



## Editor's Introduction v41(3)

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I am pleased to present to you this special issue of *Contemporary Jewry* on Judaism and Hinduism. It is guest-edited by Alon Goshen-Gottstein, complementing his guest-edited special issue on Judaism in Comparative Perspectives [v.40(1)]. The previous special issue covered a broad comparison between Judaism and several other religions (e.g., Christianity, Islam), focusing on conceptualization of particular concepts in the religions and how they are shaped by interreligious dialogue. The current special issue zeroes in on the relationship between Judaism and Hinduism, a specialized field with a small number of scholars but of increasing interest, as Hinduism spreads beyond its birthplace in India, with emigration of Hindus to the west, and as religious and secular tourism to predominately Hindu areas as well as longer stays in such areas increases the interaction between Jews and Hindus. Here we have presented Hindu views of Judaism as well as Jewish views of Hinduism, both current and historical; narrative accounts of religious scholars whose work has been influenced by the other religion (whether it be Jewish or Hindu); and a specific critical focus on *avoda zara*—the challenge of idolatry—and how its respective conceptualizations in Judaism and Hinduism intersect (or not).

Again I was intrigued by these insights from a standpoint of comparative civilizations—that theological or ideological principles underlie the conceptualization of civilizations and the boundaries of their change, which arenas of social action will gain importance, which public discourse addresses underlying premises and values, and what types of interactions between religions (be they civil religion or theological in nature) can be expected to take place and for what purpose. In this increasingly global yet polarized world, these questions take on particular importance, for interaction is bound to take place, yet its outcome is to a great extent unpredictable and tenuous. Mutual understanding is of great importance to maximize the possibilities of productive and beneficial interaction, and for recognizing the extent of both similarity and difference. Note also the role that personal journeys play in promoting the passion to study the intersections of Judaism and Hinduism, as well as the need for collaboration and dialogue. I hope you share my interest in learning more about

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the encounter between Judaism and Hinduism as well as Jews and Hindus, and will both learn from the papers included and be inspired to learn more.

The scholarly articles in the special issue are followed by present-day research updates as well as reviews of two recent books.

I would like to call your attention to an opening for a Book Review editor for *Contemporary Jewry*, as our current book editor, Daniel Parmer, will be stepping down after an illustrious 6-year run as editor. Daniel is responsible for reinstating book reviews back into the journal, after a long hiatus. Please contact me (harriethartman@gmail.com) if you are interested in the position or have someone to nominate.

I would also like to call your attention to a new series of virtual “Conversations” about issues raised in *Contemporary Jewry*. We began the first such Conversation on November 21, with presenters including 9 of the 11 authors of scholarly articles in v41(1) on the coronavirus pandemic beginning in 2019 (COVID-19) and contemporary Jews. If you missed it, or would like to listen to it again, you can find the recording here (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SF4fgEjkv0knqfgYvLhU2EHHUk-qtm3t/view>). Feedback on this initial conversation and other topics you would like to see discussed in these conversations are more than welcome (harriethartman@gmail.com). If you would like to be notified of the next Conversation and are not on the mailing list as a member of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry (ASSJ), please email me about your interest.

I wish you good reading, and best wishes for a healthy, fulfilling, and inspiring 2022.

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