Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia

The triumph of Zionism has clouded recollection of competing forms of Jewish nationalism vying for power a century ago. This study explores alternative ways to construct the modern Jewish nation. Jewish nationalism emerges from this book as a Diaspora phenomenon much broader than the Zionist movement. Like its non-Jewish counterparts, Jewish nationalism was first and foremost a movement to nationalize Jews, to construct a modern Jewish nation while simultaneously masking its very modernity. This book traces this process in Galicia, which was the second-largest Jewish community in Europe. The history of this vital but very much understudied community of Jews fills a critical gap in existing scholarship while revisiting the broader question of how Jewish nationalism – or indeed any modern nationalism – was born. Based on a wide variety of sources, many newly uncovered, this study challenges the still-dominant Zionist narrative by demonstrating that Jewish nationalism was a part of the rising nationalist movements in Europe.

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To my parents, with all of my love.
Come now, Joseph nudged himself, we are getting rather like the Irish – or the Welsh who deplore that all cities on the isles haven’t got names with fifteen consonants on a string. But then, nationalism is only comic in others – like being seasick or in love.

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Map 1. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867–1914.
MAP 2. Galicia.
Source: Map prepared by Paul R. Magocsi. Reprinted with permission.