
Book Review

A PEOPLE THAT SHALL DWELL ALONE: JUDAISM AS A GROUP EVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

By Kevin MacDonald, Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994

Mortimer Ostow just published *Myth and Madness: The Psychodynamics of Anti-Semitism*, a recent contribution to the genre of literature that explains anti-Semitism as a mental illness whose epidemiology can be understood through "psychoanalytic interpretation of . . . specific antisemitic myths, including pre-Christian early and medieval Christian, 'racial' and post-modern Muslim antisemitism . . . the pogrom mentality, including the Nazi phenomenon, antisemitic fundamentalism, and black antisemitism."

In distinction, Kevin MacDonald recently published *A People That Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy*, which is a prelude to *Separation and Its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism*. In these two works, only the first of which can be considered here, MacDonald argues that the worldwide, age-old phenomenon of anti-Semitism is not a disease state vectored by myths, but is instead what should be expected given the nature of human intergroup competition and the competitive attributes of Judaism.

Love Thy Neighbor

Like all human groups that compete long enough to be counted, Judaism entails codes of behavior that curtail competition within the group in order to facilitate competition with other groups. In addition, Judaism added the ultimate foundation for cooperation: "Love thy neighbor as thy self" (from Leviticus 19:18). MacDonald reviews a prodigious number of secondary sources, authored almost entirely by Jewish historians, which substantiate the argument that Judaism's moral code stopped at the border line—that this apex of morality was meant, and has for practical purposes been taken to mean, "love your coreligionist as yourself."

Rather than review MacDonald's extensive and competent review of this literature, I think it would be more useful to show that this argument can also be derived from primary sources. Turning to the Torah (first five books of the Bible), if we want to know who Moses thought his god meant by *neighbor*, the

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love law should be put into context. The minimum context that makes sense is the biblical verse from which the law is so frequently extracted. Here are four translations of Leviticus 19:18:

- “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”—first Jewish Publication Society translation (JPS, 1917) and the King James Version (KJV, 1611)
- “You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”—Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1952).
- “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself.”—TANAKH, most recent JPS translation (1985).

In context, *neighbor* meant “the children of thy people,” “the sons of your own people,” “your countrymen”—in other words, fellow in-group members. Specific laws that curtail competition within the group follow from the love law and can be better understood by keeping the in-group definition of *neighbor* in mind. Consider, for example, the proto-legal portion of the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:17–21; JPS ’17 & KJV):

Thou shalt not kill.
Neither shalt thou commit adultery.
Neither shalt thou steal.
Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor.
Neither shall you covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.

—and keep in mind that there is no punctuation in the original. That is, the scrolls from which these words were translated have no periods, no commas, and no first-word capitalization. Decisions about where sentences and paragraphs begin and end are courtesy of the translator. Accordingly, instead of being written as five separate paragraphs of one sentence each, Deuteronomy 5:17–21 could be translated:

Thou shalt not kill, neither shalt thou commit adultery, neither shalt thou steal, neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor. Neither shall you covet your neighbor’s wife—and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.

Here the question “Thou shalt not kill who?” is answered “Thou shalt not kill thy neighbor. . . the children of thy people, your countrymen, your fellow in-group member” (see Hartung ms 1¹ for confirmation of this interpretation of the Talmud).

¹ I have taken the liberty of citing manuscripts that I have not as yet been able to publish because MacDonald cites several of them, with permission, in his work. They are available on request.

An Endogamous Light Unto The Nations

Turning to the implications of in-group morality for out-groups, MacDonald reviews the “apologia intended to portray Judaism as universalist” (pp. 105, 62–63):

The idea that Jewish separatism fundamentally derives from a moral, even altruistic, stance has been common throughout Jewish history. Baron (1952a, 12) notes that an integral aspect of the ideology of Judaism has been that “segregation is necessary to preserve at least one exemplary group from mixing with the masses of others” who are viewed as morally inferior. Separatism not only is motivated by ethical reasons, but involves altruism: In being Jews, they were “living the hard life of an exemplar.” And by serving as a morally pure exemplar, “they were being Jews *for all men*” (italics in text).

