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AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

In this new edition, contemporary Judaism is presented in all its rich diversity, including both traditional and modern theologies as well as secular forms of Jewish identity. While the focus of the book is on developments that have taken place in the past 200 years, they are set against a historical background, going back to the Bible. Beginning with a description of the Jewish people as it exists in today's world, it studies the unique concept of Jewish peoplehood and its survival over the centuries in the face of many challenges. An account of the key texts is followed by studies of the different interpretations of the religion, and the ways that life is lived out both in the home and in the community. Jewish theology is described both historically and in terms of contemporary issues. An important and distinctive section considers the goals of Jewish life and faith.

NICHOLAS DE LANGE is Professor of Hebrew and Jewish Studies in the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge. A distinguished scholar and translator, he is author of *The Penguin Dictionary of Judaism* (2008), co-editor (with Miri Freud-Kandel) of *Modern Judaism: An Oxford Guide* (2005), and author of an edited translation of Colette Sirat's *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages* (2002, 2008).

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NICHOLAS DE LANGE
University of Cambridge

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Preface

This book is intended for students of religion and others who seek an introduction to Judaism. It is, as its title says, an introduction, and nothing more. Some suggestions for further reading are given at the end. I hope I have covered the main points, without becoming too embroiled in details. I make no apology, however, for including a certain number of quotations, from the prayer book and other sources, because Judaism is a text-based religion, and to describe beliefs or rituals without giving texts would be to offer a very faint glimpse.

The focus throughout is on contemporary Judaism. Insofar as I delve into history, I do so through the eyes of the present. There are many books which tell the story of the Jewish people, but what matters for this introduction is the way that the past is perceived today and the ways that it affects contemporary Judaism.

Judaism today is very fragmented, as I have tried to explain in the book, and I have been careful to try to do justice to the different strands, roughly in proportion to their numerical importance. If I have been less than fair to secular Judaism that is because it does not yet seem to be as articulate about itself as the other trends.

The main centres of Judaism today are in the United States and Israel, and I have tried to reflect that importance in the book. However, I have also referred to Judaism in Europe, not only before the Second World War but today as well. Although the heyday of European Judaism lies in the past, it cannot be written off.

I have designed the book so that the chapters can be read in any order, and have deliberately included some repetition and cross-reference to that end. However, I believe there is a certain logic in the order in which the subject is presented, and recommend readers to follow the good advice to 'begin at the beginning'.

I acknowledge that my attempts to avoid sexist language may seem half-hearted. I have aimed at a compromise between accuracy and elegance,

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and I know I have not always succeeded. It is hard to avoid sexism completely when writing about Judaism, because it pervades the sources. I do hope, though, that when I refer to God as 'he' I do not give the impression that he has a sex or gender, and I sincerely hope I do not use the word 'Jew' to mean 'male Jew'.

Since this is an introduction, I have allowed myself to use a simplified system of transliteration of Hebrew, which aims to give an approximation of the pronunciation, rather than to permit words to be retranscribed directly into the Hebrew alphabet. There are pitfalls: in particular, the letter *h* is used for two Hebrew letters, one of which is a harder sound than English *h*. Those readers who know some Hebrew should have no difficulty in identifying the transliterated words, but for added clarity I have inserted a more exact transcription of each word in the Glossary.

I have incurred many debts while writing this book. I must thank the Weizmann Institute, Rehovot, for offering me shelter while I was researching the Israeli aspects, and the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Yarnton, for similar hospitality during the writing. I derived terrestrial and intellectual nourishment from friends in both places. I am grateful to my students in Cambridge and during a brief stay at the Free University of Berlin for letting me test out my ideas on them, and for trusting me with some of their own. Several friends have offered advice and suggestions, for which I am duly grateful. Finally, my warm thanks to my mother and to my children for not letting me stray too far from reality, and for putting me right on lots of details.

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Preface to the second edition

I am glad to have this opportunity to bring my book up to date and to refresh the suggestions for further reading. I am grateful to my colleagues George Wilkes and Melanie J. Wright for helpful comments and suggestions.

Nicholas de Lange
Cambridge,
December 2008.

