images, he is not, as Marks points out, referring to Hindu image worship, but offers a view of talismanic magic, relying on images, which he, and other medieval authors, ascribes to the Indians. There is no suggestion in Halevy that Hindus worship other gods. The wisdom paradigm may therefore assume a monotheistic view of God. The same cannot be said of Saadia, who shares the view of Indian idol worship and even recognizes Hindu theory, but nevertheless refers to Indians as worshippers of idols. See his commentary to Ex. 32, 1–6, where he speaks of Indians, rather than Brahmins. Marks reconstructs Halevy's views, based on various Muslim authorities, revealing thereby how extensive Halevy's knowledge of contemporary Muslim literature is. The charge of magic is a second strand in Halevy's thinking, which may be conceptually indebted to the lack of true revelation, but at the end of the day functions as a self-standing critique of Hindu practice. The critique is based on the inefficacy of astral magic rather than on issues of appropriate worship and is in line with Halevy's overall reasoning that judges religions by the degree of their efficacy in drawing forth the Divine.
  15. Indeed, as Marks shows, what draws forth Halevy's ire is where Hindu claims for their tradition go beyond the historical boundaries established by biblical revelation. It is thus the undermining of revelation that leads to what is in fact the longest treatment of Hinduism in medieval Jewish literature (though still a fairly short one at that). This point is particularly interesting, given contemporary self-understanding of Hindus as belonging to an ancient, possibly the most ancient religion.
  16. Halevy is representative of a broader trend among Jewish philosophers in the Middle Ages. Wisdom and magic are conflated, and the wise men of India, or the East in general, are presented as magicians. See Dov Schwartz, *Astrology and Magic in Jewish Thought in the Middle Ages*, Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan, 1999, pp. 170, 214. I am grateful to Alan Brill for referencing these sources. On the wisdom of the East, see Zohar I, 99b–100a, and see Richard Marks, Abraham, the Easterners and India, pp. 49–71.
  17. Menashe ben Israel, *Nishmat Hayim* 4,21, Jerusalem, 1998.
  18. As noted, Marks devotes a special study to this verse's interpretation.
  19. Alan Brill, *Judaism and World Religions: Encountering Christianity, Islam and Eastern Traditions*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, p. 208, refers to Menashe's knowledge of the Portuguese Pedro Teixeira, and his writings of 1610.
  20. It is quite curious that Abraham should serve as a figure through whom other religions are legitimated, even if partially. We see here that such legitimation extends

beyond the realm of what are considered today “Abrahamic” faiths, and includes the religion of India, as well. For other associations of Abraham and Hindu tradition, see David Flusser, Abraham and the Upanishads, *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, pp. 33–40. It is interesting to note that Muslim authors also associated Abraham and brahman and Hinduism in general with Abraham. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, G. Allen and Unwin, London, 1972, p. 139. On the problematic nature of the designation of certain religions as “Abrahamic,” see my own Abraham and Abrahamic Religions in Contemporary Interreligious Discourse: Reflections of an Implicated Jewish Bystander, *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 12,2, 2002, pp. 165–183 and more recently Aaron Hughes, *Abrahamic Religions: On the Uses and Abuses of History*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012.

21. Rabbi Matityahu Glazerson, *From Hinduism to Judaism*, Himelsein Glazerson Publishers, Jerusalem, 1984.
22. Yitzchak Ginsburgh, <http://torahscience.org/Chanuka,%20India%20and%20the%20Structure%20of%20the%20Soul.pdf>. This teaching is discussed in <http://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2013/11/27/rabbi-yitzchak-ginsburgh-on-chanukah-and-israelis-in-india/>.
23. Ginsburgh, p. 1.
24. It is noteworthy that Ginsburgh’s teaching plays on the word צלם, which describes both the image of God that has to be reconstituted through the spiritual search in India and the false images associated with image worship. He uses the term exclusively in the former context, avoiding, like Glazerson, any discussion of image worship.
25. See Melamed. Note in particular how India and Africa were confused in the common imagination, as described by Melamed Abraham, The Image of India in Medieval Jewish Culture: Between Adoration and Rejection, *Jewish History* 20, 2006, p. 310ff.
26. This is the subject of a forthcoming study by Richard Mark’s, who studies the various medieval Jewish authority from this angle.
27. See his commentary on Gen. 24,2; 46, 3; Ex. 8,22; 19,9; Psalms 2,12 and Daniel 1,15. These examples and more are discussed by Marks in a chapter on Ibn Ezra in his forthcoming work.
28. So for Ibn Ezra. Other authors, as demonstrated by Marks, use the same data to opposite conclusions.
29. Scholars seem to differ on whether Benjamin ever made it to India in person or not. According to Melamed, p. 311, Benjamin’s description is influenced by Muslim texts and does not constitute an eyewitness report. Furthermore, as in many cases in the Middle Ages, India and Ethiopia or Africa have been confused and identified, thereby detracting further from the reliability of this witness. Marks, *Hindus and Hinduism*, pp. 65–67, on the other hand, reads Benjamin as a faithful report of his own travels, even if it was reworked by reference to biblical materials.
30. This is also true of Maimonides’ reference to the people of India, in the Guide of the Perplexed 3,29 and 3,46. However, Maimonides is not really helpful to our discussion. India is related to in the framework of his broader treatment of the Sabians. As such, it has little to do not only with the Indian religion per se, but even with the broader cultural image of India in the Middle Ages. Situating Indian religion within a discussion that focuses on idolatry may or may not indicate awareness of the actual religious practices of Hinduism. In any event, it is worth noting that Maimonides approaches Hinduism with sensibilities similar to the contemporary ones, and very much at odds with the common approach to Hinduism as wisdom, current in the Middle Ages.

31. Indian teachers tend to emphasize the experiential aspect that informs the philosophical and mystical insights that contribute to contemporary Hinduism's teachings. This is particularly true in relation to the Upanishads and the teachings of Vedanta. While the Vedas do come under the category of texts that have been heard, and therefore form a parallel of sorts to revealed scripture, there are meaningful differences in understanding the nature of such revelation. For a description of the Hindu understanding of scripture, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What Is Scripture? A Comparative Approach*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1993, Chapter 6.
32. A. J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, Farrar Straus, New York, 1955, p. 15.
33. Notably Gutman Locks, *There Is One*, Jerusalem, self published, 1989. Some modern Hindu figures provide the basis against which a Jewish thinker could articulate his own unique positions. Sri Aurobindo is one such figure. See Miriam Dean-Otting, Hugo Bergman, Leo Baeck, and Martin Buber, Jewish Perspectives on Hinduism and Buddhism, *Journal of Indo Judaic Studies*, 1,2, 1999, pp. 7–26. See also Chapter 5 of Margaret Chatterjee, *Studies in Modern Jewish and Hindu Thought*, Macmillan, London, 1997, devoted to a comparison of Sri Aurobindo and Rav Kook.
34. As indicated above in relation to the volume *Karmic Passages*, travelers to India have provided feeders for the academic study of Hinduism. A similar process may be envisaged in terms of theological reflection, in dialogue with Hinduism and other Eastern religions.
35. The essays collected in *From India Till Here* provide a first taste of such encounters, as do various posts and publications on the Internet by Rabbi Yakov Nagen. The movement can be recognized also in the autobiographical reports of Nathan Katz and David Zeller. See Nathan Katz, *Spiritual Journey Home: Eastern Mysticism to the Western Home*, Ktav, Jersey City, 2009 and David Zeller, *The Soul of the Story: Meetings with Remarkable People*, Jewish Lights, Woodstock, 2006. Reflections on the spiritual significance of the encounter with Indian religion as an instrument for Jewish spiritual regeneration can also be found in Odeya Zuriely's *Transitions*, Rubin Mass, Jerusalem, 2009 [Hebrew], see in particular pp. 33–38.
36. Rabbi Yoel Glick has developed a small body of teachings, captured in a genre and style particular to him, where wisdom teachings of Jewish and Hindu masters blend into a composite spiritual vision. It is noteworthy that his website is named *da'at elyon*, higher wisdom or the wisdom or consciousness of the highest. See [www.daate-lyon.org](http://www.daate-lyon.org). On Glick's major contribution to the field, see Appendix to Chapter 7.
37. Francis Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001.
38. In a Jewish context, combining it with classical Jewish learning, notably by Ohad Ezrahi. I consider these attempts flaky and not on par with parallel Christian attempts. The drive may, in the future, yield more mature fruits.
39. I found particularly helpful the work of Brockington, even though it is more comparativist and descriptive than constructive. See John Brockington, *Hinduism and Christianity*, Macmillan, London, 1992.
40. This doesn't mean that God-talk has ceased completely. It has continued through some of the existing genres, such as hassidic teaching, as exemplified in works of the late Rabbis Schneerson of Lubavitch and Berezovsky of Slonim and others. The point I am making is that Jewish religious thought and how it perceives God and the world has not been significantly challenged in quite a while.
41. One of the theological challenges of the encounter consists of exploring the very tension and distinction between monotheism and monism. The distinction is indebted as much to the question of God and creation, discussed here, as to the question of the relationship between the personal and impersonal God, to be discussed

presently. The challenge is to reflect upon whether monism might be the higher goal that monotheism points to, and therefore a metaphysical fulfillment of monotheism, or whether the metaphysical view of creation and the theological understanding of God should be kept distinct. Of course, this is not only a discussion to be had between religions, but also a discussion within Judaism. Jewish proponents of a pantheistic, or panentheistic, view would intuitively recognize monism, or panentheism, as the higher meaning of the recognition of the one God.

