

Howard Jacobson's *Roots Schmoots* — In Search of His Own Jewish Roots —

Yoshiji HIROSE[※]

ハワード・ジェイコブソン作 『ルーツ・シュムーツ』

— 内なるユダヤ人アイデンティティを求めて —

広瀬 佳司

ハワード・ジェイコブソンはイギリスのマンチェスター生まれのユダヤ系作家である。小説家だけでなくコラムニストやアナウンサーとしても知られている。2010年にはマン・ブッカー賞を受賞した。本論で扱う回想録『ルーツ・シュムーツ』(*Roots Schmoots - Journeys Among Jews*, 1994) で少し触れられているが、最初の結婚は長くは続かなかった。二度目のキリスト教徒の妻ロザリン・サンドラー (Rosalin Sadler <1965年結婚 - 95年離婚>) がこの作品に登場する。ロザリンとの離婚後、今の妻ジェニー・デ・ヤング (Jenny De Yong, 2005年結婚) している。ジェイコブソンは決して宗教的なユダヤ人ではないが、やはりアイデンティティの拠り所であるユダヤ教伝統には特別な思いがあるようだ。そうした立場から、主にアメリカユダヤ社会とイスラエル社会を訪れて彼の感想を率直にまとめたのがこの回想録である。それだけに、作家の具体的な批判精神が顕著に表されている。ジェイコブソンの他の小説の舞台裏を覗くような印象を抱かせる作品だ。世界の各地におけるユダヤ社会の矛盾点をジェイコブソンがユダヤ系イギリス作家として鋭く抉る部分を注意深く分析する。同じユダヤ系のアメリカ作家であるアイザック・シンガー、フィリップ・ロス、シンシア・オジックらの世界とも比較しながら論じていきたい。

キーワード：モーセ五書、シオニズム、人種差別主義

I. Introduction

As he travels around America, Israel, and Lithuania, Howard Jacobson (1942-) presents flashes of brilliant and deep insight on Jewish problems in the world throughout his memoir *Roots Schmoots* (1994). I would like to explicate his treatment of diversified Jewish communities and his British Jewish identity reflected in his reaction and feelings toward Jews in the world. My interest lies not in the general study of Jewish identity, but in his particular sense of Jewishness. His criticism of Israelis is

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※ 本学文学部英語英文学科

worth close reading and analysis, and Jacobson's insightful discussion about Jewish-Palestinian issues might contribute to finding some clues for peace in Israel.

Often compared to Philip Roth, the British Jewish Jacobson has some affinities with Roth, an American Jew, in terms of his literary imagination and his rich sense of Jewish humor as well as harsh criticism of 'non-Torah Jews' (non-religious Jews). Roth, however, is harsh about religious Jews, too. Most of his rabbis are hypocrites or villains. Their marked differences stem from their respective upbringings: Jacobson in Britain, where only a small Jewish population exists, and Roth in America, one of the centers of Jewish population and culture, along with Israel.

Through *Roots Schmoots*, Jacobson critically observes American Jews and Israelis from an outsider's perspective (that of a British writer). His unique British Jewish point of view vividly shows us not only the differences among Jews in the world Jewish communities, but also their relationship with non-Jews.

Roth's fiction also deals with the process of traveling as an American Jewish writer to Israel, and his heroes learn about Jewish history in Europe during the Holocaust. Cynthia Ozick similarly writes on the journeys of main characters to Europe as a means of revealing the difference between 1950s Europe and America in *Foreign Bodies* (2010). In her best-known novel *The Shawl*, Ozick delineates different types of Jews in Poland. Another American Jewish writer, Bernard Malamud, deals with the provocative history of accusations of 'blood libel' against Jews in Russia in his controversial novel *The Fixer* (1964).

Through Jacobson's poignant observations, we can learn new perspectives on Jewish issues from within and without. This book contributes to our understanding of Jacobson's perception of Judaism, Zionism, Christianity, and Jews in America and Israel.

II. Jacobson's Religious View

In Chapter 10, Jacobson reveals his own religious stance. Jacobson pays a visit to The University Bible Church to hear a Jew preach the word of Jesus to Christians. One of the pamphlets at the church says:

'God (unlike your mother) did more than just make you feel guilty about sin. He sent Y'shua, the Jewish Messiah, to relieve your guilt by—*paying the price* for your sin.' (219)

Jacobson humorously disagrees:

This is inaccurate. Every Jewish son knows that his mother encourages his guilt only in order that she should have more sin to suffer for herself. Here is why Jesus will never catch on among us. We already have a savior/redeemer/martyr at home. (219)

This suggests the essence of a typical Jewish mother, a *Yiddish Mame*, who is willing to devote her life to her children. It goes without saying that one should not compare Jesus to a Jewish mother, and Christians would consider such joking sacrilegious.