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Chronology

c. 1225 BCE	Suggested date for Exodus of Israelites from Egypt
c. 1000 BCE	Kingdom of David and Solomon
c. 950 BCE	First Temple
722 BCE	Sargon of Assyria conquers kingdom of Israel
586 BCE	First Temple destroyed by Babylonians. Babylonian exile. Beginning of eastern Diaspora
c. 520 BCE	Second Temple
333–323 BCE	Conquests of Alexander the Great
167 BCE	Revolt of the Maccabees (Hasmoneans) against Seleucid rule
164 BCE	Hasmoneans capture Jerusalem. Hasmonean dynasty
40–4 BCE	Herod the Great, king of Judaea
66–74 CE	Great revolt; sack of Jerusalem by Romans (70 CE)
77–8	Flavius Josephus, *Jewish War*
115–17	Diaspora revolt
132–5	Bar Kokhba revolt
c. 220	Mishnah compiled
313	Emperor Constantine establishes tolerance of Christianity: beginning of Christian dominance
c. 415	Jerusalem Talmud compiled
589	Beginning of the Geonic period; Babylonian Talmud compiled
eighth century	Rise of Karaism
1040–1105	Rashi
1096	Crusaders massacre Jews in Rhineland
1138–1204	Maimonides
c. 1275	*Zohar* compiled
1488	First printed Hebrew Bible
1492	Unbaptised Jews expelled from Spain
1534–72	Isaac Luria

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1565	*Shulhan Arukh* published
1626–76	Shabbetai Tsvi
1654	Jews arrive in New Amsterdam
1698–1760	Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism
1720–97	Elijah of Vilna (the 'Vilna Gaon')
1729–86	Moses Mendelssohn
1730	First public synagogue in New York
1791	Russian Pale of Settlement, Jews of France emancipated
1817	First Reformed congregation in Hamburg
1873	Union of American Hebrew Congregations
from 1881	Pogroms in Russia; rise of antisemitism; migrations
1882–1903	First *aliyah* (Zionist immigration to Israel)
1885	Codification of Reform Judaism (Pittsburgh Platform)
1886	Jewish Theological Seminary of America
1894–9	'Dreyfus Affair' in France
1897	First Zionist Congress; founding of the Bund (Jewish Workers' Union)
1917	Emancipation in Russia following the Revolution; Balfour Declaration
1920–48	Palestine under British Mandate
1925	Founding of Hebrew University of Jerusalem
1933–45	Nazi persecution; the Holocaust
1934	Birobidzhan proclaimed 'Jewish Autonomous Oblast'
1936	World Jewish Congress founded
1937	Columbus Platform
1948	State of Israel founded
1967	Six-Day War
1973	Yom Kippur War
1976	Centenary Perspective issued
2000	Dabru Emet published

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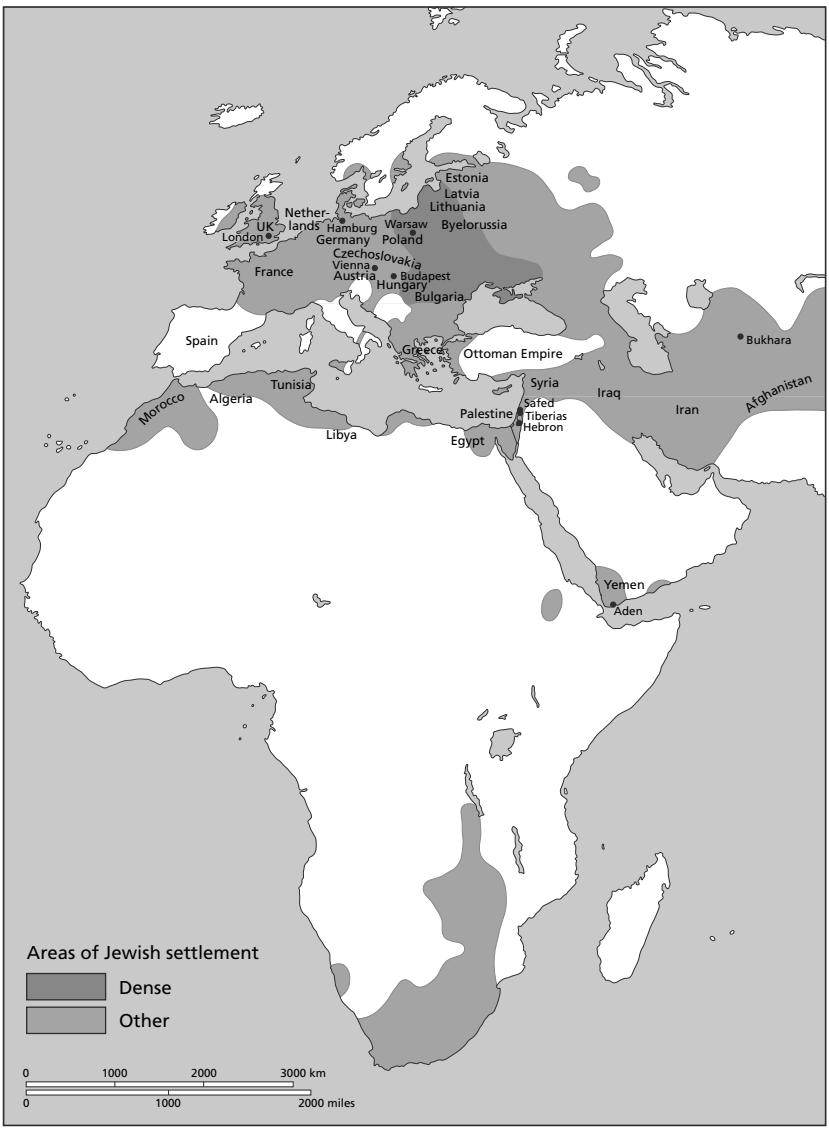


