CHAPTER 1

Proselytism in 'Jewish Worlds'?

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Introduction

Speaking of "Jewish proselytism" could, in principle, seem irrelevant, given the extent to which the Jewish world is usually perceived as being hostile to conversions, and even more so to any form of proselytism: one is born a Jew, one does not become one, and rabbis tend to push away candidates presenting themselves for conversion rather than to actively look to make converts. In other words, Judaism is more interested in *transmission* than *mission*.[1]

The dynamics at work in contemporary Judaism nevertheless show that the Jewish world is no exception to the major trends of contemporary religiosity marked by an intensified logic of faith-related circulation, which has expressed itself worldwide by a significant rise in conversions,[2] involving both individuals knocking on the doors of Jewish institutions to become Jews,[3] as well as Jews raised with no religious reference who make repentance or *teshuva*—literally "to return"—in reference to the transition from a Jewish identity far removed from normative preoccupations to one entirely structured around the Torah.[4]

1 Sophie Nizard, *Adopter et transmettre. Filiations adoptives dans le judaïsme contemporain* (Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS, 2012).

2 Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Le Pèlerin et le converti. La religion en mouvement* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999). See also Yannick Fer, *L'offensive évangélique. Voyage au cœur des réseaux militants de Jeunesse en Mission* (Geneva: Labor et Fides 2010); Maïté Maskens, *Cheminer avec Dieu: pentecôtismes et migrations à Bruxelles* (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2013); Géraldine Mossière, *Converties à l'islam. Parcours de femmes au Québec et en France* (Montreal: Presses universitaires de Montréal, 2013); Christophe Pons (ed.), *Jésus, moi et les autres. La construction collective d'une relation personnelle à Jésus dans les Églises évangéliques: Europe, Océanie, Maghreb* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2013); Loïc Le Pape, *Une autre foi: itinéraires de conversions en France. Juifs, chrétiens, musulmans* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2015); Juliette Gallonier, *Choosing Faith and Facing Race: Converting to Islam in France and the United States*, doctoral thesis, Paris and Evanston, IEP de Paris and Northwestern University, 2017; Fatiha Kaouès, *Convertir le monde arabe. L'offensive évangélique* (Paris: CNRS Édit, 2018); Emir Mahieddin, *Faire le travail de Dieu. Une anthropologie morale du pentecôtisme en Suède* (Paris: Karthala, 2018).

3 Sébastien Tank-Storper, *Juifs d'élection. Se convertir au judaïsme* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2007).

4 See on this topic Herbert Danzger, *Returning to Tradition: The Contemporary Revival of Ortho-*

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This article will explore the effects that this religiosity of conversion has had on the historic institution of French Judaism. I will especially show how the Consistoire central de France,[5] under the leadership of its Chief Rabbi Joseph Sitruk,[6] transitioned in the late 1980s from a logic of *representation* to a logic of *mission* aiming to "re-Judaicise French Jews," which notably translated into its increasing closure to external conversions and to emphasis on the figure of the *baal teshuva* (master of repentance).[7] This article will argue that this transition from a logic of representation to one of internal proselytism not only did not strengthen the institution, but on the contrary largely contributed to making it into a satellite organisation, thanks to a French-speaking ultra-Orthodox network seeking to transform this religious mobility into geographical mobility by encouraging internal converts to move to Israel.

1 Covenant, Election and Conversions

The historiographical debates regarding the existence of a potential "Jewish proselytism" during Antiquity have not been resolved. For certain historians,

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dox Judaism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Laurence Podselever, *Retour au judaïsme?* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010); Damián Setton, *Revitalización de la ortodoxia judía y experiencias identitarias* (Saarbrücken: Editorial Academíca española, 2011); Sébastien Tank-Storper, "Prosélytismes en mondes juifs: vers des judaïsmes affinitaires?", in *Prosélytismes. Les nouvelles avant-gardes religieuses*, ed. Fatiha Kaouès and Myriam Laakili (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016), 59–74.

5 Founded in 1808 by Napoleon on the model of the Catholic Church in order to organise the Jewish religion, the Consistoire central de France was, until the enactment of the laws of 1905, the only Jewish religious institution on French soil, and is even more important today, although it now faces competition from non-Orthodox branches on the one hand, and from the rise of non-Consistory Orthodox synagogues and the success of the Lubavitch movement on the other. The Consistoire is a pyramidal, centralised, and bureaucratic institution: the Consistoire central, which merged in 2004 with the Consistoire de Paris, oversees regional Consistoires, which in turn oversee local communities. It is also in charge of a vast network of Jewish schools, and manages numerous Jewish cemeteries and *carrés juifs* (Jewish squares). It also trains rabbis ordained to officiate in communities affiliated with the Consistoire. Its *beth din* has authority over all regional Consistoires in matters relating to civil records (birth, religious adulthood or *bar mitzvah* and *bat mitzvah*, marriages, divorces), *kashrut* certificates (the largest source of income for the Consistoire de Paris), and certificates of conversion.

6 Joseph Sitruk, who was born in Tunis on October 16, 1944 and died in Paris on September 25, 2016, was the Chief Rabbi of the Consistoire central de France for three consecutive terms, from June 1987 to December 2008.

7 Literally "master of repentance" or "master of return," those who repent and return to full practice of the commandments.

Judaism practiced a policy of active conversion, notably during the Greco-Roman period. This is the position taken by Bernard J. Bramberger[8] and Max Weber,[9] for whom proselytism initially and especially affirmed the sanctity of the Jewish people by reinforcing its ritual separation through the inclusion of non-Jews, with whom Jewish populations could establish lasting contacts. Conversion helped avoid intermediate statuses: one was either inside or outside the circle of holiness.[10] Jewish proselytism only ended when Christian authorities forbade Jews from converting—a ban whose violation was punishable by death. For other historians, such as the philologists Édouard Will and Claude Orrieux,[11] Judaism on the contrary never actively sought to convert, and was always suspicious, to say the least, toward those who knocked at its door, as demonstrated by the series of legal provisions that significantly limited access to *giyyur*—the process by which a non-Jew becomes a Jew—without entirely closing it off.

The historical uncertainty regarding a possible Jewish proselytism echoes the ambivalence of laws with respect to converts. Judaism's body of legal texts does not provide a clear and unequivocal position regarding conversion. Talmudic and Midrashic sources are often contradictory, sometimes advocating a kindly welcome for *gerim* (proselytes) and even calling for proselytism ("God dispersed the Jews throughout the world for the sole purpose of having converts join them," *Pessachim* 87b), and sometimes calling for them to be repelled without exception ("Converts are to Israel as leprosy is to skin," *Yebamot* 47b), thereby enabling a wide range of often contradictory interpretations.