Tuvya Zaretsky, a Christian Jew, gives a speech about how he has come to believe in Jesus, though his upbringing was in Orthodox Judaism. Many Christians at the church are pleased with his conversion:

They like him. They enjoy seeing a Jewish boy coming clean with them about the pitfalls of Judaism. (223)

And Zaretsky continues,

‘Droves of Jewish people are coming to faith in Jesus. . . . Jewish people are looking for the truth but we struggle with some of the things that have made truth fuzzy.’ (224)

Jacobson criticizes Zaretsky. Regarding ‘droves of Jewish people,’ he categorically denies it. And, as one of the things that have made truth fuzzy, Jacobson points out Y’shua (Jesus Christ).

The Christian Jewish movement of the 19th and 20th centuries consisted of Jews who converted to Christianity but worshiped in congregations separate from denominational churches. In many cases, they retained some Jewish practices and liturgy, with the addition of readings from the Christian New Testament. The movement was incorporated into the parallel Messianic Jewish movement in the late 1960s. Another Christian Jewess asks Jacobson ‘What do you believe?’ (229):

I say that I pray to no one. And that blood sacrifice is not a problem. Judaism rejected the paganism which later Christianity had recourse to. Jews turn to the Torah, to law, to help them sort out evil. A refusal of human sacrifice as a means of redeeming sin is at the heart of Judaism. Ours was a revolutionary faith for precisely this reason: we brought evil out of the supernatural sphere into the moral. (229)

In other words, Jacobson means, ‘I am Jewish, I feel Jewish, I think Jewish, I argue like a Jew, I read like a Jew, I talk like a Jew, I look like a Jew’ (230). This is his cultural and traditional identity, nurtured in the fertile soil of Judaism.

Tuvya Zaretsky (a Christian Jew) shows quite a different face to Jacobson when they are alone:

I realize that he is pooh-pooing the Christmas holy days. Christmas? Just an adaptation of a pagan festival. Easter? Passover with variations. 'I often suggest to my Christian friends,' he says, 'that we should have Pessach and Easter combined.' (232)

His tone and emphasis differ from his speech to the Christian audience at The University Bible Church. Zaretsky even whispers to the writer, 'Some of them . . . find it hard to grasp that Jesus was a Jewish thinker . . . who wanted to reform Orthodox Judaism' (232). And Zaretsky the Christian Jew says, 'we are still Jews and we have to help one another' (233). Surprised at his unexpected words, Jacobson cries inwardly, 'Well, that's *chutzpah* [audacity, insolence, brazen nerve] Tuvya' (233).

We clearly understand Jacobson's harsh criticism of this Christian Jew. Despite what Zaretsky says in front of Christians, Zaretsky believes that Jesus was a Jewish thinker. If Zaretsky is correct in his interpretation of Jesus, then the New Testament is nothing but another story of the continuation of Judaism.

III. The Trip to Israel— 'Not Israel Proper'

Jacobson's wife, Ros, is an Australian Catholic, and they visit Israel, fleeing the miserable winter weather of Britain.

I give her sun in Eilat and Midnight Mass in Bethlehem, and she gives me the opportunity to find out what it's like for a Jew to return to the Promised Land. . .
(281)

After arriving in Israel, Ros whispers to her husband, 'Welcome home, Howard' (283). Because she is a Christian, she regards her husband as 'a foreigner in England' (283) even now. This reveals a big disparity between husband and wife, or a British Jew and British Christian.

In fictional form, Cynthia Ozick also delineates a similar relationship between Jewish husband Marvin and Christian wife Margaret in *Foreign Bodies* (2010). She despises her husband's Jewish genealogy and compares him to a foreign body in America which invades her body. Even in an immigrant country like America, Marvin tries to give up his every sign of Jewishness through marriage to Margaret, who was raised in an old, established WASP family. Even after a long married life, she looks down upon her husband as if he were a foreign body.