Map of the Jewish world in 1930 (a)

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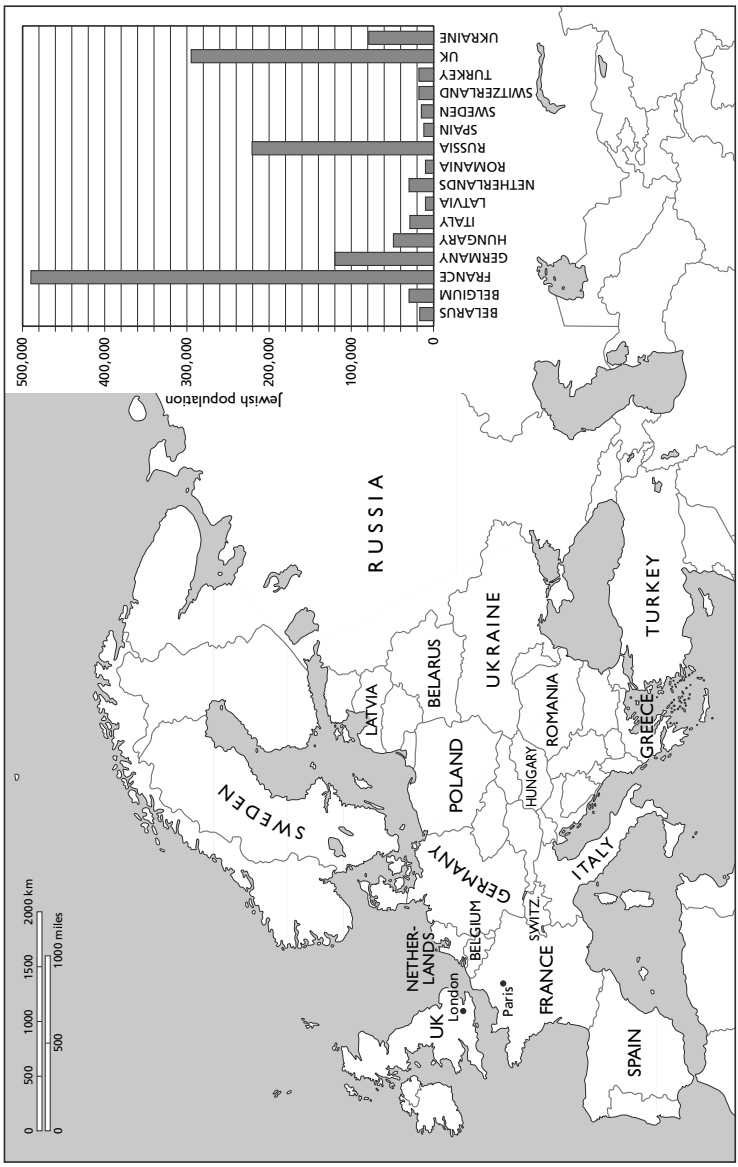