The way in which rabbis conceive of conversion—and the ambivalence of traditional texts regarding this topic—can be understood through the tensions that were never truly stabilised between these notions of covenant and election. We know the Torah refers to four successive covenants. The first, which was proclaimed after the flood, was concluded with Noah and involved his descendants as well as all living beings. God promised to never again unleash a flood, in exchange for human beings submitting to a charter defining relations among themselves and with all other living beings (Genesis 9:1–7). It is based on this passage from Genesis that rabbinic Judaism defined the elementary

8 Especially Bernard J. Bramberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1939).

9 Max Weber, *Le judaïsme antique* (Paris: Éditions Pockett, 1998) [1917–1919].

10 Ibid., 517–520.

11 Édouard Will and Claude Orrieux, *"Prosélytisme juif"? Histoire d'une erreur* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1992).

legal code of the Seven Laws of Noah, adherence to which ensured the salvation of all those who did not join the later covenants: not to worship idols, not to curse God, not to commit murder, not to commit incest, not to steal, to establish courts of justice, and not to eat flesh torn from a living animal (Sanhedrin 56b). The second and third covenants were those concluded with Abraham: God promised him descendants more numerous than the stars, and gave him land in perpetuity. This second covenant is more forcefully reiterated two chapters later, this time making Abraham the father of a multitude of nations in exchange for circumcision (Gen. 15). Finally, the fourth covenant was concluded at the foot of Mount Sinai. God, through the voice of Moses, promises to the children of Israel that they will be "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6), on the condition they respect the law: "Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples" (Ex. 19:5).

This fourth Covenant between God and the People of Israel should not necessarily be understood as a particularist withdrawal from the preceding covenants. The tradition distinguishes between "all nations," which must follow the Seven Laws of Noah, and Israel, which must apply the particular law expressed in the Torah.[12] Election is often interpreted as a burden, as a series of duties and responsibilities toward all other Nations, rather than as an honorific distinction.[13] This burden is that of the Law, which the Jewish people must be a testament to among nations. All Jews can think of themselves as priests vested with a higher duty, or in the metaphor proposed by Max Weber, must behave as "virtuosos" subject to higher ritual requirements. However, this Covenant is also a collective covenant. It was not contracted between God and each Jew in particular, but between God and the people of Israel, thereby establishing a deep bond of solidarity and reciprocal responsibility within the *Klal Yisrael*—the Jewish people conceived of as a solidary whole. It gives a particular dimension to this belonging, a sacred character that is reminded daily in the prayer (*Berakhot*, 11-b) preceding Torah study, in which Jewish men pronounce: "Thank you for choosing us among nations and for giving us the Torah." This sacred character is indissolubly expressed in the fulfilment of the law that, once again according to Max Weber, protects the

12 This justifies the refusal of conversion for those who rabbis believe will not adhere to the *mitzvot*. While as non-Jews they must follow the minimal rules to conform with divine will, the requirement will be much greater if they become Jews.

13 Régine Azria, *Le Judaïsme* (Paris: La Découverte, coll. "Repères," 2003), 11; Alyette Degrâces, "Le Judaïsme et la lecture religieuse de l'histoire du peuple juif," in Frédéric Lenoir and Isé Tardan-Masquelier, *Encyclopédie des religions* (Paris: Bayard, 2000), 271.

"circle of holiness" (*kedushah*, which literally means separate, distinct) by ritually separating Jews from non-Jews.

As a result, the Covenant takes on its full meaning—especially in the eyes of "Orthodox"[14] Judaism—only through the submission of the people of Israel to the Torah (making Judaism a people of priests, of virtuosos). In short, it is far removed from any missionary objective, or at least from any missionary objective seeking to convert non-Jews: if there is a mission, it is fulfilling the *mitzvot*,[15] with the salvation of the Jewish people and all humanity residing in the ability of Jews to submit collectively to the Jewish law.

In this sense, Jewish identity is neither limited to a purely religious definition (understood as an act of personal faith), nor to a purely ethnic definition. For rabbis, Jewishness cannot be defined solely within the framework of filiation, as it is also a commitment to the Torah. If one is primarily Jewish by one's mother, conversion nevertheless remains possible, although it is not encouraged. Taking inspiration from the book of Ruth, who was rejected three times by her mother-in-law before being allowed to follow her to Israel after the death of her husband, rabbis customarily dissuade candidates for conversion numerous times, thereby testing the strength of their commitment.

The reluctance toward conversions can also be seen in how the transition from being Jewish to non-Jewish was codified. The legal texts governing *giyyur* (the process whereby a non-Jew becomes a Jew, which usually translates into conversion to Judaism) reflect this desire to maintain the Jewish people's "circle of holiness" (to make it a "dynasty of priests and a holy nation," or, in more Weberian language, a pariah people separated by an ethic of religious virtuosity), all while allowing those who sincerely want to enter the circle the possibility of doing so. In other words, the codification of *giyyur* is subject to various constraints in order to maintain the specificity of a Jewish collective in perman-

14 Contemporary Judaism includes numerous trends and sensibilities that are generally classified in two major groups: "Orthodox" Judaism (itself divided between *haredim*, or ultra-Orthodox, and "Orthodox"), and another Judaism referred to as "modernist" or "non-Orthodox," divided between "Reform" (or liberal) and "conservative" (or *masortim*, which means "traditional" in Hebrew). There are many fault lines between these various branches. They involve interpretations of the *Halakha* or Jewish law, for instance with regard to conversions or the role of women in religious life (notably regarding the authority ascribed to *Shulchan Arukh*, the legal codification established by Joseph Caro in 1565, which the Orthodox consider the primary source of law, and the *masorti* and liberals relativise to greater and lesser degrees).

15 The term *mitzvot* (plural of *mitzvah*), which is translated as "commandments," refers to the 613 acts that Jews must accomplish. They are divided into 248 positive commandments (acts that Jews must perform, to which only men are subject), and 365 negative commandments, which establish prohibitions to which women are also subject.

ent contact with other collectives (in other words, to guarantee the holiness of the Jewish people by maintaining a clear boundary between Jews and non-Jews), and to affirm the normative character of the law through commitment to the *mitzvot*.

The *Shulchan Aruch*[16] of Rabbi Joseph Karo (1488–1575),[17] which today serves as an authority in the Jewish Orthodox world, establishes two indispensable conditions for accepting candidates who present themselves for conversion. They must firstly be motivated by a pure intention (*le shem shamaïm*), defined in the negative as not wanting to convert to obtain a subsequent benefit—money, power, or a wife or husband. The convert must commit to accepting the *mitzvot* (*kabbalat ol ha-mitzvot*). If these two conditions are met, rabbis must allow the candidate to proceed with the ritual conversion that will make him a full-fledged Jew, which consists of immersion in the *mikveh*—the ritual bath—for both women and men, followed by circumcision for men.

