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Orthodoxy in the Grip of Nationalism

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Orthodoxy in the Grip of Nationalism

Yosef Salmon

*Translated from the Hebrew
by Joel A. Linsider*

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In memory of Joel A. Linsider

CONTENTS

Prologue	7
Translator's Note	8
Introduction: Orthodoxy in the Grip of Nationalism	11
 PART ONE: THE LAND OF ISRAEL IN ORTHODOX JEWISH THOUGHT	50
I: The Land of Israel in Nineteenth-Century Orthodox Jewish Thought	51
II: Orthodox Judaism in Eastern Europe	85
III: The Land of Israel in the Philosophy of Y. M. Pines	98
IV: The Corfu Citron Controversy (1875-1891)	115
 PART TWO: FROM SUPPORT TO UNCERTAINTY IN THE ERA OF <u>HOVEVEI ZIYON</u>	160
V: Zionism and Anti-Zionism in Traditional Eastern European Jewry	161
VI: Y. M. Pines: Leader of Palestine Jewry	192
VII: <u>Aḥad Ha-Am</u> and Benei Moshe: An "Unsuccessful Experiment"?	213
VIII: Hasidism, the Land of Israel, and Zionism	227
 PART THREE: ORTHODOXY AND POLITICAL ZIONISM	250
IX: Theodor Herzl and Orthodox Jewry	251
X: The Establishment of the Mizrachi Movement in America	267
XI: The Lida Yeshivah: A Unique Institution of Higher Learning	281
 PART FOUR: THE NATIONAL STATE AND SOCIETY	307
XII: Messianism and Normalization in Secular Zionist Thought	308
XIII: "Renew Our Days As Of Old": A Zionist Myth	325
XIV: Religion and Secularism in the Zionist National Movement	344
 PART FIVE: RELIGIOUS ZIONISM: A GENERAL PERSPECTIVE	356
XV: The "New Jew" in Religion Zionist Thought	357
 Bibliography	382
Index	417

Prologue

This volume is the translation of a book that was originally published in Hebrew in 2006. Great efforts were invested in the English translation, primarily by Joel A. Linsider, of blessed memory, who did the translation itself. With the completion of the translation, Joel passed away, as if he had completed the last mission that he had taken upon himself. Joel was a wonderful individual. An American Jew who had a thorough knowledge of Hebrew and an intense love for his fellow Jews, he made aliyah a year before his death in order to be with his children and grandchildren, who had made aliyah before him. This book is dedicated to his memory.

This book is the continuation and enhancement of my previous work, *Religion and Zionism*, which was published in 2002. The issues that it raises include the relationships between the Land of Israel, the Torah of Israel, and the Jewish people, as manifested from the pre-Zionist period at the beginning of the nineteenth century until our times. The discussion traces the development of these issues on the theoretical and the practical levels, both within non-Zionist Orthodox society and among the thinkers, leaders, and members of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel. Chapters of the book focus at times on prominent individuals and at times on thematic issues related to the historical matters under discussion. Writings that I published previously on these topics have been updated and revised.

The difference between this volume and the Hebrew original is that one chapter relating to Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever which appears in the Hebrew edition is missing in the English version, because it was published previously in *Religion and Zionism*. In its place, I have added a chapter on the “new Jew” in Religious Zionism, which serves in a sense as a general conclusion to the topic.

I would like to thank those who supported the publication of this work: Professor Tzvi Cohen, the rector of Ben-Gurion University, the Grant Foundation of the Jewish National Fund under the direction of Yechiel Leket, and the Rabbinic History Chair of Bar-Ilan University, under the direction of Professor Gershon Bacon. It is my hope that my words will be of interest and well received.

Translator's Note

Most of this book's chapters are based on articles that previously appeared only in Hebrew. The English translations of those chapters in this volume are entirely new. Earlier versions of Chapters 2, 7, 11, and 12 have appeared in English in various forums. Some of these chapters have been substantially revised, and all are newly translated here. Nevertheless, I relied on the earlier translations to varying degrees in preparing the new translations that appear here. Chapter 10, which also appeared previously in English, has not been newly translated for this volume. What appears here is an edited version of an earlier translation. (For bibliographical details on that earlier translation, see the first footnote to that chapter.)

This work quotes extensively from documents and other sources more or less contemporaneous with the events recounted. Few of these documents have previously been translated into English, and the extracts from them are newly translated here. The book also quotes from other primary sources and classical Jewish texts, some of which are available in English. Where I have used previous translations of the materials, I have cited those translations. In most instances, however, the translations are my own. In translating biblical verses, I relied heavily on the Old JPS and New JPS versions (*The Holy Scriptures* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917]; *The Tanakh*, 2nd ed. [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1999]).

In transliterating Hebrew words, I aimed for a balance between precision and readability. I have used the following conventions:

' = 'alef
h = het
k = kaf
` = `ayin
z = zadi
q = qof

Where *‘alef* and *`ayin* appear at the beginning or the end of a word, they are not represented unless needed for clarity. In most instances, transliterations of personal names follow the foregoing conventions, but where a name is widely familiar in a different transliteration, I have retained the familiar form (e.g., Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin, but Chaim Nahman Bialik; Chaim Weizmann).

The conventions used with respect to the titles of Hebrew works cited are set forth in the introductory note to the bibliography. Note that I have followed the practice of capitalizing only the initial word of a Hebrew title (*Shivat ziyyon*, not *Shivat Ziyyon*).

Introduction

Principles and Concepts

Religion and Nationalism

For many scholars—historians, anthropologists, and sociologists—religion as a social phenomenon signifies a conservative, even medieval, perspective on politics and ethics alike. Nationalism, in contrast, is regarded as a modern and, for many, secular phenomenon.¹ Some scholars posit that nationalism as a social movement arose to replace, for societies and individuals alike, religious identities that had been lost.² But this stereotypical and unidimensional understanding of the past two hundred years of human history is now being subjected to penetrating criticism by historians of society and historians of religion.³

Even if it is granted that nationalism arises in societies in which religious identity has been attenuated, it still cannot be denied that national identity employs aspects of the religious tradition in fashioning itself, and doing so is sometimes warranted by the religious differences between national groups. In many cases, nationalism enlists religion

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- 1 S. N. Eisenstadt, "Studies of Modernization and Sociological Theory," *History and Theory* 13 (1974): 226, 230; C. J. Hayes, "Nationalism," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 11 (1933): 243; A. D. Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Robertson, 1979), 16, 33. According to Smith, the transition from religion to secular nationalism took place via unsuccessful attempts at religious reform: see *ibid.*, 37. Smith even suggests a causal connection between religion and nationalism: nationalism arises to save the group's identity after religion fails to maintain it. On Jewish society's aspirations to shed its religious component in the wake of modernization and the reactions to those aspirations, see J. Katz, "The Jewish Response in Western Europe," in *Patterns of Modernity*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 102–103. On tendencies in European society to separate religion from modern life, see H. Daalder, "European Political Tradition and Processes of Modernization: Groups, the Individual and the State," *ibid.*, 22, 23, 28.
 - 2 A. D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 1971), 43; *ibid.*, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, Introduction.
 - 3 On the role and place of religion in the formation of nationalism, see Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 12, 30–42, 56–57; M. H. Boehm, "Nationalism," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 11 (1933): 236–237. Smith deals as well with the tension that is generated between religion and nationalism and with the transformation of religion within nationalism; see S. Almog, "Religion and the State as Seen through Jewish Nationalism," in *Priesthood and Monarchy*, ed. I. Gafni and G. Motzkin (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1987), 285–287.

to sanctify its symbols.⁴ This view of history binds nationalism and religious tradition into a Gordian knot that bears the potential for perpetual conflict within its strands. Owen Chadwick put it this way with respect to European nationalism: “Christianity and nationality stood in tension. On the one hand, the national religion helped to make part of the national consciousness. On the other hand, Christianity proposed to cross the barriers of race and unite men in an order of charity.”⁵

Because of Christianity’s ecclesiastical and international nature, religion served as a tool for the rise of European nationalism, but sometimes it also impeded its realization. Even within Christianity, the Christian community that formed the majority in a particular country did not always identify with the dominant church within that country, a state of affairs that promoted ethnic separatism, as in the cases of Ireland, the Balkan states, or the states of the Former Soviet Union established following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.⁶ In other countries, nationalism tended to unify, or at least protect, different streams within the church, as in the case of Germany, with its Lutheran majority and Catholic minority. A similar situation can be found in Islamic lands, where governance may be in the hands of one religious community even though the majority of the populace identifies with a different one. That is the case, for example, in Iraq, and it was formerly the case in Lebanon, where the government was dominated by Christians even though the majority of the populace was Muslim. The religious element is central in the shaping of national identity.

In Judaism, the relationships between religion and ethnicity are made even more complicated by their total overlap. No important Jewish nationalist thinker, and no mainstream Jewish nationalist movement, called for or believed in drawing a line between religion and nationalism. Some urged that religion be severed from tradition and that nationalism replace tradition in giving religion its meaning. But even those who sought separation of church and state did not extend that demand to encompass the Jewish national movement overall.⁷ Treitschke made a

4 H. Ben-Israel, “The Study of Nationalism as a Historical Phenomenon,” in *Jewish Nationalism and Politics*, ed. J. Reinhartz, Yosef Salmon, and Gid’on Shimoni (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar and Tauber institute, 1997), 79; Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 3.

5 O. Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 130.

6 Ibid., 127–131.

7 Treitschke made a similar observation with respect to German nationalism, *ibid.*, 131. According

similar observation with respect to German nationalism.⁸

The dispute between advocates of a religious concept of the community and proponents of a secular one pertained primarily to the relationships between the religious and national entities. One group sought to make religion a tool of the nation, while the other sought to make the nation a tool of religion. The line dividing the two positions has been blurred and muddled in various ideological formulations, but it remains a substantive matter of principle.⁹

Anthony Smith, a student of nationalism, offers another insight in this context. Smith argues that in minority communities, the nationalist thinker seeks to synthesize tradition and modernity. He does not abandon tradition so much as reinterpret it in a manner consistent with the spirit of nationalism.¹⁰

Modernization and Secularization

Within the study of Jewish nationalism, one can likewise find the idea that nationalism was the heir to religion, but that view is more prevalent among historiographers and sociologists of Jewish nationalism than among its principal thinkers. It is enough to mention the programmatic remarks of Dov Weinrib:

Zionism means the establishment of a secure refuge, a national home, a territorial center, a Jewish state, and so forth, through the systematic actions of human beings, without awaiting the actions of supernatural or meta-rational forces—which is to say, Zionism’s goal is secular, in man’s hand and not in the hands of Heaven.

He goes on to say that even in the case of rabbis who supported Zionism and based their position

to Baruch Kimmerling, only five percent of the Israeli Jewish population can be defined as anti-religious, see B. Kimmerling, *Migrants, Settlers, Natives* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 188.

8 See Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*, 131.

9 On this conflict in the State of Israel, see C. Liebman, “Religion and Democracy in Israel,” *Zemanim* 50-51 (1994): 134–144; B. Kimmerling, “Religion, Nationalism, and Democracy,” *Zemanim* 50-51 (1994): 116–131.

10 G. Shimoni, “Jewish Nationalism as Ethnic Nationalism,” in Reinhartz, Salmon, and Shimoni, *Jewish Nationalism and Politics*, 85–86, 91.

on statements by the sages of blessed memory, those [statements] served as the permissive ruling—one might even say as the prooftext—that they hoped to find, allowing for the resolution of secular, real-world questions regarding the Land of Israel and the Diaspora.¹¹

In that same spirit, Ben-Zion Dinur formulated the characteristics of Jewish nationalism in poetic terms: “... the sanctity of life instead of the sanctification of God’s name [i.e., martyrdom].”¹²

A more recent but no less biting formulation is that of David Vital in his opening remarks at a conference on Zionism and religion held at Tel Aviv University: “Zionism, whether as a movement or as a social concept, was primarily a movement that rebelled against tradition in general and Orthodoxy in particular.” As he sees it, Religious Zionism divests modern Jewish nationalism of “its primary, historical, original content.”¹³ The same argument appears in an article by Baruch Kimmerling, who saw “religious Jewish nationalism, or people who came to it [that is, to Jewish nationalism] from a religious perspective,” as merely

a drop in the bucket of the religious-Jewish collective, for religion in principle did not permit “hastening the end” or realization of collective redemption without realization of the vision of the End of Days.¹⁴

Weinrib, Dinur, Vital, and Kimmerling all mold Zionist historiography to an axiomatic, subjective model at odds with historical facts. Even the secular Zionist thinkers did not deny the existence of Religious Zionism as a stream within the national Zionist movement—“the pious national course,” in the words of Aḥad Ha-Am (1856–1927). They simply insisted, in the name of pluralism and tolerance, on secular Zionism’s

11 D. Weinrib, “Foundations and History of Zionism,” *Tarbiz* 8 (1937): 71–72.

12 B-Z. Dinur, *As the Generations Change* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik 1954), 9.

13 D. Vital, “Introduction,” *Topics in the History of Zionism and the Yishuv* 2 (Tel Aviv, 1983), 12, 17.

14 Kimmerling, “Religion, Nationalism, and Democracy,” 116. Kimmerling’s account in his article is inconsistent with his initial premise that religious Zionists played—and continue to play—only a minor part in the formulation of Jewish nationalism. Later, Kimmerling offered some new insights regarding the relationship between religion and nationalism in Jewish society, noting “the substantial difficulty of separating religion from nation within the Zionist version of Jewish nationalism” (Kimmerling, *Migrants*, 15).

right to exist, and refused to grant the religious community a monopoly over Jewish religion or, even more so, over Jewish history. To be sure, the secularists advanced a different view regarding the place of religion in national life, as Samuel Almog has shown,¹⁵ but the Religious Zionists had no difficulty in bringing their interests to bear within Zionist society in its early days, from the 1860s to the late 1880s. Even if no one will dissent from Shlomo Avineri's maxim that Zionism is "the Jewish response to the challenge of modernization,"¹⁶ it seems clear to me as well that no one will accept the determination that Zionism equals secularization.

Having agreed that the Zionist national movement was modern but not secular, we must try to describe the weight assigned to religion and its place within the movement. In presenting the question, we have already determined in principle that religion is an element in the historical embodiment of Jewish nationalism, though not its bearer. We have acknowledged a shift from religion as the bearer of Jewish identity to religion as a component of national identity. Ehud Luz accurately found that "Jewish nationalism drew its legitimacy from the Jewish religion," and that the bearers of secular nationalism needed carriers of religion "in order to realize the Zionist dream."¹⁷ The need for religion in this context may have a certain instrumental quality, and nationalism therefore felt itself empowered to adopt, from all the elements of religion, those that suited its spirit.

In arguing that Zionist nationalism was not a secular movement, I do not mean to deny the (correct) claim of *haredi* anti-Zionists that Zionism is a movement that fosters secularization. The two issues must be distinguished. Even though affiliation with the movement was not conditioned on acceptance of a secular identity, and even though the definition of Jewish nationalism was not secular in content, the fact remains that many people, on joining the movement, shed their *halakhah*-observant identities. For many youngsters, the movement served as a way-station on the path from the world of religious observance to the

15 S. Almog, *Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness*, trans. Ina Friedman (New York: St. Martin's and Magnes, 1987), 122–128. See also *ibid.*, chs. 14 and 15 on messianism and secularism.

16 S. Avineri, *Varieties of Zionist Thought* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1980), 24.

17 E. Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement (1882–1904)*, trans. L. J. Schramm (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), X, XI.

“free” world, that is, the world free of religious obligations.¹⁸ That was the haredi argument against Zionism as formulated by Rabbi Eliezer Gordon of Telz, one of the greatest Russian rabbis of the time: more than “purifying the defiled, it defiles the pure.”¹⁹

The Scholarly Literature

In the study of Zionism’s history and development, little attention has been paid to the place of religion as a system of beliefs and ideas and as a social organization within the Jewish national movement. That omission can be explained in various ways. Because religion was represented by parties within the Zionist organization, its study has been limited primarily to inter-party political discussions. In addition, the broad opposition to Zionism within the various streams of Orthodoxy gave the impression of enmity between Jewish religion and Zionism from the earliest days of the Jewish national movement. But once the subject of political factions within Zionism had faded from the stage, and support for the State of Israel had come to characterize most segments of Orthodoxy that survived the Holocaust, there was a revival of interest in the original ideas of Zionism in general and Religious Zionism in particular.

Only in recent years has much attention been paid to the relationships between Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism. Two important perspectives on the matter bear noting: the examination of Orthodox anti-Zionism as a matter of historiography as presented in the studies of Ehud Luz, Jacob Tsur, and Shalom Razabi as well as in my own work, and the sociological and ideological inquiry into Religious Zionism as it appears in the work of Aryeh Fishman, Aviezer Ravitzky, and a number of books by Dov Schwartz. Ravitzky nicely surveyed and analyzed the religiously based opposition to Zionism within Eastern European Orthodox society, an opposition that shaped Jewish Orthodoxy in that

18 An instructive example of the process can be seen in the correspondence between Chaim Nahman Bialik and Rabbi Isaac Nissenbaum, both members of the *Hovevei Ziyyon* organization in the Volozhin yeshivah known as *Nezah Yisra’el*. After Bialik published his first poems and it became clear that he was becoming secularized, Nissenbaum, in the name of their membership in the organization, tried to persuade him to suppress these ideas and even proposed to support publication of an edition of edited, “improved” poems. See the letter from Nissenbaum to Bialik, 8 Av 5654 [10 August 1894] in *Letters of Rabbi Nissenbaum*, ed. I. Shapira (Jerusalem: Ahvah, 1956), 20–21.

19 Z. A. Ribner, *The Great Scholar Rabbi Eliezer Gordon of Blessed Memory* (Tel Aviv, 1968), 134.

part of the world until the Holocaust. Schwartz demonstrated in striking detail the degree of intellectual innovation that characterized all aspects of Religious Zionism, but considerable work remains to be done in the study and description of religion's role in shaping Zionism's ethos and symbols. Moreover, the struggles associated with haredi opposition to Zionism have not yet been exhaustively studied. Today no one denies that religion was the central subject on the Zionist agenda throughout its pre-State history and later within the State of Israel, and that it remains the decisive domestic issue shaping the movement and the State.

What I hope to do in this book is present a broad view of the issue from the pre-Zionist period to the establishment of the State of Israel and after. The book's chapters represent a continuation of the articles in my earlier book, *Religion and Zionism: First Encounters* (originally published in Hebrew as *Dat ve-ziiyyonut: imutim rishonim*). The historical picture painted in that book provides the underpinning for this one, which extends the inquiry to additional social and ideological aspects. This Introduction will focus on the implications of those inquiries, grouped by subject: the Land of Israel and the religion of Israel; the Land of Israel and modernity; halakhic implications of Land of Israel-based nationalist concepts, social and political processes that follow from Religious Zionist teachings, and the influence of religion on the Zionist ethos.

Interrelationships between the Land of Israel and the Religion of Israel

The place of the Land of Israel within the religion of Israel has been considered from various perspectives by students of Jewish thought and society throughout the ages. It is unlikely that there is any other religion in which the territorial element figures as significantly as it does in Judaism. The Land is a prominent element in every aspect of Judaism: theology, halakhah, eschatology, and apocalypse. Indeed, there is no Judaism without the Land of Israel. To be sure, the nation of Israel has survived since the destruction of the Second Temple without the Land of Israel as its territorial center, but the Land of Israel elements that have remained in Jewish collective memory and ritual make the Land a central element of Jewish consciousness, the very core of its life.

From a theological perspective, the Land is sacred and endowed with unique divine protection, and its residents are eligible to fulfill the commandments that are dependent on it. From a halakhic perspective, the Land must be redeemed from foreign ownership and settled, and one

must carry out the commandments that can be carried out only there. The unique status of the Land within the Jew's world is unaffected by the differences of opinion over whether living in the Land of Israel nowadays should be listed as one of the 613 commandments (Nahmanides believed that it should be included, while Maimonides did not).

These issues were on the table long before the establishment of the Zionist movement and even before ideas about immigrating to the Land of Israel had taken on a nationalist component. The historical context in which these discussions were renewed involved the introduction of modernity into Jewish society and the struggles over Jewish identity that it engendered. Modernity and its ramifications—that is, Enlightenment and the Reform movement in all its forms—generated a reaction within traditional society, a reaction that made its way through a complex process to Orthodoxy and to Zionist nationalism.

This book presents several different ways in which Orthodox Jews dealt with the question of modernity and the Land of Israel. The interrelationships between the Land of Israel and the religion of Israel had already been considered by the father of Central European Jewish Orthodoxy, Rabbi Moses Sofer (known as the *Hatam Sofer*; 1762–1839). Rabbi Sofer's writings are replete with statements regarding the sanctity of the Land of Israel and its central place in the consciousness of the believing Jew. Nevertheless, he did not support immigration to the Land of Israel in his time, either because he did not believe the commandment to settle the Land of Israel was then applicable or because he had reservations related to reports of various mystical activities—applied Kabbalah and graveside rituals—that were developing there at the time.

At the same time, his reliance on the centrality of the Land of Israel in Jewish thought as a counter-argument to Reform tendencies to downplay it, and his concern about mass immigration taking place in the absence of an economic base adequate to support it, made his treatment of the issue inconsistent and perhaps even misleading. On occasion, one gets the sense that the *Hatam Sofer* did not ascribe much importance to the physical Land of Israel and was interested only in “the higher Land of Israel,” the spiritual future dwelling place of the Jewish people. At other points, he deprecates Diaspora life in no uncertain terms, characterizing it as “an artificial life,” in contrast to life in the Land of Israel.²⁰

20 Y. Salmon, “The Land of Israel in Nineteenth-Century Orthodox Thought,” in *The Land of Israel in*

The Hatam Sofer sets up a confrontation between the two key Jewish values of settling the Land of Israel and studying Torah. His writings do not tell us which of them takes precedence, but it is clear that in the circumstances of his era, he saw a life of Torah study in the Diaspora as preferable to a life dedicated to the settlement of the Land of Israel. Could that judgment have been tied to the dangers and economic hardships of life in the Land of Israel at the time? Or might it have been more of an a priori judgment about what is primary and what is secondary within Judaism?²¹ What can clearly be said is that the Hatam Sofer poured cold water on expectations that the Messiah would come in his time.²²

The Hatam Sofer's spiritual disciple, Akiva Joseph Schlesinger (1827–1922), maintained forcefully that he was continuing in his teacher's path. As a practical matter, however, he turned things completely around. Although Schlesinger reacted even more stridently to modernization than the Hatam Sofer had, he saw no way to defend against it in the Diaspora. His unambiguous and far-reaching call for immigration to the Land of Israel and his activities in that connection were not at all in accord with the Hatam Sofer's views. In Schlesinger's opinion, the Land of Israel had to serve as Judaism's refuge from the Diaspora, where it was melting away. Only in the Land of Israel was it possible to erect a barrier between Jews and their surroundings. The idea of such a barrier had already been raised by the Hatam Sofer—"They spoke partly in Yiddish and partly in Hebrew and Aramaic, and it was all mixed up with other languages, a bizarre language, so that we would be a community and not be intermingled with the nations"²³—but only Schlesinger gave it full voice. The Land of Israel, in his view, was a land of refuge.²⁴

Different from both of the foregoing men in image and perspective was Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874), who had no doubt that the commandment to settle the Land of Israel was applicable in his time. The sanctity of the Land of Israel inhered in the land itself, and only there were the people of Israel destined to be redeemed. Kalischer

Modern Jewish Thought, ed. A. Ravitzky (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1998), 426.

21 Ibid., 428 and n. 19.

22 Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2, Discourse for 7 Av 5595 [2 August 1835], s.v. "hashiveinu ha-shem eleikha," in *Sefer hatam sofer*, ed. J. Pollack (Michalovce: Grünfeld, 1939), 56.

23 Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 1, 166 (discourse for 7 Tevet 5577 [26 December 1816]).

24 A. J. Schlesinger, *The Book of the Society of the Restoration of Things to Their Former Glory* (Jerusalem, 1873), 26–1.

did not suggest that the commandment to study Torah might be superseded by the commandment to settle the Land, but he considered the ideal to be to “grasp the one without letting go of the other” (Eccl. 7:18). The two commandments, which represent Judaism’s central value systems, can be united and fulfilled jointly. Settlement of the Land of Israel is not merely a positive commandment, it is a condition to redemption overall. To be sure, it is only “the beginning of redemption,” the first steps of the process, attainable by natural means, that the Jew may grasp without clear divine aid. Yet, he believed, those initial steps are a necessary precondition to complete redemption: one who enters upon the performance of a commandment will ultimately merit its full realization.²⁵ Religious redemption and national redemption become blended: “And that is the essence of the redemption—that we will be free people.”²⁶

The Hatam Sofer, Schlesinger, and Kalischer shared the idea that the Land of Israel could serve as a shutter behind which traditional society could secure itself against modernity. In that sense, all three may be considered Orthodox thinkers, and they differ only in the extent of their reaction to modernity and the role assigned to the Land in their reactions. Schlesinger totally rejected modernity, and his perception of the Land of Israel was that it would serve to separate the Jews from the world, becoming the land of a “people that dwells apart” (Num. 23). Kalischer, in contrast, saw nationalism as a positive modern phenomenon, and he therefore integrated tradition and nationalism by promoting settling the Land of Israel, contrary to the view of the Reform movement. The Hatam Sofer, for the most part, rejected modernity, but he believed one could protect oneself against it even in the Diaspora context. For the Hatam Sofer, the Land of Israel served only a conscious spiritual purpose, that of making the Jew unwilling to be absorbed into his surroundings.

Kalischer’s successor in crystallizing Religious Zionist thought was Rabbi Samuel Mohilever (1824–1898). He adopted Kalischer’s idea of redemption by stages and characterized the first stages of redemption—“redemption by natural means”—as “low-level redemption.” Unlike Kalischer, however, Mohilever was confronted by a new set of

25 Salmon, “The Land of Israel in Nineteenth-Century Orthodox Thought,” 444–445.

26 Z. H. Kalischer, *Passover Haggadah* (Warsaw, 1864), 20, 38.

circumstances including widespread Jewish emigration from Russia, increased Jewish suffering, the rise of secular Jewish nationalism, and a developing Jewish national movement. He enlisted in a range of Zionist activities, but his theoretical discussions are sporadic and scattered.

That said, it was Mohilever who produced the most far-reaching Religious Zionist text. On his return in 1890 from a journey to the Land of Israel, while still aboard ship, he formulated his argument that residents of the Land of Israel who did not fulfill the commandments were on a higher spiritual level than Diaspora-dwelling Jews who fulfilled the commandments in their entirety:

The Holy One Blessed Be He prefers that His children dwell in His land, even if they do not observe the Torah properly, than that they dwell outside the Land and observe the Torah properly.²⁷

The sanctity of the Land of Israel takes precedence over the fulfillment of commandments, and the link between the nation and the Land thus acquires primal metaphysical status.

As far-reaching as it was, Mohilever's statement, which appeared in print a year after being uttered, did not immediately elicit criticism from within haredi society, and only after his death did haredi critics revile the statement in poisonous terms. In his article, Mohilever also reiterated something that Kalischer had already said: "Merely dwelling in the Land of Israel, without being involved in its development, is not to be considered so great a commandment."²⁸ The words constitute a clear devaluation of the Old Yishuv from a halakhic perspective in particular and a religious communal perspective in general.

An independent line of thought about these matters was pursued by Yehiel Mikhel Pines (1843–1913), a writer, journalist, and communal worker. His early work coincided with the Zionist activity of Kalischer and Mohilever, and he remained active until the time of Isaac Jacob Reines (1839–1915), thus spanning three generations of Religious Zionist thinkers. In his writing and thought, Pines abandoned the

27 S. Mohilever, "The Purpose of My Journey to the Land of Israel," in *The Book of Samuel*, ed. J. L. Fishman (Jerusalem: Mizrachi, 1923), 38–39.

28 *Ibid.*, 40. For a full description of Mohilever's philosophy and activity, see Y. Salmon, *Religion and Zionism: First Encounters* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2002), 140–176.

homiletical mode, and his writing employed a modern Hebrew idiom. Prooftexts from early sources do not serve as the fulcrum of his arguments, and he is the first Religious Zionist thinker whose Zionist teachings are unreservedly modern. Pines subscribed to an intellectual thesis that preceded his nationalist thesis: working the land was “the basis and foundation on which a social polity and national sanctuary might be built.”²⁹

The problem that burdened Pines in the late 1860s was finding economic support “for thousands of the afflicted of the time,” a problem whose solution might be found in Russia, in America, or in the Land of Israel. The preference for the Land of Israel grew out of “feelings of love for the land of our fathers,” which was also a nationalist consideration.³⁰

Pines fully expressed his concept of the Land of Israel in several articles written in 1875. As he described it, the national revival and the revival of the Land were integrated. By its very character, the Land would respond only to its children, and only then are they destined to make it fertile. Pines aspired to establish a modern state in the Land of Israel, with its capital in Jerusalem. Jerusalem would be “like one of the glorious cities of Europe.”³¹ To these ideas, he added that of the ingathering of exiles to the historical land.

At this point, Pines introduced the idea of the sanctity of the Land, which provides the underpinnings for his positions on matters of public policy. He attributed to the Land a status independent of the nation dwelling on it. The nation is obligated to treat the Land “with unconditioned love” and “to restore it to its erstwhile glory.”³² In formulating the rules for the *Tehiyyat Yisra’el* (Revival of Israel) society, however, Pines accepted the position of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922), who held that the nation precedes the Land, and the association’s declared goal was “to revive the nation of Israel and raise it out of its degradation.”³³ As time went by, though, he seems to have returned to his original view

29 Y. M. Pines, “On Improving the Situation of Our Jewish Brethren in Russia,” *Ha-maggid* 13 (1869): 98.

30 Y. M. Pines, “On Working the Land,” *Ha-karmel* 7 (1868): 27–28.

31 Y. M. Pines, “On Settling the Land of Israel,” *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 35 (1875): 273.

32 Y. M. Pines, “May Those Who Love You, Jerusalem, Be at Peace,” *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 9 (1875): 66.

33 By-laws of the *Tehiyat Yisra’el* organization, *Marḥeshvan* 5642 [late 1881], in *Sources on the History of Hibbat Ziyyon and the Settlement of the Land of Israel*, ed. S. Laskov (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz Ha-me’uḥad, 1990), 1, doc. 16, 122.

that the sanctity of the Land was a value in and of itself.³⁴

Pines devoted his time to the Land's economic and cultural revitalization, and he had no preference for rural life over urban. His approach in that regard was bound up with the practical need to ensure that the Land's populace had a livelihood. Pines believed that only the Land of Israel, because of its unique attraction, could succeed in settling Jews within it. In his great disputation with Ahad Ha-Am and the Benei Moshe during the early 1890s, he expressly declared that, with respect to everything tied to the Land of Israel, "the place is the end, and the soil and those who dwell on it are the means."³⁵ His practical conclusion was that it would not be possible for every Jew to settle in the Land. The privilege of dwelling there was reserved for Jews who were prepared to live there "not for the sake of its produce but for the sake of love for its national sanctity." Rebuilding the Land is meant not to resolve the problems of Jews in difficult straits but simply to sanctify the Land. Pines seems here to have worked a multiple reversal. In the early 1870s, he argued for settlement of the Land in the name of the nation's needs; in the mid-1870s, he raised the banner of the Land's sanctity; in the early 1880s, he once again emphasized the revitalization of the people; and then, in the mid-1890s, he demanded recognition of the Land's sanctity on the part of those who would violate it.

A unique position recalling that of Rabbi Judah Halevi was that of Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines, who, like Halevi, spoke of the mystical connection between the Land of Israel, the people of Israel, and the Torah of Israel. Reines believed that Jewish existence in the Diaspora is inherently defective, lacking any prospect of attaining the harmony that can naturally be attained only in the Land of Israel. Because of the inherent connection between the Land and the people, social and religious normalization—"healing of the body and healing of the spirit"³⁶—can be achieved only in the Land of Israel: "The sanctity of [the people of]

34 Dov Schwartz finds that "most of the religious Zionist thinkers adopted a spiritual and metaphysical concept of the Land," but he associates that approach with Rabbi Kook's circle and maintains that it originates in the mystical-kabbalistic establishment. My findings see the idea as going back to Pines, who offered no kabbalistic support for his approach. D. Schwartz, *Land of Israel in Religious Zionist Thought* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), 18.

35 Yehiel Mikhel Pines to his brother, Yeruham Fishel Pines of Ruzhnoy, Elul 5652 (late summer 1892), Central Zionist Archives A109/56/2.

36 Letter from Reines to a friend, 17 Tammuz 5649 [16 July 1889], in M. Reines, *Nezah yisra'el* (Krakow, 1890), 47.

Israel and the sanctity of the Land are one.”³⁷ The uniqueness of the Land thus turns out to be marked not only by the special attention God bestows on it and not only by the commandments that are dependent on it, but by the unmediated bond between the nation and its Land.

The Land of Israel and Modernity

Judaism’s relationship to the Land of Israel and the commandment to settle in it has undergone changes over the ages, and the rise of modernity has made it even more multi-faceted. Modernity entailed the introduction of secular values, the breakdown of religious and class identity, and the development of new forms of self-definition in the social, national, and personal spheres. In all of these respects, it suffused the Jewish consciousness with desires, concerns, and challenges that led Jews to take actions and adopt positions toward which they had not previously been impelled. First and foremost were the threat and the challenge to the traditional Jew that were posed by modernization as a process of secularization in many respects, ranging from the complete rejection of halakhah to the call for its reform or for a diminution in its status.

At times, traditional Jews responded with total opposition to modernity, manifested by closing the door to any breath of fresh air within the administration of halakhah. This was done by elevating existing customs to the status of laws having biblical (as distinct from only rabbinic) authority, or by creating a system of new customs that sanctified the Eastern European way of life, attire, and educational system. In other cases, the response to modernity involved efforts to “Judaize” it, by arguing that all wisdom had its source in Israel, by importing humanistic values and moral ideas and internalizing them within Jewish thought and exegesis, or by shifting modernity from one territorial arena to another, from the lands of the Diaspora to the Land of Israel. Both reactions that developed within traditional society—the one that rejected modernity and the one that cautiously embraced it—can be considered Orthodox reactions.

A turn to the Land of Israel as a counter-measure to modernity, as a means of resisting assimilation into the surrounding culture and denying the inevitability of living in exile, goes back all the way to the

37 Ibid., 37.

Hatam Sofer. The Land of Israel as portrayed in prayer and *midrash* is a conscious barrier against thoughts about assimilating into Christian surroundings. The yearning for redemption stands in the way of coming to see the Diaspora as a homeland. As already noted, Schlesinger—the Hatam Sofer’s spiritual disciple—makes the physical Land of Israel into a domain that protects its people against any possible sort of modernity, for there will arise in it a Jewish entity that looks back to the Second Temple period in its way of life, economic livelihood, dress, and language.³⁸

While Schlesinger foresaw the Land of Israel as a place where the Jew could find protection against modernity, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), the founder of German Orthodoxy, had serious doubts about the drive to make the Land into a refuge from all that was modern. He believed that redemption could not be hastened through natural means, and certainly not by Jews who did not observe halakhah and were likely to scorn the commandments dependent on the Land and desecrate the Sabbath on it.³⁹ Hirsch foresaw the joining of modernity and the Jewish State in the Land of Israel and pointed to resulting negative implications.

A modernity that entailed relinquishing one’s national identity, becoming assimilated into the surrounding culture, and conforming halakhah to the religious ways of the Christian majority—in short, the modernity of the Reform movement as it was seen by Eastern European Jews—generated a turn toward settling the Land of Israel, which would be a domain in which Jewish society would be liberated from the pressures imposed by the non-Jewish environment. That liberation included responding to modernity through national identity, a socially progressive society, an enlightened form of government, and a culture open to broad general education. Anti-Reform motives led many to support Land-of-Israel-based nationalist ideas. These supporters included, among others, Moses Hess (1812–1875), Rabbis Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874) and Judah Alkalai (1798–1878), and the writers and journalists David Gordon (1831–1886), Yehiel Mikhel Pines (1843–1913),

38 Salmon, “The Land of Israel in Nineteenth-Century Orthodox Thought,” 436–440. See also chapter 1 of this book.

39 M. Breuer, “Discussion of the Three Oaths in Recent Generations,” in *Redemption and State: The Redemption of Israel* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1979), 53.

and Peretz Smolenskin (1840–1885).⁴⁰

The reaction to modernity thus led to the formation of two types of Orthodoxy—the haredi and the nationalist. The *haredim* rejected modernity altogether while the nationalists met it half-way, but both are part of the Orthodox mosaic as it has developed. They share allegiance to halakhah and the principles of Judaism, but they differ with regard to all elements of modernity: education, secular learning, comportment, culture, and so forth. Pines’s reservations about the *Hovevei Ziyon* (“Lovers of Zion”) movement because of his criticism of *Aḥad Ha-Am* and the *Benei Moshe* show that his position was Orthodox. He was the nationalist within Religious Zionism, extending his protection to the *Biluim*⁴¹ and defending them against their critics. His rabbinic colleagues accused him of going too far in advocating certain halakhic reforms, and Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin (1817–1898) and his court imposed a ban on him because of his willingness to integrate vocational education into the study hall he established in Jerusalem. Yet this was the Pines who called for establishing a *Hibbat Ziyon* movement limited to halakhically observant members and for expelling *Benei Moshe* from the Jewish national movement!

The circle that opened during the late 1860s and allowed for two models of Orthodoxy—haredi and nationalist—seemed to have closed in the mid-1890s when Pines joined the Old Yishuv in Jerusalem and took up its rejection of anything new. That was only a brief phase, however. When the common features of all segments of Orthodoxy are on the public agenda, they are reconciled with one another, but when their differences are taken up, they appear to be part of two divergent historical strains. Eventually, the nationalist Orthodox joined the *Mizrachi* movement, and the anti-Zionists established *Agudat Yisrael*.

The Land of Israel is the enchantress that makes this tension within Orthodoxy so severe. The territory laden with holiness is also subject to desecration; the land overseen by God enjoys that special oversight but also repels sinners. The joining of the holy Land of Israel and the national Land of Israel inevitably causes conflict from an Orthodox

40 Salmon, “The Land of Israel in Nineteenth-Century Orthodox Thought,” 440–446; see also chapter 1 of this book.

41 **Translator’s note:** *Biluim* refers to participants in the *Bilu* group of immigrants to the Land of Israel. *Bilu* is an acronym for the biblical passage (Is. 2:5) *beit ya’aqov lekhu ve-neilekha* (“O House of Jacob, come let us go”).

perspective, a conflict between tradition and modernity that can never be conclusively resolved. Mohilever's pronouncements about the advantages of a non-observant life in the Land of Israel over a fully observant life in the Diaspora make no sense to a haredi Jew, for whom observance of the commandments has priority over everything and for whom a Jew living in the Land of Israel without observing the commandments not only sins but also desecrates and defiles the Land. That is the root of the tension and antagonism between the segments of Orthodoxy over the status of the Land of Israel in the Zionist program.

Halakhah, the Land of Israel, and Nationalism

In Zionism's earliest days, concerns and questions were raised about whether the movement to settle in the Land of Israel would be able to ensure that the people residing in the Land would observe halakhah. German Orthodoxy tended to answer the question in the negative; on that basis, among others, it explained its opposition to the "Society for the Settlement of the Land of Israel" established by Dr. Hayyim Luria. Rabbi Kalischer, who supported the Society, wanted to immigrate to the Land of Israel himself and supervise the observance of the commandments at the *Miqveh Yisra'el* School established by the Alliance Israélite Universelle in 1870.

The first halakhic issue that came up on the Zionist agenda was that of the Corfu *etrogim* (citrons ritually used on the holiday of Sukkot). On its face, the issue would appear to be primarily an economic matter, involving an effort to avoid the inflation of the price of *etrogim*, which was a result of a cartel formed by the Greek *etrog* (sing. of *etrogim*) merchants in 1874. The efforts to invalidate the Corfu *etrogim*, and the demand that *etrogim* from the Land of Israel be preferred, generated a dispute that invoked old halakhic claims, impugning the Corfu *etrogim* on the grounds that they might be grafted. (A large majority of decisors hold that, *ab initio*, a blessing may not be recited over a grafted *etrog* because it is not the fruit referred to in the Torah.)

Legitimate halakhic considerations were intermingled with public policy considerations involving economic support for the Land of Israel's residents and notions of national revival. All of the halakhic questions that had been raised in connection with Zionist activity were jumbled together, and distinctions were not always drawn between the significant and the trivial. In any case, even after the fitness of the *etrogim* of the

Land of Israel was called into question as well, advocates of settlement in the Land of Israel still found reason to favor them over the Corfu etrogim based on their love for the Land and for those dwelling in it. The decisive factor in the controversy was a public policy matter that worked in favor of the Land of Israel etrogim, namely the intense anger at the Greeks in Corfu over the blood libel to which they subjected the island's Jews in 1891. The blood libel impelled even those who had permitted the Corfu etrogim to ban them.⁴²

With the start of the First Aliyah, questions arose regarding the extent to which one might actively participate in communal affairs together with those who violate halakhah. The question is not a clearly halakhic one, for the prohibition on making common cause with the wicked is not one of the 613 commandments.⁴³ It is grounded more in emotion, but that too entails a variety of considerations. When the matter involves saving the life of a Jew the prohibition does not apply at all, but when fulfilling one of the commandments tied to the Holy Land is at issue the prohibition acquires added force.

In a December 1883 letter to the rabbis of Russia, the heads of the Ashkenazi institutions and court in Jerusalem reacted to the immigration of the Biluim and determined "that they do not follow in the path of Torah and piety ... and they do not hasten the redemption, but delay it, God forbid."⁴⁴ This idea that the *Hovevei Ziyon* movement was illegitimate because its members' anti-halakhic conduct would delay the redemption became the principal argument of those who excluded Zionism from traditional Judaism, and it went on to be crystallized as the position of *da'at torah* ("the Torah opinion"). An accompanying claim was that secularism was spreading and becoming more influential and, accordingly, "there is no hope even for the few who, had they not joined up with the impure, would have followed the right path."⁴⁵

42 On the episode of the Corfu etrogim, see chapter 4 of this book.

43 Even Rabbi Israel of Radin (the *Hafetz Hayyim*) does not include the prohibition on making common cause with the wicked as one of the negative commandments. He discusses contemporary transgressors only when he confines the prohibition against hating another in one's heart to hating "a worthy Jew." See I. M. Hakohen [Kagan], *The Concise Book of Mitzvot* (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1990), 79, comm. 78.

44 Open letter from the heads of the Ashkenazi institutions and court in Jerusalem to the rabbis of Russia, Kislev 5644 (December 1883), *Sources on the History of Hibbat Ziyon and the Settlement of the Land of Israel* 3, ed. A. Druyanow (Tel Aviv, 1919–1932), doc. 1186, 579–584.

45 Letter from Ziskind Shaḥor to Rabbi Berlin, Marḥeshvan 5648 (autumn 1887), in Druyanow, *Sources* 2, doc. 683, 348–350.

The issue went beyond the area of halakhah and became a matter of theology. Even the most enthusiastic advocate of Hovevei Ziiyyon among the rabbis of the time, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (1817–1893, known as the Netsiv of Volozhin) summed things up as follows: “We are strengthening the hands of sinners and defiling the Land.”⁴⁶ The Holy Land was being defiled by undisciplined behavior within it, and all who supported that behavior participated in that defilement. Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, the movement’s leading operative within traditional circles in Russia and Poland, also subscribed to this position. In late 1887, Mohilever wrote to Judah Leib Pinsker that “the Holy Land” is unlike “Germany or France, or even Russia, which can gather within it the observant and non-observant alike.”⁴⁷

When the non-halakhic character of a segment of the First Aliyah became clear, and even more so when the second generation, educated in the Land of Israel, showed its non-halakhic colors, Mohilever set down new ideological bases for tolerance *vis à vis* those settling the Land and published them in his Hebrew booklet, “The Purpose of My Journey to the Land of Israel” (1890). But this ideological determination, which had halakhic significance as well, did not finally decide the matter, for the question of joint efforts with non-observant Jews remained on the Zionist agenda, arising again and again with respect to various critical matters such as education, culture, and observance of Sabbath and *kashrut* in Zionist institutions. The question remained one of who had authority over matters having a clear halakhic aspect.

The dispute over the sabbatical year of 5689 (1888–1889) provides another example of a halakhic matter that provoked an ongoing dispute within Zionism.⁴⁸ The sabbatical year (*shemittah*) of 5689 was the first since the destruction of the Second Temple to be a matter of practical concern. The question was whether the New Yishuv and the Hovevei Ziiyyon movement that stood by it would be willing and able to observe the sabbatical year in accordance with the halakhah. The halakhic question of the sabbatical year’s contemporary application, its limits, and the obligations it imposes was laden with emotions about belief and

46 Letter from Rabbi Berlin to Pinsker, Kislev 5648 (late 1887 or early 1888), in Druyanow, *Sources* 2, doc. 709, 391–393.

47 Letter from Mohilever to Pinsker, Tevet 5648 (late 1887 or early 1888), in Druyanow, *Sources* 2, doc. 727, 425–427.

48 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 123–139.

community, and it affected the New Yishuv's halakhic observance in general. Could the halakhah withstand modern economic conditions? Moses Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910) worded the question this way: "Is it conceivable that an entire nation, hundreds of thousands of people, can live for an entire year by sitting with their hands folded?"⁴⁹ But would the return to the Land defer observance of a commandment uniquely tied to the Land's sanctity?

Concealed yearnings for redemption in the wake of settlement also played a role. Secondary questions that arose included the locus of authority to decide the matter: did it lie with the rabbis of Jerusalem—the local authorities—or with rabbis in the Diaspora? Was it conceivable that the new settlers, who had risen up against the *haluqah* (the system by which the residents of the Land of Israel, themselves economically unproductive, had been supported by donations from abroad) would themselves fall within the net of the *haluqah* and its emissaries and be required to forgo working the land? Was the entire Zionist dream of again working the land unattainable because of halakhic limitations? An admonition in the name of Baron Edmond James de Rothschild (1845–1934) declared:

The sabbatical year will bring about the destruction of the entire Yishuv enterprise, the destruction of the settlement of the Land of Israel, the destruction of the nation, and the destruction of the religion.⁵⁰

For the first time, a halakhic question came up for discussion that created two lines, one supporting a permissive ruling and one opposing it. Rabbis, journalists, politicians, and Zionist thinkers all participated prominently and actively in the debate. The dividing line did not run between those who observed halakhah and those who abandoned it, for those who issued the permissive ruling and supported it were themselves from traditional circles.

The sabbatical year was and remains a prominent, many-nuanced halakhic problem that confronts Zionists and the opponents of Zionism within traditional society every sabbatical year, and the positions on

49 M. L. Lilienblum, *The Way through Exile* (Warsaw: Ahiasaf, 1899), 127.

50 Statement of Rabbi Lubitzky of Paris to the Netsiv, in Fishman, *The Book of Samuel*, 92–93.

both sides have their own dynamic. Unlike the issue of hybrid etrogim, which was resolved with the planting in the Land of Israel of non-hybrid etrog orchards, the issue of the sabbatical year has not yet been conclusively decided. The permissive ruling that allowed the selling of the lands to a Gentile—first implemented in 5649 with the concurrence of Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor (1817–1896) and Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, and later that of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook (1865–1935)—has been met throughout the generations by doubters and challengers. Even decisors within the National-Religious camp have sought other solutions.

Along with the halakhic problems raised by the Zionist enterprise, such as that of kosher etrogim, the commandment to settle the Land, and the sabbatical year, there arose theological issues related to one's state of mind, intentions, and feelings. The most prominent of these involve human initiatives to bring about the redemption, which contravene the midrash of the "three oaths." Scripture states:

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by gazelles or by hinds of the field: do not provoke Providence [lit., do not wake or rouse love] until it pleases. (Song of Songs 2:7)

The sages inferred from this verse that God imposed certain oaths on Israel:

Not to scale the wall [that is, not to engage in mass immigration to the Land of Israel], not to rebel against the nations of the world, and not to hasten the "End of Days." (BT *Ketubot* 111a)

Rabbi Eliezer interpreted "by gazelles or by hinds of the field," as follows:

The Holy One blessed Be He said to Israel, if you abide by the oath, good; if not, I will make your flesh available to be eaten like that of gazelles or hinds of the field. (Ibid.)

This rabbinic dictum, different versions of which appear elsewhere in

rabbinic literature,⁵¹ was the principal source for the anti-Zionist claims raised by the *Admor*⁵² of Satmar, Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum (1888–1979) in his book *Vayo'el mosheh*.⁵³ The midrash, which demands that the Jew remain passive and avoid any direct effort to hasten the redemption, was widely cited throughout haredi anti-Zionist literature. The question is when the midrash first appeared in that literature, and whether it was the original reason for the haredi position on Zionism.⁵⁴ There is no doubt that the concept of redemption as something miraculous, concealed, and unexpected has deep roots in midrashic literature, both early and late, and gained support in the wake of the appearance of false messiahs.⁵⁵ On the other hand, there are plenty of sources suggesting that redemption will come largely through natural means and that the miracle will simply round it out.⁵⁶

With the appearance of Zionism's early heralds, the German Orthodox newspaper *Der Israelit* raised the issue of hastening redemption, but did so in reliance on a different source: the verse in Psalms (127:1) that reads "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain on it."⁵⁷ We may say that those who relied on these biblical verses and rabbinic dicta saw them not as halakhic *midrashim* (which would be binding) but as aggadic *midrashim* available for reference by those so inclined.⁵⁸ In any case, the "Three Oaths" could be circumvented by

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- 51 Breuer, "Discussion of the Three Oaths," 49–57. The article includes a systematic analysis of the force of the oaths in rabbinic literature. Ravitzky's article, "The Impact of the Three Oaths in Jewish History," in A. Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 277–305, fills out the sources and interprets this dictum differently.
- 52 **Translator's note:** *Admor* (pl., *admorim*), an acronym of the Hebrew for "our lord, teacher, and rabbi," is an honorific applied to prominent Hasidic leaders.
- 53 J. Teitelbaum, *Vayo'el mosheh* (Brooklyn, 1961), 31 and Introduction.
- 54 In 1922, Rabbi Simḥah of Dvinsk, the author of *Or sameiah*, mentioned these oaths as a source of haredi opposition to Zionism. See A. J. Slutsky, *Shivat ziiyyon: Collected Articles by Great Scholars of the Age in Praise of Settlement of the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Dinur, 1998), 92–93 (supplements). Breuer, in "Discussion of the Three Oaths," 53–54, argues that the three oaths played no role in the opposition even of such anti-Zionists as Samson Raphael Hirsch.
- 55 See also Slutsky, *Shivat ziiyyon* (1998), 81–84.
- 56 J. Alkalai, "Me'oded anavim," in J. Alkalai, *Complete Writings of Rabbi Judah Alkalai* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1944), 2, 453.
- 57 See Luria's reply to the anti-Zionist arguments that rely on this verse in Z. H. Kalischer, *Derishat ziiyyon* (Jerusalem, 1964), 173. See also Alkalai's reply in Alkalai, *Complete Writings* 2, 472–473.
- 58 Alkalai turned the midrash on Song of Songs on its head: "... If you rouse love [or: if you provoke Providence]—that is, if you engage in the matter of redemption—do not rest until it pleases" (Alkalai, *Complete Writings* 1, p. 285). In his book *Mevasser tov* (London, 1852), Alkalai attacks the conventional interpretation of the midrash, disparaging it as one favored by "lowly ignoramuses"; thus, the midrash lends itself to ambivalent interpretation (*ibid.*, 288). Even if the midrash is

claiming that Zionism had no political aspirations, as stated by Rabbi Alexander Moses Lapidot of Reisin (1819–1906), a leading Lithuanian rabbi of his time:

We do not mean to seize the Land of Israel from the Turks by sword and bow, nor do we mean to establish a government there. All we want is to form a band of farmers, tillers of the soil, who would exist on an enduring basis in the Land of Israel.⁵⁹

It would not have been difficult, then, to interpret what was happening in a way that did not run afoul of the dictum in *Ketubot* 111, in either of its variations—hastening the End or deferring the End—by arguing that the *Hovevei Ziyyon* initiative entailed no element of rebellion against the nations, did not constitute “scaling the wall,” and did not hasten the End.⁶⁰

In the earliest days of Zionism, and again in the *Hovevei Ziyyon* period, the dictum was interpreted in accord with its plain meaning as a prohibition against bringing about the redemption through a one-time act of force. What was intended, instead, was an effort that would enjoy international support and within whose framework the redemption would be realized by stages, “bit by bit,” through an ongoing process. Still, some Zionist thinkers likewise forbade delaying the End.⁶¹ In any

interpreted as a prohibition on hastening the end, contemporary reality could be interpreted so as not to fall within that prohibition (*ibid.*, 441–442). In that context, see the comments of Rabbi Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew and compare them to Rabbi Isaac Ha-Levi Herzog’s observation that the Holocaust put an end to the prohibition imposed by the three oaths in Breuer, “Discussion of the Three Oaths,” 54–55.

59 Comments of Rabbi Lapidot (written in Marḥeshvan 5651 [fall 1890]), in Slutsky, *Shivat ziyyon* (1985), 37.

60 Comments of Rabbi Benjamin Diamant of Simpropol, in Slutsky, *Shivat ziyyon* (1985), 41; Rabbi Zebulun Barit of Plongian, *ibid.*, 51; Rabbi Naḥum Grinhaus of Trak, *ibid.*, 60–68. Rabbi Joseph Jaffee of Grozd cites various sources said to prohibit hastening the End: “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain on it”; “As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things” [OJPS]; “the LORD ... shall come to His Temple suddenly”; “... which do not look to any man nor place their hope in mortals” (*ibid.*, 70). Rabbi Samuel Feinberg of Nesvitzh responds, arguing that the *Hovevei Ziyyon* are acquiring the Land of Israel not by force but by purchasing it for money, and that the three oaths therefore do not apply to them (*ibid.*, 84). See also Breuer, “Discussion of the Three Oaths,” 52.

61 Joseph of Grozd does not refer to an explicit prohibition, but says: “... The scoffers and those who oppose this therefore delay the redemption by our Messiah and deny much good to Israel” in Slutsky, *Shivat ziyyon* (1985), 72. Alkalai had already addressed himself to the prohibition

case, both concepts—miraculous redemption and redemption through natural means—had support in the sources, and no decision one way or the other was possible.⁶²

*The Social and Political Development of Orthodox Positions
and National Orthodoxies*

Orthodoxy in all its streams has maintained a complex attitude toward Zionism that has varied with time and place. That Orthodoxy opposed Zionism from the outset—a claim sometimes heard—is refuted by simple facts. At the same time, the apologetic efforts to show that Orthodoxy was the herald of Zionism and that the Orthodox were among its most energetic supporters demonstrate mere wishful thinking. As explained earlier, Zionism presented Orthodoxy with a complex challenge that simultaneously attracted it and repelled and threatened it. Orthodoxy was caught in the grip of Zionist nationalism, incapable of being either swallowed or expelled.

It is widely thought that the Hasidic movement mounted the most organized opposition to the national revival, but that generalization, too, lacks any basis. Even if Hasidic symbolism included elements that neutralized the place of the actual Land of Israel in Jewish consciousness, it cannot be denied that Hasidic Jews reached the Land of Israel in the earliest days of Hasidism and established communities there that predated the communities of the *Perushim* (non-Hasidic Eastern European Jews in the Land of Israel).

During the *Hovevei Ziyon* period, there were Hasidic *admorim* who were sympathetic to the Zionist idea; they included Admor Shlomo Zalman Schneerson of Kupys (1830–1900), the leader of an important faction of Chabad Hasidim, and Admor Isaac Friedman of Buhushi (1834–1896), the greatest Romanian *admor* of the Ruzhany dynasty. Prominent Hasidic supporters of *Hovevei Ziyon* during the 1890s included Admor *Hayyim* Israel Morgenstern of Pulawy-Kotsk

on delaying the end: “lest they delay the end by their indolence” (Alkalai, *Complete Writings* 2, 477). Alkalai interpreted the prohibition on scaling the wall as being limited to a mass effort and considered it permissible to do it bit by bit. Indeed, not only was it permissible but it was desirable, for it always is “His will, may He be blessed, that miracles approximate nature” (ibid., 468, “*Me`oded anavim*”). And he interpreted the verse “Do not provoke Providence” contrary to the conventional understanding, taking it as a prohibition against provoking before “the arousal from below” (that is, action by human beings) (ibid., 476–477).

62 M. Eliasberg, in Slutsky, *Shivat ziyon* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Dinur, 1998), 9–11.

(1840–1905), Admor David Moses Friedman of Chortkov (1828–1903), and Admor Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew (1839–1910). Their discussions of the subject involved issues of principle, such as that of lending support to sinners, as well as practical questions pertaining to the Hovevei Ziyon program. Over the years, they abandoned their support for Zionism and aligned themselves with its opponents, but because there is no single Hasidic position and each dynasty determined its own stance, one cannot generalize about Hasidism overall. Still, by 1900, the Hasidic admorim stood in opposition to Zionism just as did their Mitnagdic brethren, and there is no basis for the claim that they were unique in their opposition or that their position differed in any way from that of the Mitnagdim. Both groups had similar concerns about the secularization of Jewish society and about the settlement that was growing in the Land of Israel.⁶³

Until the establishment of the Mizrachi organization in 1902, Religious Zionists did not sense a need to form a separate political organization within the Zionist movement. In the earliest days, most of the leaders and activists were from within the traditional community. In the Hovevei Ziyon period as well, when leadership was in the hands of Pinsker and Lilienblum, and in the 1890s, when the “Odessa Committee” was in charge, it was still clear to rabbis like Mohilever that they represented the movement’s rank and file, and they claimed the leadership in their name. Even when the leadership transfer was delayed or frustrated, they remained certain that it would eventually come into their hands. At a minimum, they demanded the public information and education portfolios. And, indeed, the rank and file responded to Mohilever in 1893, when the first Mizrachi group was established in Bialystok.

The assignment of tasks among the representatives elected after the First Zionist Congress in 1897 likewise showed a consensus belief that responsibility for public information and education would be vested in Mohilever and the Zionist organization in Bialystok. Only after the Third Zionist Congress, in late 1899 and early 1900, did it finally become clear that most of Orthodox Jewry was in opposition and neither shared the Zionist idea nor supported Zionist activities.

Did Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), the leader of the World Zionist

63 For a full treatment of the subject, see chapter 8 of this book.

Organization, attempt to draw these circles into the Zionist Organization? Clearly, Herzl was far removed in experience and outlook from the Orthodox world. An examination of the Zionist utopia reflected in his books *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*) (1896) and *Altneuland* (*Old-New Land*) (1902) suggests that Herzl wanted to make the Jewish religion an instrument for the advancement of the nationalist idea. He had no doubts about the crucial importance of Orthodoxy, at least in the Eastern European sector, from which he hoped to draw many supporters for his movement. At the same time, a careful study of his actions toward that segment of the public shows that he did not understand its world and treated it with arrogance, and that his liberal perspectives did not permit him to respond to its demands. It is almost certain that the efforts made to draw the Orthodox public into the Zionist movement were doomed to failure from the outset, given the positions taken by the sides.⁶⁴

The Zionist Organization's failure to draw Eastern European or Western European Orthodoxy to its side, and the efforts of Orthodoxy's opponents to organize themselves into a movement, led to the establishment of Mizrachi, the first factional group within the Zionist Organization. It was specifically the Russian Mizrachi members, despite their lack of a developed political tradition, who now understood the secret of organization and the political game. In taking action, they also recognized their relative position within the Zionist organization and were compelled to temper their demands to match their degree of power. The principle of political organization for the attainment of sectarian goals became the touchstone for the behavior of Orthodox circles within the Zionist Organization and, later, within the State of Israel. Joining the governing coalition in order to protect the interests of the community became the guiding force by which members of these circles conducted their affairs.

Orthodoxy and Nationalism—Regional Characteristics

Any social phenomenon will bear the distinctive mark of the regional context in which it develops. Zionism overall has unique characteristics in each land, and the literature speaks of American Zionism, for example, as distinct from Russian Zionism, or of Western European Zionism

64 See chapter 9 of this book.

as differing from its Eastern European counterpart. The differences are not merely external, but sometimes penetrate to the heart of the matter. Even if the commonly accepted distinctions between the practical Zionism of Eastern Europe and the spiritual Zionism of America deserve a skeptical second look, one cannot disregard the environmental factors that contribute to the fashioning of every national Zionist federation. And that is true of Religious Zionism as well.

As noted, the Religious Zionists in Eastern Europe were the first to organize a political structure. They quickly came to understand the political power game and acted in accordance with its rules. In America, many years went by before Religious Zionism found its way. It seems impossible to escape the conclusion that the structuring of American Jewry along lines determined by its religious organizations, and the decisive influence of non-Orthodox organizations on the American Zionist Federation, delayed the integration of the Mizrachi movement into the Zionist Organization of America.⁶⁵ In Europe, the rise of the Jewish national movement was antithetical to the Reform movement, but American Reform differed from its European counterpart in matters related to national identity, and American Jews were already quite free of the complexes from which their European brethren suffered. On the other hand, Eastern European intellectuals and rabbis who reached America and, with the rise of political Zionism, lost the influence they had enjoyed in the American *Hovevei Ziyyon* movement, remained suspicious of men like Richard Gottheil, a Reform Jew and son of the rabbi of the most important Reform congregation in New York, who served as head of the American Zionist Federation.

Herzl himself favored the Jews of Western European origin who presided over American Zionism over their Eastern brethren. The turnaround in the overall leadership of the Zionist organization was not happily received by the Eastern Zionists, who were compelled to reconcile themselves to the fact that the center of Zionist activity had moved to Western Europe thanks to the limitations imposed on them by the Russian authorities—limitations that did not exist in America. As Jews from different parts of Europe encountered one another on American soil in the context of the Zionist organization, various tensions and anomalies emerged, and many years passed before they were attenuated

65 On the Mizrachi movement in America, see chapter 10 of this book.

and resolved. For example, two Zionist federations were established in America, one comprising Jews of Western European origin and headed by Gottheil, and the other comprised of Jews from Eastern Europe, headed by Rabbi Dr. Hillel Klein (1848–1926).