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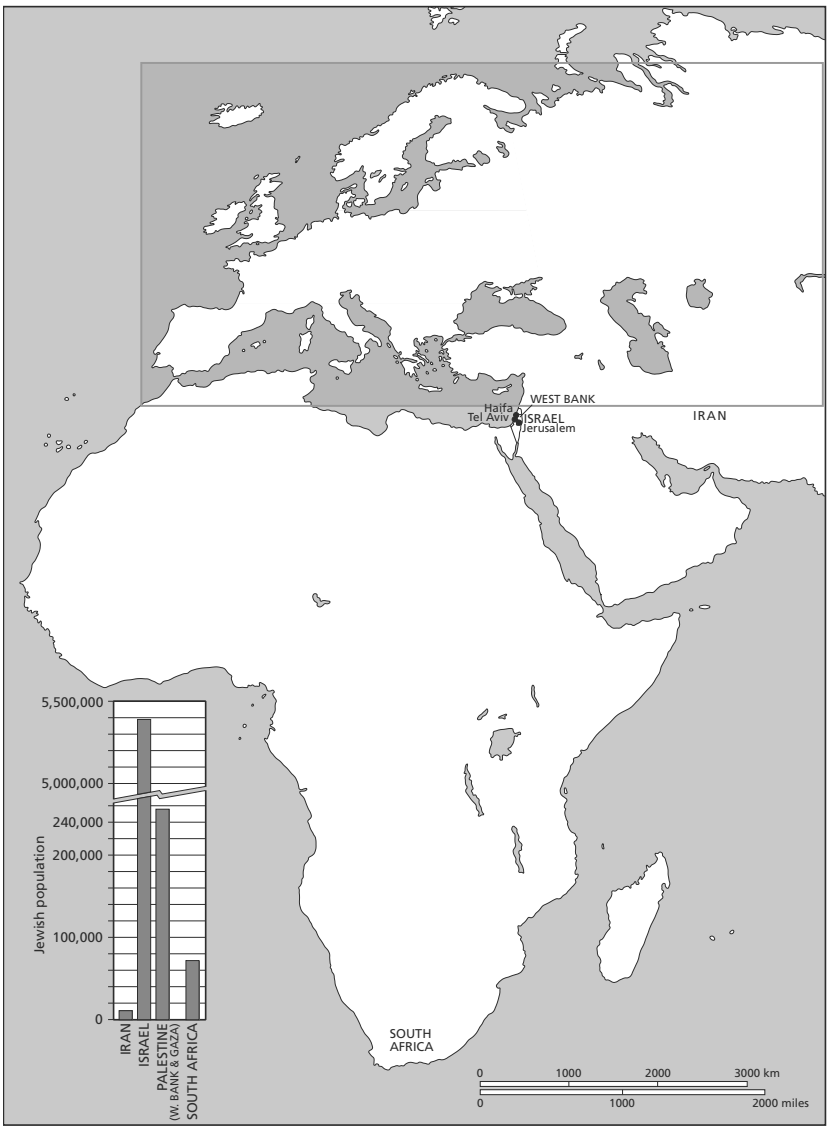


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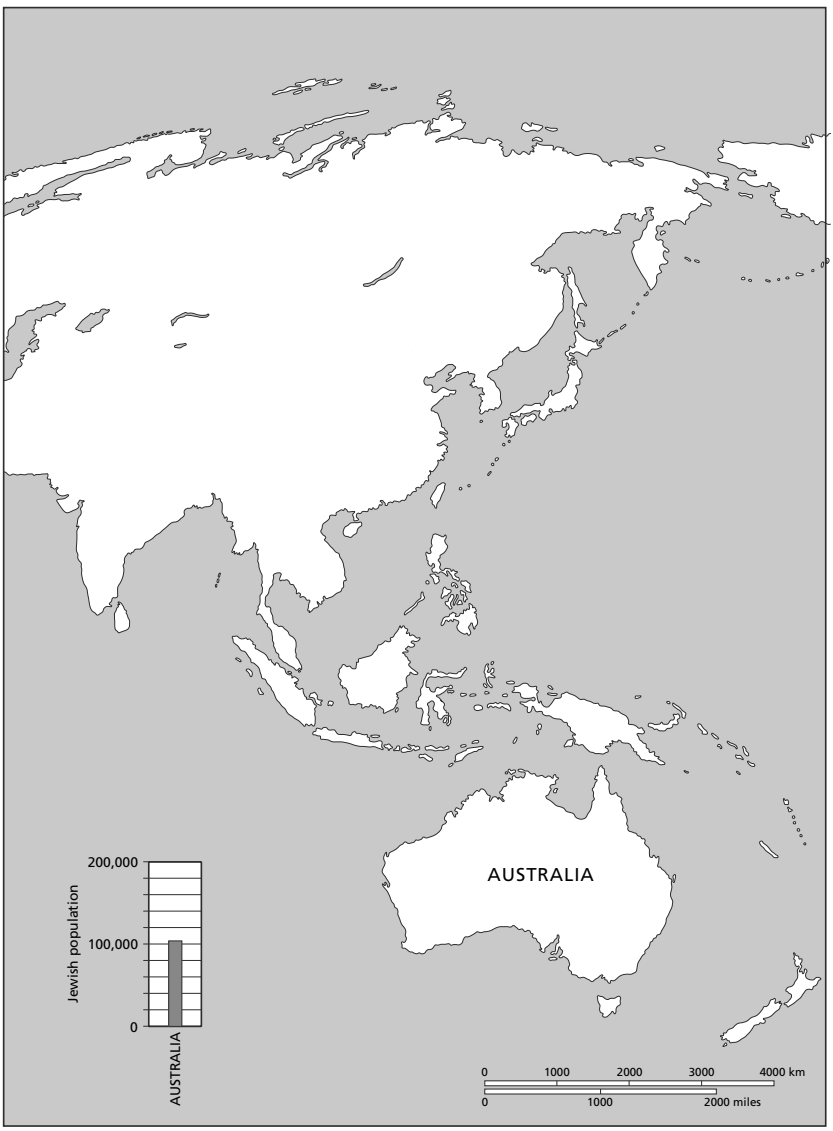


