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Religion and the Body

Shedding Liberalism, All Over Again

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Change, however, is not a simple escape from constraint to liberation. There is no shedding the literal fear and figurative law of the father, and no reaching a final realm of freedom. There is no new place, no new home.[1]

In their now classic reading of feminist poet Minnie Bruce Pratt's essay "Identity: Skin Blood Heart," Chandra Mohanty and Bidy Martin remind us that change is never simple.[2] Even for Pratt, a brave and powerful writer and activist, letting go of our deepest fears and abiding commitments is a process. We shed and then we shed again. The layers are sedimented, and letting go takes time and diligence—and, even with all of that, there is no new place, no new home. We live with the traces of our various pasts even as we move on, even as we try to break away. This was the central argument of my first book, *Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home*, where I described in some detail my traumatic experience of reconstituting my literal home after I had been raped. In the process, I came to a profound realization that many of the various traditions, communities, and narratives that had once offered me comfort and security were no longer available to me in the ways that I had once thought they were.[3] *Jews and Feminism* was about my attempts to engage with the traces of those various legacies in more partial and less absolute terms as I remade my home.

In the present, I return to these feminist texts and my reading of them from a different angle, to reframe my own efforts to escape the full embrace of one of these profoundly disappointing legacies. I return to classical liberalism because, in many ways, it has operated as a central organizing discourse in my life. As such, it remains the legacy I continue to mourn, as a Jew and as a woman. I return to this loss to reconsider my disappointment alongside liberalism's promises of liberation and freedom. Truth be told, I have spent most of my career trying, in different ways, to let go, not only of my own liberalism but to challenge what I understand to be a far more pervasive American Jewish, as well as feminist, loyalty to classical liberalism. Like Pratt, what I am shedding is intimately a part of who I am. My critique has been shaped by my deep sense of both the promise and disappointments at the heart of classic liberalism and its vision of social inclusion. I carry the weight of this disappointment in my body. After all, the State was not able to protect me; after I was raped, it never did find the man who assaulted me. It is now over twenty years later, and there is still no resolution. Yet I find myself holding onto the hope that this need not be the case. Even these many years later, I am struck by the tenacity of my own lingering loyalties to this promise of justice. This has not gone away. As much as I know that there is no new home, no new place, I still find myself caught in liberalism's promises.

In all kinds of ways, my efforts to critique liberalism are informed by this persistence. As such, I have taken seriously the ways that the classical liberal vision opened up space in modern nation-states for Jews and for women. It allowed Jews to become citizens and enter into the so-called "secular" public sphere. Later, it did the same thing for women. In the United States these promises were extended to

my own immigrant grandparents at the beginning of the last century. It was in this country that my family first understood that these promises were to be extended to Jewish women as well as to Jewish men, to my grandmothers and my mother and eventually to me. This, however, is not the entire story. Even our inclusion remains partial and incomplete. This is not because we did not get it right, but rather because there are limitations built into the very terms of the liberal social contract and its promises.

Despite its seemingly universal vision of inclusion, liberalism has not actually provided full access to its social contract for all kinds of "others." Social inclusion for the various others living within liberal nation-states, much less for those residing within these countries' colonies and former colonies, has not been and cannot be fully realized on liberalism's terms. These promises remain partial and incomplete for all of us. As I have argued in my various works, this includes all those constructed and configured as minorities residing within these nation-states: people like me (women, Jews, Jewish women).

In other words, the mechanisms of liberal inclusion, the very discourses that those of us especially in the United States have come to believe are normal and natural and, in some sense, act as the common sense of social inclusion, are fundamentally flawed. They do not work in the ways that we have come to believe they do or should. Liberalism sets up a public expectation and indeed a veneer of openness to its invitation even as it simultaneously makes impossible the very promise it offers. Despite, perhaps, its best intentions, liberalism excludes all over again in the very name of inclusion. [4] Part of what I am suggesting is that these promises be understood as much more partial and incomplete. That even as we may aspire to some kind of a universal, we make explicit the limits of current discourse in accommodating the promise of inclusion. This might help us begin to search more fully and earnestly for better ways of realizing greater inclusion.