The American Mizrachi organization was not established until 1914, and its “practical” and “result-oriented” tendencies, involving settlement, education, and aliyah, differed from the principal tendencies of American Zionism in general. Because no haredi Orthodoxy existed in America when American Mizrachi was founded, the Mizrachi movement could flourish and expand into the religious factional organization having the greatest influence on American Jews. It exercised considerable power within general American Jewish organizations, such as the American Zionist Congress and the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, as well, and it was active in educational and communal matters within America itself. The distinctive character of American Mizrachi continues to this day, and it deserves credit for the prominent part played by Mizrachi members in aliyah, especially since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Orthodoxy, Nationalism, and Education

Much has been written about the ties between the Enlightenment movement and the Zionist nationalist movement. In its aspiration for normalization of Jewish society, the national movement is, in large part, an offshoot of the Enlightenment. The craving for normalization was bound up with the desire for modernization of the Jewish nation. Nationalism in general as a modern phenomenon was inherently joined to the enlightened ethical values that preceded it. The Enlightenment movement’s aspirations for normalization and modernization also introduced into the national sphere its platform of economic productivity and general education. It is not surprising, therefore, that the national movement’s agenda is replete with discussions of these matters.

Traditional Jews had no position of their own with respect to economic matters, but when it came to education, they wanted to have a decisive voice. The connections between enlightenment and nationalism in this context were many. The discussion focused on a form of education that, though traditional, was cognizant of innovation and modernization—a form of education initiated by Rabbi Reines, one of

the Mizrachi movement's founders. The first progressive *yeshivah* that he founded in 1882 was in the Lithuanian town of Świąciany, where he served as rabbi. The *yeshivah* lasted for only two years, and was bitterly attacked by the leaders of traditional Jewish society in Russia at the time.⁶⁶ Reines explained that the *yeshivah* had been established in response to governmental and economic pressures then imposed on Jewish society, necessitating modern skills, including knowledge of languages and science. The story of the Świąciany *yeshivah* is not part of Zionist history, but its underlying worldview continued to guide Reines when, twenty years later, he established the Lida *yeshivah*⁶⁷ with its blend of enlightened rabbinics and Zionism.

Unlike the Świąciany *yeshivah*, the academy in Lida lasted ten years and was closed only due to World War I. It enjoyed the support of the Mizrachi movement, whose young members were persecuted in the *haredi yeshivot* (pl. of *yeshivah*), and it was strengthened by the need to withstand the disintegrative tendencies of traditional society caused by internal and external pressures. This was a time when, on the one hand, the Musar movement was gaining strength within the *yeshivot* and, on the other hand, youngsters were leaving the *yeshivah* world and joining radical Socialist movements. Reines spoke of the need to establish the *yeshivah* to save the Torah world, but his students already saw the *yeshivah* as blending Torah, faith, and enlightenment. Its unique combination of a progressive *yeshivah* program reconciled to modernity and a Zionist worldview ensured its place in history. Despite its similarity to the Western Orthodox rabbinical seminaries with respect to secular learning and despite its resemblance to the traditional Lithuanian *yeshivot* with respect to Talmudic studies, it established its own place in nationalist Orthodoxy. Its educational doctrine and its nationalist doctrine were two sides of the same spiritual coin.

The successors of the Lida *yeshivah* were the Mizrachi educational system in the Land of Israel and Yeshiva University in New York. Mizrachi is the educational arm of Religious Zionism, and Yeshiva University is the mother institution of Modern Orthodoxy. Both of

66 Y. Salmon, "The Beginnings of Reform in the Eastern European *Yeshivot*," *Molad* 19-20 (1971): 161-172.

67 Y. Salmon, "The *Yeshivah* of Lida: A Unique Institution of Higher Learning," *Yivo Annual* 15 (1974): 106-125. See also chapter 11 of this book.

these educational institutions are the offspring of nineteenth-century nationalist Orthodoxy.

The Influence of Jewish Religion on the Ethos and Way of Life of the Zionist State

Religious and Quasi-Religious Markings in Jewish Nationalism

The Jewish religion has contributed so extensively to Zionist nationalism that it is difficult to imagine the latter having emerged in isolation from the former. For one thing, the Jewish religion has provided the system of symbols used by Zionist nationalism, and, after it, by the Jewish state. The very term “Zion” and its derivatives are suffused with religious significance going beyond the territoriality of the Land of Israel: Zion is the site of the Temple and the center of religious worship. The historical Jewish yearning for the Land of Israel, especially insofar as it is connected to exile and redemption, is rich in religious residues and is symbolized, above all, by “Zion.”

It was religion that provided nationalism the basis for territorial demands in the Land of Israel, which is sanctified in religious tradition, and the Hebrew language, the literary tongue of traditional society. Sacred books, especially the Hebrew Bible, served as a source of inspiration for the educational and cultural activities of nationalist society.

Zionist nationalism (and its outcome, the State of Israel) drew from religion not only symbols, but also norms of conduct. Matters of marriage and family were subject to halakhic norms, and observance of the Sabbath and festivals were set in accordance with the halakhic tradition. The very definition of Jewish identity—“Who is a Jew?”—was left subject to halakhic determination. The Religious Zionists did not succeed in shaping the overall public space of the Jewish State in conformity with the halakhah, as they had hoped to do at the start of political Zionism. In practice, however, various sectors of Israeli life are still conducted in accordance with halakhah.

Zionist nationalism also drew its myths from religion: exile and redemption, ingathering of the exiles, and messianism. All of these myths underwent a process of secularization, but they derived their power in part from the religious echoes resonating within them.

Messianism and Nationalism

More than any other traditional Jewish value, secular Zionism wanted to preserve the messianic idea.⁶⁸ Secular Zionism pointed proudly to the messianic movements in Jewish history—movements that Religious Zionism regarded as false messianism. The preeminent scholars of messianism came from secular Zionist circles, and included Joseph Klausner (1874–1958), Zalman Shazar (1889–1974), Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), Aaron Zev Eshkoli (1901–1948), and Yehudah Kaufman (Even Shmu'el, 1886–1976). In modern times, some have characterized the messianic movements as radical and antinomian, a view that conforms to the secular Zionist reading. The traditional Jewish messianic idea was bound up with the idea of redemption, and the two cannot be separated. That redemption entailed not only gathering the exiles into the Promised Land and restoring the Davidic monarchy to its original glory, but also upholding the religious values of renewing the cult at the Temple in Jerusalem and instituting halakhic social governance. Secular Zionism selected from this list the values that suited it: ingathering of the exiles, rejection of the Diaspora, return to nature, and working of the land. In that sense, it was no different from any messianic thinker who adopted the elements of tradition that he preferred. The difference between the traditional approach and the secular involves the component of divine participation, totally removed from secular doctrine. Traditional messianism anchored realization of messianic yearnings within divine providence.

Only in the 1950s did criticism of the messianic idea in secular Zionism begin to emerge within the center of Zionist thought. As early as the First Zionist Congress, the opening speech by the eldest of the delegates, Dr. Karl Lipa of Romania, included a sharp critique of the messianic concept within traditional Judaism, but it was taken as a passing episode that did not distress even the Religious Zionists.⁶⁹ Zionist thinkers and writers, chief among them Joseph Hayyim Brenner (1881–1921) of the Second Aliyah, likewise criticized the messianic idea, but those critiques were met with rejection and opposition from all corners of the Zionist movement, both within and outside the Land of Israel.⁷⁰

68 E. Lederhendler, "Interpreting Messianic Rhetoric in the Russian Haskala and Early Zionism," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 7 (1991): 14–33.

69 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 289.

70 See N. Guvrin, *The Brenner Affair: The Struggle for Freedom of Expression, 1911–1913* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1985).

During the 1950s, however, it became possible to hear a critique of messianism emanating from within the political center. Leading the critics were Prof. Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–1994) and Prof. Natan Rotenstreich (1914–1993). Leibowitz based his concept of Judaism squarely on the acceptance of the commandments, and he regarded messianism as a harmful, alien transplant within Judaism. Rotenstreich, meanwhile, relied on Zionist doctrine itself, which was centered on real-world problems and their real-world, not messianic, solutions. Even in its secular format, the messianic idea seemed to him to be nothing more than a rhetorical flourish.

Assigning a negative connotation to the concept of “messianism” overall and treating it as the symbol of all that is wrong in Israeli society is a relatively new ideological departure dating from around the time of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. At that time, leading centrist Zionist intellectuals such as writers A. B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz and the journalist Prof. Amnon Rubinstein began to attack messianism. They attributed the Yom Kippur War and its terrors to messianic notions, and the messianic idea that guided Religious Zionism’s settlement campaign in the territories taken in the Six-Day War became, in the eyes of the Israeli left, a scapegoat for the military and political failures associated with the Yom Kippur War. Practical political stances related to possible agreements with the Arab enemy became confused with an overall Zionist worldview vigorously defending the Zionist idea of normality. Secular Zionism thus produced two metamorphoses over the years: the transformation of messianism into a secular idea, followed by the spurning of the messianic idea in any form whatsoever.

The Myth of Return

The statement “renew our days as of old” is very widespread in Zionist literature. Its religious significance is as a prayer for a return to a flawless life, and it was incorporated into general Zionist thought. Its source is the penultimate verse of the final chapter in the biblical Book of Lamentations. In Jewish ritual, the verse is repeated after the final verse and thus constitutes the conclusion of the book. Since the book as a whole deals with the destruction of the Land and the nation, its ritual conclusion becomes relevant to Zionist interests and is taken, in the Zionist context, as a reference to repairing the breach suffered by the nation. The concept of “return” in this context encompasses a return to

the past, a restoration not only of past glory and political self-definition, but also of redemption and repair. This ambivalent interpretation of the statement—looking both backward and forward—leaves its mark on secular and Religious Zionist streams alike.

The expression “renew our days as of old” is used as a guiding myth for Zionist thought and action and serves the Zionist ethos and Zionist ritual in both its temporal senses, looking to the past for legitimacy and offering hope for a nearly perfect future. The term is centered on Zionism and the mythos of the Land of Israel. Even though they are not now living on it, the Jews believe the territory to have been promised to them. It is their homeland, and they will realize their nationalism upon it.

It is worth considering whether that past is real or imagined, a partial picture or a full depiction. Similar questions should be asked about the future: is it a utopia or a realistic vision, and what are its sources?

Zionism is a nationalist movement with a well-developed historical consciousness. Its myths, therefore, are likewise historical in their essence, and their remoteness in time enhances their power in the present. Some of these myths are tied to a universalist perspective. One example is Moses Hess’s vision of imparting the Jewish social model to the entire world. Other myths, such as those of Akiva Joseph Schlesinger, aim to cut off any contact between Jews and their surroundings. The difference grows out of the two positions’ different attitudes toward modernity: Hess happily embraces it, while Schlesinger rejects it outright.

Zionism’s myth of return incorporates several elements. Among them is the claim that the Land has remained abandoned since the Jews were exiled from it, withholding its fertility from other residents. The return has a cyclical element: the first return (actually, the initial entry to the Land in the time of Joshua), the second (after the Babylonian exile), and, now, the third. The concept of “return to the land of the fathers” took on a flavor of returning home to an embracing and comforting Land. The basis for the assurance of return—the “Promised Land”—added a claim of entitlement that came to be used ideologically and politically. This element of the myth of return is shared by Jews and those non-Jews who cite the Jews’ rights to the Land of Israel.⁷¹

71 See also A. Raz-Krakotzkin, “Returning to the History of the Redemption,” in *Zionism and the Return to History: A New Assessment*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt and M. Lisak (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1999), 249–276.

The myth of the return includes negative overtones as well, namely a call to avoid returning to flawed historical models. Herzl was very concerned about returning to “Asia,” and the idea that it could imply a withdrawal from modernity. Numerous utopian models were implicated in the polemics over the return. Aḥad Ha-Am referred to a model of “internal Torah” and ethics, Herzl spoke of advanced technology, and Bialik spoke of a small, poor country producing intellectual giants. Berl Katznelson (1887–1944), a prominent leader of the labor movement in the Land of Israel between the two world wars, wrote about a literary-educational model, like the Bible, for teaching love of liberty, and Aaron David Gordon (1856–1922), a leading intellectual of the labor movement, spoke of centering that movement in the Land of Israel, as had occurred in the earlier returns. The Diaspora model was a negative one, and the return to Zion would put an end to it. In the words of Max Nordau (1849–1923), the model of “barrel-chested men with muscular limbs and powerful eyes” justified the new return to Zion, meant to remedy the period of exile marked by “a weak Judaism, a Judaism based on nothingness, an ungrounded Judaism.”⁷²

Within Religious Zionism, interestingly enough, the yearning for the past was not so intense. Because its concept was fundamentally progressive—that is, it was based on the promise that the redeeming Messiah would eventually arrive—it followed that the models of the past were not as attractive as they were in secular Zionism. Most Religious Zionists, to be sure, did not regard Zionism as a messianic movement, but Religious Zionism nevertheless preserved the ethos of awaiting the future redemption, and particularly the structure of the messianic idea.

The myth of return also included an element of revival, renaissance, and restoration. Many elements of the Christian Millennium became associated with this aspect of the myth, including the future revelation of Jesus and the establishment of the thousand-year kingdom. The return of Israel to its Land was connected, in English millenarianism, to clearly Christian ideas regarding the establishment of that Millennium. In its appeal to the Christian world, the Zionist Organization integrated the millenarian idea with a demand, presented to the heirs of those who

72 M. Nordau, *The Jewish Question and Its Solution: Selected Speeches and Essays* (Jerusalem: Zionist Organization, 1960), 73 (Speech at the Second Zionist Congress).

had stolen the Land of Israel from the Jewish nation, for recognition of Jewish rights to the Land.⁷³

Secularization

Although the Zionist national movement did not invent secularization as a factor in Jewish history, it contributed significantly to its advance. It provided the means by which hordes of Jewish young people became gradually secularized under a cloak of legitimacy in the form of a return to the Holy Land and the use of the Holy Tongue. Many Jewish religious symbols were internalized by and enlisted in the Zionist national movement. Lines became blurred between content and values on the one hand and symbols and myths on the other, and the intermingling of the two domains allowed the process to take place before the eyes of its participants and of the guardians of the old ways, who cried without avail that their tradition had been “stolen” from them. These are transformations that cannot be withstood by society and certainly not by individuals, as the broom of history sweeps away whatever stands in its path.

The drive to exchange Jewish religious identity for national identity, and the actions taken to do so, were grounded in Zionist thought and deed. The secularization of religion and the use made of it within the Zionist nationalist ethos have been extensively considered in the literature, and two cycles of the process are now recognized. In the first, religious values were transformed into secular values. In the second, secular theism was deconstructed. The first cycle has been described with reference to six models of secularization:

1. The social governance model was represented by Moses Hess. The Holy Scriptures are taken as the source for the just system of social governance to be established in the Land of the Patriarchs, and it is worthy of serving as an example for the entire world. The system of governance draws its authority from the socialist consciousness of the person contemplating it.

2. An entirely different model was suggested by Peretz Smolenskin, an early nationalist thinker from a Russian enlightenment background. In his view, religion serves as a barricade that unifies nationalist society.

73 See chapter 12 of this book; see also Raz-Krakotzkin, “Returning to the History of the Redemption.”

He has no doubt that the halakhah must be improved and he regards it as subject to the will of the national community, but he rejects changes of the sort made by the Reform movement, which divests national identity of its essence.

3. The moral model was advanced by Ahad Ha-Am, who sang the praises of prophetic morality as denoting national identity and shaping within it the concept of divine form. Jewish morality, which provides the underpinning for the national culture that will grow in the historical Land, will eventually come to replace halakhic religion. Judaism will become an ethical value and will be formed into a Hebrew language-based literary culture, which will have no need for heteronomic halakhah.

4. An atheistic model, laden with antipathy toward halakhic Judaism, was articulated by the important Socialist thinker Nahman Sirkin, but the most vocal proponent of the rebellion against tradition was the writer Joseph Hayyim Brenner (1881–1921), a participant in the Second Aliyah. Their position holds that nationalist society has no reason to regard halakhah as binding. Similarly, Scripture has no preferred standing within the national literature. Brenner rejected messianism and set productive work as the national purpose. Labor, the Hebrew language, national dignity, and liberal culture are the components of Jewish identity.

5. More widespread within some secular New Yishuv circles was messianism, whose proponents came from across the political spectrum. They regarded the messianic idea as the link binding traditional and secular Judaism. The Zionist themes were considered to incorporate both messianic aspirations and values that could shape the reality being built. This was the pathos of radical change, of building an unprecedented new reality. Like traditional messianism, Zionism spoke of return to the ancestral Land and redemption from exile.

The common features of the foregoing five models enabled them to borrow traditional frameworks and terminology, even though it was absolutely clear that the new models were in no way dependent upon the divine will.

The prophetic model, based on the Bible, became a Zionist alternative to the world of halakhic tradition. The Bible is the guide for pioneering Judaism. The social and moral ideas of the new Judaism are grounded in Scripture, while rabbinic Judaism and its literature contain no norms that pioneering Judaism must treat as binding. Yizḥak Tabenkin, a leader

of the Labor party, Hakibbuz ha-Meuḥad, and Ahdut ha-Avoda, spoke in such terms.

Along with the conceptual models, a secular society was constructed in the Land of Israel with a way of life that made use of many religious symbols. The festivals of Passover, Sukkot, and Shavuot were recast as holidays marking the seasons of the year, the working of the land, and political freedom. Days of rest were the traditional Sabbath and festivals. Rituals of remembrance and mourning were borrowed from the practices followed in traditional society. The personal status laws of halakhah, relating to matters such as marriage and the family, were likewise adopted. In this way, a quasi-traditional secular society was created.

The Israeli society just described later underwent a lengthy process of deconstruction. As early as the 1960s, Rotenstreich, a prominent thinker within the labor movement, lamented the narrowing of the horizons of secular Zionism to material production. Jacob Katz (1904–1998) was concerned that the religious component of the nationalist ethos would be attenuated and offered academic Jewish studies as a defense against alienation from religious nationalist values. The unraveling set in as soon as the State was established, and its leading voices included some writers of the 1948 generation.

The most extreme exponents of the process can be found among the historians and sociologists of the 1970s and 1980s, who explicitly criticized the theistic Zionist models. The weakening of Israel's socialist structure, with its settlement and labor union institutions, also contributed to the process. The tendency to blame Israeli society for ignoring the plight of its unfortunate European brethren during World War II and for abusing the Land's Arab residents was the culmination of this extended and complex deconstructive process that placed Zionism squarely in the defendant's dock.

Zionist society today finds itself in a state of profound confusion, for its *raison d'être* has lost much of its meaning. The harsh existential struggle of Zionist society makes this confused state an even greater threat.

A Note on Terminology

The scholarly literature has used a variety of terms to refer to some of the European Jewish streams described in this book—"religious" or "traditional," "Orthodox" or "haredi"—but I have attempted to assign them a set of uniform, consistent terms. Pre-modern Judaism is "traditional Judaism," and traditional Jews are referred to as "religious Jews," "observant of the Torah and the commandments." The term "Orthodoxy" is used in the sense given to it by Jacob Katz, referring to the streams that formed among halakhah-observant Jews in reaction to modernity.⁷⁴ I use the term "haredi" for Eastern European Orthodox streams and "Orthodox" for streams within Western and Central Europe (even though the haredim of Eastern Europe also referred to themselves as "Orthodox"). In Central Europe, two secondary Orthodox streams were formed: "neo-Orthodoxy" is the version of Orthodoxy inspired by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and "ultra-Orthodoxy" refers to the group in Hungary led by Rabbis Hillel Lichtenstein and Akiva Joseph Schlesinger.

With the rise of the Jewish nationalist idea, there developed in Eastern and Western Europe a stream referred to as "Haredi-Nationalist," which is also called "Religious Zionist," and in America "Modern Orthodoxy" emerged. The willingness of these movements to come to terms with modernity might suggest that one should regard them as byways of "neo-Orthodoxy," but there is an important difference between them: their readiness to accommodate modernity arises out of the encounter with the Jewish nationalist idea, while the willingness of neo-Orthodoxy to do so arises out of its cultural and political encounter with the Western world (in such matters as dress, leisure culture, education, secular learning, and so forth). Accordingly, it is possible to consider "neo-Orthodoxy," "ultra-Orthodoxy," and "Religious Zionism" as three separate Orthodox groupings.

If that is so, the "classical" Orthodoxy of the Hatam Sofer can be seen as dividing into "neo-Orthodoxy" (Hirsch) and "ultra-Orthodoxy" (Lichtenstein, Schlesinger, Maharam Schiff). At the same time, the Eastern European "haredi" stream divides into a "classical" stream

74 J. Katz, "Orthodoxy as Reaction," in J. Katz, *Halakhah in Straits* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992); idem, "Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 3–17. See also S. C. Heilman, "The Many Faces of Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism* 2, no. 1 (1982): 23–51, 171–198; M. Samet, "The Beginning of Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism* 8, no. 3 (1988): 249–269.

(Rabbi Israel Salanter, Jacob Lifschitz), a “Haredi-Nationalist” stream (Pines), and “Modern Orthodoxy” (Yeshiva University). I have only alluded to the formation of an “ultra-haredi” stream in Eastern Europe in the course of discussing the Hasidic opposition to Zionism (which was joined by Chabad, Munkacs, and Satmar), and that stream is not part of the focus of this inquiry. The “ultra-haredi” groups considered here are from Lithuania, and are represented by Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk and Admor Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson of Lubavitch.

I. THE LAND OF ISRAEL IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ORTHODOX JEWISH THOUGHT¹

Jewish Orthodoxy, a new phenomenon within Jewish history, developed during the nineteenth century. It is not a unitary phenomenon, and its various sub-groupings were conditioned by time and place. It grew out of the reaction of traditional Ashkenazi Judaism to the challenges of modernity,² and it expressed itself socially, ideologically, and halakhically. Jewish Orthodoxy is one of the central inventions of modern Jewish history, marked by continuity and persistence, rich spiritual creativity, and varied modes. It deserves more scholarly attention than it has hitherto received.

The Land of Israel occupies a central place in Orthodoxy's system of beliefs and practices. Because Orthodoxy is fundamentally a reaction to modern streams within Jewish society, its attitude toward the Land of Israel varies with the place of the Land in the doctrines against which it is competing. The present chapter considers three individuals who represent three types of Orthodoxy: the Hatam Sofer (Rabbi Moses Sofer) representing classic Orthodoxy, Rabbi Akiva Joseph Schlesinger representing ultra-Orthodoxy, and Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer representing nationalist Orthodoxy. The tension among the Land of Israel, modernity, and Orthodoxy is clearly evident in the teachings of the Hatam Sofer, one of the greatest traditional rabbis of the nineteenth century, who is thought of as Orthodoxy's spiritual father.³ His doctrine had a bearing on a diversity of Orthodox positions that sometimes opposed one another, and it therefore provides a window onto the problematic place of the Land of Israel within the traditional normative system in general.

1 This chapter was published in my book, *Religion and Zionism* (pp. 1–26), but because it is an opening chapter to the whole book, we decided to republish it here.

2 Katz, *Halakhah in Straits*, 9–10, 20.

3 J. Katz, *Halakhah and Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), 335. Within Orthodoxy, at least in its Hungarian segment, the Hatam Sofer to this day is considered the greatest of teachers. Many see him as a reappearance of Moses. See J. Weiss, *Rabbinic and Community in the Teachings of the Hatam Sofer* (Jerusalem: Weiss, 1987), 12–13.

The Hatam Sofer

Historiography

The Hatam Sofer's attitude toward the Land of Israel has been widely examined. Many writers on Zionism, on Hungarian Jewry, and on the Hatam Sofer himself have discussed his statements disapproving of the Diaspora and stressing the importance of the Land of Israel and its settlement.⁴ The prominent scholar of Zionism Ben-Zion Dinur (Dinaburg) and others have even argued that in its early days, the Hatam Sofer's study hall was in the forefront of those promoting nationalistic attitudes.⁵ The most far-reaching position on this was taken by Zvi Zahavi, who in his widely read *From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl* found that the Hatam Sofer was not only a herald of Zionism but actually a founder of the movement:

Rabbi Moses Sofer belongs not only to the “heralds.” He created a movement, promoted and labored on its behalf, and the results of his actions and those of his students who immigrated to the Land of Israel at his behest are evident in Jerusalem, in Miqveh-Yisra’el, and especially in the first agricultural settlement in the Land, Petah Tiqvah.⁶

These studies trace a direct line from the Hatam Sofer's comments on the Land of Israel to his students' immigration there, and the “heralds

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- 4 See Z. Zahavi, *From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl* (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1972), and S. Weingarten, *The Hatam Sofer and His Disciples: Their Attitude towards the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem: Zionist Organization-Religious Department and Mossad Harav Kook, 1945). Other works treating these points include E. Katz, *The Hatam Sofer: Rabbi Moses Sofer, His Life and Works* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1963), 67–80; J. Nahshoni, *Our Rabbi Moses Sofer, the Hatam Sofer* (Jerusalem: Mishavim, 1981), 337–380; and Katz, *Halakhah and Kabbalah*, 345. (**Translator's note:** The Hebrew term *yishuv*, usually translated as “settlement,” can refer to more than populating the area; it can encompass its economic development—agricultural, commercial, and even industrial—as well, and might sometimes better be translated as “inhabiting” or even “developing.” “Settlement” will here be used consistently, as it is in the Hebrew, but its range of meanings should be recognized. Note also that *yishuv* (as a proper noun) denotes the community of Jews residing in the Land of Israel. The Old Yishuv generally refers to those who were there before the proto-Zionist and Zionist immigration that began during the second half of the nineteenth century; the New Yishuv, to those who arrived during those waves of immigration.)
- 5 B. Dinur, *Hibbat Ziyyon* (Tel Aviv: Hevrah, 1932–1934), 15.
- 6 Zahavi, *From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl*, 35.

of Zionism” among Rabbi Kalischer’s students.

The ideas of Religious Zionists and anti-Zionist haredim have both been traced to the Hatam Sofer.⁷ Because his teachings have been used to support opposing positions, they warrant an in-depth inquiry.

Reform and the Land of Israel

At the center of the Hatam Sofer’s world was the struggle against Reform, a confrontation that explains his positions in public affairs and scholarly matters alike.⁸ The “heralds of Zionism” phenomenon was also, in principle, anti-Reform. This accounts for the link between the rise of Orthodoxy and the beginnings of national revival, a link that would later unravel. During the Hatam Sofer’s lifetime, Reform was taking its first steps, and during the 1820s and 1830s it lost some of the ground it had gained in Prussia and even in Hamburg, the center of the initial controversy, itself. Nevertheless, the Hatam Sofer’s profound concern for the future of traditional Judaism—a concern that may also reflect the deterioration and erosion of the traditional way of life through its failure to organize as a movement⁹—roused him to envision the future.

As early as in his letter to the Jewish court in Hamburg (included in the book *Eleh divrei ha-berit*), written following the establishment in 1818 of the Reform temple in that city, the Hatam Sofer declared that life in the Diaspora was artificial and that Hebrew was the holy tongue. Accordingly, the prayer book and anything related to it should not be translated into the vernacular.¹⁰ There is no halakhic basis for his finding that the prayers’ true meanings were simply untranslatable and therefore could never be expressed in the vernacular, but as in other such matters, he did not rely on recognized, authoritative halakhic sources to arrive at a position in the public consideration of the issue. When he saw a need to mount a defense, he did not distinguish between more important and less important aspects of the law.¹¹ The Hatam Sofer’s position and authority within his society made his judgments decisive

7 Religious Zionists: Z. Zahavi, “Hatam Sofer as a Founder of the Hibbat Ziyon Movement,” *Sinai* 67 (1970): 308–320; Anti-Zionist haredim: E. Y. Schlesinger, *The Hebrew Heart* (Pressburg, 1864); Weingarten, *The Hatam Sofer and His Disciples*.

8 Katz, *Halakhah in Straits*, 211, 217–218.

9 *Ibid.*, 10.

10 Hatam Sofer, *Responsa Hatam Sofer* 6 (Jerusalem, 1970–1972; photo-offset, Pressburg, 1864), *Responsum* 84, 26, cols. 2, 3.

11 Katz, *Halakhah in Straits*, 218.

in these matters, even in the sense of “*da`at torah*,”¹² a doctrine that would become widespread in later Orthodox society.¹³ The foregoing statement was directed at Reform, which had sought to excise from the prayer book those prayers that referred to a messianic hope to return to Zion and had translated many of the prayers into German.¹⁴ But does this sort of reaction represent his first-instance approach in principle to the Land of Israel?

The Sanctity of the Land of Israel

The sanctity of the Land of Israel and its contemporary nature and force form a complex subject in the Hatam Sofer’s writings. Is the Land a territorial entity or a spiritual one? The Hatam Sofer developed a distinction between Mount Seir, given to Esau as his possession, and the higher Land of Israel, given to Jacob. On the verse in Deuteronomy that states: “You may view the land from a distance but you shall not enter it” (32:52), the Hatam Sofer comments: “This is the higher Land of Israel.”¹⁵ In a Passover discourse in 1800, commenting on “I ... led him [Abraham] through the whole land of Canaan” (Josh. 24:3), he explains the idea as follows:

This shows the difference between the Land of Israel as given to Abraham our father, peace be upon him, and Mount Seir as given to Esau. For it was given to Esau to possess it, really to possess it, to be his share and his portion, but the Land of Israel was given to Abraham our father, peace be upon him, not to possess, but I led him through it so it would be a path on which he could go from there to someplace higher than it.¹⁶

This idea recurs in various versions throughout the Hatam Sofer’s many writings.¹⁷

12 **Translator’s note:** “*Da`at torah*,” lit., “the Torah opinion,” generally refers to the view that prominent rabbinic scholars can provide binding advice on matters of doctrine and opinion beyond the scope of *halakhah per se*.

13 Katz, *Halakhah in Straits*, 17–18.

14 Weingarten, *The Hatam Sofer and His Disciples*, 30–31; *Eleh divrei ha-berit* (Altona, 1819), 9; Hatam Sofer, *Responsa Hatam Sofer* 5 (*Hoshen mishpat*), Responsum 192, 72, col. 4.

15 Hatam sofer al ha-torah (Jerusalem, 1958), 5 (*Devarim*, *Ha’azinu*), 137, and *Sha`ar yosef* ad loc.

16 Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2, 262.

17 Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 1, 6, col. 1; Hatam sofer al ha-torah, 2, 27, s.v. *ve-natati*; *ibid.*, 3, 91, s.v. *ve-natati*.

It is hard to exaggerate the radical quality of this statement, which significantly detracts from the standing of the physical Land of Israel. To similar effect is a discourse given in 1833 on the subject of “all our dwelling and residing in the Land of Israel is only to improve ourselves in preparation for entry from there alive into the Garden of Eden.” The latter discourse is not as sharply worded as the earlier one, but one can still discern his approach, which narrows the place occupied by the physical Land of Israel within the Jewish heritage.

Settling the World and Settling the Land of Israel

The passages just cited were written at times and in contexts known to us, but many other writings by the Hatam Sofer are of unknown date or context, and even where the overall context is known, the specific context cannot be reconstructed. These include his novellae and discourses on a portion of the Talmudic tractate *Berakhot*,¹⁸ addressing the disagreement between Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai and Rabbi Ishmael regarding the verse “you shall gather in your grain” (Deut. 11:14): “He instituted for them the practice of the world [that is, laboring for one’s living]—so said Rabbi Ishmael. Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai says: ‘When Israel performs the will of God, their labor is done for them by others’” (BT *Berakhot* 35b). The Hatam Sofer explains:

Rabbi Ishmael understood the verse “you shall gather in your grain” to pertain only to the Land of Israel and the production of its sacred produce, and with respect to that the Torah commanded “you shall gather in your grain” ... But when we are dispersed, by reason of our many sins, among the nations of the world, the more [effort] that is devoted to settlement of the world [that is, worldly activities], the more divine service is left desolate. [In that situation, therefore,] Rabbi Ishmael concedes the point to Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai.¹⁹

In the Hatam Sofer’s understanding—an understanding that dif-

18 *Responsa Hatam Sofer* 6, 42 (appendix of halakhic novella on the Talmudic chapter *Lulav ha-gazul*).

19 *Hatam Sofer, Sefer Torat Moshe*, 5 (Shoftim) (Pressburg, 1897–1893), 36, col 2. The same opinion is found in his book *Daat Hatam Sofer* (Brooklyn: Strasser, 1996), 13–14.

fers from that of later Zionist interpreters—the passage is not meant to glorify agricultural work in the Land of Israel so much as to glorify Torah study in the Diaspora. In the reality of the Hatam Sofer's time, when most Jews lived outside the Land of Israel, it was desirable to limit one's involvement in worldly activities and increase one's involvement in divine service. A similar observation appears in the Hatam Sofer's commentary on the Torah. Only

when Israel is situated in its land is it a commandment to gather one's grain, not merely for sustenance but to fulfill the commandment to settle the Land of Israel.... And this refers not only to agricultural work but to all crafts engaged in for the settlement and glory of the Land of Israel.

But

when we are dispersed among the nations, which have many craftsmen, where there is no need for us [to engage in those crafts], and one who engages in them does so only to earn a living, I will abandon all crafts and teach my son only Torah.²⁰

According to the Hatam Sofer, then, the commandment to settle the Land of Israel does not apply nowadays—a matter to be considered further below.

The Commandment to Immigrate to the Land

The Hatam Sofer did not encourage his students to immigrate to the Land of Israel. In his responsa, he ruled expressly that spouses may not compel each other to immigrate in his era.²¹ The ruling is contrary to

20 Hatam Sofer, *Sefer Torat mosheh* 5 (*Shoftim*), 36, col. 2. This understanding of the statement also appears in his book *Da'at hatam sofer* (Brooklyn: Strasser, 1996), 13–14.

21 *Responsa Hatam Sofer* 4 (*Even ha-ezer*), Responsum 132, 84, col. 4. The Hatam Sofer here relies on Mahari and *Me'il zedakah*. On this, see J. Landsfer, *Responsa* (Prague, 1757; photo-offset, Jerusalem, 1968), Responsum 26. Proof cited from Rabbi Israel Isserlein, the author of *Terumat ha-deshen* (*Pesqim u-ketavim*, sec. 88) does not unambiguously support the Hatam Sofer's ruling, for it involves a range of different considerations that did not apply in the Hatam Sofer's time. At a minimum, the Hatam Sofer does not rely on them. A similar ruling to the Hatam Sofer's had

most precedents from the Mishnah to the *Shulhan arukh*, according to which “all may be compelled to immigrate to the Land of Israel.”²² He likewise supported the ruling that the commandment to settle the Land did not apply in his time:

in any case, one does not do right if he journeys there and must on that account be supported by charity, though he could have supported himself had he remained outside the Land.²³

In so saying, he favored the ruling of Jonah Landsofer, an eighteenth-century halakhic decisor, over a long decisional tradition that did not condition settlement of the Land on economic security and certainly did not reject being supported by such sources as the *haluqah*.²⁴

The *Hatam Sofer* expressed reservations about being supported by charity in the Land of Israel, reservations unknown in the responsa literature that preceded him. He even questioned the claimed basis for the *haluqah*—the argument that residents of the Land of Israel had the right to demand support from their overseas brethren not as charity but as compensation for their fulfillment, on behalf of all Israel, of the mission to dwell in the Land and pray there for all Jews.

But the *Hatam Sofer* was not at all consistent with respect to the *haluqah*, for he himself was in charge of raising funds for it in Hungary, and even offered his own rationale for maintaining Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel in his day: “If, Heaven forbid, the settlement in the Land of Israel were to cease to exist nowadays, that sanctification [that is, declaration of months and years by authorized rabbis] and many [other] commandments would [also] cease to exist, Heaven forbid, and

appeared many years earlier in the responsa of Rabbi Simeon ben Zemah Duran (*Tashbez*) and Rabbi Solomon ben Simeon Duran (*Rashbash*), but it is unusual and not unambiguous. See I. Schepansky, *The Land of Israel in the Responsa Literature* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1967), 122 and n. 19, 133.

22 BT *Ketubot* 110b; Maimonides, *Mishneh torah*, *Hilkhot ishut* 13:19; *Even ha-ezer*, *Hilkhot ketubot*, sec. 75. *Rashbash*, however, ruled that one is not forced to immigrate to the Land of Israel (see Schepansky, *The Land of Israel in the Responsa Literature*, 132, n. 45), but his primary rationale is related to the danger of the journey and differentiates between places from which immigration is compelled and those from which it is not. See *ibid.*, 134.

23 *Responsa Hatam Sofer* 3 (*Even ha-ezer*), *Responsum* 132, 84, cols. 1–2.

24 **Translator’s note:** The *haluqah* (“distribution”) refers to the charitable distributions of funds raised in Diaspora communities for the support of Jews residing in the Land of Israel.

we must therefore continue to support them with all our energies.”²⁵ The Hatam Sofer expressly urges support for those dwelling in the Land, but he still does not call on those in the Diaspora to join them. The responsum was written in 1838 and may already reflect something of a change in his treatment of questions relating to the Land of Israel.

This thinking also underlies the Hatam Sofer’s responsum to his student Rabbi Amram Hasida, who immigrated to the Land of Israel in 1827. It is evident from the responsum that the Hatam Sofer did not consider settlement of the Land of Israel to be a commandment in his time. One gets the impression that the Hatam Sofer here attempts to excuse his own failure to immigrate to the Land on the grounds that he did not want to participate in the commemoration of Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai at Meron on Lag Ba-omer, a commemoration suffused with kabbalistic practices he did not approve of: “For that reason itself I was among those who withdrew, so that I would not have to dwell there and change their custom before them, and so I would not want to join them in it.”

When a custom was consistent with his position, he would adopt it enthusiastically, but when it was a custom he regarded as superstitious, he rejected it with the stroke of a pen. Examination of the responsum as a whole reveals that its essential position is that any place where Torah study goes on is a proper place to live: “On the contrary; it is possible that Babylonia is preferable to the Land of Israel for there is more Torah study there.”²⁶ One cannot avoid the sense that the Hatam Sofer never seriously entertained the possibility of immigrating to the Land of Israel and never thought that the commandment to settle the Land applied in his time or obligated the Jews in the Diaspora to move there. Still, his opinion was not definitively and firmly held, and he may have contradicted himself. It is reasonably clear that it was not he who impelled his students to immigrate, but his statements on the issue were carefully worded and non-binding.

His comments offer conflicting alternatives: on the one hand, immigration to the Land could be justified because travel there was no

25 *Responsa Hatam Sofer* 1 (*Orah hayyim*), Responsum 203, 250, cols. 2, 4.

26 *Responsa Hatam Sofer* 2 (*Yoreh de'ah*), Responsum 233, 100, col. 4. Nahshoni does not quote all parts of the responsum, which effectively annul the commandment to settle the Land of Israel nowadays. It appears from the ensuing responsum (no. 234) that no. 233 likewise was written in 1827. See Nahshoni, *Our Rabbi Moses Sofer*, 338.

longer as dangerous as it had been in late medieval times, when Rabbi Hayyim, one of the Tosafists, ruled that one might not compel his wife to immigrate to the Land because of the journey's hazards. Moreover, according to Ra'abad, the commandments dependent on the Land and on the Temple are inapplicable nowadays, so Rabbi Hayyim's second concern—"there are commandments dependent on the Land, subject to punishment for their violation, that we are incapable of fulfilling punctiliously" (Tosafot on BT *Ketubot* 110b, s.v. "*hu omer*")—need not deter us. On the other hand, even if the sanctity of the Land was annulled with the destruction of the First Temple, the sanctity of Jerusalem remains intact, and it follows that Jerusalem is the primary focus of the Land's sanctity nowadays. That determination negates, or at least diminishes, the sanctity of the Land of Israel outside of Jerusalem.²⁷

Questions regarding the contemporary force of the commandment to settle the Land, like those in an earlier time related to living in the Land versus living in Babylonia, echo throughout Talmudic and rabbinic literature, but in the circumstances of the Hatam Sofer's time, when Ashkenazi immigration to the Land of Israel became a prominent public issue and was supported by key groups within Jewish society (such as the Lithuanian Perushim²⁸ and important Hasidic dynasties, such as certain groups within Chabad), his statements on the question became even more important. In his letter to Zvi Hirsch Lehren, the head of the Organization of *Peqidim* and *Amarkalim* [Clerks and Administrators] in Amsterdam,²⁹ the Hatam Sofer conveyed his positive decisively:

Regarding [your; the Hebrew uses an elaborate honorific] comment that I should prevent the immigrants from going, my course is to direct them to what is written at the conclusion of *Sefer tashbez qatan* [responsa of Simeon ben Zemah Dur'an]: "Certainly one should not leave his

27 *Responsa Hatam Sofer* 6, Responsum 233, 100, cols. 1, 4; Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2 (Discourse for 7 Av), 660. On his responsa to his students in the Land of Israel—Amram Hasida and Zalman Margolies, two of the leading Galician rabbis—see Zahavi, *From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl*, 80–81.

28 **Translator's note:** The Perushim, literally, "those who withdrew," were the followers of the Ga'on of Vilna in the Land of Israel, and were so termed after their dissociation from the Hasidim there. The name may also suggest withdrawal from worldly activity in order to devote oneself entirely to study of Torah.

29 **Translator's note:** The Clerks' Organization was established in 1809 and engaged in the raising of funds for the Jews of the Land of Israel.

teacher in the Diaspora and go to the Land of Israel and there abandon his studies to pursue his living” [*Tashbez*, sec. 564], but Heaven forbid that I forcefully prevent it, for they are permitted [to decide], not I.³⁰

The remarks seem to embody clear reservations on the part of the Hatam Sofer regarding immigration to the Land of Israel in his time.

Messianism

The Hatam Sofer also rejected any messianic efforts and any allusions to the coming in his own time of the Messiah—“signs of the dawn”—such as the messianic awakening in anticipation of the year 5600 (1840) that swept over some Jewish circles. Leaving no room for doubt, he declared “speedy redemption is not assured.”³¹ More generally, fulfilling the commandment of repentance need not involve the Land of Israel:

“It is not in the heavens” [Deut. 30:12]—that is, not even specifically at the gate of the heavens, in Jerusalem ... but “close to you” [Deut. 30:14], even in the Diaspora, through study and prayer. It is “close to you, in your mouth,” through study of the laws and praying in lieu of bringing sacrifices and “in your heart,” through your yearning to perform [the commandments]³² ... *hal-akhah*, exile and the destruction of the Temple and hope for salvation ... that sorrow is itself full repentance.³³

These discourses were given during the 1830s, and one cannot escape the impression that they were meant to contradict the messianic expectations that had been raised within the Jewish world, thereby quelling the hope that the Messiah would appear very soon.³⁴ The anticipation of

30 See Hatam Sofer’s letter, dated spring 1835, in *Kerem shelomoh* 189 (Iyyar–Sivan 1999): 29. My thanks to Michael Silver for referring me to this text as soon as it was published. Joseph Isaac Cohen has published, relatively recently, other sources that confirm my understanding; see his *The Sages of Hungary and Its Rabbinic Literature* (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 1997), 13–14.

31 J. Falk, ed., *Sefer hatam sofer* (Michalovce, 1939), 56; Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2 (discourse for 7 Av 5595 [2 August 1835], s.v. *hashiveinu ha-shem eilekha*).

32 Hatam Sofer, *Sefer Torat mosheh*, 61, col. 4 (*Devarim*, s.v. *lo ba-shamayim hi*).

33 Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2, 676 (discourse for 7 Av 5597 [8 August 1837]).

34 J. Lifschitz, *Zikhron ya`aqov* 1 (Kovno: Dreller, 1923–1930; photo-offset, Jerusalem, 1968), 84–85.

salvation was ritualistic, not programmatic.

Emancipation, Acculturation, Diaspora, and the Land of Israel

The historical literature generally sees the Hatam Sofer as a herald of Zionism or the bard of hope for the redemption of Zion. It appears, however, that he was primarily the spokesman for Diaspora Jewry. The change in circumstances during his productive years, from the 1790s to the late 1830s, may account for certain changes in his positions or threads in his teachings. These were the stormy times of the French Revolution, Napoleon's campaigns, and Metternich's conservative restoration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the Jewish world, hopes for emancipation in the wake of the French Revolution were intertwined with internal struggles between conservatives and innovators, beginning in the German lands and then spreading throughout the Hapsburg Empire.

The Hatam Sofer's discourses nicely reflect the conflicts within the Jewish world from the end of eighteenth century until around 1840 over the questions of exile and redemption, acculturation, and isolation. One of the earliest is his discourse in Mattersdorf (where he served as rabbi from 1798 to 1806) during the month of Av in 1799. The discourse provides a clear apologia for the Diaspora, something out of the ordinary in the rabbinic world of his time. Centuries earlier, Nahmanides had identified settling the Land of Israel as one of the 613 commandments, but the Hatam Sofer maintained that the commandment applied only when it was a matter of choice, not when Jews were compelled (by adverse circumstances in the Diaspora) to live in the Land of Israel. In the future, conditions in the Diaspora would be "such that we will be able to live in their lands as we wish," and only then "will our portion [that is, the Land] be selected for us"—evidently a reference to messianic times. Only in the time of the Messiah will we fulfill the commandment to dwell in the Land:

Only when it is good for us in the lands of other nations
and we nevertheless choose to dwell exclusively there [in
the Land of Israel] will we fulfill the foregoing positive
commandment through our free will.³⁵

35 Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2, 611.

Israel sustains the world by virtue of observing the Torah, not necessarily doing so in the Land of Israel, as it did at the time of the Exodus from Egypt:

Do not say specifically by fulfilling the Torah and the commandments in the Land of Israel, where it is the law of the God of the Land.... And when the Holy One blessed be He says to Israel “You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Start out and make your way to the hill country of the Amorites... See, I place the land at your disposal” (Deut. 1:5-8), it means the world overall, which I have given you through [your] dwelling at this mountain. Only after the entire world was given to them “do I advise you to come, take possession of the Land I promised to your fathers; why should you go elsewhere?”

And then, “you shall choose life; come and possess.” This was in the time of Moses, but it appears from the discourse overall that the Hatam Sofer saw his own time as one in which “we lack all; we are hungry and thirsty ... they have no part in this world and no share in it.” Accordingly, “come, take possession” does not pertain here. “That being so, each Jew has the choice of choosing for himself a pleasant lot, selecting a dwelling place where his spirit leads him and he is accepted.”³⁶ Only after the stage at which they are accepted everywhere will the final stage ensue: “Come and possess the land that I gave to your fathers.” Of course, this understanding of the discourse might be turned on its head, given the Hatam Sofer’s ambiguous terminology on such matters,³⁷ but it appears that the main idea here is that nowadays, normative Jewish life can encompass the entire world.

Eventually, the Hatam Sofer witnessed the beginnings of the Jews’ cultural integration into their surroundings, first in Germany and

36 Ibid. The discourse is used in haredi literature to sing the praises of the Land of Israel, a possible interpretation given its ambivalent language. See Hatam Sofer, *Da`at hatam sofer*, ed. Ben-Zion Sofer (Brooklyn: Strasser, 1996), 12.

37 A statement he included in his discourse—“why should we nourish other nations with what is ours when we lack all ... to repair the supernal worlds as well, only in the Holy Land” (Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2, 611)—turns the discourse on its head.

Moravia and later in Hungary. He sensed deep-down that these developments could lead to the unraveling of Jewish society, and his resulting anxiety explains the changes in his positions and his barbed comments about Reform and emancipation generally.³⁸ The Land of Israel and the Hebrew language, recalling the Land and immigrating there, all serve as a defense against these developments.³⁹ The markers that differentiate Jews from their surroundings, including their faith and their language, become mechanisms for protecting their distinctiveness and separation from the world around them. And they can operate in conditions of exile as well.

The writings of the Hatam Sofer convey no concerns about antisemitism that might trigger a change in the concept of the Diaspora. In his view, it is specifically acculturation that provokes hatred; his premise is that inter-societal hatred is generated not by differences but by imitation and efforts to mask differences:

... they teach their children everything about the ways of the nations and their books, mingling them with Gentile children and hoping thereby to draw nearer to the nations of the world. But the more they do that, the more they increase hatred of us, and even if a Jew were to be learned in all the world's wisdom, he would not attain even a minor position of authority.... Even if he abandons "the voice of Jacob," he will still not attain "the hands of Esau," and he will lose both qualities.⁴⁰

Exile is primarily a state of mind flowing from loss of individual identity. It follows that overcoming it likewise is primarily a matter of consciousness, of ousting the desire to be like one's surroundings. The

38 See Nahshoni, *Our Rabbi Moses Sofer*, 340 et seq.

39 See the explication of the verse in the Torah portion *Vayishlah*, s.v. *im lavan garti*: "All the time that Jacob dwelled with Laban, his eye and his heart never moved from the Holy Land ... if over all the time in exile we cleave to God and do not learn the ways of the nations, then we will have already attained the standing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Hatam Sofer, *Sefer Torat mosheh*, 1 [*Bereshit*, *Vayishlah*], 24).

40 Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2, 665 (discourse for 7 Av 5592 [3 August 1832]). Compare the discourse for 7 Av 5569 (20 July 1809): "The more we become involved and want to draw near to them and act and adopt their practices, the more God instills baseless hatred between us and them" (*ibid.*, p. 624).

Hatam Sofer says as much in a discourse delivered on 7 Tevet 5574 (30 December 1813):

All the exiles originated only in the Jews' mingling with the Gentiles and learning their ways. They began by resembling them in their attire, and then in their language, and then, through our many sins, in changing their names.⁴¹

He offers the following explanation of the Hebrew language as a mechanism for isolating Jews from their surroundings:

The impurity of the idolaters' tongues is the lot of their foreign gods, and our fathers therefore saw that it was good for us not to speak eloquently in the various languages of the Gentiles. They would speak part Philistine and part Hebrew and Aramaic, mixed with various languages, so it would be a witness for us not to intermingle with the nations.⁴²

The Hatam Sofer's responsa and discourses convey a sense of having come to terms with the Exile. In a responsum written in 1815, he comments on Jeremiah's admonition to "build houses [in the Babylonian exile] and live in them" (Jer. 29:5):

And he counts [the time of] our future redemption, whose time is hidden, and each day might be its time, and we might learn from our ancestors not to build a house or plant vineyards, it so seems to me, but that would be only if the building were unnecessary. But our needs are great and our living is constrained, and the Exile is long, so it appears that we should not pay much heed to this [that is, to not building] and that it would be good to dedicate the house [that one builds] through Torah study and prayer for a while, for that is our life

41 Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 1, 166 (discourses for 7 Tevet, 5577 [26 December 1816]).

42 *Ibid.*

and the length of our days.⁴³

The Hatam Sofer had a deep-seated sense that Jeremiah's words, directed to the Jews of the Babylonian exile, were equally suited to his own time. Because the time of the Exile's end is concealed, immediate necessities should be given primacy over expectations of redemption in the distant future. The Hatam Sofer maintained this attitude even when his tone changed.

In a responsum written in 1834, in a passage beginning "anyone who dwells in the Land of Israel dwells without sin" (BT *Ketubot* 111a), he wrote: "Two things are involved—that he be among those who dwell there and that he be specifically in it"; in other words, "those who are described as dwellers in the house of the Lord need not be within it; wherever he goes, His house goes with him, and his thoughts make it a sacred place."⁴⁴ If a person dwells outside the Land of Israel and his mind is directed toward Torah and the commandments, it is as if he dwells in God's house. Similarly, in *Torat mosheh*, commenting on "They also took Lot" (Gen. 14:12), he writes: "Even though we are, willy-nilly, in Exile, it is our bodies, but not our thoughts. Wherever we dwell, we dwell on the holy land in our minds."⁴⁵ That discourse complemented his responsum to Rabbi Amram Hasida, which concluded, as noted, that the commandment to settle the Land of Israel does not apply nowadays.

The 1830s—A Changed Orientation?

Overall, as we have seen, the Hatam Sofer took a positive view of the Diaspora. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of a change in tone on his part beginning in the early 1830s, which may be attributable to the increased unraveling of traditional communities that reached even Hungary with the beginning of urbanization. It was certainly influenced by the Hatam Sofer's involvement in the struggle with the Reform rabbi of the Arad community, Aron Chorin, whose anti-traditional positions and publications impacted on him. The letters he received from Jews

43 *Responsa Hatam Sofer* 2 (*Yoreh de'ah*), Responsum 138, 51. Zvi Zahavi takes a different view of the responsum, seeing it primarily as expressing opposition to building grand structures outside the Land of Israel; Zahavi, *From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl*, 71.

44 *Ibid.*, 1 (*Orah hayyim*), Responsum 194.

45 See Hatam Sofer, *Sefer Torat mosheh* (*Bereshit, Lekh-lekha*), 6, col. 1, s.v. *vayiqhu et lot*.

throughout Europe also affected his pronouncements.⁴⁶ In any case, what stands out is that during those years, he issued public rebukes for their disregard for the elements of the Jewish tradition that pertain to the Land of Israel. In a discourse in 1833, he stated:

Do not be among the enemies of Zion who do not wish to return and instead favor living in tranquility under foreign kingdoms over our salvation and the redemption of our souls.⁴⁷

To similar effect are discourses that repeatedly change the notion of Exile from consciousness to deed:

We are shamed and abashed because we left the Land and were expelled from it because of our iniquitous actions and we have extended the term of our exile. For each year in which it is not rebuilt is as if it was the year in which it was destroyed, for there is no year whose accursed nature is not worse than that of the year before.⁴⁸

Similarly: “Our soul weeps in hiding.... How much longer will we be dispersed and not hope to return to Zion.”⁴⁹ And: “The enemies of Zion are heretics, haters of God, His nation, and His Torah.”⁵⁰ In the circumstances of the Exile, the Hatam Sofer wanted to raise the walls of separation between the Jews and their surroundings, and extreme Orthodoxy went even further than he did. Many of his discourses are ritualistic, without any call to action. They convey apprehension about the dissolution of Jewish identity, but they do not offer any hope of a change in Israel’s status among the nations.⁵¹

46 S. Sofer, *Sefer iggerot soferim* (Vienna: Schlesinger, 1928), letter 66 (pp. 62–66, from Amsterdam); letter 64 (p. 76, from Prague). The Alexanderson incident dates from that period as well, on which see Katz, *Halakhah in Straits*, 211, 217–218.

47 Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2, 93 (discourse for 8 Tevet 5593 [30 December 1832]).

48 *Ibid.*, 2, 667 (discourse for 7 Av 5593 [23 July 1833]).

49 *Ibid.*, 1, 93 (discourse for 8 Tevet 5593 [30 December 1832]). A similar discourse was given on 7 Av 5559 (8 August 1799), *ibid.*, 2, 613.

50 *Ibid.*, 1, 333, note (discourse for 6 Av 5592 [2 August 1832]).

51 Cf. the discourse for 7 Av 5559 (8 August 1799) (*Discourses* 2, 613) with that for 8 Tevet 5593 (30 December 1832) (*Discourses* 1, 187).

The signs of change in the Hatam Sofer's positions during the 1830s are, in general, a continuation of his thought processes in earlier years. In his discourses during the 1830s, he not only emphasizes the Land of Israel, its settlement, and immigration to it, but he also mounts a direct attack on the rationale of liberal Judaism with respect to both the hope for emancipation and the idea of Israel's destiny. In a discourse on the Sabbath before Passover in 1832, he took a clear anti-emancipation line:

There are two types of exile. If the world imposes burdens on Israel, the harshness of their servitude causes an abandonment of divine service and a crisis of body and soul. But sometimes the problem is the contrary, in that the government liberates the Jews, raising them up and drawing them near. The evil inclination then becomes significant, immediately causing problems, for on account of our many sins, the Jews then become inclined only to draw near to the government officers, following in their ways and abandoning Torah and commandments of their own free will.⁵²

It is clear from this that the Hatam Sofer favored the first form of exile—servitude—over the second, for the second, as he saw it, meant abandonment of Judaism. Against those who argued for “the idea of destiny” within the Exile, he maintained that Israel's salvation would come when the people of Israel were all assembled on their land, and only then would they be a model for all nations:

All Israel will dwell securely, dedicated to their God. After that the House of God will be a place where all nations will gather to worship Him together, in clear speech.⁵³

Israel has no mission amidst the nations of the world.

The Hatam Sofer wavers between the Land of Israel as a spiritual idea

52 Ibid., 1, 500 (discourse for the Sabbath before Passover, 1832); Zahavi, *From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl*, 76, n. 113.

53 Zahavi is correct in seeing this as being in opposition to the liberal idea of destiny; *ibid.*, 72. See also Hatam Sofer, *Discourses* 2, 379 (eulogy for Rabbi Aaron Segal Spitz, 1817).

of Torah and commandments and the Land as a physical territory bound up with the commandments that depend on the Land and aspirations for tangible redemption from exile. Each side of his thinking about the Land of Israel has support in the rabbinic literature that preceded him, but the urgency with which he considers the issues and their proximity in time to a period of radical change in all aspects of the Jewish attitude toward the Land give his position added importance.

Studies of the Hatam Sofer, especially those of Zvi Zahavi and Samuel Weingarten, have found that his students included some who immigrated to the Land of Israel or supported its settlement, such as Eliezer Halevi (Moses Montefiore's secretary), Rabbi Joseph Natonek, and even Moses Sacks. But this tells us nothing about the Hatam Sofer's own position on the matter, for many other men who attended his yeshivot in Mattersdorf or Pressburg neither immigrated nor supported immigration. Moreover, what the students who did immigrate had in common is not at all clear, nor is the extent to which their teacher was involved in their decisions.⁵⁴ Although they emerged from a similar intellectual and social background, each followed his own course in life. Particularly instructive are the comments of Rabbi Simeon Deutsch, who expressly declared that the doctrines of his teacher, the Hatam Sofer, had led him to immigrate to the Land of Israel: "His holy Torah implanted in my heart the sense of obligation 'to go up to Jerusalem.'"⁵⁵ The statement does not necessarily mean that Deutsch's teacher suggested that he move to the Land of Israel. Rather, it can imply only that the student retroactively attributed his actions to what he had learned from his teacher in his youth.

Aside from this report, we have no programmatic statements regarding the Hatam Sofer's position on immigration to the Land of Israel, and his stance seems to have been one of ritual emphasis on elements that had been downplayed by the Reformers. If the Hatam Sofer was in fact a herald of later intellectual and communal positions, he can be credited with presenting the dilemma of Torah and commandments

54 On the uncertainties regarding the relationships between Dr. Eliezer Halevi and the Hatam Sofer, see the 1836 letter from Rabbi Herschel Levin, rabbi of London, to the Hatam Sofer in Sofer, Iggerot soferim, letter 71, 80–81.

55 The letter is quoted in P. Grajewski, ed., "The Deutsch Family of Jerusalem," in *Zikhron la-hovevim ha-rishonim*, booklet 19 (Jerusalem, 1929), 391–393; cf. Weingarten, *The Hatam Sofer and His Disciples*, 92. Of his more than one hundred principal students, only four reached the Land of Israel; Sofer, Sefer iggerot soferim, letter 77, 89–95.

versus territory and national normalization.

Akiva Joseph Schlesinger: The Rejection of Modernity

Rabbi Akiva Joseph Schlesinger was the preeminent spokesman for ultra-Orthodoxy, first in Hungary and later, after his immigration in 1870, in the Land of Israel. Zionist historians made him into a “herald of Zionism”—see, for example, the article about him in the *Hebrew Encyclopedia*. But because Zionism was essentially a modern movement, Schlesinger’s teachings could not be aligned with it. The call for “restoration of the ancient crown” (*hahazarat atarah le-yoshnah*), as he titled one of his books,⁵⁶ was more than a rhetorical trope or a general outlook; it was a detailed program to return Jewish society to a pre-exilic utopia, not only with regard to halakhah but in all aspects of life—language, dress, and economics. Schlesinger envisioned an ultra-Orthodox utopia that corresponded neither to the values of Hungarian Orthodoxy⁵⁷ nor to those of the Old Yishuv in Jerusalem, a divergence that became evident in the banning of his books.⁵⁸

To illustrate the nature of this utopia, we can cite a story recounted by Schlesinger in his book *The Last Eternal Covenant*:

I purchased a parcel [of land in Petah Tiqvah] so as to provide food for our family through the toil of our hands ... and it was a festive day for me when I was privileged to bring up to Jerusalem the first ten camels laden with the first and second tithes for distribution to the priests, Levites, and poor.⁵⁹

But the halakhic consensus of most decisors, early and late authorities alike, is that the priestly and levitical gifts are no longer required as a matter of biblical law (Maimonides, *Mishneh torah*, *Hilkhot terumot* 1:26; *Shulhan arukh*, *Yoreh de`ah* 331:1-3); they were discontinued in

56 Schlesinger, *Book of the Society of the Restoration of Things to Their Former Glory*.

57 Katzberg, “The Ruling of the Mikhailowitz Court,” 274–277, 280–282; J. Reinitz, *Repentance through Love* (Ungvar, 1865); *Ketav yosher divrei emet* (Pressberg, 1865).

58 Booklet, *Nituz ha-bayit* (Jerusalem, 1875); booklet, *Shomer yisra’el* (Jerusalem, 1875), especially the summary on 2.

59 A. J. Schlesinger, *The Last Eternal Covenant* (Jerusalem, 1898), 68a. See also A. J. Schlesinger, *The Pillar of Torah* (Jerusalem, 1879), 2, col 1.

Babylonia and portions are set aside at the present time only to recall an earlier practice. We have here a good example of Schlesinger's disregard for halakhah as accepted in his own time and a commitment instead to a utopian halakhah. This sort of move is typical of him and of ultra-Orthodoxy generally: broadening the realm of the forbidden on grounds of *da`at torah*, and reaching decisions, unsupported in accepted halakhah, on the basis of social considerations.⁶⁰ Schlesinger instituted so many stringent rulings of his own, with no authoritative support, that he was isolated and excluded from the Orthodoxy out of which he had emerged. But his extraordinary stringencies were matched by extraordinary leniencies on some matters. For example, he found a basis for leniency with respect to Rabbenu Gershom's ban (the medieval ruling abolishing polygamy within Ashkenazi Jewry) when a husband wanted to immigrate to the Land of Israel and his wife did not wish to join him.⁶¹

How did the nationalist doctrine that became widespread during the 1860s and 1870s—in effect, the doctrine of Rabbi Kalischer—come to inspire an anti-nationalist doctrine such as that of Rabbi Schlesinger? Many writers have already noted the points of similarity between Kalischer's teachings and Schlesinger's,⁶² focusing on the action plans

60 Schlesinger took the view that those who wanted to join Torah and “external” learning were worse than outright heretics; they were like idolaters who worship other deities together with God. A. J. Schlesinger, *The New Bet Yosef* (Jerusalem, 1875), title page. On the ultra-Orthodox, see also N. Katzberg, “The Ruling of the Mikhailowitz Court,” in *Chapters in the History of Medieval and Modern Jewish Society Presented to Prof. Jacob Katz on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. I. Etikes and Y. Salmon (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2000), 280–284. On the prohibition of marrying “foreign-like” women who cast off observance—or even the daughters of the non-observant—see Schlesinger, *The New Bet Yosef*, 43, 44a–54a. On the prohibition against reading books printed on the Sabbath by the non-observant, see *ibid.*, 37a. On the prohibition of violating the Sabbath through the actions of the nonobservant, see *ibid.*, 109c. The non-observant are to be considered as those who “descend not to ascend”; see *ibid.*, 44a. On items cooked by the non-observant having the status of items cooked by a non-Jew and their wine having the status of a genuine idolater's libation wine; see also *ibid.*, 109d–110d and the title page. See also the booklet *Nituz ha-bayit*, 1–3.

