

THE JEWS CANNOT BE ERASED

What Rising Antisemitism Reveals About a Culture and a Church in Crisis

Darrow Miller · Credo House Publishers

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CHAPTER 6

The Gifts of the Jews

From Part II — The Jewish Revolution: The Birth of a Moral Universe

This sample is Chapter 6 of *The Jews Cannot Be Erased* by Darrow Miller, forthcoming from Credo House Publishers, mid-October 2026. It does not lead with the church-crisis or Bible-study origin story; those belong later in the book. The hang line of the work is here: You cannot hate the root and love the fruit.

I discovered Thomas Cahill's book *The Gifts of the Jews* somewhat late in my reading life, and I have not been the same since. It is not a religious book written by a theologian. It is a work of cultural history written by an American scholar who set out to answer a deceptively simple question: what have the Jewish people actually contributed to the world?

His answer was not what I expected. I expected a list of impressive achievements—Nobel Prizes, scientific discoveries, literary masterpieces. What Cahill gave me instead was something far more fundamental. He argued that, without the Jews, the world as we know it could not have existed at all. Not merely that it would have been poorer or less impressive or lacking certain achievements. But that the very categories through which we think about reality—the words we use, the concepts that structure our inner and outer lives, the moral intuitions we take for granted, the understanding of time and progress and hope and justice that we breathe like air—none of these would exist without the Jewish people.

Can we really grasp the implications of this? We cannot even go one day without thinking Jewish thoughts we did not know we had.

This chapter is about those thoughts. About the gifts. About what was given to the world through this people—this small, scattered, frequently persecuted, often despised people—and why those gifts are so extraordinary that they have made all subsequent human history possible.

The Treasure Hidden in Plain Sight

Thomas Cahill opens *The Gifts of the Jews* with an observation so simple it is almost startling:

The Jews gave us the Outside and the Inside—our outlook and our inner life. We can hardly get up in the morning or cross the street without being Jewish. We dream Jewish dreams and hope Jewish hopes. Most of our best words, in fact—new, adventure, surprise; unique, individual, person, vocation; time, history, future; freedom, progress, spirit; faith, hope, justice—are the gifts of the Jews.

Stop with that list of words for a moment. New. Adventure. Surprise. Unique. Individual. Person. Vocation. Time. History. Future. Freedom. Progress. Spirit. Faith. Hope. Justice.

These are not exotic philosophical terms. They are the words we reach for when we want to express the most important things in our lives. They are the words inscribed on our founding documents. They are the words we speak at funerals and weddings, at graduations and bedsides. They are the words our children learn before they learn to read.

And every one of them is a Jewish gift.

Before the Jewish revolution in human thought—before Abraham heard the Voice and followed it out of Ur into the moral universe—none of these words existed in the form we know them. The ancient pagan world had no word for “future” in the sense of a destination toward which history is moving, because time was not moving toward a destination. It was cycling endlessly, going nowhere. There was no word for “progress,” because nothing was getting better—only repeating. There was no “individual” in the fullest sense, because personhood was subsumed into tribe, clan, and the demands of the spirit world. There was no “hope” as a settled confidence in a faithful God’s future action, because the gods of paganism were not faithful—they were arbitrary, capricious, and had to be continuously appeased.

The Jews gave the world a new vocabulary. And because vocabulary shapes thought, and thought shapes culture, and culture shapes civilization—the Jews gave the world a new civilization.

Metaphysical Capital: The Wealth that Outlasts Everything

I have spent decades working in development—helping communities and nations move out of poverty and toward flourishing. In that work I have seen something that conventional economics cannot explain. Some communities with abundant natural resources remain impoverished generation after generation. Other communities with almost no natural advantages flourish against all odds. The difference is never primarily material. It is always primarily a matter of ideas.

I have come to call this metaphysical capital—the wealth of ideas and virtues that a people carry in their minds and hearts. Metaphysical capital is more important than physical capital in the long-run flourishing of nations. You can give a community money, infrastructure, technology, and training. But if the people do not carry within them the ideas that make free, just, and flourishing society possible—the dignity of the individual, the rule of law, the sanctity of the family, the moral accountability before God—the

money will be wasted and the infrastructure will decay.

The Jewish people are the greatest living demonstration of this principle in all of human history.

Consider the arc of Jewish history. Enslaved in Egypt. Exiled to Babylon. Scattered across the Roman world after AD 70. Expelled from England in 1290, from Spain in 1492. Herded into ghettos across Europe. Subjected to pogroms in Russia. Murdered by the millions in the Holocaust. And yet—again and again and again—wherever they were permitted to live freely, they rose. They built communities of learning. They excelled in commerce and law and medicine and science and the arts. They prospered.

