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## FROM TACITUS TO AMIA: A STUDY ON UNIVERSAL ANTI-SEMITISM, ARGENTINE ZIONISM AND THE TIMERMAN AFFAIR\*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper uses empirical data emerging from a “participative action-research” project undertaken in early 2015, to test the hypothesis that the geopolitically-meaningful ancient mechanisms that were at work in Greco-Roman times, connecting the Jewish Diaspora with an active Jerusalemite center, continue to function today. Examples are drawn from recent Argentine and U.S. experiences. In one specific case related to the attempt to excommunicate Argentine Foreign Minister Hector Timerman from Jewish institutions, the attitudes of members of the public were studied through a “voluntary online panel.” The findings were linked to a major heuristic effort aimed at determining if the “Baron dialectic,” so-called in honor of Salo W. Baron (the most important historian of the Jewish people of the World War II generation) is still at work. This dialectic can be summarized

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as the complex trans-historical sociological mechanism whereby the Jewish religion is reinforced by the Jewish nationality, whilst the latter is supra-nationally rooted through the Diaspora communities. This process is likely one of the long-term causes of anti-Semitism that concerned Hannah Arendt.

**Keywords:** AMIA, Anti-Semitism, Argentina, Salo W. Baron, Hannah Arendt, Eichmann, Israel, Seneca, Tacitus, Timerman

### DE TACITO A LA AMIA: UN ESTUDIO SOBRE EL ANTISEMITISMO UNIVERSAL, EL SIONISMO ARGENTINO Y EL *AFFAIRE* TIMERMAN

#### RESUMEN

Este trabajo usa datos empíricos provenientes de una “investigación-acción participativa,” realizada a comienzos de 2015, para poner a prueba la hipótesis de que los mecanismos que tenían vigencia en tiempos greco-romanos, conectando las comunidades de la diáspora judía con un activo centro jerosolimitano, siguen funcionando en nuestros tiempos y siguen teniendo relevancia geopolítica. Se tomaron ejemplos provenientes de experiencias recientes de Argentina y Estados Unidos. En un caso específico, el de las presiones para excomulgar al canciller argentino Héctor Timerman de las instituciones de la comunidad judía, se estudiaron las actitudes de miembros del público a través de un “panel voluntario online.” Los hallazgos se vincularon a un significativo esfuerzo heurístico para determinar si la “dialéctica Baron,” así llamada en honor de Salo W. Baron (el más importante historiador del pueblo judío de la generación de la Segunda Guerra Mundial), sigue vigente. Esta dialéctica puede resumirse como el complejo mecanismo sociológico trans-histórico por el que la religión judía es reforzada por la nacionalidad judía, a la vez que ésta se arraiga supranacionalmente a través de las comunidades de la diáspora. Este proceso seguramente es una de las causas de largo plazo del antisemitismo sobre las que reflexionó Hannah Arendt.

**Palabras clave:** AMIA, Antisemitismo, Argentina, Salo W. Baron, Hannah Arendt, Eichmann, Israel, Séneca, Tácito, Timerman

### DE TÁCITO A AMIA: UN ESTUDO SOBRE ANTISEMITISMO UNIVERSAL, O SIONISMO ARGENTINO EO CASO TIMERMAN

#### RESUMO

Este trabalho usa dados empíricos que emergem de um projeto de “pesquisa-ação participativa” realizado no início de 2015, para testar a hipótese de que os mecanismos antigos, geopoliticamente-significativos, que estavam funcionando na época greco-romana, ligando a diáspora judaica com um centro ativo Jerusalemita, continuar a funcionar hoje. Exemplos de experiências recentes da Argentina e dos Estados Unidos foram tomados. Em

um caso específico relacionado com a tentativa de excomungar o chanceler argentino, Hector Timerman, de instituições judaicas, as atitudes dos membros do público foram estudadas por meio de um “painel on-line voluntário.” Os resultados foram ligados a um grande esforço de heurística destinado a determinar se a “dialética Baron,” assim chamada em honra de Salo W. Baron (o historiador mais importante do povo judeu da geração II Guerra Mundial) ainda em vigor. Essa dialética pode ser resumida como o complexo mecanismo sociológico trans-histórico pelo qual a religião judaica é reforçada pela nacionalidade judaica, ao mesmo tempo em que nacionalidade judaica está enraizada supranacionalmente através das comunidades da diáspora. Este processo é provavelmente uma das causas de longa duração de antissemitismo em que Hannah Arendt ponderou.

**Palavras-chave:** AMIA, Antissemitismo, Argentina, Salo W. Baron, Hannah Arendt, Eichmann, Israel, Seneca, Tácito, Timerman

## INTRODUCTION

### There is something rotten in Denmark

Where does anti-Semitism end, and where does the manipulation of the concept “anti-Semite” begin?

Where is the threshold beyond which political and geopolitical interests replace the struggle against prejudice and discrimination in the accusation of “anti-Semite”?

Where does the legitimate defense of the interests of the State of Israel end, and where does the improper intervention in the affairs of states inhabited by Diaspora communities begin?

Up to what point is it acceptable that the influence of Israel over the leaderships of Jewish institutions in the Diaspora be used to condition the policies of ministers of Jewish identity in states inhabited by a Diaspora community?

These are some of the questions that came to my mind when important leaders of the Argentine Jewish community began to demand the expulsion from AMIA (Argentine Israelite Mutual Association) and Bet El Synagogue of the Argentine citizen Héctor Marcos Timerman, a Jew who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs. This clamour emerged:

- From the anger of these leaders as a consequence of the signature, in 2013, of a memorandum of understanding between Argentina and Iran that allowed the questioning, in Teheran, of Iranians indicted by the Argentine judiciary as alleged parties to the 1994 terrorist bombing against AMIA;

- From the accusation presented on January 14, 2015 by Alberto Nisman, special prosecutor in charge of the AMIA investigation, against the President of Argentina and against Timerman himself, for an alleged cover-up, supposedly implicit in the 2013 memorandum, of the Iranian responsibility in the 1994 bombing, and
- From the suspicious death of the said prosecutor on January 18, 2015.
- From that moment on, a campaign was unleashed to excommunicate the foreign minister from the Jewish community<sup>1</sup>.