42. One author who would respond positively to these questions is Gutman Locks, mentioned in note 33.
43. See Lynn White Jr., *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, *Science* 155, 1967, pp. 1203–1207.
44. Exclusive focus upon the creation story ignores the covenantal-revelational framework that offsets the perspective that is suggested through this reading of the creation story. See the various responses to White in *Judaism and Environmental Ethics*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2001, listed in the index. It is worth noting that in the context of the new beginning of creation, following the flood, most of Gen. 1,28 is repeated, with the exception of reference to conquering. See Gen. 9,1–2.
45. See Norbert Samuelson, *Jewish Faith and Modern Science: On the Death and Rebirth of Jewish Philosophy*, Rowman and Littlefield, Plymouth, 2009.
46. Maimonides, *Laws of the Foundation of the Torah*, Chapter 1, 1–6, my translation.
47. This in contradistinction to what seems to be the plain sense of the introduction to the ten commandments, linking the Sinai revelation with the particularity of Israel's tale, the Exodus from Egypt, as the preamble to the particular covenantal relationship God is about to conclude with Israel. Rabbinic interpretation, while losing sight of the overall covenantal structures, remains true to the biblical understanding, in reading the opening statement of the decalogue as "accepting the yoke of the kingdom of heaven," which, as Kimelman has demonstrated, provides continuity with the biblical covenant. See Reuven Kimelman, *The Shema Liturgy: From Covenant Ceremony to Coronation*, *Kenishta: Studies of the Synagogue World*, ed. Joseph Tabory, Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan, 2001, pp. 9–105. Thus, this reading of Maimonides is original and it is only on common philosophical soil that it can grow.
48. The third attribute that goes along with these two, based on the teaching of the Upanishads, is bliss.
49. The question of "truth" and which view is metaphysically "correct" is therefore not simply a difference between religions, but also a difference between different voices within the same religion.
50. This formulation accords with the tenets of Advaita Vedanta. Other schools understand worship differently. Accordingly, rather than worship everything *as* God, ultimately making worship an impossibility, God is worshipped *in* everything, without ultimately being identified with everything. This also has consequences for what objects are worshipped. Non-monist schools tend to focus their worship on the person of God (usually of Vishnu), rather than on various manifestations in nature.
51. The "same God" issue provides a core axis for analysis in *Same God, Other god*. I reference this subject here only briefly, inasmuch as it has implications for wisdom and for the possibility of inspiration across traditions.
52. A dialogue with philosophy or Kabbalah is of obvious interest and will in some way impact an encounter based on more conventional understandings of God.
53. This raises the interesting question of the relationship between Christian and Hindu reference to incarnation. I would propose that while in many respects similar claims

- may be made on both sides, the fundamental metaphysical background is different. In the Christian context one is not dealing with a metaphysic that is dualistic in this sense and that requires bridging. Hence the difficulty in accounting for incarnation, against the background of traditional Judaism, and hence the uniqueness of the incarnation in Jesus, seen as a one-time event. For a Jewish appreciation of the Christian incarnation, see my *Judaisms and Incarnational Theologies: Mapping Out the Parameters of Dialogue*, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 39,3–4, 2002, pp. 219–247. For a comparative presentation of Hindu and Christian incarnation, see Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, Chapter 4.
54. It is enough to read randomly through Mahendra Gupta, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, Calcutta, 1942, and multiple editions since, if one wishes to gain an appreciation for how deeply this question runs at the heart of Hindu religious thought.
  55. See Arthur Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, Oxford University Press, London, 1927; David Stern, *Imitatio Hominis: Anthropomorphism and the Character(s) of God in Rabbinic Literature*, *Prooftexts* 12, 1992, pp. 151–174.
  56. In a reflective moment, David Shulman puts forward the hypothesis that Jews worship a *saguna* God with no visible form, while Hindus worship a *nirguna* God, who can take on form. If things are seen in this light, is it even possible to place a value judgement, let alone to consider one form of religion superior to the other, or is one moved to simply recognize fundamental systemic differences? See Shulman's Preface to Hananya Goodman (ed.), *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, p. xii.
  57. Much would depend, of course, on what kabbalistic teaching and what school of Hindu thought are compared. If we compare an Advaita Vedanta position to certain schools, or certain understandings, of early Kabbalah, where *ein-sof* is distinct from God possessing attributes, the comparison may be made. But the theistic Hindu schools refer to the great deities as *saguna brahman*, thereby complicating the identification of the absolute and being beyond form. Similarly, *ein-sof* is also personalized over time. Kabbalistic traditions that speak of aspects within the *ein-sof* suggest it is a higher realm and is not necessarily a formless absolute. Indeed, it may be that from the outset, or close to the outset, *ein-sof* expresses not philosophical speculation of a negative theology, but rather some kind of positive understanding of the absolute. See Sandra Valabregue-Perry, *Concealed and Revealed "Ein Sof" in Theosophic Kabbalah*, Cherub Press, Los Angeles, 2010. Later reference to *Ein Sof Baruch Hu*, may He be blessed, as the focus of devotion, would thus accord with fundamental understandings of *ein-sof*. In light of Valabregue-Perry's study, it may be that rather than contrast *ein-sof* and *brahman* as philosophical concepts, we do better to recognize both of them as means of dealing with the same basic dynamic—that of the relationship between unity and plurality.
  58. This in turn also reflects the broader asymmetry of the present encounter, to which I refer repeatedly.
  59. The sole exception is Ananda, *Hindu View of Judaism*, APC Publications, New Delhi, 1996. The book draws heavily on the theology of Ramakrishna and is of little value to the present discussion.
  60. For a somewhat entertaining illustration of how this plays out in a Hindu academic context, see Alan Brill's post, <http://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2013/11/27/ramana-maharshi-on-judaism/>. This teacher knows his Judaism through Ramana Maharshi. Ramana, in turn, cites some stock verses that are popular in vedantic readings of the Bible, but without reference to Judaism as a specific religion.

61. For reflections on crisis in Hinduism, see Deepak Sharma, *Hinduism, The Crisis of the Holy: Challenges and Transformations in World Religions*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2014, pp. 111–123.
62. It is worth noting that the book titled *Om Shalom*, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, focuses, inter alia, on questions concerning God's nature, absolute and relative, and how God can be approached. In this sense, the book is true to the kind of agenda that can emerge when dialogue is real, opening paths to new self-understanding.

## **10 The Encounter within: Hinduism and Configurations of Jewish Identity**

1. India and its sages figure early on in discussions that are concerned with Jewish identity. However, these discussions are not based on the actual encounter with India, but they use India as a foil for another identity struggle, with Hellenism. See Francis Schmidt, *Between Jews and Greeks: The Indian model*, *Between Benares and Jerusalem*, ed. Hananya. Goodman, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1994, p. 43.
2. Identity is rich and textured. It is articulated not only through the expression of core faith tenets and fundamental observances, but through myriad details that define how one goes about doing some of the most basic things. Identity informs all aspects of one's life. Therefore, in theory everything about how one lives can become an identity marker. The present discussion focuses on identity construction in a narrower sense, as governed by immediate relations with other religions. For a presentation of a broad range of identity-forming strategies see Sacha Stern, *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings*, Leiden, Brill, 1994. While Stern's work is focused on the rabbinic period, much of what Stern records remains true for millennia, considering the formative status of rabbinical literature for later Judaism.
3. It is acknowledged that some forms of contact with Hinduism in the diaspora, especially exposure to Hindu religious groups with outreach mechanisms, do not comply with the description of a travel-based encounter, though they too have only become possible thanks to contemporary ease of travel.
4. See my *A Jewish View of Islam*, *Islam and Interfaith Relations*, ed. L. Ridgeon and P. Schmidt-Leukel, SCM Press, Norwich, 2006, pp. 84–108.
5. It is worth reflecting on the context of the dialogue of the Chief Rabbinate with Hindu religious leaders, in light of this claim. This dialogue, which will occupy our attention later, is driven by the foreign policy needs of Israel, and Israel's foreign ministry played an important role in driving the process. It will therefore be interesting to see what degree of continuity or discontinuity this dialogue has with the experience of Israeli and Jewish travelers to India, who carry most of the present-day encounter.
6. I was recently approached by an institute of Jewish learning with a request to organize a travel to India for Jewish students in search of a spiritual process. Apparently, there is already precedent for such visits within the Hillel campus ministries. The organizers of such initiatives obviously assume that some answer to a problem that they face as Jewish educators will be found through the encounter with India or with Hinduism. While they may not be able to articulate how the process would work, nor to provide assurances that would assuage the fears typically associated with encounters with other religions, they seem to consider that the visit to India holds such promise, that they are willing to risk the experiment, regardless of these

considerations. The process, in their minds, is likely informed by the notion of spirituality.