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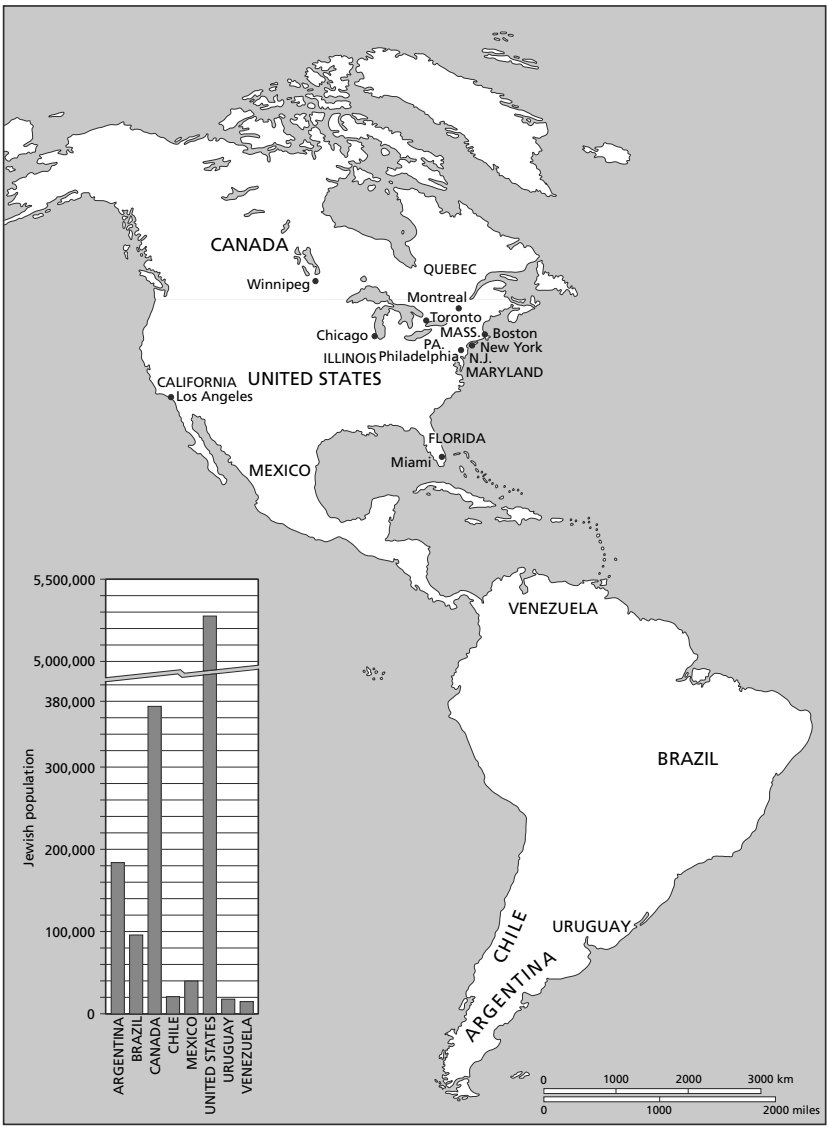


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