

PREFACE

This collection of essays had its origins in the JudaicaFest conference in Manchester, UK, in 2008. This comprised end-on conferences of the British Association for Jewish Studies (on the theme 'Normative Judaism' organised by its president Philip Alexander and its secretary Daniel Langton), The Jewish Law Association (Fifteenth Biennial Conference, organised by its president Bernard Jackson) and a colloquium on Jewish Culture in the Age of Globalisation (organised by Cathy Gelbin). It is with considerable warmth and pride that my co-editor Philip Alexander and I look back upon this conference and we wish to express our profound thanks to our colleague, Bernard Jackson, the conference's primary organiser, without whom the JudaicaFest would not have been the highly productive and successful event that it turned out to be. The JLA published its proceedings as Leib Moscovitz, ed., *The Manchester Conference Volume* (Liverpool: Deborah Charles Publications, 2010; Jewish Law Association Studies XX). The Globalisation colloquium published its proceedings as Cathy Gelbin and Sander Gilman, eds., *Jewish Culture in the Age of Globalization*, *European Review of History* 18:01 (2011). And the BAJS conference proceedings have now been published as a supplementary volume of *Melilah: The Manchester Journal of Jewish Studies* in 2012. We would also like to express our gratitude to the journal's editorial assistant, Francesca Frazer for her assistance with proofreading.

The co-editors have collected together a selection of papers from the BAJS conference with the sincere hope that it will engender serious debate on the question of normativity in the study of Judaism and Jewish identity. The contributions, which take the form of case-studies mainly but not exclusively from the modern period, seek to address questions that relate to how and why certain aspects of Jewish life and thought come to be regarded as authoritative or normative, rather than inauthentic or marginal. No attempt has been made to synthesize or harmonize their conclusions; rather, the approach adopted is to allow the presentations from a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, musicology, history, Jewish law, and cultural studies, to speak for themselves. The case-studies include the medieval philosopher Moses Maimonides, the composer Felix Mendelssohn, the self-perception of communal leadership in Manchester during the late nineteenth-century, sermons of Anglo-Jewish Reform rabbis during the Second World War, Orthodox rabbinic debate about war in general, the idea of Jewish music, and representations of Jews in recent photographic exhibitions. The collection begins with a stout defence of normativity in the academic study of Judaism.

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