61 See also the booklet *Shomer yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 1875), 17–22; Schlesinger, *The New Bet Yosef*, title page. Schlesinger explained that his ruling was limited to the case of a man emigrating to the Land of Israel whose wife declined to join him and who nevertheless did not divorce her, but that limitation was not accepted by the community, which saw the ruling as a general breach of Rabbenu Gershom's ban. Because Schlesinger also tied the annulment of the ban to the need to bear more children, his initiative can be seen as part of his effort to restore Jewish society to its pre-exile greatness.

62 See, for example, I. Freiden, “Rabbi Akiva Joseph Schlesinger and the Society for Settlement of the Holy Land,” *Shalem* 6 (1992): 347–360; but I do not accept his view that Schlesinger drew on the theories of modern nationalism. Even if there are similarities in motifs, and even if Schlesinger explicitly referred to nationalism, he did so only on the surface, and Freiden himself says that nationalism was not Schlesinger's goal (*ibid.*, p. 354). See also I. Freiden, “Akiva Joseph

and modes of argument with respect to all matters tied to the settlement of the Land: redemption by stages, engaging in agriculture versus Torah study, establishing companies for the purchase of lands, organizing defense, establishing agricultural schools, etc.⁶³ Schlesinger's programs were formulated after Kalischer's were publicized, and the reasonable inference that Kalischer influenced him is supported, in fact, by solid evidence. There is evidence as well of extensive contact between the founders of the Society for Working and Redemption of the Land, who were involved in the establishment of *Petaḥ Tiqvah*, and Schlesinger, who founded the Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land. Schlesinger's grandson, Mordecai Eliezer Schlesinger, speaks of the close ties between his grandfather and David Guttman in their efforts to acquire land near Hebron and later to acquire land in *Mulabbis (Petaḥ Tiqvah)*.

The commonalities between the ultra-Orthodox and the heralds of Zionism grew out of their common enemies: the Reform movement in Germany and the Neologist movement in Hungary. The heralds of Zionism sought not to replace frenzied messianic hopes but to reject the Reformers' notion that the Jews were "German citizens of the Mosaic persuasion."⁶⁴ The ultra-Orthodox likewise were motivated by opposition to Reform more than by messianic expectations. Under Schlesinger's leadership, the ultra-Orthodox reacted to Reform with a program for restoring Jewish society to an ancient, pre-exilic state. They saw the Reform threat as one of becoming like one's surroundings, that is, of assimilating—and assimilation is the essence of exile.

But there was also an important division between the heralds of Zionism and ultra-Orthodoxy: their attitude toward modernity. The heralds of Zionism responded favorably to modernity, and showed a willingness to adopt nationalist ideas and formulate a plan for establishing a national Jewish society in the Land of Israel. The ultra-Orthodox, in sharp contrast, rejected modernity and looked toward the establishment of a walled-off, sectarian Jewish society, a society maintaining the "world of Torah and Judaism."⁶⁵ The two responses met with different

Schlesinger—"The First Zionist," *Cathedra* 73 (1994): 83–114.

63 Schlesinger, *Book of the Society of the Restoration of Things to Their Former Glory*, 24–31.

64 Y. Salmon, "The Rise of Jewish Nationalism on the Border of Eastern and Western Europe," in I. Twersky, *Danzig: Between East and West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 123–137.

65 Schlesinger, *Book of the Society of the Restoration of Things to Their Former Glory*, 26, col 1; booklet *Shomer yisra'el*, 12, col 1.

fates over the course of the generations: the nationalist utopia gained “flesh-and-blood” reality despite the difficulties and dislocations it encountered, while the ultra-Orthodox utopia was forced to retreat behind the walls of Jerusalem’s haredi sections and Benei Beraq. Moreover, even haredi life as lived in those areas differs from what Schlesinger envisioned: he did not foresee a society of full-time “Torah scholars” supported by the public dole.

Both programs, the Zionist and the ultra-Orthodox, had to confront the concept of the existing Yishuv, a society pursuing a mission in the Land of Israel, maintaining the presence there of Torah and settlement, and therefore entitled to the financial support it received from Jews in the Diaspora. Both programs met with opposition from the Yishuv, which saw them as challenging the rationale for its existence. Nevertheless, the nationalist program was able to come to fruition side by side with the Old Yishuv (and, to a substantial extent, on its ruins), but the Old Yishuv rejected Schlesinger’s form of ultra-Orthodoxy, and it was never able to gain a foothold. Schlesinger himself was banned by the Old Yishuv and was compelled to live in Even Yisrael, the neighborhood of the *maskilim*.⁶⁶ Since the 1860s, the Old Yishuv in Jerusalem had experienced a measure of revisionism which led it to forge links with nationalist circles, but not with Schlesinger’s ultra-Orthodoxy.

Schlesinger was a pathetic figure in some ways. He borrowed ideas and methods, including the creation of a stock company to raise funds for the implementation of his programs, from the emerging Zionist concept. At first glance, the stock company seems to be a modern economic initiative, but the idea was stillborn because he imposed a condition that grew out of his utopian vision but was commercially unreasonable: the stock certificates had to be printed solely in Hebrew.⁶⁷ Similarly, in his books, he used Hebrew letters as numerals instead of Roman or Arabic ones in order to highlight Hebrew’s distinctiveness and its freedom from external cultural influences.⁶⁸

Schlesinger is a subject warranting further study. His readers have

66 **Translator’s note:** Maskilim were proponents of, or sympathizers with, the Haskalah (“Enlightenment”), the movement that called for Jews to acquire secular education and European culture.

67 Schlesinger, *Book of the Society of the Restoration of Things to Their Former Glory*, 24, col 2.

68 In books printed later by the Frumkin press, introductions and prefaces were numbered in Arabic numerals. Schlesinger himself never explained why he used Hebrew letters as numerals, and my conclusion grows out of his overall philosophy.

noted his frequent use of the adjective “Hebrew”—“Hebrew lad,” “Hebrew charitable organization (*kolel*),” “Hebrew heart”—and some attribute nationalist implications to that usage. There is no doubt that the term “Hebrew” is a central symbol, appearing already in his youthful writings, and while the usage may have been inspired by Hungarian nationalist ideas, the writings certainly predate Italian unification and its associated nationalist ideas and the strengthening of Jewish nationalism.

Schlesinger grew up in the Oberland region of Hungary, an area subject to a strong German influence that was manifested in the Jewish community as well. His name was Joseph, and his biblical eponym was a key symbol for him and played an important role in his thinking: “Joseph the Hebrew,” who came from the Land of the Hebrews, avoided self-effacement before the Egyptians and maintained his identity, even though he was one facing many—“He recognized them, but they did not recognize him.”⁶⁹ In his writings, Schlesinger referred to a midrash that explains the name “Joseph the Hebrew,” in the context of Moses’ plea to be allowed to enter the Promised Land. The midrash recounts the following:

Said Rabbi Levi: He [Moses] said before Him, “Master of the Universe, Joseph’s bones will come into the Land, but I will not come into the Land?” The Holy One blessed be He said to him, “One who acknowledged his land is buried in his land, but one who did not acknowledge his land is not buried in his land.” Whence do we know Joseph acknowledged his land? His mistress said “Look, he had to bring us a Hebrew ...” [Gen. 39:14] and he did not deny that, even saying “For in truth, I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews” [Gen. 40:15]. And whence that he was buried in his land? For it is said, “The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem” [Josh. 24:32]. “But you [Moses], who did not acknowledge your land are not buried in your land.” How so? Jethro’s daughters said, “An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds” [Exod.

69 Schlesinger, *Book of the Society of the Restoration of Things to Their Former Glory*, 6.

2:19], and he listened in silence. Therefore, he was not buried in his land (*Deut. Rabbah*, *Va'ethanan* 2:8).

This accounts for the considerable attention that Schlesinger paid to the Yiddish and Hebrew languages, Hebrew names, distinctive Jewish attire, and Jewish customs, all of which had one important purpose: to isolate the Jews from their surroundings. Nationalism was an instrument Schlesinger used to erect a divide between Jews and non-Jews. Others called for normalization of Jewish society, an impulse clearly appearing in Kalischer's teachings as well, but Schlesinger preached against it, hoping thereby to keep Jewish society utterly closed off from the outside world. Similar considerations drove his opposition to the German neo-Orthodox, whom he called "Sadducees" and "half-assimilated."⁷⁰ Hoping to transform the Jewish people into a closed ethnic sect, he also opposed conversion. In his book *Beit yosef ha-hadash*, he subordinated halakhah to anti-modern, anti-secular sectarianism, treating all of the laws applicable to idolaters as applying to non-observant Jews as well, thereby incurring the wrath of the Jerusalem rabbis, Ashkenazi and Sephardi alike.

As suggested by the title of his book (which can be translated as "The New *Beit yosef*"), Schlesinger claimed to be a decisor of the same rank as Joseph Karo, author of the original *Beit yosef* and of the *Shulhan arukh*.⁷¹ In response to the book and its claims, the rabbis of Jerusalem published a pamphlet entitled *Nituz ha-bayit* and emphasized, in banning Schlesinger's volume,

that its author, Akiva Joseph, dared to speak against the sages, and it is almost entirely vanity and striving after wind, prideful, noisy, and stubborn, attacking the greatest of our early rabbis.⁷²

70 A. J. Schlesinger, *A Sound of Wailing in Zion* (Jerusalem, 1872).

71 The title page of *Beit yosef ha-hadash* declared the authoritativeness with which Schlesinger invested himself: "Our master the *Beit yosef*, may his merit protect us, presumed to decide halakhah, and I, by his merit, presume to decide custom, which is the root and protector of halakhah" (22a-b).

72 Booklet *Nituz ha-bayit*, 1; booklet *Shomer yisra'el*, n. 51, 22a-b, in which Schlesinger is entirely spurned. The booklet suggests that Schlesinger had supporters in Jerusalem from the group known as "*azovei ha-qir*," who established a court that withdrew from the court of the *Perushim*; see *Shomer yisra'el*, 3-4. The bans against Schlesinger were signed by the administrators and officers of various community organizations, including *Perushim*, *Hasidim*, and *Sephardim*, the chief rabbis, and rabbis and sages who lived in Jerusalem.

When Schlesinger realized that his utopia was not gaining support either in Hungary or in the Land of Israel, he became involved in messianism. His messianic expectations were manifested in his 1876 effort to acquire lands in Migdal-Eder near Hebron, an acquisition that he regarded as opening the way to the redemption. His position is evident in his commentary on the Torah, when he cites Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on the verse “he pitched his tent beyond Migdal-Eder’ [Gen. 35:21]: the place where King Messiah is destined to be revealed at the end of days.”⁷³

If Schlesinger in fact heralded anything, it was the emergence of the Neturei Qarta movement many years after his death. That movement adopted Schlesinger as its mentor, as is made clear in the introduction by Joseph Moses Sofer, the publisher in 1976 of Schlesinger’s *Ma`aseh avot*, including a text whose Hebrew title can be translated as “Enactments, decrees, and rulings issued by our rabbis, the great ones of the generations that preceded us.” The book was first published anonymously by Schlesinger in 1901, and Sofer, in his introduction to the 1976 edition, writes as follows:

Blessed be God, who delivered His world to guardians [BT *Avodah zarah* 40b]. Among the guardians of the walls set over Jerusalem, to whom God, may He be blessed, assigned the task of guarding His world, the world of Torah and Judaism, was the great scholar, righteous one, and world-renowned author of *Lev ha-ivri*.⁷⁴

The Neturei Qarta adopted Schlesinger’s doctrines belatedly, and it is questionable whether Schlesinger himself would have been satisfied that the way of life followed by the haredi community in contemporary Jerusalem was a fulfillment of his utopian vision.

Zvi Hirsch Kalischer and His Theory of Zionism

The Jewish national awakening of the 1860s and 1870s took place in Jewish centers situated where Eastern and Western Europe converged,

73 A. J. Schlesinger, *The Commentary “Torah Yehiel” on the Torah* (Jerusalem: Ha-va’ad Lehotsa’at Sifre Haga’on Akiva Yosef, 1971), 33.

74 A. J. Schlesinger, *Ancestral Actions* (Jerusalem: Sofer, 1976), Introduction.

and two differing, even opposing, Jewish cultures met. For the most part Eastern European Jewish culture was closed off from its surroundings, while Jews in Western Europe were becoming acculturated. Nationalism sought to resolve the tension between the two by forging a vital Jewish identity defined in national terms. It attempted to blend the drive to maintain existence as a group which characterized the Jews of Eastern Europe with the modernity imported from the West. And thus, centers of nationalist activity arose in Vienna, Posen, Lyck, Zemlin, Odessa, and elsewhere. At the center of these efforts were men such as Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (in Toruń, Posen), periodicals such as *Ha-maggid* in Lyck and *Ha-shahar* in Vienna, and organizations such as the Society for the Settlement of the Land of Israel, established by Dr. Hayyim Luria in Frankfurt-am-Oder. Kalischer was an Orthodox rabbi who used nationalism to protect tradition in the context of modernity. He saw nationalism as a social framework in which Jewish tradition and modernity could coexist harmoniously.

Kalischer was born in 1795 in Lissa, a town in western Poland that had come under Prussian rule. He was a student of Rabbi Jacob of Lissa, the author of *Havvot Yair da`at*, and of Rabbi Akiva Eger of Posen, both Polish rabbis who had experienced movement from one jurisdiction and culture to another. Much has been written about Kalischer's nationalist-Zionist views,⁷⁵ and we need only highlight the particular environment in which he grew up and worked. In his 1939 book *Mevasserei ha-ziyyonut* [Heralds of Zionism]⁷⁶, Ben-Zion Dinur correctly noted that one might link Akiva Eger and the Hatam Sofer with the first signs of the nationalist movement: the call to use Hebrew and promote ties to the Land of Israel, the emphasis on the commandment to settle the Land, and quasi-messianic terminology for the return to Zion. These ideas had already appeared in Akiva Eger's article in the book *Eleh divrei ha-berit*,⁷⁷ an Orthodox response to the establishment of the Reform temple in Hamburg. The book opposed any modification in traditional synagogue ritual, including the introduction of the German language, changes in the liturgy, and the use of an organ. The Reform prayer book, composed

75 J. Katz, "The Historical Figure of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer," *Shivat ziiyyon* 2-3 (1953): 26-41; J. E. Myers, "Attitudes toward a Resumption of Sacrificial Worship in the Nineteenth Century," *Modern Judaism* 7 (1987).

76 Ben Zion Dinur, *The Herald of Zionism* (Tel Aviv, 1939).

77 *Eleh divrei ha-berit* (Altona, 1819)

on the occasion of the temple's opening, omitted some of the prayers for the return to Zion and the restoration of animal sacrifice.⁷⁸ Kalischer grew up in the Orthodox circles of these parts of Western and Central Europe, and he went on to develop the Orthodox public positions regarding Jews and Judaism.

In 1836, Kalischer suggested to Baron de Rothschild of Frankfurt that he purchase the Land of Israel from Mehmet Ali, then its ruler, and, in particular, that he acquire the Temple site so that sacrifices could be resumed as the first step toward the redemption. Kalischer was not playing the eccentric when he approached Rothschild; rather, he was behaving in a manner consistent with the circle from which he had emerged, a circle that sought to defend the values of traditional society against its adversaries.⁷⁹ His appeal to Rothschild was, in effect, the first step toward realizing his idea of "redemption by stages," an idea he later elaborated on in his famous book, *Derishat zivyon* (1862). The first stage would be the partial ingathering of the exiles with the concurrence of the European powers. In the second stage, once "many of the far-flung Jews are back in the Holy Land," an altar would be rebuilt in Jerusalem and the sacrificial rites would be renewed. That would atone for Israel's sins, and God would be pleased to the point of "causing the light of His presence to descend to His people." The ensuing stages of redemption would involve the war of Gog and Magog, the completion of the ingathering of exiles, the appearance of the Messiah the son of David, the building of the Temple, and the sanctification of God's name over "all inhabitants of the world." All would be part of the complete redemption, referred to in the literature as "the miraculous redemption."⁸⁰

The scholarly literature has not yet considered why, in the 1830s, it was specifically the sacrifices (and not, for example, agricultural settlement) that came to symbolize the beginning of the redemption. This does not appear to have been the result of a messianic movement that saw the renewal of the sacrifices as the first step toward redemption. It must be recalled that the subject of sacrifices was being raised at the

78 M. Meyer, "Founding of the 'Temple' in Hamburg," in Etkes and Salmon, *Chapters in the History of Medieval and Modern Jewish Society*, 218–224. Akiva Eger's comments on the Hebrew language and on the prayers to rebuild the Temple appear in *Eleh divrei ha-berit*; Rabbi Jacob of Lissa's comments appear there on 80–81. See also N. Friedland, *Qol abirei ha-ro'im* (Laslow, 1870), 10.

79 Z. H. Kalischer, *The Zionist Writings of Rabbi Zvi Kalischer* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1957), 3–4.

80 Kalischer, *Derishat zivyon*, 209–222.

same time by others, among them Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chayes in Zolokov, Galicia, who maintained devotion to the sacrifices as part of his battle against Reform. It appears, then, that sacrifices were less an expression of messianic expectations than a reaction to liberal Jewish voices that declined to see the sacrificial cult as a substantive part of the Jewish doctrine and therefore omitted from their prayer books any plea for its restoration. In other words, the call for renewed sacrifices was an outgrowth of the Orthodox struggle against Reform, a struggle that reached its peak during the course of the 1830s and 1840s, as Reform, with governmental help, gained ground.⁸¹

The reformers' opposition to the sacrificial cult was even stronger in those years than its opposition to the return to Zion, as is evident from comments by Rabbi Mannheimer of Vienna in a controversy that developed over the publication in Hamburg of the second Reform prayer book in 1841.⁸²

In 1843, Rabbi Kalischer published his book *Correct Belief: On the War between Torah and Science*,⁸³ in which he responded to current European philosophical notions and sought to integrate them with traditional Jewish thinking. He did not follow the Hatam Sofer's maxim that "the new is forbidden by the Torah," nor did he accept Samson Raphael Hirsch's formulation of "Torah with worldly ways." He believed he could bring about a genuine blend: "inquiry and faith, intellectual speculation and received [tradition] are as the foundations of the earth ... a God-fearing man fulfills all and makes peace among the pursuers."⁸⁴

Kalischer was part of the transitional generation in the leadership of traditional Jewry in Western and Central Europe. His generation had been educated in old-style yeshivot, but was also open to the new modes

81 It was specifically in Prussia, where Kalischer lived, that the government supported the Orthodox position by enacting legislation in 1823, 1829, and 1836 that forbade liturgical reforms. See S. Bernfeld, *A History of Jewish Religious Reformation* (Warsaw: Ahiasaf, 1923), 144. Jody Myers argues that Kalischer's motives for wanting to renew the sacrifices were messianic, not anti-Reform, but she fails to prove her claim (Myers, "Attitudes toward a Resumption of Sacrificial Worship," 34–35). She stands by her view that even during the 1860s Kalischer was motivated by messianism (*ibid.*, 40). Even if one can understand the existence of messianic impulses during the 1830s, in anticipation of the expected redemption in 1840, it is difficult to understand the existence of such impulses continuing into the 1860s. She develops her thesis in a different article, "The Messianic Idea and the Zionist Ideologies," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 7 (1991): 3–13.

82 J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968), 51, 53.

83 Z. H. Kalischer, *Correct Belief: On the War between Torah and Science* (Krotoshin, 1843, 1862).

84 Kalischer, *Correct Belief*, 12–13.

of thought that were circulating in the Jewish street. These rabbis responded to the political and intellectual questions of their time not by brushing them aside or recoiling from them but by grappling with them on the basis of traditional thinking and concepts. Kalischer himself characterized that religious leadership as “the remnant in the German lands who fear God’s word and in whose hearts a love of the holy burns.” He did not include Samson Raphael Hirsch within that remnant, and disputed his teachings. It is possible that his appeal to Rothschild was a reaction to Hirsch’s *Iggerot zafon* (1836), in which Hirsch had said that the Land of Israel played only a temporary role in Jewish history.⁸⁵

Kalischer emphasized, especially in his writings dating from the 1860s, the idea of the Land of Israel as a “settled land,” and later deferred to the idea of renewing the sacrifices. This rejection of his previous position, which did not discuss renewing the sacrificial cult, was associated as well with criticisms of the positions he had taken in the early 1860s. It may also be that the harsh circumstances encountered by the Yishuv in the wake of the Crimean War (1853–1856), and the extensive discussion in the Hebrew press of the need to make the Yishuv more productive, led Kalischer to his emphasis on the settlement of the Land. In any case, had the sacrificial cult ever occupied a central role in his thinking, he certainly would not have marginalized it simply because of changed circumstances.

Kalischer’s book *Derishat ziyyon*, published with the support of the Society for the Settlement of the Land of Israel, is a basic text of Religious Zionism. In the introduction to the first edition and the second (which was published in 1865), Kalischer outlined the principles of Religious Zionist thought. A close reading of the book shows that its veneer of traditional rhetoric cloaks a modern nationalist outlook. Kalischer did not oppose the philanthropic efforts of Diaspora Jews for the benefit of those living in the Land, such as those which established shelters for the Jews of Jerusalem suffering from a housing shortage.⁸⁶ He was prepared

85 S. R. Hirsch, *Iggerot zafon* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1963), 61. Hirsch emphasized that if the concept of *volk* encompassed attachment to a land, it could not be applied to the Jewish nation; see also Bernfeld, *A History of Jewish Religious Reformation*, 125. One cannot accept the view of Yehiel Brill, editor of *Ha-levanon*, that Kalischer saw the settling of the Land of Israel as a means to restore sacrifices, and that the Jerusalem rabbis opposed him on that issue and not on settlement itself.

86 The initiative to establish shelters was taken by the Dutch and German kolel, led by the kolel’s presidents in the Diaspora—Rabbis Jacob Ettlinger of Altona and Esriel Hildesheimer of Eisenstadt.

to serve as trustee of the Shelter Society established in 1858, but his willingness to do so did not distract him from his primary interest:

above all else, to [rebuild] its ruins so its dust will be graced; to plant a vineyard and sow fruit in righteousness, so the land will not be desolate.

He did not reject the traditional reasons for settling the Land—"to pray for its rebuilding on a firm basis ... let those who call on God not be silent; let them seek Him with all their hearts"—nor did he abandon the ideology of the haluqah. He wrote that "the people who dwell there have their sins forgiven" and atone for the sins of all Israel, for they are the emissaries of the people of Israel, "engaging in God's Torah night and day." The residents of Jerusalem fulfill "the commandment to dwell in the Land" and they are the direct recipients of the inspiration afforded by God's presence; for the sanctity of the Land in general and Jerusalem in particular did not abate with the destruction of the Temple: "...On account of the sanctity itself, for through all eternity this is the gate of Heaven ... from which God's presence never budged, even in its destruction."

Even one who dwells in the Land for reasons other than to settle it fulfills the commandment to settle the Land.

Kalischer also maintained the principle of mutuality between those who resided physically in the Land and those who supported them though themselves living in the Diaspora, but he used an *a fortiori* inference to add a further element to the traditional view: if one supports "increased settlement of the Land of Israel, so that it provides its bounty to the children of Israel, his help [in that effort] is reckoned to him as if he lived there." His merit is accumulated to his benefit in this world, and he "merits the good that is set aside in the world to come." The reward for one who supports settlement [that is, development] is greater than the reward for one who simply supports those who dwell there. The analysis oscillates continuously between traditional notions and modern ideas and platforms.

A similar manner of thinking appears in Kalischer's treatment of the haluqah. He writes that those who dwell in the Land and enjoy the benefit of the haluqah:

... are men who hold fast to the Torah and from an early age have not grown used to the idea of working. Most of them came from distant lands and risked their lives for the privilege of dwelling in the Holy Land; and in a land that is strange to them, a land never traversed by human feet, how could they find business or labor [to support themselves]? ... And meager amounts of bread and water are enough for them as long as they can be part of God's portion.⁸⁷

And yet, one can see in his words an express challenge to the way in which the Old Yishuv maintained itself. It is the New Yishuv that will present the desired model for life in the Land; it will "flourish and establish there a domain of fields and vineyards," but it will also preserve the old, for "the horn of redemption will appear in the Land of Israel." In that way, the Old Yishuv will be freed from economic dependency on the Jews of the Diaspora, and that will naturally put an end to the complaint that it is the Diaspora Jews who support its existence: "They will no longer fill their households with grain from Egypt; rather, blessing will be upon us from within the Land."⁸⁸ The desire to fulfill all of the commandments, including those dependent on the Land, requires the formation of an agricultural settlement that supports itself by working the Land.

Settling the Land in the new manner is a necessary step toward the final and complete redemption. Kalischer broadened the concept of redemption, treating "redemption of the Holy Land," along with redemption of the nation, as a precondition to the final, complete, and miraculous redemption: "And when redemption will come to the Land, in a terrestrial manner, so will the horn of redemption grow from the heavens above." Directing the flow of persecuted Jews to the Land of Israel incorporates "redeeming captives," a recognized traditional halakhic value, but a new value assumes center stage in Kalischer's thought, that of "redeeming the desolate land." Kalischer used traditional categories homiletically, applying them to new situations.

Kalischer, then, gave modern public meaning to traditional values.

87 Z. H. Kalischer, *Derishat ziyyon* (Jerusalem, 1964), 77.

88 Ibid., 68.

For example, he instilled practical significance into the maxim “if there is no flour, there can be no Torah”; in practice, he took it to mean “let those who have no Torah”—that is, who are not actively engaged in Torah study—“engage in flour,” that is “labor.” In the Land of Israel, many had lived under the cloak of Torah scholarship in order to escape their obligation to settle the world. However, even Torah scholars should conduct themselves in the manner of the Talmudic rabbis, who “engaged in agricultural work, making their Torah study primary and their worldly labor secondary, but still engaging in both.” And again, agricultural work in the Land of Israel differs from agricultural work elsewhere. In the Land of Israel, “labor ... is itself a great commandment”; accepting “the yoke of Torah in its totality” implies “not being dependent on man.” From there it is but a short step to a social critique of the traditional community’s way of life: “One who benefits from his own toil and fears Heaven is superior to one who fears Heaven but does not benefit from his own toil.”⁸⁹

Along with his modern interpretations of traditional values regarding the Messiah and Torah study, Kalischer also adopted values having no basis in traditional Jewish texts. He spoke of the need for national normalization, a value accepted within non-Jewish society, indicating that the Jewish people should return to the Land of Israel

... so that we, too, will be honored and respected among the nations, who will say that Jews, too, are people who have the spirit to seek and renew their ancestral inheritance, the sanctified Land now desolate and despised, to dwell on it as a human flock and make it fruitful—and therein is their glory. Why should the people of Italy and other nations give their lives for their ancestral lands while we stand afar from our even more special land, called holy by all inhabitants of the world, as men of no courage and heart?⁹⁰

It is commonly thought that Rabbi Kalischer’s main innovation was his call for the Land of Israel to be settled “at this time,” a call inspired by messianic fervor. But his words and actions suggest an inclina-

89 Ibid., 79

90 Kalischer, *The Zionist Writings*, 76–81, and sources cited earlier.

tion to neutralize the messianic idea and take a position very close to that of Rabbi Judah Alkalai. An example is in his commentary on the Passover Haggadah (1864), in which the aspect of redemption that he emphasizes is political freedom rather than the building of the Temple, the punishment of enemies, or the universal recognition of the God of Israel. Emancipation in Europe is the first step:

for God, may He be blessed, has now declared freedom
for the Jews in most states, and that is the prologue to
our being free in the Land of Israel, speedily, in our days.

And, similarly, “That is the essence of redemption, namely, our being free men.”⁹¹

Kalischer distinguished between the Western Jews of his time, who sought to be absorbed into the surrounding society, and the Jews in ancient Egypt, who

did not want to become like the nations, to be one nation
with the people of Egypt, in order to ease their poverty
and enslavement—as the people of our generation want
to be thought of by the Gentiles, and are ashamed to
maintain a distinctive religion.

Western Jews pursue assimilation in the hope that it will free them from antisemitism, but Kalischer believed that hope to be in vain: “That will not eliminate Gentile hatred and enmity; for they will only hate them more, as experience shows.” Because the Jews in Egypt preserved their identity and did not assimilate, “the end [of enslavement] was hastened for them and their honor was increased without end ... and God placed them above all the nations of the earth.”⁹²

On this need to maintain Jewish identity and reject the liberal tendency to acculturate, Kalischer was of the same mind as Schlesinger and the Hatam Sofer. Like them, he did not think assimilation would end antisemitism. In his view, however, the awakening from below⁹³ is the

91 Kalischer, *Passover Haggadah*, 20, 38.

92 Ibid., 49.

93 **Translator’s note:** “Awakening from below” refers to the mystical idea that the redemption had to begin with human action; the awakening from below is thus a precondition to the awakening from on high.

act of settlement itself, “for the beginning of the awakening from below is in repentance and the action of settling the Land of Israel.” But the precondition is “openness to the moral”: “Liberty and freedom surround [me], so I may raise my head; and we will then be able to possess our portion, fields, and vineyards in the Holy Land.” Only after taking these real-world steps, “when the righteous become numerous in the Land of Israel, will we merit sacrificing an offering of thanksgiving.”⁹⁴ It is those who come to settle in the Land of Israel who are called “Messiah,”

for those who come to rebuild the ruins ... are referred to as “Messiah,” and they merit that because they roused themselves to come and were unconcerned about their wealth ... and even before seeing luxury and glory in the Land of Israel, they came and returned to the holy place.⁹⁵

Kalischer’s turn toward a nationalist-Zionist program, then, was a sort of third way. It was meant to reject both the assimilationist tendencies of the Jews of Western and Central Europe, including German neo-Orthodoxy, and the tendencies of the traditional world in Eastern and Central Europe to reject anything new. Kalischer found nationalism to be the path to modernizing traditional Judaism. It likewise offered a way to ease the physical distress of the Jews in the Land of Israel and Europe, and to provide the spiritual benefits of preserving traditional culture with its halakhic and kabbalistic elements through critical encounters with contemporary cultural, political, and intellectual ideas.⁹⁶

94 Ibid., 98.

95 Ibid., 100.

96 Interestingly, Rabbi Nathan Friedland, who drew people to Kalischer’s thinking, presents him and Elijah Guttmacher as “standing in the breach, resisting those who would burst out, repairing the ruined fence of Israel [that is, Jewish practice]” (Friedland, *Kol abirei ha-ro`im*, 1). See also Kalischer’s letter to Hildesheimer: “We have arisen against God’s enemies, to promote the memory of Jerusalem and to instill hope for the redemption of the land” (ibid., p. 9).

II. ORTHODOX JUDAISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

Orthodox Jewry, a new phenomenon in modern Jewish history, took shape in Europe during the nineteenth century, with different variants emerging as a result of the prevailing temporal and local conditions. In its essence, Orthodoxy was the reaction of traditional Jewry to the challenges of modernity. This movement, which is one of the central phenomena of the period, expresses itself socially, ideologically, and halakhically. Its continuity, endurance, spiritual creativity, and variety make it deserving of more attention than it has received to date.

Research into Orthodox Judaism has recently progressed to the point at which we can make fine distinctions between related groups. We speak of Orthodoxy, neo-Orthodoxy, ultra-Orthodoxy, haredi Orthodoxy, Religious Zionism, and Modern Orthodoxy, some of which originated in Western and Central Europe and others of which come from Eastern Europe. Jacob Katz, Mordecai Breuer, Moshe Samet, Samuel Heilman, Steve Levinstaum, and others have produced valuable research on the Western and Central European streams. By contrast, Eastern European Orthodoxy has remained virtually unexamined.

In the past, I have always thought of Eastern European Orthodoxy as primarily a response to nationalism, and therefore dated its onset to the mid-1890s, when the growing resistance to the nationalist movements within the religious community led to the creation of Orthodox organizations. Although I identified some earlier activity, I did not find it sufficiently persistent or organized to qualify as a social movement. Lately, however, some findings I have made about the late 1860s and early 1870s have caused me to change my mind.

I now divide the development of Eastern European Orthodoxy into two stages: the ideological-theological and the halakhic. The controversy over religious reform, which raged from 1868 to 1871, provided the keynote of this ideological phase, while the halakhic phase emerged, between 1874 and 1878, within the context of the controversy about the ritual appropriateness of the etrogim from Corfu and a new compilation of Talmudic material. In order to delineate the developing characteristics of early Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe, I will trace the

progress of both the ideological and the halakhic debates.

The Controversy over Religious Reform

The controversy over Jewish religious reform peaked during a three-year period (1868–1871). It focused upon the place of custom (*minhag*) within the normative halakhic framework and was carried out primarily in the Hebrew press. This period witnessed the demonstrative gatherings of Reform Jews in Germany (Kassel, Augsburg, and Leipzig), the Jewish Congress in Hungary (1868), the first Reform Convention in America (Philadelphia, 1869), and widespread public deliberations in Russia on issues of religious reform. As the raging current of reformation became increasingly radical, it was perceived as a threat that could wash away traditional Judaism altogether.

The controversy was touched off by Moses Leib Lilienblum's famous article, "The Ways of the Talmud" (*Orhot ha-talmud*), which began appearing in the periodical *Ha-me'iliz* at the end of April 1868 (Nisan 5628, no. 13) and was published in eight installments over the following three months. Lilienblum attempted unsuccessfully to enlist the support of Rabbi Mordecai Gimpel Jaffe, his student Yehiel Mikhel Pines, and Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Traub of Kidan, each of whom belonged to the moderate camp of the Russian rabbinate and had recently published articles calling for the social reform of Russian Jewry in a way that took cognizance of the need for intellectual enlightenment.

Of the three, Pines was the most active as a publicist. He came from a prominent and wealthy family in the town of Ruzhany in Lithuania, and became the son-in-law of Shemaryahu Luria of Mohilev and the brother-in-law of David Friedman, the rabbi of Kralin, and of the historian Zev Yavetz. His series of articles "Israel's Situation among the Nations" (Hebrew), also published in *Ha-me'iliz* (1867, nos. 16–18), marked him as a member of the left wing of the rabbinic camp. In contrast to the German reformers, who maintained that Jewish identity is primarily religious, Pines argued that Jewish nationalism should be taken as the defining characteristic of the Jewish people. However, in other ways he might be seen as abetting the Reform position. For instance, in one of his articles (no. 17), he explains that halakhic prescriptions that seem to reflect hatred of the Gentiles were nullified through the application of other halakhic imperatives such as those

forbidding the performance of any act that might lead to the profanation of God's name and invoking the principle of preserving peace. This sort of presentation of halakhic deliberations might be taken as a concession to the reformist idea that the Talmud contains elements inappropriate to the present times, a position that endangers the halakhah in general. Pines was prepared for these challenges and answered them through internal halakhic argumentation. Nevertheless, such views got him into trouble in the traditional camp with which he identified himself.

Indeed, Rabbi Jaffe sought to silence his student for saying things not usually said in traditional society. Jaffe, the rabbi of Ruzhany, settled in the Land of Israel many years later (1888), and served as the rabbi for the settlements until his death from malaria in 1891. He had a good general education and was open to the critique of traditional society. However, he adopted the apologetic strategy of claiming that there was no need for either halakhic or theological reform. He opposed Pines's rationalist view that the messianic idea had the functional value of preserving the nation as unacceptable to a Jew who was attached to traditional ways of thinking. Although Pines and Jaffe were eventually reconciled, what is of interest here are the first signs of the future debate between two kinds of Eastern European Orthodoxy, ultra-Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism. While the ultra-Orthodox entrenched themselves in apologetics, the Religious Zionists were willing to open themselves to modernity on several fronts.

Another article by Pines, "How to Educate Our Nation's Children,"¹ drew even more attention. Here, Pines outspokenly criticized traditional educational modes, especially the imbalance between general education and Jewish education. He called for a synthesis of the two, for a strengthening of ethical education, and for better education for girls. He insisted on seeking out Talmud teachers who knew Bible and Hebrew grammar and who were talented pedagogues. Eventually, Pines would claim that these issues could be properly addressed only in the Land of Israel, but at the beginning of 1868, he called on the Russian people to allow the Jews to farm in Russia, and even hinted that Jews would be willing to serve in

1 Y. M. Pines, "How to Educate Our Nation's Children and What the People Require of Their Rabbis," *Ha-me'iliz* 35 (1867).

the Russian army in exchange for certain prerogatives.²

Lilienblum referred to the article by Pines at the end of his *Orhot ha-talmud* series. His ostensible purpose was to defend the Talmud from its detractors, but beneath the surface of his analysis of the different genres of Talmudic literature (halakhic and aggadic) lay a muffled call for halakhic reform. Still, Lilienblum's article received no response from the traditional camp. The positive general tenor of his articles and his citations of Pines and Jaffe, who belonged to the camp of those "who were at peace with the faith of Israel," protected him from any vituperative response from the traditionalists.

A few months later, however, the final article in Lilienblum's series appeared. Titled "Supplements to *Orhot ha-talmud*" and written in Hebrew, it generated the controversy Lilienblum had avoided up to that point. What made Lilienblum change his conciliatory attitude is still unclear. Perhaps it was the persecutions in his town, Wilkomer. At any rate, he now attacked the halakhic decisors (*poseqim*):

If only these *poseqim* had truly looked at the Talmudic way, if they had noted that the Talmud is more a guide for how to decide the law than it is for actually teaching it ... then they would not have created all these new rules for every moment.³

At the end of this article, Lilienblum turned to the rabbis—Rabbis Isaac Elhanan Spektor, Israel Salanter, Mordecai Gimpel Jaffe, Joseph Zechariah Stern, and Alexander Moses Lapidot—from whom he hoped to garner support for his position. Whether Lilienblum actually believed that these rabbis would support what amounted to an appeal for the destruction of the traditional rabbinic decision-making system and a comprehensive reform of the halakhah remains an open question.

Responses to "Supplements to *Orhot Ha-Talmud*"

Lilienblum received no support from the Haskalah-leaning rabbinic circle, which united in opposition and formulated the ideological in-

2 *Ha-meiliz* 1 (1868).

3 Lilienblum, *Writings*, 37.

frastructure it bequeathed to Orthodoxy. The first to attack was Jaffe. Although he admitted that Lilienblum's quotations seemed to support his claims, he insisted that such comments were exceptional in the literature and did not represent fundamental Talmudic principles.⁴ Furthermore, he warned, such thinking would bring about the destruction of the entire halakhic process.

Pines, in his answer to Lilienblum, distinguished the religious reforms he supported from those advanced by Lilienblum. He conceded that Jewish law had always been open to changes related to the exigencies of the times and the needs of the people, but he charged that Lilienblum's reforms were meant to "alleviate a burden that has not been felt and to reward a nation despite itself." Furthermore, he insisted that religious reforms originating outside the domain of the halakhically observant public are based on alien considerations and are therefore unacceptable. In his flowery language, he explained that:

All the restraints and stringencies have been planted in the earth of religion, and as long as they are still moist with it, Judaism will be nurtured. We cannot uproot anything from this earth without drying up the source of its moisture and shriveling up the ground of religion, together with its flora.⁵

Pines introduced a novel principle, "the spirit of religion," which appears to operate in a spontaneous manner, similar to that of Aḥad Ha-Am's later "spirit of the nation." Pines was prepared to admit that there are "customs of questionable value, or of superstitious origin," but he held that these must be removed by the workings of the process itself, rather than by public outcry.⁶ In other words, he believed in the principle of a halakhic process, the development of which is internal and spontaneous and not dictated from the outside.

Pines's position would cost him dearly later on, when he was criticized and excommunicated by Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin, the rabbi of Brisk, and his circle. Even at this time, however, he was rebuked by those of his

4 M. G. Jaffe, "Supplements to 'Orhot ha-talmud,'" *Kevod Ha-levanon* 6 (1869): 153.

5 Ibid., no. 21, 164.

6 Ibid., 169.

own circle who saw in his position a deviation from traditional norms. They rejected all claims for halakhic reform and refused to recognize any historical development of the halakhah. This was their interpretation of the famous statement that “anything new an elder sage would say in the future had already been stated at Sinai.”

One of the most noteworthy of this group of Enlightenment-leaning rabbis, Rabbi Joseph Zechariah Stern of Shavli, defended this refractory position in a series of articles entitled “A Time to Build Up the Wall of Religion,” published over many months in 1869.⁷ Representing the group’s right wing, he refuted each of Lilienblum’s points in turn. He denied all distinctions between the halakhic deliberations of the Talmud and later halakhic decisions, asserting that the *Shulhan arukh* is the direct continuation of the Talmudic process and maintaining that the Judaism of anyone who thought otherwise was worthless.⁸ Stern thus put into place a theological basis for Orthodox thought. First, he refused to recognize differing degrees of authority within the components of halakhah. This was a radical step even for traditional thinkers, who routinely distinguished between scriptural edicts and rabbinic decrees of various sorts. Second, he proclaimed that since the halakhah is eternal, it does not have to change in response to history as everything is already contained within it.

Such an assumption is extremely problematic, for it precludes, as a matter of principle, the possibility of long-standing rabbinic decrees such as *prushul* and *heter isqa*, as well as widely accepted changes in the application of laws concerning idolatry. It is clear that Stern did not intend to implement his ideological assumptions in practice, but he introduced the idea, which would become characteristic of Orthodoxy, of forbidding consideration within the halakhah of the needs or demands of a particular period.

Lapidot adopted a similar stance.⁹ His claim that the “customs of Israel are Torah,” in an absolute sense, added a layer to Orthodox theology. He attributed to custom (*minhag*) the status of law on the grounds that it always has a source either in the Talmud itself or among the medieval sages who relied on a continuous tradition. Whereas Lilienblum

7 J. Z. Stern, “A Time to Build Up the Wall of Religion,” *Kevod Ha-levanon* 6, no. 31 (1869): 241–244.

8 Ibid., 32–36, 39–40.

9 A. M. Lapidot, “*Tokheifah megullah*,” *Ha-levanon* 6 (1869): 41–43.

opted for the term “senseless custom,” which does exist in the halakhic literature, to describe the use of charms, amulets, and incantations, Lapidot was willing to sanctify even such practices, claiming that those rationalists who viewed them as contrary to science did not know the whole natural world. He also castigated any appeal to the needs of the times as a sinful surrender to the power of desire.

Isaac Margoliot, in a pamphlet entitled “*Ma`oz ha-talmud*” (1870), introduced yet another element that would become typical of the Orthodox approach, the issue of social status. He argued that Torah scholars, who generally came from rabbinic families, should certainly be granted greater authority than those authors and journalists, such as Lilienblum, who were only self-appointed authorities and upstarts with no learned family background. Such expressions by the enlightened rabbinic camp were totally reactionary and could never be justified by the history of the halakhic process itself.

Pines and Stern: Alike yet Different

While the controversy raged between the Haskalah-leaning rabbis and the radical maskilim, an internal controversy broke out within the enlightened religious camp, with Stern taking an extreme position and Pines a more moderate one. A year after Pines explained his special approach to religious reform, Stern wrote a Hebrew article entitled “Sages, Be Cautious in Your Words,”¹⁰ criticizing Pines’s view that the halakhah could address the issues of the times and still maintain itself. Stern responded, with what was to become familiar Orthodox vehemence, that drawing any distinctions among elements within the halakhah and custom threatens the system as a whole. He predicted that those who sought to free themselves from their religious obligations would turn Pines against himself in order to justify their behavior: “They will twist your words and say ... we are no longer responsible for keeping Shabbat; the prohibitions against carrying and against writing on Shabbat are also customs.”¹¹

Stern and his cohort well understood that their positions were based not on irrefutable principles but rather on the exigencies of the time

10 J. Z. Stern, “Sages, Be Cautious in Your Words,” *Ha-levanon* 7, no. 3 (1870).

11 Ibid.

and circumstances in which they found themselves. When speaking to a public that kept the law, they could allow themselves to support educational reforms and even some aspects of the Haskalah. When addressing the reformers who had cast off the yoke of Torah, however, they dug in and refused to budge an inch, because they sensed that the viability of the entire system was being threatened. One might have expected Stern's answer to satisfy Pines, for Stern explained his motivation well. Pines, however, reiterated that Judaism was in need of reform, even if not of the kind proposed by Lilienblum.¹² What we find here is a new line of Orthodox polemics in which the halakhah is used as a defense for the tradition. Objective criteria for a halakhic decision are no longer primary because what is at stake is not a solitary self-contained issue, but parts of a very complex whole.

Yehuda Leib Gordon: An Anti-Traditional Polemicist

Toward the end of 1869, the author, poet, and essayist Yehuda Leib Gordon entered the fray. Unlike Lilienblum, he was not interested in historical analysis of halakhah. Instead, he launched a frontal attack against the rabbis of the traditional camp.¹³ He gathered case after case to demonstrate the hard-heartedness of rabbinic behavior: the prohibition of olive oil for no good reason, the ruling forbidding legumes on Passover despite a famine, the unnecessary prohibitions in regard to ritual slaughtering which brought about a shortage, the attempt to burn a free-thinker's library and exile him, and the refusal to verify a writ of divorce, preventing a woman from remarrying and causing her husband to live in sin. In retaliation, the Orthodox polemics against their opponents, and against modernity in general, were formulated in insultingly satirical language.

Gordon's articles escalated the lack of etiquette in the dialogue, reducing it to the level of personal attacks. Radical polemicists appeared in both camps, and they reviled each other with the most derogatory terms possible. Thus, a polemicist named Moses David Wolfson appeared on the pages of *Ha-levanon* and broke all of the boundaries: "Rabbi

12 Y. M. Pines, "The Ways of the Lord Are Righteous: The Just Will Follow Them but Sinners Will Stumble on Them," *Ha-levanon* 7, no. 13 (1870).

13 Y. L. Gordon, "By the Merits of the Rabbis," *Ha-meiliz*, no. 47 (1869).

Joseph Zachariah Stern has more enlightenment than Lilienblum—the enlightened ones sin through sexual promiscuity and break all the demands of morality.”¹⁴ In one article in *Ha-levanon*, Lilienblum was called “Eisenmenger,” the name of a Christian writer who wrote a book against the Talmud entitled *Judaism Revealed*. This type of “poster” language subsequently characterized Orthodoxy’s polemics against its opponents in particular and against modernity in general. The mutual bitterness went so far as to bring one group to inform on the other to the Gentile authorities. Rabbi Isaac Margoliot, mentioned above, hinted in a series of articles he published in *Ha-levanon* that those who wanted to reform halakhah were not faithful to their land.¹⁵

In 1870, the Orthodox *Hevrat Mazdiquei Harabim* (Communal Benefit Society) was established to fight the free thinkers through the publication of satiric pamphlets (*pasquils*). Severe criticism was directed against rabbis who had anything to do with modernity, and step by step a distinct line was drawn between two types of Jewish Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe: the ultra-Orthodox who totally rejected modernity, and the Religious Nationalists who accepted modernity in part. The ultra-Orthodox designated modernity as the “spirit of the times” and denigrated “its sole purpose” as “the love of pleasure and the desire of the flesh.”¹⁶ The controversy became increasingly intense throughout the year of 1870. Neither side refrained from vulgarity and slander; all restraint was abandoned. The free-thinkers belittled the halakhah and those who observed it, and they extended their initial demand for marginal changes in religious custom to encompass a claim that all aspects of halakhah must be overhauled. Their critique progressively turned from halakhic issues to an attack upon fundamental beliefs such as the messianic idea and the return to Zion.

By the end of 1870, the ideological controversy began to subside. External and internal pressures—changes in the sites and publication policies of the periodicals, the war between France and Germany, and the pogroms in Odessa (1871)—contributed to the exhaustion of both sides. Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor, one of the leaders of the generation, took it upon himself to calm everyone down. On the margins of the

14 M. D. Wolfson, “In the Merit of the Rabbis: A Response to Daniel Bagar,” *Ha-levanon* 7 (1870): 4–5.

15 I. Margoliot, “The Fortress on the Sea,” *Ha-levanon* 6 (1869): 43.

16 A. M. Lapidot, “Tokheihah megullah,” *Ha-levanon* 6 (1869): 41–43.

controversy, one could sense the sprouting of nationalist expression, each side hoping for the actualization of a homeland that would create the framework for its own utopia.

The Etrog Controversy and the New Gemara

The watershed in the crystallization of Eastern European Orthodoxy was reached when a perennial halakhic issue—the controversy over the etrogim (citrons) of Corfu—became a political controversy as well. This dispute, raised as early as the sixteenth century, was over the question of whether it is permissible to use a grafted etrog as one of the four species designated for the ritual of the holiday of Tabernacles, or Sukkot. The halakhic issues and the details of the ensuing polemics will be discussed in detail in chapter 4. All of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi halakhic decisors agreed that grafted etrogim were not kosher for use on Sukkot, and the controversy ostensibly focused on whether the Corfu etrogim were indeed grafted. In the 1840s, the majority of Ashkenazi and Sephardi rabbis had decided that the Corfu etrogim were not grafted, in accordance with the testimony of the local rabbinate of Corfu. This decision was reversed by Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor, who was informed by the new rabbi of Corfu that the etrogim of Corfu were indeed from grafted trees. To this was added testimony that the supervision of the Trieste rabbinate over the etrogim had in fact collapsed.

Although the controversy focused on the halakhic issue involved, there was also an economic aspect to this controversy. The price of Corfu etrogim had risen precipitously, which caused the Hebrew newspapers to call for a boycott in order to force a reduction in prices. In addition, this issue dovetailed with a pragmatic one: there was a desire to encourage the cultivation of etrogim in the Land of Israel. Were the etrogim of Corfu to be classified as grafted, those from the Land of Israel would be preferred. A number of leaders with a national religious inclination, such as Pines, were motivated by the desire to increase productivity in the Land of Israel, a goal that would be advanced by the invalidation of the Corfu etrogim. Some of the rabbis and writers who preferred the etrogim of the Land of Israel were those who had previously been involved in the issue of halakhic change: Pines, Jaffe, Stern, and Eliasberg, among others.

The controversy soon developed into polemics characterized by clas-

sical Orthodox rhetoric. Some, such as Joseph Rivlin, Yehiel Brill, and Jacob Lifschitz, opposed Pines's argument for increased productivity in the Land of Israel for fear that increased productivity would undermine the traditional rationale for the existence of a community of Jews in the Land of Israel, namely that prayers and Torah study in the Holy Land open the gateway to heaven for the entire Jewish nation. The split between the two types of Eastern European Jews—the ultra-Orthodox and the Religious Nationalists—was evident here as well. The ultra-Orthodox wished to preserve the Old Yishuv in its traditional role as the religious emissary of all of Israel, while the nationalists wished to place the Yishuv on an independent and normal economic base.

The controversy within ultra-Orthodox circles, as well, degenerated into Orthodox polemics. Rabbi Bezalel Katz Hakohen (1820–1866), one of the great teachers of Vilna and a scholar of widespread renown whose halakhic responsa carried great weight, attacked not only the nationalist rabbis, but also Rabbi Spektor. Spektor's reason for prohibiting the Corfu etrogim, he argued, was that they were expensive, which is not halakhically relevant. Katz Hakohen's concern was that a prohibition of this kind would bring ridicule upon the way halakhah was decided in general, placing the entire rabbinic decision-making institution in jeopardy. It is a sign of the times that what worried him was not what the observant Jews would say, but rather what would be said by those who were looking for a reason to free themselves from religious strictures.

Even those from the Spektor camp who prohibited the use of the Corfu etrogim employed exaggerated Orthodox language—"chaos has been created in the house of Israel"; it is "a time to do God's bidding"—language of a sort that had not been employed since the beginning of the Haskalah. It is hard to justify the use of this language in the context of this issue. Those who permitted the Corfu etrogim had good reasons, had not come from free-thinking circles, and certainly had no intention of being frivolous with the law. Quite the contrary; they themselves suspected those who prohibited the etrogim of having ulterior motives. Undoubtedly, the controversy over the etrogim of Corfu added a new nuance to Orthodoxy, a new style of argumentation based on the defamation of character. Rabbi Spektor never indulged in this kind of behavior himself, but his supporters did. According to many in the Orthodox camp, any prohibition that might strengthen the cause of religion should be considered legitimate. Nevertheless, this emerging

Orthodox position remained unclear to many of the participants in the dispute. Surprising alliances were sometimes formed and unexpected halakhic decisions reached.

The Order of Tahorot

The etrog controversy developed alongside another dispute that raged around the publication of an innovative edition of Talmudic material, a controversy that added fire to the developing Orthodox attitude. In 1873, Rabbi Gershon Hanokh Henikh Leiner (1839–1893), the admor of Radzyn, published an anthology of Oral Law material on the mishnaic tractate *Kelim*, a tractate that, like the others in the Order of *Tahorot* (one of the six major divisions of the Talmud), lacks any Gemara. A number of influential rabbis wrote approbations for this publication, which came out only a year before the etrog controversy.

However, Rabbi Bezalel Katz Hakohen, who had permitted the Corfu etrogim, forbade the use of the new “Talmud.” His ruling implied that not only was the entire Written and Oral Torah revealed on Sinai, but its format was as well. Thus, the same authority who appeared to be lenient on the etrogim could be stringent here, and he clearly introduced an Orthodox tone into the controversy. He saw the prohibition of the new Talmud and the permitting of the Corfu etrogim as analogous. In both cases, the issue was the preservation of the integrity of tradition. The maxim of the *Hatam Sofer*—“Anything new is forbidden by the Torah”—characterizes the Orthodox attitude. However, this same motivation—to keep the tradition intact—could be cited in defense of various positions. For instance, Lifschitz prohibited both the etrogim and the “Talmud,” in accordance with his principle that any prohibition enhances religion. All of these efforts to prevent innovation are directed towards one goal: “To mend the breaches in the fences of the vineyard of Israel,”¹⁷ and thus to withstand the increasing threat to the traditional way of life.

Not all of the renowned halakhic scholars of the time and place adopted this Orthodox line. For example, Samuel Joseph Fuenn, also known as Rashi Fuenn, a Haskalah-inclined scholar and leader, permitted both the etrogim and the “Talmud” because he applied the Talmudic principle that leniency is preferable. Rabbi Spektor, on the other hand,

17 *Ha-Karmel* 3, no. 8 (1878): 446.

distinguished between the halakhic questions, issuing a lenient ruling with respect to the “Talmud,” but ruling stringently regarding the etrogim. He prohibited the etrogim because their status had been placed in question by new evidence, but he permitted the “Talmud” because he did not see the format of the page and certainly not the printing plates of Vilna as intrinsically holy. He was not a man of coalitions. His rationale in all cases was purely halakhic, and social and political considerations were alien to him.

What characterized the two sides surrounding the two issues is that the halakhic concerns that were considered in both cases were primarily meta-halakhic considerations. The standard-bearers of both camps of Orthodoxy came from the area of Lithuania. Both those who permitted and those who prohibited the Corfu etrogim all came from Lithuania. It is thus quite clear that Lithuania was the hub of all of this activity and the cradle of Eastern European Jewish Orthodoxy, with both the ultra-Orthodox and the Religious Nationalist groups taking their first steps toward organization and institutionalization within the Lithuanian milieu. The ultra-Orthodox rejected anything that suggested even a hint of modernity or nationalism because those values were in conflict with standing customs. By contrast, the national religious tended not to sanctify customs that might challenge nationalist or educational values. Both sides used the Orthodox rhetoric of “desecrating God’s name,” “sanctifying God’s name,” “*Da’at Torah*” (the binding opinion of the Torah), and “*Da’at Gedolei Torah*” (the binding opinion of the great Torah sages), but the different ways in which they related to traditional customs demonstrates the difference between them vis-a-vis their approaches to modernity and their associated concerns regarding education and nationalism.

III. THE LAND OF ISRAEL IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF Y. M. PINES

Yehiel Mikhel Pines was the first Religious Zionist thinker to develop a modern Zionist doctrine. Pines was born in 1843 in Ruzhany, a town in the Grodno region, within the sphere of influence of Lithuanian Jewish culture. Lithuanian Jewry was the epicenter of the Jewish national revival in Eastern Europe in general, and of Religious Zionism in particular. For all their diversity, the principal streams in modern Jewish history can be traced back to Lithuanian Jewry, and its prominent intellectual and social role within Jewish culture has received scholarly attention. However, the nationalist awakening within that community has not yet been adequately studied.

The early-nineteenth-century immigration of the Perushim, the disciples of the Vilna Ga'on, to the land of Israel set the basis for the close ties between the Jews of Lithuania and those living in the Land of Israel.¹ Members of both the Old Yishuv and the later New Yishuv had relatives in their homelands and thus had already established strong links with those homelands. The special ties of Lithuanian Jews to the Land of Israel had already become manifest in the character of the immigrants who arrived during the first half of the eighteenth century. The Jews of Lithuania sent their scholarly and economic elite to the Land of Israel at a time when immigrants from other areas came only occasionally and without a defined sense of community.² Pines's personality and thought exemplify these tendencies.

In his memoirs, Pines relates that he began to think about the Land of Israel when he was only two years old, under the influence of a distant relative who had come from there to visit and told him stories about the Land.³ Pines married Hayyah Zipporah Luria, the daughter of Shemaryahu Luria, a wealthy man from the city of Mohilev who had

1 J. J. Rivlin, "The Affinity of the Jews of Lithuania," in *Lithuanian Jewry*, ed. D. Lipitz, et al (Tel Aviv: Am Ha-sefer and Organization of Lithuanian Émigrés in Israel, 1960).

2 I. Klausner, "Hibbat Ziyon in Lithuania," in *Lithuanian Jewry*, ed. Lipitz, et al., 489–504; A. Morgenstern, *Redemption by Natural Means in the Writings of the Vilna Ga'on and His Disciples* (Elkanah: Orot Yisrael, 1989), 7, 28, 42–43, 47, 361–379.

3 Y. M. Pines, *Binyan ha-arez*, 2, Book 1 (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1899), 13.

led a group of immigrants to the Land of Israel during the 1830s and returned to Russia after a few years. Luria himself was the son-in-law of Hillel Rivlin, the patriarch of the Rivlin family in the Land of Israel, who had immigrated there in the early 1830s.⁴

Restoring a Society in Crisis

The subject of the Land of Israel appears in Pines's earliest writings in the Hebrew press, dating to 1867–1868, found in the journals *Ha-karmel* and *Ha-maggid*. He was moved to write by the economic crisis that gripped Russia at the time, primarily in the areas of Lithuania and White Russia, which were home to many Jews in both urban and rural settings. In its consideration of the crisis, the Hebrew press paid some marginal attention to the emerging question of Jewish nationalism, whose leading exponent was David Gordon, the editor of *Ha-maggid*. The economic crisis and Jewish nationalism were issues that almost naturally intersected.

Pines's position was national and social, and he did not yet see the Land of Israel as a necessary part of the solution. His starting point was the need to return Jews to creative work, which he took to mean agriculture. Agriculture was not merely a source of livelihood; it was "the basis and foundation for the betterment of a society's political and national structure."⁵ No national society can exist without agriculture, and returning to it would also promote social improvement, "for working with one's hands has an advantage over small business, which destroys a person inwardly."⁶ Pines was totally committed here to Haskalah concepts in which social improvement was to take place in Russia, America, or the Land of Israel. In his call to support the Society for the Settlement of the Land of Israel, he appeals even to people who have "feelings of pity and mercy for your impoverished brothers," without any nationalist rationale, and only later does he call for settlement of the Land of Israel at the present time: "provide food to thousands of today's afflicted and contribute to the fund for Israel and [the bet-

4 Rivlin, "The Affinity of the Jews of Lithuania," 468–469; Morgenstern, *Redemption by Natural Means*, 35, n. 2.

5 Pines, "On Improving the Condition of Our Fellow Jews in Russia," 98. See also Pines, "On Working the Land," 199–200, 205–206.

6 Pines, "On Improving the Condition of Our Fellow Jews in Russia," 98.

terment of] its condition.”⁷ In other words, settlement of the Land of Israel at the present time also has the national value of increasing national dignity.

Unlike Kalischer and Alkalai, Pines started from a national rather than a religious perspective, adopting a stance closer to that of David Gordon. Despite his willingness to search everywhere for the social solution for Russian Jewry, Pines himself preferred the Land of Israel “out of a feeling of love for the land of our ancestors”—a primarily nationalist consideration.⁸

Jewish Nationalism

Pines’s first full discussion of the Land of Israel dates to the winter of 1871, after the Society for the Settlement of the Land of Israel was re-established in Berlin and ran into harsh opposition from several Jewish organizations including the Organization of *Peqidim* and *Amarkalim* in Amsterdam, headed by Akiva Lehren. The discussion no longer involved the social crisis faced by the Jews of Russia as much as it did national revival—“to ignite the flame of national love and attachment”—and the resolution of the economic difficulties of those living in the Land of Israel: “to provide food for thousands of Jews.”⁹ There is as yet no mention whatsoever of the Land of Israel as the territorial center for the Jewish masses.

Modernity, Not Philanthropy

For about the next four years, Pines withdrew from discussions about the Land of Israel. Following the establishment of the Moses Montefiore Testimonial Fund by the Board of Deputies in London in 1874, the Board sent a delegation to the Land of Israel to look into conditions there and to discuss how to go about improving the lot of the Old Yishuv. In the wake of that delegation’s report and in the context of the discussion it provoked, Pines once again began to write about the Land of Israel.¹⁰ Regarding the future of the Old Yishuv, Pines presented his perspective in contrast to that of Montefiore and the Board of Deputies. Now his stance was clearly nationalist, while

7 Ibid., 99.

8 Ibid.

9 Y. M. Pines, “Open Letter,” *Ha-levanon* 8 (1871): 85.

10 Y. M. Pines “Moses Montefiore and the Holy Land,” *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 23 (1875): 179–180.

Montefiore and the Board of Deputies held a philanthropic view on the subject.

Pines's comments in this article, as he described the differences between his position and Montefiore's, are among the penetrating he ever wrote. Montefiore, he said, is

among those proponents of the ascetic outlook who cherish the well-known idea that with the destruction of the Temple Judaism ascended and assumed a seat just below the Throne of Glory, annulling its covenant with political life. Their entire inclination is to make Jerusalem into a refuge for ascetics and hermits who withdraw from temporal life to eternal life.