This sense that Judaism represents a moral ideal to the rest of mankind — “a light unto the nations” (Isa. 42:6) — has been common throughout Jewish intellectual history, reflected for example, in Philo, who depicts Israel “as a nation destined to pray for the world so that the world might ‘be delivered from evil and participate in what is good’” (see McKnight 1991, 39); or “the Jewish nation is to the whole world what the priest is to the state” (McKnight 1991, 46). This theme also emerged as a prominent aspect of the 19th-century Jewish Reform movement and remains prominent among modern Jewish secular intellectuals. Moore (1927–30, I:229) notes that in the ancient world the ideology contained the thought that “Israel is not only a prophet of the true religion but its martyr, its witness in suffering; it bears uncomplaining the penalty that others deserved, and when its day of vindication comes and God greatly exalts it, the nations which despised it in the time of its humiliation will confess in amazement that through its sufferings they were saved.”

I recently received a letter from Rabbi Epharim Z. Buchwald decrying “The Silent Holocaust” (Hartung ms 2¹). Rabbi Buchwald’s *National Jewish Outreach Program* has been reaching out to individuals who might make a financial contribution to bolster Jewish endogamy. The pitch goes like this:

Concentration camps and gas chambers aren’t the only ways to exterminate the Jewish people . . . intermarriage can accomplish the same evil end. What you and I do in the next few years will make the difference between a thriving American Jewry and a tragedy truly beyond comprehension . . . Never before has the future of our people been so threatened . . . Can we do anything to stop this ‘Silent Holocaust?’ The answer is yes . . . Please join us in this life-and-death battle today.²

MacDonald addresses this bedrock of separatism (pp. 102–103):

Once again, as in the “light unto the nations” concept so common throughout Jewish history, the proposed moral nature of Judaism is utilized as a rationale for maintaining the perpetuation of the group: “The identification of Judaism with applied morality has been a primary Jewish civil religious strategy

² This promotional literature can be obtained from the *National Jewish Outreach Program* at 485 Fifth Avenue, Suite 212, New York, NY 1007-6104 (Fax: 212-986-7476). Ask for information on “The Silent Holocaust.”

for vindicating both its embrace of America and its support of Jewish group perpetuation" (Woochler 1986, 28). The belief gradually emerged that the Jewish community qua Jewish community had an important contribution to make to American life, and the Jewish tradition had helped to shape America's values because of their moral, civilizing influences on American life. Within the confines of Judaism as a civil religion, "The survival of the Jewish people is a consuming passion because the Jewish people and the Jewish community becomes a value in its own right, a crystallization of all that is being defended" (Woocher 1986, 76) . . . Woocher's (1986) data indicate that the leaders of civil Judaism in the 1970s had a strong sense of Jewish ethnicity and were greatly concerned about Jewish intermarriage. A strong sense of ethnic pride and a sense of Judaism as making a unique, irreplaceable contribution to human culture are characteristic of these individuals, as indicated by agreement with the following statements: "The Jewish contribution to modern civilization has been greater than that of any other people" (over 60% agree or strongly agree); "The Jewish people is the chosen people" (over 60% agree or strongly agree). Regarding the latter, Woocher (1986, 1145) notes, "Civil Judaism, like many modern Jews, often finds the traditional language of chosenness, and the implications of that language discomfiting. For this reason, it is possible to lose sight of how critical the myth of chosenness really is, to fail to recognize that it is the glue which holds together the pragmatic ethos and the transcendent vision of civil Judaism." In addition, 72 percent agreed that intermarriage was a "very serious" problem, and an additional 21 percent viewed it as "moderately serious." . . . There was also a rejection of the melting pot conceptualization of the United States in favor of a cultural pluralism model developed originally by Horace Kallen (1915, 1924) early in the century as a mechanism for preserving Jewish separatism within American society.

"Writing of the 1970s in the United States, Sachar (1992, 688) states that 'the Jewish family's principal 'religious' 'philosophic' concern was simply the in-group marriage of its children.' (p. 103)." MacDonald cites and broadens this observation to conclude that (p. 64): "From an evolutionary perspective, in the absence of actual genetic assimilation one is left to conclude that this Jewish sense of moral and religious idealism, which results in genetic segregation, is in fact a mask for a self-interested evolutionary strategy aimed at promoting the interests of a kinship group that maintains its genetic integrity during a diaspora."