However, the apparent simplicity of the rules governing the welcome of converts hides a broad interpretative latitude, which in practice authorises a wide range of conversion policies ranging from the proactive welcome of converts[18] (to be nevertheless distinguished from proselytism) to being almost entirely closed to conversions. Neither pure intention (*le shem shamaïm*) nor the concrete reality of keeping the *mitzvot* (*kabbalat ol mitzvot*) are ever truly defined, or they are only defined apophatically for what they are not—obtaining a spouse, for example. Some rabbis nevertheless consider that plans for marriage (which would in theory compromise the purity of the intention) do not necessarily invalidate conversion, for they do not necessarily exclude the exist-

16 The *Shoulchan Arukh* (or "the Set Table") is a legal code established by Joseph Caro in 1565 that Orthodox rabbis consider the primary source of law.

17 He used the provisions contained in the tractate *Yebamot* (135 Common Era), themselves listed in the tractate *Gerim* (whose date is estimated to be circa 500, but is attested since 1300).

18 The sociologist Gary Tobin (who at the time was the president of the Institute for Jewish and Community Research) most fully developed the theorisation of compensating for the loss of those leaving the bosom of Judaism with new converts who could revitalise the Jewish communities of North America. It explicitly involved direct entry into the "religious market" by emphasising the fact that Judaism is a faith-based community to which its members commit (Gary Tobin, *Opening the Gates: How Proactive Conversion Can Revitalize the Jewish Community*, San Francisco, Jossey Bass Publishers, 1999). Some support programs for conversions were proposed, essentially in the United States, in order to facilitate the process for those who wanted to convert, such as the one established by the Conservative movement with the Miller Introduction to Judaism Program based in California. They offered candidates an introductory course in Judaism, welcome for celebrating *shabbat* together, regular follow-up, etc.

ence of sincere motives going beyond marriage.[19] Others may also believe that wanting to establish a Jewish household and to transmit the Jewish identity to children is a sincere motive in and of itself, especially in secularised societies where spouses from different faiths can marry without going through religious authorities. The same applies to the commitment to observe the *mitzvot*: while some rabbis require candidates to demonstrate over time their capacity and will to conform to Orthodox criteria of religious practice,[20] others believe that the candidate can be accepted as long as they do not explicitly refuse any of the Torah's 613 *mitzvah*, without for all that having to "do everything" at the moment of conversion.

Much room is thus left for interpretation and the subjective assessment of decision-makers (namely rabbis), who maintain broad freedom of action. However, each of these two conditions for the acceptance of candidates (*le shem shamaïm* and *kabbalat ol mitzvot*) raise problems in the contemporary context of shrinking religious practice, institutional deregulation of religious practices, and the increase of mixed marriages. In the vast majority of cases, the conversion requests sent to rabbinic institutions came from non-Jewish women recently married to or about to marry a Jew who is himself far removed from religious practice, but wants to establish a Jewish household and transmit the Jewish identity to his children.[21] In this regard, knowing whom to convert raises the larger question of the rabbinic response to violations of the rule of endogamy (which directly threatens the holiness of the Jewish collective), and the distancing of an increasing number of Jews from the normative dimensions of Jewish identity.

Converting these spouses could—in the mind of some rabbis, especially Orthodox ones—amount to the retrospective validation of what they considered one of the most serious violations possible, thereby renouncing the injunction to remain a dynasty of priests. On the contrary, not converting them can blur the boundaries of identity by allowing an increasing number of individuals with the uncertain *halakhic* status[22] to reside within Jewish families and communities, thereby renouncing the preservation of the circle of holiness.

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19 Avi Sagi and Zvi Zohar, "*Giyyur*, identité juive et modernisation," in Florence Heymann and Danielle Storper Perez, eds., *Le corps du Texte. Pour une anthropologie des textes de la tradition juive* (Paris: CNRS, 1997).

20 See Tank-Storper, *Juifs d'élection*.

21 Ibid.

22 This essentially involves those whose father is Jewish and whose mother is not, but who were socialised within Jewish institutions, or those who converted with a non-Orthodox

The closing of conversions must therefore be understood as a desire to reaffirm doctrine (in Talal Asad's sense of a series of practices and norms)[23] rather than a narrowing down to the genealogical, ethnic, or racial dimension of Jewish identity. It is indeed in the defence of an indissoluble bond between Judaicity, Jewishness,[24] and the Torah that rabbis refuse to compromise on what they believe to be the essence of Jewish identity: adherence to the Torah. Conversely, the sacralisation of identity boundaries justifies certain deviations from the ideal norm, for the purpose of preserving the statutory coherence of *Klal Yisrael*.

2 The Consistoire central de France: From *Representation* to *Mission*

The French case offers a good illustration of this tension. Until the mid-1980s, the policy of the Consistoire central de France toward conversion was typical of such policies seeking to preserve statutory coherence within families and communities in an effort to clarify the boundary between Jews and non-Jews (to preserve holiness, the statutory separation of the Jewish people), at the risk of a certain doctrinal wavering. Faced notably with the growing number of requests submitted to the Consistoire from mixed couples far removed from the normative practices of Judaism, the non-Jewish spouse of a Jewish man could,

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institution, but who are not recognised as Jewish by Orthodox institutions. They can take advantage of the Law of Return to Israel, be recorded as having Jewish nationality in civil registers, but not be recognised as Jewish by the Rabbinate. They cannot, as such, marry on Israeli soil, as civil records are the monopoly of the Orthodox rabbinic institution. See on this topic Sébastien Tank-Storper, "Jewish Trouble: Mixed Marriages, Conversions and Boundaries of Jewish Identity," *Ethnologie française*, CAIRN International, 2015 http://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_ETHN_134_0591---jewish-trouble-mixed-marriages.htm; Sébastien Tank-Storper, "'Qui est juif?' Loi du retour, conversions et définition juridique de l'identité juive en Israël," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 177 (2017): 31–50.

23 Talal Asad, "L'idée d'une anthropologie de l'islam," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 180 (October–December 2017): 117–137.

24 Here we borrow the distinction established by Albert Memmi between Judaism, Judeity (Jewishness), and Judaicity (Albert Memmi, "Recherches sur la judéité des juifs de France," *Revue Française de Sociologie*, VI-1, (1965), 69). "*Judaicity* is all Jewish persons taken as a whole, either in the wider sense of all the Jews scattered throughout the world, or in the narrower sense a particular geographically located Jewish group, such as French Judaicity or New York Judaicity." *Judeity* is the fact or manner of being Jewish. More specifically, Judeity refers to being or feeling Jewish, whether this feeling is solely subjective, or is objective in the form of certificates (*ketubah*, certificate of conversion, certificates of Judeity, inclusion in Jewish nationality registers in Israel, etc.). *Judaism* refers to the content (cultural, religious, etc.) and practices mobilised to inhabit Judeity.

for example, be converted in order for the couple's children to be considered Jewish "according to the *Halakhah*," without religious practice being entirely in keeping with the one emphasised by the institution.