In contrast, Pines said of himself that

like all proponents of the political view, my heart yearns to see Jerusalem in its beauty as one of the glorious cities of Europe ... a vibrant city, throbbing with international commerce, a seat of wisdom and industry.¹¹

The nation's revival and that of the Land are interconnected:

My soul longs to see the beauty of the holy land as it returns to flower as the Garden of Eden ... not for these Arabs, but for its children, the prisoners of hope.¹²

Pines included other factors in his nationalist outlook: the characteristics of the Land of Israel, which is fertile only for its children; the romantic vision of restoring the national crown to its ancient glory—"a time of efflorescence, beautiful and mighty"—and the idea of ingathering the exiles to their historical Land: "They will flow to her

11 Pines, "On Settling the Land of Israel," 273. At first, Montefiore "was the proponent of the ascetic perspective" to which Pines addressed himself in the "Open Letter," but as things unfolded, others were found to favor the ascetic approach, including Jacob Lifschitz, who developed his own approach to the issue. See Y. M. Pines, "May Those Who Love You, Jerusalem, Be at Peace," 65.

12 Pines, "On Settling the Land of Israel," 273.

from the far reaches of the earth, to attend to her, to work her, and to preserve her.”¹³

The Holiness of the Land

In those same years, Pines developed the concept of the “holiness of the Land,” an independent value that spawned a complex set of relationships between the Land and the people. The Land receives only the nation of Israel, which is committed “to freeing the Land from the shame of desolation and destruction and restoring it to its age-old glory” and to loving the Land “with a natural and simple love, a love not dependent on anything extraneous ... a love [like that] of a son for his mother.”¹⁴ This concept, which assigns equal value to the Land and the nation dwelling within it, would underlie much of his later thought and activity. Pines’s perspective on the Land of Israel seemed marked, superficially, by profound internal contradiction: on the one hand he wanted to maintain the sanctity of the Land, while on the other he wanted it to be “as one of the glorious cities of Europe.” But it follows that in Pines’s thinking, “asceticism and separation” were not necessary conditions of holiness, and modernity and holiness were not contradictory terms. He sharply attacked the proponents of the “ascetic outlook” with regard to the Land of Israel—a coalition of prominent figures in the Jewish society of the time, such as Montefiore, Akiva Lehren, and Jacob Lifschitz.¹⁵

Nationalism, Not Philanthropy

Pines paid a high price for his ideas regarding the nature of the Land of Israel. The Board of Deputies was seeking a suitable candidate to represent the Moses Montefiore Testimonial Fund in the Land of Israel, and the selection process proved lengthy and difficult. The candidate had to be a European Jew who spoke Hebrew and German, and ideally he would know Arabic and English as well.¹⁶ The press added its view that he should be “a Jew faithful to his religion and a lover of the gates of Zion, and it would be advantageous if he knew Torah and admired its scholars.”¹⁷ These desirable qualities were identified as those deemed

13 Ibid.

14 Pines, “May Those Who Love You, Jerusalem, Be at Peace,” 66.

15 Ibid., 65–67.

16 “Notice of the Board,” *Ha-maggid* 20, no. 20 (1876): 176.

17 “Another Word on the Matter of Settling the Land of Israel,” *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 44 (1876): 344–345.

acceptable by most of the Jewish population in the Land of Israel. Pines was selected for the job with the approval of various institutions within the Jewish community,¹⁸ but when he came to Ramsgate (in late summer 1878) to receive Montefiore's blessing before departing, Montefiore received him with hostility, for the choice had been imposed on him by the "secretariat." In fact, Pines's nationalist outlook differed significantly from Montefiore's perspective and even from that of the Board of Deputies, who were primarily interested in philanthropy. Only the pressure brought to bear by various enlightenment-oriented writers and rabbis in Eastern Europe had resulted in Pines's selection.

About three years after arriving in the Land of Israel, in the fall of 1881, Pines joined with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda in establishing the *Tehiyyat Yisra'el* society. The society's by-laws declared its primary goals as being "to revive the nation of Israel, raise it from its lowly state, bolster its spirit, and restore its ancient dignity."¹⁹ Pines's formulation here put the nation before the land. The land was considered a means

to return members of the children of Israel to the land of their fathers so as to extract their food from it by the labor of their hands, to promote all manner of commerce and industry in the land, and to revive the Hebrew tongue as the people's spoken language.

The setting of nationalism at center stage seems to have been heavily influenced by Ben-Yehuda, and that accounts as well for the absence of the religious component. The educational section of the by-laws likewise emphasizes general aspects of Jewish history and literature and the geography of the Land of Israel, and downplays religious aspects.²⁰

18 Pines's qualities were described in the following terms in *Ha-levanon* following his selection as representative of the Montefiore Testamentary Fund: "A man of great distinction, in whom are joined Torah and wisdom, faith and knowledge, hand-in-hand in love and peace. Fully engaged in the world of ideas and the world of action, renowned and raised ... his honor in Torah, our master and teacher Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel Pines.... For, to the best of our knowledge, nearly all of the leading Torah figures in Russia and Poland beseeched the Board to select the aforesaid genius, Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel Pines, and no other" ("Items of News from around the Jewish Dispersion," *Ha-levanon* 13, no. 12 [1876]: 94–95).

19 By-laws of the *Tehiyyat Yisra'el* Society (fall 1882), in *Sources on the History of Hibbat Ziyyon and the Settlement of the Land of Israel* 1, ed. S. Laskov (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz Ha-me'uhad, 1990), document 16, 122.

20 *Ibid.*, 123.

European, Not Oriental

Pines took a modern view of things. The Land of Israel had to be built as a modern state on the contemporary European model. In one of his earliest letters after arriving in the Land, he tells of visiting Miqveh-Yisra'el and the Templar (a nineteenth-century German Christian group) settlement of Sharona. He was powerfully impressed by the beauty of the Sharona settlement. Although he did not believe the Jewish settlers had to invest the funds that would be needed to establish settlements that grand, he nevertheless wrote, "I was delighted to find, in the midst of our desolate land, a village as pleasant as this, comparable to the loveliest villages in the vicinity of London."²¹

Pines assumed that if Hebrew were the language of instruction in the schools to be established in the Land, it would become the spoken language in the settlements to be built there. It was likewise clear to him that the education of the "new" Jew would have to include instruction in the local language, Arabic, as well as in general knowledge such as history and science.²²

Pines's presence in the Land enabled him to study its climate, ecology, and economy, all of which were of interest to him. His writings constitute the fullest, most accurate source of information about the Land of Israel during the final quarter of the nineteenth century.

In the spring of 1885, Pines set out on a tour of the Galilee. He traveled from Jerusalem to Jaffa and then sailed from there to Haifa, a city that made a powerful impression on him. Its cleanliness, the breadth of its streets, and its quiet were uncharacteristic of the Orient.²³ Pines craved a Land of Israel that was European in its culture and Hebrew in its content. He believed in the future of Haifa and advised investing in it, but he critically attacked the Alliance Israélite Universelle, whose school in Haifa had set itself the goal of raising French Jews. The school paid no attention to the Jewish or Hebrew education of its students, and they often ended up becoming less observant.²⁴ Pines also noticed that the girls of Zichron Yaakov would dress less modestly than the girls of

21 Pines, *Binyan ha-arez*, 2, book 1, 42.

22 Letter from Pines to the Board of the Montefiore Testimonial Fund in London, January 1879, in *ibid.*, 58.

23 Y. M. Pines, *Binyan ha-arez*, 2, Book 2, 6.

24 *Ibid.*, 7.

the Templar settlement. Here, too, Pines found something to criticize, and he blamed their immodest modishness on the support of Baron de Rothschild.²⁵

Riding from Haifa to Acre and then on to Safed, Pines was amazed at the scenery he observed and wrote an account of it. When he reached Meron, however, and encountered the ceremonies at the grave of Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai, he did not hold back from expressing his disdain for the cult of the saints, something with no Jewish source.²⁶ He went on to describe Safed's external beauty and inner ugliness and neglect,²⁷ noting the potential for its development but recounting that its inhabitants lived in constant dread of earthquakes. As he described it, Safed's Ashkenazi residents were mostly Hasidim from Volhynia and Romania who knew how to enjoy life and therefore preferred Safed, with its low cost of living, to Jerusalem, where the cost of living was high. He mocked the wealthy in Safed, who despite their wealth demanded their share of the *haluqah*.²⁸

In a series of articles in *Ha-zevi*, written during 1885–1886, Pines clarified his view of the social character of the new settlement destined to develop in the Land of Israel. Unlike his Enlightenment-oriented friends who gravitated toward the *Hibbat Ziyon* movement—often out of Russian revolutionary attitudes—Pines did not adopt Narodnik ideas, which called for moving to a pastoral way of life. His interest in agricultural society was primarily instrumental rather than moral. For him, the national revival in the Land of Israel involved not a back-to-the-countryside romanticism, but a concern for the livelihood of the Yishuv, whether derived through agriculture or through commerce and industry.²⁹

Attitude toward the Biluim

An important episode in which Pines figured was that of the Biluim,³⁰ who arrived in the Land of Israel in the summer of 1882, entertaining

25 Ibid., 7–8.

26 Ibid., 12–13.

27 Ibid., 17–18.

28 Ibid., 19–22.

29 Ibid., 37–38.

30 Pl. of "Bilu," an acronym for the biblical passage: *beit ya`aqov lekhu ve-neilekha* ("O House of Jacob, come let us go") (Isa. 2:5).

grandiose schemes of leading the Jewish national revolution from there. Reality intervened, however, and their lack of means and the difficulties they faced in accommodating themselves to the conditions of life in the Land drained them of their energy.³¹ The hardships they faced, and the refusal of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and Baron de Rothschild to support them, led them to Pines, and he took them under his wing. His solid ties to the Jews of Russia made it only natural for the Biluim to turn to him. Only with the organization of the Hovevei Ziyyon institutions in late 1884 and early 1885 did there emerge some other framework in which the Biluim might find help, but they still needed Pines as a contact person.

The Biluim practiced a free way of life that angered the rabbis of Hibbat Ziyyon, but Pines stood by them, defending them against their detractors in the Land of Israel and the Diaspora, including prominent Hibbat Ziyyon rabbis such as Samuel Mohilever and Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin. In the ensuing polemics, the rabbis urged that the Biluim be expelled from the Land. In Mohilever's words,

the Holy Land [is not] like Germany or France, or even like Russia, which can incorporate within it alike both those who observe the Torah and those who violate it.³²

Pines did not deny Mohilever's primary contention, and went even further in his idea that the sanctity of the Land could not tolerate a free way of life on the part of Jews living there. But in the episode involving the Biluim in Gadera, he moderately denied the facts raised against them by those who charged that they did not observe the commandments, and expressed confidence that his influence was strong enough to persuade them to adopt a halakhic way of life. Pines was prepared to expel from Gadera anyone who refused to commit himself to a halakhic way of life,³³ and his attitude toward the Bilu mode of living was thus more didactic than principled.

The controversy over the sabbatical year of 1888–1889 posed the question of whether the New Yishuv was willing and able to act in accor-

31 Salmon, "Ideology and Reality in the Immigration of the Biluim," *Shalem* 3 (1981): 149–184.

32 Letter from Mohilever to Pinsker, in Druyanow, *Sources* 2, document 727, 426.

33 Letter from Pines to Pinsker, winter 1888, in *ibid.*, document 756, 488–489.

dance with halakhah. Everyone understood that the sabbatical year was a test case for the whole idea of contemporary settlement of the Land of Israel.³⁴ Unlike the Hovevei Ziyon rabbis, who worked energetically to find a way to permit agricultural work during the sabbatical year, Pines took a strict position, one that was effectively inconsistent with his earlier premises regarding halakhic development. A permissive ruling with regard to the sabbatical year could bear out his views regarding halakhic development to suit the needs of the time, accomplished through the power of those authorized to rule on halakhic matters. But here, once again, Pines acted contrary to expectations and seemingly contrary to his earlier attitudes and to the roles he played as secretary of Hovevei Ziyon with respect to the settlements and as the spiritual guide for the people of Gederah.

An easy way to account for the contradiction would be to say that Pines had in this case adopted the position of his teacher, Rabbi Mordecai Gimpel Jaffe, who opposed the permissive ruling. But closer examination reveals that Pines had his own view on the matter. Jaffe's position is explained in a broadside that he issued,³⁵ and it is evident that he was not dealing in purely halakhic rationales premised on the sabbatical year at the present time being of biblical (rather than only of rabbinic) force, as maintained by Rabbi Yosef Dov Ber Soloveitchik and Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin. His outlook was grounded, rather, on considerations of faith and public policy that regarded proper observance of the sabbatical year as conclusive proof of the New Yishuv's desire to maintain a halakhic way of life, thereby refuting its critics, including some rabbis of the Old Yishuv who inferred from the conduct of some of the settlers that the New Yishuv overall would lead to the secularization of the Jews living in the Land: "And the rabbis of Jerusalem will be happy to be among the shamed rather than the shaming." As a matter of faith as well, Jaffe supported full observance of the sabbatical year: "With all my soul I desired to see them observing the religion and properly fulfilling the commandment of the sabbatical year, after [doing so] has been denied our people for several hundred years."³⁶

Pines's position was more complicated, weighted with doubts and

34 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 123–139.

35 M. G. Jaffe, "Not the Time for Silence," 1 Av 5689 (29 July 1889), in Druyanow, *Sources* 3, document 1322, 888–892.

36 Ibid., 889.

conflicting considerations. He made it clear that as a halakhic matter he was inclined to be permissive even without regard to the permissive ruling that had been proposed, which was not to his liking. He therefore instructed the people of Gadera to plow their fields and plant their vineyards during the sabbatical year, as only rabbinical laws prohibited doing so. Regarding activities forbidden during the sabbatical year by force of biblical law, however, such as harvesting, he suggested being strict. He offered the following account of his perspective regarding the development of the halakhah:

My longstanding view regarding religious enactments is that they should be done bit by bit and quietly once the need for them is felt, and in that way they will not harm the body of Judaism ... but if they are done with *sturm und drang* ... they will greatly harm the religion, for the masses will say: the Torah is in the hands of the sages as clay is in the hand of the potter.³⁷

Pines assumed that the Yishuv had to be halakhah-observant, and therefore wanted to prove that the residents of Gadera, under the auspices of Hovevei Ziyyon, observed the sabbatical year properly—in contrast to the people in the settlements under the Baron's patronage, who he thought were quickly becoming secularized.³⁸

Sacrifice and Dedication

Because he was actively involved in the settlement of the Land and the support of the settlers, Pines could speak freely about the nature of that settlement and the demands it made on the individual—self-sacrifice and dedication. In a letter to the rabbi of Mir, Yom Tov Lippman Hakohen, written in the fall of 1888, he described his overall approach:

One who desires the settlement of the Land of Israel must be like a volunteer joining an army to fight on be-

37 Letter from Pines to Samuel Joseph Fuenn, 9 Shevat 5689 (11 January 1889), in *ibid.*, 2, document 866, 638–639.

38 H. Z. Maccabee to Ussishkin, 27 Nisan 5649 (28 April 1889), in Druyanow, *Sources* 2, document 880, 669.

half of his homeland. He must know that he will be putting himself in danger, lest he be felled by an arrow or lest a stone embed itself in his forehead. He may never return home or he may return limbless, blind, or lame; yet he nevertheless will go, for it is for his homeland that he is fighting. If he merits it, he will enjoy the fruits of victory; but if he does not, it is enough for him that his fellows and countrymen will enjoy them.³⁹

Pines believed that despite the difficulties of settling the Land, Jewish agricultural settlement could never become established elsewhere:

For all the external advantages of settling in America, it can never compete with settling in the Land of Israel. For the one advantage of the sacred tradition enjoyed by the Land of Israel overcomes ... all the economic advantages enjoyed by other lands.⁴⁰

Pines was the first to suggest establishing an institution to be called “Keren Kayemet” (later known in English as the Jewish National Fund) for the redemption of the Land, a central organization to oversee the acquisition of real estate in the Land.⁴¹

The Benei Moshe Controversy

Between 1893 and 1895, Pines sharpened his concept of Religious Zionism and drew some practical public-policy conclusions. The background for his departure from Hovevei Ziyyon was the establishment of the Benei Moshe organization, a secret order within the Hibbat Ziyyon movement, and his being squeezed out first from the organization, then from the executive committee of the Odessa Committee, and finally from the activities of Hovevei Ziyyon in the Land of Israel.⁴² The details

39 Letter from Pines to Rabbi Yom Tov Lippman Hakohen, 4 Tishri 5649 (9 September 1888), in *Hatzofeh* 5 (November 1943): 3.

40 Letter from Pines to Sokolowsky, spring 1891, in *ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*

42 Y. Salmon, “Polarization in the Yishuv during the Early 1890’s.” *Cathedra* 12 (1979): 4–46.

of the episode have been widely studied.⁴³

The spiritual father of the Benei Moshe organization was Ahad Ha-Am, who served as its president and hoped to use it to fulfill his national vision. The organization was meant to serve as the “high priesthood” of the national movement. Because Ahad Ha-Am was the intellectual leader of the nationalist intelligentsia that organized itself into Benei Moshe, he exercised considerable public influence. Only from that perspective is it possible to assess and understand the abundant energy that Pines invested in undermining the organization and its leader. But there was also a personal side to his stance, as he was hurt by Ahad Ha-Am’s attitude toward him after removing him from Benei Moshe, from the executive committee in Jaffa, and from his position teaching at the Alliance Israélite Universelle school in Jaffa, all of whose teachers were members of Benei Moshe. Pines put all his weight into this controversy and practically declared a personal war against a powerful stream within the emerging Jewish national movement. He published the views he held during those years in a series of pamphlets called “*Emet me-erez*” (“Truth from the Land”), published between 1894 and 1896. A nationalist Jew even before the rise of the movement that took that name, he characterized his nationalism as that of Judah Halevi and Nahmanides: “a nationalism embraced within religion and within which religion is embraced ... a nationalism whose soul is the Torah and whose life-source is the commandments.”⁴⁴ In that way, Pines established absolute congruence between halakhic Judaism and all aspects of Zionism. To say that “Torah and religion are matters of individual concern, within a person’s heart, while nationalism is the concern of the nation overall” is “total heresy”; “we are at war against those who proclaim a nationalism divested of religion.”⁴⁵

Pines explained his differing attitudes toward the Biluim and the Benei Moshe carefully. The Biluim, he wrote, came from a free background, and “in judging a person one must take account of his education and the factors that shaped him.” Regarding the Biluim, therefore, Pines was confident that “by virtue of the power of the commandment to settle the Land of Israel, even those removed from the field of the

43 On this, see chapter 6 of this book.

44 Y. M. Pines, *Emet me-erez tizmah* (Jerusalem: Magnei Haaretz, 1894–1896), 1, 4.

45 Ibid., 5.

Torah and the commandments would eventually return to it.”⁴⁶ The Benei Moshe, however, make their free thinking a guideline for all ages: “They mean to raise the next generation on the knees of this teaching ... for they believe that only a generation with this free-thinking doctrine instilled in its heart can come to the Land and take root in it as a nation among nations.”⁴⁷

Unlike Pinsker and Lilienblum, Pines did not see the contemporary settlement of the Land of Israel as an escape from antisemitism, and he did not see the Land of Israel as a refuge for oppressed Jews, as did Rabbi Mohilever, Rabbi Spektor, and others. Nor did he entertain grand eschatological hopes of the sort that echoed in statements by Rabbis Jaffe and Berlin. Pines’s religious position saw contemporary settlement of the Land of Israel as a realization of the Land’s sanctity, a sanctity epitomized in fulfillment of the Torah of Israel, by the nation of Israel, within the Land of Israel.⁴⁸ According to Pines, in all matters associated with the Land of Israel, “the place is the end, and the soil and its settlers are the means.”⁴⁹

That idea is linked to the distinction that he drew between the settlement of the Land of Israel and the settlement of, say, Argentina. The settlement of Jews in Argentina was meant to resolve the problems of persecuted and exiled Jews, but the settlement of the Land of Israel was meant to sanctify the Land. It follows from these divergent goals that any Jews immigrating to Argentina would be entitled to financial support from all Jews, but when it came to Jews immigrating to the Land of Israel, “not only do we have the right to choose from among them; we have the obligation to do so ... and not every [group] that wants to assume the name ‘settlement’ can come and assume it.” Those moved to settle in the Land of Israel are “people devoted with all their heart and soul to this Land, living in it not for the sake of its lush produce but for the sake of its national sanctity.”⁵⁰

Pines believed that “the question of Judaism” preceded “the Jewish question” and that mass settlement in the Land therefore was not the

46 Ibid., 7.

47 Ibid., 8.

48 Ibid., 5.

49 Letter from Pines to his brother, Yeruham Fishel Pines, winter 1893, in Pines, *Binyan ha-arez*, 2, book 2, 156.

50 Ibid., 157.

movement's main immediate goal: "The matter of settlement is not today's issue; it is a historical issue in whose context one hundred years is a brief time. Why then should we rush to pursue it?"⁵¹ On this issue, Pines's perspective corresponded to that of Aḥad Ha-Am, despite their differences regarding the nature of Judaism. In the context of this dispute, Pines declared the collapse of the common ground shared by religious and secular circles within Hovevei Ziyyon. He came around to the conclusion that Rabbi Soloveitchik, Rabbi Elijah Hayyim Meisel of Lodz, and others had reached in the early days of Hovevei Ziyyon, namely that it was necessary to insist on two separate national movements—one religious and one secular.

Despite his strong identification with Hovevei Ziyyon during the 1880s, Pines became its great opponent during the 1890s: "Let there be no strife between us, for we are brethren. Let us separate, whether you go to left or to the right" (cf. Gen. 13:8-9).⁵² Elsewhere, he determined that the path to be taken by religious nationalism involved "our establishing a settlement of our own, which will be conducted according to the Torah and the commandments; and all God-fearing men will see that it is possible to settle the Land of Israel in a way that can survive without violating Torah and religion."⁵³ Pines began to organize such a settlement at Motsa. The members of his circle asked the leadership of the Old Yishuv to establish "*ḥibbat ziyyon* [love of Zion] with purity and sanctity" and to undertake a program of broad settlement based on the people of the Old Yishuv and supported with the funds of the general committee.

Pines's call in the press for the Old Yishuv to start its own settlement program was well received and elicited numerous replies,⁵⁴ resulting in the establishment in 1896 of the Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land. The group was established by young people from within the Old Yishuv. At first it looked as if it would grow quickly, but it lasted only two years. Pines drafted its by-laws,⁵⁵ and for the third time used an organization's by-laws to convey his thinking. (He had previously done

51 Ibid., 158.

52 Pines, *Emet mei-erez tizmah*, 2, 23.

53 Letter from Pines to Nissenbaum, spring 1894, in I. Nissenbaum, *Alei ḥeldi* (Jerusalem: Mass, 1969), 101.

54 G. Yardeni-Egmon & S. Derekh, ed., *Chapters in the History of the Old Yishuv: Selected Essays of E. R. Malachi* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz Ha-me'uhad, 1971), 207–252.

55 Ibid., 248–252.

so in the by-laws of the *Tehiyyat Yisra'el* society and then in those of the *Biluim*.) Here, too, he met with disappointment. In a critical article about the young people of Jerusalem, he compared them unfavorably to the *Biluim*, whom he set as a model. In Pines's opinion, the Land of Israel could not serve as a source of livelihood, and he argued repeatedly that only idealists could build the Land. For the *Biluim*, he argued, "settlement was not a means for earning a living; it was an end in itself." The young people of Jerusalem, however, were excited by the idea "not because they concluded that they, more than any of their brethren, had the duty to settle the Land in a substantive way, but because they became fed up with their dependency."⁵⁶ Pines's controversial comments provoked extensive support and opposition. Once again, he was undermining a movement (the Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land) that he had helped to found.

The Uganda Controversy

In the Uganda controversy, Pines took a position uncharacteristic of the *Mizrachi* leadership, arguing that the Jews would not accept national autonomy outside the Land of Israel. That was, he believed, because their emotional tie to the Land of Israel could never be compartmentalized. Moreover, it was the connection to the Land that made the Jews a nation: "The great joy of the nation regarding the land to which it is returning, and the great fear lest they lose it again, are the factors bringing about the wondrous transformation within it and making separateness the primary characteristic of the nation." In Pines's opinion, the Jewish traits of disputatiousness and fragmentation could be overcome only through the unifying force of the Land of Israel. In that connection, he made it clear that he did not call for full political independence and was prepared to settle for autonomy under foreign rule.⁵⁷

Pines died in 1913, shortly after returning from Russia—impoverished, alone, and depressed. He had found his place within neither the *New Yishuv* nor the *Old*. Was it his own personality problems that kept him from becoming part of one or the other, or was it his ideas and principles, which situated him where neither the people of the *Old Yishuv*

56 Ibid., 239.

57 Y. M. Pines, "On the State as Residence," *Ha-mizrah* (Krakow, 1903), 333–335. The editors of the newspaper included a comment disassociating themselves from these views.

nor those of the New could join him? He appears to have been a victim of his own principles. He lacked the intellectual framework possessed by Rabbis Mohilever, Reines, and Kook which enabled them to survive within the Zionist movement even though it was controlled by people who rejected the yoke of halakhah, but neither could he live a Diaspora-style life in the Land of Israel, as did the people of the Old Yishuv.

The key to understanding Pines is grounded in his concepts that the territory of the Land of Israel is sacred territory and that the needs of the nation are secondary to it. This concept brought him, paradoxically enough, near to the position of the anti-Zionist haredim of the most extreme stripe, those who would later become his sharpest ideological adversaries within the Jewish community—Rabbi Hayyim Elazar Shapira of Munkacs and Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum of Satmar.⁵⁸

58 On the positions taken by these two rabbis, and other radical anti-Zionist voices among the traditionalists, see Ravitzky, *Messianism*, 40–78, esp. 44–45.

IV. THE CORFU CITRON CONTROVERSY (1875–1891)

The suitability of grafted etrogim for ritual use on the festival of Sukkot is a venerable issue, much debated in the halakhic literature over the centuries.¹ The earliest known treatment of the subject appeared in the middle of the sixteenth century in the responsa of Rabbi Meir Katzenellenbogen (Maharam of Padua) in Italy and Rabbi Moses Alshekh in the Land of Israel. The halakhic question was whether it was permitted to recite a blessing over the four species used on Sukkot if the etrog among them was grafted.

A grafted etrog is one grown on a tree that was reinforced by hybridization, a practice used because the citron tree itself has a weak stock (the stock is the lower part of the tree, including the roots and the bottom of the trunk). In order to produce a stronger tree, the stock of some other species is used, and the shoot of a citron tree is grafted onto it. As a halakhic matter, it is questionable whether the resulting hybrid etrog is kosher,² that is, whether a blessing may be recited, for the root of the tree that produced it is not an etrog root. The halakhic decisors were required to decide whether the grafted etrog tree is the tree to which Scripture refers when it speaks of the four species used on Sukkot. Most decisors, Sephardi and Ashkenazi alike, agreed that a hybrid etrog was not suitable for use, at least *ab initio*.

From the end of the eighteenth century, the practical halakhic issue

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- 1 The issue of etrogim from the Land of Israel vs. those from Corfu has been considered in several studies: E. R. Malachi, "On the History of the *Etrog* Trade," in *Chapters in the History of the Old Yishuv: Selected Essays of E. R. Malachi*, ed. G. Yardeni-Egmon and S. Derekh; I. Rafael, "The *Etrogim* of Corfu and the *Etrogim* of the Land of Israel," *Shragai* 2 (1985): 84–90, and E. Goldschmidt, "The Question of the Grafted *Etrog* Today," *Tehumin* 2 (1981). Malachi relied on letters that were in his possession, some of which he published. Rafael provides a general discussion, and Goldschmidt breaks a new critical path; the latter's knowledge of botany clarifies some previously obscure matters. Recently, Dan Porat wrote a master's thesis on "The Polemic over Land of Israel *Etrogim*, 1875–1889," The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993. His important work is focused primarily on the polemics over etrogim from the Land of Israel and the activities of Hayyim Elazar Wachs, rabbi of Kalish and Pietrikow and president of the Warsaw kolel in the Land of Israel. It does not delve into the broad historical background of the controversy and its halakhic and cultural significance. The study ends with Wachs's death and thus fails to address the episode's conclusion.
 - 2 **Translator's note:** "Kosher," of course, is used here in its root meaning of "fit for use," not in the conventional sense of "permitted to be eaten."

was focused on whether etrogim from Corfu, which had cornered the market in Europe, were grafted. The conflict was resolved for a while in the 1840s when the leading Sephardi and Ashkenazi decisors ruled that the etrogim from Corfu were not grafted. The permissive decision was supposedly based on a clarification of the factual situation; as a practical matter, however, it relied on the practice of presuming all etrogim available at the time to be kosher. That practice, in turn, was based on the premise that “the Holy One, blessed be He, does not ensnare the righteous,” who fulfilled the commandment with the etrogim that were available. That determination went contrary to the view of most Ashkenazi decisors since the end of the eighteenth century, who had presumed that only etrogim from certain locales were kosher, and Corfu was not on the approved list.³ Nevertheless, the permissive ruling, issued in 1846, was accepted in most communities, although some Eastern European communities maintained the practice of not using the Corfu etrogim.⁴

Grafted etrogim reemerged as an issue during the mid-1870s and continued to be discussed until the early 1890s. Halakhic and social considerations were raised against the background of the Jewish national revival of the time, the efforts to settle the Land of Israel, the beginnings of Jewish Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe, and severe antisemitic outbreaks. As a purely halakhic matter, the issue seems a rather marginal one, but it offers a unique lens through which to observe some of the other phenomena taking place at the time. The controversy, the range of its participants, its historical background, and its resonances in our own day make it a unique episode in the history of halakhah and Jewish society during a transitional period.

In the halakhic deliberations that preceded the permissive ruling of 1846, etrogim from the Land of Israel were presumed to be not grafted.⁵ As early as the 1850s, there are references in the literature to growing etrogim in the Land of Israel to be marketed to Diaspora communities. Those engaging in the business included members of the Old Yishuv

3 Y. Salmon, “The Dispute over Corfu *Etrogim* and Its Historical Background,” *AJSR* 35, 1 (2000–2001): 1–24.

4 On the avoidance of Corfu etrogim in the central Lithuanian city of Raseiniai, see B. Diamant, “On the Corfu *Etrogim*,” *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 7 (1875). On the permissive ruling of 1846, see Salmon, “The Corfu *Etrogim*.”

5 H. Palaggi, *Lev hayyim* (Izmir, 1874; photo-offset, Yehud, 1976), sec. 121, 79b, 80a; J. Schwartz, *Tevu'ot ha-arez* (Jerusalem, 1845), 2.

who sought productive sources of livelihood. In many Diaspora communities, trade in etrogim constituted a source of additional income for various people, including religious functionaries. In some areas, the community took over the trade and dispatched emissaries to the lands where etrogim were grown or to the central market in Trieste, charging them with purchasing etrogim and reselling them at a profit.⁶ The controversy of the 1870s took shape against this background.

The question of whether Corfu etrogim were kosher was integrally and inseparably related to the same question regarding the etrogim of the Land of Israel. Our discussion of the issue, to be presented in chronological sequence, is based on general halakhic works, responsa texts, polemical literature specific to the etrog issue, and coverage of the matter in the contemporary press, both in the Land of Israel and outside it.

The Controversy over Corfu Etrogim

The Etrog Trade--Background

The controversy that erupted anew in 1874 had both economic and social elements. The principal factor was the rise in price of Corfu etrogim, engineered by a cartel organized by merchants on the island in anticipation of Sukkot of that year (5635),⁷ to which was added the ferment surrounding the settlement of the Land of Israel. Although the controversy had previously played out primarily in Galicia, the Ottoman Empire, Hungary, and the German lands, it was now centered on Lithuania. The shift of focus to Lithuania seems to have resulted in part from the increased prominence of the Land of Israel in the etrog market, for the Ashkenazi Jews living in the Land were primarily from Lithuania. In addition, Lithuania had again become the center of halakhic decision-making. The intense argumentation itself was conducted during the four years from 1874 to 1878, and was more complex and involved than the earlier etrog controversies had been.

According to Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor, the leading halakhist of the generation, etrogim from Corfu had been prohibited in Lithuania as early as in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Their use in

6 Malachi, "On the History of the *Etrog Trade*," 168.

7 Y. M. Pines, "Concerning *Etrogim* from Corfu," *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 50 (1876).

Lithuania was later allowed during the 1830s, following a ruling by a judge on the Vilna rabbinical court, a leading student of Rabbi Ephraim Zalman Margoliot.⁸ Rabbi Margoliot, author of the *Beit efrayim* and one of the great decisors in Galicia during the first third of the nineteenth century, had permitted the use of Corfu etrogim on the grounds that they grew from cuttings and therefore were not considered to be grafted, and his student evidently followed his lead. Under the influence of this ruling, only a few especially punctilious people took pains to avoid etrogim from Corfu.⁹

The price-based opposition to Corfu etrogim was reinforced by rabbis from Corfu and from Warsaw, who reported that the practice in Corfu was to graft etrog trees, and by suggestions that one should not rely on certifications of kashrut issued by rabbis in the Trieste etrog market.¹⁰ The controversy began with a call by the editor of *Ha-levanon*, Yehiel Brill, to forbid the use of Corfu etrogim because of their elevated price. He recounted that the commandment to take the four species on Sukkot was one especially valued by the Jews of Russia and Poland, “almost more than all the other commandments.”¹¹ In his article, Brill described the operation of the etrog trade. Etrogim reached European Jews through two ports, Trieste and Genoa, having originated in Corfu, the Albanian coast, Italy, or Corsica. Italian and Corsican etrogim were imported through Genoa, while those from Corfu and the Albanian coast came through Trieste. The certifications were provided by rabbis at the ports of origin and the marketing ports. Corfu etrogim, therefore, were certified by both the rabbi of Corfu and the rabbi of Trieste, and Italian etrogim were certified by the rabbis of Trieste and Genoa. The etrogim coming to Genoa were of several origins: Corsica, Riviera, Bordighera, Calabria, and Naples.¹² Throughout France and in Berlin, Corsican etrogim were

8 M. Romm, *Tokheifah megullah* (Mainz, 1875; photo-offset, Brooklyn, 1994), 56. The decisor in question seems to have been Rabbi Ezekiel Halevi Landau, appointed chief judge in Vilna following the death of Rabbi Abele Poslover. See, on this, H. N. Maggid, *The City of Vilna: Recollections of a Jewish Community and the Lives of Its Great Scholars* (Vilna: Romm, 1900), 35–36. There is no direct evidence, however, that this is his ruling.

9 Romm, *Tokheifah megullah* 57. Romm’s listing of those punctilious people includes Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin, Rabbi David Tavli of Minsk, and Rabbi Abraham Samuel of Raseiniai and Eishishok. But other sources maintain that Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin in fact used Corfu etrogim.

10 Ibid., 57–58. See also Pines, “Concerning *Etrogim* from Corfu.” The article refers to three documents with respect to forgeries in Corfu and Trieste.

11 Y. Brill, “A Few Words about the *Etrog* Trade,” *Ha-levanon* 11, nos. 35–36 (1874).

12 Romm, *Tokheifah megullah*, 6.

avored, while other communities in Germany used Bordighera etrogim, and the Hasidim in White Russia valued etrogim from the Riviera. The rabbi in Genoa issued certifications for all the Italian etrogim, but there was doubt about the quality of the certifications.¹³

Corfu etrogim, Brill went on, were of two sorts: those grown in Parga, a small port opposite Corfu itself, and those coming from the Albanian coast along the Adriatic Sea or from Crete. Some of those who permitted Corfu etrogim limited their approval to those coming from Parga, but that limitation was not accepted by the Sephardi rabbis, who even in the 1846 conflict had permitted all Corfu etrogim.¹⁴ In any case, Brill reported that the rabbi in Corfu would certify on the containers that all of the etrogim were from Parga, even if they had originated in Corfu and adjacent areas, including Crete.¹⁵ The change in status of Corfu etrogim during the 1870s, from presumptively kosher to presumptively not, followed from a statement by the rabbi of Corfu that no distinction was made in Corfu between grafted and non-grafted etrogim.¹⁶ He thereby contradicted his predecessor, who had said that all the Corfu etrogim should be presumed non-grafted. Brill further argued that all European etrogim should be presumed grafted, but that in recent times, there was a tendency to be lenient and permit the use of grafts.¹⁷

As noted, Brill's principal concern was directed toward the price of the Corfu etrogim, which had risen to an average of six rubles each. These etrogim were used by most of the Jews in Poland, Lithuania, Austria, and Hungary, who were not people of means. The price of etrogim was several times higher than that of other fruit coming from Mediterranean ports, such as lemons and oranges.¹⁸

13 Ibid. Romm lists the places where etrogim used by Jews were grown: the Land of Israel, Morocco, Corsica, Bordighera, Naples, and Calabria. He does not mention the Riviera, perhaps because the Bordighera etrogim are from the Riviera.

14 M. I. Halevi, *Bar livai, Orah hayyim* (Lvov, 1861; photo-offset, New York, 1990), 32a, 33a-b.

15 Benjamin Diamant, "On the Corfu Etrogim," *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 7 (1875).

16 Halevi, *Bar livai*, 32a; Pines, "Concerning Etrogim from Corfu."

17 Diamant, "On the Corfu Etrogim," 49-51.

18 Brill's account suggests that etrogim were imported from Morocco as well, though they were not of the best quality and did not have a pitem (see below, translator's note). These etrogim were favored by Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger and his followers, for they believed that they posed no risk of being grafted inasmuch as grafting was not known in North Africa. That premise was not accepted by Rabbi Nathan Adler (1804-1890) of London, who maintained that only Sephardim used Moroccan etrogim, but that Ashkenazim avoided them because of concerns about grafting; see J. Sapir, "Mikhtevei soferim," *Ha-levanon* 13, no. 2 (1876): 20-22. Those who forbade Corfu etrogim were the very ones who sought to maintain the presumption of fitness for etrogim from Morocco, Corsica,

*Opposition to Corfu Etrogim on Account of
Those from the Land of Israel*

The question of Corfu etrogim arose at a time when the emissaries of the Moses Montefiore Testimonial Fund were engaged in an initiative to increase the productivity of Jews in the Land of Israel. The Testimonial Fund had been established in Montefiore's honor on his ninetieth birthday, and its purpose was to improve the living conditions of Jews in the Land. Representatives of the Fund visited Israel in March 1875 and recommended that the Jews there be employed producing ritual objects for their Diaspora brethren.

It was the author and journalist Yehiel Mikhel Pines who, in 1875, first raised the idea of using the production of etrogim to advance the productivity of Jews in the Land of Israel. He saw the industry as one of great economic promise,¹⁹ for he calculated that the Corfu etrog merchants were selling their product at fifty times their true worth. He was concerned about the wasteful expenditures Jews were making as a result, but he also argued that the funds being invested in Corfu etrogim could be used to diminish the heavy burden of support borne by the *haluqah*. In addition, he maintained that the Corfu etrogim remained presumptively grafted and that those responsible for certifying them were engaged in fraud. The idea of encouraging residents of the Land of Israel to plant etrog orchards so the funds from the sale of etrogim would be redirected to their benefit was part of the program to improve the Yishuv's productivity.

Pines was already known to the Jews of Russia through his articles in the Hebrew press, published during the late 1860s, calling for increased productivity on the part of the Jews of Russia. From the beginning of the 1870s he was a proponent of making the Land of Israel into the land of the Jewish nation, and the issue of the etrogim was simply another detail in his overall plan.

and the Land of Israel. They argued that etrogim from North Africa, Yemen, and the Land of Israel had never needed certificates of fitness since they were never suspected of being grafted, unlike the etrogim from Genoa and Corfu, whose etrogim could be used only if they came from specified orchards; see *ibid.*, 21. According to Sapir, etrogim from Corfu could be used only if they came from the Parga orchard; Genoan etrogim could be used only from the Bordighera Apoltana orchard. *Ha-levanon* itself, which led the public struggle against Corfu etrogim, published notices of the sale of etrogim from other locations but not from Corfu; see *Ha-levanon* 13, no. 5 (1876): 40, which refers to etrogim from the Land of Israel, Corsica, Morocco, and Genoa. (**Translator's note:** A pitem is a small protuberance at the end of the etrog. An etrog that grows without a pitem is not thereby invalidated, but one that grows with a pitem is invalidated if the pitem is removed or falls off.)

19 Pines, "On Settling the Land of Israel."

Pines's article hit a sensitive nerve. As noted, it was published only a short while after the delegation from the Montefiore Testimonial Fund—Samuel M. Montague and Asher Asher—had visited the Land. The delegation had harshly criticized the workings of the *haluqah* and the unproductiveness of the Land's residents. The latter, and especially the leaders of the Ashkenazi community, were stung by the criticism, and Brill, who had already been in the Land for a while and had ties to the leadership of the Perushim, was called upon to defend them. He wrote that they were attempting to grow *etrogim*, but could earn very little by doing so. The Land of Israel's distance from the European markets meant that growers there faced less favorable conditions than those in Greece.

The questions raised by Brill and Pines regarding the *kashrut* of the Corfu *etrogim* found an attentive ear. Rabbi Spektor forbade *etrogim* from Corfu until their status was clarified and saw to it that worthies of the community engaged in the *etrog* trade in order to ensure reasonable prices. But his actions responded only in part to the challenges that had been raised, for he limited his prohibition to his community and to a specified time. Those who had approached him hoped that his status as the greatest halakhic decisor of the age would extend the prohibition to other communities as well, and that in fact happened in a few places.²⁰ It is not entirely clear whether Spektor's prohibition was motivated by concern over the price of the Corfu *etrogim* or over their *kashrut*, and it may have been motivated entirely by an interest in supporting the residents of the Land of Israel in the manner Pines had suggested. In any case, what is clear is that Spektor wanted to weaken the hand of the Corfu merchants, though he stopped short of forbidding their merchandise entirely. He lent the full weight of his authority and standing to the effort, and appears to have wanted to do more than merely reduce the price of *etrogim*. Jacob Lifschitz, Rabbi Spektor's secretary, published an article in *Ha-levanon* in which he tied the ruling to Pines's desire to establish a new economic base for the Land's residents.²¹

Spektor's prohibition of Corfu *etrogim* led to concern about a scarcity-induced increase in the price of *etrogim* imported from Italy,

20 I. E. Spektor, et al., "A Great Remediation," *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 39 (1875): 307; A. M. Lapidot, "Releasing the Fetters," *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 46 (1875).

21 Spektor, et al., "A Great Remediation."

Corsica, and Morocco, in which case the cost of the ruling might exceed its benefit. Some suggested organizing a centralized purchasers' cartel to deny sellers the opportunity to raise the price. Brill's desire, after all, was to reduce the price of the etrog so it would be comparable to that of an orange or a lemon.²²

In a "publisher's note" Brill, as the editor of *Ha-levanon*, broadened the issue by pledging that even with Corfu etrogim banned, European Jews would not want for etrogim. Supplies from areas of Italy and Morocco were available, and etrogim from the Land of Israel would also come into their own. He acknowledged that the latter were not as beautiful as those from Corfu, but he maintained that the external beauty of the Corfu etrogim was outweighed by the inner beauty of etrogim from the Holy Land, free of any concern about grafting.²³ Brill's arguments were controversial, to the point that he was compelled to reexamine the matter and acknowledge that at this stage, etrogim from the Land of Israel were not sufficient to satisfy the demand in Russia and Poland.²⁴

Also joining in the fray was Rabbi Jaffe, the rabbi of Ruzhany and Pines's teacher. In his newspaper, Brill quoted Jaffe's comments along with the ruling by Rabbi Moses ben Joseph Trani (Mabbit), a leading decisor in Safed during the second half of the sixteenth century, because both of them favored an etrog from the Land of Israel over a more beautiful one from elsewhere.²⁵ Moved by his love for the Land of Israel, Jaffe wanted to broaden the prohibition on Corfu etrogim in order to enhance the value of etrogim from the Land of Israel. He was prepared to go further than Brill or even Pines himself, and criticized Brill for retreating from his initial position in support of Land-of-Israel etrogim:

Every man whose heart bears love for the Land should

22 Y. Brill, Publisher's note, *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 46 (1875).

23 Ibid. Brill also cited a Talmudic homily suggesting, by a play on the biblical term for etrog, that the etrog tree had to bear its fruit from year to year—something he believed to apply only to non-grafted etrogim.

24 Brill assumed that purchasers would not forgo etrogim with a pitem, a mark of beauty in an etrog and something having a halakhic aspect as well; Land-of-Israel etrogim often lacked a pitem. See on this J. Ettlinger, *Bikkurei ya'aqov al hilkhot sukkah ve-lulav* (Altona, 1858), 648:23. Brill considered the pitem issue in detail and argued that etrogim lacking a pitem were to be found mostly in the Land of Israel, Morocco, and Corsica. As a practical matter, etrogim without a pitem were used in the Land of Israel and in Morocco. See Publisher's note, "Concerning the *Etrogim*," *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 41 (1875): 322.

25 Publisher's note, "Two Voices with Respect to the *Etrogim*—First Voice," *ibid.*, 353–355.

attempt to purchase one of these etrogim for use in fulfilling the commandment.... For those believers who love their land and cherish its dust will choose its fruit, either because of their love for the holy or because of its appeal to the eye on the harvest festival, as a remembrance of Jerusalem celebrating its festivals when the Land was settled.²⁶

Rabbi Jaffe's Zionist ideas had never before been set out in print, but early evidence of them appears in this controversy. Jaffe relied here on Joseph Schwartz, the author of *Tevu'ot ha-arez*, who attested that the etrogim of the Land of Israel were not grafted,²⁷ and Jaffe had no doubt that they were to be preferred over those from elsewhere which were subject to such concerns.

Also endorsing the ban on Corfu etrogim was Rabbi Alexander Moses Lapidot, who was close to the circle of rabbis sympathetic to the Haskalah and whose voice was widely heeded on communal matters. He acknowledged that economic factors carried weight in halakhic determinations and that those who permitted Corfu etrogim—himself included—had done so “in view of the difficult circumstances at the time, so that etrogim would be available inexpensively.” Now that Corfu etrogim had risen in price, however, there was no basis for ruling leniently, and the very factors that supported the previous lenient ruling now warranted a stringent ruling.²⁸ According to Lapidot, the entire argument led to the desecration of God's name and should be ended, for there were weightier issues to be dealt with by the Jewish community.

Notwithstanding these voices, there were those who challenged the practicality of enhancing the economy of the Land of Israel through the

26 M. G. Jaffe, “Two Voices with Respect to the *Etrogim*—Second Voice,” *ibid.*, 354–355. Jaffe reiterates the idea first raised by Brill regarding the “external beauty” or “lesser beauty” of the Corfu etrogim, in contrast to the “inner beauty” of the etrogim from the Land of Israel, which he considers preferable. He relies on the Mabbitt, who had already increased the regard for Land-of-Israel etrogim. It appears that Jaffe introduced these terms. The Mabbitt did not compare etrogim from the Land of Israel to etrogim from elsewhere, as his purpose was to make it possible even for poor Jews in the Land of Israel to acquire a kosher etrog.

27 Schwartz, *Tevu'ot ha-arez*, 383. In the first edition of the book, published in 1845, grafted etrogim grown in the Land of Israel are not mentioned. In the second edition, published in 1900, the editor, A. M. Lunz, noted the presence in the Land of grafted etrog trees planted by Arabs and the admonition by Jerusalem rabbis not to use their fruit.

28 A. M. Lapidot, “Enhancing the Sacred,” *Ha-levanon* 13, no. 8 (1876): 59–61.

growth of etrogim. Joseph Rivlin, secretary of the General Committee of all the kolels, argued that the proposed programs were of no use, for efforts had already been made to produce etrogim and expenses had exceeded revenues. The great impediment to a successful program was the distance between the Land of Israel and target markets, which increased both shipping costs and spoilage. In addition, one had to recognize the poor quality of the etrogim themselves.²⁹ Rivlin confirmed what Brill had already argued.

The Debate Goes On

Pines's articles, which tied the kashrut of the Corfu etrogim to the discussion of productivity in the Land of Israel, elicited opposition even from those who were close to him in the Land of Israel and in Lithuania. Brill, Rivlin, and Jacob Lifschitz were concerned that Pines's comment would provoke criticism of the Old Yishuv. As noted, they maintained that commercial difficulties eliminated any opportunity to benefit from the exporting of etrogim from the Land of Israel.³⁰

Lifschitz, Rabbi Spektor's secretary and a leading promoter and spokesman of Lithuanian Orthodoxy, relied on clearly Orthodox arguments in opposing the use of the etrog trade to increase the productivity of the Old Yishuv. In fact, two Orthodox attitudes were evident in the polemics, and a clear line divided them. The attitudes had emerged earlier, during the controversy over religious reforms (1870) between the haredi stream, with Lifschitz as its leading spokesman, and the National-Religious stream, whose positions were voiced by Pines. From the issue of the etrogim, the debate turned to the nature and identity of the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. Pines supported the overall modernization of the Yishuv in the hope that it would bring about national modernization; Lifschitz rejected outright any notion of modernizing the Yishuv and meant to maintain it as it existed, engaged solely in divine service and thereby representing all Jews.³¹

Lifschitz did not reject the idea that Jews should settle on the Land of Israel (that is, work there productively), but he would limit that sort of settlement to Jews from Eastern lands and to Ashkenazim who were

29 J. Rivlin, "Jerusalem," *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 45 (1875): 358–359.

30 Y. M. Pines, "A Word to My Opponent," *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 50 (1875): 395–396.

31 J. Lifschitz, "Seek the Peace of Jerusalem," *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 42–43 (1875): 337–339.

not equipped to study Torah. Pines also disagreed with Brill about the economic prospects for trade in Land-of-Israel etrogim. He attributed the failures in that trade to outdated commercial arrangements, maintaining that if these were improved and updated, the export of etrogim from the Land of Israel would face a bright economic future.³²

Rabbi Spektor's ruling evidently influenced other communities as well, and traders in Corfu etrogim protested. They argued that their products had been forbidden solely for economic reasons, because of their high prices. To eliminate any doubt, Spektor reiterated his view, again basing his ruling on two factors—the high price and the possible grafting.³³

Ha-levanon took the lead in challenging the kashrut of the Corfu etrogim, and the issue occupied center stage in the newspaper for as long as it went on. The newspaper cited reports by the rabbi of Corfu and people involved in marketing the etrogim who acknowledged that they did, in fact, mingle grafted and non-grafted produce. An important report was provided in September 1875 by Jacob Sapir, a scholar from the Land of Israel who looked for lost Jewish communities and studied Jewish manuscripts. While visiting Trieste, the center of the etrog trade, he found out that the kashrut certificates given to the etrogim there were all baseless fabrications, meant primarily to enrich the rabbis in Trieste and Corfu who issued them.³⁴ Sapir's report and others like it seriously damaged the trade in etrogim from Corfu and adjacent areas and undercut, for a time, the reliability of etrog-approval certificates in Lithuania and White Russia. As a halakhic matter, this meant that any Jew who recited a blessing over an etrog imported from Corfu—the principal source of etrogim in Europe—was reciting a vain blessing.³⁵

On the other hand, etrogim from Morocco and the Land of Israel were presumed to be non-grafted. One need hardly describe the disappointment felt by many Jews who had diligently sought to enhance

32 Pines, "A Word to My Opponent," 395–396.

33 "Important Notice," *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 3 (1875): 17.

34 Diamant, "On the Corfu Etrogim," 25–26.

35 **Translator's note:** In Jewish law, a "blessing" (*berakhah*) often refers to a specific liturgical formula that begins (except for one sort of blessing not pertinent here) with the words "Blessed Are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe." A blessing of this sort is never optional. If it is not required, it is forbidden and is termed a "vain blessing." A blessing is required before performing certain ritual acts (such as taking an etrog and lulav on Sukkot), but if the object involved in the ritual act, such as the etrog, is unfit for use, the blessing over it would be in vain and hence forbidden.

their observance of the commandment to take the four species and had invested good money in the attempt.

Nahum Mikhel Kahana, rabbi of Saukenai, in the Kovno district, decided to set things straight and confirmed the prohibitions on Corfu etrogim. In his article in *Ha-levanon*, he wrote that the use of etrogim from Corfu was permitted only in exigent circumstances.³⁶

Considerable confusion ensued. The unambiguous reports regarding the approvals issued by the rabbis of Corfu and Trieste³⁷ meant that according to most decisors, the etrogim from Corfu were not kosher and a blessing could not be recited over them. But if that were so, how could rabbis have relied on false testimony and pronounced wasted blessings? Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Mikhel Weiser (the Malbim) acknowledged that he knew the etrogim were grafted but added, “I could not bring myself to say unacceptable things.”³⁸ He now became more courageous and declared that etrogim from the Land of Israel were preferable because of their beauty, because of the ban on Corfu etrogim, and in order “to provide a living to the residents of our Holy Land and help in the settlement of the Land.”³⁹ Other rabbis, including Nathan Adler, the chief rabbi of England, and Samuel Zanwil Klapfish, one of the judges of the rabbinical court in Warsaw, followed Rabbi Spektor and forbade Corfu etrogim outright. Prominent among those who forbade the etrogim were a group of rabbis with Haskalah leanings— Rabbis Jaffe and Lapidot, whom we mentioned previously, as well as Rabbis Joseph Zechariah Stern of Shavli and Barukh Halevi Epstein of Novaredok.

The comprehensive ban on Corfu etrogim altered the determination, reached thirty years earlier, that the etrogim were kosher.⁴⁰ The ban also raised doubts about etrogim imported from other parts of Europe. The only etrogim that continued to benefit from the presumption of kashrut were those coming from the Land of Israel, Morocco, Corsica, and Genoa. To fortify the front against the Corfu etrogim, it was necessary to support the use of etrogim from these other locales, for their kashrut, too, had been subject to question.⁴¹ Invoking the rabbinic tradition followed

36 N. M. Kahana, “On the Corfu *Etrogim*,” *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 2 (1875): 9–10.

37 Y. M. Pines, “To What Extent Can One Rely on Trieste Certifications of Kashrut in General and with Respect to *Etrogim* in Particular,” *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 1 (1875): 1–2.

38 Stern, “On the Corfu *Etrogim*,” 33 and publisher’s comments.

39 M. L. Weiser [the Malbim], “On the Corfu *Etrogim*,” *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 49 (1876).

40 See Lapidot’s account and the comment by the publisher (Brill), *Ha-levanon* 11, no. 40 (1875).

41 Halevi Epstein, “A Category of Sage.”

by the Hatam Sofer, which permitted only etrogim from Genoa, was of no help given the expanded market and its varied nature. Those etrogim, although known for many generations to be kosher, could hardly suffice to meet the demand.

Accordingly, the halakhic determination that all Corfu etrogim were to be considered grafted never gained popular acceptance among believing Jews, who invoked the principle that “the Holy One blessed be He does not set snares for the righteous.” The Jewish masses, along with their rabbis and Hasidic *rebbe*s, had recited the blessing over Corfu etrogim for many generations. The halakhic solution, then, was to categorize the Corfu fruit as “possibly grafted,” a status consistent with the data that had come to light since the ruling of 1846, and to determine that a blessing recited under this sort of uncertainty would not be a vain blessing. Echoes of that approach can be heard as well in the statements in opposition to it made by those who disqualified the Corfu etrogim, including Rabbi Stern, who sought to resist reliance on the doubtful nature of the disqualifying features as a basis for permitting use of the etrogim.⁴² Another line of reasoning maintained that the use of grafting in Corfu was something new, and one who had recited blessings over Corfu etrogim in past years had not done so over grafted fruit.⁴³ That argument, of course, was inconsistent with the long line of decisors who had banned Corfu etrogim all the way back to the second half of the eighteenth century.

Traders in Corfu etrogim naturally opposed the ban and argued that Rabbi Spektor should have consulted with other rabbis on the matter. They also threatened to attack both the economic interests and the reputation of those who had prohibited the use of their produce, hoping thereby to pressure them into changing their minds.⁴⁴ Rabbi Spektor’s negative ruling was issued in the spring of 1875, and two rabbinic judges from Vilna—Rabbis Bezalel Katz Hakohen and Joseph Ben-Refael—set out in late summer of that year to gather approbations for the use of etrogim from Corfu. Hakohen was a particularly prominent figure, an outstanding scholar who had served as a rabbinic judge in Vilna for some thirty years. He was known for his responsa and also wrote the Talmudic

42 Stern, “On the Corfu *Etrogim*.”

43 Pines, “To What Extent Can One Rely on Trieste Certifications of Kashrut in General and with Respect to *Etrogim* in Particular?” 1–2.

44 Ibid., and see also Tanhum, “On the Corfu *Etrogim*.”

novella and annotations known as *Mar'eh kohen*, which is included in the standard Vilna edition of the Talmud. Those who forbade the etrogim listed him as a supporter of their position, but he denied their claims. He maintained that while he had visited Trieste as early as 1864 and had found that the certifications for etrogim from Corfu and Corsica were not worth the paper they were written on, he now found it possible to permit use of Corfu etrogim in accord with Margoliot's ruling.⁴⁵

At the same time, Rabbi Gershon Tanh_um, a rabbinic judge in Minsk, published an article in *Ha-levanon* citing the views of prominent rabbis in support of Corfu etrogim, views that had been published in the conflict of 1846 and that included Rabbi Akiva Eger's son's statement that his father considered Corfu etrogim particularly desirable.⁴⁶ The conflict divided families, and rabbis often changed their minds. There were contradictory reports of some rabbis' positions, and each side sought to offer proof in support of its view.⁴⁷

Hora'at Heter or Tokheihah Megullah?

In September 1875, Rabbi Katz Hakohen published his book *Hora'at heter*.⁴⁸ In the introduction, the publishers argue that Corfu etrogim had been banned on account of their high price, as Rabbi Spektor's statements indicate. In their view, however, the ban should not be accepted, for it confused economic and halakhic considerations in a way that risked the cheapening of rabbinic rulings:

... For they will say that all the words of the Torah were given into the hands of rabbis of the generation, who had the power, Heaven forbid, to bend all the laws of the Torah in whatever manner they alone wished, Heaven forbid ... and in that way, the foundations of the Holy Torah will be undermined, Heaven forbid, and the Torah itself will be invalidated, Heaven forbid.⁴⁹

Those who ruled permissively recognized that extra-halakhic factors,

45 B. Hakohen and J. Ben-Refael, *Hora'at heter*, 18.

46 Tanh_um, "On the Corfu Etrogim."

47 Kahana, "On the Corfu Etrogim," 9–10.

48 Hakohen & Ben-Refael, *Hora'at heter*.

49 Ibid., 3.

not necessarily economic ones, had penetrated the halakhic analysis of those banning the etrogim, as we shall see.⁵⁰ They were able to report as well that even in the Land of Israel Corfu etrogim were especially sought out, and forbade paying more than one-third above the market price to secure an especially attractive etrog in order to avoid inflating the prices.⁵¹ They also argued that the pertinent features of Corfu etrogim resembled those of etrogim from the Land of Israel, and that any effort to distinguish between them therefore was null and void.⁵²

In response to the publication of *Hora'at heter*, a pamphlet entitled *Tokheihah megullah* was published at Rabbi Spektor's initiative, and signed by Rabbi Moses Romm, head of the advanced Talmudic academy in Kovno.⁵³ It offered a sharply worded reply to the Vilna scholars and sought to cut off all authorization to use Corfu etrogim. In taking this step, Spektor was influenced by Rabbi Stern, Jacob Moses Karpas of Kovno, and others.⁵⁴

The author of *Tokheihah megullah* charged that permitting etrogim from Corfu was "a scandal in the house of Israel" and that "it was a time to act for God." A scandal so harmful to the Jewish religion had not occurred since the onset of the Haskalah, "from the time the apostate writers began to devote their pens to lies."⁵⁵ Spektor set out his reasons for invalidating the Corfu etrogim and polemicized against those who disagreed. First, he took on the Corfu merchants, who had raised their prices.⁵⁶ He then argued that while presumption and tradition were fine

50 Ibid., 5–6. According to a few of the Ashkenazi rabbis, Corsican etrogim were offered more widely than those from Corfu, and prohibiting the Corfu etrogim would raise the price of those from Corsica.

51 Ibid., 17.

52 J. R. & B. Hakohen, "On the Corfu Etrogim," *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 43 (1876).

53 The pamphlet, which was written by Zvi Hirsch Rabinowitz, was issued at Spektor's initiative; see J. Lifschitz, *Zikhron ya`aqov* 2 (Kovno: Dreller, 1923–1930), 175; see also I. D. Beit-Halevi, *Biography of Rabbi Hayyim Elazar Wachs, the Rabbi of Kalish* (Tel Aviv, 1950), 83, n. 1. Lifschitz; see Maggid, *The City of Vilna*, 58.

54 Lifschitz, *Zikhron ya`aqov* 2, 174. Stern was tied to the group of religious maskilim, including Pines, Eliasberg, and Jaffe, that during the late 1860s was involved in a dispute with other maskilim over religious reforms.

55 Romm, *Tokheihah megullah* 3. (**Translator's note:** The Hebrew contains an untranslatable play on words. The Hebrew for "pen" is a homophone for "time" [both pronounced *et*, although spelled differently], and the passage could suggest that the writers had created a "time for lies," in contrast to "a time for truth.")

56 Ibid., 4–5. While Rabbi Margoliot had permitted their use on account of their low price, the rise in prices eliminated that rationale. Moreover, Margoliot's permissive ruling was limited to etrogim from Parga, but now, during the second half of the nineteenth century, one could no longer rely

when circumstances were unchanging, they could not be relied upon in contexts such as the growing and grafting of trees, where innovations were prevalent—as even the rabbi of Corfu had attested.⁵⁷

As for the principle that “the Holy One blessed be He does not ensnare the righteous,” the author of *Tokheihah megullah* pointed out that the Corfu etrogim had only now lost their presumption of kashrut on the basis of the local rabbi’s account and the reports of flawed certification. That does not mean they were unfit in the past, and the principle thus stands uncompromised. He bolstered the legal-halakhic argument with historical assumptions.⁵⁸ One way or another, he argued, now, in the mid-1870s, etrogim from Corfu had neither reliable certification nor in-force presumption of fitness, and it was therefore universally agreed that one could not use them to fulfill the commandment. Moreover, there was no cause for concern that banning Corfu etrogim would keep people from fulfilling the commandment, for since the ban had been enacted merchants had imported numerous etrogim from Morocco and the Land of Israel at reasonable prices.⁵⁹

on precise data regarding Corfu etrogim.