Recalling Pratt's labors to undo or redo her own inheritances, I see this essay as an exercise in shedding—my way of remembering that change is a process. It is my hope that iteration with a difference can help us more fully appreciate the problems posed by liberalism. In this instance, I hope to show, in a somewhat more nuanced fashion, how a certain Jewish (and feminist) loyalty to liberalism limits our ability to find other discourses, other ways of imagining social inclusion.

With this in mind, I present this essay in three parts. In part one, I return to my own ambivalent search for home to confront this problem in relation to what it means to claim an American Jewish feminist position. In part two, I offer a glimpse at two more recent efforts to get at these issues. On the one hand, I ask what the difficulties of claiming a secular Jewish position in the United States tells us about the terms of Jewish entry into the liberal nation-state's ostensibly secular public sphere. On the other hand, I suggest how a reconsideration of the place of the Hebrew Bible—known by Jews as the *Tanakh*—in American culture can help us better see the limitations of religious pluralism. In the third section I engage with a different conversation partner, drawing connections between my critique of American Jewish liberalism and anthropologist Saba Mahmood's recent work on Muslims, social tolerance, and secularization, drawing attention to a few key points of connection between our positions. In my conclusion I suggest that perhaps not only shedding, but also mourning, might be a way out of this otherwise melancholic enactment of letting go of liberalism.

Part 1: The First Iteration: An Ambivalent Search for Home

In *Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home*, part of my efforts to reconfigure my home began with my need to reconsider especially my own American Jewish loyalties to liberalism. To denaturalize what had long been a kind of self-evident quality to my own attachments to liberalism, I historicized these ties by showing the links between liberalism and colonialism. This was my way of denaturalizing many of my assumptions about the emancipatory promises of liberalism for Jews. In the opening chapter I wrote:

Liberalism and colonialism share an ambivalent promise of emancipation and assimilation. In both, power is organized asymmetrically, and some people are necessarily excluded. Building on cultural critic Homi Bhabha's critique of colonialism, I have come to see the liberal/colonial project in terms of promise and effacement, a kind of mimicry. Like colonialism, liberalism offers formerly subjected peoples a kind of partial emancipation. As Homi Bhabha explains, "By 'partial' I mean both 'incomplete' and 'virtual.' It is as if the very emergence of the colonial [liberal] is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative discourse. The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace." ... No matter how hard the colonial subject tries, he or she will remain "a subject that is almost the same, but not quite."^[5]

In other words, like Bhabha's colonial subject, I argued that "others" within liberal nation-states are subject to a similar mechanism of exclusionary inclusion. Like Jews who have been granted citizenship, such persons nevertheless maintain their status as the other. They are almost but not quite proper liberal subjects, who remain marked by their difference from the norm. This difference is often manifested in an excessive desire to efface this variation, for those perceived as others to present themselves as normal. The excess, the trying too hard, ironically is itself a trace of the desire to fit in, as if they could control the way others see them or respond to them by trying harder.

As a result, the more those designated as others try to be normal or mainstream, the more overt are their differences. In the case of Jews, it is this excess that is at the heart of the joke that says that Jews are just like everyone else, only more so. Bhabha's work helped me see these dynamics as a structural problem. Although the material effects of this exclusion for Jews and for women within liberal nation-states are radically different from the forms such dynamics took under colonization and continue to take in former colonies, I continue to take seriously these formal connections. They help us see many of the invisible links among and between liberal nation-states and colonization, between notions of the public and the private within these locations, as well as their lingering resonances in would-be emancipatory discourses that build on classical liberalism's grand vision.

In *Jews and Feminism* I also explored how I myself had come to naturalize these desires and assumption. As I explained it then:

In the Jewish home I was raised in, Jewish values were liberal values. There was seemingly no difference. Liberalism was filled with promise. It was through liberal lenses that my parents taught me about justice, about fairness, and about liberation. Liberalism had promised my immigrant grandparents a safe home, hospitable soil, a place to grow and to prosper by entering into the American social contract. In my family, being a citizen of the United States was considered sacred.^[6]

I went on to argue that, like many American Jews, my own immigrant grandparents and extended family were deeply loyal to the United States. We had gained so much and felt so grateful. I still believe that such loyalty marks much of American Jewish politics, so that even those of us who are the grandchildren of the vast wave of Eastern European Jewish immigrants continue to find it difficult to challenge this most basic American discourse.