Even though all Argentines have the right to oppose the policies of their government, this right emerges from their condition as citizens, not as members of a religious or ethnic community. To threaten a Jewish minister with excommunication if s/he does not change a state policy leaves the door open to the establishment of a communitarian veto power to government action.

On the other hand, it is known through cables revealed by Wikileaks that the will of the community leadership was strongly influenced by the embassies of the United States and Israel, and that at least until 2011, Prosecutor Nisman followed the instructions of Washington officials (Clarín, 2011, august 11). Obviously, if the local Jewish community's veto power is exercised in tandem with foreign governments, it is even more objectionable.

This coordination became visible with the public intromission of the Israeli government in this Argentine imbroglio, during the commemoration of the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the 1992 bombing of the Embassy of Israel in Buenos Aires. On that occasion, Israeli Minister of Agriculture Yail Shamir, who was visiting Argentina, stated that Prosecutor Nisman "paid his attempt to find out the truth with his life," in reference to the investigation of the 1994 AMIA bombing and its alleged 2013 cover-up (Clarín 2015, march 15). How did Shamir know this? And if he had evidence, why did he not file formal charges?

Simultaneously, in the same public commemoration at a foreign embassy, the public, made up mostly of Argentine Jewish celebrities and leaders, booed the attending representatives of the Argentine government.

This mild clash between the Israeli and Argentine governments was analogous to the one produced in Washington on March 3, 2015, when in his effort to thwart the nuclear agreement between the United States and Iran, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke before

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1. By "to excommunicate" I mean "to exclude by or as if by decree from membership or participation in a group" (The Free Dictionary, 2015). This definition converges with the first example presented by the Oxford English Dictionary (1971): "He shoulde be excommunicat out of the Sinagoge" (sic), from Tindale (sic), "John", IX 22, 1506. See also the article on "excommunication" in Berlin & Grossman. (2011).

the U.S. Congress, trying to drive a wedge between its members or attempting to take advantage of preexisting divisions. Showing the connection between his policy towards Washington and Buenos Aires regarding Teheran, in his U.S. speech Netanyahu mentioned the 1992 and 1994 bombings in Argentina, blaming Iran without documented proofs. In so doing, he unwittingly showed that some of the criticism forwarded by Mearsheimer & Walt (2007) is warranted.

In the case of Argentina, which is the most vulnerable side of the triangle, the events recorded above reflect an anomalously high degree of geopolitical autonomy for a Diaspora community after Jewish Emancipation. It violates the norm that establishes that the preferences of ethnic and religious communities are private and should not interfere in the public realm as such. Indeed, any process tending to make the Argentine Jewish community geopolitically independent from the Argentine state breaks away from the sound principles of Jewish Emancipation, which put an end to European ghettos.

It is clear that this dialectic of domestic and external pressures, implemented by the Israeli government both in Washington and in Buenos Aires, is part of the same complex Diaspora political game. Towards the beginning of 2015 the Israeli policy of keeping Iran isolated implied opposition to both the Argentine-Iran memorandum and to the ongoing U.S.-Iran nuclear negotiations, and the Diaspora communities of both countries were summoned to defend the interests of the Jerusalem government. Though not quite identical, the mechanism at work was analogous to the conflictive dialectics described by a great historian of the Jewish people, Baron (1952), in relation to Roman times. The present study is based on the incipient proto-theory found in his work.

In Antiquity, this sort of mechanism engendered the impassioned Judeo-phobia of great pagan personalities such as Cicero (106 - 43 BC), Apollonius of Rhodes (1<sup>st</sup> Century BC), Horatius (65 - 8 BC), Seneca the Younger (14 BC - 65 AD), Apion (20 BC - 45-48 AD), Martial (40 - 104 AD), Suetonius (70 - 123 AD), Juvenal (1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD) and Tacitus (c. 56 - 120 AD), in times in which the Jewish people no longer had a sovereign state but long before Christianity installed the myth of deicide, which had such a strong impact upon medieval and modern anti-Semitism.

Judeo-phobia was born in Egypt and preceded Hellenism. The first recorded pogrom took place in Alexandria in 38 AD. The first expulsion of Jews from Rome took place in 139 BC, and other expulsions followed during the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD (Schäfer, 1997; Merrill, 1919; Rutgers, 1994). According to illustrious thinkers such as Seneca and Tacitus, a Roman Jew could not be a Roman patriot.

For a scientific spirit of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century this is, of course, unacceptable. Numerous Jews harbor patriotism toward their native lands. But the demands of part of the Argentine Jewish leadership vis-à-vis Argentine cabinet ministers of Jewish identity seem to be incompatible with Argentine patriotism (unless the Jewish leaders are to be considered the *de facto* guardians of the Argentine national interest).

When faced with the situation created in 2015 by the intromission of Israel and some local community leaders in the foreign policy of Argentina, I decided to carry out an experimental field study, making use of the possibilities afforded in the present by social fora. When Mr. Natalio Steiner, co-director of the local Jewish periodical *Comunidades*, published a pamphlet in my Facebook page demanding the expulsion of Timerman from AMIA and Bet El Synagogue, I responded with a publication demanding Steiner's own expulsion, on the grounds of the moral inadmissibility of such excommunications.

From that moment on, during several weeks, I published a series of well-thought provocations for my Facebook contacts to respond to spontaneously. With almost 4000 contacts in my page, I had at my disposal a "voluntary online panel" of self-recruited people whom I had accepted as "friends." It was an interesting starting point for the penetration of some aspects of the human soul through "participative action-research" (Pérez, 2006; Nistal, 2008; Villasante, 2008).