This posture was notably explained by the centralised and historically monopolistic character of the Consistoire central, which was meant to represent all of French Judaicity rather than a particular conception of Judaism. Founded in 1808 by Napoleon on the model of the Catholic Church, it had the dual task of organising "*israélite*" worship, and until the laws of separation in 1905, of representing French Jews with the state. This mission of representation involved some compromise with the principles of *halakhah*, while its monopolistic and centralised character imposed a certain tolerance toward internal plurality, partly explaining the weak establishment of liberal Judaism in France and, until the 1980s, of ultra-Orthodox Judaism as well.[25] In short, the Consistoire central de France presented numerous characteristics of the church as defined by Max Weber: a bureaucratic administration of the faith (universal in design, here on the scale of French Judaicity) that is joined at birth and that confers salvation via a rationally trained staff, in symbiosis with society, and disposed to making compromises with the world.[26] This relative tolerance toward the diverse ways of being Jewish in return favoured greater tolerance toward transgression, which especially took the form of a relatively welcoming policy toward conversions by marriage.

This model of a "community in its plurality," which for a long time was the originality of "Franco-Judaism,"[27] was initially challenged by the laws of 1905—involving a *de facto* loss of the consistorial monopoly that enabled the gradual appearance of competing institutions, both liberal and ultra-Orthodox—as well as by the subsequent criticism beginning in the mid-1980s of this Judaism of compromise embodied by the Consistoire, sometimes even by those

25 Unlike the German case, where, following a political struggle led by Samson Raphael Hirsch (one of the central figures of what is referred to as the modern Orthodoxy of nineteenth-century Germany) with Prussian authorities to secure the right to establish separate communities, the Orthodox broke away, with the official communities being accused of giving too much room to supporters of Reform from 1876 onward (see on this topic Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism became a religion. An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought*, Princeton University Press, 2013). The dominant Protestant world in Germany, which was marked by fairly extensive institutional fragmentation, probably explains German Judaism's greater tendency toward fragmentation than its French neighbour, marked by the Catholic model of institutional centralism.

26 Max Weber, *Sociologie des religions* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 251.

27 See especially the text by Shmuel Trigano, "Le concept de communauté comme catégorie de définition du judaïsme français," *Archives européennes de sociologie*, Tome XXXV (1994), no. 1: 48–71.

who were supposed to represent it. The election of Joseph Sitruk as Chief Rabbi of the Consistoire central de France in 1987 was a major turning point in this regard. Himself a Jew of the "return," who was trained at the Séminaire du Consistoire de France and in the ultra-Orthodox *yeshivot*[28] based in Israel (where he grew close to Rav Shakh,[29] a central and charismatic Israeli figure of *ashkenazi* ultra-Orthodoxy), Sitruk arrived with a slogan in the form of a policy program: "The Jews of France must be re-Judaicised." The objective was no longer to prioritise the representation of French Judaicity (which entailed including its numerous sensibilities), or to organise the religion/ faith for all French Jews, but to propose a specific conception of Judaism based on the primacy of the Torah and the *mitzvot* over other forms of affirming Jewish identity.

This policy of reaffirming doctrine was accompanied by a policy of relative closure toward external conversions. Candidates who wanted to convert to the Consistoire central now had to face standardised bureaucratic procedures, and to demonstrate over the course of years their perfect conformity with the model emphasised by the institution. In other words, they had to become exemplary practitioners, with the purity of intention thereby being validated through practical demonstration. Agents from the office of conversions could show up unannounced at candidates' homes to verify the conformity of their kitchen or refrigerator with the dietary laws of *kashrut*,[30] verify with their employer whether they work on *Shabbat*, and gather information from their friends and family to ensure that they are not secretly seeing someone.[31]

By establishing the conditions of rigorous religious practice for the acceptance of candidates for conversion, the Consistoire Central de France clearly presented a norm that everyone must ideally follow and engaged in a process of internal proselytism, which is highlighted in its policy toward the parents of children adopted by Jewish couples. As Sophie Nizard has shown in

28 A *yeshiva* (plural *yeshivot*) is a centre for the study and teaching of the Torah and the Talmud. Each *yeshiva* is generally directed by a rabbi, known as the *Rosh Yeshiva* (literally "head" of the *yeshiva*).

29 Elazar Menachem Man Shach (1899–2001) was a leading Lithuanian-Jewish Haredi rabbi in Bnei Brak, Israel. He was Rosh Yeshiva of the Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, along with Rabbis Shmuel Rozovsky and Dovid Povarsky. He also founded the Degel HaTorah political party, which represents Lithuanian (non-Hasidic) Ashkenazi Jews in the Israeli Knesset.

30 *Kasherut* refers to all dietary laws. It includes the criteria that determine whether a food (animal or plant based) is permitted for consumption, as well as the laws governing the preparation and cleaning of foods for consumption. Foods that conform to these laws are said to be *kosher*, which is to say "fit" or "acceptable" for consumption.

31 See Sébastien Tank-Storper, *Se convertir au judaïsme* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2007).

her study on adoptive filiations in contemporary French Judaism, the rabbinic court of the Consistoire de Paris does not convert children adopted by Jewish couples unless their parents "convert" to Orthodoxy,[32] showing the extent to which orthopraxy (the strict implementation of the institution's prescriptions) has supplanted all other forms of constructing and transmitting Jewish identity. This approach, seeking to "once again place the Torah at the heart of the community,"[33] is all in all relatively close to that of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement,[34] which grew out of Hasidic Judaism,[35] and especially emphasises the personal conversion of Jews grown distant from the Torah. This movement, which has achieved growing success within the contemporary Jewish world (it includes approximately 2,300 centres in the world, with over 120 in France),[36] is based on intense proselytising activity to bring back "lost Jews" to repentance.[37] Those who walk the streets of New York or certain neighbourhoods in Paris[38] have a high chance of being approached by members of Chabad asking "Are you Jewish?" If the answer is no, they allow the person to leave without insisting. However, if the answer is yes, the person is asked to put on their *tefillin*[39] (or

32 Nizard, *Adopter et transmettre*, 155–186.

33 Joseph Sitruk, interview with Haim Messika, August 2014, https://www.torah-box.com/news/actualite-juive/interview-du-grand-rabbin-sitruk-alyah-communaute-islam_3599.html, published online on November 4, 2019 (16:48 to 17:15).

34 Chabad-Lubavitch is a movement that grew out of Hassidic Judaism, and was founded in Belarus in the eighteenth century by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, known as Alter Rebbe. After World War II, his centre moved to Brooklyn, New York, where the movement developed considerably, today counting 1,300 centres in 75 countries and over 950 cities. The distinctive feature of the Lubavitch movement within Hassidic Judaism (which generally promotes dynasties, and is very difficult to join without being born into) is to emphasise the conversion of Jews grown distant from the Torah.

35 Hassidic Judaism is a mystical branch of Judaism founded in the eighteenth century in Podolia (modern-day Ukraine, but what was then Poland), by Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known by the name of Baal Shem Tov. Focusing on piety and charity, and centred on the individual in his or her direct relation with God, Hassidic Judaism is opposed to the scholarly tradition of rabbinic Judaism, and tried to offer a spiritual response to the material misery of the persecuted Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. See Jacques Gutwirth, *La Renaissance du Hassidisme de 1945 à nos jours* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2004); Jean Baumgarten, *La naissance du Hassidisme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2006).