- 57 Ibid., 7. Romm also rejected the argument, advanced by those who permitted the etrogim, based on the fact that “a craftsman does not ruin his handiwork” and that one therefore can rely on orchard owners and merchants not to graft etrogim and not to deal in grafted etrogim. That argument had been raised repeatedly during the debate, but etrog trees were planted primarily to produce fruit to be eaten, and grafting improves the fruit for that purpose. Moreover, the growers were able to market grafted etrogim to Jews on account of the permissive ruling, so they had no reason at all not to grow or trade in grafted etrogim (ibid.). The Jews of Lithuania and White Russia, the author continues, regularly used Corsican etrogim, and those who permitted Corfu etrogim were now casting doubts on those from Corsica in order to bolster their permissive ruling (ibid., p. 14). Corfu etrogim should not be permitted on the grounds that they were traditionally permitted, he claimed, for it was clear that the entire system for certifying them was not properly administered (ibid., p. 20).
- 58 In his words: “Truly, fifty years ago, when the great scholar, the author of *Beit efrayim*, of blessed memory, permitted their use, Italy had a presumption of kashrut [and one could rely on the certifications issued for the etrogim], its rabbis were faithful and God-fearing, the number of etrogim was small, and they were placed in the custody of the local rabbis. And so [invalidating them now] does not cast aspersions on the earlier generations” (Romm, *Tokheihah megullah*, 20). How, then, did Solomon Kluger, one of the greatest Galician decisors of his time, forbid etrogim from Corfu? The author replied that where a presumption was contradicted by visual appearance, reliance on visual appearance was preferred. Kluger found the Corfu etrogim to be grafted on the basis of indications in the etrogim themselves. Those who forbade Corfu etrogim maintained that they did not benefit from the presumption of kashrut because they lacked signs of kashrut. But the matter of signs on the etrog was in addition to other evidence and was a factor relied on to reach a stringent ruling, not a lenient one. It was pertinent only to places, such as Genoa, where etrogim were presumed kosher [in which case the absence of signs could rebut the presumption].” See the anonymous “On the Corfu Etrogim,” *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 47 (1876): 367.
- 59 Romm, *Tokheihah megullah*, 34.

Rabbi Spektor's initial ruling, in 1875, forbade the use of Corfu etrogim only for his own community and at the time in question. In the ensuing years, however, it was published in *Ha-levanon* as a prohibition of general applicability.⁶⁰

Tokheihah megullah, like *Hora'at heter*, incorporates clearly Orthodox considerations. In an Orthodox analysis, modernity in all its manifestations plays a decisive role in halakhic deliberation. Katz Hakohen had charged that those who forbade Corfu etrogim were opening "the way for the Reformers," for one could infer from their ruling that the rabbis ruled in accord with their whims. According to the author of *Tokheihah megullah*, however, it was very much the opposite.⁶¹ It was the permissive rulings that desecrated God's name, whether by disparaging the rabbis who banned the etrogim or by opening the way for Reformers to argue that the rabbis ruled arbitrarily: "A desecration of God's name, from which destruction of religion can flow. Honor is not shown to these rabbis."⁶² In general, according to the author of *Tokheihah megullah*, Katz Hakohen's style in the etrog polemics was unduly provocative.⁶³

From that point on, the arguments on both sides took account, in the Orthodox manner, of the reactions of the non-traditional public. This was a new turn in a clearly halakhic controversy that had gone on for generations, and the references appear to be the first appearances in Eastern Europe of Orthodox halakhic discourse. Lifschitz himself saw it that way when he later wrote the Orthodox version of nineteenth-century Russian-Jewish history.⁶⁴ Only extra-halakhic considerations could combine such diverse halakhic rationales having no substantive ties to one another.

The Etrog Controversy and the Controversy over Sidrei Tahorot

Rabbi Katz Hakohen, the leader of those permitting the use of Corfu etrogim, was a sharp-tongued halakhic disputant. About a year after the publication of *Hora'at heter*, he issued another polemical leaflet, titled *Divrei milu'im*, meant as a response to *Tokheihah megullah*. As noted, the

60 See, for example, M. Auerbach, "Etrogim from the Holy Land," *Ha-levanon* 13, no. 42 (1876): 329.

61 Romm, *Tokheihah megullah*, 58–59.

62 Ibid., 120.

63 Ibid., 60.

64 Lifschitz, *Zikhron ya' aqov* 2, 174.

latter work was written under Rabbi Spektor's auspices.⁶⁵ *Divrei milu'im* first appeared in Samuel Joseph Fuenn's Vilna periodical *Ha-karmel*, which supported the permissive authorities.⁶⁶ The disputants joined the debate over the etrogim to an entirely different dispute in which Katz Hakohen forbade the publication of a new edition of the Talmud in a format different from the one we know.

The new edition, as was discussed elsewhere, was initiated by Rabbi Gershon Hanokh Henikh Leiner, the admor of Radzyn, who had collected passages from the Talmud and the midrashim in which the sages deal with issues of ritual purity and arranged them by topic. In addition, he collected and interpreted novellae by the *rishonim*⁶⁷ on these subjects and entitled the collection *Sidrei tahorot*.⁶⁸ In its external format, the book simulated the organization of the standard Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud, with a lengthy commentary on one side and a shorter one on the other, on the model of Rashi and Tosafot on the Talmud. Because there is no Gemara on these issues,⁶⁹ the idea developed of creating a sort of Gemara which would be based on a collection of the rabbinic statements appearing at other points in the Talmud. The first part published was called *Masekhet keilim* (the tractate *Keilim*, the title of the first tractate of *Tahorot* in this order of the Talmud), and it incorporated the collection of rabbinic passages dealing with that tractate of Mishnah. Despite his audacity in creating a tractate that did not exist in the received edition of the Talmud, the admor of Radzyn secured approbations for his project from leading authorities of the time, including Rabbis Joseph Saul Nathanson of Lvov, Simeon Sofer of Krakow, Isaac Elhanan Spektor of Kovno, Hayyim Sofer of Munkacs, Hayyim Elazar Wachs of Pietrikow, and others.⁷⁰

65 On the identity of the pamphlet's writer, see above, n. 51.

66 B. Katz Hakohen and J. Ben-Refael, *Divrei milu'im* (Vilna, 1877). The article also was published that year in *Ha-karmel* 3, no. 8 (1876): 437–460; the page numbers in the citations that follow are for *Ha-karmel*.

67 **Translator's note:** The *rishonim* ("early ones") are rabbinic authorities of the period extending roughly from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries.

68 Lifschitz, *Zikhron ya' aqov* 2, 175.

69 **Translator's note:** The first five of the Talmud's six "orders" include both Mishnah and Gemara. The sixth order, *Tahorot*, on issues of ritual purity, contains only Mishnah.

70 G. H. Henikh Leiner, *Sidrei tahorot* (Yosepoff, 1873; photo-offset, Bnei Brak, 1985). The second part, on tractate *Ohalot* (Petrikov, 1903) was published after the compiler's death, but when he composed it he obtained approbations from the leading scholars of the time. Among those giving approbations were Isaac Elhanan Spektor and Israel Joshua Trunk of Kutno. When it later appeared, each page bore the legend, "Anthologized from the statements of the *tanna'im* and *amora'im* of

Rabbi Bezalel Katz Hakohen was initially among the supporters of the admor of Radzyn's initiative. Now, however, in the etrog polemics of September 1875, he stood at the head of the group ruling permissively, while in the debate over *Sidrei tahorot*, as discussed earlier, he led those prohibiting the volume. The court that issued the prohibition rationalized its decision on the basis of the

desecration of the name of Heaven ... the desecration of the honor of the holy Oral Law ... the great stumbling blocks that could arise from this in the generations that will follow us.⁷¹

It is entirely possible that in both of these issues economic considerations were at play. Could Katz Hakohen have been protecting the Corfu merchants in the etrog controversy and the publishers of the standard Vilna Talmud—in the editing of which he himself had participated—in the *Sidrei tahorot* dispute? We have no certain proof that ulterior motives were involved, but one way or the other, Katz Hakohen ruled permissively in the etrog controversy and stringently in the “new Gemara” dispute.

In a July 1876 article in *Ha-karmel*, Katz Hakohen explained that his permissive ruling should not be seen as a leniency with regard to the etrogim, but rather as a stringent ruling against those who failed to honor the existing tradition which permitted their use, and he went on to describe the factors that motivated him.⁷² As he tells it, most Jewish communities, including those in the Land of Israel, used Corfu etrogim on Sukkot of 1875, notwithstanding Rabbi Spektor's contrary ruling. All of the other etrogim available were unfit, and so prohibiting these ones would have eliminated the entire supply.⁷³ In contrast, Katz Hakohen's ruling against the new Gemara burdened the editor, the printer, and the purchasers. In both instances, he attacked those who took the tradition lightly, for he was concerned about a breach that would result in everything being swept away:

blessed memory.” It appears that the inclusion of the legend was a condition of publication; see Maggid, *The City of Vilna*, 59–60, and cf. Katz Hakohen and Ben-Refael, *Divrei milu'im*, 437–438.

71 Maggid, *The City of Vilna*, 60n.

72 Katz Hakohen, “*Lehokhiah be-mishor*,” 385–392.

73 Ibid., 390.

If we remain silent now regarding this, Heaven forbid, what shall we do if this author continues in his way and issues a new Gemara of this sort on tractate *Berakhot*, tractate *Shabbat*, etc.?⁷⁴

When Orthodox modes of thinking were beginning to take shape, it was less than fully clear to the parties themselves who was more Orthodox—those who forbade the Corfu etrogim or those who forbade the new Gemara. Each side accused the other of “degrading, by reason of our many sins, the honor of the Torah’s sanctity and the sanctity of the Sages of blessed memory” and doing so “in a generation when, thanks to our sins, the glory of the holy Torah has retreated.”⁷⁵ But a close examination of the competing positions will show that the Vilna rabbinic judges, who permitted the etrogim, took a more characteristically Orthodox position. What the positions opposing the new Gemara and permitting the Corfu etrogim had in common was their firm maintenance of tradition and existing custom: “One who questions this has the weaker position, and to this, the great scholar of blessed memory, the author of the *Hatam sofer*, applied his turn of phrase in several places ‘the new is forbidden by the Torah in all instances.’”⁷⁶

The prohibition on Corfu etrogim had a quality of an innovative enactment: “... For no court in our time has the power to displace the Torah’s words, Heaven forbid, even where it merely calls for refraining from action.”⁷⁷ In contrast, permitting the new Gemara entailed great risk:

... to take lightly, Heaven forbid, the sanctity of the entire Oral Torah, in which all holy Jews truly believe; for the entire order of the holy Talmud as we have it today was uttered from heaven by the Holy One blessed be He, Himself, may His name be blessed, Who appeared in the Holy Spirit to all His holy ones, the organizers of the Talmud, may their memories be for a blessing.⁷⁸

74 Ibid., 387.

75 Hakohen & Ben-Refael, *Divrei milu'im*, 438.

76 Ibid., 455.

77 Katz Hakohen, “*Lehokhiah be-mishor*,” 391.

78 Ibid., 387.

It should be noted that those who forbade Corfu etrogim likewise cited seemingly Orthodox rationales for their position. They cited the maxim that “the practice in a wayward generation such as this should be bolstered and made more observant,”⁷⁹ and maintained that one such practice was that of relying on rabbinical certifications that had been disproven by the new reports regarding Corfu etrogim. But one cannot escape the sense that arguments of this sort were raised only in an effort to cut off the arguments in favor of permitting the etrogim and were not otherwise taken seriously.

The opposition to the new Gemara was organized very close in time to the publication, in the spring of 1875, of Spektor’s ruling against Corfu etrogim, and in the fall of the same year, of *Tokheifah megullah*. The rabbis who forbade publication of the new Gemara, led by Katz Hakohen, had not done so when it first appeared, in 1873, but now joined forces to ban it. Among those opposing it were rabbis from Bialystok, Dinaburg, Grodno, Slonim, Minsk, and Święciany—all from the Jewish region of Lithuania (historical Lithuania, within its sixteenth-century borders). The opposition to printing the new Gemara was not grounded in halakhah, and the reason given for the prohibition was not a characteristically halakhic one: “... for this new Gemara defiles the honor of the Talmud and the holy Oral Torah in its entirety.”⁸⁰ The opponents compared the project to efforts to translate the Talmud into foreign languages. The *Hatam Sofer* had initially approved such a translation, but later changed his mind. Opposition to translating and editing the Talmud had, in essence, a single purpose: “to close the breaches in the vineyard of the House of Israel.”⁸¹

Those who permitted the new Gemara lived throughout the Jewish world, while those who forbade it were all from the Lithuanian region.⁸² Hoping to induce Spektor to support him against those who forbade the Gemara that he had published, the admor of Radzyn was prepared, in exchange for that support, to argue within Poland for the prohibition on the use of Corfu etrogim. Jacob Lifschitz relates that the admor of

79 Hakohen & Ben-Refael, “On the Corfu *Etrogim*,” *Ha-levanon* 12, no. 43 (1876).

80 Hakohen & Ben-Refael, *Divrei milu'im*, 446.

81 Ibid.

82 See the unidentified letter, perhaps from Brisk, that places the Ga’on of Vilna at the center of the controversy over the “new Gemara” in that it accuses the editor, Rabbi Gershon Henikh Leiner, of deprecating the Ga’on’s annotations on the Talmud; see Hakohen & Ben-Refael, *Divrei milu'im*, 444–445.

Radzyn, in his travels, also discovered the snail from which the blue color (*tekhelet*) for *zizit* could be extracted, but he could not gain Spektor's support either for the new Gemara or for the identification of *tekhelet*.⁸³

Rabbi Spektor provides a characteristic expression of pre-Orthodox traditional Judaism, not yet alarmed by modernity and not fearful of crisis or dissolution. His concerns were exclusively halakhic, but the people in his camp were already raising extra-halakhic Orthodox considerations.

The sanctity and superiority of the Land of Israel were not treated in the discussion, for they were not of halakhic significance in the etrog controversy. Even Rabbi Reines, later a leader of the Mizrahi movement and already in the 1870s a member of the Society for the Settlement of the Land of Israel, attested during the controversy that he himself used etrogim from Corfu because of their superior quality and saw no reason to change his practice. The place of etrogim from the Land of Israel vis à vis those from Corfu was not yet on his agenda.

In *Divrei milu'im*, the rabbinic judges of Vilna offered further proofs for the permissibility of etrogim from Corfu.⁸⁴ In summing up their position, they asserted that those who permitted the use of etrogim from the Land of Israel and from Morocco relied on the premise that in Asia and Africa there need be no concern about grafting, for the procedure was unknown there. But that premise is fundamentally flawed, for the Talmud itself refers to the procedure being used in its time, and it would be unreasonable to believe that a technique known nearly two millennia ago would be unknown to people in those lands today. And, in fact, after a year it became clear that the premise was, in fact, untrue, and at that stage of the dispute, the primary argument for favoring Land-of-Israel etrogim over those from Corfu simply collapsed.

Etrogim from the Land of Israel

A History of the Orchards in the Land of Israel

Reports on the export of etrogim from the Land of Israel to Diaspora communities go back to the 1850s. At that time, there were orchards in the areas of Umm al-Fahm and of Nazareth, Safed, Tiberias, and Nablus.

83 Lifschitz, *Zikhron ya`aqov* 2, 176.

84 Hakohen and Ben-Refael, *Divrei milu'im*, 448–452.

The early etrog merchants were members of the Ashkenazi community, and included the author and scholar Jacob Sapir, who served as a rabbinic emissary (fundraiser) for the *Perushim* in several lands, Judah Leib Salant, and Rabbi Benesh Benjamin Salant. By 1859, members of the Salant family had established a company to deal in etrogim from the Land of Israel.⁸⁵ At the same time, the Sephardi merchants Murato and Barukh went into the etrog business.⁸⁶

Those who favored etrogim from the Land of Israel over those from Corfu assumed, as noted, that the practice of grafting was unknown in the East.⁸⁷ Joseph Schwartz, who studied the Land of Israel, attested in the 1840s that etrogim grown in the Land of Israel were not grafted.⁸⁸ His finding was confirmed by Sapir, who observed the etrog harvest in 1854 and reported that there were no grafted etrogim in Umm al-Fahm. He saw only one grafted etrog tree, and that was in Jerusalem. According to Sapir, the advantage of an etrog from the Land of Israel was symbolic only: “to be graced with the fruit of Jerusalem ... and soon be privileged to see God’s beneficence and the return of His people to dwell in the Land as in days gone by.”⁸⁹

The history of Corfu etrogim in the Land of Israel is not entirely clear. According to one account, by the late 1850s and early 1860s, etrog trees were being imported from Corfu to the Land of Israel and planted in Jaffa.⁹⁰ Another account dates the first such plantings to the late 1860s.⁹¹

Jacob Sapir studied the subject and found that etrogim with a *pitem* were available in Jaffa from the late 1850s, but the story goes back to the previous decade. The rabbis of Corfu sent a box of etrogim, evidently from Parga, to the leading Sephardi rabbi in the Land of Israel, the *Rishon*

85 H. Romm, “The Beginnings of Jewish Agriculture,” 20, n. 4.

86 Porat, “The Polemic,” 31. Eliezer Rafael Malachi argues that the Sephardim were the first to engage in this trade; see Malachi, “On the History of the Etrog Trade,” 170.

87 *Quntres Peri ez hadar*, in *Judah and Jerusalem: The Newspaper (1877–1878) of Rabbi Joel Moses Solomon* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1955), 102.

88 Schwartz, *Tevu’ot ha-arez*; *Quntres Peri ez hadar* (1955): 102.

89 J. Sapir, “Stories from Our Ancestral Land,” *Shomer zivyon ha-ne’eman* 2, no. 178-179 (1854): 355, 357.

90 See the letter from Abir to Joel Moses Salomon, in J. M. Salomon, *Judah and Jerusalem*, ed. G. Kressel (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1955), 61.

91 According to *Quntres Peri ez hadar* (1878): 6, five years had passed since grafted etrogim first appeared in Jaffa; that is, they were first seen in 1873. The account goes on to tell of grafted trees from the early 1860s; see *ibid.*, 12.

Le-ziyyon, Rabbi Abraham Hayyim Gaggin. Sapir assumed that because the etrogim had been sent to the *Rishon Le-ziyyon*, the people sending them must have made sure they were not grafted. At the same time, two Jews purchased land in Jaffa for the planting of an etrog orchard. They asked Gaggin to send them the Corfu etrogim after the holiday so they could plant their seeds. Eight years later, they had fruit-bearing trees. In 1849, they sold their orchard to Moses Montefiore. Shoots from the trees were used to plant Corfu etrogim with a pitem in all of the Jaffa etrog orchards.⁹²

That story provides the background for the struggle between Ashkenazi and Sephardi merchants over Land-of-Israel etrogim that began in 1876. The Ashkenazim alleged that the Jaffa orchards, from which the Sephardi merchants purchased their product, were flawed, contending that the seeds originated in Corfu and thus came from grafted trees.⁹³ The Sephardi Rabbi Aaron Azriel approved several orchards in Jaffa after uprooting the grafted trees, but that did not convince the Ashkenazim. It should be noted that the Sephardim, too, treated the Jaffa etrogim other than those from the orchards inspected by Rabbi Azriel as presumptively grafted. The Ashkenazim made sure to use only etrogim from Umm al-Fahm and the Galilee, arguing that according to presumption and tradition they were not grafted. That premise, however, was not precisely correct, because only the orchard in Umm al-Fahm enjoyed that presumption.

The dispute in 1876 also was grounded in commercial competition, and Sapir—who had supported the Sephardi etrog merchants in the 1846 controversy—so argued.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the Ashkenazi rabbinical courts in Jerusalem issued their certifications of the etrogim from Umm al-Fahm and the Galilee and disqualified the Jaffa etrogim, doing so even though there was no presumption that the Galilee etrogim were kosher.⁹⁵ They also attested that Land-of-Israel etrogim by their nature did not grow with a pitem. The *Rishon Le-ziyyon*, Rabbi Abraham Ashkenazi, published his contrary view in an article in *Ha-levanon*. He invalidated all the etrogim that lacked a pitem, maintaining they should be considered incomplete and therefore unfit. The ruling was intended

92 J. Sapir, "On the Etrogim of the Holy Land," *Ha-levanon* 14, no. 14-15 (1877).

93 *Quntres Peri ez hadar* (1955): 103.

94 Sapir, above, n. 88; Malachi, "On the History of the Etrog Trade," 173.

95 *Quntres Peri ez hadar* (1955): 101.

to approve the Jaffa etrogim, which were presumed not to be grafted, and to invalidate the etrogim that grew in the Galilee and in Samaria, which the Ashkenazim had accepted. The ruling ran contrary to all precedents regarding pitem-less etrogim from the Land of Israel, Morocco, or Bordighera, and makes no reference to the ruling of the Mabbitt issued in the sixteenth century.⁹⁶ Yehiel Brill, the publisher of *Ha-levanon*, therefore believed that Rabbi Ashkenazi had not signed his article himself and that it had been signed in his name by one of his assistants.⁹⁷

In another article in *Ha-levanon*, the rabbi of Jerusalem, Meir Auerbach, disputed the view of those who cited the risk that Land-of-Israel etrogim ran afoul of the rules regarding *orlah*⁹⁸ as a reason for using Corfu etrogim. He demonstrated the absence of any basis for that concern and argued as well that the etrogim from the Land of Israel “come from a holy place” and are “kosher beyond any doubt even for the punctilious.”⁹⁹ But his comments preceded the report of the delegation sent by the rabbis of Jerusalem, to be considered below.

*The Kashrut of Land-of-Israel Etrogim in General
and Jaffa Etrogim in Particular*

Faced with the growing intensity of the dispute between Sephardim and Ashkenazim regarding Jaffa etrogim, the rabbis of Jerusalem decided to appoint a delegation to consider the nature of these etrogim first-hand. The delegation comprised an etrog merchant, Samuel Muni Silberman; a member of the All-Kolel Committee, Rabbi Solomon Zalman Levi; and Joel Moses Solomon, who was a member of the Ashkenazi court, a journalist, and a public figure. All three of them traded in etrogim, so it is hard to consider them impartial. According to one account, they were joined by Jacob Sapir, associated with the Sephardim in the industry.¹⁰⁰ The delegation familiarized itself thoroughly with all aspects of grafting, and published a book based on what they saw in the late summer of 1877.¹⁰¹

The delegation’s report suggests that in the early 1870s Jaffa

96 A. Ashkenazi, “On the *Etrogim* of the Holy Land,” *Ha-levanon* 13, no. 47 (1876).

97 Publisher’s note, *ibid.*, 370.

98 **Translator’s note:** The laws of *orlah* forbid the use of fruit that grows during a tree’s first three growing seasons. The laws apply with full force only in the Land of Israel.

99 Auerbach, “On the *Etrogim* of the Holy Land.”

100 *Quntres Peri ez hadar* (1955): 104–105.

101 *Quntres Peri ez hadar* (1878).

etrogim were presumed grafted and were used only after the holiday in the making of preserves. The Jerusalem merchants avoided exporting Jaffa etrogim, considering them to be even less fit than those of Corfu, and they never enjoyed a presumption of kashrut.¹⁰² The Jews of Jaffa themselves used etrogim from Umm al-Fahm rather than from their hometown. The delegation found that the Jaffa etrogim were grafted, as the owners of the orchards acknowledged.¹⁰³ The Ashkenazi court ruled that the grafted etrogim should be forbidden, but that there was no need for concern about fruit produced by trees grown from shoots of grafted trees, for there otherwise would be no end to it.¹⁰⁴ Rabbi Auerbach declined to endorse the court's ruling and determined that all Jaffa etrogim were presumed grafted and that no distinction should be drawn between the initially grafted tree and the progeny of its shoots.¹⁰⁵

The delegation was also asked to inspect the other orchards in the Land of Israel, and it did so following the festival of Sukkot of 1877. They concluded that the orchards in Umm al-Fahm, Alma al-Sha'ub, Hittin, and Tiberias were not grafted. On the basis of that evidence, the Ashkenazi court in Jerusalem approved the etrogim from those regions.¹⁰⁶ The rabbis of Jerusalem—Meir Auerbach and Samuel Salant—asked Rabbis Spektor and Wachs to permit etrogim from Umm al-Fahm, Safed, and Tiberias, and to forbid those from Jaffa.¹⁰⁷

In the mid-1870s, etrogim from the Land of Israel posed no significant market challenge to those from Corfu, as they could supply only a small percentage of the total demand. Moreover, the distance between the Land of Israel and the centers of consumption increased the cost of transporting the etrogim and seriously impaired their quality.¹⁰⁸ However, the dispute that called the fitness of the Corfu etrogim into question, and the ideas about increasing the productivity of the Yishuv, encouraged the interested parties to increase etrog output in the Land

102 Ibid., 4–7.

103 Ibid., 10–15. One cannot use the principle of “a craftsman does not ruin his handiwork” as a basis for asserting that the etrogim in Jaffa benefited from a presumption of kashrut, since the merchants and orchard owners there did not know of the Jewish preference for non-grafted etrogim.

104 Ibid., 16–17.

105 Ibid., 17. He relied in his ruling on Rabbi Akiva Eger and on Rabbi Meir Pozner of Danzig, the *Beit mei'ir*.

106 Ibid., 18–20.

107 Ibid., 27–31.

108 Porat, “The Polemic,” 32.

of Israel. During the 1870s, numerous etrog orchards were planted in the areas already noted, and the Alliance Israélite Universelle planted its orchard at Miqveh-Yisra'el.¹⁰⁹ The doubt cast on Jaffa etrogim did not undermine the opinion that etrogim from the Land of Israel were superior to those from Corfu.

Jacob Sapir, an etrog expert after having engaged in the business, determined that there were, in fact, grafted etrogim in the Land of Israel. He said that it was possible to distinguish between trees that were grafted and those that were not, but that it was difficult to distinguish between the fruits of the two kinds of trees. One therefore could rely only on the certification of the rabbis in the area where the fruit had been grown, and on that account etrogim from the Land of Israel were to be preferred.¹¹⁰ Sapir anticipated the arguments that would later be made by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, and it was on the basis of those arguments that the dispute was ultimately resolved.

Hayyim Elazar Wachs and the Land-of-Israel Estrogim

Hayyim Elazar Wachs, the rabbi of Kalisz and Pietrikow in Poland, played a unique role in the etrog controversy and the move to expand the market share of Israeli etrogim. He was an atypical figure in the Polish rabbinical world of the final third of the nineteenth century, a great Torah scholar with a broad secular education, a man who lived a comfortable life, was well acquainted with the affairs of the world, and was active in public affairs.¹¹¹ Beginning in 1868 he served as president of the Warsaw kollel in the Land of Israel, whose members were all Polish émigrés. Earlier, in 1860, he had been named the rabbi of Kalisz.¹¹²

Wachs supported increased productivity in the Yishuv, but his reasons for doing so were traditional rather than nationalist.¹¹³ His involvement in the affairs of the Yishuv grew out of personal familiarity,

109 Ibid., 33; Malachi, "On the History of the *Etrog* Trade," 171.

110 J. Sapir, "On the *Etrogim* of the Holy Land," *Ha-levanon* 14, no. 15 (1877): 120.

111 Y. I. Trunk, *Poland: Memories and Images* (Merhavyah: Sifriyat Poalim, 1962), 18–19, 39–41; Beit-Halevi, *Biography of Rabbi Hayyim Elazar Wachs*, 11.

112 As a practical matter, he had already assumed responsibility for the kollel in 1862, after the rabbi of Warsaw, Dov Berish Meisels, was arrested and expelled from the city in the wake of his support for the Polish struggle against Russian control. Meisels served as president of the kollel from 1859 after Meir Auerbach, Rabbi of Kalisz, immigrated to the Land of Israel and was named Rabbi of the Ashkenazim in Jerusalem.

113 Porat, "The Polemic," 37–38.

and may also have been influenced by his community of Kalisz, which maintained close ties with the Jews in the Land of Israel.¹¹⁴ The unique association of two great Torah scholars—Rabbi Wachs, the head of the Warsaw kollel, and Rabbi Auerbach, the Ashkenazi rabbi of Jerusalem—both men of means and each the occupant of a key position related to the Jews of the Land of Israel, opened the door to joint efforts in a range of areas, among them the etrog question.

Wachs devoted his principal energies to the growth and sale of etrogim from the Land of Israel.¹¹⁵ He regarded the recitation of a blessing over an etrog from the Holy Land as a meritorious act beyond the simple fulfillment of a positive commandment. He took these etrogim to symbolize the “atmosphere of the Land of Israel” and their use as associating performing the commandment with the coming of the Messiah.¹¹⁶ As a practical matter, Wachs hoped to make the production and sale of Land-of-Israel etrogim a profitable enterprise that could support the people in the Warsaw kollel that he headed, and aimed to dominate the etrog market in Poland.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, Wachs had reservations about the *Hovevei Ziyon* movement in general and the nationalist idea in particular.¹¹⁸

In 1876, Wachs acquired land in *Hittin* and planted etrogim on it. He later expanded his holdings, personally managed the sale of etrogim, and turned over the profits to the Warsaw kollel in the Land of Israel. His initiative was independent of that of Pines and his associates. In correspondence with Wachs dating from 1874, Elijah Guttmacher tied the “beginning of the redemption” to the contemporaneous settlement of the Land of Israel, “so they may begin to work the holy soil.” Wachs, in contrast, adopted a less forceful formulation, stating that the settlement of the Land was a part of the “path ascending to the house of God.”¹¹⁹ Wachs associated his etrog orchards in *Hittin* with the beginning of the new settlement of the Land. His idea of planting etrog trees was also influenced by the etrog controversy, for he emphasized his ability to

114 I. J. Eibeschutz, *The Life and Work of Rabbi Hayyim Wachs* (Jerusalem: Horev, 1961), 31–32.

115 Ibid., 30.

116 Beit-Halevi, *Biography of Rabbi Hayyim Elazar Wachs*, 72–74.

117 See the letter from Wachs to Rabbi Elazar Hakohen of Sochaczew, winter 1876–1877, in *Novellae of Mahar'akh* (Warsaw, 1898), 125–126.

118 Letter from Wachs to Pines, 17 Adar 5645 (4 March 1885), in Eibeschutz, *The Life and Work of Rabbi Hayyim Wachs*, 73–76.

119 H. E. Wachs, *Responsa Nefesh hayyah* (Jerusalem, 1986), 10.

provide non-grafted fruit: "... In addition, Jews will be able to fulfill the commandment with etrogim that are clearly kosher, without any doubt whatsoever."¹²⁰

The importance Wachs assigned to his enterprise in the Land of Israel is emphasized in his book, *Nefesh hayyah*, which appeared in 1877. The first three sections of the book are in regard to settling the Land and using its etrogim, and the fourth lists some 120 rabbis and admorim who ruled that "wherever an etrog from the Holy Land is to be found, one should not, ab initio, recite a blessing over a Corfu etrog."¹²¹ This exhortation does not disqualify Corfu etrogim as a matter of halakhah; it simply favors those from the Land of Israel. Wachs thus formulated a more moderate position than the Lithuanians who forbade Corfu etrogim outright, leaving open the possibility of using them when kosher etrogim from the Land of Israel are not available.¹²² These passages appeared as well in a separate, widely disseminated pamphlet.¹²³

In addition to distributing his pamphlet, Wachs corresponded with other rabbis in an effort to dissuade them from using Corfu etrogim. His letters, in which he said he had no doubt that Corfu etrogim were not kosher, were not always consistent with the moderate approach that he adopted in his books. He rejected all efforts to find grafted etrogim acceptable, invalidating them on the grounds that they were half non-etrog.¹²⁴ Moreover, he argued, the use of Land-of-Israel etrogim support-

120 Ibid. Eibeschutz maintains that the orchards in Hittin had already been planted in 1873; Eibeschutz, *The Life and Work of Rabbi Hayyim Wachs*, 38. Wachs's comments in *Responsa Nefesh hayyah* make it clear, however, that he acquired the orchards only after the death of Guttmacher and under his influence. The comments appear at the beginning of his responsa, which appeared in 1877, where Wachs tells of acquiring lands in Hittin a year earlier. That said, it is difficult to accept the idea that there was some connection between the polemic and Wachs's initiative, for the two initiatives were too close to each other in time; see Porat, "The Polemic," 38.

121 Ibid., 23.

122 See A. Bornstein, *Avnei neizer* (New York, 1954), *Orah hayyim* 2, sec. 484.

123 S. Marcus, *The Fruit of a Goodly Tree* (Cracow, 1900), 38.

124 Letter from Wachs to Rabbi Elazar Hakohen of Sochaczew, 4 Kislev 5637 (20 November 1876), in *Novellae of Mahar'akh*, 117-123. Wachs elaborated on his rejection of the arguments offered by those who permitted them. He declined to accept the tradition that it was the Seer of Lublin who introduced Corfu etrogim into use among the Jews of Poland; that Corfu etrogim generally lacked clear indications that they were not grafted; and that their presumption of kashrut was questionable. Another source suggests that Corfu etrogim were introduced into Poland during the Napoleonic Wars when it was impossible to import etrogim from Italy, and the use of grafted etrogim was permitted only because of those extenuating circumstances; see E. Deinard, *God's War against Amalek* (New York: Deinard, 1892), 34. The rabbi of Horodno ruled that the actual blessing, invoking God's name and declaring Him King of the universe, should not be recited over these etrogim, and one should simply recite an alternative formula, "Blessed is the Merciful One,

ed the Jewish settlement in the Land, which in any case was dependent on financing by Diaspora Jews, and by its effect on the overall market helped to ensure that Corfu etrogim also would be sold for a reasonable price.¹²⁵ He added that Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel had a special importance, for even in modern times, the Hebrew calendar required the seal of the court in the Land of Israel: “For every year, a calendar should be sent from our Holy Land regarding the sanctification of the months and years; and from Zion shall go forth Torah.”¹²⁶ Wachs enlisted every possible rationale in support of his effort, ranging from the entirely halakhic to the purely economic.

In a letter written in the fall of 1876, Wachs explained his view that etrogim from the Land of Israel were to be preferred to those from Corfu.¹²⁷ For support, he cited Rabbi Judah Leib, the admor of Gur and the author of *Sefat emet*, and Rabbi Elimelekh Shapira, the admor of Grodzisk. The former had argued that etrogim from the Land of Israel were deemed kosher by tradition and that “it was a great [fulfillment of the] commandment to say the blessing over a kosher etrog from the Holy Land,”¹²⁸ and the latter concurred. (The admor of Gur would later change his mind and become one of the foremost opponents of etrogim from the Land of Israel.) Rabbi Elijah Hayyim Meisel of Lodz, a prominent rabbi of the time, also agreed to promote the use of etrogim from the Land of Israel, albeit in restrained terms: “It is not my way to say that things are unacceptable, so I am unwilling to forbid the use of etrogim from Corfu.”¹²⁹ An unambiguously enthusiastic supporter of Wachs, of course, was Rabbi Auerbach, rabbi of Jerusalem. He argued that there had never been any doubt about the kashrut of Land-of-Israel etrogim vis à vis all others, but acknowledged that only certain orchards—in the Galilee and Samaria, but not in Jaffa—could be relied upon.

The Conflict Abates in Europe and the Land of Israel

In 1877–1878, the disputants again were unable to resolve the etrog question, as each side continued to press compelling arguments. Corfu

who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to take the lulav.”

125 Ibid., letter from Wachs to Rabbi Elazar Hakohen.

126 Wachs, *Responsa Nefesh hayyah*, 9.

127 Ibid., 11–14. Wachs here relies on statements by the author of *Bigdei yesha*. Later in the responsum, he relies on Rabbi Solomon Kluger, who was suspicious of Italian etrogim in general.

128 Ibid., sec. 4, 24.

129 Ibid.

etrogim were vigorously opposed by some and advocated just as vigorously by others. Among the rabbis who frequently changed their minds on the issue was Rabbi Israel Joshua Trunk of Kutno, a leading Polish rabbi, who consistently supported initiatives to settle the Land of Israel. The simplistic classifications conventionally applied to rabbis—moderate or extreme, for or against secular education, more modern or less modern—are of little use in parsing this complex reality. In a letter to Abraham Bornstein, the rabbi of Sochaczew, evidently written during 1876 or 1877, Trunk expressed reservations about having signed Wachs's earlier statement in support of Land-of-Israel etrogim. In his view, the matter was on shaky halakhic ground, and it was therefore best to follow whatever practice was more widely accepted within the community:

Since most people in these lands follow the practice of using Corfu etrogim to fulfill their obligation, and great and holy [scholars] have fulfilled their obligation with these etrogim, Heaven forbid that a ruling be issued against them.¹³⁰

Still, Trunk, too, thought it

... fitting and proper, for the sake of settling the Land of Israel, to recite the blessing over etrogim from the Land of Israel; and the commandment is thereby enhanced through the commandment to love the Land of Israel and settle it, for in that way [that is, by using etrogim from the Land], many there will be enabled to earn a living.

Elsewhere, Trunk determined that it was preferable to recite a blessing over etrogim from the Land of Israel even if they were less attractive than Corfu etrogim:

The greatest enhancement of the commandment is through [etrogim that are associated with] the pleasant-

130 See I. J. Trunk, *Yeshu`ot malko* (Pietrikow, 1927), sec. 46. He limits his objection to those who elevate Corfu etrogim to special sanctity, as if to say "even Joshua son of Nun ordered that an etrog from Corfu be brought to him for Sukkot, not wanting to use an etrog from the Land of Israel."

ness of the Land of Israel, for that manifests affection for the commandment to settle the Land of Israel and bolsters the settlement of the Land. And the sages accepted many leniencies for the sake of settling the Land of Israel.¹³¹

Trunk added an additional reason for favoring etrogim from the Land of Israel: “to avoid disparaging earlier authorities, for the great scholars, Rabbi Isaac Luria, Rabbi Moses Cordovero, and Rabbi Joseph Karo, fulfilled the commandment with those etrogim.” He acknowledges that “I did not sign the proclamation willingly”; that as a matter of law “it is permitted to take [an etrog] from wherever one wills”; and that one should follow “the majority of the local populace.” The flaw of the Corfu etrogim lies in their price, but that flaw does not bear on the commandment even slightly and one need not be concerned about it.¹³² Trunk’s positions remain grounded in pre-Orthodox approaches and traditional considerations: the traditions of earlier authorities, the custom of the majority, and the love for the Land of Israel.

The etrog controversy cast aspersions on the kashrut of all etrogim, those imported from Italy as well as those from Corfu. Even etrogim from the Land of Israel could not escape all suspicion that they might be grafted. Ashkenazim in the Land of Israel forbade Corfu etrogim and took even greater pains not to use those from Jaffa, “for they have neither a tradition nor a presumption of kashrut.”¹³³ And even rabbis who later retracted the aspersions they had cast on Jaffa etrogim had already brought them under suspicion. As a practical matter, each individual had to decide for himself, relying on his family’s traditions or presumptions.

A turning point in the dispute in the Land of Israel took place shortly before Sukkot of 5638 (1877), when Sephardi merchants publicized a letter in which Rabbi Auerbach permitted the use of Jaffa etrogim. The pamphlet *Peri ez hadar*, issued the following year in Jerusalem at the initiative of the merchants Benesh Benjamin Salant and Judah Leib Salant, attributed Auerbach’s change in position to his age, alleging that he had become confused, as evidenced by his adopting a stance at odds with

131 *Novellae of Mahar’akh*, 126.

132 *Ibid.*

133 *Quntres Peri ez hadar* (1878): 24.

what he had said only a year earlier.¹³⁴ But Brill's letter to Pines clarifies the more complex background to Auerbach's change. Brill writes that Wachs himself grafted some etrog trees in Hittin with shoots brought from Jaffa after finding that the latter had more purchasers. It therefore appears that Auerbach and Wachs were moved to waive their objection to Jaffa etrogim by their interest in increasing the Warsaw kolel's revenues through the sale of more etrogim in Poland.

That episode opened the door to a ceasefire in the etrog controversy between Ashkenazim and Sephardim in the Land of Israel, and from that point on they joined forces to increase sales of Land-of-Israel etrogim in the Diaspora. They jointly organized a company to export etrogim and established a sales agency in Trieste.¹³⁵ Sales of Land-of-Israel etrogim increased sharply. The report of the Warsaw kolel shows that in 1880 Wachs turned over to it some 3,000 rubles in profits on the sale of Land-of-Israel etrogim—only a portion of that year's profits in the export trade.¹³⁶

Despite the sharp increase in exports, Pines, as early as 1878, warned against excessive exuberance, cautioning that etrogim from the Land of Israel would not soon be able to replace those from Corfu, as an etrog tree begins to produce fruit only eight or nine years after being planted.¹³⁷ Until the Land of Israel could provide the needed quantity of etrogim, Pines advised using imports from Morocco and Corsica rather than from Corfu. If that meant a shortage, it was preferable that communities make do with less rather than use etrogim from Corfu.¹³⁸

It thus appears that the issue shifted its course, becoming a social dispute rather than a halakhic one. Support on nationalist grounds for settlement of the Land of Israel had already introduced into the dispute a blatantly extra-halakhic consideration favoring Land-of-Israel etrogim over those from Corfu, namely the desire to support poor people in the Land of Israel as well as future immigrants. Growing etrogim in the Land of Israel and exporting them to the Diaspora was a novel situation; Wachs followed Brill and Pines in emphasizing this consideration, and

134 Ibid., 28–29.

135 Malachi, "On the History of the *Etrog* Trade," 176–178. On the matter of Rabbi Wachs, see Beit-Halevi, *Biography of Rabbi Hayyim Elazar Wachs*, 61–63.

136 Porat, "The Polemic," 43, citing a document from the Zionist Archive.

137 See letter from Pines to Louis Emanuel, 11 December 1878, in A. Ya'ari, *Letters from the Land of Israel* (Ramat Gan: Masada, 1971), 448.

138 See letter from Pines to Erez, *Ha-me'iliz* 19, no. 62 (1883): 991.

although he limited the argument to one regarding productivity of the Yishuv and support for it, he added a social factor to the halakhic analysis.¹³⁹ There was another social factor as well. Some identified Corfu etrogim with the Greeks, for Corfu was a Greek isle, and the rivalry between the two sources of etrogim came to symbolize the struggle between Jews and their enemies: "... They took on the etrogim of the Greeks, their enemies, and they prevailed over them."¹⁴⁰ The anti-Greek social theme became a powerful one in the polemical literature and provided an additional basis for sniping at the users of Corfu etrogim.

The Polemics during the 1880s

The Positions of Land-of-Israel Etrogim and of Corfu Etrogim Become Established

Over the course of a few years, etrog orchards in the Land of Israel underwent impressive growth. In 1883, exports numbered 30,000 etrogim,¹⁴¹ and by 1887 the number had risen to 42,000.¹⁴² By way of comparison, it may be noted that during the mid-1870s, Corfu exported 100,000 etrogim annually to Eastern Europe. Other sources show that the annual demand in Eastern Europe was about 150,000 etrogim.¹⁴³ Even with their increased number, then, etrogim from the Land of Israel thus satisfied something less than one-third of the Eastern European market.

Throughout that time, Pines, with Wachs at his side, led the battle to promote Land-of-Israel etrogim. Wachs was committed to the economic support of the Warsaw kolel,¹⁴⁴ of which he was president, while Pines integrated a Zionist-nationalist utopia into his vision of the struggle. He urged new settlements to plant etrog orchards and encouraged Eastern European Jews to acquire orchards from Arabs.

139 See E. Lerman, *Responsa* (Warsaw, 1884), sec. 18, 41–42.

140 Y. M. Pines, "Mahilev," *Ha-levanon* 14, no. 9 (1877): 69–70.

141 See Erez (A. Zederbaum), "More on *Etrogim* from the Beautiful Land," *Ha-meiliz* 19, no. 67 (1883): 1067.

142 "In Our Holy Land," *Ha-meiliz* 27, no. 212 (1887): 2259.

143 See A. J. Slutsky, "On the Question of Land-of-Israel *Etrogim*," *Ha-meiliz* 28, no. 117 (1881): 1238–1242; "In Our Holy Land," 2259–2260.

144 Wachs also spoke in terms of redemption, but he attributed those ideas to others such as Rabbi Elijah Guttmacher. See the letter from Wachs to Elazar Hakohen, winter 1876–1877, in *Novellae of Mahar'akh*, 117.

Like Sapir before him, Pines argued that rabbinical certificates of kashrut were given not to the fruit itself but to its growers. Accordingly, it made no sense to certify Greek etrogim from Corfu, for their growers could not be relied upon to observe the prohibition on grafting.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, one cannot disregard the many impediments to increased productivity that the Land-of-Israel Jews themselves created. Some were concerned that investment in etrog orchards would be at the expense of funds raised for the *haluqah*,¹⁴⁶ while others were repelled by the certification industry.¹⁴⁷ The increased Orthodoxy of European Jewish society also influenced those who had reservations about the investments. Lifschitz and those with a similar outlook criticized the effort by *Hovevei Ziyyon* to use the growth of etrogim as a means to increase the Yishuv's productivity.¹⁴⁸ They hoped to maintain the Yishuv as a cohort engaged exclusively in Torah study and prayer.

The many efforts by prominent Lithuanian and Polish rabbis to preclude the use of etrogim from Corfu proved futile, as their colleagues continued to purchase them. Wachs asked Rabbi Israel Isaac of Alexander, one of the leading Polish admorim, to use Land-of-Israel etrogim along with those from Corfu,¹⁴⁹ and he was partially successful. The claim that Corfu etrogim were grafted was neither unambiguously proven nor universally accepted.¹⁵⁰ Although numerous reasons were advanced for disqualifying Corfu etrogim, the very multiplicity of reasons weakened the position of those advancing them, for the large number of rationales suggested that none was decisive.¹⁵¹ Wachs's opposition grew weaker, and he settled for a ruling that Land-of-Israel etrogim should be favored over those from Corfu, a ruling to which numerous rabbis assented.¹⁵² The ruling shows that most rabbis in Poland, Lithuania, and Galicia ultimately relied on Margoliot's determination that Corfu etrogim were

145 Letter from Pines to Erez, *Ha-me'iliz* 19, no. 62 (1883): 991.

146 See Israel Dov Frumkin's criticism of Rabbi Wachs in Porat, "The Polemic," 41, citing *Havazelet* 8, no. 5 (1877-1878).

147 See the negative comments by Brill, editor of *Ha-levanon*, against his son-in-law Jacob Sapir and against Rabbi Auerbach himself, in Porat "The Polemic," 42.

148 *Ibid.*, 34, 38.

149 Letter from Wachs to Danziger, 12 Tishri 5647 (11 October 1886), in Eibeschutz, *The Life and Work of Rabbi Hayyim Wachs*, 80.

150 Letter from Wachs to "the honored ones of Israel," fall 1886, in *ibid.*, 82; letter from Wachs to "the honored rabbis, the great ones of Israel," about one year later, *ibid.*, 83-84.

151 Z. E. Michaelson, *Wine and Oil* (Bilguriya: Kranenberg, 1936), 136.

152 *Ibid.*, 138.

permissible because they grew from shoots of grafted trees, which were “permitted in principle.” It appears that all the efforts to close the door opened by Margoliot failed, even though it was based on a legal fiction.¹⁵³

Hovevei Ziyyon and the Land-of-Israel Etrogim

Starting in the 1880s, the dispute acquired another dimension, fostered by the publications that supported *Hovevei Ziyyon*. The preference for Land-of-Israel etrogim moved from being a matter of halakhah to being one of social policy, and Zionist-nationalist ideas became more and more central to it. Abraham Moses Lunz, editor of the Hebrew periodical *Jerusalem*,¹⁵⁴ wrote that the rabbis had not managed to forbid Corfu etrogim and that “the rabbis lack the power to impose their prohibition, given the revolutionary aspects of the issue.” Nevertheless, Land-of-Israel etrogim should be promoted “by force of the love for the nation.” Lunz suggested that the organizations involved in the *haluqah* be the ones to engage in the etrog trade, both in the Land and outside it, that they impose a tax on people engaged in the etrog business, and that the proceeds of the tax be used to plant etrog orchards in the Land. Lunz saw Wachs’s initiative as proof of the economic potential implicit in the sale of etrogim for the good of the people living in the Land. Other supporters of Land-of-Israel etrogim used less expansive language than Lunz, asserting that the issue was one of “settling the Land of Israel.”¹⁵⁵

Advocates of that view included the journalists Peretz Smolenskin, editor of *Ha-shahar*, Alexander Zederbaum (Erez), editor of *Ha-meiliz*, and Nahum Sokolow, editor of *Ha-zefirah*. None of them was interested in the halakhic side of the question. Erez reiterated the argument that the Greeks of Corfu should not be supported, for their hatred of Jews was known: “They pillaged us then, and they pillage our commandment today”; “[they are] our enemies, the destroyers of our Land and the robbers of our freedom.”¹⁵⁶ The weight of argument against Corfu etrogim shifted from the writings of halakhists to those of publicists. During the 1880s, the subject almost disappeared from the halakhic literature, notwithstanding the efforts of *Hovevei Ziyyon* to draw the rabbis back into

153 A. L. Broyde, *Mizpeh aryeh* (Lvov, 1880), responsum 54, 58–59. It was a halakhic fiction because it was not proven that that was the actual situation in Corfu.

154 A. M. Lunz, *Jerusalem* (Vienna: Berog, 1882), 245–247.

155 H. J. Kremer, “To the Publisher,” *Ha-shahar* 11 (1883): 262.

156 Erez, “More on the Etrogim of the Beautiful Land”; Erez, “*Peri ez hadar*,” *Ha-meiliz* 19 (1883): 45.

the issue¹⁵⁷ as *Ha-meiliz*, followed by other Zionist periodicals, opened its pages to the struggle to disqualify Corfu etrogim.¹⁵⁸ The rabbis certainly sensed that a political subject treated by publicists was not one properly considered in the halakhic decisional literature that partook of the “holy.”

But even the members of *Hovevei Ziyon* themselves were less than certain that encouraging the etrog trade would support the New Yishuv. The primary beneficiaries of the increased exports were Arab farmers and Old Yishuv merchants. The writer Jacob Bachrach, a *Hovevei Ziyon* member who visited the Land of Israel in the summer of 1882, expressed grave doubt about the ability of the Land of Israel to supply the merchandise: “If we gather up all of our Holy Land’s etrogim, they will supply a very small portion of our fellow Jews in Europe.”¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the etrog merchants were men of the Old Yishuv, wealthy men who did not need help from “people outside the Land.” The new settlers had to support themselves immediately and therefore needed to devote themselves to field crops, not to orchards, which provided a return only many years after being planted. He added that the promotion of Land-of-Israel etrogim in the press was unnecessary, for every Jew recognized that for the purposes of performing a commandment a fruit from the Land of Israel was preferable to one from elsewhere. The entire matter, as he saw it, was a mountain made out of a molehill. Primarily, it was important to avoid antagonizing the Greeks in Corfu, “so as not to incense them and add to the hatred that already exists.”¹⁶⁰

Bachrach’s reservations were supplemented by those of Naftali Maskil Le-eitan, who presented himself as the greatest etrog merchant in the Russian Empire. Maskil Le-eitan declared that he was a lover of Zion (*hovev ziyon*) and that he meant to protect the rights of those who

157 See S. Z. Kaufman and Erez, “On the *Etrogim* of the Land of Israel,” *Ha-meiliz* 19, no. 41 (1883); Z. Epstein and Erez, “A Word to *Hovevei Ziyon*,” *Ha-meiliz* 19, no. 34 (1883).

158 See *ibid.*, the above-cited two articles. It seems that the rabbis associated efforts to promote etrogim from the Land of Israel with *Hovevei Ziyon* and the maskilim, and they were therefore unwilling to be identified with them; see Porat, “The Polemic,” 59. Even Rabbi Spektor, who had previously spoken out against Corfu etrogim and supported *Hovevei Ziyon*, remained silent on the issue during the 1880s. Within the *Hovevei Ziyon* movement, there was a widespread sense that the etrog trade should be taken under its auspices as a source of income for the New Yishuv; see A. E. Sandler, “You Shall Take for Yourselves the Fruit of the [*Etrog*] Tree,” *Ha-maggid* 29, no. 24 (1885): 205–206.

159 J. Bachrach, *A Journey to the Holy Land* (Warsaw: Baumritter, 1883), 117 n.

160 *Ibid.*, 118–119 n.

earned a living in the etrog trade in Russia. He found that the Land of Israel lacked the capacity to supply all the etrogim that were needed and that the etrog trade in the Land provided a livelihood to Arab growers and to Old Yishuv merchants, not to those whom the new movement was concerned about.¹⁶¹ The editor of *Ha-me'iliz* responded to these claims. First, there was the social argument: "... How can we rejoice before God using an etrog and *lulav* purchased with good money from our leading enemies"?¹⁶² To Maskil Le-eitan's argument that Hovevei Ziyon had no interest in the merchants of the Old Yishuv, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, editor of *Ha-zevi*, replied that one needed to be concerned about all who dwelled in the Land, and that one should not confuse working the land with the existence of the Yishuv. His comments reveal a strain of "Haskalah-based" criticism of the rabbis who took pains to seek out Corfu etrogim even in the Land of Israel, regarding them as superior, and thus showed themselves to be indifferent to the needs of the Jewish community.¹⁶³

Other articles along these lines appeared in the Hebrew press. For example, Samuel Strasson thought that the involvement of Hovevei Ziyon and the Hebrew press in promoting Land-of-Israel etrogim had been harmful in its conflation of halakhic and nationalistic issues.¹⁶⁴ Y. B. A. Ziv believed that the involvement of the press had been harmful to the cause of Land-of-Israel etrogim not only because it had taken a nationalist stance but especially because the radical Hebrew press (*Ha-me'iliz* and *Ha-shahar*) had supported Reform innovations in the late 1860s and early 1870s.¹⁶⁵ Erez, the editor of *Ha-me'iliz*, tried unsuccessfully to gain rabbinic support for the distribution of Land-of-Israel etrogim. The writers for *Ha-me'iliz* suggested forgoing rabbinic support and simply promoting the etrogim in the press, but that idea never stood any chance of success. The public debate over etrogim thus underwent a fundamental

161 N. Maskil Le-eitan, "One Inquires about and Discusses the Laws Concerning the Festival Fruit," *Ha-me'iliz* 19, no. 43-44 (1883). The offspring of a rabbinic family in White Russia, Maskil Le-eitan (1829-1898) was a merchant, writer, scholarly investigator, and poet, and was a deeply involved activist in Russia. His original family name was Maskilson, but his father was called Maskil Le-eitan after his book that had been published in 1808, and the name continued.

162 The publisher [Erez], "*Peri ez hadar*," *Ha-me'iliz* 19, no. 45 (1883).

163 "The Trade in *Etrogim* of the Land of Israel," *Ha-zevi* 1, no. 36 (1885): 154.

164 J. S. Strasson, "And You Shall Take for Yourselves—of Your Own—the Fruit of the [*Etrog*] Tree," *Ha-asif* 1 (Warsaw, 1884): 186-187.

165 Y. B. A. Ziv, "Shavel," *Hame'iliz* 19, no. 52 (1883): 831. In an apologetic response, the publisher says that he does not believe the rabbis are accusing him of opening the pages of *Ha-me'iliz* to the reformers, for the journal opens its pages to all positions; *ibid.*, 831-832.

transformation. No longer a halakhic dispute with limited economic and social overtones, it was now an overall dispute between the nationalists and their opponents within the traditional community.¹⁶⁶

Wachs attempted to bridge the gap by proposing that Hovevei Ziiyyon redirect its efforts toward helping the existing Yishuv rather than encouraging additional immigration.¹⁶⁷ Hovevei Ziiyyon tended to promote the New Yishuv and opposed the haluqah system that had supported the Old Yishuv. Wachs, by contrast, favored the Old Yishuv and looked to Land-of-Israel etrogim as a source of revenue for the haluqah. The Jews who benefited from the haluqah, of course, were utterly different from the nationalists. Hovevei Ziiyyon aimed to raise up a “New Jew,” an effort inconsistent with the goal of simply making the Old Yishuv more productive. Several writers, including Yehuda Leib Gordon, supported emigration to America because of their concern that the nationalist effort might be taken over by the members of the Old Yishuv, proponents of the outlook associated with the haluqah. There was no way that Wachs and the members of Hovevei Ziiyyon could become allies, for the differences between them were too deep-seated.¹⁶⁸

The Struggle over Corfu Estrogim in the Polish Hasidic World

The rabbis declined to support Land-of-Israel etrogim during the 1880s, and Wachs’s hoped-for alliance with Hovevei Ziiyyon never took shape. Nevertheless, exports of etrogim from the Land of Israel continued to increase, prompting an adverse reaction from the Corfu merchants.¹⁶⁹

In 1886, Wachs traveled to the Land of Israel with his son-in-law, Rabbi Israel Joshua Trunk, intending to improve production at his etrog orchards in Hittin. After returning to Poland, he reengaged in the struggle to introduce etrogim from the Land of Israel into the market. To promote his position, he published letters that rabbis had sent to him during the dispute in the mid-1870s. He formulated his position through several principal points: enhanced observance of the commandment was possible only with a kosher fruit; fruit from a grafted tree was invalid as a matter of biblical law; the kashrut of an etrog was determined in

166 Porat, “The Polemic,” 57–58.

167 Letter from Wachs to Pines, in Druyanow, *Sources* 3, 935–938.

168 See letter from Mohilever to Pinsker, June 1885, in Laskov, *Sources* 3, document 617, 347–348; letter from Mohilever to Pinsker, July 1886, *ibid.*, 4, document 822, 181–182.

169 M. Zilberstein, “Important Notice to the *Etrog* Merchants,” *Ha-zefirah* 13, no. 92 (1886): 4.

accordance with the tradition; visible signs may not be relied on in determining kashrut because etrogim from multiple trees were intermingled and the status of one etrog said nothing about the status of another; an etrog without a pitem was kosher; and etrogim from the Land of Israel could be relied upon only if they bore Wachs's name.¹⁷⁰

The rabbis who supported Wachs stipulated that the Land-of-Israel etrogim he sold were kosher beyond doubt. Some of his supporters agreed that Corfu etrogim were presumptively grafted; others expanded on the idea of affection for the Land of Israel; and all agreed that etrogim from the Land of Israel were to be preferred as long as they were definitively non-grafted.

Wachs's views were replied to by Rabbi Gershon Hanokh Henikh Leiner, the admor of Radzyn who in the past had disagreed with Rabbi Spektor, favoring a ban on Corfu etrogim, but had now changed his tune. In his view, conditioning the acceptability of Land-of-Israel etrogim on Wachs's certification weakened the position of those who maintained their presumptive kashrut, for Wachs marketed only a small part of the total output. The views of the admor were publicized by his brother-in-law, who dealt in etrogim from Corfu, and while the family relationship diminished the authoritativeness of the admor, it was impossible to deny that he had raised an issue requiring a response. His arguments can be summed up as follows: he had visited Corfu and found no grafted etrog trees; the kashrut of etrogim could be confirmed without a tradition to that effect; and even if a tradition was needed, etrogim from Corfu enjoyed the benefit of one, for Jews had lived there since the time of the First Temple and used its etrogim, while etrogim from the Land of Israel enjoyed no such tradition, for the Land was desolate for many generations. Moreover, one should not recite a blessing over Wachs's etrogim because he had cast aspersions on etrogim that were, in fact, kosher. Etrogim from the Land of Israel also required trustworthy oversight, as Wachs himself argued, and Wachs, in general, was not considered to be an authoritative source and should not be heeded.

The admor of Radzyn added that benefitting the poor of the Land of Israel did not warrant forgoing enhancement of the commandment to take the four species, and other ways of addressing their problems should be found. He also maintained that most of Wachs's supporters

170 *Ha-meiliz* 27, no. 200, 206 (1887).

themselves used Corfu etrogim, and that residents of the Land of Israel had always used them. That was true as well of many rabbis:

... and how can we not be ashamed to slander great and holy Jews including the rabbi of Lublin, the holy *Maggid* of Kozieniec, the holy Jew from Przysucha, and all the leaders and rabbis of our generation?¹⁷¹

The arguments of the admor required a response, and similar contentions were pressed by an etrog merchant from Warsaw in a letter to *Ha-zefirah*.¹⁷²

The economic interests of the two sides figured prominently in the dispute but could not resolve the halakhic debate, which grew out of a lack of information about the actual situation on the ground. Presumption and tradition were invoked by both parties, for neither factor had a standard by which it could be measured. Wachs himself questioned the presumption that Land-of-Israel etrogim were fit when he certified only his own produce from *Hittin*. The representatives of the Warsaw Hospital, which was sustained through the sale of Corfu etrogim, put it well when they said that there was concern also about the kashrut “of etrogim from the Land of Israel, for how are the Ishmaelites who own the orchards in the Land of Israel better than the Greeks who own the orchards in Italy?”¹⁷³ Once the use of visible signs to differentiate between grafted and non-grafted etrogim was rejected, so was in effect any notion of tradition or presumption. It was clear to all that trees and seeds were transferred from place to place, “and who knows if the seed was taken from a plant grafted with the shoot of a lemon?”¹⁷⁴

The ascription of binding halakhic status to “the actions of the sages,” even when it is clear that the sages had erred, is a characteristically Orthodox position, inconsistent with the traditional understanding of things.¹⁷⁵ Even if the situation could not be fully clarified—for it was impossible to ascertain what had taken place in the past—it was certainly

171 See letter from Nahum Feigenbaum, *Ha-meiliz* 27, no. 207 (1887): 2204–2206.

172 Letter from etrog merchant Levkowitz, fall 1887, *Ha-zefirah* 14, no. 201 (1887).

173 Letter from the Warsaw Hospital board, fall 1887, *ibid.*, 202.

174 *Ibid.*

175 See Z. Safrai and A. Sagi, ed., *Between Authority and Autonomy in Jewish Tradition* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameu'had, 1997), introduction, 11–15; J. Ahituv, “Changes in Religious Leadership,” in *ibid.*, 57–58.

possible to clarify whether Corfu etrogim were being grafted at the time of the dispute, just as the situation in the Land of Israel had been clarified. But the supporters of the Corfu fruit made no effort to clarify the situation and rested content with a supposed presumption, even though there was contrary halakhic authority. It may be that both sides despaired of ascertaining the truth and therefore sought some practical resolution. Wachs certainly retreated under critical pressure when he said that he was not forbidding Corfu etrogim but only favoring his own where they were available.¹⁷⁶ In so doing, he shifted the emphasis from the halakhic question toward the social and ideological one, centered on support for the poor of the Land of Israel. Others tilted the discussion in the direction of nationalism.¹⁷⁷ Nahum Sokolow, editor of *Ha-zefirah*, sought to use the struggle to benefit Land-of-Israel etrogim and, during 1888, issued a call for rabbis to support their use. His primary rationale, of course, was nationalist and economic: "... The etrog trade is a stronghold, a good source for the support [of the Jews in the Land of Israel]." Sokolow also offered an ideological rationale: "They come from the Land of Israel, and we admire them because of our affection for the Land."¹⁷⁸

By the end of the 1880s, the polemics had diminished substantially. Little remained of the great enthusiasm for Land-of-Israel etrogim that the rabbis had manifested during the mid-1870s. Several factors accounted for this diminution of support. First, it became clear that etrogim from the Land of Israel were no more presumptively kosher than those from Corfu, for most of them were grown by Arabs. The people of the Old Yishuv were primarily interested not in growing etrogim, but in trading in them. Wachs met with strong opposition to his initiative even within the Warsaw kolel.