The data collected (Escudé, 2015) shows that, as expected, there are many Jews that are without doubt Argentine patriots. But there are also many Jews who express their disdain, if not their hate, for their native Argentina. Also, and not less interesting, is that in Argentina to be an anti-Semite carries a much greater stigma than to be an anti-Argentine. This is true both for Jews and non-Jews. To be anti-American in the United States is apparently as bad as being an anti-Semite, and to be anti-French in France is probably much more blameworthy than being an anti-Semite, but in Argentina it is the other way around.

This bespeaks of Argentina itself, but it also reveals the soft power acquired in this country by the tandem engendered between the local Jewish community and the State of Israel. Seventy years after a Second World War in which Argentina did not participate, it reflects a curious situation.

Stimulated by these results, and framing my analysis in Baron's proto-theoretical matrix, I undertook a heuristic analysis of universal anti-Semitism to attempt to determine if what happened recently in Argentina is related to the logic of co-responsibility that, according to Hannah Arendt (1951), underlies the history of anti-Semitism during the past two-thousand five-hundred years.

This exercise made it possible for me to bridge the gaps between Antiquity and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and between the center of Western civilization and its periphery.

### **Introductory comments on anti-semitism**

A comprehensive analysis of the Timerman affair requires looking far back into history. All human phenomena are explainable, but in order to do so it is sometimes necessary to recur to the *longue durée* approach pioneered by Bloch, Febvre and Braudel.

It is true that, at times, the re-reading of the past is ill-used. It can become a litany that, evoking tragedies like the Holocaust, begs of us not to be critical of the present policies of the State of Israel. It can also be exploited by anti-Semites who, through the verification of the continuity of anti-Jewish hatred during two and a half millennia, spread the idea that Jews are as bad as long-standing myths suppose them to be. Knowledge can always be used for evil purposes. But if for that reason we engaged in censorship or self-censure, the heirs of the Enlightenment would abdicate of everything that made them great.

Likewise, it is no less fallacious to assert that it does not make sense to try to correct errors of the past that contributed to anti-Semitism because “anti-Semites will forever be anti-Semites,” and one should simply denounce and combat them. Anti-Judaism is not a metaphysical quality that springs from infernal powers. Arendt was quite correct in stating that “persecution of powerless or power-losing groups may not be a very pleasant spectacle, but it does not spring from human meanness alone” (1951, p. 5). Indeed, all of its causes must be explored.

These disquieting issues were renovated and made more powerful by the Timerman affair. Furthermore, the affair made these issues significant in the peripheral context of the Latin American Southern Cone. Is there a quota of Jewish co-responsibility in Argentine anti-Semitism? Can anti-Judaism be stimulated by interventions perpetrated jointly by the local community and Israel, such as took place against Minister Timerman and his Iran policy?

The issue is awkward. Arendt was right when she wrote that “just as anti-Semites understandably desire to avoid responsibility for their deeds, so Jews, attacked and on the defensive, even more understandably do not wish under any circumstance to discuss their share of responsibility” (1951, p.7). Notwithstanding, Arendt would agree that, if to avoid this awkwardness we were to toe the line of the more authoritarian members of the Jewish community, the struggle against anti-Semitism would be emptied of an important part of its intellectual honesty.

Inspired by resentment, ancestral myths and racist theories, anti-Semites have persecuted Jews. In contrast, most of the scholars who rightfully reacted against this aberration forcefully rejected the idea that there might have been some justification for some of the ill-feelings against Jewish communities.

On the other hand, among the few thinkers who acknowledged some Jewish co-responsibility in anti-Semitism, not all came to reasonable conclusions. Marx, for example, was a very peculiar Jew who accepted the then culturally-dominant idea that money is the god of the Jews, and decided that as far as he was concerned, all those who adore money are “Jews.” “The Jew is perpetually created by civil society from its own entrails,” wrote Marx in *On the Jewish question* (2014, p. 14).

Marx had orthodox and heterodox disciples. Sartre, for example, asserted that anti-Semitism is not engendered by the Jews themselves, but by the idea that, historically and universally,

has been forged of the Jew. Shocked by human wickedness, he proposed the foundation of a world league against the plague of Judeo-phobia. "It is the anti-Semite who creates the Jew," he pontificated, reasoning that the Christian accusation of deicide had forged an accursed identity for a people who, in reality, no longer exist, because they have been dispersed for twenty-five centuries (Sartre, 1948). The claim is clever, but as Joseph Sungolowsky (1963) wrote, Sartre seemed not to know that Seneca had characterized the Jews as a "criminal race" long before the accusation of deicide was born.

Sartre's error is quite generalized. More recent scholars, such as Robert Wistrich, are not very far from the idealistic position of those who cultivate an erudite discourse with a high tone of moral indignation. Although Wistrich (2010) acknowledges the anti-Semitism of Antiquity, he dedicates scarce room to it in his writings, rapidly passing to the persecutions of the Middle and Modern Ages, which are easier to use in erudite *anti*-anti-Semitic propaganda. His works are good for keeping us on the alert, but not for understanding the origins of anti-Semitism.

In the more recent generation of scholars there are some who, perhaps inspired by Marx, assert that they are not interested in the Jews and anti-Semitism, but rather in the cultural constructions about what is "Jewish", which frequently refer to subjects who are not Jewish but rather behave as "Jews." It is the case of David Nirenberg (2013), a Chicago professor born to Jewish-Argentine parents who recalls that, according to some ancient Egyptians, Roman Emperor Claudius was a "Jew" because his attitudes, in their perception, befitted a Jew. As punishment for accusing the Emperor of being a Jew, the Alexandrine Isidorus was, of course, executed.

In keeping with the empirical relevance of such phenomena, in Nirenberg's 2013 book the word "Jew" does not refer to the Jewish people or religion, but to all people and organizations that fit the stereotype of what is "Jewish." This includes the Jews themselves, banks in general, "vulture funds," etc. Thus, he is able to circumvent the awkward questions posed by Arendt and Baron.

An interesting French thinker who overcame these limitations was the iconoclastic Rabi (pseudonym of Wladimir Rabinovitch). Recalling Bernard Lazare, who in 1894 had stated that the Jews are "a nation that has survived its nationality," Rabi (1947) stated that Jews cannot be denied a quota of responsibility in the causes of anti-Semitism. In an ironical review titled "*Sartre, portrait d'un philosémite*," he commented on the work of his non-Jewish compatriot.