As I explained then, liberalism offered "American Jews a new vision of home, [it] opened up both a conceptual and a political terrain within which Jews could participate in American culture."^[7] Given this depth of feeling, my desire to look more closely at this promise demanded that I explore some of the gaps in this almost sacred narrative. I did this not simply to tear liberalism apart, but to find other resources—roads not taken that could help me imagine other ways of figuring social inclusion. I looked back at American history to draw connections between liberalism and colonialism. This helped me in my efforts to use postcolonial theory to challenge American liberalism: "Even as the history of the American Revolution makes clear, this liberal emancipatory project was never just a way of

constructing political, social, or cultural relationships in the West [L]iberalism and colonialism are intertwined."^[8] We cannot look at one without the other, especially in the American context.

To sum up, from the perspective of Jews in the United States, in that first book I tried to reconsider the cultural legacy of liberalism for Jews and for women, and for Jewish women in particular, as a way of getting at these problems:

1. I considered the relationship between liberalism and colonialism, using Homi Bhabha's notion of the colonial subject as almost but not quite European. I showed the similarities between this dynamic at the heart of colonialism as a dynamic at work within Europe, as well as within the American liberal nation-state and its relationship to various others living within its borders. I looked at women and Jews as well as Jewish women.^[9]
2. I then explored the ways that liberal marriage was itself a part of the negotiation for Jewish emancipation, which first occurred in France. I discussed this by looking at the role of marriage in Napoleon's questions to the Jewish Notables as he offered them citizenship. I argued that fidelity was itself a crucial part of the bargain, complicating the role of women in these negotiations, while also clarifying that emancipation itself was contingent upon Jews giving up various customs and social institutions, including traditional rules about marriage, in order to show their loyalty to liberal nation-states. I also clarified that this fidelity came with the promise of state protection for Jews, including Jewish women, another unfulfilled promise.
3. I used the relationship between the sexual contract and the liberal social contract to show how marriage is a *sui generis* contract. As feminist political theorist Carole Pateman has argued, marriage produces and reproduces an asymmetrical relationship of power that again does not redress the absence of women within the original social contract and, in fact, exacerbates the sexual asymmetry in even normative heterosexuality through the institution of marriage.^[10]
4. I then looked at how even liberal Jewish and Jewish feminist theologies have understood the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people as a kind of marital model. This model reproduces precisely these asymmetrical power relationships, again making it difficult to imagine Jewish women as empowered actors in both metaphorical and material relationships. This was again a way of unraveling the power dynamics that haunted my project.
5. Finally, as I considered the normative heterosexual contract, in each instance I also asked questions about its opposite, the case of rape. I asked how promises of protection were linked to notions of fidelity. At the same time, I also raised questions time and time again about how vulnerable women remain in this system. I challenged the way that sexual assault continues to be addressed in this nexus of state-sanctioned heterosexual relations and false promises of protection.

Part 2: Reiterations: Secular Jews, Hebrew Bibles

Since I wrote that book, I have continued to work at undoing these connections and denaturalizing the assumptions that make them still seem so powerful.^[11] I have tried to consider the linkages between classical liberalism and secularism in order to reconsider the seemingly neutral secular public sphere as the critical site for social inclusion. I have argued that this is not as inclusive a space as one might hope. More specifically, I have challenged how in the United States, at least for Jewish others, acceptance into the secular public sphere came with the ironic expectation that Jews should relinquish their own self-proclaimed secular forms of Jewish identification to become Americans. This is especially evident in the experience of Eastern European Jews who came to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.^[12] Thus to be accepted in the secular and presumably neutral public sphere, those Jews who identified as secular had to refashion themselves into socially acceptable "religious" Jews. In other words, to enter this seemingly unmarked social space, many secular Yiddishists had to perform their Jewishness in religious terms. This acceptability makes explicit the rules of what Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, in their edited volume *Secularisms*, have called the Protestant secular culture of the United States.^[13]

The idea that Jewish difference must be defined in religious terms, as a matter of private faith, challenges the promise of liberal inclusion by helping us see the connections between liberalism, secularization, and the lingering power of the Protestant imaginary in shaping this peculiar version of American secular culture. These secular forms of social acceptance ended up denying the explicitly secular forms of Jewish identification favored by large numbers of immigrant Jews because it construed religious pluralism as the relevant form for containing and expressing Jewish difference. By producing a religious designation for Jews in the twentieth century, secular American culture rejected the possibility of secular forms of Jewishness. Here again we see how liberal inclusion is strangely partial.