'He's turned himself into what he thinks I am. That crest! All that research on the sacred family escutcheon! If Marvin could find a way to crawl inside my bloodstream, he'd do it.' (92)

Just as Jacobson attended Cambridge, Ozick's protagonist Marvin enters Princeton. It is in his first year at Princeton when Marvin learns what it is like to find oneself the object of contempt:

At Princeton he became afraid. It dawned on him that it was not enough to be bright . . . you had to be right. For the first time he was struck by the import of birthright—you slid out of the womb grasping it in your tiny fist, a certificate that guaranteed you would know how to speak and dress and scorn and brazenly intimidate everyone doomed to enter the world empty-handed. (Ozick 152)

We see a similar cynicism or scorn in both Christian ladies' remarks, Mrs. Ros Jacobson and Margaret. As their husbands are Jewish, those men are fated to be considered foreigners regardless of the country in which they are born and live.

IV. 'The Curse Is Come Upon Us'—Israel Center

Jacobson's religious philosophy is well portrayed when he visits the Israel Center to attend a forum:

In pursuit of peace: A Torah State in Israel. Real Peace can only come to Israel when Torah and Mitzvot are observed by all Jews. Do you agree or disagree? Come and share your opinions and those of others. (319)

To share his opinion, Jacobson is invited on a Sunday night. The Israel Center's sponsor is the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. He realizes that 'Jerusalem is the fifty-first state of the United States, a spiritual playground, just as Hawaii is the fleshly playground of Americans' (320).

Most members violently insist that Torah is the key to obtaining peace in Israel. The chair person, Phil Chernofsky, draws particular attention to 'Prospects for Peace in the Middle East' in a discussion document:

The Torah gives us a simple formula for peace in Bechukosai, Leviticus XXVI.
 3. If you keep my commandments . . .
 5. . . . you shall dwell in your land safely.
 6. And I will give you peace in your land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid.
 Followed by religious coercion—if you don't keep the commandments, you get the Tochacha (reproach, curse) . (321-322)

According to these Torah-centered arguments, there is no meaning if Jews are nice to Arabs. Their interpretation of Torah is too much for Jacobson, 'a non-Torah Jew' from

Britain, a title which somebody at the meeting has given him.

There, Jacobson happens to meet 'a formidable and frightful woman' (323), dressed all in green. Without any hesitation, she tries to convince other Jews of her frightful and dangerous religious opinions:

'I'll tell you something else a Jewish answer means. It means valuing Torah above everything else. Above democracy. Above peace. Above caring what other people think about us. What do I care that I do things that are called racist?' Her voice is a falcon that swoops and raises, a high, breaking voice, with blood in it. 'What do I care that I do things that are *not* racist? Is this in Torah? My aim is not peace. Who says we need peace? Is peace a Torah priority? No. The aim is not so that we should know peace. The aim is to know the truth. Truth is above peace. . . . There's a *mitzvah* to go to war, to fight. The Torah tells us that victory is assured if you conduct the war full-heartedly. Full-heartedly.' (325)]

Her interpretation can be seen as a totally crazy idea, and it is hard to follow.

Ignoring Phil Chernofsky's interjection, she continues:

'We are afraid of what will come of us if we are isolated. Well, I say this to you—you doing one more *mitzvah* (commandment) won't be a solution, me doing one more *mitzvah* won't be a solution—it's thrilling stuff; despite myself, I shiver—"a chosen people." ' (326)

No wonder that Jacobson cannot accept her violent and parochial religious philosophy, which categorically denies Martin Buber's humanitarian perspective.

Against her extreme argument, Jacobson cannot keep silent without showing any disagreement or anger. Though he is titled 'a non-Torah Jew' by one woman attending the forum, he strongly manifests his belief in Torah as a Jew:

And something snaps in my soul, and at last I break all my working rules—a felony for which the punishment is suffocation by snood—and cause silence and consternation to fall on the room by announcing myself as a non-Torah Jew from England (I know who I am now), who has turned up tonight to hear what fine examples might be set him by Torah Jews, and has found here in Israel—irony of ironies—nothing but blasphemy and sacrilege. For if the Torah is the thing of murderousness and inhumanity it has appeared to be tonight, then it is no Torah worth following—except, except, that I have read enough of it myself to know it is no such thing, and is only brutal and inhuman and, yes, ungodly, in your interpretation. (328)

By this argument, Jacobson realizes who he is. In spite of his given title, 'a non-Torah' Jew, his attachment to Torah is still strong enough to support its real meaning. Even though he himself is not an avid reader of Torah, he does know it never encourages Jews to commit 'brutal and inhuman and ungodly' things. Jacobson's emotional or instinctive reaction clearly shows his Jewish identity, which otherwise can be hard to realize. These feelings may not be religious, but rather a cultural identification with Judaism.