Arendt's thought is very much akin to Rabi's when she asserts that "scapegoat theory," although appealing because it implies the perfect innocence of the Jewish victim, has nothing to say about why the Jews have been chosen for such a role. She adds:

Whenever its adherents painstakingly try to explain why a specific scapegoat was so well-suited for his role, (the scapegoat) ceases to be the innocent victim whom the world blames for all its sins and through whom it wishes to escape punishment; it becomes one



group of people among other groups, all of which are involved in the business of this world. And it does not simply cease to be co-responsible because it became the victim of the world's injustice and cruelty. (Arendt, 1951, pp. 5-6)

## **Part I - The “baron dialectic” and the judeo-phobia of antiquity**

### ***The dialectic between the Jewish religion and the Jewish nationality<sup>2</sup>***

Arendt's and Rabi's ideas on this score are similar to stances that can be inferred from Baron's writings. The latter leaned on his vast knowledge of Jewish history to identify the mechanism that made possible both the astonishing survival of the Jewish identity and its despicable counterpart, the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. Apparently, one would not have been possible without the other.

To understand Baron's reasoning we must go back to the moment in which the Diaspora emerged. Although the Babylonian conquest of Judah of 586 BC produced mass deportations, the later conquest of Babylonia itself by Achaemenid Persia, in 539 BC, made it possible for important contingents of Jews to return to their homeland. Notwithstanding, because many had fared well during their exile, only a minority opted for returning. The Temple of Jerusalem was reconstructed and the semi-autonomous Second Community was born under Persian protection. Not only did the Diaspora emerge; some of the traits that characterize Jewish communities to the present day, such as bilingualism, diversification of economic activities and the doubling of national identities, also came into being (Baron, 1952).

The Babylonian exile forged the Jewish people as we know it today, because it was from that moment on that an extended Diaspora began to complement itself with an active Palestinian center. Without this, the dialectic process that made it possible for the Jewish people not only to survive adversities but also to play a unique role in world history during the following two-and-a-half millennia would not have been unleashed. From that moment on, the Jewish religion would be reinforced by the Jewish nationality, whilst the latter would be supra-nationally rooted in the Jewish religion. In honor of the great Jewish historian who identified it, I have baptized this complex trans-historical sociological mechanism as the “Baron dialectic”.

Post-exilic success came after traumatic experiences. In the previous stage, immediately after the fall of Judah, desertions had created a demographic collapse. To survive despite the crisis of faith and assimilationist tendencies, exilic Judaism placed more emphasis than ever on inbreeding and respect for Mosaic Law: circumcision, dietary norms and observance of the

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2. I define “nationality” as does Baron. This definition corresponds to the second meaning given by the Oxford English Dictionary: “An ethnic group forming a part of one or more political nations”.

Sabbath. But once the communities of the Diaspora were consolidated and prospered, an unprecedented proselytism began. Through several centuries, an extraordinary growth of the Jewish population took place (Feldman 1995 and 1996b; Schäfer, 1997).

This surprising fact was already the focus of conjectures in Philo's time (20 BC - 50 AD). He was amazed at the masses of his coreligionists, and commented that knowledge of Jewish Law by "one half of the human race" was a "source of annoyance to the other half" (Baron, 1952, p. 171). This exaggeration was close to the truth in his home city of Alexandria, where there were as many Jews as Greeks. According to Baron, toward the beginning of the present era there were some eight million Jews in the world, with almost three million in Palestine itself. One out of every ten Romans was a Jew. Since towards the West the density of Jewish population was much lower, in the eastern part of the Empire one out of every five persons was a Jew (Baron, 1952).

Geographically, the expansion was also astonishing: Spain and Mauritania towards the West; Abyssinia towards the South; Armenia towards the Northeast, and towards the East the Assyrian kingdom of Abiabene. In August's time, Strabo denounced that: "This people has already made its way into every city, and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world which has not received this nation and in which it has not made its power felt" (Feldman 1995, p. 155).

Scholars have always been intrigued by this Jewish success. The relative tolerance of Greco-Roman Antiquity for other cults (which was partially eclipsed after the reign of August), the great geographical reach of the Diaspora, and the solidarity of Jewish communities among themselves, were a source of transnational commercial advantages that encouraged the conversion of traders. Also, the philanthropy bestowed upon poor proselytes was attractive to the needier (Feldman, 1995).

On the other hand, the temptation to convert was greater among Phoenicians, because they also circumcised. It was precisely the absence of this dissuasive what made the women of some nationalities more prone to conversion than men. Josephus (1998) says in *The wars of the Jews* that when agitators from Damascus organized a massacre of Jews, they found that the majority of their own wives had converted.

Spiritual motivations also enticed converts. Long since, Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristoteles, and Roman thinkers like Cicero, had come to the rational conclusion that there is a Supreme Being. Suddenly, intellectualized pagans found a religion that told them that the Supreme Being discovered by their philosophers had revealed himself to Moses centuries before, had bestowed his Torah upon him, and had chosen a holy nation to disseminate his Law (Baron, 1952; Fowler, 1965).

Seen from the Roman perspective, the case of the Jews was very different from that of other barbarians. All Jews paid a levy for the maintenance of the Temple of Jerusalem. There existed a close link between the Temple and the Jews of the Diaspora. This is the reason why, when

the Jewish revolt of 66 AD broke out, the Roman high command ordered the destruction of the Temple. This they did, but the Jewish religion not only did not lose devotees but continued growing in numbers. The objective of destroying Judaism failed.

The difference vis-à-vis other subjected nationalities was clear. In an interesting study, Zvi Yavetz compared Roman attitudes towards the Jews and Dacians. The latter were an ethnic group that had much in common with the Jews, except that they had no Diaspora and were not an agent of change of Roman customs through proselytism. Several other peoples, including the Dacians, rebelled against Rome, but only the Jews (and later on, to a greater degree still, the Judeo-Christian sect) changed Rome (Yavetz, 1998).