The sedimentation of these commitments to liberal inclusion and the ways they have become seemingly natural or normal makes even the idea of "secular" Jews seem oxymoronic. This too is part of the legacy of liberal inclusion and its problems. For me, by denaturalizing some of these aspects of liberal inclusion, I want to open up space for alternative forms of Jewish expression, including feminist and secular forms of Jewish identification that clearly do not neatly fit into this normative model.

In addition to considering the incompatibility of secular forms of Jewish identification in the United States and its presumptively secular public sphere, I have also tried to consider the strange legacy of the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition as a container for American religious pluralism. I did this by asking questions about the Hebrew Bible.^[13] I use the 1985 Jewish Publication Society's then new translation of the *Tanakh* and the fact of this decidedly Jewish naming of the text as a way of reconsidering the degree to which it is possible for Jews to name and claim this clearly religious text as specifically and decidedly Jewish, rather than as a part of the so-called Judeo-Christian Bible, a presumably singular universal tradition.^[15] I challenge the notion that the Hebrew Bible is a shared sacred text. I do this to further complicate the notion of religious pluralism in the Protestant United States. In other words, this time I challenge the theological vision of liberal inclusion, the so-called "Judeo-Christian" tradition, for not allowing religious Jewish differences.

Although it might seem that the Jewish Publication Society's naming of the translation signified a new openness to how Jews read and engage with the Hebrew Bible in terms that are specifically Jewish and not shared with their Christian neighbors, this is not necessarily the case. The text is still not commonly recognized as a version of the Hebrew Bible. Likewise, the notion that Jews read this text in a different order and through their own post-biblical exegetical traditions remains not fully appreciated, even now over 25 years after its publication.^[16]

For me this example offers another way of complicating what is often still taken for granted—a kind of seamless account of the shared legacy of Christians and Jews in the American context, a shared Bible—when in fact these communities have very different relationships to and readings of this text. Even among various Christians and Jews, there is a much fuller and more complicated set of overlapping and contradictory engagements with the Hebrew Bible. All of this makes relationships across these divides less simple and more contentious. For me this recognition of the fault lines enables American Jews an opening to begin to connect to other communities, especially Christian and increasingly Muslim communities, on new terms. We need not posit a "shared" tradition to engage with each other regarding our quite different reading of what is presumptively the same text.

In addition to these essays, I also have tried to raise some of these challenges to liberalism within the context of those who are very much committed to liberal theological discourse, where some of these tensions and problems continue to be glossed over in the name of a kind of ecumenicalism that does not acknowledge its own Christian and indeed Protestant history and ongoing commitments.^[17] These forms of interreligious engagements often demand that others—Jews, Muslims, Buddhists—conform to its norms in order to engage in dialogue in the first place. In all of these efforts, what I find most astonishing is the tenacity of these liberal commitments. They seem to remain more firmly in place than ever. I suspect this is because we fear that there may not be other alternatives to working across our differences. I believe there are other ways of making connections that do not insist on

sameness as a starting point. Rather, I want to address differences more fully as an opportunity to explore new kinds of relationships.

Part 3: Postsecular, Postcolonial, Postliberal: Making Connections

The remainder of this essay extends some of these more recent efforts to consider how paying attention to the secular can help make more visible mechanisms of exclusion, again with the hope of imagining other forms of social connection. In considering alliances between Jews and Muslims, I draw on the work of anthropologist Saba Mahmood on Muslims and secularization. From a different angle, Mahmood helps open up these seemingly otherwise invisible mechanisms of exclusion and what is at stake in articulating a postsecular criticism.