Right, but again, MacDonald's perceptive perception of "The light unto the nations," with all of its self-aggrandizing revisionism, can be gleaned from the original (Hartung ms 1¹). Moses may not have known about natural selection, but he transmitted his god's explicit commandment to kill and steal from out-group members as a recurrent major theme.³ Two distinct policies were put into effect. First, all members of nations located in the land that was to become Israel were to be killed outright. Subsequently, people in surrounding nations were to be killed unless they agreed to become subservient to Israel. Both policies are

³ For examples of the commandment to kill out-group members, and boasts of having done so, see Numbers 21:2-3; 21:34-35; 24:8; 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:2-6; 3:21; 7:1-2; 7:16; 7:23-24; 9:3; 11:24-25; 20:16-17; 31:3-5; 33:27; Joshua 2:10; 6:21; 8:2; 8:24-26; 10:1; 10:28; 10:35; 10:37; 10:39-40; 11:11-14; 11:20-21; Judges 1:17; 3:29; First Samuel 15:3; 15:8; 15:15; 15:18; 15:20; and First Chronicles 4:41, any major translation.

given in one passage of Deuteronomy (20:10–18:RSV), with instructions regarding people outside of Israel given first:

When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. And if its answer to you is peace and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; and when the LORD your God gives it into your hand you shall put all its males to the sword, but the women and the little ones, the cattle, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourselves; and you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you. Thus you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here.

But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded; that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices which they have done in the service of their Gods, and so to sin against the LORD your God.

The *Light Unto The Nations* was to be Israel, and centuries of effort by Christian and Jewish exegetical spin-doctors aside, nations outside of the genocide zone were to be caused to see the light in consequence of being conquered by Israel. Those nations would then realize that the god of Israel is stronger than their gods, and most important, they would then worship Israel's god *through* Israel—that is, by paying tribute to Israel. This ultimate in-group fantasy is explicated throughout the Bible,⁴ but is perhaps put most pointedly in Psalms and Isaiah (RSV):

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. [Psalms 2:8–9] . . . And the [diaspora Jewish] peoples will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them in the LORD's land as male and female slaves . . . [Isaiah 14:2] . . . Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you and be yours, they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will make supplication to you, saying: 'God is with you only, and there is no other, no god besides him.' [Isaiah 45:14] . . . I will give you as a light unto the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. [Isaiah 49:6] . . . Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD

⁴ To trace the development of this theme, see Genesis 18:18; 18:22; 26:4; 27:29; 28:14; Exodus 23:31; 33:16; 34:24; Deuteronomy 7:14–24; 10:15; 14:2; 15:6; 12:18–19; 28:1; 28:10–13; 32:43; 33:17–29; Joshua 1:3–4; 23:4–5; Second Samuel 8:2–14; 10:19; 12:30–31; 22:44–47; First Kings 4:21; 4:24; 10:14–15; Second Kings 3:4; First Chronicles 16:35; 17:21; 9:25–26; 20:29–30; Psalms 2:4–9; 61:6; 89:27; 105:44–45; 110:5–6; 111:6; Isaiah 11:11–15; 14:1–2; 17:12–14; 19:17; 34:1–8; 40:15–17; 41:8–11; 45:14; 45:22–25; 49:1–7; 49:22–23; 54:1–3; 55:5; 59:20–21; 60:1–16; 61:5–8; 66:10–16; Jeremiah 12:16–17; 30:11; 33:9; 46:28; Ezekiel 28:24–26; 36:6–11; 39:17–22; Dan 2:44; 7:13–14; 7:27; 10:13–14; 12:1–3; 12:7; Joel 1:12–14; 3:2; Obadiah 1:15–17; Micah 4:12–13; 5:5–18; Zephaniah 2:7–9; 2:12–13; 3:19–20; Haggai 2:6–9; Zechariah 1:14–21; 2:8–9; 8:22–23; 9:11–15; 12:5–6; 12:9; 14:1; 14:9–12; 14:16–19; and Malachi 1:2–5.

has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you . . . you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you . . . Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you . . . your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut; that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste. (Isaiah 60:1–12)