7. See, for example, Chapter 11 in *Judaic-Hindu Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 197–211. Julia Egerova's chapter is titled: Describing the "Other": Describing the "Self." See also Daria Maoz, When Images Become "True": The Israeli Backpacking Experience in India, Chapter 11 of *Karmic Passages: Israeli Scholarship on India*, ed. David Shulman and Shalva Weil, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 214–231. Maoz explores the role of India in processes of identity construction. Her discussion, however, focuses on the formation of personal and psychological identity, rather than the collective or religious identity that is the focus of the present discussion.
8. See Ronie Parciack, West Asia, South Asia, Travels to the Other Side of the Self, Chapter 10 in *Karmic Passages*, pp. 191–213.
9. Parciack, West Asia, South Asia, p. 192.
10. Laurie Patton and Shalom Goldman, Indian Love Call: Israelis, Orthodoxy and Indian Culture, *Judaism* 50,3, 2001, pp. 351–361.
11. Compare the views of Rabbi Itzchak Ginsburgh, chapter 9.
12. A less charged perspective is offered by Pinchas Giller, who sees Indian reality as an alternative to the Israeli reality and in particular to the reality of military occupation. Giller offered this insight in a paper presented in response to Daniel Sperber's book-in-progress at a panel of the American Academy of Religion, 2013.
13. There are, of course, various practical factors that account for this. Israelis travel to India because it is cheap and because they can function in English. The availability of vegetarian food is also a great advantage. These reasons precede the various theoretical reasons for why India is a preferred destination, but do not replace them. India's role in the Israeli psyche, as documented in the just cited studies, is far more comprehensive than the practical considerations related to travel to India. Because Hinduism is primarily centered in India, the travel to India is also an encounter with Hinduism. Buddhism, by contrast, lacks one primary geographic location with which it is identified.
14. While the preceding discussion focused on the reality of Israeli travellers, the concern for spirituality is characteristic of Jewish society as a whole. The following discussion therefore explores the relationship between Hinduism and Judaism, rather than simply Israeli identity. Hinduism is also relevant for Jewish practitioners in the diaspora, notwithstanding Hellner-Eshed's observation concerning the preference of American Jews for Buddhism.
15. The spirituality-identity axis emerges as the primary axis for discussions of present-day crises in all religions. See Alon Goshen-Gottstein (ed.), *The Crisis of the Holy: Challenges and Transformations in World Religions*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2014.
16. That is, in sum, what discussions of Avoda Zara concern themselves with.
17. February 9, 2009.
18. Swamiji observes silence. Consequently, his answers are given in writing and are often terse, lacking the ability to fully tease out a subject, in ways that a verbal exchange might enable.
19. Nathan Katz, *Spiritual Journey Home: Eastern Mysticism to the Western Wall*, Ketav, Jersey City, 2009, tells of several Tibetan teachers who adopt this stance. See pp. 107ff. Significantly, the Dalai Lama himself takes another position, in response to a question posed by Katz. Katz's concern of Jewish brain drain to Buddhism is addressed by the Dalai Lama who responds by saying: "if you want to keep your

- people in your religion, you must open your doors to spirituality” (p. 111). Rodger Kamenetz’s description of the same dialogue session in *The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet’s Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India*, HarperSanFrancisco, NY, 1994, pp. 226–231 is more complex. The Dalai Lama indeed quotes his public teachings, in which he encourages people to follow their own traditional religion. Nevertheless, his response to Katz’s concerns underlines the need for openness, both in sharing the esoteric tradition and in terms of willingness to accept the spiritual choices made by seekers, and for an experience-based means of adopting religion.
20. On a more recent visit, in January 2013, swami pushed one Israeli disciple to follow the ways of Torah. Due to the method of communication, the ensuing attempt to balance the two perspectives did not meet with great success. This tell us, however, that the exchange of February 2009 may not contain the entire picture.
  21. This is the heart of the debate in the Middle Ages with the followers of Maimonides, who sought to understand observance of the Jewish commandments in precisely such terms, leading to their abandonment. In terms of both historical and present-day Judaism, such an approach remains episodic. There is no school that considers mitzvot obsolete as a consequence of attaining a spiritual state. Movements in Judaism, such as Reform, that have over the past 150 years argued for the obsolescence of mitzvot have done so using historical, rather than spiritual, arguments. One interesting source, in the context of the present discussion, is Mordechai Yosef Leiner’s *Mey Hashiloach* on Gen. 22,12. However, even for this maverick author, who certainly had antinomian tendencies, at the end of the day, ritual is upheld, even if for social reasons.
  22. For a classical spiritual statement of the enduring efficacy and purposefulness of mitzvot, regardless of one’s spiritual achievements, see R. Nathan of Breslov, *Likutey Halachot, Hilchot Shiluach Haken*, 4.
  23. See W. D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age*, SBL, Philadelphia, PA, 1952; Moshe Idel, “Torah Hadashah”: Messiah and the New Torah in Jewish Mysticism and Modern Scholarship, *Kabbalah* 21, 2010, pp. 57–109. See also in this context David Berger, *Torah and the Messianic Age: The Polemical and Exegetical History of a Rabbinic Text, Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan*, ed. D. Engel et al., Brill, Leiden, 2010, pp. 169–187.
  24. The same is true of contemporary Jewish converts to Christianity (at least to Catholicism). I have yet to encounter one who repudiates or is ashamed of his Jewish roots or birth.
  25. Some religions may actively conceptualize such affiliation, as in the case of Judaism, that conceptualizes the significance of community through notions of covenant, election, and the centrality it affords to the Jewish people within its religious worldview. Others may approach community in a less conceptually formulated way. Indeed, one could argue that Hinduism may have a weaker sense of community, and that this may have ramifications on its social thinking and action. Nevertheless, there is no religion devoid of a sense of community, even if it is theorized in different ways, or given a weaker expression within the religion’s overall economy.
  26. See Shemot Rabba 1,1.
  27. If anything, Israelis may rediscover their Judaism as a consequence of the encounter with *India*. This could include encounter with aspects of Hinduism, but is broader in scope.
  28. In terms of numbers, TM, in its heyday, boasted tens of thousands of meditators in Israel. ISKCON, by contrast, with all the markers of an alternative religious identity, including ritual, clothes, names, etc., was never able to draw more than several dozen

- enthusiasts, with only a handful of dedicated members at its core. To continue the comparison, in the United States, ISKCON was able to draw so many Jewish members that its leadership, following the death of its founder, Acharya Bhaktivedanta, was, as already mentioned, nearly half Jewish.
29. See p. 97.
  30. See p. 98.
  31. <http://www.hakolhayehudi.co.il>
  32. Judith Linzer, *Torah and Dhrama, Jewish Seekers in Eastern Religions*, Jason Aaronson, Northvale, NJ, 1996.
  33. A large number of her case studies involve Zen. Indeed, the book's title reveals specific interest in Buddhism, as does the final section, devoted to Jewish-Buddhist dialogue. There is no parallel section devoted to Hinduism. Linzer herself practices Zen and the book draws heavily on her own experiences as a practitioner. Of those involved with Hinduism, about half were involved with TM (Transcendental Meditation). While clearly having its origins in Hinduism, it is hard to speak meaningfully of TM as Hinduism, in terms of the present discussion. All in all, there are no more than three to four cases of meaningful contact with Hinduism, and even those do not always represent full-fledged Hindu practice or belonging. The most impressive and suggestive case is that of Rabbi Dovid Zeller, who is greatly inspired by India and receives much by sharing its practices, but is never described as properly belonging, during a certain phase of his life, to a Hindu group.
  34. The statement by Maurice Friedman, p. 204, is particularly clear, and in my view typical.
  35. This seems to be in contrast to the experiences of Jews engaged in Buddhism, particularly Zen. These seem to continue upholding both practices. This impression is substantiated by Linzer's case studies and finds further support in other works. See *Besides Still Waters: Jews, Christians and the Way of the Buddha*, ed. H. Kasimow and J. Keenan, Wisdom Publications, Sommerville, 2003. A likely explanation is that Buddhism is practiced as a technique, while Hinduism is closer to a religion. A technique can be more readily integrated into a broader religious framework than a parallel religious system. This would require accounting for why we lack similar integration in relation to TM and other movements that have distilled Hindu teachings into a technique that is almost free of religious trappings. The answer is most likely related to the rise and fall of those movements and may not reflect on the capacity of integration of such practices within Jewish observance.
  36. See in particular statements quoted on p. 123ff. and 186ff.
  37. This is the impression one also comes away with from reading Sara Yocheved Rigler's *God Winked: Tales and Lessons from my Spiritual Adventures*, Mekor Press, New York, 2012.
  38. Nathan Katz, in *Spiritual Journey Home*, is an important exception to this characterization.
  39. The concern for Avoda Zara obviously plays further into this dynamic. But in the context of the present discussion, this is only a secondary consideration.
  40. Linzer's study focuses heavily on issues of Jewish identity. See in particular pp. 88–118. However, this entire discussion focuses on the identitarian dimensions of these returnees' attitudes to their Jewish identity. Consequently, anti-Semitism, whether external or internalized, plays an important role in her analysis. In her entire book there is not a single case that explores the possibility of multiple religious identities, in terms of Hinduism and Judaism (as opposed to Buddhism). Her discussion of identity is therefore of little help to the present discussion of the impact of the encounter with Hinduism upon Jewish identity.