Writing about the modern phenomenon of secularism and the idea of religious tolerance in her essay "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," Mahmood explains:

In this account, modern secularism emerges in the seventeenth century as a political solution intended to end the European Wars of Religion by establishing a lowest common denominator among the doctrines of conflicting Christian sects and by defining a political ethic altogether independent of religious doctrines. The realization of these goals was dependent, of course, upon the centralization of state authority and a concomitant demarcation of society into political, economic, religious, and familial domains whose contours could then be mapped and subjected to the calculus of state rule. In this narrative, both the ethics of religious tolerance and freedom of conscience are considered to be goods internal to the doctrinal separation that secularism institutes between operations of the state and church, between politics and religion. The assumption is that the state, by virtue of its declared neutrality towards specific religious truth claims, makes religious goals indifferent to the exercise of politics, and, in so doing, ensures that religion is practiced without coercion, out of individual choice and personal assent. In so much as liberalism is about the regulation of individual and collective liberties, it is the principle of freedom of conscience that makes secularism central to liberal political philosophy in this account.[18]

This is Mahmood's starting point. It is a succinct encapsulation of the broader contours of liberalism's historical relationship to religion and its efforts to both separate from religion and to tolerate religious difference. It also prefigures many of the problems I have already discussed. Before challenging the deeply troubling implications of U.S. attempts to reform Islam in the name of religious tolerance, Mahmood goes on to argue:

Recent scholarship offers some interesting challenges to the idea that liberal secularism primarily consists in securing a form of governance orchestrated around these two principles of freedom and restraint. Some scholars suggest that the so-called firewall separation between church and state does not adequately describe how religion and modern governance are constitutively intertwined[19]

Challenging further this claim of separation, Mahmood goes on to show how this imbrication continues to pose problems. American efforts to promote religious pluralism remain fraught. What I find most compelling in Mahmood's analysis is the ways she argues that liberal discourse itself produces acceptable forms of religious subjectivity in the name of tolerance. As she explains:

The political solution secularism proffers, I am arguing, lies not so much in tolerating difference and diversity but in remaking certain kinds of religious subjectivities (even if this requires the use of violence) so as to render them compliant with liberal political rules. Critics who want to make secularism's claim to tolerance more robust must deal with this normative impetus internal to secularism, an impetus that reorganizes subjectivities in

accord with a modality of political rule that is itself retrospectively called "a religiously neutral political ethic."^[20]

This dynamic reorganization of subjectivity echoes political theorist Wendy Brown's account of the legacy of Jewish emancipation in Western Europe. As Brown explains:

To be brought into the nation, Jews had to be made to fit, and for that they needed to be transformed, cleaned-up and normalized, even as they were still marked as Jews. These triple forces of recognition, remaking, and marking—of emancipation, assimilation, and identification as different—are what characterize the relation of the state to Jews in nineteenth-century Europe and constitute the tacit regime of tolerance governing Jewish emancipation.^[21]

As I have argued elsewhere, these efforts to reform Jews to remake them into acceptable others within liberal nation-states, challenges the very terms of Jewish difference and who gets to define what it means to claim a Jewish position. In fact, I used this passage from Brown to frame my account of the demise of secular Yiddish forms of Jewish expression in twentieth century America.^[22] As I noted then, the problems Brown raises are very much the concerns that the last generation of Jewish secularists confronted as they tried to imagine a future for their communities. Returning to these issues in light of Mahmood's essay, I am struck by the connections. These critiques resonate with the account of Hebert Parzen, one of the last of the secular Yiddishists I wrote about. As Parzen explained:

The Jewish communities, during the stormy struggle for emancipation and enlightenment in the nineteenth century, achieved adjustment to the general social order on the primary basis of religious tolerance. [...] The Synagogue was, accordingly, the primary instrument of adjustment to modern life, and acknowledged as the center of Jewish loyalty and identification.^[23]

For Parzen, such adjustment required that his Jewishness be remade in order for him to fit in as a recognizable and acceptable Jew in the United States. There was no room for a Jewish subjectivity that was not already figured in religious terms, even in the secular American state. For me these accounts make clear how in the name of inclusion and an appreciation of difference, others—in this case Jews and Muslims—are strangely forced to contort themselves into an acceptable and contained form of their Jewish or Muslim identities. This contortion makes explicit how much pressure is placed on others to reform themselves within a liberal pluralist vision of inclusion. This is the shared price of acceptance that perhaps we might begin to draw on together in order to imagine a different future.