36 Laurence Podselver, "Loubavitch," in Jean Leselbaum and Antoine Spire, eds., *Dictionnaire du judaïsme français depuis 1944* (Paris: Armand Colin / Le Bord de l'eau, 2013), 574.

37 Laurence Podselver, *Retour au judaïsme? Les loubavitch en France* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010).

38 Especially around the Buttes-Chaumont in the nineteenth arrondissement. See Lucine Endelstein, *Une géographie du renouveau religieux. Judaïsme et expérience urbaine en quartier cosmopolite*, doctoral thesis at l'Université de Poitiers, 2008.

39 *Tefillin* are objects consisting of two small cubical boxes containing four passages from the biblical text, and are attached to the arms and head by leather straps. They are worn

at least to practice a *mitzvah* or commandment), and to then celebrate *Shabbat* at the Chabad community centre, a first step on a path leading to conversion to Rabbi Lubavitch's movement.[40]

One of the particularities of Chabad-Lubavitch within the Hassidic world is that it is as much a dynasty (which is what all Hassidic movements are) as an intellectual school. This largely explains, according to Laurence Podselver, the movement's success with young Jews seeking "spiritual revitalisation." In fact, as noted by Podselver, the Lubavitch movement in France (this is also true of other countries such as Argentina,[41] England, and elsewhere)[42] consists almost exclusively of internal converts or *baalei teshuva* (those who return to full practice of the commandments), in other words Jews who have recently "returned" to religion, which does not prevent differences and hierarchies persisting between members from birth, or lifers, and "new members."[43] In the absence of a historic establishment of Hassidic Judaism and more broadly of *haredi*[44] on French and North African soil—the primary ground of French Judaicity (with the exception of *Yeshiva Chachmei Tsorfat* founded in Aix-les-Bains immediately after World War II)—it could develop only through the influx of converts.

Teshuva (conversion) entails that the newcomers adopt a number of practices that strengthen the boundaries between Jews and non-Jews. These include observing *kashrut, Shabbat* and Jewish holidays in particular, imposing a specific temporality and commensality that limit interactions and form a "sociological wall" with the non-Jewish world.[45] Even more so, insistence on the requirement of specific food purity, such as *glatt kosher*,[46] establishes separ-

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during the reading of *Shema Yisrael* (the primary text of the Jewish liturgy consisting of three excerpts from the Torah, recited in the morning and evening, and accompanied by blessings) by boys upon reaching religious adulthood (at the age of 13).

40 Laurence Podselver, "La *Techouva*. Nouvelle orthodoxie juive et conversion interne," *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales*, 57, no. 2 (2002), 275–296.

41 Setton, *Revitalización*.

42 Gutwirth, *La Renaissance*, 41–115.

43 Podselver, *Retour au judaïsme?* 16–22.

44 The *haredim* or "God-fearing," often called ultra-Orthodox Jews or simply the ultra-Orthodox, stand out through their especially strong religious practice and exclusive sociability. They do not represent a uniform whole, and today include among them the *hassidim*, *mitnagdim*, *ashkenazi*, *sephardic*, *mizrahim*, etc. *Haredi* communities follow the same principles, each with its few variants.

45 Salomon Poll, *The Hassidic Community of Williamsburg: A Study in Sociology of Religion* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006) [1962]. See also David Kraemer, *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages* (London: Routledge, 2007), 161.

46 Refers to a higher level of *kashrut*, or dietary purity laws. The term *glatt* means "smooth"

ation not only with the non-religious Jewish world, but also with the rest of the Jewish world, Orthodox included. These internal converts (who in France are mostly from the Sephardic world even though the Lubavitch movement grew out of the Ashkenazi world), often no longer eat at their parents' homes (unless they are in conformity with the rules for this enhanced *kashrut*), thereby drawing a boundary within Jewish families themselves.

3 A Judaism of *olim baalei teshuva* in the Service of *teshuva* and *aliyah*[47]

What was original about the doctrinal reaffirmation that developed within the historic institutions of French Judaism compared to that of the Lubavitch movement was the close link between *teshuva* (conversion) and *aliyah* (migration to Israel). While Chabad remains essentially diasporist (the movement is present in Israel but its geographic and spiritual centre remains New York),[48] the narrowing of consistorial Judaism around religious norms accompanied a process (correlated, but not necessarily causal) that Yossi Shain has called the Israelisation of French Judaism.[49] Since the Six-Day War in particular, reference to Israel has become one of the primary drivers for mobilising French Judaicity.[50] There are many circulations between France and Israel,[51] and community life often occurs "on Israeli time," as the President of the Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France (CRIF, Representative Council of

in Yiddish, and indicates that verification was made that the animal's lung was not infected with a deadly disease. The label of the Consistoire central de France is not considered "*glatt*."

47 This term, which I built based on the word *olim* (those who immigrate to Israel) and the term *baalei teshuva* (literally those who "return to the answer" and convert to a more comprehensive religious practice), refers to the Jews whose conversion includes Orthodox religious practice that takes the concrete form of migration to Israel.

48 See Podselver, *Retour au judaïsme?*, 63–97.

49 https://www.radiosefarad.com/dr-yossi-shain-the-israelization-of-judaism-and-its-effects-on-the-diaspora/, accessed on June 25, 2021.

50 Renée Waissman-Hober, *De l'expression privée à l'expression publique de l'identité juive. Une nouvelle manière d'être juif en France (1967)* (Brussels: Éditions Modulaires Européennes, 2015).

51 85% of those surveyed by Dominique Schnapper, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun, and Freddy Raphaël for their study of the Jewish condition in France indicated they had travelled to Israel at least once, and approximately 55% of them indicated they had family in the country; Dominique Schnapper, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun, and Freddy Raphaël, *La condition juive en France. La tentation de l'entre-soi* (Paris: PUF, 2009), 76.