41. Scholem's letter was shared by Boaz Huss at a conference on Jewish-Indian Encounters, held at the University of Haifa, November 27, 2012.
42. See Kumari Yayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia during British Rule*, Routledge, New York, 1995, Chapter 15: The "Jewish Mother" of Pondicherry, Mira Alfaasa Joins Aurobindo, pp. 207–217.
43. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max\\_Th%C3%A9on](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Th%C3%A9on).
44. The critical perspective of a distant family member can be found at <http://www.alfassa.com/momma.html>.
45. <http://www.madrasi.info/the-mother.php>.
46. See Yayawardena, *White Woman's Other Burden*, p. 214.
47. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice\\_Frydman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Frydman); <http://www.among-friends.ca/spiritual-writings/maurice-frydman.htm>.
48. Radhanath Swami, *The Journey Home: Autobiography of an American Swami*, Mandala, San Rafael, 2010.
49. If we add the teaching and writing activities of Paul Brunton and Suleyman Cohen, we are pushed to the conclusion that an extremely high percentage of Jewish disciples end up making a meaningful contribution to Indian culture and society. Of course, the statistic may be misleading, inasmuch as we only know of those individuals who have made a mark on society. Other individuals may have come and gone, without leaving a (Jewish) stamp on Indian society.
50. At the Kumbh Mela of 2013, I encountered an Israeli who plays a leadership role in the organization of a Western female guru, ordained by Sai Baba, called Sai Ma. While not part of a Hindu organization, one must also recall the Jewish Richard Alpert, known as Ram Dass. On his Jewishness, and his own sense of being a "lousy Jew," see Rodger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus*, pp. 264–269. And if artistic contribution counts, it is worth recalling his spiritual brother, Krishna Das, a devotee of the same guru. Krishna Das is the foremost proponent of Kirtan singing and thus a visible Hindu presence. Other than parentage, Judaism seems to play no role in his spiritual life. Except for a passing joke about Jewish women, there is no reference to his Jewish roots in his biography, *Chants of a Lifetime: Searching for a Heart of Gold*, Hay House, New Delhi, 2010. Even his visit to Auschwitz was deeply appreciated, but not on account of his Jewish roots. See <http://www.elephantjournal.com/2013/03/an-interview-with-krishna-das-melissa-codispoti/>.
51. See Swami Chidanand Saraswati, *Drops of Nectar*, Ganga Press, Rishikesh, 2004. Note this is a different figure than the Swami Chidananda, Swami Sivananda's disciple, mentioned in the book's dedication.
52. Another Jewish Hindu Swami is Radhanath Swami, author of *The Journey Home: Autobiography of an American Swami*, Mandala Publishing, San Rafael, 2008. Significantly, the subtitle refers to him as an American, not a Jewish, swami. Indeed, while his Jewish roots are mentioned several times in the book, they seem to play a very minor role in his spiritual formation. Even though he mentions having prayed in synagogues in his youth (p. 302), there is no indication of Jewish formation or teaching in the book. In fact, my reading of the book is of a retrojection of a mature religious identity back onto the 19-year-old boy, whose story the book tells. Accordingly, the scope of knowledge of the boy Richard reflects his later training. Hence the predominance of Christianity and the absence of Judaism. The general kind of openness to Judaism, expressed in his "letter" to his father (p. 180), would also be typical of this later identity. Note that even his concerns about idolatry are not ascribed exclusively to a Jewish formation, but to a broader awareness of the teachings of Christianity and Islam (p. 134). While Israel figures in the background,

in the choice of a traveling partner who chose to go there, the author chooses India instead. All in all, the book reflects a dismally low level of Jewish affiliation and knowledge, beyond parental roots. Against this written testimony, it is interesting to consider some oral testimonies concerning ISKCON swamis in general, whose interest in their Jewish roots is piqued, when visiting Israel. A story of the same Radhanath Swami (true or apocryphal, I do not know) tells of a moving encounter at the Western Wall, which for a moment raised the question of whether he was to return to Judaism, despite his many accomplishments in Hinduism. A vision of Krishna at the Western Wall provided his answer and reassurance. Such an image (even if only a literary figure) could provide an emblem for a certain kind of dual religious belonging. I am grateful to Rukmini Walker for sharing Radhanath Swami's work with me.

53. Another work, scheduled to appear more or less at the same time as the present volume, illustrates this process in an interesting way. Jayadvaita Swami's *Vanity Karma: Ecclesiastes, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Meaning of Life*, The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles, 2015, is an attempt to read the biblical book of Ecclesiastes in light of the author's Vaishnava spiritual tradition, and in particular the Bhagavad Gita. The work's logic is biographical. As a young teen the author was struck by the book of Ecclesiastes and the emptiness of life it describes, which echoed the author's own existential sense. The author's particular biography took him into Krishna Consciousness, where he found a meaning beyond Ecclesiastes and an answer to his existential quest. This is not a study of Judaism and Hinduism or strands of those traditions. Rather, it is the story of a Jewish boy who identifies questions in a biblical book and finds answers to them in Hindu tradition. One imagines the story could have equally unfolded into a discovery of hassidic Judaism under other circumstances. Structurally, this is just the reverse of the procedure described by Nir, Chapter 7. While the work may not reveal much beyond the biographical, concerning the relationship between the two traditions, it is an important exercise in reading across traditions. Because its scope is limited—one biblical work, rather than an entire religion—it provides us with the only example of a comparative theological exegetical reading, of a Jewish (biblical) book and a part of Hindu scripture. This exercise is valuable and much more mature than the supposed dialogue presented below in Steven Rosen's *Om Shalom: Judaism and Krishna Consciousness*, Folk Books, New York, 1990.
54. Both Ram Das and Krishna Das, just mentioned, are disciples of the same saint.
55. Ma Jaya Sati Bhagawati, *The Light of Every Candle, The Fifty Eighth Century: A Jewish Renewal Sourcebook*, ed. Shohama Wiener, Jason Aaronson, New York, 1996, pp. 265–272, available also at <http://www.kashi.org/wp-content/themes/kashi/docs/The%20Fifty-Eighth%20Century.pdf>.
56. Contrast this with the story of Sarah Rigler, note 37 in this chapter
57. A collection of essays that explores this issue from within Jewish-Buddhist relations is *Beside Still Waters*, cited earlier.
58. While the immediate historical context within which these instances of multiple religious identities occur may be considered one of crisis, the crisis may itself be an expression of the systemic contours that provide Judaism and Hinduism (or certain forms of it) with their unique religious profile. We recall Soderblom's portrayal of Judaism, in contrast with Hinduism. While his presentation was selective, hence slanted, in how each of these religions was portrayed, the basic contrasts and dynamics that emerge from his description do describe remarkably well the tensions, challenges, and opportunities that inform the cases of multiple religious identity that we shall be studying. Thus, the crisis may be more systemic than simply the product of

- certain historical factors. If so, Judaism's encounter with Hinduism touches upon spiritual concerns and dynamics that are fundamental to Judaism.
59. Hananya Goodman, thanks to whom I am in possession of some of the following biographical information, suggests this is Rabbi Nathan Netter, Rabbi of Metz.
  60. I owe much to Aurelie Simonet, who spent a number of years with him and who graciously communicated much of what she knew to either Hananya Goodman or myself.
  61. <http://www.anandamayi.org/devotees/inthesteps.htm>.
  62. I possess recordings of these exchanges that future students of his life may find interesting.
  63. For a Buddhist analogue, see Nathan Katz's *Spiritual Journey Home*, pp. 54–55, where Katz tells us of an eminent Buddhist monk who is a Jew, and of Aya Khema, an important Buddhist nun, who like Vijayananda affirms: "Of course I am still Jewish. Jewish is something you *are*, and I am proud of our heritage." Vijayananda's Judaism, however, seems to have had more substance than simply ethnic heritage.
  64. A discussion of the inappropriateness of entry into Hindu temples can be found in his *Some Aspects of Ma Anandamayi's Teachings*, <http://www.anandamayi.org/devotees/Jv2.htm>. Chapter 13 of this work is titled "Hindu Temple and Worship." Interestingly, he juxtaposes the Hindu mind with the Western mind and suggests the incompatibility of the two when it comes to temple worship, even to entry into Hindu temples. It seems impossible to divorce this attitude, including the avoidance of entry into Hindu temples, from his Orthodox Jewish upbringing. A quote in a later note, showing his conflicts as he passes by the Sinai and considers the demands of biblical faith in relation to Hindu worship, proves the point. Yet, the discussion is never framed in specifically Jewish terms. These have been replaced by broader reference to "Western." See also his relativizing statement in relation to mythology: "It is impossible to adopt the mythology of a religion when one has not been born and brought up in it, which one has not absorbed into the marrow of one's bones" (Part 2, Chapter 3 of his autobiography).
  65. His position echoes the classical views on permissibility of *shituf*, that is, the worship of another being alongside God, for non-Jews. What is appropriate for non-Jews is considered as inappropriate for Jews. Growing up in Ashkenaz (Mainz), he is likely to have imbibed such an attitude from his rabbinic stepfather. However, whether consciously or not, this position has undergone modification from a legal formulation to a cultural formulation. Its focus is, accordingly, not the permissibility of a given form of worship for non-Jews, but the fact that it is considered superfluous or out of context for Jews.
  66. I recall one time I visited him during Hannuka. His Jewish disciples had brought Hannuka lights and I was asked to light them. Swamiji delighted in the ceremony and spoke of it with great feeling and approval. Tellingly, the initiative came from others, with his clear approval, rather than from himself.
  67. Sadhvi Bhagawati recently shared with me her own frustration at the narrow-mindedness of one of these emissaries, while expressing profound appreciation for their continuing efforts and sacrifices. She highlighted the positive contribution she is able to make through her chosen path as preferable to narrow role models and expectations placed upon her by Chabad emissaries. There is no doubt that gender perspectives and opportunities should be taken seriously when discussing opportunities for spiritual growth in Judaism and Hinduism.
  68. One moment is telling. On his way to India he passes the Suez Canal, and reflects on the meaning of his own travels to India, in light of the great event of Sinai: "This