A Diffuse Light Unto The Nations

MacDonald details how this ideology was transformed during the Jewish Diaspora. A unified, overtly competitive group was broken up into hundreds of small, covertly competitive groups. Consider just one thread of this cloth—the profession of tax farming. Throughout the Dark Ages, much of the world into which Jewish groups dispersed was divided into small princedoms, sheikdoms, fiedoms, etc. The primary responsibility of such governments was to collect enough taxes to maintain a large enough army to prevent adjacent governments from collecting the same taxes. But most of the heads of such governments could barely read or write, let alone keep accounts and figure compound interest. This created an entrepreneurial opportunity that was dominated by Jews. The pitch was irresistible: “Listen Prince, according to my estimate, the folks around here owe you big bucks, but you don’t really know which ones and how much. I’ll figure that out and collect it if you will put your enforcers at my disposal and give me a modest percentage of the take.” (Hartung ms 3’).

More generally, as put by Israel Shahak (1994), for hundreds of years subsequent to the apex of their influence over the governments of Spain, England, France, Italy, and some parts of the Muslim world, Jewish intermediaries’ “most important social function” in Prussia, Austria, Hungary, Poland, and western Russia “was to mediate the oppression of the peasants on behalf of the nobility and the Crown... Many Jews throughout Poland, but especially in the east, were employed as the direct supervisors and oppressors of the enserfed peasantry—as bailiffs of whole manors (invested with the landlord’s full coercive powers) or as lessees of particular feudal monopolies such as the corn mill, the liquor still and public house (with the right of armed search of peasant houses for illicit stills) or the bakery, and as collectors of customary feudal dues of all kinds. In short, in eastern Poland, under the rule of the nobles (and of the feudalised church, formed exclusively from the nobility) the Jews were the *immediate exploiters of the peasantry*” (pp. 53, 62, 63, italics and parentheses not added).

Reactive Racism

History is replete with the consequences of that form of reactive racism which we call anti-Semitism, and MacDonald is in the vanguard of those who will

broaden our understanding of its origins. The ancient *Light unto the nations* burned most brightly during Solomon's reign over the entire Middle East. According to the original account, "the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and sixty-six talents" (First Kings 10:14, RSV), or about 60,000 pounds—three times the amount that Attila was able to extort from Rome per annum before he sacked it.

Those figures are exaggerated, but the point remains, and contemporary figures need no embellishment. The modern state of Israel receives the monetary equivalent of more than 625,000 pounds of gold per year, primarily from the United States. Isaiah's dream has come true and it rests on two pillars: (1) most of the citizens of most donor nations are Christian or Jewish, such that, the former religion being a form of the latter, to varying degrees they believe in a god who gave Palestine to the Jews, and (2) the most enormous act of reactive racism ever perpetrated, namely the Holocaust, has been presented, and so is perceived, as having been the psychotic swelling up of a form of evil that resides disproportionately in the souls of Goyim—and so they have been induced to irrationally atone for their special evil by enabling descendant and nondescendant coreligionists of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust to systematically purloin the land and property of people who were not those victims' persecutors.

MacDonald's work will help us chip away at this second pillar, and that makes it very good work indeed.⁵

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⁵ Readers who understand the liabilities inherent to group selection arguments are likely to be distracted from this conclusion by MacDonald's predilection in that regard. Particularly grievous is his argument that the high IQ of Ashkenazi Jews (a phenomenon that does not apply to Jews in general—so much so that IQ among contemporary Israeli Jewish school children rounds out to average—see, e.g., Kaniel and Fisherman 1991) is a consequence of eugenic practices that have involved, at least to some degree, the *voluntary* reduction of reproductive success by Jews with low IQ (a true group selection argument, as distinct from the amalgam recently perpetrated by Wilson and Sober, 1994). Those who might spend time contemplating the possibility that Jews have evolved as much as a single allele by group selection should contemplate the newest concern of Jews whose understanding of Judaism is farsighted and acutely perceives the difficulty of maintaining minimal in-group cohesion—as put by Avraham Burg, the new Chairman of The Jewish Agency: "If real peace does come to Israel, the question will be asked: Can we, and how do we survive without an external enemy?" (1995).

Fortunately, the value of MacDonald's book, as outlined above, can be extracted without serious injury from this ill-considered aspect of his theoretical framework.

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