Conclusion: The Death of a Promise or the Need to Mourn the Loss of a Liberal Vision

Since neither her view of history, nor her construction of herself through it are linear, the past, home, and the father leave traces that are constantly reabsorbed into a shifting vision. She lives, after all, on the edge, indeed, that early experience of separation and difference from the father is remembered not only in terms of the possibility of change, but also in relation to the pain of loss, the loneliness of change, the undiminished desire for home, for the familiarity, for some coexistence of familiarity and difference.^[24]

In order for the mourning process to take place at all, those who have suffered injuries at the hands of their society (or by the imposition of others) must be able to name the causes of their losses. Only through some form of social or political consciousness is the anger that accompanies such injuries able to find its proper objects—and only in this way, is the process of grieving free to proceed. [...] [T]he process of social mourning involves a sustained effort—collective as well as individual—to raise to consciousness the ongoing libidinal attachments of the bereaved to those social possibilities that have been proscribed or imperiled.^[25]

In order to change, we need to appreciate the ways that change always already comes with loss. Even as we long to move on, we harbor attachments to those things we are trying to let go of. For those of us intimately bound to liberalism's promise of home, this letting go can be extremely difficult; like Pratt we too face the loneliness of change, the undiminished desire for a new home. As we change, we too hold on to the places, the people, and the ideals that formed us. These legacies coexist. That which is familiar intermingles in our imaginations and our daily lives with that which is new. In Pratt's case, it is her love of her father and his world mingled with her self-conscious feminist appreciation for difference. Literary scholar Seth Moglen describes these engagements in terms of grief and mourning. According to Moglen, social loss is unique in the ways that it calls us to political engagement. In order to grieve, he suggests that we must be able to name the causes of our loss. In a sense, this is, in part, what my own many different efforts have been all about.[26]

Like Moglen, Wendy Brown also argues for a kind of politics of mourning. In her essay "Feminism Unbound: Revolution, Mourning, Politics," Brown writes:

Mourning revolution is thus mourning a particular kind of futurity, a specifically modern kind of rightful expectation, a temporality we do not yet know how to live without. [...]

The death of a promise is like no other because a promise is incorporeal; there is no body to claim, to bid farewell, to bury (which is why the Left argues incessantly over what the body is). In mourning a dead promise, a promise that no longer is one, we mourn "the disappeared"; this is a perpetual and ungratified mourning that reaches in vain for closure. The very object that we mourn—the opening of a different future, the ideal illuminating that future—has vanished. So we cannot even see or say what we mourn, gather at the site of its disappearance, weep over its remains, hold its lively embodiment in our memory as we must if the mourning is to come to an end. This is a mourning that inevitably becomes melancholia—as the loved and lost promise becomes nameless and unfathomable in a present that cancels and even mocks it, its disappearance is secured by this loss of a name and so also is our inconsolability.[27]

For Brown, the death of a promise is an especially difficult undertaking. Without a body, we reach in vain for closure. In a sense this is very much my own experience of letting go of liberalism. The danger is that this melancholic state can become deeply unproductive because it does not allow us to move on, to live our lives in the present and to imagine a different future. I cite this passage from Brown in full because I find its dramatic and arresting vision compelling. I see myself reflected in this account. But more than this, when I read Brown's analysis in conjunction with Moglen, Mohanty, Martin, and Pratt, I feel hopeful. Together they help me better understand what it is that I continue to experience in letting go of liberalism. The loss of liberalism's promise is something I must grieve; because this is a social loss, in sharing my analysis I hope to add to that more collective effort that Moglen advocates.