son of the Mediterranean, what is he setting out to look for among the descendants of the Rishis? Is this worshipper of the “jealous God,” going to bow down before the images and idols of Ind? Is it not written in the tablets that Moses borne down from the mountains, “Thou shalt have no other god before me. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them?” And the philosophy of India is so different from that of the Mediterranean! Between the Hindu mind and that of Mediterranean man lies an entire world! Their archetypes, the impressions and attitudes buried deep in their unconscious, are surely fundamentally different?” The one word that is lacking in this description is “Jewish.” It is replaced by Mediterranean man, as though what was under discussion were a matter of culture and geography, rather than of fundamentals of religious faith.

69. Significantly, the only Jewish tradition that he does bring is not attributed to Jewish tradition but to a Cabbalistic legend. In Chapter 3 of his autobiography he tells the story of the existence of 36 masters who have achieved perfect wisdom, and on whose count God preserves the world. His reading of this Jewish tradition is telling: “No doubt they include Hindus and Christians, Jews, Moslems and Buddhists but they never discuss dogma.” Jews are but one of many religions.
70. <http://www.anandamayi.org/devotees/Jv2.htm>.
71. The fact that Vijayananda authored his earlier works, while someone else edited materials from later years could of course account for the different emphases, making the suggestion of an evolution in his Jewish identification superfluous. If so, his earlier writings were penned for a Hindu publication, where he did not feel it appropriate to be open about his Jewish roots. Still, it seems to me that the politics of concealment exceed what is necessary in such a context, especially given theoretical Hindu openness to all religions. This makes the suggestion of evolution in his position in relation to Judaism more probable.
72. He maintained good relations with his family throughout his stay in India. In this he did not follow the stricter observances that recommend renunciants break family ties.
73. While the explanation he offered for his lack of observance of the mitzvot is formulated in terms of the worldview to which he subscribed for nearly 60 years, we must also recall that his ceasing to observe the commandments antedates his becoming a renunciant, and for that matter his coming to India. As far as I can tell, by his 20s he was no longer practicing Judaism publicly and visibly. His autobiography presents him as engaged in a quest for Oriental wisdom, while his public profile in conquered France was anything but Jewish. It seems he thus encountered India as a self-identified Jew, who had nevertheless ceased to practice Judaism as a spiritual path, maintaining strong identity and affiliation with the Jewish people.
74. His case is thus much closer to those of post-Maimonidean philosophers in medieval Europe, who were led to view the mitzvot as no longer necessary, once proper philosophical knowledge was attained. While Vijayananda’s philosophical perspective was not attained through association with a neutral philosophical system, but through one associated with another religious worldview, at the end of the day his lack of observance was more philosophical than it was religious, to the degree that “religious” signals buying into the totality of a particular alternative religious worldview.
75. <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/15/ART1/551/718.html>.
76. My translation.
77. Katz, *Spiritual Journey Home*, pp. 74–75.
78. See Lawrence Fine, *Tikkun: A Lurianic Motif in Contemporary Jewish Thought, From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, ed. J. Neusner

- et al., Scholars Press, Atlanta, GA, 1989, vol. 4, pp. 35–53. See further the essays in *Jewish Political Studies Review* 25, 2013.
79. Classical opposition to other religions would even consider a life lived nominally as a Jew, though devoid of any spiritual content or practice, as preferable to a life of spiritual fulfillment in another religion.
  80. See previous chapter.
  81. There are different dimensions to how one might be *wrong*, as suggested in *Same God, Other god*. For present purposes it does not matter whether we are dealing with moral error, metaphysical error, or with energetic “bonding” with forces that should be avoided, thereby making it wrong.
  82. Extending this logic could lead to the position that everything that is within the realm of the other is ipso facto Avoda Zara. While such a clear articulation of the relationship of Avoda Zara and otherness is rarely encountered in theoretical reflections on Avoda Zara, it does inform certain halachic positions. See Shut Ziz Eliezer, Part 14,91; See also Part 10,1. For present purposes I wish to raise the concern for Avoda Zara as compromising or threatening identity, without going to the extreme that identity protection requires avoidance of all forms of interreligious contact or influence.
  83. One could suggest that in relation to non-Jews Avoda Zara expresses a concern for truth. It takes on an additional dimension when applied within—the concern for preserving identity.
  84. Primarily Swami Premswaroopananda, a female swami who presently runs the center and concerning whom much of what has been related here applies equally.
  85. Biography would seem to make all the difference. Vijayananda was observant, then dropped his observance, and moved to India. The move to India never provided an incentive to return to active Jewish practice. The Israeli group, by contrast, was originally nonobservant, and their journey into Hinduism took place within a broader spiritual search that had its effects also upon their active Jewish practice.
  86. I intentionally avoid use of the term “syncretistic.” Some might choose to describe their practices thus. I myself do not find the term helpful. On the contrary, it functions more as a derogatory term that judges practices unfavorably. The entire phenomenon of multiple religious identities is a broad phenomenon that nowadays touches all world religions. It is a pastoral as well as theological challenge, and a knee-jerk application of a category that has not been fully thought through is not helpful to the present discussion.
  87. The problem of forced participation arose also in relation to the relaying of the meditation technique of TM. Teachers on that occasion perform a puja, with clear trappings of Hindu worship, directed to the photo of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s own guru. Many rabbinic authorities forbade practicing TM for this reason. See Yisrael Hess, *Emunot*, Jerusalem, Techiyat Yisrael, 1989, p. 249. However, this one time ceremony can be more readily overlooked, and its role in the experience of the future meditator is so minor as to almost be ignored.
  88. More on this in *Same God, Other god*.
  89. I am not able to state to what degree Jewish practice is viewed as equally nonessential and how both sets of practice are relativized in terms of vedantic philosophy. If one practice emerges as more essential than the other, in either theoretical or psychological terms, this might provide us a key to which identity is considered primary. However, the challenges of a multiple religious identity do not change much if one identity is primary and the other secondary.
  90. Of the various opinions discussed in *Same God, Other god*, that of the Meiri would provide the best ammunition for such a view. While he might not endorse the

specifically Hindu approach, considering it an error in and of itself, the error is not so grave as to lead to charges of Avoda Zara. For Meiri, ritual does not define Avoda Zara. The practices would therefore be tolerable, even if practiced by Jews. It is worth noting that Meiri is willing to recognize Jewish converts to other religions in terms of their new identity, because the validity proffered by an authentic religious system takes one beyond the charges of Avoda Zara and even beyond the bounds of the community. But this is precisely where the rubber of identitarian concerns hits the road. Do we really wish to accommodate practices that will ultimately have identitarian consequences? See further David Berger's struggles, *Jews, Gentiles and the Modern Egalitarian Ethos: Some Tentative Thoughts, Formulating Responses in an Egalitarian Age*, ed. Marc Stern, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, MD, 2005, pp. 83–108, especially pp. 93ff.