He also asks the people studying Torah, 'Is it not a *mitzvah* to feel humanity for another?' (329) 'Is it not a *mitzvah* to love and help those less fortunate than yourselves?' (329) Without doubt, Jacobson's angry statement sounds unexpected to those Israelis who aim at making Israel a religious nation. In fact, people come to him after the meeting and correct his interpretation of Torah.

They gather round—all except the Green woman and her black companion, who depart—in order to tell me how mistaken my understanding of Torah exacts kindness to fellow beings from us, it only really means kindness to fellow Jews.

(330)

Thus, Jacobson's interpretation of Torah reflects a universal view, which has more affinity with Christianity (the 'International' version of Judaism). It is no wonder, because he was born and raised in Britain, a Christian country, and educated at Cambridge. Therefore, he is never confined to the parochialism of *Halachah* (*Halakha*=Jewish law), upon which Talmudists' arguments rely.

Jacobson continues:

'. . . our people have seen their temples destroyed, their synagogues burned. Will we do to others what we can never forgive them for doing to us? Is this how we become a light unto nations? Have we been through the fires and learnt nothing? Do we possess, after all we have undergone, no imagination for equivalence?' (333)

This is more the philosophy of the New Testament than of the Jewish Old Testament. As the other participants insist, Torah itself is aimed at the covenant between God and Jews only. God says to Moses,

If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them . . . I will give peace in the land and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid: I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land. You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you.

(Leviticus 26:3, 6)

The question in Torah is if you keep God's commandments or not. The 'peace' is just for Jews, at the expense of the Gentiles. Therefore, if we argue 'peace' based on Torah, Jacobson's interpretation is incorrect. Torah presents a totally different dimension of God or truth. As the Green woman insists, 'The aim is to know the truth. Truth is above peace.'

IV. 'Meshuggeners'

Until I read the magazine section of the Jerusalem Post, I am unaware that a Jerusalem Syndrome has been diagnosed, the disorder being attributable, in this case, to religion . . . , and manifesting itself . . . in the conviction that you are the son of God. (366)

Jacobson calls on Professor Jordan M. Scher, who came up with the term 'Jerusalem Syndrome.' Prof. Scher gives him one example of this syndrome. In 1982, Alan Goodman was a 38 year-old American, and he shot Arabs, considering himself 'King of the Jews.' Professor Scher is originally from Chicago, with 'a sort of spiritual inclination' (370), but he is not religious. He humorously explains about Jerusalem Syndrome, 'I started off with three Jerusalem Syndrome patients, two Messiahs and a Cabalist' (370).

His adversary is Dr. Yair-El, director of Jerusalem's Kfar Shaul institute. He denies 'Jerusalem Syndrome' and does not admit that it exists. In 1982, there was a trial of Alan Goodman who shot Arabs. He intended 'to liberate the Mount and become King of the Jews. He shot his way into the Dome of the Rock, killing a man, wounding others' (371).

In the trial of Alan Goodman, Dr. Yair-El was a prosecution psychiatrist, and Professor Scher testified for the defence. For political reasons, three judges declared him responsible for his actions.

At the trial, one of the three judges asks Professor Scher why he has moved from America to Jerusalem. The professor simply answers by suggesting that he himself is a *meshuggener* (madman) who suffers from the Jerusalem Syndrome:

'I'm here because I'm Jewish. Aren't Jews supposed to come to Israel?' Later, that judge left the bar. Went berserk. And threw himself off a mountain. (371-2)

Even in Israel, Jews have to identify themselves, and have to continue to ask what kind of Jews they are. Though the professor knows well that he cannot explain every psychosis in Israel by 'Jerusalem Syndrome,' the ancient city has an incredible magnetic power not only for Jews but also for Christians and Muslims. So Jacobson feels,

We are not looking forward to leaving Jerusalem. Even though we've been frightened every day we have been here.

Let me have another go at that: because we've been frightened every day we have been here, we are not looking forward to leaving Jerusalem. (379)

It is clear that Jacobson also feels a strong emotional attachment to Jerusalem, which is a traditional and cultural symbol of Jewishness.

V. Frozen By the Chosen

At their hotel in Haifa, Jacobson and Ros see two German guests complaining about the restaurant. Ignoring her husband's feelings, from an English woman's perspective, Ros sees similarities between Germans and Jews :

'These people are angry and insulted every second of their lives,' I say to Ros.