Needless to say, with the expansion of the Jewish population both in the Diaspora and in the Palestinian center, the strength of the Baron dialectic also grew. The relevance of the process whereby the Jewish religion was reinforced by the Jewish nationality, whilst the latter became rooted supra-nationally through its religion, increased significantly. And simultaneously, there was an aggravation of the Roman fear of the subversive danger stemming from a people who repudiated and despised the polytheistic religion of the pagan state (Feldman, 1995).

In Baron's view, Roman conservatives felt threatened by "the progressive dissolution of accepted morals and the evident success of Jewish religious propaganda." His candor is moving:

Writing some thirty years after the fall of Jerusalem, Tacitus realized with great misgivings that the victory of Roman arms had not decided the issue. Just as he was willing to justify Herod's persecution of Christians as *utilitate publica*, (cf. his *Annales*, XV, 44), so he considered the Jews a menace to the existing order, subverting, especially, its three main pillars of religion, country and family... **In view of Christianity's ultimate conquest of Rome one cannot altogether condemn this Roman patriot for giving vent, although perhaps in too harsh a language, to his keen anxiety over the survival of his deeply cherished civilization.** (Baron, 1952, p. 191, emphasis added)

Under such circumstances, vehement feelings were inevitable. Philo, an impassioned Jewish patriot, said that the proselytes had "left their country, their kinsfolk and their friends and their relations for the sake of virtue and holiness" (Baron, 1952, p.181). And writing on the same theme, Tacitus, the anti-Jewish Roman historian, ranted that as soon as converts adapted to Jewish teachings they began "to despise the gods, shed all feelings of patriotism and consider parents, children and brothers as readily expendable" (Yavetz 1998, pp.97,98). With opposing evaluations, both described the same phenomenon in the same terms.

### ***Special laws, special expulsions***

It is thus not surprising that, from the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC until the Emancipation of European Jews in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, special laws were enacted everywhere to

regulate the relations between the Jewish communities and the states where they resided, be they pagan, Christian or Islamic. Among other things, this order made it less likely that events such as the Timerman affair would take place.

The first Roman legal measures towards Jews were enacted in the *Acta Pro Judaeis*, which protected their right to practice their religion. Furthermore, in what almost amounted to the recognition of their foreign character, they were exempted from military service, except in cases in which punishment for unlawful acts derived in forcible mobilizations (Rutgers 1994; Feldman 1996). There were also special provisions for the defense of Jews. Several ancient sources inform of the immediate state reaction unleashed when attacks on Jewish property took place (Rutgers, 1994).

From the Aegean, Asia Minor, the Middle East and Cyrenaica, it was the Jews themselves who requested the enactment of these laws, which were passed with the Senate's approval. These ordinances protected and benefitted the Jews, but they also reflected the degree to which the Diaspora communities were considered foreign bodies in the immense Empire.

This was illustrated by the events of 19 AD when, in a context of alarm due to the growth of the Jewish population, the Roman authorities were angered because a female proselyte of the aristocracy had been defrauded by four Jews who had been involved in her conversion, appropriating money she had donated for the Temple of Jerusalem. Emperor Tiberius retaliated, expelling all Jews from Rome. In so doing, he was reiterating the precedent set by Tribune Tiberius Gracchus in 139 BC (Feldman 1996a). The possibility of expelling entire Jewish communities became an option that, through the centuries, was adopted by European states in crisis situations.

Another realm in which the relations between pagan Rome and Judaism established the pattern for the Christian times to come was that of special taxation. With the Judeo-Roman War of 66-73 AD, Emperor Vespasian created the *Fiscus Judaicus*, a tax that from that moment on was charged to all Jews of the Empire, whether or not they had participated in the rebellion. Only those who had renounced Judaism were exempted. This new tax replaced the levy that had formerly been paid only by working-age males to finance the Temple of Jerusalem. Once the Temple was destroyed, the funds were redirected to the financing of the Roman cult. During the reign of Nerva (96-98 AD), Christians became exempted from the levy because they ceased to be considered Jews.

It was also during the Roman period that there emerged the juridical pluralism that remained in force in the Christian and Islamic kingdoms of the Middle Ages (Abrahams 1993: 49-50). This order made it possible for Jews to live according to their own laws. Normally, if it suited him, the Jew could also recur to the Roman judiciary. In case of conflict between the two systems, of course, Roman Law prevailed (Rajak, 1985).

Needless to say, under such circumstances it was very unlikely that a Jew be appointed as cabinet minister to the emperor or king. And if this occasionally happened during the Middle Ages, the Jewish leadership would have thought twice before threatening the Jewish member of the government with excommunication lest he adopt policies suitable to a foreign power. Precedents of mass expulsions were vividly remembered.

## **Part II - The daughter-religion and the mother-religion vis-à-vis the baron dialectic**

### ***The Jewish structure of the Christian myth of deicide***

Once Rome was spiritually conquered by the Christians, the pressure to convert grew, but in a different direction. It was no longer from paganism to Judaism, but from both paganism and Judaism to Christianity. And for the Jews who did not give in, things became much worse when, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD, there emerged a perverted product of the symbiotic character of both religions: the myth of deicide.

Through stages, Christianity replaced Judaism as the proselytist religion par excellence. Long before the conversion of Constantine, Saint Paul had realized that his Judeo-Christian sect would be more successful proselytizing if the harsh Mosaic Law was abolished. He argued that the advent of the Messiah had turned the Law archaic, and replaced the circumcision of the flesh by the circumcision of the heart.

Notwithstanding, the link between the two religions did not disappear. The idea that the Jewish people are the Chosen People remained imprinted both in the Old and the New Testaments of the Judeo-Christian Bible. In his Epistle to the Romans, for example, Paul exclaims: "I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin" (11:1).