My hope is that in reiterating this process, in retelling these tales of letting go of liberalism, I have in some way helped to open up a space that allows for more than simply a melancholic iteration. I have insisted, in Brown's terms, on not letting "the loved and lost promise" become "nameless and unfamiliar." Following Moglen and, perhaps somewhat differently than Pratt, I do not mourn the loss of the father, or even my own father's liberal Jewish vision, but a broader ideal, something revolutionary and powerful that was a part of liberalism's promise. It is my hope that that promise might be reabsorbed into an ever-shifting vision of both my Jewish and feminist identities and their places in a more inclusive collective future, a future that risks imagining inclusion in new and more powerful ways that just might bring Jews and Muslims into a more productive alliance with feminists and other others.

Endnotes

1. Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Bidy Martin, "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It," in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Teresa de Lauretis, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,

1986): 202. [[Return to text](#)]

2. Ibid. [[Return to text](#)]

3. Laura Levitt, *Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home* (New York: Routledge, 1997). [[Return to text](#)]

4. Aamir R. Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). [[Return to text](#)]

5. Levitt, 6. [[Return to text](#)]

6. Levitt, 4. [[Return to text](#)]

7. Levitt, 5. [[Return to text](#)]

8. Levitt, 5-6. [[Return to text](#)]

9. Here my position is and remains in sharp contrast to Wendy Brown on Jews and women. As much as I admire what Brown has to say, in her efforts to connect the Jewish and the woman questions, she ends up not being able to fully address the issue of Jewish women. This aspect of the problem is lost in her essay, where the Jews become men and the women are Christian. See: Wendy Brown, "Tolerance as Supplement: The 'Jewish Question' and the 'Woman Question,'" in *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006): 48-77. [[Return to text](#)]

10. C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). [[Return to text](#)]

11. Laura Levitt, "Letting Go of Liberalism," in *Postcolonialism, Feminism and Religious Discourse*, Kwok Pui-lan and Laura Donaldson, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2002): 161-179. [[Return to text](#)]

12. Laura Levitt, "Impossible Assimilations, American Liberalism, and Jewish Difference: Revisiting Jewish Secularism," *American Quarterly* 59:3 (2007): 281-306; Levitt, "Other Moderns, Other Jews," in *Secularisms*, Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, eds. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008): 107-138. [[Return to text](#)]

13. Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, eds., "Introduction: Times Like These," in *Secularisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). [[Return to text](#)]

14. Laura Levitt, "Beyond a Shared Inheritance: American Jews Reclaim the Hebrew Bible," and a response to the editorial introduction in *The Calling of the Nations: Exegesis, Ethnography, and Empire in a Biblical Historic Present*, M. Vessey, S. Betcher, R. Daum, and H. Maier, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011): 83-101. [[Return to text](#)]

15. The name *Tanakh* is derived from the Hebrew acronym for the book's three sections in their Jewish order: *Torah* or the first five books; *Nevi'im*, the books of the prophets; and *Kethuvim*, writings. [[Return to text](#)]

16. On this point see Stephen Prothero's notion of religious literacy, which is very much about knowing what the Christian Bible says. Although he notes briefly that the Jews call this text the *Tanakh*, he does not consider the differences between these two versions and presumes that religious literacy is about knowing dominant Christian readings of these texts. Moreover, he cites the King James version unless otherwise specified throughout. I write about this text in my response to the editor's introduction to the section of *The Calling of the Nations* that includes my essay. See: Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know and Doesn't* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007). [[Return to text](#)]

17. In 2008, I was a part of a panel entitled "Liberalism and its Analogues in Global Religions," sponsored by the liberal theologies group at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting in Chicago. See also Mahmood's account of the origins of secularism as an ecumenical and intra-Christian process, as cited later in this essay. See: Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18:2 (2006): 323-347. [[Return to text](#)]
18. Mahmood, 324. [[Return to text](#)]
19. Mahmood, 325. [[Return to text](#)]
20. Mahmood, 328. [[Return to text](#)]
21. Brown (2006): 53. [[Return to text](#)]
22. Levitt (2007). [[Return to text](#)]
23. Herbert Parzen, "The Passing of Jewish Secularism in the United States," *Judaism* 8:3 (1959): 154-164. [[Return to text](#)]
24. Mohanty and Martin, 201-202. [[Return to text](#)]
25. Seth Moglen, *Mourning Modernity: Literary Modernism and the Injuries of American Capitalism*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007). [[Return to text](#)]
26. Moglen (2007). [[Return to text](#)]
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