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**The Jewish People and the West:  
At the Crossroads**

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The Jewish people and the West are at a crossroads. We are at the same crossroads. We've arrived here at the same time.

The timing is not coincidental. The interdependence is not new. The future of both civilizations depends upon the choice each makes today.

One road leads to assimilation. Diaspora Jews who forsake their faith will become Westerners—Americans, Europeans, Argentinians—with little to distinguish them from their neighbors. Israeli Jews who abandon their ancient traditions will become the Hebrew-speaking gentiles of which so many early Zionists warned (and some dreamed).

But the Jews no longer face this dilemma alone. The entire West now confronts the same stark choice. Western man is once again slipping the bonds of the Judeo-Christian culture that undergirds his civilization. Yes, pleasure and ego have always beckoned. But only now do we find increasing numbers of our greatest minds telling us that resistance isn't merely futile, it's evil.

As the Jews and the West contemplate the way forward, they confront steadily rising stakes. At one time, a bad decision would have merely jeopardized our culture. Today, the wrong choice will endanger our lives.

This physical threat comes from an ascendant radical Islam. We mustn't be fooled. Those chanting death to the Jews on Europe's streets are not the descendants of Christian supremacists. They are almost always the cousins of those currently killing Christians in the Middle East in the name of Islam. We mustn't be naive. The only reason such slaughter remains largely confined to the Middle East is that radical Islam lacks resources, not will.

The answer to these joint threats—cultural and physical—is the same. It is to turn our backs on the road to assimilation and embark down that other road, the one that leads us home. The answer is for Jews to engage with Judaism. The answer is for the West to embrace its Judeo-Christian roots.

Such return to tradition need not be reactionary. As radical Islam demonstrates daily, faith unchecked by respect for human dignity and reason quickly turns toxic. Happily, respect for both human dignity and reason is a core Judeo-Christian value. And besides, the root of the West's current crisis is not hubris but low self-esteem.

A West reconnected to its Judeo-Christian roots will overcome its sophomoric spasm of multiculturalism. A West so educated will both acknowledge the reality of evil and recognize the evil of our time. A West so schooled will rediscover the will to fight this evil.

The Jews and the West stand together at the same crossroads. The road toward assimilation looms before us both. It's a road we have taken before. And we've forgotten that it's a dead end.

Without Judaism, Jews disappear. Those who abandoned their dusty desert rituals for Greek or Roman ways certainly had physical progeny. But these children ceased being Jewish centuries ago.

Fortunately, not all Jews chose to trade the Bible's blazing moral code for nude olympics and vomitoria. Some clung to their ancient ways. Thanks to them, there are both Jews and a West today.

We mustn't forget that the West we inhabit is far more than classical civilization electrified. Athens may have been a democracy, but almost every Athenian owned slaves taken from neighboring tribes. Romans may have developed advanced technology, but they also unceremoniously drowned their baby girls in rivers.

The ancients were nice Nazis who elevated their own race—and only the supposedly productive within their race—above the rest of humanity. Modern Nazis, Fascists, and Communists did the same thing with their own race, nation, and class, respectively. And when the West abandons its Judeo-Christian values, the Jews are almost always the ones who perish first.

Where will Jews be in 50 years? The answer depends on the path both the West and the Jews choose today. If the West chooses poorly, Israel and the Jewish

people will face an increasingly hostile world with fewer and fewer friends. We've already seen enough early signs of this possible future to understand how badly it will end.

If the Jews choose poorly, they will disappear even more quickly. But the West will certainly pay a price for Jewish folly. It will lose its stubborn conscience, its living connection to its most nourishing roots. A West without Jews will more readily revert to the ways of its classical predecessors and become societies less human and less humane. It's happened before, and not as long ago as we'd like to think.

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