'Just like your people,' she says. 'No wonder you fought so bitterly with them.'

I am angry and insulted. 'We didn't fight,' I say. 'We loved them. They just didn't love us.'

'Maybe what's missing from both cultures,' Ros says, 'it's the female influence. A moderating, ironic voice.'

Now I really am angry and insulted. (395)

To Ros, her husband is not pure English, unlike herself, despite the fact he is a famous British writer. In her view, Jacobson remains a Jew like other Israelis no matter how he tries to be a British writer. It is an insurmountable border lying between the man and the woman.

Ironically speaking, Jacobson himself proves that he is Jewish by his emotional attachment to Jewish identity, even after he is mocked as a non-Torah Jew by Israelis. Ros, on the other hand, might feel some affinity for the Christian Germans. Therefore, the crevasse becomes wider between Jacobson and Ros.

The question of Jewishness arises yet again in the memoir. Jacobson is introduced to Yigal Amitai, a Russian journalist. He throws a question at the writer about the meaning of Jewishness. Amitai came to Israel in 1972, when he was sixteen, from Czernowitz. Amitai explains to him about the difficulty of defining who is a Jew, and about the situation of Russian Jewish immigrants in Israel in particular:

'The question of who is a Jew. It is ridiculous. The present situation is just ridiculous. Here you are not Jewish unless your mother was Jewish. If the prisoners of the Nazi camps would be in Israel today, sixty per cent of them would not be considered Jewish by Israeli civil law. Hitler was less particular. In Russia it is written in your passport 'Jew' if your father was a Jew. And

this man felt like a Jew. They said he was a Jew, his passport said he was a Jew, society saw him as a Jew – so he was a Jew. But he comes to Israel and suddenly he is not a Jew!’ (398)

Israel is taking a strict policy toward Russian Jewish immigrants, and the government requires them to be circumcised if they wish to become Jews. Modern Israelis tend to become more pharisaical than before, even toward Jewish Zionist immigrants from Russia, and Israel forces them to be circumcised before they can be considered Jews. And unless a family agrees to circumcise a male corpse, the body would not be allowed burial in Israel.

As we have seen in the forum at the Israel Center, there is a strong voice to make Israel religious, against the original idea of Zionists. So the Russian Zionist immigrants often face difficulty in adjusting to Israel. The trouble for the Russians is that the Absorption Centres and related organizations are all in the hands of the religious authorities. The immigrants are led to Orthodoxy through the education conducted even in an *ulpan* (an institute or school for the intensive study of Hebrew).

At the bus station, Jacobson sees his wife Ros thrown out into the snow on New Year’s Day. Since the cafeteria is a religious one, the owner kicks her out, saying ‘Ve arr close-ed to you, Christian bitch’ (412). Ros insists, ‘It was only closed for me’ (412). She cannot control her anger toward Jews and gets furious at her husband’s response:

‘You should have gone back in.’

‘What, and spoiled a good story! Wasn’t that why you brought me—so that I would get the shiksa treatment? Well I got it. What was the hell-hole called?’

‘I don’t know. The Bus-Station Café, I suppose.’

‘Not the café, the town!’

‘Zz-fart.’

‘I hope you’re not going to be nice about it.’

‘Trust me,’ I say. (412)

In spite of his strong sense of identity with the Jewish nation, Jacobson cannot defend what the Orthodox Jews are doing toward non-Jews like his wife. Their attitude is understandable only if he accepts the green woman’s argument at the Israel Center, ‘It means valuing Torah above everything else. Above democracy. Above peace’ (325).

Not only the Orthodox Jews but also other Israelis are reluctant to accept Russian Jews and, even less, black Ethiopian Jews. Amitai’s wife Tamara explains to him about the difficult situation of Ethiopian Jews:

‘It’s a very good aliyah (the immigration of Jews from the diaspora to the land of Israel), the ones from Ethiopia,’ Tamara told me. ‘But they have troubles.

They are kept in hotels. Many kibbutzim don't want them, and the fanatically religious won't go near them because they're black.' (417)

Here we find Israeli psychology too complicated to understand. Jacobson, though he is a non-Torah Jew, is confused by their negative or even contemptuous attitude toward black Ethiopian Jews. Despite the fact that they argue the importance of Torah like the green woman, they only accept white Jews. Jacobson finds it contradictory:

We mock the goyim, we Jews, for giving Jesus a blond wig and the looks of a Norwegian. But we are every bit as uncomfortable with the idea of a black Jew as they are. (417)

In Jerusalem, Jacobson unexpectedly discovers racial discrimination among Jews. As a result of the discovery, he is dispirited as a non-religious British Jew. 'I have no right to be dispirited on behalf of anyone but myself' (417).