For Paul, gentiles converted to Christianity belonged to the people of God only through adoption. Exalting the Jews, the apostle completed the idea in a way that is almost derogatory toward pagan converts to Christianity:

After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! (11:24)

Notwithstanding, according to the Christians, the original members of the people of God would be "grafted into their own olive tree" only if they accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

Hence, there was a mother-religion and a successor daughter-religion. For the mutant Judeo-Christian sect, the advent of the Messiah in the person of Jesus was the most transcendent

event in universal history. And a century or so after his execution by the Romans, the daughter-religion deployed a powerful weapon against the mother-religion: the accusation of deicide, based on the pressure exercised by some Jews for the crucifixion of the Nazarene.

Thus was born a new stage in the history of the Baron dialectic. In the past, the adversary of Judaism had been a pagan Rome that felt threatened by a proselytist cult that did not respect its gods and was rooted in a very effective transnational Diaspora network. But the new adversary was a daughter-religion that, as the political heiress of pagan Rome, had acquired immense earthly power.

It is not then surprising that the Christian myth of deicide should have had a Jewish structure. It illustrates to what point there is a child-parent relation between both religions.

In the Pentateuch or Torah, which is canonical for both faiths, there are several cases in which children are punished for the sins of their parents, and in which the transgression of an individual is transferred to an entire people. An example of the intergenerational transmission of sins is in Deuteronomy: "No one misbegotten shall be admitted into the congregation of the Lord; none of his descendants, even in the tenth generation, shall be admitted in the congregation of the Lord" (23:3).

And an example of the transmission of a sin to an entire people is God's vengeance on the Midianites, as punishment for their women's seduction of Israelite males. In Numbers 31: 1-18 we are informed of a grand ethnic cleansing that introduces the rules of Holy War into the Bible.

Without reaching such extremes, this Jewish model was adapted by Christianity to condemn the Jews, who were burdened with their forefathers' alleged sin of instigating the execution of Jesus. Among Catholics, this accusation was in force until the Second Vatican Council declared it inadequate through its 1965 declaration, *Nostra aetate*. Among the Lutherans and the Orthodox, it remained in force much longer.

Thus, the powerful slander of deicide fed into previous anti-Jewish feelings. Notwithstanding, the uncomfortable symbiotic link between both faiths prevented a straightforward prohibition of the mother-religion. Jews were sometimes persecuted and often humiliated, but usually not banned. And as an antidote to the persecutions, the network of Diaspora communities continued being effective, somewhat widening the reduced margin of Jewish autonomy.

Nevertheless, it must not be inferred that the persecutions suffered by Jews were something exceptional. What was exceptional was the survival of Jewish religious and ethnic identity, made possible because it was considered an "accepted religion." Judaism was the "gravely mistaken" mother-religion that did not acknowledge the advent of the Messiah.

Indeed, the persecution of pagan religions, of Islam, and of all the Christian heresies, among them the Gnostics, Arians and Cathars, left Western Europe without religious pluralism until the Protestant Reformation, with the exception of Judaism. The Protestants survived because they captured secular power in several states and were thus endowed with the means to persecute Catholics.

But the Jews continued being Jews because theirs was considered an independent *religio licita*. The Catholic hierarchy reasoned that it would be a bad mistake to kill them all. With the burden of their humiliations, the Jews were the living reminder of the transit from the Old to the New Alliance.

The bizarre paradox is that there are no longer any druids in the world, but rabbis still bless us with their presence. Celtic religious identity has been extinguished. Not so Judaism's.

### ***A defensive measure: death to the Jew who informs against another Jew***

It is obvious that, in such a world, the Jews were likely to feel that the Roman, Christian or Islamic authorities were their enemies. The separation between the Diaspora communities and the states whose territories they inhabited was abysmal. As a consequence, the rabbinical tribunals established very severe penalties for Jews who denounced Jewish wrongdoers to the gentile authorities.

Indeed, throughout Jewish history the *moser*, or informer, has been infamous. After the fall of the Second Temple in 70 AD, traitors proliferated and the self-defense mechanism of Jewish communities grew in proportion.

According to Rashi, under the concept of "informant" the Jewish tradition understood not only a tipster, but also a person who hands over Jewish property to non-Jews, and one whose actions damage the community's autonomy (Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007). The first registered case of an informant who was executed is from the times of Emperor Hadrian. One Eleazar b. Simon denounced the operations of a group of Jews dedicated to piracy and looting. Captured by fellow Jews, capital punishment was inflicted upon him in fulfillment of Talmudic law (Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906).

The Talmud itself pontificates:

But as for the Minim, and the informers, and the scoffers, these will go down to Gehinnom and be punished there for all generations... Gehinnom will be consumed but they will not be consumed, as it says, and their form shall wear away the nether world. (Tractate Rosh Hashanah, RH 17 a)

Even though with the destruction of the Second Temple the Jews lost the legal right to apply capital punishment, in actual fact they continued to resort to it. On the other hand, with the

passing of time the interpretation of Talmudic law became increasingly extreme. During the Middle Ages it was clearly established that a Jew who informed on another Jew could be liable to the death penalty.

Indeed, in his famous Mishneh Torah, Maimonides (1135-1204) legislated the obligation of killing, immediately and without a trial, any Jew of whom it was known that he was about to inform on other Jews:

An informant may be killed anywhere, even at the present time when we do not try cases involving capital punishment, and it is permissible to kill him before he has informed. As soon as one says that he is about to inform against So-and-So's person and property, **even a trivial amount of property**, he surrenders himself to death. He must be warned and told "do not inform," and then if he is impudent and replies "Not so! I shall inform against So-and-So," **it is a religious duty to kill him.** (Maimonides, 1972, p. 166. Emphasis added)

Until the end of the 18th Century, there is evidence of the application of the death penalty to informants (Abrahams, 1993). Such legislation can be understood only if the Christian or Muslim authorities of states inhabited by Diaspora communities were considered virtually at war with the Jews.

In such circumstances, if a king or prince appointed a Jew as a cabinet minister, the local community leaders would probably have taken care not to attempt to visibly manipulate the Jewish minister, and much less so in complicity with foreign powers. As in Roman times, upon the authorities' slightest suspicion, the expulsion of the entire community would have been decreed as retaliation and prevention of future evils.