91. See in particular the contributions by Elhanan Nir, Melila Hellner, and Rivka Miriam.
92. It would be interesting to reflect upon the following typology of Indian gurus and their means of reaching out to the West. It seems to me that we can think of a threefold typology. Some gurus offer a teaching. The pioneer of all gurus, Swami Vivekananda, seems to have been above all a teacher. Some offer an entire way of life, attempting to export Hinduism to a large extent to the West. Acharya Bhaktivedanta, founder of ISKCON, is a prime example of that. The third group consists of gurus who offer a technique or a distillation of Hinduism. While Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of Transcendental Meditation, may provide the salient example, this is true in fact of all those teachers who import yoga, in its various forms, to the West.
93. See the excellent comments of John Thatamanil concerning the impact of encounter with Vedanta upon him, as a Christian. As Thatamanil suggests, of necessity a creative tension ensues between one's proper religion and the perspectives gained by serious engagement with another. Moreover, relations that have been formed with teachers and members of another tradition have their own power of conviction and authority, and they force the individual to redefine and continually engage his own tradition in light of those relations, what they have taught him, and their moral and spiritual command. See John Thatamanil, *Managing Multiple Religious and Scholarly Identities: An Argument for a Theological Study of Hinduism*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68,4, 2000, p. 799ff.
94. It is rare to have living teachers in both traditions. Nevertheless, quite often the cultivation of a relationship with a living guru leads to renewed appreciation of Jewish masters and their writings.
95. Here, however, we must distinguish philosophy from religion. Adopting the philosophical worldview of Hinduism while maintaining Jewish practice may not justify viewing Hinduism as the primary religion.
96. Apparently, Rosen has a somewhat complex relationship with the movement itself. See <http://www.vnn.org/editorials/ET9908/ET20-4549.html>. Nevertheless, he is clearly an important voice in presenting this form of Vaishnavism to the broader public and to the academic world, regardless of internal Vaishnava politics and personalities.
97. See one of several instances, p. 132.
98. The description of Rabbi Shimmel's experiences with the different Jewish communities, p. 65, is clearly an imaginary projection of a text book reading of the different communities of Jews in India.
99. I am not the only one to have noticed this. Rahul Peter Das, *Essays on Vaisnavism in Bengal*, Firma Klm Private Limited, Calcutta, 1997, p. 61, notes that while the conversations in these two books "are very informative and interesting," they sometimes give

- the impression “that someone who though learned, possesses an ultimately only inferior knowledge, is being instructed by Rosen” and wonders whether “this represents the true tenor of the conversations or is rather based on editorial changes.” He cites his own personal experience in having his own work manipulated by Rosen. His thinking did not go far enough to imagine that the entire dialogue is a fabrication by Rosen.
100. Rosen is well aware of this, as his discussion on pp. 143–148 indicates. He seems to have failed to grasp the import of this theory for actual Jewish practice and how it extends beyond the Tetragram to other divine names.
  101. In Rosen’s introduction, p. i, he draws an analogy between his own work and the *Kuzari* of Rabbi Yehuda Halevy. The analogy might be a giveaway to his acknowledgment of the fictitious nature of his work. However, if Halevy brought together an anonymous philosopher, Christian, Muslim, and Jew, Rosen names and fills in the biography of his rabbinic interlocutor so as to suggest a real personality, and not a literary creation. Indeed, he has succeeded in deceiving the few readers who have noticed his work and have taken the book to be a genuine example of Hindu-Jewish dialogue. See Cynthia Ann Humes, *Om Shalom: Judaism and Krishna Consciousness*, *Shofar* 17,3, 1999, pp. 111–113.
  102. Steven Rosen and Alvin van Pelt Hart, *East-West Dialogues: Krsna Consciousness and Christianity*, Folk Books, New York, 1989.
  103. Twenty years later, Rosen would seek to achieve the same goals by consciously and explicitly constructing a fictitious literary setting, rather than hiding behind a purported true dialogue. See Steven Rosen, *Christ and Krishna: Where the Jordan Meets the Ganges*, Folk Books, New York, 2011. One reviewer of this latter work is aware of the possibility that our Rabbi Shimmel is no more than a literary character. See <http://harmonist.us/2011/11/review-christ-and-krishna-where-the-jordan-meets-the-ganges/>.
  104. I will not refer to the numerous mistakes in the presentation of Judaism. They begin with the first page of the dialogues, p. 7, where Shamai is presented as Hillel’s “assistant,” and continue throughout. No real-life rabbi would commit errors as gross as those of Rabbi Shimmel. They conclude with the presentation, on p. 200, of the Satmar Rebbe as a source for contemporary practice of Jewish meditation. All in all, the multiple mistakes in the presentation of Judaism can be ascribed to the basic fact of Rosen’s having learned Judaism from books, thereby missing out on all that one would learn through life experience and real relationships, both by way of spiritual experience and by way of getting the fine points in focus.
  105. I have seen time and again how missionaries, whether Hindu or Christian, distort scriptures and teachings as part of their missionary thrust. Rosen’s work feels to me of a different type. While on some level his interests obviously remain missionary, I read this book more as a working out of fundamental issues than as a means of winning souls.
  106. Given the fictitious nature of the entire enterprise, I take this introduction too to be Steven Rosen’s own literary creation.
  107. Compare the strategies offered by Nir in *From India Till Here*, chapters 9 and 8.
  108. See Rosen, *Om Shalom*, pp. 22–23, 55–56, 61, 170, 179, 185.
  109. Pushing providence to its limits, pp. 55–56, or reflecting on the relative merits of spiritual achievement versus value of particular birth, p. 23.
  110. See Rosen, *Om Shalom* p. 170.
  111. The larger part of the third dialogue is devoted to vegetarianism, a topic that is close to Rosen’s heart and on which he has authored several books.
  112. Obviously Shimmel never quotes from books that would have been beyond Rosen’s reach and some of the books he is said to have read are quite incongruous considering the rabbinic library.

113. It should be noted that Shimmel and Rosen spend an inordinate and disproportionate amount of time discussing Christianity. Shimmel is unusually well-versed in *both* Hinduism and Christianity.
114. Another work that covers the same religious bases is *The Rabbi and I*, by William Glick a.k.a. Isa Das, published on the internet at <http://www.equalsouls.org/>. Glick too is a member of ISKCON. Glick's work is far cleaner than Rosen's, inasmuch as it rarely goes beyond his own attempts at comparative religious studies. He has read a limited number of presentations of Kabbalah and other Jewish sources and has searched out parallels with his own version of Hinduism. The result, as Nathan Katz acknowledges, can be thoughtful and provocative. Obviously, an agenda is served by identifying these comparisons. However, the method is cleaner and comes closer to academic conventions of comparison. Consequently, explicit issues of identity and ideology are put aside and the work must be judged by how convincing, or unconvincing, suggested parallels seem to the reader.
115. Quotes from the second edition, 2003.
116. <http://www.bookrags.com/tandf/radhasoami-movements-tf/>. For academic discussions of the Radhasoami movement, see M. Juergensmeyer, *Radhasoami Reality: The Logic of a Modern Faith*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1991; D. C. Lane, *The Radhasoami Tradition: A Critical History of Guru Successorship*, Garland, New York and London, 1992.
117. In this respect, the problem of definition and the appropriateness of application of the label "Hindu" to a religious movement is similar to issues raised in relation to the Brahma Kumari movement.
118. What makes Radha Soami heterodox from a Sikh perspective, namely the continuing reliance on a living guru rather than on the cessation of guruhood and its supplantation by scripture, is precisely what brings it back to the broader Hindu fold, thereby making it appropriate for the present discussion of Judaism and Hinduism.
119. In some ways this work follows the example of an earlier work, *Yoga and the Bible* by Joseph Leeming, RSSB, Amritsar 1963. "Bible" here is exclusively New Testament. By the very structure of this work, however, the two bodies of knowledge are brought into dialogue or rather the one is read against the other. This is less deceptive than the pretense to a presentation of Judaism only.
120. I would like to clarify that it is legitimate for the faithful to share their faith and to seek to spread it. The problem with missionary work is when it uses tactics deemed unacceptable, either by the target group or by what should be considered proper practice in the spreading of faith. Twisting Judaism to make it look like Radha Soami theology should be considered unacceptable.
121. Miriam Caravella Bokser, *The Holy Name: Mysticism in Judaism*, Radhasoami Satsang Beas, New Delhi, 1989, p. xvi.
122. Bokser, *The Holy Name*, pp. xiv–xv. More on struggles with particularity, see p. 118.
123. "My purpose is not to compare Judaism with Sant Mat. I am not attempting to give a definitive interpretation or history of Judaism, nor am I implying that there is a coherent system of Jewish mysticism which is analogous to Sant Mat. Rather, I hope to present a mosaic of elements that are found in common in both systems, and which reveal the universal thread that can be found in all religions and spiritual paths" (p. xviii).
124. The message—"find a guru," as opposed to—"our guru is the only worthy guru," is a sophisticated technique of religious public relations, even if in theoretical terms it is sincere. In real-life terms it addresses effectively the market of seekers of spirituality, most of whom, it is assumed, do not in fact find a worthy teacher. It seems to me this marketing strategy is not unique to Caravella, and various Indian religious

- groups seem to use it. As noted in the chapter 8, this is the main message of the Akshardham complex of the Swaminarayan BAPS movement.
125. See Bokser, *The Holy Name*, pp. 21–26, for example.
  126. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
  127. Compare the discussion above of Yoel Glick’s work, in appendix to chapter 7.
  128. Bokser, *The Holy Name*, pp. 80–88.
  129. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.
  130. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
  131. *Ibid.*, pp. 105–109.
  132. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
  133. A disproportionate number of references are provided to the Bible, with almost no references to the major works of the hassidic movement. Like Rosen, Caravella lacks the tools necessary for better execution of her project. Hers is not a project that can be carried out simply based on second-hand knowledge of the sources.
  134. Once again, she ends up rejecting the Jewish sources in favor of what seems to her the correct method, derived from her master’s teachings. Relying on the Bible is handy in this context. The Bible is far more pliable and lends itself more readily to her readings than do the kabbalistic sources. Consequently, when describing Jewish meditation practices, she argues that the biblical testimonies are preferable to the later kabbalistic ones, in that they involve a practice more similar to her own. See Bokser, *The Holy Name*, p. 146.
  135. Bokser, *The Holy Name*, p. 166.
  136. *Ibid.*, p. 201. See, however, my Judaism and incarnational theologies.
  137. See Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Spain*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, PA, 1961, vol. 1, p. 243ff.
  138. Bokser, *The Holy Name*, pp. 219–224.
  139. The collection *From India Till Here* is a model case.
  140. See note 95. See also his “mother’s” introduction, Rosen, *Om Shalom*, p. 4.
  141. Rosen, *Om Shalom*, pp. 3–4.
  142. For a comparative presentation of Jewish and Hindu (among other) models of leadership see *The Future of Religious Leadership*, ed. Alon Goshen-Gottstein, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2016.
  143. This is the overall impression one gets from reading some of the essays in *From India Till Here*.
  144. In the framework of the Elijah Interfaith Institute, we have been convening conversations within specific religious traditions in order to work on their respective issues in the field of theology of religions. As noted earlier on, the present monograph grows out of such deliberations. A follow-up project convened scholars to think through the question of particularity as a key component of a Jewish view of other religions. The resources and syllabi that emerged out of the project are featured in a dedicated website of the Elijah Institute, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.