Jacobson has something in common with Isaac Bashevis Singer regarding the question 'Who is a real Jew?' Singer also argues that Jewish racial purity is a kind of mythology:

'The Jews aren't a race,' he (Singer) stated. 'All of us were the grandsons not only of Jews but also of the other nations of the world. For two thousand years, we haven't been able to preserve racial purity. Foreign blood is mixed in us, and we don't ask a blue-eyed Jew if he's of pure race or not. The main thing is what that man feels in his heart and what people he wants to belong to. If a Gentile woman wants to be a Jew, the Talmud says she's one of us. As Ruth the Moabite said: 'Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God.'"(Zamir 41)

As Singer insists, it is impossible to preserve the racial purity of Jews in the world, and in fact, modern science proves that genetically speaking, there is no such race as 'Jewish.' Jacobson is no doubt well aware of these scientific observations, and on this basis he has formed his tolerance toward non-Jews and compassion for non-Israeli Jews.

VI. The Egotism of the 'Chosenness'

Throughout this memoir, we notice Jacobson's strong attachment to Judaism, even though he does not belong to a particular denomination. At the same time, we also see his efforts to be equal or fair to other religions and different races. In fact, he refrains from insulting Muslims in Israel.

Visiting Tiberias, Jacobson comes across the central mosque, which sits derelict and disregarded. It has almost fallen down into a ruin. There is no information about it anywhere, no markers, no signs, nothing. Though Israelis are running business around

the mosque, they pay no attention to the building, and nobody tries to clean it up. It is a dispiriting scene to the writer as a British Jew. Therefore, he mildly criticizes the way of Israel and indirectly expresses his own philosophy of religion:

A country that refuses to build in a manner that befits it, out of a sort of spite towards those who did the befitting, will lose the love of its own citizens at last.

In the end there's no escaping the theology. Israel looks the way it does, not because it's been a nation at war and in a hurry, but because the theology has no instinct for what is beautiful to the outward eye. And so the mosque is unequalled and disregarded, and lies rotting in this graveyard of rabbis. (419)

His Christian wife's cynicism about the cold-heartedness of Jews in Israel certainly contributes to reminding Jacobson of his unbiased perspective toward Muslims. This can be perceived from his comment that 'the theology has no instinct for what is beautiful to the outward eye.'

Finally, Jacobson discovers an open-minded rabbi, loved and respected by many Jews: Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon, known as Maimonides. Paying a visit to Maimonides' Tomb, the British Jew is struck by awe toward Maimonides:

I put on my *yarmulke*. I'm not sure why I've decided to indulge myself in reverence for Maimonides, dubbed the Rambam after the initials of his name, Rabbi Moses Ben-Maimon. Maybe it's because his work was once banned by the Orthodox, and because he admonished Jews to love the convert—'A convert is a child of Abraham, and whoever maligns him commits a great sin'—and because he omitted the notion of chosenness from his Thirteen Articles of Faith. (421)

Now Jacobson's idea of being a Jew is clarified. He does not seem to believe in the notion of chosenness, unlike the Jews at the Israel Center. In his opinion, the notion of chosenness contains the possibility of denying all other religious belief, and it can easily lead Israelis into parochialism. His concept of religious belief resembles a cultural identity which does not deny other forms of culture and tradition. If Israelis emphasize 'chosenness,' Judaism could become more and more close-minded.

It is possible to summarize Jacobson's criticism of Israelis. Israelis have to realize how biased and racist they are in their discrimination against Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Moreover, without realizing how biased they are toward Palestinians, they can never realize peace in the Jewish nation.

In 'The Egotism of The Terrorist' (*Whatever It Is, I Don't Like It*, 2011), Jacobson maintains,

Who are you to say that your suffering is to have a higher value placed on it than someone else's? In that split second when you are eyeball to eyeball with the divine equivalence of human souls, might it not be logical of you to conclude—never mind compassionate, forget compassion—might it not dawn on you with the light of reason that there is no righting your sense of wrong, not by you, not ever by you, because you above all people cannot be the judge of it, because resistance, retaliation, revenge—give it what name you like—cannot ever be anything but a privileging, that is to say a sentimentalisation, of yourself ?

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