Jewish Institutions in France) said himself in 2012:[52] the symbols of the Jewish state are omnipresent, important moments in Israeli life are celebrated, Israeli current events are commented on, etc.[53] While the majority of Jews involved in the community's life do not consider attachment to Israel in any way an obstacle to full exercise of French citizenship, it nevertheless creates a feeling of alterisation (to use Noga Raviv's term),[54] or rather the allogenisation and even insularisation of French Judaism, one maintained by the anti-Semitic attacks of 2012 and 2015, as well as by the subsequent expansion of security measures. The posting of soldiers at certain community sites, which reinforces the visibility of the Jewish presence in the public space, also produces a particular texture to the Jewish presence in France, a certain viscosity[55] that incessantly reactivates and updates the "state of alert"[56] that is one of the salient characteristics of the contemporary Jewish condition, fuelling the feeling of vulnerability and precariousness expressed by a growing number of French Jews.[57]

While early in his term Sitruk saw Israel's omnipresence as an obstacle to the expression of an "authentic" Judaism (threatened by an Israelity disconnected from any Jewishness),[58] his position toward Israel gradually evolved, up to ascribing genuine messianic value to "going up to Israel." In 1993, following the Israeli soccer team's victory over the French team, he declared in the columns of *Actualité juive* magazine: "David has laid low Goliath. The community takes great pride in this. Jews are a major team. (…) My spiritual conclusion is that if this is possible, then how can one doubt the coming of the Messiah?"[59] In 2013, he publicly incited French Jews to move *en masse* to Israel:

> We are living in extraordinary times; we have returned to the land of Israel; we are at the dawn of a Messianic age; every day we see the ful-

52 Cited by Noga Raviv, "'Juifs' en France et 'Français' en Israël: la construction identitaire au miroir de l'autre," *¿Interrogations?*, no. 15. Identité fictive et fictionnalisation de l'identité (1), (December 2012) [online], http://www.revue-interrogations.org/Juifs-en-France-et-Francais-en (accessed 18 July, 2021).

53 See Noga Raviv, "Le rôle d'Israël dans le dynamisme communautaire," in Ewa Tartakowsky and Marcello Dimenstein, eds., *Juifs d'Europe. Identités plurielles et mixité* (Tours: Presses Universitaires François Rabelais, 2017), 71–73.

54 Raviv, *Le rôle d'Israël*, 75–76.

55 Cédric Parizot, "Viscous Spatialities: the Spaces of the Israeli Permit Regime of Access and Movement," 2017 ⟨halshs-01528861⟩.

56 Michaël Fœssel, *État de vigilance. Critique de la banalité sécuritaire* (Paris: Le Bord de l'eau, 2010).

57 Such as the book by Danny Trom, *La France sans les juifs* (Paris: PUF, 2019).

58 Raviv, "Le rôle d'Israël," 80.

59 *Actualité juive*, no. 356, October 28, 1993.

> filment of the prophecies from the *Prophets*, the declarations by our wise men about what will happen in the end times … we must be involved: either we watch the train pass by or we climb on board (…) Come now and join us, come participate and move forward, come enjoy the happiness of being Jewish by knowing why and seeing how. Genius is being present at the right time. The time is now, and the place is Eretz Yisrael.[60]

Finally, in 2016, shortly before his death, he suggested in an interview with the website *Torah-box* that *aliyah* is in keeping with a larger messianic process, namely the gradual uniting in *Eretz Yisrael* of the Jews scattered throughout the world, a preparation of sorts for the final tableau making the Jews "an object of glory and praise by all nations."[61] The necessity of moving to Israel was also motivated by the rise of anti-Semitism and insecurity, itself directly correlated in the discourse of the former Chief Rabbi of the Consistoire de France with the demographic rise of Muslims in France, whom he considered (without citing a precise source) to be approximately 25% of the French population. While the rabbi in essence said that Christianity represents the enemy in the sky, Ishmael (Muslims) is the enemy on land, thereby validating the notion of an ontological antagonism between Jews and Muslims as justification for French Jews leaving for Israel.[62]

In Sitruk's opinion, his primary legacy was not to oppose the centrality of Israel and the centrality of the Torah, but on the contrary to have them converge: "Before my arrival, the driver of the Jewish community of France was Israel. I thought that was true, but that there was another driver, namely the Torah."[63] This convergence materialised beginning in the 2000s in the significant increase in departures for Israel (rising from approximately 1,400 annual departures in the early 2000s to over 7,000 in 2015, then stabilising around 3,500 in 2016). While it is difficult to untangle the reasons and different processes that explain this rise (a combination of security-related motives, economic reasons, religious considerations, ideological justifications, and family dynamics), various studies nevertheless reveal a strong correlation between

60 https://www.europe-israel.org/2013/08/le-top-depart-le-rabbin-sitruk-appelle-a-lalyah/.

61 (https://www.torah-box.com/news/actualite-juive/interview-du-grand-rabbin-sitruk-alya-communaute-islam_3599.html, 6:36 to 10:52).

62 Ibid.

63 Joseph Sitruk, interview with Haim Messika, August 2014, https://www.torah-box.com/news/actualite-juive/interview-du-grand-rabbin-sitruk-alyah-communaute-islam_3599.html, published online on November 4, 2019 (16:48 to 17:15).

aliyah, community integration, and religious practice.[64] For a non-negligible—albeit difficult to quantify—proportion of these *olim hadashim*[65] who left France beginning in the 2000s, and notably for the youngest among them, "going up to Israel" was in keeping with the identity-based, religious, and residential trajectories that initially led to the centrality of the Torah in their lives and their later settling in Israel. This shaped the figure of the *oleh baal teshuva* (he who goes up to Israel after or while returning to the Torah), which has become one of the exemplary figures of the French-speaking Jewish ultra-Orthodoxy that began to take shape during the 1990s.[66]

The website *Torah-box*,[67] which presents itself as the site for French-speaking Judaism, and claims Sitruk's support,[68] reserves a special role for this figure. The "My *teshuva*, it's this!" section gathers, for example, a series of short interviews (approximately ten minutes) with "personalities" from the Jewish community presenting the path that led them from an empty or superficial Jewishness to a life fully devoted to the Torah. Beyond the variety of the paths, these relatively stereotypic accounts (as almost all accounts of conversion are)[69] are all structured around the dual encounter with the Torah and Israel, with engagement with the Torah always translating into a departure for Israel, as though one went with the other, as though the authenticity of *teshuva* could be expressed only through *aliyah*.

The website Israel Torah[70] also works actively to diffuse the notion that an authentic Judaism does not exist outside of Israel. The film *Eretz Israël*, produced and directed by the filmmaker and founder of the website Shimshone Attali (freely accessible on the Internet), aims in particular to demonstrate

64 See Yann Scioldo-Zürcher, Marie-Antoinette Hily, and William Berthomière, *Migration de français en Israël* (MIFI, French Migration to Israel) survey conducted as part of the "Attentats-Recherche" 2015–2018 call for proposals: *Partir pour Israël: une nouvelle migration des juifs de France pour Israël?*, forthcoming. See also the study conducted by Schnapper, Bordes-Benayoun, and Raphaël, La condition juive, 73–78, and the research by Raviv, "Le rôle d'Israël".

65 New immigrants to Israel.

66 On the convert as an exemplary figure of contemporary religiosity, see Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Le Pèlerin et le converti* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999).

67 The website *Torah-box* was founded in early 2000 to broadcast courses on the Torah and Judaism for a broader public with no access to such instruction.

68 https://www.torah-box.com/news/actualite-juive/grand-rabbin-joseph-sitruk-le-documentaire_27164.html, 1:26:15 to 1:29:47.