### **Part III - Back to our times**

#### ***The uniqueness of the Baron dialectic***

To threaten Jews who betray other Jews with a religiously valid death sentence is just another dimension of the trans-historic sociological mechanism identified by Baron. Since the creation of the State of Israel this dialectic, which is 2500 years old, is ever more potent. At the present time, a good example is the mechanism described in our Introduction, which involved Argentina, the United States, Iran and Israel.

But there is no lack of other good examples. For instance, in 2015 Jackson Pollard, a U.S. Jew who spied for Israel, was freed on parole after thirty years in prison. Many in Israel thought that the spy's dual loyalty was justifiable, because he was supposedly working for the greater good. He was even granted Israeli citizenship while in jail. Contrariwise, with its stern sentence, the U.S. Judiciary sent a strong signal: the tandem established between Israel and some segments of the U.S. Jewish community would not be allowed to operate out of control.



Notwithstanding, as shown by Netanyahu's 2015 speech in Washington and by the Timerman affair in Buenos Aires, an active and strong Jerusalemite center continues to complement itself with Diaspora communities, working in favor of Israeli interests. As a consequence, what is now functioning is an augmented version of the mechanism through which, even when there was no state, Jewish religion and nationality strengthened each other supranationally throughout the Diaspora.

Indeed, there is nothing more eloquent than the almost prophetic words of Baron, published shortly after the tragedy of the Holocaust:

However large or small may be their number at the present turbulent period of their history..., the preponderant instinct among the majority (of the Jewish people) still perceptibly tells them that the Jewish religion, buttressed by the Jewish nationality, and the Jewish nationality, supernationally rooted in the Jewish religion, will weather the forthcoming storms, too, and that together they will continue their historic march into the unfathomable future. (Baron, 1952, p. 31).

This very special dialectic is not comparable to anything generated by other diasporas, such as the Armenian or Russian dispersions, due to three factors:

- The trans-historical record of the relation between the Jewish nationality and its Diaspora, reaching two and a half millennia,
- The enormous difference between the geopolitical gravitation of Israel and that of other diaspora centers such as Armenia (which is reflected in the fact that the Armenian genocide does not yet have the full recognition of Washington), and
- The degree of penetration of the Jewish communities in the politics of a core power like the United States, and of a peripheral state such as Argentina.

When the day comes in which Vladimir Putin is called to pronounce speeches in the Capitol in order to divide U.S. legislators with the object of thwarting Washington's Ukrainian policy, it will be arguable that the Russian Diaspora is comparable to the Jewish one. Meanwhile, we must concede that the Baron dialectic is an unparalleled phenomenon both in the past and in the present.

### ***From the Jerusalemite center, to Washington and the Once quarter of Buenos Aires***

It is because of this exceptional mechanism that great Roman public figures considered that a Roman Jew could not be a Roman patriot. And if we shore up to the Argentina of 1960, the same dynamics were put to work when Mossad illegally abducted the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann and sent him for trial in Israel, where he was put to death. Although the State of Israel

did not exist when German citizen Eichmann committed his crimes, he was not judged by an international tribunal but by an Israeli court.

When this happened, Argentine Jewish leaders had to choose which country they were more loyal to: Argentina, whose sovereignty had been violated, or Israel, that had ordered the abduction, trial and execution.

The episode is relevant. In an excellent essay about Argentine Jews and the accusation of “dual loyalty,” Israeli historian Raanan Rein (2005) aptly titled one of his sections: “Paying the Price for the Kidnapping of Eichmann”. Rein says that the two years following the abduction were the most difficult for Argentine Jews in almost half a century.

It is not surprising. This sort of operation would have engendered Judeo-phobia anywhere in the world, no less than, if perpetrated by the Buenos Aires government, the illegal abduction of an Argentine genocidal repressor in Israel would generate anti-Argentine indignation in Tel Aviv.

It is unlikely that the Israeli government would have dared do the same in a country whose friendship and alliance were vital to it, like the United States. And as the Pollard case suggests, were anything similar to occur on its soil, the American reaction would be momentous.

But in peripheral Argentina not only did the kidnapping take place. It was perpetrated at the very time that an Israeli delegation led by the celebrated Abba Eban<sup>3</sup> visited Buenos Aires on occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the May Revolution. *Ha'aretz* published an article in Hebrew that stated that the Argentine public felt that it had been stabbed in the back. (Rein 2005)<sup>4</sup>.

But although the leaders of the main Argentine Jewish institutions were uneasy because of the potential consequences of the situation, they did not object to the operation itself. Rein (2005) informs that Natan Lerner, vice-president of DAIA, stated that all of them supported Mossad's proceedings.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **Baron, Arendt and Rabi vis-à-vis Past and Present Judeo-Phobia**

The abduction of Eichmann and the reactions it generated among the leaders of the main institutions of Argentina's Jewish community are a good example, from the second half of

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3. Minister without Portfolio, 1959-60; Minister of Education 1960-63; Vice Prime Minister 1963-66, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1966-74.

4. Eliahu Arel, “Public Reactions in Argentina in the Eichmann Affair”, June 15, 1960.

the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, of the ancient dialectic identified by Baron. The Timerman affair is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century example, also from peripheral Argentina, that illustrates the actuality of this sociological mechanism.

Indeed, in February 2015 the organizations “AMIA para Todos” and “Plural Jai” demanded the excommunication of Minister Timerman for having had the nerve to negotiate with Iran. Their offensive was launched through three joint open letters:

- One to the general public,
- Another that was open to the signature of all AMIA members, and
- A third one, also open to signature by AMIA members, addressed to AMIA’s Tribunal of Communitarian Ethics.

Thus, a group of Argentine Jewish leaders attempted to capture a measure of veto power vis-à-vis the state policies implemented by a citizen of Jewish identity. The offensive was parallel to the insinuations made by Israeli officials, charging the Argentine government with the death of Prosecutor Nisman, and to Netanyahu’s attempt to block U.S. negotiations with Iran, mentioning the Buenos Aires bombings *en passant*.

