

What Are Jews For?  
The Idea of Jewish Purpose From the Bible to the Present

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'Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples [*li segulah mikol ha-amim*]. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

Exodus 19:5-6

'I the Lord, in My grace, have summoned you, and I have grasped you by the hand. I created you, and appointed you a covenant people, a light unto the nations [*or la-goyim*], to open eyes deprived of light, rescue prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.'

Isaiah 42:6-7

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God chose the Jews: they are a chosen people, though not a people ... in the sense that the English ... are a people, but rather a religious brotherhood, a 'kingdom of priests'. A chosen people, not chosen for themselves, but for others. ... A chosen people, but not chosen in order to acquire prosperity, or power, or numbers; not chosen for the sake of art, or science, or philosophy, but chosen to learn, and to help in diffusing, true doctrine and true experience about God and righteousness and the relation of man to God and of God to man.

Claude Montefiore, 'The Mission of Israel', in *Outlines of Liberal Judaism: for the use of parents and teachers* (1912), pp. 156-70

[The Jewish people] lives in its own redemption. ... In the cycle of its year the future is the motive power; the circular movement does not give birth as it were by push but by tug; the present elapses, not because the past shoves it forward, but because the future drags it along. The holidays of Creation and Revelation also somehow lead to Redemption. ... The consciousness of the still unattained Redemption again breaks through, and because of that the thought of eternity again foams over the cup of the moment into which it just now seemed decanted and gives to the year the power to begin again from the beginning ... For eternity is precisely this: that between the present moment and the completion time may no longer claim a place, but as early as in the today every future is graspable.

Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara E. Galli (2005 [1921]), p. 348