The nationalist rationale advanced by *Hovevei Ziyon*, which saw the etrog trade as a way to promote the New Yishuv, cast the question of raising etrogim into the context of broader questions, touching on support for or opposition to the *Hovevei Ziyon* initiatives. The support for the distribution of Land-of-Israel etrogim that was offered by the editors of the major Hebrew newspapers (*Ha-me'iliz*, *Ha-zefirah*, and *Ha-maggid*) was to no avail, for traditional society was suspicious of what

176 Letter from Wachs, 27 Elul 5647 (16 September 1887), *Ha-zefirah* 14, no. 203 (1887).

177 M. L. Shapira, "Trieste," *Ha-zefirah* 15, no. 167 (1888).

178 "The Scout for the House of Israel," *ibid.*, 168.

they saw as their ulterior motives.

In 1888–1889, the beginnings of the dispute over the sabbatical year cast the Yishuv into a new halakhic whirlwind, raising severe doubts about the survival of agricultural settlement in the Land. Proper halakhic observance of the sabbatical year, without reliance on the device of selling the land to a Gentile, required use of Corfu etrogim instead of those from the Land of Israel. Wachs's death in 1889 removed from the area a central figure in the struggle, who had been among the drivers of the polemics for some fifteen years.

The End of the Polemics and the Blood Libel in Corfu

What finally resolved the dispute was an event unrelated to the halakhic or nationalistic analysis—the Corfu blood libel of 1891. On Easter of that year (11 April), the corpse of a girl was found on the island and the authorities accused the island's Jews of having murdered her for ritual needs. A short investigation disclosed that the victim was a Jewish girl, Rubina Sarda, the murderer was the madam of a brothel, and the libel was the invention of a Greek police officer. The motives behind the libel are not entirely clear, but it took place against the background of an election and an effort to exclude Jews from voting in it.¹⁷⁹ Although it was immediately apparent that the accusation was a falsehood, the Jewish neighborhoods on the island were besieged for a month. Of the island's 7,000 Jews, some 2,500 fled in haste, leaving their belongings behind.¹⁸⁰

The Jewish world was enraged. In all its varied languages, the Jewish press published numerous reports and assessments of the events. The antiquity of the island's Jewish community and the grounding of the island's economy on the Jewish assets that flowed from the etrog trade added fuel to the fire. A probably unprecedented broad Jewish coalition formed behind the prohibition of Corfu etrogim that was imposed in the wake of the libel. The prohibition was supported by figures from all corners of the Jewish world: Isaac Mayer Wise, the head of the Reform seminary in Cincinnati; Dr. Moritz (Moses) Güdemann, the rabbi of Vienna; Joseph Samuel Bloch, the editor of *Wochenschrift* in Vienna;

179 "Corfu," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1905), 271.

180 "Outside Our Land," *Ha-me'iliz* 31, no. 112 (1891); see also "Letter from Trieste," *ibid.*, 107; "One Who Smells the Aroma of an *Etrog*," *ibid.*, no. 134.

Elijah Hazan, the rabbi of Alexandria;¹⁸¹ and even Naftali Maskil Le-eitan, the leading merchant of Corfu etrogim in Eastern Europe.¹⁸² Only two years earlier, Maskil Le-eitan had argued in the Hebrew press on behalf of Corfu etrogim and successfully promoted them within the community.

Weak dissent expressing continued support for Corfu etrogim even after the libel continued to be voiced by Mordecai Joseph Elazar Leiner of Radzyn, son of Gershon Hanokh Henikh Leiner, the previous admor, by Orthodox groups in Germany who feared that Jewish incitement against the Greeks would harm the Jews of Corfu, and by people having an interest in the Corfu etrog trade, including the financial officers of the Warsaw Hospital. Their views were overwhelmingly rejected.¹⁸³ In the literature of the time, Corfu etrogim were termed “bastard etrogim,” “Corfu bastards,” or “etrogim from the murderous land,” and those who fulfilled the commandment using them were condemned as “fulfilling a commandment through a transgression.”¹⁸⁴ The ban was presented as a symbol that would “show the accursed Greeks in Corfu and elsewhere that the Jews had the power to defend themselves and the honor of their nation and faith.”¹⁸⁵ The opinions of decisors who forbade Corfu were given prominent treatment in the press and literary works.¹⁸⁶

The ban was applied to purchasers and sellers alike.¹⁸⁷ In many towns, rabbis published the bans in the local press. Of particular note were the bans imposed by the rabbis of Minsk, Mir, Pinsk, and Vilna, whose districts had been dominated by Corfu etrogim for many generations and had served as centers for trading in them.¹⁸⁸

Those banning the etrogim were joined by the leading Torah scholars of the time in Lithuania, who had expressed reservations about Corfu

181 Deinard, *God's War against Amalek*, 3.

182 N. Maskil Le-eitan, “Justifying the Judgment,” *Ha-meiliz* 31, no. 146 (1891).

183 Jacob Samuel Strasson, “Generalities and Specifics Concerning *Eetrogim* from Corfu,” *Ha-meiliz* 31, no. 210 (1891); I. Sobalsky, “Let the Hebrews Hear,” *ibid.*, no. 117; “One Who Smells the Aroma of an *Eetrog*,” *ibid.*, no. 145; Deinard, *God's War against Amalek*, 17.

184 A. I. Maskil Le-eitan, “You Shall Be Strong and Take from the Fruit of the Land,” *Ha-meiliz* 31, nos. 153-154 (1891); Publisher (Erez), “A Commandment Fulfilled through Transgression,” *ibid.*, no. 103; “Suffering of the Righteous,” *ibid.*, no. 113.

185 Publisher (Erez), “A Commandment Fulfilled through Transgression.”

186 Ephraim Deinard mentions that Rabbi Daniel of Horodno used Corfu etrogim in 1808 because of exigent circumstances; Deinard, *God's War against Amalek*, 34–35.

187 Kapost, *Ha-meiliz* 31, no. 222 (1891).

188 Minsk, *Ha-meiliz* 31, no. 114 (1891); J. I. Zizling, “Corfu *Eetrogim*,” *ibid.*, no. 110; Gamzu, “*Vayshma yeshurun*”; Maskil Le-eitan, “Justifying the Judgment,” *ibid.*, no. 146.

etrogim even before the blood libel. They included Rabbis Isaac Elhanan Spektor, Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, Samuel Mohilever, David Friedman, and Hayyim Berlin.¹⁸⁹ The Enlightenment-leaning Hovevei Ziyon press, which in the early 1880s had fought on behalf of etrogim from the Land of Israel and had then turned against them, once again changed its position and trumpeted their merits.¹⁹⁰ Articles called to account those who opposed the nationalist ideal and the New Yishuv, the rabbis who supported Corfu etrogim, the merchants who placed personal profit ahead of benefit to the Jewish nation as a whole, and those among the masses who favored beautiful etrogim over ones that were truly fit for use.¹⁹¹ The maskilim were now joined by Sephardi and Ashkenazi rabbis in the Land of Israel who ruled that “etrogim from Corfu and its vicinity are permanently forbidden, and one who recites a blessing has not only failed to fulfill his obligation; he has recited a blessing in vain, and the commandment has become one fulfilled through a transgression.”¹⁹² Writers declared in the press that “every one of us is a blood avenger of the blood spilled in Corfu.”¹⁹³

From that point on, the Hovevei Ziyon settlement enterprise in the Land of Israel enjoyed praise from circles that had not previously supported it. The change took place even though only a year had gone by since the end of the harsh polemics over the sabbatical year, which had undermined confidence in the ability and willingness of the new settlement in the Land of Israel to fulfill the halakhic agricultural laws without “fictions.” The rejection of Corfu etrogim that could not be brought about by halakhic argument had ultimately been accomplished by antisemitism.

189 Isaac Sobalsky, “That They May Know,” *ibid.*, no. 111; “Outside Our Land,” *ibid.*, no. 112; Deinard, *God’s War against Amalek*, 23–24.

190 Publisher (Erez), “A Commandment Fulfilled through Transgression.”

191 Deinard, *God’s War against Amalek*, 4, introduction; 2, 5, 6, 14.

192 Publisher (Erez), “A Commandment Fulfilled through Transgression”; editor, “The Etrog Question,” *Ha-or* 8, no. 29 (1892); “Concerning the Etrogim,” *ibid.*, no. 30.

193 M. B. Gamzu, “Vayishma Yeshurun,” *Ha-meiliz* 31, no. 109 (1891).

V. ZIONISM AND ANTI-ZIONISM IN TRADITIONAL EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWRY

Traditional Ashkenazi society has confronted in modern times several crises that challenged its basic religious values and impelled it toward conceptual and social reorganization. These crises involved the spread of Hasidism, Haskalah, Reform, and Zionism and the ensuing struggles waged against them. The struggle against the Haskalah included social issues related to making Jewish society more productive and educational issues related to rabbinic learning vis à vis secular learning. The struggle against Hasidism dealt primarily with ritual and behavioral differences, as did the battle against Reform, with the latter also entailing issues related to the basis and authority of the halakhah.

It was Zionism, however, that posed the most severe threat to traditional society, for it aimed to bore from within: it sought to take over the traditional community both in the Diaspora and in the Land of Israel, which occupied a central position in the messianic aspirations of traditional society. Zionism challenged every aspect of traditional Judaism, offering a modern form of Jewish national identity, exposing traditional society to new, non-halakhic ways of life, and posing questions of faith related to how exile and redemption are to be envisioned. No social or spiritual element of traditional society was left unchallenged by Zionism. A writer for the haredi newspaper *Ha-peles* put it this way:

Those Zionists are twice as [dangerous] as the Reform, for they have appropriated to themselves the sanctity of the Land of Israel and the love of Zion, the nation's ideal. They do so to attract the eye of the nation ... blinding the wise and distorting the words of the righteous, defrauding rabbis and their students and leading the righteous and pure of heart astray.¹

1 E. A. Rabinowitz, "The Fortress of Zion," *Ha-peles* 1 (1901): 180. The views expressed in this article appear to be those of Jacob Lifschitz.

The Zionist challenge threatened traditional society in every Jewish community. More insistent and more comprehensive than the other heterodox movements, it met a more forceful resistance. One could escape the other threats in Western and Central Europe by withdrawing into separate Orthodox communities, but that solution was unavailable in the face of the Zionist challenge in Eastern Europe, even though traditionalists remained in the majority there. The situation was nicely described by Alexander Moses Lapidot, a leading rabbi of the time, who had been an enthusiastic partisan of *Hibbat Ziyon* until changing his position in the summer of 1894:

We had said that this holy sapling would be a sapling loyal to God and His people, and it would restore our souls ... but see, it is only hardship! While still in the bud it produced spoiled fruit, and its foul odor goes far afield.... What is done cannot be reversed, and where God's name, Torah, and the Holy Land are being desecrated, we should not seek to mitigate our dishonor by simply acknowledging that we made a great mistake.' If [the Zionists] do not want our advice, then we must withdraw from their effort and take a stand in opposition to them as forcefully as we are able. For we will raise the banner of God.²

The dispute over Zionism that raged within traditional Eastern European Jewry gave rise to two models of reaction to modernity. We can refer to them, on the one hand, as *haredi*, *neo-haredi*, or *haredi Orthodox* and, on the other, as *Nationalist Orthodox*. We may also distinguish them from the sorts of Orthodoxy and neo-Orthodoxy that developed in the differing circumstances of Western Europe.

Over time, the *haredim* rejected Zionism more and more forcefully, eventually coming to accuse the Zionists of heresy and apostasy and treating them as no better than Karaites or Sabbateans “who cause the masses to sin.”³ The *Nationalist Orthodox*, in contrast, accepted

2 Letter from Rabbi Lapidot to Eliasberg, 4 Elul 5654 [5 September 1894], Central Zionist Archives, A35/27.

3 Y. Salmon, “The Struggle for the Haredi Community in Eastern Europe with Respect to the Jewish Nationalist Movement,” in Etkes and Salmon, *Chapters in the History of Medieval and Modern Jewish*

Zionism. The two groups differed primarily not over whether the redemption would come naturally or miraculously, but over whether to accept modernity and all that it implied about whether “Jews who sinned” nevertheless should be seen as remaining within the fold. In other words, the groups differed in their attitude toward a Jewish nationalism that was not committed to the halakhic tradition and, as a corollary, in their attitude toward nationalist Jews who did not live in accordance with halakhah.

The divide on this subject within traditional society, which brought about the formation of separate organizations and even separate communities, augmented the crisis. The methods used in the past to cope with deviants, effectively expelling them from the Jewish community, could no longer be applied in a society already marked by widespread religious pluralism. The struggle against Zionism was especially complicated because of the difficulty in drawing internal and external lines: the haredim and the Nationalist Orthodox both clashed with the secular Zionists while simultaneously fighting between themselves.⁴

These two streams of Orthodox Judaism—led on the one side by rabbis such as Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk and on the other by Rabbi Samuel Mohilever of Bialystok and others of similar views—had taken shape in reaction to the Haskalah and modernity even before the rise of institutionalized nationalism. Their roots can be traced back to the 1860s in Hungary and the early 1870s in Russia and Poland, though this sort of Judaism did not consolidate itself into a social movement in Russia and Poland until the 1890s, and then in response to Zionism. In the view of the haredim, Zionism had absorbed the full range of factors threatening traditional society, simultaneously representing all aspects of modernity: Haskalah, secularization, and nationalism.⁵

The Heralds of Zionism

An overview of the development of the Zionist-Nationalist movement will focus primarily on the relationships between Judaism as a religion and Jews as bearers of a national identity, and on the ideologies of those

Society, 352; Salmon, “The Book *Shivat zivyon*,” 311–322.

4 J. Lifschitz, “Sustainers of the Religion,” *Ha-peles* 2 (1902): 475.

5 Salmon, “The Struggle.”

who defined themselves as Religious Zionists and as “free,” or secular, Zionists. The account will encompass, too, the Zionist man, his way of life, and his institutions and organizations from the 1860s to the end of the nineteenth century, organized around the conventional categories: the “forerunners” or “heralds,” *Hibbat Ziyyon*, and political Zionism. The development is difficult to sum up, for it took place simultaneously in many lands, in varied religious and secular streams, and within and outside the Zionist movement.

Much has been written about the “Forerunners of Zionism,” but there has been little reconstruction of the events of 1860–1880 with regard to the rise of the Zionist-nationalist idea. Jacob Katz’s early studies of that period, published during the 1950s, have not been broadened or deepened.⁶ Katz’s basic conclusion—that the Zionist-Nationalist doctrine propounded by Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, Rabbi Judah Alkalai, and the writer and journalist Moses Hess was joined to an organizational initiative intended to carry it out—remains in place today. But Katz was very moderate in the extent to which he identified nationalist elements in the teachings of Kalischer and Alkalai, for he saw their primary motives as traditional-messianist.⁷ He may have found a degree of innovation in the way in which their version of messianism incorporated aspects of the *Zeitgeist*, but he continued to see their motives as traditional and pre-nationalist. And even if Katz acknowledged that Kalischer turned away from messianism following the publication in 1862 of *Derishat ziyyon*, he did not insist that its replacement was nationalist. “The nationalist motif seems to have remained an ancillary idea in Rabbi Kalischer’s outlook.”⁸

And yet, despite these rabbis’ traditional rhetoric and modes of argumentation, their teachings include unambiguous nationalist-Zionist messages. Katz himself maintained that Zionism was joined by streams originating elsewhere but flowing with it toward a single destination. As

6 Katz’s articles, “The Historical Figure of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer,” “Messianism and Nationalism in the Teachings of Rabbi Judah Alkalai,” and “Towards Clarification of the Concept of ‘Forerunners of Zionism’” are collected in his book *Jewish Nationalism: Essays and Studies* (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1979), 263–356 (in the appendix “Forerunners of Zionism”). For fuller discussion, see Y. Salmon, “Prof. Jacob Katz’s Contribution to the Study of Jewish Nationalism,” *Iyyunim bi-tequmat yisra’el* 8 (1998): 565–579; Y. Salmon, “The Historical Imagination of Jacob Katz on the Origins of Jewish Nationalism,” *Jewish Social Studies* 5, no. 3 (1999): 161–179.

7 Katz, “The Historical Figure of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer,” 34–35.

8 *Ibid.*, 38–39.

he saw it, Kalischer, Alkalai, and Hess were part of a historical phenomenon he referred to as “Forerunners [or Heralds] of Zionism.”⁹

Closely reading Kalischer’s 1864 commentary on the Passover Haggadah, one can discern that its traditional interpretive modes contained far-reaching nationalist arguments that identified the messianic era with the auto-emancipation of the Jewish nation.¹⁰ Zionism’s driving force during the 1860s and 1870s was its opposition to the new Jewish concepts of Reform and acculturation that differentiated between the Jewish nation and the Jewish religion. It was that opposition that led to the nationalist efforts of Kalischer, Alkalai, Gordon, and Hess in Germany,¹¹ Joseph Dinner in Amsterdam, Peretz Smolenskin in Vienna,¹² Joseph Natonek in Hungary,¹³ and Yehiel Mikhel Pines, Rabbi Joseph Zechariah Stern, and Rabbi Mordecai Eliasberg in Russia.

What they shared was not primarily a commitment to a Zionist-nationalist plan of action, for none had yet been formulated and its promoters held divergent views, but rather their rejection of the efforts to de-nationalize the Jewish people. They offered different formulations of that shared rejection: Smolenskin mounted far-reaching criticism of Moses Mendelssohn; Hess attacked the leaders of the Reform movement in Germany; Pines and Eliasberg engaged in a polemical argument with Yehuda Leib Gordon and Moses Leib Lilienblum, whom they saw as following in the path of Western European Reform; Natonek attacked the Neologists in Hungary. All felt impelled to maintain the Jewish national existence, which they perceived to be at risk. Smolenskin and Kalischer feared for the future of the Jewish religion not because of Reform halakhic changes but because of the loss of nationhood—a concern they shared even though Kalischer saw nationhood as the means to religion while Smolenskin saw religion as the means to nationhood.¹⁴ The Socialist thinker Hess and the historical positivist Natonek both saw religion as serving the interests of the nation. “Nationalism stands

9 Ibid., 37.

10 Salmon, “The Rise of Jewish Nationalism,” 7–11.

11 Katz, “Towards Clarification of the Concept ‘Forerunners of Zionism,’”; Katz, *Jewish Nationalism*, 263–284.

12 Salmon, “The Rise of Jewish Nationalism,” 11–13; S. Feiner, “Smolenskin’s Apostasy against the Haskalah,” *Ha-ziyyonut* 16 (1991): 2, 12–14, 22, 25.

13 D. Frankel, *The Origins of Modern Political Zionism: Rabbi Joseph Natonek, 1813–1892* (Haifa: Omanut, 1956), 27, 80–81.

14 Salmon, “The Rise of Jewish Nationalism”; Feiner, *Smolenskin’s Apostasy*, 14–15.

above any other commandment,” wrote Natonek in a work that remains in manuscript.¹⁵

The rabbis and traditional writers retained traces of the traditional messianic idea in their religious world, but it came to be understood as meaning redemption in stages. That interpretation distinguishes between initiatives “from below” (that is, on the part of humans) and the final messianic stage, dependent on involvement “from on high.” For Hess, Natonek, and Smolenskin, meanwhile, the messianic idea became a secular process of terrestrial national redemption.¹⁶

When Zionist ideas first emerged during the 1860s and 1870s, they did not evoke significant opposition within Eastern European traditional society. Opposition came primarily from the Orthodox in Western Europe—especially the neo-Orthodox—who were concerned that defining Jewish peoplehood in nationalist terms would conflict with the demand for Jewish emancipation in the German lands and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The neo-Orthodox also sensed that nationalist self-identification would serve as a pretext for giving up a halakhic way of life. Arguments of this sort were put to Rabbi Kalischer by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch,¹⁷ Rabbi Dr. Marcus Lehman (editor of *Der Israelit*), and even by Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer, rabbi of the separatist Orthodox community in Berlin.¹⁸

In Russia and Poland, the issue of halakhic reform was raised in moderate terms at the end of the 1860s by maskilim such as Lilienblum and Gordon, who did not at the time have a firmly nationalist perspective. It was their opponents within the traditionalist camp—Pines, Eliasberg, and others—who began to propound nationalist ideas, perhaps under the influence of Reform’s opponents in the West, who turned to nationalism as the antithesis to Reform and assimilation. Only during the 1870s did a secular form of Jewish nationalism begin to take shape in Eastern Europe, gaining a voice primarily in the Jewish press. The trend gained

15 Frankel, *The Origins of Modern Political Zionism*, 92.

16 See Hess’s letter to Natonek, August 1862, in *ibid.*, 97–98. See also *ibid.*, 76.

17 See on this Hirsch’s letter to Lifschitz, written in 1886, in J. Lifschitz, *Sustainers of the Religion* (Pietrikow, 1903), 35–36.

18 See Hildesheimer’s letter to the Hovevei Ziyon organization in Warsaw, in M. Eliav, *Letters of Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer* (Jerusalem: Mass, 1966), letter 35, 70 and n. 229. See also Kalischer’s letters to Hildesheimer: 26 November 1862, in M. Hildesheimer, “Aus dem Briefwechsel Israel Hildesheimer,” in *Jubilee Volume for Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach*, ed. Moshe Stern (Berlin, 1910), 294–295; and 16 May 1867, *ibid.*, 299.

momentum during the early 1880s in reaction to the pogroms which drove radical maskilim toward nationalism. But even then, traditional circles did not reject nationalism outright. In reaction to the pogroms, the leaders of the traditionalists in Russia and Poland—Rabbis Elijah Hayyim Meisel of Lodz and Yosef Dov Ber Soloveitchik of Brisk—agreed to support emigration from Russia to the Land of Israel even though they recognized that it entailed nationalistic aspirations. They and their colleagues in the Orthodox leadership, who eventually drew away from the *Hovevei Ziyon* movement, did not regard national identity as its flaw.¹⁹

Religious Zionism vs. Secular Zionism

In his book *Parallels Meet*, Ehud Luz nicely described the identity crisis faced by the Russian and Polish maskilim: “The nationalist idea liberated the movement for a Hebrew cultural renaissance from its tie to the Jewish religion. For those perplexed spirits undergoing a religious crisis it created a neutral sphere of public activity outside the synagogue.”²⁰ At the same time, however,

The fear that Jewish society would crumble as a result of emancipation, the Haskalah, and the Reform movement brought about a gradual rapprochement between the rabbis and the *maskilim*.... The common aim of preventing the dissolution of the Jewish community paved the way for groups and individuals with varying and even contradictory spiritual backgrounds and motivations to coalesce around the nationalist idea.²¹

During the 1870s, there were intermittent manifestations of this tendency, and since no organization was formed, the two sides did not directly join forces, nor did one deny the legitimacy of the other. The Religious Zionist stream, whose spokesmen were Pines, Eliasberg, Jaffe, and Mohilever, did not clash with the *maskilic* approach to Zionism, rep-

19 Fishman, *The Book of Samuel*, 20–21.

20 Luz, *Parallels Meet*, 21.

21 Ibid., 24–25.

resented by Smolenskin, Lilienblum, Gordon, and Ben-Yehuda. Literary confrontation, to the extent that it existed, touched on the maskilic aspect of these positions. But literary confrontation could not be carried on as it had been before when things moved from talk to action, and it became necessary to establish a decisive programmatic infrastructure and organizational framework. The decisions that were needed did not pertain to questions of practical policy, such as how to go about settling the Land of Israel and establishing there the infrastructure for a national entity. They pertained, rather, to how to cooperate in the Diaspora and in the Land of Israel with those who rejected halakhah as a binding norm.

Only in 1883 did one begin to hear reservations about that cooperation when it became clear that some of the immigrants to the Land of Israel maintained a secular way of life—most notably, the Biluim. In the course of the early efforts to make the Hovevei Ziyon organizations into a national movement, it became evident that some prominent Lithuanian rabbis had objections, similar to those of Rabbi Yosef Dov Ber Soloveitchik of Brisk, to establishing a common structure for traditionalists and secularists. On the other hand, those who saw no objection to this sort of cooperation, such as Rabbi Mohilever, joined in the initiative that led to the convening of the Hovevei Ziyon Katowice Conference in 1884. The results of that conference made it plain that the leadership of Hovevei Ziyon was in the hands of secularists headed by Pinsker and Lilienblum. That outcome moved several prominent rabbis, including Hayyim Elazar Wachs, Eliezer Gordon, and later David Friedman to withdraw from the movement.²²

The traditionalists' efforts to change the character of the Hovevei Ziyon leadership bore fruit in the movement's second conference, held in Druskieniki in the summer of 1887. They secured a respectable degree of representation in the movement's institutions, substantially exceeding their share of the membership. Mohilever was displeased that he was not chosen to head the movement as "First Gabbai," but he

22 On the withdrawal by Eliezer Gordon, see B. Dinur, *In a World That Is No More* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1958), 87; E. E. Friedman, *Memoirs* (Tel Aviv: Ahdut, 1926), 170; letter from Gordon to Hovevei Ziyon in Pasvalys, summer 1889, in Z. A. Rabbiner, *The Great Scholar Rabbi Eliezer Gordon of Blessed Memory* (Tel Aviv, 1968), 130. See also Y. Salmon, "The Confrontation between Haredim and Maskilim in the Hibbat Ziyon Movement during the 1880s," *Ha-ziyonut* 5 (1978): 46–48.

eventually reconciled himself to the outcome of the conference. He took the opportunity to clarify his position, which called for the movement's leadership and its pioneers in the Land of Israel to be made up of people who observed the commandments.²³

In the wake of the Druskieniki Conference, the traditionalists were able to gain important support for the movement from within the traditional leadership. Prominent among those supporters were Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor and, especially, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin. Their support, however, was conditional. Berlin, who was involved in the day-to-day activities of the movement, threatened to withdraw whenever there were reports on the settlers' non-observant behavior.²⁴

At the Vilna Conference of Hovevei Ziyon in August 1889, matters took a different turn. Three men were chosen to lead the movement, all of them traditionalists: Samuel Joseph Fuenn, Abraham Greenberg, and, most importantly, Mohilever. This provided the traditionalist groups with the opportunity to lead the movement in accordance with their views and give it a presence in their communities. But the gains of the traditionalists were quickly undone by the establishment of the Odessa Committee in the spring of 1890, restoring the leadership to the largely secular Odessa group.²⁵

Hovevei Ziyon

The dispute between the observant and the non-observant members over the leadership of the nascent Hovevei Ziyon movement during the 1880s was not primarily over the halakhic way of life as a matter of principle. Mohilever and Pines on the one hand, and Pinsker, Menahem Ussishkin (an activist in Hovevei Ziyon and the Zionist Organization), and Lilienblum on the other, all agreed that the society being established by the new settlers in the Land of Israel should be committed to the traditional way of life. The dispute involved, rather, questions of degree and positions of power, and the dispute that developed between the movement and its supporters in the traditional community was over whether it was permissible to cooperate with transgressors even in

23 Salmon, "The Confrontation between Haredim and Maskilim," 49.

24 Ibid., 50–60. See also the letter from the Netsiv to Samuel Joseph Fuenn, summer 1889, in Druyanow, *Sources* 2, document 924, 727.

25 Salmon, "The Confrontation between Haredim and Maskilim," 53–54.

matters undertaken for the sake of Heaven.²⁶ Casting the dispute in that light opened for debate the essential nature of the Zionist movement. Was it a philanthropic organization meant to assist Jews in withstanding physical hardships, or was it a movement promoting the Jewish nation's social and spiritual renaissance? The parties who sought to relieve the tensions between observant and non-observant preferred to regard the movement as one directed to the rescue of oppressed and afflicted Jews. That was the view of Rabbis Mohilever, Eliasberg, and Spektor, and it was shared by Pinsker, Lilienblum, and Ussishkin.

But this minimalizing of the national revival movement did not sit well with Pines or Rabbis Berlin (the Netsiv of Volozhin), Reines, and Jaffe, nor with Y. L. Gordon, *Aḥad Ha-Am*, and the leaders of the Biluim in the Land of Israel. Each member of the latter group had a vision of a Jewish utopia that was dependent on the success of the national revival movement. Some of the rabbis, such as Kalischer and Alkalai, seem to have had quasi-messianist ideas, while others, such as the Netsiv and later Rabbi Kook, entertained veiled messianic notions. Rabbi Reines, meanwhile, hoped for improvements in Jewish society, a critical assessment of its way of life, education for its children, and economic sustenance achieved through settlement of the Land of Israel. The secular camp also embraced utopias that involved halakhic reform, cultural revival, social reform, and the communalization and secularization of society. When all of these diverse utopias were weighed in the balance, the leaders arrived at a delicate and fragile equilibrium among the camps.

The struggle over the standing of religion within the Zionist-nationalist movement was thus multi-faceted, pitting advocates of the conflicting utopias against one another within the movement, and pitting the movement against its external opponents—*haredim* on the right, and the world of liberal Reform on the left. During the 1880s, the leaders of *Hibbat Ziyon* were able to withstand the pressures of the *haredi* camp which opposed it on one side and those of the *Haskalah* camp which opposed it on the other, and the pragmatic, minimalist consensus prevailed. During the 1890s, the opposing forces gained strength and threatened the revival movement.²⁷ But for Herzl's meteoric appear-

26 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 121–123.

27 *Ibid.*; see also *ibid.*, 277–278.

ance on the scene and the shift in the movement's activity to Western Europe, it is doubtful that the Zionist-nationalist awakening in Eastern and Central Europe would ultimately have achieved anything once the disputes over the attitude toward halakhah erupted.²⁸

The Shemittah Controversy

The positions taken by the parties on the shemittah, sabbatical year, controversy of 1888–1889 divided along the lines identified above. The minimalists sought halakhic authorization to do field work during that year. Coalitions were forged between, on one side, Rabbis Mohilever, Spektor, and Trunk, and, on the other side, Rabbis Fuenn, Pinsker, and Lilienblum. A permissive halakhic ruling was essential for anyone who regarded the halakhah as the determinant of how life in the Land of Israel was to be lived. Rabbi Mohilever and those who thought as he did accomplished two things with the issuance of a lenient ruling: recognition in principle of the halakhah's authority and a pragmatic solution to the question at hand. According to Rabbi Spektor, the ruling was justified and applicable to its time and place, for its rationale was to support economically depressed Jews, by which he meant those residing in the Land of Israel.

Inclined to regard shemittah in contemporary times as a matter of only rabbinic authority, he found warrant for leniency on that account. He did not think in terms of national revival or the ingathering of exiles. Pinsker, Lilienblum, and their like-minded colleagues, meanwhile, gave highest priority to the immediate need to resolve the settlers' dilemma. The lenient ruling was simply a means to that end, and their endorsement of it said nothing about the future of halakhic observance in the Land of Israel. What caused difficulty was the opposition to the ruling from both within and outside the movement. In the view of rabbis such as the Netsiv and Mordecai Gimpel Jaffe, and, perhaps, of writers such as Pines, the Zionist utopia encompassed observance of shemittah even in our times, without any lenient ruling.²⁹ As support, they cited rabbinic statements attributing the destruction of the Land in ancient times to the failure to observe the laws of shemittah. Proper observance of

28 Ibid., 282–288.

29 For further discussion of the controversy over shemittah, see chapter 4 of this book.

the shemittah year now would make good for that failing and open the door to redemption. A temporary, local resolution of the problem was ill-suited to their broad ideas and their hopes that the settlers would serve as the advance guard of the national revival in the Land of Israel.

At the same time, seeking lenient rulings to deal with immediate needs would not be responsive to the demands made by Baron de Rothschild or the leaders of Hovevei Ziyon, who were interested less in the livelihoods of a handful of current settlers than in the applicability of the halakhah to the future context of large-scale settlement. One who joined those interests to the idea that the sanctity of the Land was at stake³⁰ could conclude that the needed miracle was bound to appear, fulfilling the promise that “I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it shall yield a crop sufficient for three years” (Lev. 25:21). Or, as the Netsiv put it, “... Settlement of the Land ... is not for the purpose of having some number of people there ... nor is it to settle the district of Palestine. Rather, it is for the sanctity of the Land of Israel.”³¹ Nor did the lenient ruling please the likes of Gordon and Ahad Ha-Am, whose Zionist utopia did not recognize halakhah as a source of social norms for the nation.

It is reasonable to assume that the shemittah controversy was the direct spur for the writing of Ahad Ha-Am’s programmatic article “*Lo zeh ha-derekh*” (“This Is Not the Way”). His close associate Abraham Elijah Lubarsky implies as much in his letter of 30 November 1888 to Joshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt. Both writer and recipient were among the initiators of the Benei Moshe association, which sought to remedy what they considered to be the flaws in Hovevei Ziyon. Lubarsky wrote:

Alas, my friend! My heart, like that of anyone who loves his people, is torn to shreds as we see that we must now give up the final hope of lifting slightly the darkness over the Jews’ hearts.... Through the counsel of the dark charlatans and hypocrites, the proponents of *shemittah*, the precious idea has fallen and been broken, fallen never to rise again.³²

30 B. Landau, “The Netsiv in Support of the Settlement of the Land of Israel in Its Sanctity,” *Ha-ma`ayan* 14 (1974): 4, 32.

31 N. Z. Y. Berlin (the Netsiv), *Responsa meishiv davar* (Warsaw: Meir Yehiel Halter and Meir Eisenstadt, 1894), 116.

32 Regarding Ahad Ha-Am, see Lubarsky’s letter of 30 November 1888 in Laskov, *Sources* 6, 279–280.

Similar criticism was voiced by Y. L. Gordon, although he did not explicitly refer to the matter of shemittah.³³ Baron de Rothschild, the leadership of Hovevei Ziiyyon, and figures in the Land of Israel such as Eliezer Ben-Yehuda did not forgive the farmers for refusing to accept the lenient ruling and following the law in all its stringency, as called for in the contrary ruling by the Jerusalem rabbis.³⁴

From outside the Zionist camp, opposition to the ruling came from the Ashkenazi rabbis of Jerusalem, who rejected Hovevei Ziiyyon's activities in their entirety and now took the opportunity to censure the settlement enterprise.³⁵ Also voicing opposition were some within the rabbinic leadership in Russia and Poland, who already suspected Hovevei Ziiyyon of being primarily interested in halakhic reform. The periodical Havazelet, a platform for the opposition, argued:

Anything associated with Judaism is as a thorn in your eyes ... and you hope for a day of salvation, a day when the name of Israel will no longer be remembered, Heaven forbid.³⁶

Among the opponents of the lenient ruling were some of the greatest Eastern European rabbis, including Rabbi Yosef Dov Ber Soloveitchik and the Netsiv of Volozhin, who attributed biblical authority to shemittah in contemporary times, but in any case saw no basis for leniency even if one regarded it as merely rabbinic.³⁷

33 We know of nothing in writing by Yehuda Leib Gordon that explicitly discusses the shemittah controversy, but his general position is described in his letter to Simeon Bernfeld, written in late winter of 1888: "Consider the effect on you of what Israel would experience were the *Shulhan arukh* its governmental code and one of the rabbis on its throne" (L. Rabinowitz, ed., *The Winery: A Literary and Scientific Anthology for Subscribers of Ha-meiliz* [St. Petersburg: Rabinowitz & Rappoport, 1894]), 3. Gordon goes on to explain fully the difference between his positions and those of Lilienblum; *ibid.*, 4.

34 See the list of those taking that view in *Ha-zevi* no. 4 (13 Tammuz 1889 [12 July 1889]): "One who sends even a penny to sustain residents of the settlements so they may refrain from farming this year participates in the destruction of the Yishuv and in making a mockery of the Torah." The list appears as well in *Ha-ma'ayan* 27, no. 1 (1887): 21–22.

35 Letter from Rabbi Y. L. Diskin to Baron de Rothschild, 25 April 1888, in Laskov, *Sources* 6, 122; see also *ibid.*, 286 (an article from *Ha-maggid* 32, no. 49 [20 December 1888]).

36 *Havazelet* 19, no. 23 (1889); citation to an article from *Ha-ma'ayan* 27, no. 1 (1887): 22.

37 Y. D. B. Soloveitchik, *Novellae* (Warsaw, 1891), 2–9. It is interesting to compare the ruling of the Netsiv of Volozhin with that of Rabbi Soloveitchik of Brisk. Both forbade agricultural work because they took the view that even in the present, shemittah continued to have the force of biblical authority. Rabbi Soloveitchik, however, confined himself to halakhic issues, while the Netsiv took

Baron de Rothschild vociferously insisted that the lenient ruling be relied upon. Although he wanted the settlers to observe the commandments, he was unable to comprehend observing the commandment of shemittah, especially once the lenient ruling had been secured. He therefore became embroiled in a terrible conflict with the settlers in Mazkeret Batya, whom he had regarded until then as the most successful of his beneficiaries in the Land.³⁸ These fervently observant settlers heeded their rabbi, Mordecai Gimpel Jaffe, who opposed the ruling, and they regarded the ensuing sanctions imposed by the Baron as an attempt to force them to abandon their faith. They were accordingly prepared to lose everything they had achieved, give up their lands, leave their homes, and even return to the Diaspora. Rothschild and his officials were likewise condemned by members of the Old Yishuv, who could not comprehend his extreme position on the issue.

Rabbi Samuel Salant, the Ashkenazi rabbi of Jerusalem and a supporter of the settlers, understood the dangers inherent in the Baron's withdrawal of his investments in the Land, and therefore strove mightily to repair the breach. He pressed the settlers to accept Rothschild's demeaning conditions for remaining on their lands. On the other side, defenders of the Baron included the activist writers Israel Dov Frumkin and Elazar Rokeach, who had previously supported *Hovevei Ziyon*'s operations. The shemittah issue represented a test of might between supporters and opponents of Jewish national revival. It provided the occasion to clarify the various positions on settlement, national revival, and acceptance of modernity on the one hand, and on halakhic norms on the other.

Toward the end of the 1880s, one begins to see the emergence within the traditional leadership of clear-cut opposition to the *Hovevei Ziyon* movement. The consolidation of that position grew out of the internal dispute within the movement over the secular behavior of the people in Gadera and over fieldwork during the shemittah year.³⁹ Members of the Old Yishuv in Jerusalem figured prominently in the crystallization of the position toward *Hovevei Ziyon* taken by the traditional leadership

account as well of public policy considerations, insisting on full compliance with the shemittah restrictions in order to show that *Hovevei Ziyon* was fervently dedicated to the sanctity of the Land of Israel and to observance of the commandments bound to it.

38 A. Arkin, "The Sabbatical Year of 5689 [1888–1889] in Mazkeret-Batya," *Ha-ma'ayan* 26, no. 4 (1986): 5–19; and 27, no. 1 (1987): 17–35.

39 Salmon, "The Confrontation between Haredim and Maskilim," 56–77.

in Russia, for they had observed from up close the development of the New Yishuv and mounted a critique of its way of life. Even before the convening of the Katowice conference at the end of 1883, they wrote to the rabbis in Russia and accused the residents of the New Yishuv of failing to observe the commandments, charging that “they do not follow the way of Torah and fear of God ... and the outcome is not to hasten the redemption but, Heaven forbid, to delay it.”⁴⁰

Haredi incitement against the new settlement continued through the 1880s. It was clear even to the secular leadership of Hovevei Ziyon, however, that settlers in the Land were obligated to observe the commandments,⁴¹ and the question was whether the accepted standards of conduct of “simple Jews” would suffice or whether the settlers would be expected to be particularly pious. The rabbis who supported Hovevei Ziyon generally hoped that the settlers would serve as a model of meticulous observance, and some of them therefore opposed the lenient ruling on shemittah. The process of secularization encompassed not only the young people who had already withdrawn from traditional society and its ways before immigrating to the Land of Israel but also the youth of the settlements, whose parents were observant.

Even within traditional society there were some who reacted positively to Zionist modernity and continued to sustain the ideal of a halakhically observant Jewish society within the Land of Israel. The dispute between them and the traditional circles that opposed Zionist modernity was over the means and the time it would take to realize the Religious Zionist utopia.

The Schools in Jaffa

Another incident that served to clarify the various positions on the relationship between religion and Zionism was the conflict, from 1894 to 1896, over the schools in Jaffa. The details of the episode have been widely examined in the literature.⁴² For present purposes, we note only

40 Circular letter from the heads of the Jerusalem kolels and court to the Russian rabbis, winter 1883–1884, in Druyanow, *Sources* 3, document 1186, 580. See also Salmon, “The Confrontation between Haredim and Maskilim,” 57–59.

41 Letter from Pinsker to Pines, November 1887, in Laskov, *Sources* 5, document 1107, 442–443; letter from Pinsker to the Netsiv, October 1887, *ibid.*, document 1088, 391–392; letter from Pinsker to Samuel Joseph Fuenn, October 1887, *ibid.*, document 1090, 394–395.

42 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 220–227.

that the initiative in establishing the schools was taken by Benei Moshe under the leadership of Ahad Ha-Am, and that their purpose was to realize his overall view that a spiritual-cultural revival had to precede the socio-political revival. Education was the mechanism through which Ahad Ha-Am hoped to restore the heart of the Hebrew nation, which he believed had been deadened during the time of exile. The schools in Jaffa, led by members of Benei Moshe, were meant to produce the nation's new generation of teachers, an educational avant-garde.

At issue were the content and character of the education to be offered at the schools. Would it be a traditional program, centered on the sacred texts and relegating secular studies to secondary status, or would it be based on humanistic, Enlightenment principles that drew no distinction between sacred and secular? The place once held by religious faith would be taken over by historical consciousness and literary knowledge. In the words of Benei Moshe spokesman,

The school ... would produce the first model of natural Hebrew men and women, enlightened regarding all areas of knowledge and intensely committed to their nation and land and all it holds sacred.⁴³

They would be the bearers of the “national spirit,”⁴⁴—in other words, land, language, literature, culture, history, and moral qualities.

The mission underlying the school initiative was widely proclaimed: “To infiltrate Hebrew educational institutions, the schoolrooms of all the various parties; to instill in the teachers some of the spirit [of Benei Moshe]; to demonstrate its effects on the boys and girls; and so to educate in its embrace, bit by bit, a generation of the sort that we hope to develop.”⁴⁵ Needless to say, this represented a challenge to the values of traditional society, a call to *Kulturkampf*, and a demand for an alternative national society.

The divisions within Hovevei Ziyon regarding the Benei Moshe ini-

43 I. D. Beit-Halevi, ed., *Letters from the Land of Israel* (Tel Aviv, 1894), 1–2, 8–9.

44 Ahad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings of Ahad Ha-Am* (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1950), 440 (“Supplement to *Derekh hayyim*”). On the exegesis of the coinage “fundamental customs of our ancestors,” see the Hebrew version of Salmon, *Religion and Zionism* [*Dat ve-ziyyonut: imutim rishonim*] (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Hazionit, 1990)], 240, n. 12.

45 Ahad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*.

tiative produced a crisis even more severe than the one that had grown out of the shemittah controversy. This was because the rabbinic world itself was divided over the shemittah question as a purely halakhic matter, and the issue could not be blamed solely on the Hovevei Ziyon leadership. Here, in contrast, the positions of the parties were clearly evident, and it was impossible to cover up the fundamental dispute over values. Hence, as well, the destructive effects of the controversy on everything related to the organization and foundations of the Hovevei Ziyon movement.

All sides gave voice to the severity of the crisis. The pragmatists, taking the view of Lilienblum and Ussishkin, could not reject the idea of a Jewish school in which the program was centered on secular studies. As maskilim themselves, they saw nothing wrong in such a program. It did not declare itself to be secular, and religious studies were taught, for the most part, by observant teachers. Benei Moshe saw the school's establishment as an important step toward achieving their purposes. Even the religiously observant members of Hovevei Ziyon were divided in their view of the matter—not over issues of principle but in their assessment of the reality that was unfolding. The divide within the observant camp was a painful one this time, replete with slanders and accusations—perhaps because it did not reflect halakhic or ideological differences. Mohilever's efforts to play down the evidence of what went on at the school could not prevail over the combative statements by the teachers and the leadership of Benei Moshe within the Land of Israel.

It was impossible to hide the fact that the teachers at the school in Jaffa wanted to establish a “free” (that is, non-Orthodox) nationalist school. Aḥad Ha-Am, too, recognized that his enthusiastic followers were stirring the pot and tried to moderate them, but he could not deny that they were simply carrying out his ideas. The polemics were centered on an educational program in which explicit, strongly felt intentions were given voice. Mohilever and Aḥad Ha-Am alike sought to curb the critics, but they ultimately found themselves trading accusations. Rabbi Mohilever declared: “Though one of the people [*“aḥad mei-ha-am”*], a play on Aḥad Ha-Am's pseudonym] should sin, how have the people overall sinned?”⁴⁶ From the other side, Aḥad Ha-Am com-

46 Nissenbaum, *Letters of Rabbi Nissenbaum*, 24, n. 12, 15.

plained about the course taken by the Mizrachi organization, headed by Mohilever:

In one instant they purified the camp of all the “sinners and transgressors,” cloaking all those “with cut side-locks” [that is, violators of the halakhah] in a fringed garment.⁴⁷

Its internal unwillingness to recognize stances based on values and to formulate a platform for its work plan made Hovevei Ziyon easy prey for all of its internal and external enemies.⁴⁸ For the first time in the history of the movement, a sizeable number of halakhah-observing Jews withdrew from it, led by rabbis and communal officials. Prominent among the latter were Moses Aryeh Leib Friedland and Benish Katznelson, who had hitherto supported the movement but now declared that Benei Moshe “in the guise of Hovevei Ziyon was destroying Israel.”⁴⁹ A sharply worded statement of the crisis was that of Rabbi Jonathan Eliasberg, who had high regard for Ahad Ha-Am. His father, Rabbi Mordecai Eliasberg, was a leader of Hovevei Ziyon and regarded by Ahad Ha-Am as a model, the sort of rabbinic figure that was desired within the movement for national revival.

We had hoped that the settlement of the Land of Israel would be the underlying beam joining the separate segments within the house of Israel.... We imagined that one commandment would lead to another and that “the commandment to settle the Land” would restore Jewish hearts to His Torah and His worship and that even the maskilim within Israel would return to the camp of Israel.⁵⁰

Rabbi Alexander Moses Lapidot, formerly one of the movement’s most enthusiastic supporters, maintained that since the hopes expressed by

47 Ahad Ha-Am, “An Open Response to a Private Letter,” *Ha-meiliz* 34, no. 230 (1894).

48 Salmon, “The Struggle,” 338–339.

49 Ibid., 340.

50 Letter from Eliasberg to Ahad Ha-Am, 1995, National Library of Israel, Ahad Ha-Am Archive, 4°791.5.

Eliasberg were being dashed, and the members of Hovevei Ziyyon were changing from penitents to questioners, “we should not seek to mitigate our dishonor by simply acknowledging that we made a great mistake.”⁵¹ Positions such as these were also taken by Rabbi Joshua Joseph Preil of Krakes, who was similar in personality to Jonathan Eliasberg.

Nor could the moderates within Hovevei Ziyyon—men such as the writers Alexander Harkavy and Saul Pin^has Rabinowitz (Shefer) of Warsaw and Judah Leib Rabinowitz, the editor of *Ha-meiliz*—stand in the breach. They accused Ahad Ha-Am of extreme secularism that endangered the unity of the movement. Speaking on behalf of his colleagues, Harkavy declared: “With all their hearts, they desire that Hibbat Ziyyon [“love of Zion,” as well as the name of the movement] develop and expand in the spirit of Torah and commandments in all their particulars,” but he also insisted that the traditionalists “proclaim it in the gates: with the consent of Heaven and with the consent of the congregation, we declare it permissible to love Zion together with the transgressors.”⁵² In other words, he demands pluralism in all matters connected with observance of the commandments. But that demand was not accepted by the traditionalists, who were unprepared to acknowledge the legitimacy of “free” (non-Orthodox) Zionism. Sensing that they represented the majority of Jewish society in Eastern Europe, the traditionalists never let it enter their minds to plan for waivers on matters of principle.⁵³ For their part, meanwhile, the secularists within Hovevei Ziyyon had their own radical spiritual and intellectual positions, and were unwilling to submit to anyone’s dictates.

Ye^hiel Mikhel Pines, who served for many years as the outstanding representative of Hovevei Ziyyon within the Land of Israel, was keenly aware of the seriousness of the crisis. What he took away from the Benei Moshe controversy—in which he himself had played a central role—was that there was a need to separate the camps and establish an organization of Religious Zionists independent of the Odessa Committee. That sort of suggestion had been raised during the early days of the move-

51 Letter from Lapidot to Eliasberg, 4 Elul 5654 [5 September 1894], Central Zionist Archives.

52 A. Harkavy, “Let Our Master Teach Us,” *Ha-meiliz* 34, no. 208 (1894). (**Translator’s note:** The sought-for proclamation alludes to the formula that introduces the Kol Nidrei service on Yom Kippur: “With the consent of Heaven and with the consent of the congregation, we declare it permissible to pray together with the transgressors”).

53 Salmon, “The Struggle,” 354.

ment by rabbis in the Soloveitchik family and others, but it had not been accepted. However, it now appeared impossible to resolve the split between the observant and non-observant, and the price of that failure was paid by the movement, which earlier had been diminished and was now left severely damaged.

Herzl and the Religious Zionists

The appearance of Herzl on the scene, the organization of the Zionist Congress, and the establishment of the Zionist Organization offered new prospects for the reexamination of these positions and, perhaps, for finding a way to coexist. The matter was one on which Herzl himself felt conflicted. On the one hand, he was a secularist, a man with a liberal, Western perspective. On the other hand, he wanted to attract to the movement the Jews of Eastern Europe, most of whom were traditional and observant. The Herzlian utopia sought to confine the rabbis to the synagogue. “We shall know how to restrict them to their temples,”⁵⁴ he wrote in *Der Judenstaat*, or, at least, to make them rubber stamps for the decisions reached by the state’s secular political echelons: “The rabbis will then regularly receive the announcements of the Society and the Company, and they will share them with, and explain them to, their congregations.”⁵⁵

Had Herzl been free of the pressures imposed by the Russian Zionists, he likely would have accepted the demands of the traditionalists to establish a rabbinic committee along with the Zionist executive committee, as the Eastern European rabbis had requested at the Second Zionist Congress. A decision of that sort made by a politician such as Herzl would have been understood and accepted by the Zionist public even if it went counter to their personal views.⁵⁶ But the representatives of the Russian Zionists, some of whom were radical and vocal youngsters, opposed that compromise. Given the balance of power at the time, Herzl went along with them, thereby effectively giving up the masses of Eastern European traditional Jews. In his opening speech to the Second Zionist Congress, he called for “conquering” the communities,

54 T. Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*) (New York: Herzl, 1970), 100.

55 Ibid., 81; see also J. Tsur, *Jewish Orthodoxy in Germany and Its Attitude toward Jewish Organization and Zionism* (Doctoral dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 1983), 310.

56 Ibid., 311.

and even though the call was not addressed explicitly to the people of Eastern Europe, it was so understood both by the Zionists and by their new opponents within the traditionalist camp.⁵⁷ These new opponents argued that associating with Zionism was tantamount to “joining with the wicked,” for “the Zionists want only to separate the Jews from their religion.”⁵⁸

The practical way out of this thicket of divergent views was to separate the movement from all cultural and educational activity and limit it to matters of settlement and politics. This was the solution considered by those who defined themselves as “political Zionists,” but it was not accepted. It also was possible to grant the religious circles a veto over all matters having a halakhic or educational dimension,⁵⁹ but that likewise proved unrealistic even though it had already been placed on the agenda in *Hibbat Ziyyon* days and was considered more seriously during the early years of the Zionist Organization. It must be recalled that the national revival movement was intertwined with a radical secular revolution, and that those who were involved in it were unwilling to compromise with the traditional world they had rebelled against. Tactical compromises were temporary and always fell apart in the face of loudly proclaimed principles.

From the First Zionist Congress to the Fourth

The hopes for unity quickly proved unfounded. As early as during the First Zionist Congress, and even more so during the Zionist conferences held in Russia during the years preceding the Second Zionist Congress, it became clear that most Russian Zionists were not prepared to forgo the cultural component of Zionism as they defined it. Moreover, Herzl's contacts with representatives of the traditionalist circles had the effect of disclosing his own Western liberal outlook, which ultimately tipped the traditionalists' scales against Zionism. As noted, neither in *Der Judenstaat* nor in *Altneuland* did Herzl conceal the values that would

57 Y. Salmon, “The Response of the Eastern European Haredim to Political Zionism,” in *Zionism and Its Jewish Opponents*, ed. H. Avni and G. Shimoni (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1990), 62–65; Almog, *Zionism and History*, 138–142.

58 Salmon, “The Response of the Eastern European Haredim,” 65.

59 Salmon, “The Struggle,” 350, 364.

guide the state he hoped would come into existence.⁶⁰ He was unwilling to accept any traditionalist dictates in this area, and when pressures were brought to bear on him, he delivered the speech at the Second Zionist Congress in which he called for “conquering” communities—a call that was interpreted as a challenge to the traditionalist leadership of those communities.⁶¹ His colleagues in the leadership of both Eastern and Western Europe made statements in a similar vein.⁶² The efforts at compromise that followed the Second Zionist Congress, such as the establishment of a rabbinic committee alongside the Zionist executive committee, failed to bear fruit.⁶³ Rabbis Elijah Akiva Rabinowitz of Poltava and Judah Leib Zirelson of Priluki, who had until then supported the Zionist Organization, changed their minds and began to organize the traditional public in Russia and Poland for anti-Zionist activity.⁶⁴

Following the Second Zionist Congress, only a minority of rabbis continued to support Zionism. It had become clear by that point that the people who made up the new organization were of a mindset that provided no basis for realizing Rabbi Mohilever’s hope, formulated in his statement to the First Zionist Congress and there received enthusiastically, that “our Torah, which is the Source of our life, must be the foundation of our regeneration in the land of our fathers.”⁶⁵ Two courses of action were open to traditionalists who wanted to continue within the framework of the Zionist Organization. One was to divide cultural activities between the two camps, granting each the opportunity to work in accord with its own outlook in the national organizations. This mechanism was suggested by Rabbi Jacob Samuel Rabinowitz of Sopotskin following the Second Zionist Congress and was effectively accepted at the conference of Russian Zionists held in Minsk in 1902. The alternative was to exclude cultural activity from the purview of the Zionist Organization and confine its activities to the area of political Zionism. This was the course recommended by Reines, and it served as the foundation stone for the establishment of the Mizrahi organization. Reines’s approach, though supported by political Zionists includ-

60 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 287.

61 Ibid., 300.

62 G. Bat-Yehuda, “The Cultural Question and Mizrahi,” *Shragai* 1 (1981): 66–73.

63 Ibid., 68–69.

64 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 302–304.

65 Ibid., 172.

ing Herzl, had no chance of being accepted by the majority of the movement's members in Eastern Europe. It was set aside some months after being proposed and was finally rejected at the Tenth Zionist Congress in 1911.⁶⁶ That congress approved the platform of the committee on culture, which assigned educational activities in the Land of Israel and in the east generally to the Zionist executive committee. The decision led to a split in Mizrachi. A minority of its members bolted and, together with other groups, served as the kernel from which Agudat Yisrael was established in 1912.⁶⁷

Earlier events had foreshadowed the split in Mizrachi. In 1898 and 1899, Rabbis Zirelson and Rabinowitz had worked to gain greater influence for the traditionalists within the Zionist Organization, and when their efforts failed, they recommended withdrawing from it. They were joined by the activist writer Jacob Lifschitz and by Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson, whose haredi positions had taken shape even earlier.⁶⁸ The uncertainties within traditional Jewry came to the fore in 1900 with the publication of *Or la-yesharim* ("Light for the Righteous," Warsaw, 1900), a collection of anti-Zionist statements by leading rabbis of the time. Publication of the book put an end to the deliberations between the two sides. From that point on, traditionalists were divided

66 The votes at the Fourth and Fifth Zionist Congresses regarding "culture" and establishment of the "Democratic Fraction" demonstrated beyond any doubt that there was no chance of maintaining the political Zionism approach; see Bat-Yehuda, "The Cultural Question," 69–80. Bat-Yehuda fails to distinguish properly among the three formulations that appear in the writings of Rabbi Reines: separation between Zionism and religion; separation between Zionism and culture; and separation between Zionism and messianism. A traditional Eastern European rabbi would never suggest separation between Zionism and religion, as any such position would be precluded by his concept of Judaism as a "total religion" and his understanding that the return of Jews to the Land of Israel was not to be ousted from the rubric of religion. Separation between Zionism and messianism was meant to appease the haredim, who worried that Zionism might be a form of false messianism. And separation between Zionism and culture was meant to please the political Zionists of Western (and Eastern) Europe, who were concerned that the cultural question was impeding the carrying out of the Basel program. It was also intended to calm the concerns of the haredim that Zionism sought to impose the Haskalah on Jewish society under the guise of an effort to provide Jews a safe haven in a country of their own. A failure to comprehend the broader context of this dispute led many to attribute to Reines a Religious Zionist outlook superficial in its treatment of religion and spirituality and of the idea of religion. See M. Z. Nehorai, "On the Essence of Religious Zionism: A Study in the Teachings of Rabbi Reines and Rabbi Kook," *Bi-shevilei ha-tehiyyah* 3 (1988): 25–38; Y. Salmon, "Review of *Maqbilim nifgashim* [Parallels Meet] by E. Luz," *Zemanim* 32 (1989): 185–187.

67 Bat-Yehuda, "The Cultural Question," 83–85.

68 Y. Salmon, "The Attitude of Haredi Society toward Zionism in 1898–1900," *Eshel be'er sheva* 1 (1976): 377–438.

into two factions. The majority opposed Zionism and firmly declared its haredi attitude of rejecting modernity in both its enlightenment and its nationalist senses. The minority remained within the Zionist Organization, thereby responding to modernity though not giving up its halakhic way of life.

Or la-yesharim was written in an effort to gather in one place the positions taken by the Orthodox public in Russia and Poland in all its varieties. It set before the broader public the comments of prominent personalities within Mitnagdic circles in Russia and Poland. It likewise included the position of British neo-Orthodoxy, as formulated by Rabbi Nathan Adler, the chief rabbi of British Jewry.⁶⁹ From the Hasidic world, however, it included only the position of Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson. From the Land of Israel, there were the positions of Israel Dov Frumkin, editor of *Havazelet*, conveying the opinion of the Old Yishuv, and of writer and journalist Elazar Atlas.⁷⁰ In fact, there was considerable variation in the anti-Zionist positions taken by the haredim. Zionism was taken to be a force promoting secularization of Jewish society and maintaining the predispositions of the Haskalah movement that had preceded it, but because Zionism's programs were tied to the Land of Israel, the Holy Land that was the focus of traditional messianic aspirations, it was also regarded as more of a menace to traditional Judaism than any other secularizing force within society, and as something that had to be combated. That fundamental argument of principle was accompanied by numerous secondary arguments that cast doubt on the Zionist idea and its prospects. With one exception—that of Schneerson—none of the opinions included in the book cited the traditional messianic idea of miraculous redemption as an impediment to Zionism.⁷¹ But even Schneerson, though more extreme than any of the others, did not rely in his argument primarily on messianic notions, and determined that

the commandment to dwell in the Land of Israel pertains solely to its sanctity ... it is conditioned on [its

69 The second edition of *Or la-yesharim*, which appeared in New York in 1917, evidently at the initiative of ultra-Orthodox circles, omitted the positions of the activist writers and of Rabbi Naftali Adler.

70 Salmon, "The Attitude of Haredi Society," 394–430.

71 Ibid., 430.

residents'] fulfilling the Torah and its commandments in all their details.⁷²

Because the Zionists had impaired the sanctity of the Land, he believed, the commandment to settle there did not apply, and those already living there were permitted to leave.⁷³

The years 1899 and 1900, then, marked a turning point in the attitude of traditional Jewry toward Zionism. As early as July 1899, a group of householders in Kovno published *Setirat zeqeinim*, a broadside stating that the majority of traditional Jews were opposed to Zionism—some “out of clear understanding and knowledge” and some “out of internal religious feeling derived from the ancestral tradition.” Those who compiled this document maintained that this position was widespread but not publicized, for the press tended to be dominated by Zionists, “the wicked of the age.” They also wrote that Zionism was more dangerous than any other false messianism that had arisen among the Jewish people over the ages, for only Zionism had come into existence to “extirpate all the laws of the Torah and the commandments.”⁷⁴

The Zionist periodicals, especially *Ha-meiliz*, were filled with letters from rabbis who wanted to move the public toward encouragement of and support for Zionism. None of these writers, however, came from the ranks of the important rabbis within the Russian haredi leadership.

Varieties of German Orthodoxy

The crystallization of anti-Zionist positions within turn-of-the-century Eastern European traditional Jewry involved a process by which that society became more fervently Orthodox in a uniquely haredi manner. In its opposition to Zionism, it joined with Western European Orthodoxy, which had already developed a posture of that sort. The difference between the Western and Eastern streams of Orthodoxy involved the

72 S. D. Schneersohn, *Letter Regarding the Holy Rabbi Meir Ba'al Ha-nes Institution* (N. p., 1907), 21.

73 Ibid., 31; S. Z. Landau and J. Rabinowitz, *Or la-yesharim* (Warsaw, 1900), 57–58; E. E. Friedman, *Al qeraina de-agarta* (Warsaw, 1899); S. D. Schneersohn, *The Writing and the Message* (New York, 1917); “Exchanges between Rabbi Shalom Duber Schneersohn of Lubavitch and Rabbi Shalom Hakohen Aharonson of Kiev for and against Zionism,” in I. Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Ma'ariv, 1986), 115–121.

74 Landau & Rabinowitz, *Or-layesharim*, 50–52; D. Torsh, *Setirat zeqeinim* (Warsaw, 1899). See also J. Klausner, “The Zionist Movement in Lithuania,” in *Lithuanian Jewry*, ed. Lipitz, et al., 513.

respective motivations for their anti-Zionism.