Why? Not because of race or genetic inheritance. Not because of luck or geography. But because they carried within their tradition the richest store of metaphysical capital the world has ever known—ideas and virtues rooted in the Torah, refined through millennia of exile and persecution, that produce human flourishing wherever they are faithfully practiced.

Joseph: The Paradigm of the Jewish Experience

The story of Joseph in Genesis is not merely a family drama. Dennis Prager, in his remarkable commentary *The Rational Bible: Genesis*, argues that it is a paradigm—a pattern—of the entire Jewish experience:

The story of Joseph is a paradigm of the Jewish experience. From being thrown into a pit and then being sold by traders into slavery in a foreign land, he met with considerable success before being wrongfully imprisoned, then released, and once again rose to success, this time on a grand scale. Jewish history follows the same pattern: Jews are persecuted; the moment they are emancipated, they achieve social and professional success; then they are subjugated again; and when given another chance, they rise again.

Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers. He was falsely accused and thrown into prison. Every circumstance conspired against him. And yet Genesis 39:2–3 records, with quiet force: “The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man. . . . His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.”

The success was not despite the suffering. It was forged through it. Jewish character—the virtues that produce flourishing—was hammered into shape on the anvil of persecution. This is one of the most counter-intuitive and important truths in all of human history: the people who have suffered the most have also given the most, precisely because their suffering drove them deeper into the moral universe that sustains them.

Prager identifies the specific virtues that produced this pattern: strong and stable family life; near-universal literacy, even among women; emphasis on the life of the mind; delayed gratification—keeping children in school as long as possible rather than sending them out to work; and an aversion to violence. He is direct about their source: “These values ultimately derive from the Torah

and later Judaism. There is no other way to explain the success and, more importantly, the influence of the Jews, one of the world's smallest peoples."

These are not exotic virtues. They are the virtues of the moral universe—the habits of mind and character that a life lived before the face of the True, Good, and Beautiful God naturally produces. They are what Coram Deo looks like in daily practice.

Winston Churchill's Testimony

I want to pause on Winston Churchill's remarkable assessment of the Jewish contribution to civilization, because it comes from an unexpected quarter and carries unusual authority. Churchill was not a particularly devout man. He was a politician and a warrior, a man of the world in every sense. And yet he wrote this in 1920—in the midst of the pogroms and the rising tide of European antisemitism:

We owe to the Jews a system of ethics which, even if it were entirely separated from the supernatural, would be incomparably the most precious possession of mankind, worth in fact the fruits of all wisdom and learning put together. On that system and by that faith there has been built out of the wreck of the Roman Empire the whole of our existing civilization.

—Winston Churchill, *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, February 1920

The whole of our existing civilization. Not a part of it. Not the religious parts. The whole of it—law, governance, the concept of rights, the possibility of progress, the intellectual tradition that produced science and medicine and the arts. Churchill saw clearly what many educated people in our time have been trained not to see: that Western civilization is not a secular achievement built on the foundation of Greek philosophy and Roman law. The Greeks and Romans made their contributions—but they were not the bedrock.

The bedrock is Jewish. It is a Judeo-Christian achievement built on the foundation of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God who gave the world the moral universe through the Jewish people. Greece gave us philosophy, Rome gave us governance and engineering, but it was the Jews who gave us the framework within which philosophy could pursue truth, governance could pursue justice, and engineering could serve human dignity. Remove the Jewish foundation, and the Greek and Roman contributions have no moral structure to stand on.

You cannot hate the root and love the fruit.

That sentence deserves to stand alone. It is perhaps the most important sentence in this entire book. Every benefit of Western civilization—every hospital, every university, every legal system that protects the innocent, every democratic institution, every scientific discovery, every work of art that reflects genuine beauty—is a fruit of the Judeo-Christian worldview. And the root of that worldview is the Jewish people, and the God who spoke to them, and the moral universe He revealed through them.

Those who celebrate the fruits while despising the root are not merely ungrateful. They are sawing off the branch on which they sit.

The Gifts: A Partial Accounting

What follows is a partial accounting of what the world owes to the Jewish people. It is partial because the full accounting would require more than a book—it would require a library. But even the partial accounting is staggering.

Monotheism and the Coherent Universe

We have explored this at length in chapters 4 and 5. The conviction that there is one God who made everything—and that therefore the universe is a coherent whole, governed by consistent laws, intelligible to the human mind—is the most revolutionary idea in human history. It is the foundation of science, of law, and of the possibility of genuine human knowledge. It came through the Jews.

The Written Word of God

The universe is not silent. God spoke the universe into existence, and He spoke through Moses. The Pentateuch—the five books of Moses—is the foundation of the Old Testament, which together with the New Testament constitutes the most influential library in the history of the world. Every principle of justice, every concept of human dignity, every framework for understanding the moral universe that has shaped Western law and governance traces its lineage to the written Word of God, given to the world through the Jews.