This tandem between the Jerusalemite center and two Diaspora communities is analogous to the processes described by Baron in his analysis of Antiquity. In ancient times, the Jewish religion was reinforced by the Jewish nationality, whilst the latter concomitantly rooted itself supra-nationally through the Jewish religion. Nowadays, the Diaspora communities are strengthened by the presence and proceedings of the State of Israel, whilst the latter is at times benefitted by the operations of Diaspora communities in the countries they inhabit. It is a mechanism that can sometimes engender understandable reactions against the Jews.

On the other hand, it is clear that the Judeo-phobia resulting from these processes is not a consequence of the Christian myth of deicide. If the Argentine anti-Semitic organization Tacuara flourished after the kidnapping of Eichmann (Rein 2005: 554-56), this was not mainly because of the anti-Jewish preaching of some Catholic priests, but rather because of the activation of the Baron dialectic. If President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner is today less sympathetic to the Jewish community than ten years ago, it is because the community leadership attempted to acquire veto power vis-à-vis her foreign policy, taking advantage of what it assumed to be its hold on a Jewish foreign minister.

Hence, when we attempt to explain anti-Semitism it is indispensable to begin with the analysis of its most ancient version: that which comes from the peculiar dialectic between the Jewish nationality and the Diaspora communities ever since the Babylonian exile, whereby the Jewish nationality became supra-nationally rooted in these communities.

Only thus can we understand the background of the accusations of “dual loyalty” to which Rein refers. Indeed, it is not so much a matter of dual loyalty but of a certain *disloyalty*, which is empirically identifiable in a significant minority of Argentina’s Jewish community. This is what comes out of the “participative action-research” that I undertook as a sequel to the Timerman affair (Escudé, 2015).

An example of such attitudes, published in my Facebook page by one of my panelists in the context of my field research, says:

Carlos Escudé, my friend, any Jew has the “right” to despise a Nation in which two terrorist attacks have been perpetrated against the Embassy of Israel and AMIA, two Jewish institutions, authored by a foreign power, Iran. Not the least effort has been made to solve the cases, knowing without a doubt that there was a local connection linked to Peronist power. The corollary of such impunity and impudence has been the famous memorandum, a smokescreen to cover up obnoxious deals with the attacking power that violated “our sovereignty”<sup>5</sup>. (From Mr. MS)

This forceful statement takes us back to what men like Seneca and Tacitus wrote about the Jews two-thousand years ago. It does not represent Argentine Jews in general; only some of them. The opposite attitude, of loyalty to the country they were born in, was also manifested by Jewish panelists who participated in my study. But it is individuals such as Mr. MS who activate the Baron dialectic.

When recalling the sayings of illustrious Romans, Baron acknowledged that this dialectic between Jewish religion and nationality, that engenders dual loyalties, would produce negative consequences:

Here (in Rome) and throughout the Empire there was a widespread resentment of the “alien” character of Jews, raised to a high pitch by the growth of Jewish population, both native and converted... When popular animosity in the Egyptian metropolis later found an outlet in the first real “pogrom” in 38 C.E., it was a contemporary thinker, the usually reticent Seneca, who gave the most passionate expression of the inveterate grievance: “The customs of that most accursed nation [more exactly: most criminal nation, *sceleratissimae gentis*] have gained such strength that they have now been received in all lands; the conquered have given laws to the conquered. (Baron 1952, p. 91)

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5. Amigo Carlos Escudé, cualquier Judío (*sic*) tiene “derecho” (*sic*) a despreciar a una Nación en la cual se han perpetrado dos atentados terroristas contra la Embajada de Israel y la AMIA, dos entidades JUDÍAS (*sic*), dirigidos por una potencia extranjera, Irán, sin que se haya hecho el menor esfuerzo por aclararlos, sabiendo sin ninguna duda que hubo una conexión local vinculada al poder peronista. El corolario de tanta impunidad y desfachatez, ha sido el famoso memorándum, cortina de humo para encubrir aberrantes negociados con la potencia agresora y violadora de “nuestra soberanía”. (2015, march 13)

The analogies are obvious. In 1960, Mossad, secret arm of the State of Israel, violated the laws of a country inhabited by one of the largest Diaspora communities in the world. Its actions met with the approval of the main leaders of Argentine Judaism. Although Eichmann was not a Jew, Mossad's mission was analogous to that of a Medieval hunter of informants, religiously-backed by Maimonides' *Halakhot*.

Contemporary cases such as the abduction of Eichmann and the Timerman affair underscore our debt to the numerous scholars devoted to the study of the relations between Jews and Gentiles since Antiquity; to Arendt's farsighted observations about the necessary long-term co-responsibility of Jews in the gestation of anti-Semitism, and to Baron's wondrous "sociological imagination".

The intelligence, sensitivity and honesty with which the latter dealt with these questions must be underlined. As very few have done after the Holocaust, Baron suggested that the practices that made the survival of the Jewish identity possible may be a causal factor in the complex mechanism that has led to anti-Semitism almost everywhere. This is one of the great paradoxes of all history: that survival may have been thanks to practices that are, at times, obnoxious.

Like Arendt and Rabi, Baron thought that Jews have a probably minor quota of co-responsibility. In contemporary Western culture, this idea is in itself suspicious of anti-Semitism. To approach it is almost a taboo that illustrates the soft power that, after the Holocaust, has been acquired by the sociological mechanism intuited by Baron.

Diplomatic lore has it that, on an occasion in which she pressed Henry Kissinger to adopt a more pro-Israeli foreign policy, Golda Meir reminded him that he was also Jewish. Kissinger replied that he was first and foremost an American; that after that he was the U.S. Secretary of State, and that only after that was he a Jew. To this, the brilliant prime minister answered that that was quite satisfactory, because Hebrew is read from right to left.

Thus, Meir attempted to activate the Baron dialectic through Kissinger. What could we expect from Bibi Netanyahu vis-à-vis Hector Timerman?

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