## 11 The Encounter Becomes Official: Hindu-Jewish Summits

1. See [http://www.hinduwisdom.info/Glimpses\\_XIII6.htm](http://www.hinduwisdom.info/Glimpses_XIII6.htm). The Chief Rabbi’s office has not retained a copy of a statement made on that occasion, and I rely on media reports.
2. A follow-up meeting was held in the United States in 2009, but it will not be discussed here, as it left no written record that could serve as a basis for analysis. See [http://www.ajc.org/site/c.ijITI2PHKoG/b.6396951/k.68E4/HinduJewish\\_Relations.htm](http://www.ajc.org/site/c.ijITI2PHKoG/b.6396951/k.68E4/HinduJewish_Relations.htm).

3. See <http://www.acharyasabha.org/>.
4. The situation with India-Israel relations is quite different and much more reciprocal, on many fronts. In fact, it may be that the ethnic dimension of Jewishness is so prominent as to eclipse its religious particularity. Anna Guttman's *Writing Indians and Jews: Metaphors of Jewishness in South Asian Literature*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2013, shows us multiple literary expressions of awareness of Jewishness by Indian authors. As her analysis suggests, in a postcolonial perspective, issues of identity loom large and the Jew is a rich site for exploring issues of identity. The framework of her discussion, however, relates Jewishness to Indianness, suggesting interesting intersections with the figure of the Muslim. Nowhere does this lead to engagement with Jewish identity in religious terms, and nowhere does it broach upon the encounter of Hinduism and Judaism.
5. The sole exception has been Ananda, *Hindu View of Judaism*, APC Publications, New Delhi, 1996.
6. As of May 2011, all these documents were featured on the Council's home page, suggesting their importance as recent accomplishments of the Council. See <http://www.millenniumpeacesummit.com/index.html>. Copies of the various documents have been loaded to other websites, and I have kept copies of all documents, which I shall post to my own website, in the event that the links are, at any point, no longer functional.
7. The talk was published in a volume of conference proceedings. See Arvind Sarma (ed.), *Part of the Problem, Part of the Solution: Religion Today and Tomorrow*, Greenwood Publishing, Westport, CT, 2008, pp. 80–84.
8. For a scholarly portrayal of the two religions in precisely these terms, see Barbara Holdrege, What Have Brahmins to Do with Rabbis? Embodied Communities and Paradigms of Religious Traditions, *Shofar* 17,3, 1999, pp. 23–50.
9. This sums up the situation from the perspective of the purpose and intent that lay behind the summits. As Swami Agamananda, a disciple of Swami Dayananda, who helped organize the summits and who commented on my manuscript, points out to me, once discussions got underway, there was keen interest in engaging theological issues, and to a certain extent this discussion occupied center stage.
10. See, for example Swami Vishveshvarananda, 1,27.
11. Three fundamental attributes of the absolute: truth, existence, bliss.
12. Part of message of Swami Vishveshvarananda, 1,27.
13. Swami Vishveshvaratirthaji Ashtamatha, 1,9.
14. Sri Swami Balagadharanathaji, 1,9.
15. I explore the significance of this distinction in great detail in *Same God, Other god*.
16. Swami Chidanand, 1,10.
17. Both statements on 1,9.
18. Swami Dayananda's opening address does speak of agreeing to differ, but he does not single out the notion of God as an important site for such differences. See 1,15.
19. Rabbi Metzger is struck by similarity of metaphors, but not of the basic concept of God. See 1,28. The first summit features a presentation by a Hindu on "similarities between our traditions" (1,32–33), but no equivalent Jewish presentation. In his report on the first summit, Meylekh Viswanath reports that in response to the expressions of basic similarity between Judaism and Hinduism, claimed by Hindu leaders, Rabbi David Rosen felt obliged to clarify the limits to religious relativism and that Judaism did not recognize the equality of all religions. This clarification does not seem to have made it to the transcripts of the meeting published by its organizers. See Meylekh Viswanath, *The Hindu-Jewish Encounter*, New Delhi, February 2007, *The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 9, 2007, p. 109.

20. Reviewing, on behalf of Swami Dayananda, an earlier version of the present manuscript, Swami Agamananda notes that this lack of reciprocity was a great disappointment to the Hindu side, which sought to learn more of the Jewish view of God but was unable to. In fact, a special meeting of the scholars' group devoted to "The Concept of God" was convened in New Delhi in May 2011 in order to help fill this gap.
21. Rabbi Ratzon Arusi, 2,31.
22. Rabbi David Brodman, 2,37.
23. Soloveitchik's piece "Confrontation" and a series of reflections that engage it from a contemporary perspective can be found on Boston College's website.
24. The import of this reference does not emerge from the transcript. At face value, Rabbi Kook upholds a Hindu worldview. Was he cited to offer a theological counterpart? The obvious errors in wording in this transcript, which I did not correct, suggest that whoever edited this text did not grasp its full import, and therefore the meaning of this reference remains unclear. Judging by the overall quality of the transcript, it seems that the lack of a Jewish proof of the proceedings, prior to their publication, may be one more instance of asymmetry. The response of Swami Parmatmananda, 2,34, suggests that it was understood as offering the correct balance—transcendent *and* immanent—as opposed to Spinoza who is purely immanent, pantheistic. Accordingly, Swami Parmatmananda affirms Hinduism's belief in the transcendent. While helpful, this response would not lead to a revision of Rabbi Cohen's views, given the comparison he draws between Christianity and Hinduism.
25. 2,32 and 2,40.
26. Of course, as Swami Agamananda points out to me, this may not satisfy or conform with Hindu self-understanding, but it is nevertheless an important means of bridging a theological gap.
27. See 2,34 and 2,36.
28. This does remain an option on the Jewish side as well. In *Same God, Other god*, I discuss the positions of Rabbis Steinsaltz and Sperber. Sperber's *The Halakhic Status of Hinduism* is largely constructed on this reasoning. Sperber, by his own testimony, is largely indebted to Dayananda in his view of Hinduism, and it would seem also in the emphasis placed on proper philosophical understanding as the key to resolving charges of Avoda Zara.
29. This is already a paraphrase of Brodman's words, in view of what might be a Hindu view. I thank Swami Agamananda for pointing out to me the gap between Brodman's words and my own paraphrase.
30. Bawa Jain concludes his report on the second meeting with a full-page juxtaposition of the *Shema* with a verse from the Gita. The juxtaposition would have been one further instance of missing the point, from a Jewish perspective, were it not for Rabbi Brodman's intervention.
31. The alternative, which would be more appropriate for Sugunendra Theerta Swami, would be the full identification of Lord Krishna with the Absolute. But that would reopen the conversation with the Jewish interlocutor raising the question of the same God from another angle.
32. Brodman's application of the criterion of intentionality may be the wrong way of going about developing a Jewish or halachic view of Hinduism. It certainly has played an insignificant role in prior assessments of other religions as Avoda Zara. But that he should seek to do so is itself suggestive of Jewish sensibilities.
33. One participant, though not one of the main voices in the dialogue, voiced to me his skepticism regarding the entire project. He portrayed the Hindus as trying to prove