In his studies of German Orthodoxy, Jacob Tsur showed convincingly that its opposition to Zionism was close in motive and argument to the position taken by the liberals, stemming from the universalization of the messianic idea; concern about the future of Emancipation if Jews came to be perceived as possessed of a separate national identity;⁷⁵ unwillingness to live in a Jewish state in which Eastern European Jews formed a majority; and opposition to the secularization of Jewish society. In the words of Mendel Hirsch, the son of the founder of German neo-Orthodoxy Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: “Could there be a ‘state of Zion’ without ‘Zion,’ or a ‘Jewish State’ without Judaism?”⁷⁶

The Orthodox differed from the liberals, however, with respect to the commandment to dwell in the Land of Israel. The Orthodox recognized the commandment though they objected to assigning it high priority within the system of commandments, while the liberals rejected it outright.⁷⁷ They differed as well in their formulations of national identity. The Orthodox stopped short of identifying with German nationalism, and clearly distinguished between state and nation. The liberals, by contrast, not only identified themselves with German nationalism,⁷⁸ but some among them even identified with the German *Volk*.⁷⁹

Rabbi Kosman Werner of Munich offered the following formulation for the statement of position issued by the “protesting rabbis” in response to the First Zionist Congress: “The Jewish religion obliges its believers to belong to the nationality of the people among whom they live and to love their homeland with all their heart.”⁸⁰ Rabbi Dr. Moritz Güdemann, the historical positivist rabbi of Vienna, had been part of the preparatory council for the First Zionist Congress, and Herzl had entertained high hopes of gaining his moral support. Ultimately, however, he published a pamphlet entitled *Nationaljudentum*, in which he

75 J. Tsur, “Between Zionism and Orthodoxy,” in *Zionism and Its Jewish Opponents*, ed. Avni and Shimoni, 75, 76, 78; Tsur, *Jewish Orthodoxy in Germany*, 164, 190, 289–290. On the position taken by the liberals in England, see Shimoni, “Between Zionists and Liberal Assimilationists in England,” in *Zionism and Its Jewish Opponents*, ed. Avni and Shimoni, 103.

76 Tsur, *Jewish Orthodoxy in Germany*, 165.

77 Tsur, “Between Zionism and Orthodoxy,” 78–79.

78 Ibid., 80–81; Tsur, *Jewish Orthodoxy in Germany*, 52, 63, 151–152, 170.

79 J. Reinhartz and B. Ben-Barukh, “Zionists and Jewish Liberals in Germany,” in *Zionism and Its Jewish Opponents*, ed. Avni and Shimoni, 91; Tsur, *Jewish Orthodoxy in Germany*, 151, 182–183.

80 Ibid., 131, esp. n. 36.

enthusiastically proclaimed the universality of Judaism's mission and its consequent opposition to nationalism. But there were also German Orthodox Jews who argued insistently that they were the true Jewish nationalists and that the Zionists, who did not observe the commandments, could not claim the mantle of Jewish national identity, for there could be no Jewish nationality without Jewish religion.⁸¹ Some exceptions within both the Orthodox and the historical positivist camps took a pro-nationalist view. Among the Orthodox, we may mention such men as Rabbi Nehemiah Nobel, the painter Hermann Struck, Dr. Louis Frank, and Dr. Jacob Feuchtwanger.⁸² Accounting for the motives of these exceptions is a complicated matter entailing considerable speculation. We note only that Nobel was subject to Eastern European influences. He was of Hungarian origin, and even though he was educated primarily in Germany, he remained suffused with the atmosphere of his home, which had been moved from Hungary to Germany. The encounter of émigrés from Eastern and Central Europe with the West sometimes led them to the nationalist movement.⁸³

Searching for a Way Out

The conflict with the haredi world could be resolved in one of two ways. Within the Zionist Organization, it was possible to demand that all matters having halakhic implications be excluded from the Zionist program or, alternatively, that a committee of rabbis be appointed to oversee activities in these areas, thereby appeasing the haredim. Ideas such as these had already been considered during the *Hovevei Ziyon* period. They were first raised during the 1880s with the appointment of Pines as supervisor of the settlers in Gadera, and they were renewed during the 1890s when the Odessa Committee refused to appoint someone from traditional circles as its representative in the Land of Israel. The matter came up yet again at the Warsaw conference of Russian Zionists that preceded the Second Zionist Congress, and the suggestion was roundly rejected. It met the same fate at the Second Zionist Congress itself.

81 Ibid., 81; see also M. Breuer, "The Term 'National-Religious,'" *Bi-shevilei ha-tehiyyah* 3 (1988): 14.

82 P. Rosenblit, "Rabbi Nehemiah Nobel: The Man and His Thought," *Bi-shevilei ha-tehiyyah* 1 (1983): 9–31; see also J. Tsur, "Mizrachi in Germany: 1911," *Bi-shevilei ha-tehiyyah* 2 (1987): 17–48.

83 Rosenblit, "Rabbi Nehemiah Nobel," 10.

Exclusion of matters with cultural and educational significance from the purview of the Zionist Organization was a step favored by Rabbis Jacob Samuel Rabinowitz and Reines.⁸⁴ The alternative, of appointing a rabbinic committee, was supported by Rabbis Elijah Akiva Rabinowitz and Judah Leib Zirelson. Through diplomatic maneuvers, Herzl managed to steer a course whereby the Zionist Organization rejected the suggestions of the traditionalists but also those of the circles that favored retention of Zionism's cultural aspects.⁸⁵ He believed, as did many others, that political revival could not be achieved without spiritual revival, but he also knew that submitting to one faction in the dispute would jeopardize the other's participation in the movement. However, his maneuvers did not prevent the contending sides from drawing organizational conclusions of their own. Many traditionalist supporters of the Zionist Organization withdrew from it during these years. Some of them considered establishing a competing Zionist organization, and considerable tension ensued. In his speech at the Third Zionist Congress, Dr. Leopold Cohen, a member of the Zionist executive committee, referred to the cultural question as the congress's "child of pain" (*das Schmerzenskind*).

Establishment at the Fifth Zionist Congress of the "Democratic Fraction"—a body that sought to advance cultural issues within the Zionist Organization⁸⁶—brought about a decision in favor of cultural activity. The decision led the traditionalists, who had until that point remained within the Organization, to organize a party of their own, and in spring of 1902, the Mizrahi organization was established in Vilna. Initially, it was hoped that a faction including both traditionalists and non-traditionalists could diminish the pressures brought to bear by the advocates of cultural Zionism. Those hopes, however, proved to be short-lived, and by the time of the Minsk conference of Russian Zionists in the summer of 1902, it had already become clear to the members of Mizrahi that the Russian Jews within the Zionist Organization would not allow the cultural element to wane. And so the two sides reached a compromise—educational activities would be conducted through the organizations in each country, each side on its own, and would not be-

84 Bat-Yehuda, "The Cultural Question," 69–70.

85 Ibid., 71–72.

86 At the Fifth Zionist Congress, thirty-seven of 278 delegates organized themselves as the "Democratic Fraction."

come part of the overall Zionist program.⁸⁷

It must be recognized that even earlier the Religious Zionists had thought that national revival could not take place without cultural revival, but the problem was that they were not allowed to control the program of cultural revival. And so the initial agreement between the political Zionists and the Religious Zionists with respect to the establishment of Mizrahi also lacked a stable foundation. The Religious Zionists had already undergone a modernization process, at least with respect to taking a positive view of the Haskalah, which could no longer be regarded as only academic. What Rabbi Reines had explicitly sought to conceal burst forth in the broadside prepared by Zev Yavets on the occasion of the establishment of Mizrahi.⁸⁸ In supplements to the broadside, Reines himself agreed with the ideas of cultural revival. But the efforts of Mizrahi to satisfy everyone with respect to the cultural issue proved to be in vain. They lost the haredim, who left Zionism because they believed it to be a secularizing movement; they lost their colleagues who were not themselves Religious Zionists but had joined Mizrahi in order to prevent the Zionist organization from becoming an educational organization; and they lost members who wanted to be active in the area of education and culture.

As noted, Religious Zionism was, at its base, a radical and comprehensive religious movement. In the entire history of the Jewish religion, one finds no similar instance of a socio-religious movement that reinterpreted all Jewish values related to both practice (halakhah) and belief. The primary issue was not that of politics. In both its versions, German and Eastern European, Religious Zionism presented a far-reaching positive response to modernity. Many scholars have been deceived by tactical pronouncements made by Reines and others to the effect that "Zionism has nothing to do with religion," and used those statements to reconstruct the character of Religious Zionism at its inception.⁸⁹

87 Bat-Yehuda, "The Cultural Question," 66 et seq. That was Reines's position from his first appearance on the congress stage; *ibid.*, 71 and, esp., 77.

88 *Ibid.*, 73–74. Reines's position did not differ in principle from that of Yavets. As leader of Mizrahi, Reines sought to move cultural-educational activities from the overall Zionist Organization to the local groups. In doing so, he hoped to keep the haredim within the Organization. My view here differs from that of Bat-Yehuda, who is forced to make recourse to convoluted explanations of the positions taken by Reines at the congresses and at the Minsk conference; see *ibid.*, 77.

89 Y. Salmon, "Zionism and Anti-Zionism in Traditional Judaism in Eastern Europe," in *Zionism and Religion*, ed. S. Almog, J. Reinhartz, and A. Shapira (Jerusalem: Mekaz Zalman Shazar, 1994), 41, n. 30.

However, they disregarded the purpose of those statements, which was to forestall erosion of the haredi support that the Zionist Organization enjoyed during its earliest days.

As noted, those efforts proved to be in vain and were nipped in the bud. It was clear to all that the Zionist movement, including the traditionalist stream within it, was committed to the modernization of the Jewish people in the full sense of the term, and the opponents of that process therefore had to organize for the struggle, either internally or externally. The commitment to modernity had numerous religious, educational, and cultural implications, and it was a determining factor when decisions had to be reached. Reines therefore accepted the compromise reached at the Minsk conference in 1902, and did not withdraw from the Zionist Organization in 1911 when the Tenth Zionist Congress adopted the educational program proposed by Nahum Sokolow.⁹⁰

A few of the German Religious Zionists took a different approach. Having undergone a process of acculturation within German society even before the rise of Zionism, they had no need for Zionism as a framework for modernization. They saw the purpose of Zionism to be finding a resolution to the physical problems of the Jewish people—the question of its physical existence in a hostile world. If Zionism exceeded that mandate and presumed to educate their children, it would not be worthy of support. The Eastern European spiritual and cultural perspective was certainly not to their liking.⁹¹

The publication of *Or la-yesharim* in March 1900, with its collection of anti-Zionist statements by the great rabbis of Russia and Poland as well as by the chief rabbi of England and spokesmen for the Old Yishuv, was accompanied by the failure of the Marcus initiative that was underway at the time. March 1900 represented a decisive turning point in the negative attitude of traditional Jewry to Zionism. The question of religion within the Jewish national movement was a sharply debated question from the beginning until the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901. After that, traditional Jewry was for the most part relegated to a position of opposition to Zionism. From that point on, it was absolutely clear that

90 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 345.

91 Tsur, “Mizrachi in Germany,” 35–36; Tsur, *Jewish Orthodoxy in Germany*, 32–33. On Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch’s hesitant and skeptical approach to *Hibbat Ziyon* in its early days, see his 1882 letter to his son-in-law in London in J. Emmanuel, ed., *Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: His Teachings and His Method* (Jerusalem, 1989), 285.

the halakhically observant cohort within the Zionist movement was a minority demanding its rights. That said, it would not be wrong to add that even after 1901—and to this day—religion has remained the most difficult issue within the internal history of the Zionist movement. It has surfaced in matters of education and public life, and has impacted on setting the location and borders of the Jewish state. Nor is there any doubt that the place of the religious parties in the politics of the Yishuv and the state determined the roles played by religion in those areas. Religion as a factor in the partisan politics during the mandate and since the establishment of the State of Israel is a matter warranting study in its own right.

VI. Y. M. PINES—LEADER OF PALESTINE JEWRY

In Old Yishuv Circles

Yehiel Mikhel Pines arrived in the Land of Israel in September 1878 to represent the Moses Montefiore Testimonial Fund, which had been established in 1874 in honor of its namesake on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday. His selection followed an extensive public search, involving representatives of the Board of Deputies in London, rabbis and maskilim from Eastern Europe, and leaders of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel, especially its Ashkenazi segment. The qualities that coalesced in Pines and made him worthy of the job would seem to be readily evident. As the scion of a distinguished Lithuanian family in Ruzhany, near Grodno and Bialystok, he was of the same extraction as the largest and most prominent grouping within the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv. The Ashkenazi community was under the control of the Lithuanian rabbis, who also dominated the general kolel committee. Pines had family connections to the leaders of the Yishuv and was directly related to Joseph Rivlin, secretary of the inter-kolel committee. He also had ties to prominent figures in Lithuanian Jewry, including Rabbi David Friedman and the journalist and historian Zev Yavetz, both of whom were his brothers-in-law. His father-in-law was Shemaryahu Luria of Mohilev, a prominent and wealthy man in his community who had been to the Land of Israel and maintained close ties with communal leaders in both Lithuania and the Ashkenazi Yishuv.

As an advocate of increased productivity on the part of the Eastern European Jews in general and the Jews in the Land of Israel in particular, and as an advocate of modernized Jewish education and even of moderate halakhic modifications, Pines was regarded favorably by Eastern European maskilim such as Moses Leib Lilienblum and Yehuda Leib Gordon, who also admired his solidly nationalist outlook and supported his selection. That he was known to be religiously observant enhanced his stature in everyone's eyes, for it was recognized that a secularist would not be acceptable to the Jews in the Land of Israel at the time or

even to the Board of Deputies in London, including Montefiore.¹

To promote his candidacy, Pines established a coalition of supporters that included the leading maskilim in Eastern Europe, the spokesmen for Orthodoxy in the press, Lithuanian rabbis, central figures in the Ashkenazi Yishuv, and Anglo-Jewish leaders. This group was impressive enough to preclude the emergence of any other candidate with so wide a base of support, but its support was not entirely unqualified.² Pines was close to a group of Haskalah-oriented Lithuanian rabbis who participated in the Hebrew press, especially *Ha-levanon*, including his own rabbi, Mordecai Gimpel Jaffe, as well as Rabbis Mordecai Eliasberg, Joseph Zechariah Stern, and Alexander Moses Lapidot, among others. These rabbis had taken his side in the controversy over religious reform in the late 1860s, but they had also berated him for his far-reaching critique of Eastern European Jewish society and halakhic Judaism in general. He had been independent and firm in his opinions, though he was the youngest in the group—only twenty-four—when the controversy erupted.³ Meanwhile, the maskilim Lilienblum and Gordon, though supporting his selection, had doubts about someone who had harshly criticized them during that controversy.

In the mid-1870s, when Pines took a stand in the press in favor of increased productivity within the Old Yishuv, he was criticized by his relative Joseph Rivlin and his antagonist, the writer and activist Jacob Lifschitz.⁴ The line between calling for improved sources of livelihood for members of the Old Yishuv and questioning the rationale for that Yishuv's very existence was a fine one. Those who called for reform in the Old Yishuv were generally young members of prominent families within it—Joel Moses Salomon, Benesh Benjamin Salant, Israel Dov Frumkin, and others. Those who challenged the ideology of the *haluqah*

1 Y. Salmon, "Yehiel Mikhel Pines: His Historical Image," in *Mel'ot 1* (Tel Aviv: Open University Press, 1983), 261–272. In her memoirs, Itta Yellin relates that Pines was chosen for the job on the recommendation of Dr. Asher Asher, a member of the Board of Deputies who had read Pines's articles in *Ha-levanon* and his *Yaldei ruḥi*, and that the decision was influenced as well by the homilist Zvi Dinov; see I. Yellin, *To My Progeny* (Jerusalem: Ha-ma'arav, 1938), 20. Joseph Maisel lists the reasons people had for supporting Pines: "He had a reputation within the Jewish world as a swift and skilled writer, who, with all his dedication to traditional Judaism, knew how to bring peace among the various streams, and specifically among the extreme" (Maisel, *This Is the History of the Sir Moses Montefiore Testimonial Fund* (Jerusalem: Mass, 1939), 50.

2 Maisel notes that the board, in choosing Pines, was not "of one mind and one voice" (*ibid.*).

3 Salmon, "Yehiel Mikhel Pines," 264.

4 Pines, *Binyan ha-arez 2*, book 2, 95–103.

were among the most radical maskilim in Eastern Europe. Where on that spectrum was Pines situated?

Montefiore and the heads of the Testimonial Fund in England also had doubts that the radical Pines was well-suited to carry out their moderate plans for improving the situation of the Yishuv. Pines had already visited Montefiore and the leadership of the Testimonial Fund and characterized them as “possessed of a monkish outlook,” adding that they believed that “with the destruction of the Temple, Judaism ascended and positioned itself under the Throne of Glory, severing its ties to political life.” He regarded Jacob Lifschitz and Akiva Lehren, head of the *Peqidim* and *Amarkalim* of Amsterdam, in the same light. Of himself, by contrast, he wrote: “My heart craves to see Jerusalem in its beauty, as one of the renowned cities of Europe.”⁵ Neither Montefiore, who was close to the Old Yishuv, nor the members of the committee who disparaged the Old Yishuv agreed fully with Pines regarding what ought to be done, and they themselves had no consensus on the path to be pursued. Moreover, neither Montefiore nor the members of the committee shared Pines’s nationalist outlook. Their approach was philanthropic, consistent with Jewish notions of charity, and utterly inconsistent with Pines’s mode of thinking.

Despite the reservations of some of those involved in Pines’s appointment, *Ha-levanon* summed up the deliberations in positive terms: “The pre-eminent man, in whom Torah and wisdom, faith and knowledge, are melded with love and peace, a man mighty in theory and practice ... as far as we know, most of the great men of Israel in Russia and Poland were pleased that the committee selected the genius, Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel Pines.”⁶

Pines travelled to London in August 1878 to receive the appointment. During that visit, he noted the differences between Montefiore on the one hand and the heads of the committee—Montague and Asher—on the other with respect to the settlement of the Land of Israel. He also noted the position on the matter taken by other community leaders in England. The Rothschilds and the members of the committee belittled the Russian Jews in general and the Jews of the Land of Israel in

5 Salmon, “Yehiel Mikhel Pines,” 265. See Pines’s report of his conversation with Montefiore, in which the latter said, countering Pines, “Jerusalem is not destined to be like London or Paris.” Compare Pines’s diary entry in *ibid.*, 23.

6 Quoted in Salmon, “Yehiel Mikhel Pines,” 266.

particular,⁷ while Rabbi Nathan Adler was concerned that the practice of agriculture in the Land of Israel would entail serious problems related to fulfilling the applicable commandments. For different reasons, then, both he and the heads of the committee favored enhancing the Yishuv's productivity through commerce and industry rather than agriculture.⁸ The guidance given to Pines before he came to the Land, representing a sort of compromise among the varied positions, was to invest only half of the available resources in working the land, using the rest for building houses. Rabbi Adler and Montefiore were both concerned that Pines would favor the opinion of the committee members over that of the Jerusalem rabbis.⁹ When Pines visited Ramsgate, Montefiore's residence, he was greeted with more hostility and affronts than good wishes for his venture.¹⁰

First Steps

As noted, Pines arrived in the Land of Israel in September 1878, remaining in Jaffa for several weeks. He quickly formed an impression of what was going on in the Land and reported on the situation to the committee and other institutions. He visited Miqveh-Yisra'el and was impressed by the agricultural school and its students, but he also had reservations about the school's accomplishments and wrote of them to London.¹¹ The Alliance responded angrily, but Pines, convinced that his role was to report honestly on what he saw happening, was undaunted by anger and threats. He paid attention to all matters pertinent to the Yishuv and gained an impressive mastery of the details related to agriculture, industry, and population.

His reports, incorporated in letters he wrote to the committee in London, the press, and other correspondents from the time of his arrival in the Land until the end of his days, are an abundant source of information on the Land of Israel during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. Yet, he not only reported facts, but he also staked out positions. Not long after arriving,

7 Pines, *Binyan ha-arez* 2, book 2, 19, 23–24 (diary entry); Maisel, *This Is the History*, 51–52.

8 Pines, *Binyan ha-arez*, 25–26; Maisel, *This Is the History*, 53.

9 Pines, *Binyan ha-arez*, 20–23; cf. Maisel, *This Is the History*, 51–54.

10 Pines, *Binyan ha-arez*, 20–24; *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 July 1878, 10.

11 Letter from Pines to Emanuel, September 1878, in Pines, *Binyan ha-arez*, 41–47. Cf. the diary entry in *ibid.*, 37, and Pines's article "On the Agricultural School in the Holy City of Jaffa," in *ibid.*, 117–127.

he asserted that working the soil was preferable to planting trees, for the former yielded immediate produce while the latter took much longer and did not fully occupy the people engaged in it.

There are conflicting accounts of Pines's reception in Jerusalem. Abraham Moses Lunz and Elijah Sapir, prominent figures in Jerusalem at the time, reported that most of the public received him favorably.¹² Pines himself says he was well received by Ashkenazi and Sephardi rabbis in Jerusalem, although they warned him not to dare changing educational practices—a concern on their part that turned out to be quite warranted.¹³ Other accounts, however, relate that he was received with profound misgivings. Even before he arrived, stories circulated that he was bringing a huge sum of money from the Testimonial Fund meant to establish "*shkoles*" (schools in which secular subjects would be taught). Others thought he would be a divisive force within the community. They knew of his modern way of life and were concerned that he would bring that way to Jerusalem.¹⁴ The kolel officers in the community of the *Perushim* quickly turned to their Hasidic counterparts, urging a united front against the coming assault.

During his first months in the Land, Pines continued to gather information. It became clear to him that much real estate was available for sale, but he also learned of the difficulties in acquiring it through a complex process involving bribes and deceit.¹⁵ He studied the conditions under which industries might be established and recommended setting up factories for manufacturing roofing tiles and olive-wood souvenirs.¹⁶ He compiled lists of candidates to be settled on parcels of land and other candidates for craft work, and he transmitted information about the new neighborhoods in Jerusalem.¹⁷ He depicted the situation in the Land in gloomy terms, telling of the poverty and illness, but remained steadfast in his spirit, firmly believing in the possibility of remediation and improvement.

Pines tried to involve the committee in the affairs of the Yishuv. He urged them to lobby authorities in Constantinople to promote reforms that would create a better climate for his economic initiatives. He also

12 *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 October 1878.

13 Letter from Pines to Emanuel, October 1878, in Pines, *Binyan ha-arez* 2, book 2, 42–43.

14 Maisel, *This Is the History*, 54. See also "Unity for Separation, Peace for Fighting," *Havazelet* 8 (1878): 29.

15 Letter from Pines to Emanuel, December 1878, in Pines, *Binyan ha-arez* 2, book 2, 52.

16 Letter from Pines to Emanuel, November 1878, in *ibid.*, 45–47.

17 Letters from Pines to Emanuel, December 1878 and January 1879, in *ibid.*, 61–66.

pressured the committee to work to curtail missionary activities in the Land.¹⁸ The committee members, however, were neither open to these initiatives nor energetic enough to pursue them.¹⁹ They were not free to support Pines's broad programs, nor were they interested in Jerusalem's internal squabbles.

But Pines did not allow his programs to wither under the London committee's indifference. He continued to send detailed plans for the settlement of Jews, Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike, in the land. He promoted not only agriculture but also industry related to agriculture, and the production of fig- and grape-based alcoholic beverages. Nor did he conceal his intention to improve education. He developed a program to establish in settlements schools that would teach Hebrew, Arabic, and other general subjects: "Historical origins in general and Jewish historical origins in particular; an idea of universal geography in general and the Land of Israel's geography in particular; general concepts of nature and its forces and of chemistry." He called for a revival of Hebrew: "All my efforts are to restore that language to its prime so it can become the spoken language of that colony."²⁰

Only a year after his arrival, Pines was already entangled in a complex web of dealings with the leaders of the Old Yishuv regarding his educational and economic programs. He promoted a factory for roofing tiles, but could not meet the agreed-upon conditions related to it.²¹ It was already clear that of all his great plans, the ones that succeeded were those regarding establishing neighborhoods bearing the names of Lord and Lady Montefiore. General agreement was achieved regarding the creation of neighborhoods outside the walls of the Old City, and that turned out to be the Testimonial Fund's only practical accomplishment.²² The neighborhoods known as Mazkeret Moshe, Ohel Moshe, Zikhron Moshe, and Qiryat Moshe were all established with the support of the Moses Montefiore Testimonial Fund.

The Academy for Torah and Labor

The first serious clash between Pines and the Old Yishuv took place

18 Letter from Pines to Emanuel, February 1879, in *ibid.*, 82–83.

19 Letters from Pines to Emanuel, September 1878, February 1879, in *ibid.*, 66–83.

20 Letter from Pines to the Board in London, January 1879, in *ibid.*, 58.

21 Letter from Pines to Erlanger, winter 1879, in *ibid.*, 78–91.

22 Maisel, *This Is the History*, 69.

in 1881-1882, when Pines was suspected of wanting to bring about educational reform in Jerusalem. It was also alleged that he supported the initiative of the Alliance Israélite Universelle to establish “schools and training institutions for crafts and agriculture” in cities around the Land.²³ The suspicions were due in part to articles in the press reporting that the Montefiore Testimonial Fund intended to establish modern schools,²⁴ rumors that did not lack for a basis. Pines had decided to respond to the request of a donor from Boston who wanted to establish an institution in Jerusalem named for his late wife.²⁵ He used the funds received from him to establish an academy for young people living in the area. They worshipped there, attended classes on religious subjects and sacred texts, and studied various crafts.

The zealots, led by the *rebbetzin* (rabbi’s wife) of Brisk—Sonya, the wife of Rabbi Moses Yehoshua Leib Diskin—marked the academy as a modern institution, and in 1882 imposed a ban on Pines, who stood at its head.²⁶ Comments made earlier by Pines in his *Yaldei ruhi* were now quoted to prove his offense. Pines mounted a defense in a broadside addressed to the Diaspora entitled *Shim`u harim rivi* (“Let the Mountains Hear My Case”), in which he demanded an apology for having been defamed.²⁷ Rabbi Samuel Salant stood by Pines and, with the support of Lithuanian rabbis, annulled the ban. Rabbi David Friedman, Pines’s brother-in-law, also intervened on his behalf.²⁸ Several maskilim attacked the ban in the Hebrew press. Willingly or not, Pines became allied with the enemies of the Old Yishuv.²⁹ It should be noted that not all Lithuanian rabbis supported Pines. Even the Netsiv of Volozhin, who was by no means an extremist, stormed against him: “One may envy the sage Rabbi Pines, may his lamp burn brightly, for he succeeded in

23 Ibid., 58–59.

24 Editor’s note on Pines’s letter to the rabbis of the Diaspora, “*Shim`u harim rivi*,” in Druyanow, *Sources* 3, document 1133, 366.

25 Yellin, *To My Progeny*, 63–65.

26 Druyanow, *Sources* 3, document 1133, 366–367, n. 1. See *ibid.* as well on the difficulties in determining the precise time of the ban.

27 *Ibid.* The broadside was published in *Ha-meiliz* 18 (1882): 12.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Hakohen, “To Those Who Assemble around Mount Zion.” Hakohen comments in admonitory terms on the High Holidays: “The Holy Land was filled with young Jews who are unmoved by the sound of the shofar on [Rosh Hashanah] and have no fear of the ban.” The editorial board of *Ha-meiliz* warmly accepted Pines. See the introduction and summary comments to Pines’s broadside, *Ha-meiliz* 18 (1882): 12.

finding a broad valley in which to excel with his wisdom and energy, but he has not yet succeeded in using it for his good and his honor.”³⁰ The scandal itself continued for two years, during which the Testimonial Fund’s efforts were paralyzed and Pines found himself excluded from the centers of life in the Old Yishuv.³¹

Pines’s Family

Pines’s family arrived in the Land of Israel some two years after Pines himself and shortly before the scandal over the academy and the ban. The members of the Old Yishuv in Jaffa greeted the family with reservations when they alighted from the ship. According to Itta Yellin’s account, the Pines family’s halakhic observance did not satisfy the stringent standards of the Ashkenazim in Jerusalem.³² Their modern dress, accepted in Russia, was utterly different from Ashkenazi garb in the Land of Israel. Pines’s wife did not shave her hair as the Jerusalem Ashkenazi women did, and covered it with a wig. She also did not wear pantaloons under her dress as did the Jerusalemite women.³³ The family had a Russian nanny, and its daughters learned foreign languages. As soon as they disembarked in Jaffa, they felt alienated from their surroundings.³⁴ The educational institutions in Jerusalem were not to their liking, and their effort to secure the help of private instructors incurred the hostility of the zealots around them.³⁵

The family settled in the Even Yisrael neighborhood on Jaffa Road, a neighborhood that was home to some maskilim, and they certainly were not part of the Ashkenazi community within the Old Yishuv. The residents of the neighborhood included Rabbi Akiva Joseph Schlesinger, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Dr. William Hertzberg, and others.

The Pines family became friendly with the more progressive elements of the Old Yishuv, led by Joel Moses Salomon, Joshua Yellin, and Joseph

30 Letter from the Netsiv to A. Z. Shaḥor, 14 Nisan 5642 (3 April 1882), in Druyanow, *Sources* 3, document 1134, 382–386.

31 Maisel, *This Is the History*, 59. On the limitation of the Testimonial Fund’s activities, the anger it aroused, and the Fund’s refusal to join forces with other organizations, see *ibid.*, 60–62.

32 With respect, for example, to such matters as how tea is prepared on the Sabbath; Yellin, *To My Progeny*, 25.

33 Cf. the description of Mrs. Hannah Noverdikran, *ibid.*, 27.

34 Itta Yellin tells of the reaction to the Russian nanny’s preparation of food on the Sabbath and of how her mother was spat on in the synagogue because she wore a wig, see *ibid.*, 34–35. For more on the complaints of Tsippeh Pines, see *ibid.*, 37.

35 *Ibid.*, 45.

Krieger (secretary to the Pasha in Jerusalem), and with Jerusalemites outside the Old Yishuv, such as the family of Dr. Hertzberg, the director of the Frankfurt Orphanage in Jerusalem.³⁶ Some were their neighbors in Even Yisrael. They also spent time with their relatives Joseph Rivlin (secretary of the general kolel committee) and Zalman Hayyim Rivlin, supervisor of the Etz Hayyim school.³⁷ It should also be noted that the people of the Old Yishuv were not all cut from the same cloth. The daughters of the Pines family found friends to socialize with even within the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv, generally girls from mixed Ashkenazi-Sephardi families.³⁸

Pines formed an alliance with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. When Ben-Yehuda arrived in Jerusalem in early 1881, Pines hosted him in his home for about a month.³⁹ Even at this stage, at the end of 1881 and early in 1882, Pines already had one foot in the New Yishuv. Evidence for this can be seen in his nationalist ideology, his family's way of life, his cooperation with Ben-Yehuda in setting up *Tehiyyat Yisra'el*, and his taking the initiative to establish the Academy for Torah and Labor. But his other foot remained in the Old Yishuv, reflected in his representation of the Montefiore Testimonial Fund and his family ties.

In his overall worldview, which had guided him since he attained intellectual maturity, religion and nationalism went hand in hand: there could be no Jewish nationalism without the Jewish religion, and Judaism was a nationalist religion. That outlook, which he was unwilling to moderate, served as his bridge to the Old Yishuv. He never came to terms with secular Jewish nationalism, and he struggled against every attempt to introduce it into the Land of Israel. For him, it was axiomatic that halakhic Judaism and Jewish nationalism coincided. A Jewish nationalism that threatened halakhic Judaism would do more harm than good.

In New Yishuv Circles

Pines's establishment with Ben-Yehuda of the *Tehiyyat Yisra'el* society, whose goal was to bring about a Jewish national revival by increasing

36 Ibid., 52.

37 Ibid., 49.

38 Ibid., 49–50, 53–54, 57.

39 Ibid., 47.

Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel and reviving the Hebrew language, alienated him from the Old Yishuv. Moreover, the Montefiore Testimonial Fund, whose primary interest was the Old Yishuv, cut back on its activities, and while Pines continued to represent it, it did not take up all of his time.⁴⁰

The ban imposed on Pines by Rabbi Diskin's followers alienated many of the young men who had previously gathered around him. At the same time, it brought many of the new immigrants, the founders of the New Yishuv, closer to him. These included Mordecai Altschuler of Suwalki and Joseph Rosenthal of Bialystok, who were among the founders of Yesod-Ha-ma'aleh.⁴¹

With the increase in immigration in 1882, Pines invested most of his energy and time in the absorption of the new immigrants, especially the Biluim.⁴² Owners of land in Petaḥ Tiqvah sought his help, and he sent his friend Kopelman to Russia to sell their parcels of land in the Diaspora. He also encouraged and advised the residents of Rishon Le-ziyyon.⁴³ Persons in the Diaspora sought his help on matters related to investments in the Land of Israel. Pines's nature made him well suited to acting in both the Old Yishuv and the New. We cannot be certain whether he sought out areas of public life in which to become involved or whether he was pressed into them because he was the only person in the Land of Israel known by the Russians to be reliable.

Articles by Pines were published in the local Hebrew press, and he maintained ties to both Frumkin's *Havezelet* and Ben-Yehuda's *Ha-zevi*. His descriptions of the Land, its scenery, and its people are among the most heartfelt in the literature of the time.⁴⁴

When Kolonymus Zev Wisotsky arrived as an emissary of Hovevei Ziyyon, sent to establish a presence for that movement, he looked to Elazar Rokeach and Abraham Moyal rather than to Pines. Evidently,

40 According to Maisel, Pines continued to represent the Testimonial Fund until 1901, when he was replaced by his son-in-law, David Yellin; Maisel, *This Is the History*, 61. According to other sources, though, he had stopped representing the Testimonial Fund as early as 1885. The board was assisted by special emissaries sent to the Land of Israel to report on activities within the Yishuv and to carry out projects called for by the fund; *ibid.*, 82.

41 Yellin, *To My Progeny*, 65. See also the letter from Altschuler to Levontin, December 1881, in Druyanow, *Sources* 3, document 1115, 329–331.

42 Yellin, *To My Progeny*, 69, 71–72, 93–96.

43 *Ibid.*, 73–74.

44 For example, his article "Seven Weeks in the Galilee," in Pines, *Binyan ha-erez* 2, 3–35.

Pines was unpopular among the Hovevei Ziyon leadership, perhaps because of his dispute with some members of the Old Yishuv or perhaps because of the difficulties he had with the Testimonial Fund in London after investing funds in economic initiatives that then failed. Wisotsky had certainly heard of Pines's activities and was not eager to turn Hovevei Ziyon's funds over to him. Pines certainly was not a practical sort. His ideas and plans required implementation by practical people and trained experts. In addition, matters in the Land were complicated by governmental instability and depressed economic conditions.

Moyal died soon after being appointed a representative of Hovevei Ziyon, and Rokeach was not well regarded by the movement's leadership. As a result, the door was opened to Pines. In addition, the defense he mounted on behalf of the Biluim against their detractors in the Diaspora—including Mohilever and the Netsiv—may have led Pinsker and Lilienblum in particular and the Hovevei Ziyon leadership in general to see him as a worthy agent for the movement.

And so, following the second Hovevei Ziyon conference (held in Druskieniki in 1887), Pines was chosen to serve as the movement's representative in the Land of Israel and was placed in charge of its operations there. In the wake of the appointment, Pines moved to Jaffa, the center of the New Yishuv. Having been sent to the Land of Israel to shore up the Old Yishuv, he now became a leading actor in matters related to the New.

A year after his appointment, Pines was caught up in the controversy over the shemittah year of 5649 (1888–1889) that roiled the Jewish world, especially in the Land of Israel and Eastern Europe. The question was whether the settlers would observe the sabbatical restrictions unconditionally, which would mean refraining from all agricultural work, or whether the rabbis would find ways to allow work to go forward. Hovevei Ziyon strove mightily to persuade the Eastern European rabbis to respond to the challenge and permit work. A fairly strenuous effort produced a permissive ruling signed by Rabbi Spektor, who was joined by Rabbis Mohilever, Trunk, and Klafish. Pines, advised by his rabbi, Mordecai Gimpel Jaffe, opposed the ruling, hoping to demonstrate that the settlers were committed to the full observance of the commandments, without any reliance on evasive measures. Rabbi Jaffe also believed that observance of the shemittah year in the manner prescribed

by the Jerusalem rabbis would bring the two yishuvs closer together.⁴⁵

True to form, Pines failed to consider all the social implications of his position, which alienated not only the rabbis who had issued the permissive ruling, led by Mohilever, but also the leaders of Hovevei Ziyon—his de facto employers—and his old friend Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Mohilever had accounts to settle with Pines that went back to the Bilu controversy, in which Pines took an independent stance at odds with the view of Mohilever and of the Netsiv that the Biluim should be expelled from the Land. But Pines deferred to no one and was guided solely by principle.

Despite these difficulties, Pines's star within the New Yishuv continued to rise as he supported every new initiative to strengthen the settlement in Jaffa. He founded the B'nai B'rith organization in Jaffa and was among the founders there of a branch of Benei Moshe (1889), of the Safah Berurah organization to support the revival of Hebrew, and of the Sha'ar Ziyon library (1889). With the establishment of the Odessa Committee, he was appointed a member of the Hovevei Ziyon executive committee in Jaffa (1890). That appointment was made by Mohilever, whom the Odessa Committee had sent to the Land of Israel in May 1890 to establish the executive committee, notwithstanding Mohilever's continued anger at Pines over his positions on the Gedera settlement and the shemittah year.

With Jaffe's death in 1891, the settlements lost a spiritual leader and Pines lost a personal friend and guide. He hoped that the Netsiv, who was both head of the famed yeshivah in Volozhin and a prominent leader of Russian Jewry, would agree to be Jaffe's successor.⁴⁶ But the Netsiv, too, died not long after Pines approached him, never reaching the Land of Israel.

The wave of immigrants who arrived from Russia in 1890 and 1891 found in Pines a central figure. As a representative of the Odessa Committee, he was approached by individuals and groups from Russia who wanted him to acquire parcels of land for them. He responded to each request with a personal letter or a letter in the press. He explained the economic and institutional advantages of planting trees rather than field crops—a reversal, based on years of experience, of the position he

45 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 129–130.

46 Letter from Pines to the Netsiv, 21 Kislev 5652 (22 December 1891), in Pines, *Binyan ha-erez* 2, book 2, 168–169.

had taken on first coming to the Land. He was confident that the settlement enterprise would succeed and suggested establishing an institution based on the model of the Keren Kayemet (Jewish National Fund).⁴⁷ In great detail, he explained the economic advantages of cutting stone for construction rather than manufacturing bricks, the benefits of producing roofing tiles, the woeful shortcomings of the Land, and the qualities of various fuels such as wood and charcoal. He alerted the immigrants to the hardships they would face⁴⁸ and reported on commercial activity in the Land, the assets needed to live there, the prevalent diseases, and the attitude of the government toward the population.⁴⁹ He compiled a guidebook that described the Land in detail: lands, currency, weights and measures, and travel directions.⁵⁰

The growing interest in acquiring lands for future settlers generated scandal, in part because the Arab sellers who disdained normal commercial practices raised prices and failed to deliver titles, and in part because of the profligacy with which Zev Tyumkin handled the funds sent to the executive committee for the purposes of land acquisition. Accusations were leveled against the executive committee, and against Pines personally, for his centrality to all matters related to settlement made him the target for criticism and complaint from all sides. He was admonished for having dispersed money to the settlers in Gedera without any oversight and for being insufficiently aware of what was going on. Pines pushed back against the criticism, asserting that he was unwilling to follow the Baron's destructive and wasteful administrative system.⁵¹ Some years later, Pines acknowledged that he and his colleagues on the executive committee were responsible for what had transpired, for their enthusiasm over bolstering the Yishuv had led them to believe those who sold land, "and we built castles in the sky."⁵²

All the members of the Odessa Committee's executive committee were members or supporters of Benei Moshe. Aḥad Ha-Am, the leader

47 Letter from Pines to Sokolowsky, spring 1891, in *ibid.*, 113–115.

48 *Ibid.*, 115–118.

49 Letters from Pines to Karlinsky, fall 1890; to Rabinowitz, spring 1891; to the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Vienna, undated, in *ibid.*, 126–130, 135–138.

50 *Ibid.*, 140–151 (the guidebook was called *Mishnat erez yisra'el*).

51 Letter from Pines to his brother Yeruḥam Pines, winter 1891–1892, in *ibid.*, 123–125. On his lack of expertise regarding wine, see the response of Pines and Ben-Tovim to an unidentified addressee, *ibid.*, 130–131.

52 *Ibid.*, 225.

of Benei Moshe and a member of the Odessa Committee, was called in and came to the Land of Israel in the spring of 1891 to resolve the raging dispute. He took the unprecedented step of removing Pines and his friend, Isaac Ben-Tovim, from Benei Moshe, following which they were removed from the executive committee as well. *Aḥad Ha-Am*'s action opened a wound that would continue to fester for many years, ultimately bringing about the destruction of Benei Moshe and the weakening of the Odessa Committee.⁵³ Pines stood at the center of the struggle and was helped by the leaders of the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv. Step by step, he abandoned his old colleagues: the leaders of the Odessa Committee, the rabbis who supported *Hovevei Ziyyon*, and his friends in the New Yishuv. It was a full-scale battle. Pines cobbled together an alliance that included the leaders of the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv, a few of the rabbis who had supported the *Hovevei Ziyyon* movement but now withdrew their support, and members of his family, including some from the Sephardi Old Yishuv, among whom he had three sons-in-law.⁵⁴

The events that ignited the controversy were the establishment in 1892–1893 in Jaffa of boys' and girls' schools inspired by Benei Moshe's secular nationalist ideas and Benei Moshe's denying Pines access to these institutions. In the early 1880s, Pines had been driven out of the Old Yishuv because he was suspected of wanting to establish a modern school, and now, in the mid-1890s, he was driven back into the Old Yishuv because of his opposition to a modern school established by Benei Moshe. Other incidents added to the conflict—the defaming of Ben-Yehuda, the establishment of *Mizrachi*, and the appointment of a new executive committee. In the Ben-Yehuda episode, Pines did not defend Ben-Yehuda and his father-in-law against the charge, made during Hanukkah of 1893, that their newspaper *Ha-zevi* fomented rebellion against the Ottoman authorities, but neither did he work against Ben-Yehuda. Furthermore, Rabbi Mohilever, who had established *Mizrachi* during the summer of 1893, had no solid basis for his charges that Pines was fanning the flames of dispute. In 1895, when a new executive com-

53 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 211–234, 235–278. *Aḥad Ha-Am* later came to regret his role in these episodes. See his letter to Judah Grazowsky, 8 Iyar 5673 (15 May 1913), in *Aḥad Ha-Am: Letters Regarding the Land of Israel*, ed. S. Laskov (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 2000), 429.

54 Yellin, *To My Progeny*, 97–100. Pines, who supported the rabbi of Jaffa, called him the “great scholar of our camp” and included him among those “whose hearts are devoted to the Land of Israel when it is intertwined with Torah.” These descriptions of him reflect the polemic raging in the background; Pines, *Binyan ha-erez* 2, book 2, 152.

mittee for the Odessa Committee was established, Pines hoped to be chosen for it or at least to gain a position for one of his loyalists, but Hillel Jaffe, a member of Benei Moshe, was chosen to lead it.

In the context of the dispute, Pines and Aḥad Ha-Am, along with their respective allies, wrote some of the best polemical articles in the Hebrew literature of the time. The *Kulturkampf* lasted more than two years and captivated Jewish journalism in the Land of Israel and the Diaspora. But unlike the controversy in 1868–1871 over religious reform, which was primarily a literary conflict, the present one affected power and control over the institutions of the Old Yishuv and the New, as well as over the Hovevei Ziyon movement.

When all was said and done, this institutional shake-up, which centered on Pines, drew the Old Yishuv and the New into a struggle that neither really wanted. Pines hoped to establish a Hovevei Ziyon movement whose members were all observant of halakhah, and had already taken some steps toward realizing that goal. His pragmatic colleagues in both Yishuvs, however, sought ways to resolve the conflict through compromise.

Return to the Old Yishuv

Pines's alienation from the New Yishuv led to his renewed involvement in the affairs of the Old Yishuv. By 1893, he was already explaining the need to support needy Jews by helping to settle them in Argentina. Immigrants to the Land of Israel should be supported only if they are "people devoted with all their heart and all their soul to this Land, loving it not for its excellent produce but for its national holiness."⁵⁵ It was clear to Pines that desirable settlers were "people filled with national spirit" who also accepted the authority of the halakhah. He was in no rush to realize the national revival.⁵⁶

Unlike Aḥad Ha-Am, Pines did not seek "priests and thinkers of great thoughts" to carry out the national revival. He believed the most promising bearers of the revival to be "simple people bound strongly to the Land through familiarity with it," by which he meant the people of the

55 Ibid., 157.

56 Ibid., 158.

Old Yishuv.⁵⁷ He contributed written material to *Havazelet*, a newspaper in the Land of Israel, and to the periodicals published by his brother-in-law, Zev Yavetz, once again reviewing what was transpiring in the Land, translating articles, and describing the local economy.⁵⁸ In 1894, Pines returned to Jerusalem, accepted a position as a writer on behalf of the Bikur Holim Hospital, and published the pamphlet series *Emet mei-erez*, in which he attacked Benei Moshe, the Sephardim, and Hovevei Ziyyon in Russia, including the Hovevei Ziyyon rabbis.

Pines envisioned a blending of the old and new into a single entity. The ideology would be that of the New Yishuv, but its bearers would be the members of the Old. He pleaded with the secular leadership of the nationalist movement, “Let there be no fighting between us, for we are brothers. Separate from us—to the right or to the left, as you wish.”⁵⁹ In his hope to establish a national movement whose members would all be religiously observant, he established the “Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land,” in 1895, intending that it be limited to people who observed halakhah.⁶⁰

Was Pines happy to assume his new position as spokesman for the Old Yishuv? As far as we can tell, he looked forward to a chance of returning to his earlier position as leader of the New Yishuv. Only on that basis can we understand his repeated declarations of loyalty to and belief in Hovevei Ziyyon.⁶¹ There were also rumors that he sought to be chosen as a member of the Hovevei Ziyyon executive committee following the death of Lev Bienstock in 1894, and even wanted to chair it.⁶² He made the periodical *Havazelet* his mouthpiece, publishing in it his reactions to events taking place within the Yishuv.

It appears, then, that he never abandoned his earlier ideas. He agreed that improvements in Jewish life, including educational reform, were needed, but insisted that “they must be clad in sanctity and made suit-

57 Ibid.

58 See his articles on wine and on oil, as well as his translation of an article about the Samaritans, *ibid.*, 169–194; and his report on the conflict between the Baron and the people of Ekron, *ibid.*, 194–199.

59 Pines, “An Open Letter to Ahad Ha-Am,” *Havazelet* 26 (1895): 115. See also his articles collected in the booklets *Emet mei-erez* (Jerusalem: Magnei Haaretz, 1894–1896), booklet 2, 7–19, 17; booklet 3, 28–30.

60 E. R. Malachi, “The Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land,” *Horev* 14–15 (1960): 192–245.

61 Pines, “An Open Letter to Ahad Ha-Am,” 106.

62 J. Kaniel, “Rabbi Joseph Rivlin and the Executive Committee of Hovevei Ziyyon in Jaffa,” *Vatiquin* (1975): 189; Y. M. Pines, “Send Whomever You Will Send,” *Havazelet* 25 (1894): 10, 71–72.

able through the Jewish spirit.” Pines supported the nationalist idea, but only if the nationalism was “absorbed within the religion and the religion was absorbed within it.”⁶³

The radical line that Pines adopted—separating the forces—was unacceptable to the Old Yishuv’s leadership. Some of its more pragmatic members entered into negotiations with representatives of the New Yishuv, looking toward a settlement of their differences. The negotiations went forward without Pines’s knowledge, lasted about a year, and culminated in the signing of an agreement. Participating on behalf of the Old Yishuv were Joseph Rivlin and Joel Moses Salomon; on behalf of the “newcomers” was Joshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt, the representative of the Hovevei Ziyon executive committee in Jaffa.

The initial peace feelers had been sent out by the Jerusalemites, whose actions were rooted in the struggle between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. The latter saw some benefit in an external conflict in which one side—that is, the executive committee in Jaffa and the Benei Moshe—were the opponents of the Ashkenazim and therefore favorably inclined toward the Sephardim. The members of Benei Moshe attributed the initiative to Pines’s desire to assume the leadership of the Hovevei Ziyon executive committee.⁶⁴ The establishment of the committee to negotiate a peace agreement coincided with the initiation of negotiations between Ashkenazim and Sephardim looking toward the establishment of a unity committee that could avoid inter-communal conflicts that became caught up in external issues.⁶⁵ Pines was not part of this initiative either, and even cast aspersions on it.⁶⁶

It is hard to avoid the impression that Pines was at his best in situations of conflict and controversy. His polemical and combative spirit aligned him with the most extreme elements of the Old Yishuv. Many issues of Havazelet published during 1895 are replete with articles in which Pines attacked one and all. Even Rabbi Naftali Hertz Halevi, the rabbi of Jaffa and the settlements, and someone with whom Pines had maintained ties before returning to Jerusalem in 1894, rebuked Pines

63 Pines, “An Open Letter to Ahad Ha-Am,” 113.

64 Kaniel, “Rabbi Joseph Rivlin and the Executive Committee,” 186.

65 J. S. Elisar and S. Salant, “A New Committee,” Havazelet 25, no. 40 (1895): 343; Elijah Sheid, “On Unity in Jerusalem,” *ibid.*, no. 44, 366.

66 Y. M. Pines, “May Your Wellbeing Increase,” Havazelet 25, no. 40 (1895): 336–337.

for stirring the pot.⁶⁷ Both camps had the sense that Pines was intensifying the conflict between the Old Yishuv and the New and between Ashkenazim and Sephardim in order to incite all of them against Benei Moshe.⁶⁸ Because Benei Moshe received support from Hovevei Ziyyon in general and the representatives of the New Yishuv in particular, Pines came to attack them verbally just as he attacked anyone who defended Benei Moshe. Nor did he spare the people of the Old Yishuv who had been persuaded by Benei Moshe's conciliatory words and their argument that Pines's battle against them was all a personal matter.⁶⁹

Pines may have sought to have Benei Moshe subjected to a ban within the Old Yishuv, but his effort was forestalled by the rabbi of Brisk, who had a long account to settle with Pines going back to the early 1880s.⁷⁰ He also tried to form an organization, to be known as Maginei Ha-Arez (Defenders of the Land) to compete with Benei Moshe. The organization issued the periodical *Emet mei-erez*, most of it written by Pines and his associates, including Frumkin, who had made *Havazelet* available to Pines, Joel Moses Salomon, and Joseph Rivlin.⁷¹ But even his allies in the struggle stopped short of total support for his positions. Rivlin and Salomon were directly involved in reaching the peace agreement with the New Yishuv.⁷² The agreement was reached in January 1896 and signed that spring, but Pines did not participate in the process.⁷³

Pines's reenlistment in the Old Yishuv did nothing to alter his stands on Zionism or Judaism. He continued to speak out in favor of reforming traditional Jewish education and, in his words, of "reforming the

67 N. H. Halevi, "The Words of the Master and the Words of the Student," *Havazelet* 25, no. 42 (1895): 350. See also Pines's response in the same issue and his article "A Problem in Principle," *ibid.*, 351. Pines became involved in polemics not only with Benei Moshe but also with people who were close to him, such as A. J. Slutsky and S. P. Rabinowitz.

68 Letter from Joshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt to Abraham Greenberg in Odessa, spring 1892; from Barzilai-Eisenstadt to Rabbi Nissenbaum, spring 1895; Barzilai-Eisenstadt to Aḥad Ha-Am, summer 1895, in Kaniel, "Rabbi Joseph Rivlin and the Executive Committee," 199–203. In the letter to Aḥad Ha-Am, Barzilai-Eisenstadt tells of efforts to bring about a reconciliation between Pines and Benei Moshe, mediated by Ben-Yehuda, overtures that Pines rejected.

69 Letter from Barzilai-Eisenstadt to Slutsky, summer 1895, in Kaniel, "Rabbi Joseph Rivlin and the Executive Committee," 204–206.

70 The claim that Pines sought the imposition of a ban on Benei Moshe appears in a Benei Moshe source, but its accuracy is questionable. See letter from Barzilai-Eisenstadt to Slutsky, spring 1895, in *ibid.*, 195–197.

71 Letter from Barzilai-Eisenstadt to Benei Moshe in Warsaw, spring 1895, in *ibid.*, 197–198.

72 Letter from Barzilai-Eisenstadt to Slutsky, winter 1895–1896; letter to Ben-Yehuda, winter 1895–1896, in *ibid.*, 207–208; 218. See also *ibid.*, 217, n. 134.

73 Version 3 of the peace agreement, in *ibid.*, 214–215; for the final version, see *ibid.*, 228–231.

culture.” The reforms that he envisioned pertained to such matters as educational institutions, teachers, student behavior, emphasis on plain meaning of the text and straightforward analysis, the teaching of Hebrew and other languages as spoken languages, the teaching of science, history, geography, and home economics, and field trips into natural surroundings.⁷⁴

To his dying day, Pines continued to be involved in the affairs of the Old Yishuv as well as the New—in personal, economic and social matters⁷⁵—and to be interested in the overall state of the settlements, the national library, and other institutions.⁷⁶ More than anything else, however, he sought to establish a movement to compete with *Hibbat Ziyyon*, a movement in which all of the members would be observant of halakhah. This was his Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land. He attacked the members of the Old Yishuv for failing to promote the development of the Land through the establishment of settlements. His brother-in-law Zev Yavetz followed suit, urgently asking the members of the Old Yishuv to support the establishment of a Yemenite settlement at Ramah, near Jerusalem,⁷⁷ and Isaac Ben-Tovim, who was allied with Pines and Yavetz in their battle against Benei Moshe, wrote to similar effect.

Pines’s proposal to establish the Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land struck a chord with the young people living in Jerusalem, and they reacted positively to his initiative in the pages of *Havazelet*.⁷⁸ In the course of the ensuing discussion, words were exchanged between the *Havazelet* circle and that of *Ha-zevi* on whether the Land of Israel would be built by its own residents, as favored by the *Havazelet* group, or by Jews coming from the Diaspora, whom the people of *Ha-zevi* looked to as bringers of the redemption.⁷⁹ In any case, the Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land was established, led by Isaiah Raffalovich—one of the most enthusiastic young Jerusalemites, the son-in-law of Israel Dov Frumkin (the editor of *Havazelet*), and later the chief rabbi of Brazil.⁸⁰

74 Pines, *Binyan ha-areẓ* 2, book 2, 206–215 (“Education or Culture?”).

75 On the matter of the monopoly, see *ibid.*, 220–222; Kaniel, “Rabbi Joseph Rivlin and the Executive Committee,” 223–224.

76 Pines, *Binyan ha-areẓ* 2, book 2, 237, 238–241.

77 *Ibid.*, 194–195.

78 *Ibid.*, 201–202.

79 *Ibid.*, 210–213.

80 *Ibid.*, 215.

He was assisted by Isaac Zvi Rivlin, who acquired the land in Ramah intended for the settlement and established Benei Ziyyon, an organization to promote agricultural settlement.⁸¹

Pines was a stalwart of the Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land, wrote its by-laws, and served on its executive committee. It was also supported by the Ahvah association of young members of the Old Yishuv, a group established in response to Benei Moshe. Ahvah, like Benei Moshe, was run as a secret organization, extending its hand into all matters related to the Yishuv,⁸² and Pines had a part in its establishment as well. Little came of the establishment of the Society for the Settlement of the Holy Land, however. Some seventy-five young people enlisted in it, of whom some twenty-five were sent to prepare for work on agricultural settlements. Nevertheless, their advance efforts did not inspire others to follow suit. Ahvah, too, did not diligently pursue its efforts, and it was disbanded after only two years of existence.⁸³

Pines publicly expressed his disappointment in the young Jerusalemites who were interested in settlement only as a means for making a living and not as a matter of ideology. Even at this stage of his public life, as a person of the Old Yishuv, he still favored the Biluim over the young Jerusalemites when it came to settling the Land.⁸⁴ His critical ways and his stormy and bitter temperament impelled his son-in-law and ally David Yellin to defend the young people of Jerusalem.

With the founding of the Mizrahi movement and the initial appearance of its journal, *Ha-mizrah*, it was only natural that its editor, Zev Yavetz, would invite Pines—who had preceded everyone with his National-Religious ideas—to contribute to it. Pines responded by declaring that he had already advanced all of his pertinent arguments. But the offer provided him an opportunity to reengage in polemics against Ahad Ha-Am, and he gave short shrift to the latter's idea of "the morality of the nation," reiterating his view that "the foundation of our nationalism is the God of Israel."⁸⁵ In the argument over settlement in Uganda, Pines differed from the people of Mizrahi in his opposition to the British proposal that had been accepted by the leadership of the

81 Ibid., 216.

82 Ibid., 216–217.

83 Ibid., 224–225, 240.

84 Ibid., 231–233.

85 Ibid., 231 (letter to the editor, summer 1903).

Zionist Organization. He maintained that Jewish nationalism without “Zion and the Land of Israel” could not succeed, for it would lack the power to bring about the needed change in the character of the nation.⁸⁶

In the struggle over “Hebrew labor” during 1906–1908, Pines sided with the farmers. He attributed their estrangement from Jewish laborers to the laborers’ secular behavior and extreme demands.⁸⁷ He proposed the joint establishment by laborers and farmers of a court to resolve disputes.

Pines went back and forth between the world of spirit, culture, and literature and the world of action grounded in the acquisition and working of lands and the purchase of tools and farm animals. That vacillation tragically epitomizes his life in the Land of Israel. Because of it, he never made full use of his capacities and never achieved his goals—neither in the world of action nor in the world of spirit.

86 Ibid., 234 (“On the Itinerant State”).

87 Ibid., 242–250 (“Response to Mordecai”).

VII. AHAD HA-AM AND BENEI MOSHE: AN “UNSUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT”?

Established in 1889, Benei Moshe was centered on Aḥad Ha-Am, whose ideas served as its inspiration and guide. Among its most distinguished members was the journalist and editor Ben-Avigdor (Abraham Leib Shalkovich), a disciple of Aḥad Ha-Am. In 1913, more than a decade after the group’s demise, he published a Hebrew polemical article entitled “Aḥad Ha-Am and Benei Moshe,” in which he attacked his former teacher.¹ Disregarding Aḥad Ha-Am’s contributions as an original thinker and ridiculing his ideas, he also lampooned his former teacher’s role as leader of Benei Moshe: “...The society was invented through writing, efforts were made to breathe life into it through writing, and through writing it expired.”²

Ben-Avigdor was not alone in his perception of the existence of Benei Moshe as an ephemeral episode. Aḥad Ha-Am himself entitled his article on the group’s history “An Unsuccessful Experiment.”³ But if the organization was, in fact, merely a momentary episode, why did its members write so much about it, and why did Aḥad Ha-Am believe in its importance? Time and again, Aḥad Ha-Am declared his intention to write the history of the movement, and when he put his personal papers in order, he gave special attention to those related to Benei Moshe.⁴

Benei Moshe was established in the spring of 1889 through the efforts of Joshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt and Abraham Elijah Lubarsky, and its founding conference was convened in Odessa in December 1889. Barzilai had immigrated to the Land of Israel in mid-1887, but had returned to Odessa a few months later. In Odessa, he updated his colleagues on Hovevei Ziyon’s faltering activities in the Land of Israel. They were disappointed with the group’s modest achievements and with

1 The article first appeared in the short-lived Warsaw periodical *Netivot* and was separately published in booklet form that same year; Ben-Avigdor, *Aḥad Ha-Am and Benei Moshe*.

2 Ibid., 246.

3 Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 437–449.

4 E. Z. Levin-Epstein, *My Memoirs* (Tel Aviv: Levin-Epstein, 1932), 93, 373. On Aḥad Ha-Am’s personal papers, see Pogrebinsky, “From His Last Years,” *Ha-boqer*, 8 January 1937.

its public image as an organization that merely raised funds for impoverished settlers in the Land.⁵ They believed the Jewish people were not yet ready for national revival, and that practical Zionist activity could flourish only if it were preceded, or at least accompanied, by moral and spiritual education.⁶ They enlisted the support of members of the Benei Ziiyyon organization in Odessa,⁷ and even members of Hibbat Ziiyyon, later described as “practical Zionists,” such as Pinsker and Lilienblum, endorsed the idea.⁸ In the winter of 1888, Barzilai recruited Lubarsky—one of the outstanding young Hovevei Ziiyyon activists in Odessa—to join in the project, and together they approached Ahad Ha-Am to ask him to lead an enterprise different from Hovevei Ziiyyon.⁹

As early as 1884, Ahad Ha-Am was considered the leader of a group of intellectuals opposed to the official leadership of the Zionist movement.¹⁰ In turning to Ahad Ha-Am, Barzilai and Lubarsky proposed to establish an association of distinguished educators who would lead the way to the spiritual revival of the Jewish people.¹¹

In a Hebrew booklet titled “*Derekh ha-hayyim*,” Ahad Ha-Am set out the organization’s program and by-laws.¹² Its thesis, which Ahad Ha-Am later developed further, was that the return of the Jewish people to its Land could be accomplished only if preceded by moral preparation. The organization was named for Moses, a symbol of the moral excellence and devotion to truth to which the members of the group aspired. It was divided into fourteen chapters, each comprising at least five members, and it was led by a president and advisory council.¹³ Benei Moshe

5 Ibid.; Ahad Ha-Am, *Memoirs and Letters*, 67–68; Simon & Heller, *Ahad Ha-Am*, 19.

6 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 10.

7 For a more complete treatment of the recruitment of members, see J. Goldstein, *Benei Moshe: The History of a Secret Order*, 35–36.

8 Hence, Pinsker’s advice to Barzilai regarding his mission. That also explains Lilienblum’s participation, although short-lived, in the organization. See Ahad Ha-Am’s cry: “Lilienblum is ours” in his letter to Barzilai, 15 Adar II 5649 [18 March 1889], in B. Schochetman, “From the Time of Benei Moshe,” *Davar: musaf le-shabbatot ve-hagim*, 15 January 1937; and in S. Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe and Their Time* (Warsaw, 1914), 15. According to Czernowitz, Barzilai received a letter of recommendation only from Lilienblum; *ibid.*, 25, 169–170.

9 Ahad Ha-Am, *Memoirs and Letters*, 67–68.

10 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 11–14; Ahad Ha-Am, *Memoirs and Letters*, 9.