The Moral Law

The Ten Commandments are not a Jewish artifact. They are the moral law of the universe, given through the Jews to all the nations of the earth. They are the foundational charter of every civilization that has ever protected the innocent, punished the guilty, honored the family, and refused to bow before idols. Samuel Rutherford's *Lex Rex*—the principle that the law is above the king, that no human ruler is above the moral law—flows directly from the Mosaic legislation. The American founding, with its insistence on inalienable rights and limited government, is unthinkable without it.

The Imago Dei

Every human being, regardless of race, sex, age, ability, or social position, bears the image of God and therefore possesses intrinsic and inalienable dignity. This is the Jewish gift that made human rights possible. Before the Jewish revolution, human worth was determined by utility, power, or social position. After it—slowly, imperfectly, but inexorably—the logic of the *Imago Dei* worked its way through human civilization, abolishing slavery, extending rights, insisting on the dignity of the weak and the vulnerable. Every human rights movement in history, whether it knew it or not, was drawing on this Jewish capital.

The Covenant of Marriage and the Stable Family

The Jewish sexual ethic—the channeling of human sexuality into the covenantal framework of marriage between a man and a woman—is, as Dennis Prager argues, the most revolutionary moral contribution Judaism ever made to civilization. Before the Jews, the ancient world was saturated with sexual license, temple prostitution, and the exploitation of the weak by the strong. The Jewish covenant of marriage created the stable family. The stable family created the possibility of stable society. The stable society created the conditions for all subsequent human flourishing.

Linear Time, Progress, and Hope

In the pagan worldview, time moves in circles—endless cycles of birth, death, and rebirth, going nowhere in particular. The God of the Jews moves through history toward a promised destination. He makes covenants and keeps them. He promises and fulfills. This linear understanding of time—creation, fall, redemption, consummation—is the framework within which the concepts of progress, hope, and a better future become thinkable. Without it, there is only the wheel. With it, there is a story—and stories have endings.

Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter

Through Jesus of Nazareth—a Jew from the tribe of Judah, born in Bethlehem in the line of David, who fulfilled the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12—the God of Israel opened the covenant to all the nations of the earth. The gospel is the most universal expression of the particular Jewish calling: in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Every person who has ever found forgiveness, hope, and new life through faith in Jesus Christ has received a Jewish gift.

The Nobel Prize and the Saving of Lives

Jewish individuals represent less than 0.2 percent of the world’s population and approximately 22.5 percent of all individual Nobel Laureates in history. According to ScienceHeroes.com, which tracks the most impactful life-saving advances in human history, Jewish individuals are responsible for saving approximately 2.8 billion lives—50 percent of the total lives saved by the 105 most impactful individuals in human history. These are not incidental achievements. They are the measurable, quantifiable fruit of a people who carried within their tradition the metaphysical capital that produces human flourishing.

The Secret Is Not a Secret

What is the secret to Jewish flourishing? It is the same secret that Joseph carried into Egypt, that the Hebrew slaves carried out of Egypt, that the exiles carried to Babylon and back, that the diaspora carried across the Roman Empire and into every nation that received them.

It is not a secret at all. It is a worldview. It is the conviction—lived out in daily practice, passed from parents to children, sustained through centuries of persecution, never fully extinguished—that we live in a moral universe made by a God who is True, Good, and Beautiful; that human beings are made in His image and are therefore persons of infinite worth and dignity; that the moral law He revealed through Moses is not a burden but a gift; and that the future belongs to those who live faithfully within the

framework He established.

This is why the Jews have given so much to the world. Not because they are racially superior or intellectually exceptional by nature or mysteriously favored in ways that bypass the normal rules of human life. But because they have carried, longer and more faithfully than any other people, the foundational ideas on which human flourishing depends.

And this is also—as we will see in the chapters that follow—why they are so deeply and so persistently hated.

The hatred of the Jews is the hatred of the gifts they carry. It is the hatred of the moral universe. It is the hatred of God.

And the people who hate those gifts are not hating something foreign and alien. They are hating the very foundations of their own civilization—the root of every fruit they have ever tasted, every right they have ever claimed, every word of hope they have ever spoken.

You cannot hate the root and love the fruit.

Lord, we are the recipients of an extraordinary inheritance. Through this people—small, scattered, persecuted, and yet indestructible—You gave the world the knowledge of who You are, who we are, and how life works. Open our eyes to see the gifts we have received. Open our hearts to the gratitude they deserve. And give us the courage to stand with the people through whom You chose to bless us all. Amen.

End of sample. Notes omitted here; full citations appear in the published book. Genesis 12 is why the Jews cannot be erased: the covenant stands. The canary is an alarm in the mine — not a claim that they can be wiped out.

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