- they believe in one God, but “who really believes them?” This participant, who is one of the less theologically inclined among the participants, obviously failed to draw the distinction between the philosophical achievements of the summit and the halachic issue of Avoda Zara.
34. See 1,37. Meiri’s views are elaborated in great detail in *Same God, Other god*. Briefly, Meiri considers Avoda Zara to be no longer applicable, applying the criterion of moral living to distinguish proper from false religion. Accordingly, the religions known to him are considered free of Avoda Zara. How this might relate to Hinduism is explored in *Same God, Other god*.
  35. I myself adopt this strategy in *Same God, Other god*.
  36. Obviously, an out-and-out discussion of Avoda Zara as an internal Jewish category and its halachic ramifications would have been impossible in terms of tact and diplomacy, certainly at this early stage of the relationship.
  37. There is a significant gap between the statement that all gods are one or even that God is one and the classical monotheistic formulation that there is no god but God. The distinction between philosophy and worship is certainly a context in which this distinction may be meaningful. On this distinction as the mosaic distinction, according to Jan Assman, see *Same God, Other god*.
  38. Rosen’s appeal to Meiri might be the simplest way of dealing with the problem. Alternatives are discussed in *Same God, Other god*.
  39. I have numbered the clauses, not numbered in the original, and omitted the eighth clause that is related to the group’s process, rather than to its common recognition.
  40. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Dignity of Difference*, London, Continuum, 2002. See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1412530/Dr-Sacks-rewrites-book-after-criticism.html>. For echoes within the Orthodox Jewish world, see <http://www.chabadtalk.com/forum/showthread.php3?t=3674>.
  41. These expectations precede the meeting and do not flow from its discussions. Swami Agamananda points out that in fact these concerns are not covered in the substance of the dialogues and therefore reflect the prior agendas of the organizing communities.
  42. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB3eMbItvrk>.
  43. When I first raised these objections with David Rosen, who was responsible for drafting the statement on the Jewish side, he completely concurred with them. Swami Agamananda suggests to me that Clause 5 of the second declaration, referring to spirituality, was meant to address Jewish concern about the exodus of Jewish youth to Hindu spirituality. But, as she notes, this was not addressed in the actual discussions, which means it was never brought to the attention of Hindu leaders. Moreover, the clause does not deliver the message clearly enough.
  44. Contrast this with the ongoing concern for Jewish identity, voiced throughout Nathan Katz’s biography, *Spiritual Journey Home: Eastern Mysticism to the Western Wall*, Ketav, Jersey City, 2009 See especially pp. 107–112.
  45. I omit the 9th Clause as it refers to structures and procedures of the dialogue and not its substance.
  46. Swami Agamananda clarifies: the Vatican and the World Council of Churches. If so, the appeal is not meant to neutral parties that could serve as referees, but to the parties supposedly engaged in missionary activity. Thus, Jews are brought on board to aid in the Hindu appeal directed at bodies carrying out missionary activity.
  47. As reported above by Swami Agamananda, its purpose seems to be to address Jewish concerns over the draw of Jewish youth to Hindu spirituality.

48. Presentation by Rajiv Malhotra, who also funded the summit. Inclusion of this clause in the statement may have therefore been necessary due to his financial involvement. See 1, 40–41.
49. See 1,16.
50. March 9, 2008, cited in 3,9–12.
51. <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=1587/%20april-june%202008%20issue>. Katz's statement refers to the first summit, and would be even stronger, in view of the second. Katz seems to consider this statement such a highlight that he presents it as the culmination of the introduction to his autobiography, *Spiritual Journey Home*, p. xvii.
52. How these two statements could be related to one another is explored from various angles in *Same God, Other god*.
53. Rabbi Sperber, who is a signatory of the first declaration and who published a piece on the sheitel crisis, only points to the declaration to indicate how complex the issue is, following this first declaration. See <http://www.jewishideas.org/articles/how-not-make-halakhic-rulings>.
54. To the Jewish voices who see in the summit's declaration a breakthrough also in terms of Avoda Zara I must add that of Rabbi David Rosen, who played an important role in drafting the statement. When I shared with him my article *Encountering Hinduism from Jewish Theology and World Religions*, ed. Alon Goshen-Gottstein and Korn Eugene, Littman Library, Oxford, 2012, pp. 263–298, where I discuss Steinsalz's position at great length, he felt I had overrated Steinsalz's importance, especially in light of the just published statement, cosigned by the Chief Rabbinate. A statement coming out of such a body had weight and representativity that in his view exceeded those of Steinsalz. I take exception to his evaluation. The Chief Rabbis never affirmed in terms of internal Jewish categories that Hinduism was not Avoda Zara. They acknowledged, and if need be affirmed, Hindu self-understanding. By contrast, Steinsalz applied this understanding to traditional halachic and attitudinal approaches to other religions, thereby bringing it more within the realm of halacha. Clearly, neither the Chief Rabbinate nor Steinsalz issued a *pesak*, but Steinsalz at least used halachic thinking and engaged the halachic process.
55. The Israeli branch of the organization is run by Rabbi David Rosen's wife, Sharon, and thus it may be less a sign of general interest in the statement than of the natural flow of information within a family and the organizations it serves.

## 12 Hinduism and a Jewish Theology of Religions

1. Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1983.
2. See Alan Brill, *Judaism and Other Religions: Models of Understanding*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010.
3. See p. 96.
4. See *Same God, Other god*, Chapter 10.
5. I am not aware that Meiri claims anywhere that all religions he considers valid are grounded in authentic revelation. Unlike a major trend in Jewish philosophy that approaches religion through the criterion of revelation (and we have seen this also with reference to Jewish evaluations of the imagined wisdom of India), Meiri seems to base his evaluation on the actual workings of religion and their effectiveness. This is likely due to the broader philosophical context that informs his thinking.

6. Were the religion to conform with the mandates of the halacha, it would come under the noachide commandments and therefore be part of our own revelation. Exclusivism, in this reading, can never be absolute such that it invalidates all religions outside Judaism. My use of exclusivism is therefore slightly imprecise, seeking to capture an attitude, not only a philosophical position.
7. The most notable instance of an inclusivist perspective leading to major spiritual transformation within Judaism is probably Abraham Maimonides's indebtedness to Islam, justified as bringing home the lost spiritual treasures of Judaism.
8. Note: the only person in both Jewish-Hindu summits to evoke Meiri was Rabbi David Rosen. None of the Rabbinat officials appealed to him.
9. Note, however: For Meiri the ability to validate other religions was based on his ability to ignore certain aspects of those religions and their theology, in favor of what he deemed most important, the moral and spiritual life. Thus, a theological dialogue and philosophical enrichment are not necessary outcomes of the pluralist option.
10. An early proponent of the idea of multiple revelations was Rabbi Nethanel Al-Fayumi. See Alan Brill, *Judaism and Other Religions*, pp. 111–112. His pioneering work, as well as that of other pluralists, has not been extended to the kind of dialogue envisioned here. But this is more a function of contemporary sociological circumstances than an outcome of the philosophical position itself.

### 13 Summary and a Personal Epilogue

1. Indeed, when I think of someone like Swami Atmapriyananda, with whom I have had just as many hours of spiritual and personal exchanges, his attitude of genuine interest in the particularity and uniqueness of each tradition is the opposite. Much depends therefore on personality, orientation, and formation. But perhaps the difference might be ascribed not simply to personality, but to the greater importance attached to interreligious harmony in the Ramakrishna order, following the personal experiences of its founder. Still, one might have equally argued that Ramakrishna's experiential discovery of the unity of all religions would have led to dismissal of all differences between religions as trivial. In this context, it is worth recalling that the only Hindu-based examination of Judaism was undertaken from a Ramakrishna perspective. See Ananda, *Hindu View of Judaism*, APC Publications, New Delhi, 1996. See also the recent publication by Srinivas Bharadwaj, *The H-Source of the Bible: Enhancing the Documentary Hypothesis to Include a New Source to the Bible*, self-published on Amazon, 2015, though it focuses on the Bible and not on Judaism.
2. See Ashok Vohra, *Metaphysical Unity, Phenomenological Diversity and the Approach to the Other: An Advaita Vedanta Position*, *The Religious Other: Hostility, Hospitality and the Hope of Human Flourishing*, ed. Alon Goshen-Gottstein, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2014, pp. 99–115.
3. Herein lies a great paradox of the Hindu objection to missionary work. If all is one, and if there is no real otherness, all otherness being only part of metaphysical illusion, why worry about the particularity of religious identity, let alone fight to protect the particularity of one identity over another? Hindus are well aware of this tension. It is clear they operate on multiple levels, and that metaphysical truths do not always translate one on one to social policies. In fact, it is argued that such deep attitudes were the basis for conversion and its acceptance in earlier generations. This requires a statement of why this point in time calls for a different approach, and most often the response is couched in terms of an identity now threatened in ways it was not previously.

4. This is the intention behind clause 5 of the declaration of the second Jewish-Hindu summit.
5. Compare the remarks of John Thatamanil, *Managing Multiple Religious and Scholarly Identities: An Argument for a Theological Study of Hinduism*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68,4, 2000.
6. Perhaps we can take the language of journey and consider it not only in light of one person's personal experiences, but in terms of the encounter itself. As we have seen, travel and journey play an important part in the present-day Jewish encounter with Hinduism. Perhaps the fullest vision of the import of the encounter may be obtained if we consider that we are all on a journey, if you will—on a pilgrimage. The journey and its encounters, for both parties, are part of a greater process of pilgrimage, whose full significance we do not yet grasp. I find the notion that religions are themselves on a pilgrimage a fruitful notion. I noted the ease with which Christians can apply this notion. Thus, when Pope Benedict invited members of other faiths to a gathering in Assisi in 2011, the invitation spoke of “the Pilgrim Church,” as a means of framing the meeting, conceived as common pilgrimage. Our history of exile may shape our religious concept of movement in space in different terms. While I wouldn't know how to frame the present insight in Jewish terms, I remain challenged by it.

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