69 Le Pape, *Une autre foi*; Tank-Storper, *Juifs d'élection*.

70 The website *Israël Torah* was founded in 2005 by a film director. Like its competitor *Torah-box*, the purpose of *Israël Torah* is to mobilise popular culture to diffuse Judaism to a wider audience.

that there is a powerful and indissoluble bond between the People of Israel and the land of Israel. Using the narrative codes from action series or television shows such as Fort-Boyard, where the candidate must overcome a series of tests, a young person meets with different rabbis who give him the keys to liberate his family, kidnapped and held prisoner by "Evil." A first rabbi teaches him them that "the secret and grandeur of *Eretz Yisrael* is that it gives all Jews a secret place where they can blossom. Learn this deeply and you can use it as a weapon."[71] A second rabbi tells him them "When you go to *Eretz Yisrael*, you are going toward yourself."[72] Another affirms: "In *Eretz Yisrael*, it is possible not only to know the Torah, but also to live it."[73] Finally, other rabbis advance the metaphor of a reciprocal bond of love between the people and its land, advancing the notion that the land would remain loyal to its people, never allowing another people to settle there: "The goal of all these people is to reveal *Eretz Yisrael*. And *Eretz Yisrael* is the people of Israel and the land of Israel. Israel is a nation, but there is no nation without land. (…) The man is the people of Israel; the woman is the land of Israel. (…) The bond between the people and the land is like the bond between a man and a woman: a man, without his woman, does not exist. Israel is the same: the people of Israel, without its land, does not exist."[74]

By highlighting these conversion narratives or other edifying stories that illustrate the immediate benefit of conversion (like the rolling broadcasts of edifying conversion narratives broadcast by televangelist and Pentecostal media),[75] websites such as *Israël Torah* and *Torah-Box* present themselves as being in the service of *teshuva* and *aliyah* operating thanks to their *kiruv* activity (broadcasting Torah classes to a public grown distant from it), and through the mobilisation of audiovisual and LOL culture (parodies of game shows,[76] parodies of YouTube videos, etc.).

Beyond the specific example of these two media, there is an entire French-speaking *haredi nébuleuse*[77] that took shape beginning in the 1990s, and organ-

71 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POkeMRzn1UI, 14:16 to 14:53.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., from 27:45 to 27:50.

74 Ibid.

75 Jacques Gutwirth, *L'église électronique. La saga des télévangélistes* (Paris: Bayard, 2003).

76 "Questions for a *tzadik*," "Who wants to win *mitzvot*."

77 Here I use Françoise Champion's term *Nébuleuse* (Nexus), who uses it to designate this mystical and/or esoteric religiosity that is deinstitutionalised but connected in a network, one in which individuals circulate more or less freely—Françoise Champion, "Religieux flottant, éclectisme et syncrétisme," in *Le fait religieux*, ed. Jean Delumeau (Paris: Fayard, 1993), 750–754.

ises and channels the circulation of these young *baalei teshuva* between France and Israel. For example, Rabbi Chaoul Wajsman, who founded and directed the French-speaking Ohel Naftali *kollel* (Study, Training, and Diffusion of Judaism for French Speakers)[78] based in the ultra-Orthodox city of Bnei Brak in north-east Tel Aviv, welcomes young, recently-settled French-speaking couples that want to deepen their knowledge of the Torah. When asked about his activity with these *olim hadashim* by the researchers from the MIFI study, he insisted on the need to accompany *aliyah* "with a progression along the path of religion" that prompts individuals to make *teshuva* and become a part of Israeli ultra-Orthodox religious worlds: "We think that coming to Israel means improving both one's life and spiritual level. The materialist *aliyah* is no good. 'One must go up.' It is our country. If coming here means worsening one's condition, means having less than in France …"[79] In the mid-2000s, he also founded, with Rabbi Krief, the Neshama project, which provides grants to non-religious French Jewish students to study in Israel, in exchange for their attendance at the *kiruv* activities organised by the program under the supervision of Rabbi Wajsman (conferences, celebrations or holidays, etc.).[80]

What should be emphasised is that these different *yeshivot*, *kollelim*, YouTube channels, and French-speaking associations devoted to *kiruv* (including, among others, *Leava*, which means "flame," along with *Oraita* and *Aish Hatorah*) are often founded or led by rabbis or speakers who made *teshuva* or *aliyah*, such as Rav Mordechai Bitton, who speaks on various online platforms (*Torah-box*, *Leava*, *Arakhim*, etc.), and gives conferences in French-speaking communities. In 1990, Mordechai Bitton, who was an activist in community and antiracist associations during his youth (serving as president the Union of French Jewish Students or UEJF, and vice-president of the SOS racisme movement from 1986 to 1988), joined the ultra-Orthodox *yeshiva* in Épinay sur Seine led by Rav Heymann. Between 1995 and 1998, he gave regular conferences for *Arakhim*, an association dedicated to diffusing the Torah, and in 1998 was entrusted with the management of the seminaries of Rav Ron Chaya, himself an *oleh baal teshuva* and founder of *Leava*, an association for diffusing and bringing Jews together around the Torah, which opened a French-speaking *yeshiva* in Jerusalem in 1994. In 2001, Mordechai Bitton made *aliyah*

78 A *kollel* is an advanced centre for Torah study attended by young men for a shorter or longer period of time after their marriage. In principle they receive an often-modest grant so they can devote themselves to full-time study, and increasingly to teaching and publication. The *Rosh Kollel* directs the *kollel*, and oversees its functioning.

79 Scioldo-Zürcher, Hily, and Berthomière, *Migration française en Israël*.

80 https://haguesher.com/2019/12/18/neshama-un-projet-qui-porte-des-fruits/.

and studied in Rav Mordékhai Eliyahou's *kollel* until 2006, when he obtained his *semikhah* (rabbinic ordination).

This type of profile is hardly an exception. Many of the rabbis and speakers who are part of this French-speaking ultra-Orthodox network have followed similar paths, showing how much the figure of the *baal teshuva*, and even more so the *oleh baal teshuva*, proved especially corrosive for the consistorial institution. Beginning with Sitruk's first term at the head of the Consistoire, Shmuel Trigano, a sociologist and intellectual engaged in French-speaking Judaism, denounced the consequences of Chief Rabbi Sitruk's management on the franco-judaïsme model and the consistoral institution, criticising him for systematically aligning his decisions with the Israeli ultra-Orthodox *guedolim* (the great of the Torah), and submitting himself to different religious norms than those of the institution he was leading, especially with regard to *kashrut* (deeming the consistoral label not "strict" enough).[81] The researchers Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun and Laurence Podselver made the same observation in 2003 following their study of changes to the rabbinic function, emphasising how much the Séminaire Israélite de France that trained rabbis for consistorial communities was now competing with the model of the Israeli *yeshivot*, which had become an obligatory step for young rabbis in training, notably to the detriment of their university education.[82] Noga Raviv has shown how the departure for Israel of the most active and invested members of French Jewish communities—a departure paradoxically encouraged by their own internal dynamics—could prove so extremely devitalising for the historical institutions of French Judaism.[83] In this sense, the call to "re-Judaicise the Jews of France" launched by the Consistoire Rabbi Sitruk in the late 1980s, and later its fusion with a certain Messianic Zionism, seemingly resonated with the rise of these various producers of Jewishness (to use Ashley Mayer-Thibault's term)[84] or *aliyah* entrepreneurs (to repeat the term used by Yann Scioldo-Zürcher, Marie-Antoinette Hily, and William Berthomière)[85] who, without necessarily having gone through the consistoral institution, drew on the legacy of the former chief rabbi of the Consistoire central de France, thereby helping to make the historic institution of Franco-Judaism a satellite institution.

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81 Shmuel Trigano, *Un exil dans retour* (Paris: Stock, 1996), 16.

82 Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun and Laurence Podselver, *Les mutations de la fonction rabbinique* (Paris: Observatoire du Monde juif, 2003), 24–32.

83 Raviv, "Le rôle d'Israël," 80–82.

84 Ashley Mayer-Thibaut, "Quebec's Sephardic Jews: Between Localism and Francophone Transnationalism," Congress of the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, 28 May 2021: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nr9-KMFYvfE&t=926s.

85 Scioldo-Zürcher, Hily, and Berthomière, *Migration française en Israël*.

Conclusion

When asked whether *aliyah* was "good for the Jews," Rabbi Lubavitch Menahem M. Schneerson reminded that it should only take place under pressing need (fleeing persecution or poverty), and that the *olim* should under no circumstances become burdens for the state of Israel. He also pointed out the priority of committing to the *mitzvot*, and insisted on the need to no longer weaken diaspora communities through the departure of their lifeblood: "A healthy Jewish community in the Diaspora—one that is not solely 'Jewish' in name—is the best advantage for *Eretz Yisrael*," he suggested.[86]

It is this specific relation to Israel and the diaspora that distinguishes this French-speaking Judaism of mission that developed beginning in the 1990s from that other Judaism of mission that is the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, which continues to make its presence felt wherever Jews live, for example during the lighting of candles organised each year in major global capitals, as studied by Lucine Endelstein:

> This spectacular display of Judaism at the most symbolic sites of capitals stages the political and religious ideology of the Lubavitch movement, for which the presence of its emissaries throughout the diaspora is crucial to bringing Jews across the globe back to the practices of the *mitzvot* and hastening the coming of the Messiah. That is why this movement does not advocate for *aliyah*—the immigration of Jews to Israel—and stands out from other Hassidic movements that do not seek contact with the rest of the Jewish world. The Lubavitch ascribe crucial importance to their role in each nation, for it is by fully being part of the society that they can spread their message and fulfil their mission of proselytism within the Jewish world.[87]

This different relation to space has an impact on the specific methods used by each one to perform their mission. The Lubavitch movement relies primarily on techniques of direct proselytism by questioning Jews in the street, whom they encourage to put on their *tefillin*, and to subsequently join them to celebrate *Shabbat* or a holiday (thus placing greater emphasis on the material, exper-

86 https://fr.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2853938/jewish/La-Aliyah-en-Isral-est-elle-bonne-pour-les-Juifs.htm.

87 Lucine Endelstein, "Lumières sur la ville. Les fêtes de Hanoucca entre action missionnaire transnationale et appartenance événementielle," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 177 (2017), 66–67.

iential, and relational dimension of the conversion, even though it does not forbid use of the Internet). On the other hand, the various actors of the French-speaking ultra-Orthodox network instead prefer *kiruv* (entailing an effort at popularisation) by opening their own *kollelim* and *yeshivot*, and through deterritorialised media such as the Internet, broadcasting courses and mobilising secular popular culture (at the risk of breaking with the erudition of major *yeshivot haredi*) to offer a doorway into the world of the Torah, subsequently and ideally leading to the materiality of the gesture and the realisation of *teshuva* within *aliyah*.

However, by trying to harness and channel the flows of these potential converts, they both substantially challenge the diasporic model, which Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin believe represents the heart of the historic Jewish experience:

> *Genealogy* and *territorialism* have been the problematic and necessary (if not essential) terms around which Jewish identity has revolved. In Jewish history, however, these terms are more obviously at odds with each other than in synergy. This allows a formulation of Jewish identity not as a proud resting place (hence not as a form of integrism or nativism) but as a perpetual, creative, diasporic tension.[88]

As pointed out by Stéphane Dufoix, the concept of diaspora that has today largely spread to all of the social sciences was historically conceived based on the Jewish case.[89] This notion helps understand how social actors or groups provide themselves with a collective identity that transcends their many ethnic and national origins, as well as the diversity of their strategies for local integration.[90] The diasporic model thereby becomes, in the words of Paul Gilroy, central to a theory of unity and diversity that renounces neither of these two poles,[91] or, as suggested by Daniel Boyarin, points to this relation of interiority and exteriority toward local cultures that Jewish populations have continually maintained:

> The diaspora is in a synchronic situation between two (or more) cultural places. [It] involves a dual cultural location, an orientation in which a

88 Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 19, no. 4 (1993), 714.

89 Stéphane Dufoix, *La Dispersion* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2011).

90 Régine Azria and Chantal Saint-Blancat, "Diaspora," in Régine Azria and Danièle Hervieu-Léger, eds., *Dictionnaire des faits religieux* (Paris: PUF, 2010), 252.

91 Paul Gilroy, "Diaspora," *Paragraph*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1994), 212.

> human collective is in the cultural place where it resides and simultaneously in another place, and hence both interior and exterior to a local culture.[92]

More than a simple logic of transnational circulation and solidarity, the diasporic phenomenon involves a dynamic process of sedentarisation and negotiation with the religious and political culture of the society in which they are rooted, of which Franco-Judaism was a particularly prominent example.[93] It can therefore be argued that this fairly particular chemistry was profoundly shaken by this missionary logic. By building a sociological wall with the surrounding society in which they live, and by sharing the same convictions and way of life regardless of their local rootedness, the Lubavitch tend to erase national borders and to construct a deterritorialised Judaism that no longer negotiate with local cultures.[94] Conversely, by closely linking *teshuva* and *aliyah*, and by ascribing messianic signification to the presence of each Jew on the land of Israel, many actors from this French-speaking ultra-Orthodox network, which gradually emerged and structured itself outside of the historic institutions of Franco-Judaism beginning in the mid-1990s, on the contrary have called into question the possibility of expressing an authentically Jewish life in the diaspora.

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92 Daniel Boyarin, *Un Patrie portative. Le Talmud de Babylone comme diaspora* (Paris: Cerf, 2017), 125.

93 Chantal Bordes-Benayoun and Dominique Schnapper, *Diasporas et nations* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006).

94 Podselever writes: "Living separately where they reside, [the Lubavitch] share the same convictions and way of life in Paris, New York, and Jerusalem, in addition to distant communities in Bombay, Cape Town, and Sydney. Belonging erases national borders, serving as an example of contemporary transnationality and memory for continuing to exist" (Podselver, *Retour au judaïsme?*, 301).

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