11 An account of the discussions leading to the establishment of Benei Moshe appears in Bar-Li (a pseudonym for Barzilai), “A Daydream,” *Luah erez yisra’el* 11 (1905): 108–125.

12 Ahad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 438–439.

13 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 21–22.

was structured as a secret society on the model of the Freemasons.¹⁴ Its members were initiated through a ritual called *qiddushin* ("consecration"; the term is the same as that used for a wedding ceremony), in which they swore loyalty to the organization and undertook to preserve its secrets even after leaving it.¹⁵ The members addressed one another as "Brother." Members were required to be at least twenty years of age, to know Hebrew, and to pay dues amounting to two percent of their income.¹⁶ It was agreed that the headquarters would be in Odessa for the time being and that Aḥad Ha-Am would serve as president of both the local chapter and the overall organization. The by-laws were completed in January 1889, and the organization convened for the first time on 7 Adar I, traditionally believed to be the date on which Moses was born and died. On that day, ten members swore loyalty to the organization, each chapter was given a name, and all the members received a secret password.¹⁷ The members of Benei Moshe, numbering about 160, were drawn from the leading intelligentsia of Hovevei Ziyyon.¹⁸ They came from Russia, Poland, and the Land of Israel—the Land of Israel chapter was among the most important—as well as from Germany, France, England, and even the United States.¹⁹

Aḥad Ha-Am had already noted the deficiencies of the Hibbat Ziyyon movement, but he attempted to influence it in its efforts to build the national homeland in the Land of Israel and to organize the nationalist

14 The resemblance between Benei Moshe and the Freemasons troubled some members of the movement, who saw it as countering their purpose of preserving Jewish culture. For that reason, they emphasized the differences between their organization and other secret societies. See *ibid.*, 21, n. 2, 40; A. Simon & J. A. Heller, *Aḥad Ha-Am* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1955), 19.

15 Z. H. Masliansky, "Aḥad Ha-Am and Benei Moshe," *Ha-do'ar* 17 (1937), 338–339; Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 21.

16 In addition to Hebrew, each member was required to know at least one European language, but that requirement was waived because many potential members could not meet it. In some special cases, members who did not know Hebrew were accepted. See Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 42.

17 Upon meeting, one member would greet another by saying "*lo ve-lo*" ("no and no"); the response would be "*lo kehatah eino ve-lo nas leikho*" ("his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated"; Deut. 34:7, describing Moses before his death). Following the organization's conference in Warsaw during the summer of 1890, the response was changed to "*lo be-ḥayil ve-lo be-koah*" ("not by might, nor by power"; Zech. 4:6). On the names of the chapters, see Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 92–93.

18 Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 437 ("An Unsuccessful Experiment").

19 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 26, 92, 93. The largest chapters were in Odessa ("Derekh Ḥayyim"), Warsaw ("Jeshurun"), Vilna ("Ezra"), and Jaffa. Other chapters were in Moscow, Bialystok, Kovno, Poltava, Kharkov, Kremneczog, Dvinsk ("Hillel"), Pinsk ("Zerubavel"), Minsk, and Homel ("Homiyah"). See also Aḥad Ha-Am's letter to the Warsaw chapter, 25 Adar 5650 [17 March 1890], in Levin-Epstein, *My Memoirs*, 84.

movement elsewhere. Because the Odessa Committee limited its efforts to raising funds for Jewish farmers and craftsmen in Syria and the Land of Israel, it left a vacuum within which Benei Moshe could expand its activities.²⁰ The organization hoped not only to provide educational leadership for the national revival, but also to guide the activities of *Hibbat Ziyon* in the Land of Israel, including its dealings with the Ottoman government and the local Arabs.²¹ It worked hard to gain influence in the Odessa Committee and to control its executive committee in Jaffa.²² Its aspirations were based both on its numerical weight and on moral considerations, for it claimed the mantle of the spiritual elite. It cannot be denied that the organization attracted some of the best of *Hovevei Ziyon*'s young people at the time.²³

Benei Moshe was involved in the practical activities of the Odessa Committee. It acquired real estate in the Land of Israel, promoted and assisted agricultural settlements, and performed other self-appointed tasks. For example, the city of Rehovot was established by members of the Warsaw chapter of Benei Moshe.²⁴ Members of the organization participated in the July 1891 mission to Berlin and Paris, which sought to persuade the Alliance Israélite Universelle and Baron Maurice de Hirsch to found an agrarian bank that would acquire property and support new settlers. It participated as well in the general meeting held in Paris in September 1891 to establish a central committee for the *Hibbat Ziyon* organizations.²⁵ These efforts did not meet with success. Benei Moshe even attempted to establish its own national fund, but was unable to raise enough money.²⁶ In reaction to these difficulties, *Aḥad Ha-Am* proposed that Benei Moshe limit itself to spiritual leadership.²⁷ Despite the failures, there is no doubt that the Benei Moshe members were the

20 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 9–10, 28–92; Ben-Ephraim, “An Unsuccessful Experiment,” *Bustanai* 10, no. 45 (1939): 19.

21 Letter from *Aḥad Ha-Am* to Z. R. Levontin, 19 Tevet 5651 [30 December 1890], in Pogrebinsky, “Selected Letters,” 119–120. See also the program in the booklet “*Derekh ha-hayyim*.”

22 Y. Ben-Ephraim, “An Unsuccessful Experiment,” 9.

23 E. Stein-Ashkenazi, “Benei Moshe and Its Ties to the *Hibbat Ziyon* Movement,” *Ha-ziyyonut* 11 (1986): 31.

24 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 32–38. On the founding of Rehovot, see also Levin-Epstein, *My Memoirs*, 115–191.

25 Ibid., 81–86; *Aḥad Ha-Am*, *Memoirs and Letters*, 16–17.

26 Elijah Zev Levin-Epstein claims in his memoirs that the funding was intended to support future political activity; Levin-Epstein, *My Memoirs*, 87. Czernowitz argues similarly in *Benei Moshe*, 103–105.

27 Ibid., 87–91.

leading Hovevei Ziiyyon activists during the 1890s, both in the Land of Israel and abroad.²⁸

The organization’s greatest success came in the field of publishing. Its achievements included the publication of inexpensive editions of Hebrew literature for children and adults in the pocket-book series known as *Sifrei agorah*,²⁹ periodicals such as *Kavveret*, *Pardes*, *Luah aḥi’asaf*, and *Ha-shiloah*,³⁰ and leaflets such as *Mikhtavim mei-erez yisra’el* (“Letters from the Land of Israel”). It ran the Tushiyah and Aḥiasaf publishing houses³¹ and published articles in newspapers and periodicals.

From 1892 to 1895, considerable attention was given to the Hebrew schools established by the Jaffa chapter of Benei Moshe in cooperation with the local branch of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. These schools offered an education consistent with Aḥad Ha-Am’s ideas, and the members of Benei Moshe hoped that they would produce nationalist educators to serve the Jewish people.³² The members of the group were active in Russia as well, where they opened new schools and supervised others. But these efforts failed to bring about substantial change in the Eastern European Jewish educational system or even to steer it in new directions.³³

As early as 1891, a sense of organizational disarray began to be felt within Benei Moshe. In the summer of that year, on Aḥad Ha-Am’s initiative, the group’s headquarters was moved from Odessa to Warsaw, the first public step in Aḥad Ha-Am’s effort to end his formal leadership of the group, though he continued to lead it in practice. His stated reason for the initiative was his disappointment with the activities of the Benei Moshe members on the Odessa Committee’s Jaffa executive committee, but his true reason for wanting to quit the leadership was his inability to overcome the differences of opinion and disputes within the organi-

28 Letter from Levin-Epstein to Nissenbaum, 5 Marheshvan 5657 [15 October 1896], in Levin-Epstein, *My Memoirs*, 89–91.

29 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 61.

30 *Kavveret* was founded in 1890 at the initiative of the Odessa chapter and was edited by Aḥad Ha-Am; see Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 34–35; Aḥad Ha-Am, *Memoirs and Letters*, 12.

31 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 61–62; Ben-Ephraim, “An Unsuccessful Experiment,” 20. The Aḥiasaf publishing house published several types of books—original works and translations, books for youth and for adults, and periodicals.

32 On the matter of the schools in Jaffa, see Y. Salmon, “Polarization in the Yishuv during the Early 1890s,” *Cathedra* 12 (1979): 4–46.

33 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 142. Czernowitz maintains (*ibid.*, 93, 165) that these efforts laid the basis for the “improved *heder*,” but I have found no evidence directly linking the two.

zation.³⁴ These included, for example, the actions of the Warsaw center with respect to the traditional formulation of the membership oath. In addition, Benei Moshe had been publicly criticized by Lilienblum, an early member of the group who soon left it and became its strongest adversary in the Zionist press.³⁵

All of these factors contributed to Aḥad Ha-Am's growing distress. After the "purge" of several members of the Jaffa chapter, Aḥad Ha-Am concluded that it was the chapter best suited to realizing his programs. With the growing recognition on the part of Aḥad Ha-Am and his associates that the Jewish people's spiritual center should be established in the Land of Israel, they decided in the winter of 1892 that Benei Moshe's headquarters should be moved to Jaffa.³⁶ Aḥad Ha-Am also worked to decentralize the group's European leadership and divide it among the Odessa and Vilna chapters, which played important roles, and the Warsaw chapter.³⁷ These decisions show that Aḥad Ha-Am had lost his command of the organization and, perhaps, that he wanted to distance himself from responsibility for its activities.³⁸

These steps did not halt Benei Moshe's decline. The secrecy oaths sworn by its members had a negative effect, opening the group to accusations and attacks by hostile factions within Hibbat Ziyon.³⁹ Its principal opponents were the Orthodox, both those within the Zionist movement and those outside of it, as well as some members of the group itself who had Orthodox leanings.⁴⁰ Opposition also came from members of Hibbat Ziyon who favored the idea of "practical Zionism," as it had

34 Members expressed their distress at the inaction of the organization and its leader with respect to efforts to advance its goals. Other factors contributing to the dispute were Aḥad Ha-Am's refusal to accept the decisions of the Warsaw Conference (summer 1890) and the failed efforts of the association's members in Warsaw to gain the support of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and Baron de Hirsch within the Hibbat Ziyon movement; Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 62–63, 81–91.

35 For an expansive discussion of the matter, see Goldstein, *Benei Moshe*, 49–50.

36 The initial decision was to leave the headquarters in Warsaw until the summer of 1893. According to Czernowitz, the move to Jaffa resulted from the decision to operate in the open, which was impossible in Russia; Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 95.

37 I. Klausner, *The Movement to Zion in Russia* 2–3 (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1962–1965), 236.

38 Goldstein, *Benei Moshe*, 77–79.

39 Aḥad Ha-Am himself acknowledged that the secrecy had been destructive and that it was best forgone. See his letters to the Jaffa chapter, 16 Kislev 5655 [14 December 1894], 1 Sivan 5655 [24 May 1895], in Aḥad Ha-Am, *Letters of Aḥad Ha-Am* 1, ed. A. Simon and Y. Pogrebinsky (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1957), 71–72, 84–86; Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 94, 133, 139–140; M. Ben-Hillel Hakohen, "A Frightened Lot," *Luah ahi'asaf* 11 (1904): 244, 248.

40 Goldstein, *Benei Moshe*, 60–62.

been defined by the leadership of the Odessa Committee. Benei Moshe had suffered a sharp decline in its standing in the Odessa Committee,⁴¹ and it was accused of attempting to control the *Hibbat Ziyyon* movement in general and its activities in the Land of Israel in particular.⁴² Its members accordingly were compelled to make public statements of their views on various matters.

Between 1895 and 1897, the organization continued to unravel. In 1895, with the appointment of Hillel Jaffe to replace Lev Bienstock, it gained control of the Odessa Committee's Jaffa executive committee, but even that achievement did not alter its fate.⁴³ None of the attempts to revive it proved useful.⁴⁴ Aḥad Ha-Am proposed to make Benei Moshe into a party working in the open, with its principal centers in the Land of Israel and in Western Europe. In that way, it would be able to free itself from the restrictions on its activities imposed by the Russian government. This idea, however, was never carried out.⁴⁵ When the Zionist Organization was established in 1897, Benei Moshe came to an end. Many of its members became active in the new Zionist movement.⁴⁶

The question calling for an answer is why Aḥad Ha-Am saw Benei Moshe as "an unsuccessful experiment." To be sure, its achievements seem disappointing. Its attempt to create an elite leadership for the national movement met with failure. It gave up its sponsorship of the educational institutions it established even before the teachers it envisioned could be trained. Although its literary activity continued to act as a stimulant to Hebrew writing long after the organization came to an end, it is hard to say how much of this creativity should be attributed to the organization rather than to the talents of its members in their own

41 On Benei Moshe's situation within the Odessa Committee, see *ibid.*, 49–58. See also letter from Aḥad Ha-Am to the Jaffa chapter, 22 Adar 5655 [18 March 1895], in Aḥad Ha-Am, *Letters* 1, 75–83; Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 131–133. For an account of these squabbles and their consequences, see Salmon, 330–368. See also Salmon, "Polarization"; Aḥad Ha-Am, *Letters* 1, 75–81; Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 131–133.

42 *Ibid.*, 131–133, 136.

43 Letter from Aḥad Ha-Am to the Jaffa chapter, 1 Sivan 5655 [24 May 1895], in Aḥad Ha-Am, *Letters* 1, 84–86.

44 During 1895 and 1896, two attempts were made to amend the Benei Moshe by-laws as part of the effort to revive the organization. Aḥad Ha-Am, *Letters*, *ibid.*; Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 147–150; Levin-Epstein, *My Memoirs*, 91.

45 Aḥad Ha-Am to the Jaffa chapter, 24 Adar 5655, in Aḥad Ha-Am, *Letters* 1, 75–81; Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 133, 138–140.

46 Some members of Benei Moshe drew comparisons between Aḥad Ha-Am and Herzl. See, for example, Ben-Avigdor, "Aḥad Ha-Am and Benei Moshe," *Netivot* 1 (1913): 244.

rights. Benei Moshe attracted capable members, but it failed to provide them with the structure needed to accomplish the tasks it had taken on. Outside the Land of Israel, it faced few challenges, and within the Land, its activities lacked a proper social and economic basis.⁴⁷ For example, the school founded in the Land of Israel was supported by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and its students came primarily from Sephardi families who were quite removed from Benei Moshe's ideas.

Benei Moshe's disappointing fate can be attributed to its having appeared before its time. The Jewish public was not yet ready to adopt Aḥad Ha-Am's ideas and accept his programs. It must be kept in mind that Aḥad Ha-Am attacked the Hibbat Ziyon movement for devoting too much attention to practical activities and disregarding the need to instill a nationalist consciousness within the Jewish people. In fact, the practical Zionism of the final two decades of the nineteenth century succeeded, despite the impediments it faced, in laying the social and economic foundations of the New Yishuv in the Land of Israel. That was not true of Benei Moshe's initiatives, which failed one after another.

Once Aḥad Ha-Am had defined what he considered to be the ideal national norms, he hoped that his students, working in small groups, would instill them in the Jewish people. These norms were based on secular values and grounded on the premise that traditional Jewish society had ceased to be a vital force and, in that sense, had come to the end of its path. In the supplements to *Derekh ha-hayyim* ("The Way of Life") that he presented to the Warsaw Conference in the summer of 1890, he took it as self-evident that nationalist values were preferable to traditional religious ones. He called on those in attendance "to exalt the national spirit within the hearts of the entire nation and set it above the various spirits wafting through the factions of Israel."⁴⁸ Among these national values, Aḥad Ha-Am included "our ancestral Land and its settlement, our ancestral language and its literature, the memory of our fathers and their history, the basic customs of our fathers, and their national way

47 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 62, 143–144. Benei Moshe did not control the funds that supported programs and institutions in the Land of Israel, and it therefore was compelled to rely on such organizations as the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Odessa Committee and on individuals such as Baron de Hirsch. Another donor who was generous to them was Kolonymus Zev Wisotsky, but he, too, exercised personal control over his contributions. See also the comments of Simon & Heller, *Aḥad Ha-Am*, 27.

48 Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 440 ("Supplement to *Derekh ha-hayyim*").

of life from generation to generation.”⁴⁹ With respect to educational values, Aḥad Ha-Am emphasized the crucial importance of Western education. He insisted on bringing the students of Jewish schools to a point at which “they are in no way inferior to graduates of European schools in their knowledge and manners and in all the other ‘markers’ of the new culture.”⁵⁰ Efforts to establish modern Hebrew schools in Jaffa met with bitter opposition from the Old Yishuv, from haredi society in Eastern Europe, and even from the rabbis who had until then supported the *Hibbat Ziyyon* movement.⁵¹

In truth, the absolute secularism on which these ideas are based is something that never existed. When Benei Moshe disclosed its goals and its values, it immediately ran into sharp opposition not only from the *Hibbat Ziyyon* movement but from within its own ranks as well. Some leaders of the Bialystok, Vilna, and Warsaw chapters rejected Aḥad Ha-Am’s ideas, and, in response to the demands of the chapters’ representatives, the organization’s by-laws were changed.⁵² Efforts to expel this minority from the organization succeeded only in part. In the Land of Israel, figures such as Yeḥiel Mikhel Pines and Isaac Ben-Tovim were expelled because of their Orthodox perspective, and the Bialystok chapter was disbanded.⁵³ The Vilna and Warsaw chapters continued to operate, but some of their members (such as Joshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt) held views that had more in common with religious messianism than with Aḥad Ha-Am’s secularism.⁵⁴

Opposition to Aḥad Ha-Am grew within the organization itself, and individuals aware of Benei Moshe’s secrets discredited it. From late 1893

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., 37; see also Stein-Ashkenazi, “Benei Moshe and Its Ties,” 32–33.

51 Goldstein, *Benei Moshe*, 117–121.

52 One of the raging questions regarding the by-laws was whether the organization’s oath should refer to God’s name. Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 21.

53 Some have attributed the expulsion of Pines and Ben-Tovim to the financial scandals that affected the Jaffa office of the Odessa Committee. But if that were so, individuals such as Joshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt and Zev Tyumkin would have been accused as well. Accordingly, there can be no doubt that Aḥad Ha-Am wanted to ensure a majority loyal to him within the Jaffa chapter; see Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 27, 51–52, 55, 58–59, 87, and cf. Levin-Epstein, *My Memoirs*, 85–86. On the dissolution of the Bialystok chapter, see Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 27, 42.

54 The attitudes expressed in the Vilna and Warsaw chapters were polar opposites. Traditionalists held sway in Vilna, while the Warsaw chapter was divided between traditionalists and secularists. See Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 23, 133–139, 145–146; letters from Aḥad Ha-Am to the Jaffa chapter, 24 Marheshvan 5655 [23 November 1894] and 24 Tammuz 5655 [16 July 1895], in Aḥad Ha-Am, *Letters* 1, 70–71, 93–94.

until 1896, the organization was involved in public squabbles with distinguished members of *Hibbat Ziyon*, such as Moses Leib Lilienblum, Abraham Jacob Slutsky, Jacob Mazeh, Mordecai Ben-Hillel Hakohen, and others, who rejected its programs and its elitism. Other opponents of Benei Moshe included rabbinic figures, rank-and-file individuals, and writers such as Pines, Zev Yavetz, Lapidot, and others.⁵⁵ In the course of the conflicts, Benei Moshe's secular goals became publicly known, and its positions were polarized. As a result, opposition was aroused among its supporters as well.⁵⁶ In late 1894 and early 1895, opposition to Benei Moshe was voiced within the Odessa Committee on the part of people such as Rabbi David Slouschz and the chapter's secretary, Menashe Margolis, opposition that caused it serious harm.⁵⁷ If these inter-chapter quarrels are taken into account as well, one gains a full picture of the whirlpool within which the organization attempted to swim.⁵⁸

Without a doubt, *Aḥad Ha-Am*'s complex and problematic personality was among the factors that contributed to Benei Moshe's failures.⁵⁹ He was undermined by his lack of consistency: he wanted to be a public figure, but he was unable to serve as a public leader. He candidly ac-

55 This group of *Hibbat Ziyon* leaders included figures who could have been members of Benei Moshe. Some, such as Moses Leib Lilienblum, participated but left; others such as Menahem Ussishkin remained members and protested from within; still others were not admitted because of *Aḥad Ha-Am*'s concern about being unable to control figures who were prominent in their own right. See *Aḥad Ha-Am*'s letter to Ussishkin (undated, evidently from 1893 or 1894), in Y. Pogrebinsky, "Selected Letters of *Aḥad Ha-Am*," *Bizaron* 36 (1957), 121, 140; M. Ben-Hillel Hakohen, "A Frightened Lot," 256. *Aḥad Ha-Am*'s view of who should be encouraged to join Benei Moshe appears in his letter to Z. D. Levontin, 19 Tevet 5651 [30 December 1890], in Pogrebinsky, "Selected Letters," 119, and in his letter to Barzilai, 17 Adar II 5649 [20 March 1889], in Schochetman, "From the Days of Benei Moshe"; see also Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 26–27. Later, *Aḥad Ha-Am* would blame the group's by-laws for the rejection of desirable members; Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 63, nn. 4–5. On the opposition to Benei Moshe of rabbis and other *Hibbat Ziyon* activists, see Salmon, "Polarization"; Salmon, "The Struggle"; and Levin-Epstein, *My Memoirs*, 86.

56 Goldstein, *Benei Moshe*, 117–128.

57 *Ibid.*, 139–147.

58 *Ibid.*, 148.

59 Levin-Epstein, *My Memoirs*, 89–91; Stein-Ashkenazi, "Benei Moshe and Its Ties," 38; and Goldstein, *Benei Moshe*, 166–167. Esther Stein-Ashkenazi attributes the organization's collapse to its "ideological structure," to "unclear relationships between the irresolute leader and the members craving action," and "to the wide range of people with varied and opposing views who joined its ranks" (*ibid.*, p. 58). But that was true as well of *Hovevei Ziyon* and of the Zionist movement overall, and they were not impaired to the point of being unable to act. In fact, there is no escaping the conclusion that the decisive factor causing the collapse of Benei Moshe was to be found in the personality of its leader. Only that way can one understand the great fury felt by members of the group with respect to its leader, as expressed by Ben-Avigdor (above, n. 2). Stein-Ashkenazi herself reaches these conclusions later in her article (*ibid.*, 63–64).

knowledgeed that "I, your servant, am not equipped to be an 'administrator,' going forth and leading with the needed energy."⁶⁰ On another occasion, he blamed himself for instilling his own ideas into the organization's by-laws and public declarations despite their inconsistency with the outlook of most members of the organization.⁶¹ His disciples' tendency to attribute his behavior and the secrecy of Benei Moshe to humility and shyness miss the mark: Aḥad Ha-Am preferred a secret society because he could not bear open power struggles. When he decided, in the summer of 1891, that the organization would work better in the open, he submitted his resignation from its official leadership. He did not, however, suggest anyone who might succeed him, even though the by-laws required an election of a new president.⁶²

Another important factor in the organization's decline was the dispersal of its members throughout the expanses of Russia and Poland, which made it difficult for the leadership to control individual members and chapters.⁶³ The Jaffa chapter's decision to cease operations in 1896 and Aḥad Ha-Am's decision to concentrate his efforts on editing the new periodical *Ha-shiloah* show that Benei Moshe died a natural death and that it was not political Zionism that was responsible for its demise.⁶⁴

Having clarified the nature of and reasons for Benei Moshe's dissolution, we can consider why its history is so important for Aḥad Ha-Am and those who would follow in his path. Benei Moshe served as the source of inspiration for Aḥad Ha-Am's literary oeuvre.⁶⁵ To understand the essays he wrote between 1889 and 1897, it is necessary to take ac-

60 Letter from Aḥad Ha-Am to a Benei Moshe chapter (evidently to one in Vilna), 24 Tammuz 5655 [16 July 1895], in Aḥad Ha-Am, *Letters* 1, 87. See also Simon & Heller, *Aḥad Ha-Am*, 27, Pogrebinsky, "From His Last Years"; Ben-Avigdor, *Aḥad Ha-Am and Benei Moshe*. It is odd that Aḥad Ha-Am was not present at the highly important conference of summer 1890 in Warsaw, where the by-laws for the organization were publicized. His absence mystified the members. See Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 38.

61 Ibid., 38.

62 Simon and Heller, *Aḥad Ha-Am*, 29–31.

63 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 164–165. On the effect of the dispute on Aḥad Ha-Am, see his *Memoirs and Letters*, 189. On problems of dispersal and control, see Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 94, 146, 157–158; Simon & Heller, *Aḥad Ha-Am*, 27, 28, 38. See also Goldstein, *Benei Moshe*, 129–138.

64 Letter from Aḥad Ha-Am to the Jaffa chapter, 25 Kislev 5656 [12 December 1895], in Aḥad Ha-Am, *Letters* 1, 93–94, and letter from Aḥad Ha-Am to Aḥiasaf (Warsaw), 28 November 1896, in *ibid.*, 152–154. On the by-laws of 1892–1893 and the dispute in the Odessa chapter, see Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 96, n. 2, 132. Aḥad Ha-Am himself initiated the dissolution of Benei Moshe over the protests of the Vilna and Warsaw chapters; see *ibid.*, 149–151.

65 Aḥad Ha-Am, *Al parashat derakhim* [At the Crossroads] 4 (Odessa: Ravnitski, 1913): 197.

count of his activity within the organization. He wrote his prospectus for Benei Moshe (*"Derekh ha-hayyim"*; "The Way of Life") simultaneously with the publication of his sharp critique of *Hibbat Ziyon* in his essay *"Lo zeh ha-derekh"* ("This Is Not the Way"). Aḥad Ha-Am himself said that the two essays were complementary—one positive, the other negative. He says they were written after extended discussions with Joshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt and Abraham Elijah Lubarsky, two of Benei Moshe's founders.⁶⁶ He also acknowledged that his purpose in writing *"Ha-kohanim ve-ha-am"* ("The Priests and the People") was to publicize the ideas embodied in Benei Moshe.⁶⁷ In his essays *"Heshbon ha-nefesh"* ("Self-Assessment," 1890),⁶⁸ *"Pezq`ei ohev"* ("Wounds of a Lover," 1890),⁶⁹ *"Emet mei-erez yisra'el"* ("Truth from the Land of Israel," 1891), *"Milu'im le-emet me-erez yisra'el"* ("Supplement to Truth from the Land of Israel," 1891),⁷⁰ *"Doqtor pinsqer u-mahbarto"* ("Dr. Pinsker and His Notebook," 1892),⁷¹ and *"Kohen ve-navi"* ("Priest and Prophet," 1893),⁷² Aḥad Ha-Am described the failings of *Hibbat Ziyon* and the need for Benei Moshe to change the movement's overall economic and cultural-educational structure. In his essay *"Hasidim ve-anshei ma`aseh"* ("Pietists and Men of Affairs"), he defended the idea of the "spiritual center."<sup>73</sup> He described Benei Moshe's educational mission in *"Bet ha-sefer be-yafo ve-she'eilat ha-po`alim"* ("The School in Jaffa and the Question of the

66 Bar-Li, "A Daydream," 108; Z. Epstein, *Writings of Zalman Epstein* (Tel Aviv: Oneg Shabbat—Ohel Shem, 1938), 225 ("A. E. Lubarsky"). When Joshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt polemicized on behalf of Benei Moshe, he used "This Is Not the Way" as a complement to "The Way of Life," as Aḥad Ha-Am himself had suggested; see the latter's letter to Barzilai, *Davar*, 15 January 1938. "This Is Not the Way" was published a week after the founding of Benei Moshe; see Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 11–14, 437 ("This Is Not the Way"; "An Unsuccessful Experiment"). "This Is Not the Way" appeared in *Ha-meiliz* 29 (1889): 53.

67 Letter from Aḥad Ha-Am to Z. D. Levontin, 19 Shevat 5651 [28 January 1891], in Pogrebinsky, "Selected Letters," 120; Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 327, n. 2; Simon & Heller, *Aḥad Ha-Am*, 13–14.

68 *Kavveret* 1 (1890).

69 *Ha-meiliz* 30, no. 248 (1890); Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 20–22.

70 *Ha-meiliz* 31 (1891), *Ha-meiliz* 33 (1893); Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 23–24, 35–37; "Confused Opinions," *Ha-meiliz* 31 (1891).

71 *Pardes* 1 (1892), under the heading *"Even la-mazeivah"* ["In Memoriam"]. Aḥad Ha-Am acknowledged that this article was less a eulogy for Pinsker than a forward-looking declaration. See Aḥad Ha-Am, *Memoirs and Letters*, 187.

72 See Simon & Heller, *Aḥad Ha-Am*, 13–14.

73 *Ha-meiliz* 32, no. 55–60 (1892). The essay was not included in Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, because of its sharply polemical tone; see his introduction to the first edition of *Complete Writings*, 3. The idea of the "spiritual center" was raised for the first time by Ben-Avigdor in a booklet titled *"Shenei hazonot"* ["Two Visions"] (Warsaw, 1891).

Workers”).⁷⁴ In his articles “*Rabbi mordekhai eli’asberg*” (“Rabbi Mordecai Eliasberg,” 1890),⁷⁵ “*Torah she-be-lev*” (“Inner Torah,” 1894),⁷⁶ “*Sovlanut*” (“Tolerance,” 1894),⁷⁷ and “*Divrei shalom*” (“Words of Peace,” 1894),⁷⁸ he polemicized against Benei Moshe’s Orthodox opponents. Articles dealing with the Hebrew language—“*Ha-lashon ve-sifrutah*” (“The Language and Its Literature,” 1893)⁷⁹ and “*Ha-lashon ve-diqduqah*” (“The Language and Its Grammar,” 1894)⁸⁰—and articles for the planned but never published Hebrew encyclopedia, “*Al devar ozar ha-yahadut*” (“On the Jewish Archive,” 1894–1895)⁸¹—provided a structure for the organization’s educational, scholarly, and literary activities.

It was no coincidence that Aḥad Ha-Am published his collection of essays—*Al parashat derakhim* (“At the Crossroads,” 1895)—precisely when he had decided to make Benei Moshe an open faction. The organization had reached a crossroads and had to decide whether it would attempt to control the nationalist movement and move it along the path suggested by Aḥad Ha-Am’s ideas or whether it would cease to exist. Aḥad Ha-Am was convinced that it made sense to move the Zionist movement’s center to Western Europe, to a country free of the restrictions imposed by the Russian government. That may have been among the reasons he was prepared to move to Berlin and assume the task there of editing *Ha-shiloah*.⁸²

Aḥad Ha-Am was the central figure in the Jewish national movement from the time of Pinsker’s departure at the end of the 1880s until Herzl’s appearance in 1897. It was Benei Moshe that made his leadership possible.⁸³ It should be emphasized that Benei Moshe’s dissolution led Aḥad Ha-Am to alter his basic outlook regarding the Jewish national revival. Moreover, no historian of the Jewish national movement can disre-

74 *Ha-meiliz* 33 (1893), under the heading “*Ha-kamut ve-ha-eikhut*” [“Quantity and Quality”].

75 *Kavveret* (winter 1890), under the heading “*Aḥar mitato shel talmid ḥakham*” [“Following the Bier of a Sage”].

76 *Pardes* 2 (1894); Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 51–55.

77 *Ha-meiliz* 33 (5 Shevat 5653 [1893]); Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 54–56.

78 *Ha-meiliz* 43 (2 Marḥeshvan 5654 [1893]); Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 56–58; 56 n.2, 437.

79 *Luah aḥi’asaf* 1 (1893), 10–16; Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 92–99.

80 *Luah aḥi’asaf* 2 (1894); Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 98–113.

81 He wrote three essays on this subject, collected under the heading “*Al devar ozar ha-yahadut ba-lashon ha-ivrit*” [“On the Jewish Archive in the Hebrew Language”] (Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 104–113). The articles were originally published in *Ha-meiliz* 34 (2 Tammuz 5654 [1894]; 5 Av 5654 [1894]; 4 Shevat 5655 [1895]).

82 B. Dinur, *Aḥad Ha-Am and His Historic Accomplishment* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1957), 23–24.

83 Ben-Zion Dinur shares this view; see *ibid.*, 25.

gard the fact that many distinguished Zionists, including Aryeh Leib Motzkin, Chaim Weizmann, Menahem Ussishkin, Abraham Idelsohn, Shemaryahu Levin, and Chaim Nahman Bialik, grew up within Benei Moshe. Ahad Ha-Am would later claim that “nearly all the outstanding figures of Hovevei Ziyon were members [of Benei Moshe].”⁸⁴ The development of the New Yishuv in the Land of Israel would have been inconceivable without the group’s contribution. Joshua Barzilai-Eisenstadt, Meir Dizengoff, Judah Gur, Israel Belkind, David Yudelevich, and Aaron Elijah Eisenberg—all of them key figures in the history of the New Yishuv—were members of Benei Moshe. Most importantly, the ideological principles of secular Jewish nationalism were for the first time fully and explicitly formulated by the members of Benei Moshe.⁸⁵ The organization served as a symbol of secular Zionism, just as the Biluim served as a symbol of avant-garde pioneering Zionists. Uncovering the gap between a symbol and reality has no effect on the functioning of the symbol in a historical perspective.

84 Ahad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 437 (“An Unsuccessful Experiment”).

85 Czernowitz, *Benei Moshe*, 4, 166. Joseph Goldstein argues, perhaps correctly, that the emphasis on Benei Moshe’s secular character was a guidepost for its history. But he fails to note that despite the triumph of the “secular” stream within the movement (in the poll taken in 1890), the leadership in Warsaw, established after the poll, changed the by-laws in a manner contrary to the spirit of the poll’s results. More far-reaching is the conclusion that the group’s decision with respect to this issue was “an important guidepost for Jewish socio-cultural history in modern times” (Goldstein, *Benei Moshe*, 71). Further consideration of Goldstein’s ultimate conclusion, that “the experiment in fact succeeded,” is needed as a counterweight to Ahad Ha-Am’s own view of the movement as “an unsuccessful experiment.”

VIII. HASIDISM, THE LAND OF ISRAEL, AND ZIONISM

Hasidism's attitude toward the Land of Israel has been extensively considered in the historical literature. Books by Samuel Abba Horodezky, Simon Federbush, Isaac Raphael, and Isaac Alfasi—descendants of Hasidic families who became active Zionists—manifest a clear tendency to portray Hasidism as being enthusiastic about the Zionist idea.¹ The opposite perspective, however, characterizes the memoir literature and academic studies, which depict a Hasidism that is hostile to the Zionist idea and carries the banner of the struggle against it. That tendency is evident in the writings of important Zionist activists and scholars including Shemaryahu Levin and Isaac Greenbaum.² We can say that the Hasidic movement had no single, uniform attitude toward the Land of Israel and Zionism—not with regard to the religious obligation to settle there, and not with regard to the broader idea of the Land's sanctity and its status as a focus of the Hasidic doctrine of redemption.

Hasidism was dominant in Galicia, Congress Poland, Northeastern Hungary, Transylvania, Bukovina, Ukraine, and in limited parts of White Russia. Each Hasidic court was, in effect, an ordered subculture, and the Hasidic leadership comprised an array of admorim who acted independently of one another. Unlike the haredi leadership in Russia,

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- 1 I. Rafael, *Hasidism and the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem: Eretz Yisra'el, 1940); Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*. In his doctoral dissertation, Isaac Alfasi cites numerous anti-Land-of-Israel and anti-Zionist Hasidic sources; see I. Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, doctoral dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 1979. He shows there that S. A. Horodezky overstates his account of Hasidism as supporting Zionism (*ibid.*, p. 2, n. 3). See also S. Federbush, ed., *Hasidism and Zion* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook and Moriah, 1963). Every participant in that anthology gleans findings from the teachings of Hasidic leaders about the Land of Israel, but none offers a hint of the intense opposition to aliyah and to Zionism within Hasidic society over the course of many generations. In his introductory article to the collection, Federbush states that "it was only natural since Hasidism, too, was grounded from the outset on a belief in redemption and the anticipation of the return to Zion." However, his statements are not based on a critical examination of the sources (*ibid.*, 9–10). On the scholarly literature that has robbed the matter see *ibid.*, 10, n. 1.
 - 2 Letter from Shemaryahu Levin to Aryeh Leib Motzkin, 26 September 1895, in Levin, *Letters*, 12; I. Greenbaum, "The Zionist Organization," in *Encyclopedia of the Diaspora: Warsaw 1* (Tel Aviv: Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora, 1953), 362; A. Weiss, "The Struggle between Zionists and Their Opponents, Seen through the Lens of One City, Lvov," in *Zionism and Jewish Opponents*, ed. Avni and Shimoni, 250; see also, in a similar vein, J. Goldstein, "The Beginnings of the Zionist Movement in Congress Poland," *Polin* V (1990), especially 115, 118.

therefore, the Hasidic leaders were never able to unite on a common position statement regarding Zionism.³ There was no consistency among the Hasidic dynasties or even within local Hasidic communities concerning the issue.

The varied positions regarding the Land of Israel were already evident in the context of the aliyah (immigration to Israel) that took place during the eighteenth century. The Hasidic aliyah of 1777, led by Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and Rabbi Abraham Kalisker, preceded the aliyah of the Perushim (the Mitnagdim who settled in the Land of Israel). It was an out-of-the-ordinary event, for it did not provoke additional waves of immigration, nor did it lay an ideological basis for Hasidic aliyah analogous to that set in place by the aliyah of the Mitnagdim. Given that, it is hardly surprising that the leadership of the Ashkenazi community in the Land of Israel was controlled by the Mitnagdim until World War I. Nor is there any doubt that some Hasidim maintained a hostile stance toward aliyah even before the spread of Zionism, which was not paralleled among the Mitnagdim of Eastern Europe.⁴ Moreover, Hasidic symbolism contains the roots of the idea that the physical Land of Israel is inferior to the spiritual Land of Israel. The *zaddiq* (Hasidic rebbe) and his study hall are the symbolic embodiment of the Land of Israel and Jerusalem.⁵

Hasidic pronouncements about Zionism, both pro and con, are more far-reaching than those of the Mitnagdic world, and yet close examination shows that the statements are typical haredi pronouncements, having no distinctively Hasidic content.⁶ For example, traditional Judaism could generally accept the idea of settling the Land. What it could not abide was the concept of a national identity displacing traditional Jewish identity, or the identification of the settlement effort with messianic redemption.⁷ As was the case with other ultra-Ortho-

3 I disagree with Goldstein's generalization that all of Polish Hasidism was opposed to *Hibbat Ziyon* and that Zionism therefore did not gain traction in Poland; Goldstein, "The Beginnings of the Zionist Movement in Congress Poland," 115.

4 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 9–12.

5 Ibid.

6 Later, things changed, and Mendel Piekarz argues that the opposition to Zionism of the admor of Perzava was grounded in distinctively Hasidic terms. See M. Piekarz, "Religious Spiritualism against Zionist and Elitist Determinism," in *Hasidim in Poland*, eds. I. Bartal, R. Elior and C. Shmeruk (Jerusalem, 1994).

7 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 71.

dox streams, the negative attitude of some Hasidic dynasties toward Zionism was partly motivated by their extreme opposition to modernity. They were the heralds of ultra-Orthodoxy in Galicia and Poland, and brought about its expansion into Hungary.⁸ Yet one could also find within Hasidism—even among the ranks of the *admorim*—some enthusiastic proponents of the Jewish national awakening from its very inception. During the 1880s, *Hovevei Ziyon* groups comprising primarily Hasidim were established throughout Russia, Poland, Galicia, and Romania.⁹ They were covertly or overtly supported by *admorim* such as Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Schneerson, Rabbi Isaac Friedman, Rabbi David Moses Friedman, Rabbi Abraham Bornstein, and Rabbi Hayyim Israel Morgenstern. In contrast to these figures, one can note the objections to Zionism within the dynasties of Sanz, Belz, Gur, and Alexander and within the principal Chabad faction of Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson. Both sides included representatives of important and influential dynasties in Eastern and Central Europe. The lines of opposition to Zionism were drawn more sharply around the turn of the century; after 1900 or so, no important Hasidic leader took a stand in favor of Zionism, nor did any *Mitnagdic* leader.

Even if numerous individual Hasidim were active in *Hovevei Ziyon* groups and, later, in branches of the Zionist organization, it was the views of the *admorim* that, for the most part, guided the Hasidic public. The survey that follows will consider the position of the *admorim*, for it was they who led their communities and charted their courses.

Hasidism at the Time of *Hibbat Ziyon*

*Support for *Hibbat Ziyon* in Russia and Romania*

The leadership of *Hibbat Ziyon* was well aware of the importance of persuading the Hasidic *admorim* to support the movement, for their support would attract the masses of Jews in Eastern Europe. A concentrated effort in that direction was mounted in 1887 by Meir Dizengoff and Menahem Ussishkin, with the support of Mohilever. They sought to enlist in their cause Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Schneerson, the important

8 Ibid., 17–19. On conservative attitudes within Hasidism, see Piekarz, “Religious Spiritualism,” 280.

9 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 22–23. On the participation of Chabad in the Zionist organization in Polteva, see Z. Shimshi, *Memoirs* (Jerusalem: Mass, 1938).

Russian admor, and Rabbi Isaac Friedman, the leading Romanian admor of the Ruzhin dynasty.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Schneerson, grandson of the *Zemah Zedeq*, was the leader of the important faction of the Chabad dynasty that did not accept the leadership of the admor of Lubavitch, Rabbi Samuel Schneerson (1834–1882), and set its own course. At a meeting with Ussishkin in August 1887, the admor expressed support for the *Hovevei Ziiyyon* initiative,¹⁰ declaring that the enterprise promoted Jewish unity.¹¹ Ussishkin, to be sure, pledged that the movement would restore “the young people ... to their origins,”¹² but in his conversation with the admor, it became clear that the movement was a pluralistic one in which every member could find what he wanted—for some, the commandment to settle the Land of Israel, for others, nationalism, and for still others, philanthropy. The other Chabad stream, led by Rabbi Samuel Schneerson and, later, by his son, Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson, took a strongly anti-Zionist stand.¹³ Rabbi Samuel Schneerson, son of the *Zemah Zedeq* and uncle of Shlomo Zalman Schneerson, based his position on the secularism of the Biluim, for he had previously considered immigrating to the Land of Israel with a hundred thousand of his followers if conditions for Jews in Russia did not improve.¹⁴

Rabbi Isaac Friedman showed a certain degree of support for immigrating to the Land of Israel and settling there, albeit a support complicated by various other considerations.¹⁵ When approached by Dr. Karpel Lippe of Iasi, one of the leading benefactors of Romanian aliyah

10 Letter from Ussishkin to Kalmanson, November 1887, in Laskov, *Sources* 5, document 1092, 398–399; letter from Dizengoff to Ussishkin, January 1888, in *ibid.*, 6, document 1138, 21–22. See also *ibid.*, 5, 251, 256–257, 327–328. On efforts to persuade the admor of Kapost to join the *Maḥaziqei Hadat* organization that Jacob Lifschitz attempted to establish in 1893, see Lifschitz, *Sustainers of the Religion*, 41.

11 Druyanow, *Sources* 2, 360, n. 4.

12 *Ibid.*, 359.

13 I considered the position of Shalom Dov Ber Shneersohn extensively in my book *Religion and Zionism*, 324–330.

14 On the position of Rabbi Samuel (Maharash), see J. L. Shazar, “The Longing for Redemption and the Idea of Aliyah in Hasidism,” in *Sefer ha-besht*, ed. Y. L. Maimon (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1960), 105; Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, 44. Some claim that the admor was speaking of 100,000 families; see *Biography of Maharash*, 184.

15 Benjamin Dienstag maintains that within the Ruzhin dynasty, there was a tradition of support for settling in the Land of Israel. See B. Dienstag, *Titten emet le-ya`aqov* (New York: Hadar, 1957), 95; Laskov, *Sources* 6, document 1138, 280–292; letter from Dizengoff to Ussishkin, 17 Tevet 5658 [11 January 1898], in Laskov, *Sources* 6, document 1138, 21–23 (including letters to Mohilever from Pinhas Ganis and the admor of Buhusi); Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 32–33.

during the early 1880s, he responded that it was necessary to consult with an agricultural expert, with someone informed about political considerations, and with a rabbi from the Old Yishuv in order to determine whether immigration would invade the Old Yishuv's turf. According to Dr. Lippe, Friedman spoke first with people from the Old Yishuv, who expressed opposition.¹⁶ Even earlier, it seems, representatives of Hovevei Ziyon in Romania had asked him to support their initiative, and he had replied with reservations. He later attributed his position to concern about the Jews of Romania and recommended that they devote themselves to agricultural work and not indulge in unrealistic ideas.¹⁷ In March 1887, the Doresh Ziyon organization was founded in Iasi "to support Romanian Jews wanting to immigrate to the Land of Israel and work the land there,"¹⁸ and the group again asked the admor to instruct his followers to support it. In his first response, in May 1887, Friedman disregarded the principle issue, indirectly expressing his sympathy for their interests by stating that he favored etrogim from the Land of Israel. After the group approached him a second time, he considered the practical question and explained that the Land of Israel could not provide a solution for the difficulties faced by the masses of Romanian Jews. That said, he did not express opposition in principle to the idea of settlement, but he believed it necessary to secure a charter from the Turkish government as a condition of immigration to the Land. Without that sort of authorization, he believed, the bearers of the Zionist idea were leading the masses astray.

Friedman was approached yet again in December 1887 by Ussishkin and Dizengoff, who sent him an emissary bearing a letter from Rabbi Mohilever asking him to support the settlements. The admor was concerned that his followers would perceive that support as implying support as well for the Hovevei Ziyon mass immigration movement and that they would hasten to immigrate, only to be disappointed by the difficulties they would encounter.¹⁹ Later, Rabbi Jacob Friedman of Husyatin, Rabbi Friedman's son, would claim that his father had sup-

16 K. Lippe, "Writers' Pen," *Ha-maggid* 27 (1883): 30, 244.

17 Y. Alfasi, ed., "Isaac Friedman of Buhusi," in *Encyclopedia of Hasidism: Personalities 2* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2001), 355–359; Alfasi, *Hasidim and the National Awakening*, 74. See also the letter from Mordecai Segel (secretary to the admor of Buhusi) to the Doresh Ziyon organization in Iasi, 1887, in Laskov, *Sources* 6, 275–276.

18 I. Klausner, *Hibbat Ziyon in Romania* (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1958), 263–264.

19 Letter from Dizengoff to Ussishkin, January 1888, in Laskov, *Sources* 6, 21–23.

ported the establishment of Rosh Pina but that in response to reports from the Land of Israel that the settlers were rejecting religious observance he had conditioned his support on their adhering to a halakhic way of life, and he thereafter had reservations about the project.²⁰ It is likely that it was the controversy over the Biluim that led him to adopt this position. Later evidence suggests that he took a more favorable view of Zionism on the eve of political Zionism's appearance.²¹

Shlomo Zalman Schneerson generally expressed support for Hovevei Ziyon's efforts but did not do much on their behalf, and his followers were uncertain of his position.²² Rabbi Friedman supported settlement but had reservations about any presumption to solve the existential problems of European Jews. He stressed the need for some sort of international charter as a precondition to encouraging immigration of Jews to the Land of Israel, and did so even before Herzl raised a similar demand.

Support for Hibbat Ziyon in Poland

Mohilever's efforts to attract the Polish admorim ran into numerous obstacles. That was the case, for example, when he approached Rabbi Judah Leib Eiger of Lublin (1816–1888) and Rabbi Gershon Hanokh Henikh Leiner of Radzyn.²³ Atypical in their positive attitude toward Hibbat Ziyon were the admorim Rabbi Hayyim Israel Morgenstern of Pulawy-Kotsk (the grandson of the founder of Kotsker Hasidism, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Morgenstern) and Rabbi Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew, son-in-law of Rabbi Menahem Mendel. Their positions may be attributable to attitudes within the Kotsk dynasty, but they may well have been exceptional even within the dynasty itself. Several students of Hasidism have sought to find pro-Land-of-Israel (though not nationalist) tendencies within the Kotsk dynasty, but they have not been able to make a persuasive case.²⁴

20 Ibid., 21; Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 32–33; Alfasi, "Isaac Friedman of Buhusi," *Encyclopedia of Hasidism: Personalities* [*Inziqlopediyah la-ḥasidut: ishim*], 2 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2001), 358.

21 Klausner, *Hibbat Ziyon in Romania*, 300.

22 Letter from the *maggid* Hayyim Zundel Maccabee to Ussishkin, summer 1888, in Druyanow, *Sources* 2, 568–570.

23 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, 47–48.

24 I. Rafael, "Rabbi Hayyim Israel of Pulawy— A Zionist Admor," *Shragai* 1 (1981): 40–50. It is a fact that Rabbi Hayyim Israel Morgenstern did not publish his pamphlet even after receiving

The third admor in the Kotsk dynasty, Morgenstern had written his Zionist tract *Shalom yerushalayim* in 1886, but the reactions to it suggest that he published it in 1891, evidently in the context of a renewed wave of immigration to the Land of Israel and a temporary moderation in the Ottoman policy regarding the acquisition by Eastern European Jews of real estate there. In a second introduction to his book, written that year, he states explicitly that the Ottoman willingness to allow Russian Jews to acquire property in the Land of Israel and the wave of immigration in 1890–1891 suggest that the time is one of “heavenly arousal.”²⁵ His arguments lack typically Hasidic qualities. He explains in the introductions that he came to his Zionist ideas independently and spontaneously and that he wants to join in the acquisition of property in the Land of Israel in order to establish a Hasidic settlement.²⁶

There is no doubt that Morgenstern’s Zionist vision far exceeded that of any other Hasidic voice. He speaks of contemporary settlement of the Land of Israel as part of the messianic vision and recognizes that “the hearts of the Hasidim and the *zaddiqim* stand at a distance.” He does not criticize those who express reservations, for there has been no explicit sign that the redemption is at hand, but he himself has a profound sense that contemporary settlement of the Land is “the opening of hope [*petah tiqvah*] for the growth of salvation that will come bit by bit, to return to it in mercy until comprehensive salvation comes to all Israel, speedily and in our days, Amen.”²⁷ To be sure, Morgenstern expressed doubts regarding the nature of a movement led by people who did not observe the commandments, but in response to those concerns, he made the revolutionary pronouncement that God chooses to bring salvation with the help of non-observant Jews:

approbations for it. See also Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 23–24. Morgenstern argued that Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa had already stated that if the Land of Israel passed into Jewish possession, it would be the beginning of the redemption; H. I. Morgenstern, *The Peace of Jerusalem* (Pietrikow, 1925), 7–8.

25 Ibid., 3.

26 Ibid., *First Introduction* (evidently written in 1886) and *Second Introduction* (evidently 1890–1891), 3–4; M. Piekarz, “The Internal Point in the Hasidism of Gur and Alexander,” in *Studies in Kabbalah Jewish Philosophy and Ethical and Philosophical Literature: Presented to Isaiah Tishbi on His Seventy-fifth Birthday*, ed. J. Dan and J. Hacker (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 630, n. 37.

27 Morgenstern, *Shalom yerushalayim*, 4. On Morgenstern’s sense regarding bringing about the redemption through the settlement of the Land of Israel, see *ibid.*, 5, 13, 16.

Even though the activists are not so righteous, we have already learned that God sometimes takes pleasure more in simple Jews than in those who are entirely righteous.²⁸

That is a far-reaching claim, having no parallel in the thought of Religious Zionism. To it he added a further original claim, arguing that all who dwell in the Land of Israel are righteous even if they do not appear to be so, for if they were not, the Land would eject them.²⁹ He goes on to argue that anyone living in the Land of Israel is under God's direct providence, and he adds the remarkable statement that those who reside in the Land of Israel but are supported by contributions from the Diaspora fulfill no commandment by residing there "and their dwelling in the Land of Israel is worthless."³⁰ He cites Rabbi Simḥah Bunim of Peshischa, a leader of Polish Hasidism following the death of the Seer of Lublin, who said that if Montefiore succeeded in acquiring the Land of Israel from the Ottomans, "salvation is very near at hand."³¹

Rabbi Israel Joshua Trunk of Kutno, a senior Polish rabbi already mentioned for his support of Hovevei Ziyon, reacted excitedly to the rebbe of Pulawy. He cited the "spirit of redemption" or the "divine arousal" prevalent in his time, represented by the eagerness of Jews who were not particularly "kosher" (that is, observant) to fulfill the commandment to settle the Land: "And especially now, when we see this great desire among lesser people, middling people, and righteous people, it is almost certain that the spirit of redemption is aglow."³² He was thereby referring to Morgenstern's earlier statement that one must accept the fact that those redeeming the Land now included people who did not observe the commandments, and one should not seek to ascertain God's intentions in that regard. These revolutionary ideas about the ways of divine providence in the world overturn the widespread haredi concerns about the redemption seeming to be associated with secularism. The secularists who become involved with redemption gain higher standing as the profane is joined to the holy.

28 Ibid., 7.

29 Ibid., 8.

30 Ibid., 37. In his practical summation, however, he spoke leniently of those who did not earn a living in the Land and said that they, too, fulfilled a commandment, for in the Land of Israel "all pales before the holiness" (ibid., 49–50).

31 Ibid., 7.

32 Trunk, *Yeshu`ot malko*, Responsa *Yoreh de`ah*, sec. 66, 48.

Also concurring with the view of the rebbe of Pulawy was the admor Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew. He determined that the commandment to settle the Land of Israel involved primarily “drawing one’s livelihood within the Land of Israel itself and having no need for [support from] the Diaspora.”³³ He declared his intention to acquire real estate holdings within the Land of Israel.

The admor of Gur, Rabbi Judah Leib Alter, the Sefat Emet (1847–1905), had reservations about Morgenstern’s ideas. The Gur dynasty was the largest in Polish Hasidism, and Rabbi Judah Leib Alter, author of the biblical commentary *Sefat emet*, was the son of its founder, Rabbi Isaac Meir Alter, and held considerable sway over Polish Jews. He hesitated to endorse Morgenstern’s argument that if a Jew immigrated to the Land of Israel and undertook to fulfill the commandments associated with the Land, his residing in the Land would be considered to be the fulfillment of a commandment, as he was concerned that the immigrants would not live up to the condition.

He did not share Morgenstern’s premise that immigrants would be moved by the Land’s sanctity to submit to the commandments even if they had failed to observe them while in the Diaspora. He took the view that the immigration was driven by ulterior motives, such as the hope of making a better living than was available in Europe, and that there was reason to believe that the immigrants would associate themselves with the “the wicked, dissolute groups that have spread in the Land of Israel and in Jerusalem.”³⁴ Alter also doubted the capacity of the Land to support the immigrants and the ability of the immigrants to change conditions in the Land. He therefore ruled that “we cannot justify permitting immigration to the Land of Israel.”³⁵ In another letter, he reiterated that position and said that the immigrants were “dissolute people who treated many matters lightly; how can we say that they will change their ways?”³⁶

Morgenstern’s initiative became known within the Hasidic leadership in Poland even before it was printed, and as we have shown, it elicited sharp opposition,³⁷ even being cited as the cause of several tragedies

33 A. Bornstein, *Avnei nezer* (Tel Aviv, 1964), *Yoreh de`ah* 2, sec. 455.

34 A. Isaac, ed., *Novellae of Rabbi Isaac Meir* (Bilguriya, 1913), 61–62. The letter is quoted as well in Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, 267–268.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Morgenstern’s statements were circulated in manuscript form before being printed; *ibid.*, 52.

that befell his family.³⁸ His son, Rabbi Isaac Zelig of Sokolow, was less supportive of Zionism than was his father and maintained that after Herzl's appearance, his father recanted.³⁹

The admor Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew, preeminent student of Rabbi Isaac Meir Alter of Gur and the Admor Hanokh Henikh of Alexander, expressed his views in a series of responsa written in 1891 in which he supported the establishment of the Odessa Committee and the expansion of immigration to the Land of Israel.⁴⁰ He was distinctive in that he transferred the issue to the realm of halakhah, using responsa as the literary medium for dealing with it. Most others in the traditional camp who considered the question did so in the context of homiletical discourses. Because a halakhic discussion calls for a practical resolution, it will consider the details of the subject at hand with greater precision and formulate the matter more precisely.

Bornstein held that the commandment to settle the Land of Israel was in force at that time, and it was fulfilled more properly by developing the Land, not merely residing there:

How great is the commandment to purchase fields in the Land of Israel, so that one can support oneself through income earned in the Land of Israel. In that way, the commandment is carried out in full.⁴¹

He thereby invalidated the justification for the existence of the Old Yishuv:

The essence of the commandment to reside in the Land of Israel is to earn a living from the Land, but if funds are sent to him from the Diaspora as a gift from the people in the Diaspora ... that does not constitute total fulfillment of residing in the Land of Israel.⁴²

38 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, *ibid*; Piekarz, "The Internal Point," 630–631, 642. It appears that Morgenstern's three sons urged their father to give up his support for Zionism; see Rafael, "Rabbi Hayyim Israel of Pulawy," 49.

39 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 28; Rafael, "Rabbi Hayyim Israel of Pulawy," 49–50. Rafael also cites sources that contradict the admor of Sokolow.

40 Bornstein, *Avnei nezer*, sec. 454.

41 *Ibid.*, 284 (sec. 454).

42 *Ibid.*, 290.

Bornstein also called on community officials to work to secure an international charter for the settlement of the Land. Consistent with these positions, he sent his son and son-in-law to acquire real estate in the Land of Israel for the purpose of establishing a “city of God-fearing men.” That mission did not succeed, partly because the Sultan, in 1891, renewed his ban on Jews acquiring property in the Land of Israel.⁴³

While endorsing the settlement enterprise in principle, the admor of Sochaczew also warned against encouraging non-observant Jews to immigrate to the Land of Israel. His statements include no nationalist elements, and he did not recognize the reality of the secularist involvement in contemporary settlement efforts. Once the secularism of the both the settlers and the activists in the Diaspora became clear, Bornstein’s enthusiasm for the Zionist endeavor diminished.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the conceptual premises he laid down continued to resonate in his family for several generations, and they account for the substantial involvement of the Sochaczew dynasty in the Zionist enterprise.

It was in 1891 that the rebbe of Pulawy and the admor of Sochaczew publicly declared their support for Hovevei Ziyon, suggesting an inclination on the part of the traditional rabbinic leadership to support the Zionist endeavor when it was showing signs of success. One year earlier, the Odessa Committee had been established under the authority of the Russian government, and dozens of settlement associations were being established in Eastern Europe. It is hard to avoid the impression that success was understood in these circles as a sign of divine approval, for they considered everything that takes place to be the result of divine providence.

It is interesting to note the support for Hovevei Ziyon by Rabbi Feigenbaum, the head of the Jewish court in Warsaw and a relative of two leading Polish admorim, Isaac Meir Alter of Gur and Hanokh Henikh of Alexander. Feigenbaum was the outstanding supporter of Hovevei Ziyon in the Warsaw community, standing with them as early as the

43 Z. Y. Halevi Mamlook, ed., *Sefer abir ha-ro`im*, 2 (Pietrikow: Palman, 1938), article 201, 106.

44 The Sochaczew Rebbe’s positions are described by his son, Rabbi Israel, who himself was a strong opponent of the Zionist idea but changed his view, evidently after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration; M. Z. Fogel, *Sefer zimrat ha-arez* (Jerusalem, 1941), 7. (The letter was written by Joseph Sternberg, Rabbi Israel’s secretary, in the summer of 1931 and was directed to Rabbi Zalman Halprin.) See also Dienstag, *Titten emet le-ya`aqov*, 78, 98; Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 35–36.

1880s in the face of all their attackers.⁴⁵ He supported them actively, participating in meetings, acquiring real estate in the Land of Israel, and engaging in prolonged polemics with their opponents. He also supported the Menuḥah ve-Naḥalah association, which was established in 1889 and founded the settlement of Rehovot. His son recounted that Feigenbaum was alone within the leadership of the traditional community in Warsaw in extending his hand to the Zionist movement.⁴⁶ He made sure to drink wine from the Land of Israel, favored books written in Jerusalem, and even accepted the doctrine of redemption in stages advanced by Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, who believed that “before the coming of the Messiah, Israel will be on its Land.”⁴⁷ Feigenbaum took a firm and extraordinary position regarding the participation of secularists in the movement, arguing that “if the pious participated with them, everything would certainly be conducted in accordance with the Torah.”⁴⁸ In effect, he blamed the observant Jews for the secularization of the Zionist movement.

Under the influence of the position taken by the admor of Gur, Polish Jews generally tended to oppose Zionism even during the Hovevei Ziyon period. With the rise of the Zionist Organization, the admor was joined by the admorim of Pulawy and Sochaczew, and their opposition determined the anti-Zionist stance of most Polish Jews at least until World War I and, to a considerable degree, even afterwards.

Galicja—Opposition from Mahziquei ha-Dat and Ahavat Ziyon

Mahziquei ha-Dat

In contrast to the supportive attitude toward the Land of Israel of their Polish counterparts,⁴⁹ the admorim in Galicja had opposed, since the early nineteenth century, all innovative initiatives connected with the Land of Israel.⁵⁰ The difference can be explained on the basis of the differing degrees to which traditional society felt threatened by exposure to modernity. The exposure and sense of threat were greater in Galicja

45 I. Feigenbaum, *Or penei yizḥaq* (Jerusalem, 1992), 79.

46 I. Feigenbaum, *Or penei yizḥaq* (Warsaw, 1939), 30.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Statements by Rabbi Simḥah Bunim of Peshischa, Rabbi Abraham Tschekhnov, Rabbi Shlomo Leib of Lentsche, and Rabbi Meir Alter of Gur; Dienstag, *Titten emet le-ya`aqov*, 91–92, 95.

50 Ibid., 61–64.

than in Poland, and traditionalists in Galicia therefore recoiled from anything new. That eventually included the spirit of Jewish nationalism, regarded as a manifestation of modernity.

In 1879, the *Maḥizzei ha-Dat* organization was founded in Galicia at the initiative of the Admor Rabbi Joshua Rokeach of Belz and Rabbi Simeon Sofer of Krakow. The organization was able to enlist in its ranks more than two hundred communities, prominent rabbis, and the *admorim* of Belz, Vishnevets, Sadigura, and Dzykow.⁵¹ It was established to combat the *Haskalah* and the Galician *maskilim*, who had already organized as *Shomer Yisrael* and were influencing important communities through that group.⁵² The fierce struggle between *maskilim* and traditionalists for control of the Galician communities and representation of the Jewish public in the Austrian parliament preceded by fifteen years the developments that brought about the firm anti-Zionist stance on the part of *haredim* in Russia and Poland but followed by some ten years the corresponding struggle in Hungary. During the course of the struggle, Hasidim and *Mitnagdim* made common cause against the forces that threatened both of them.

Rabbi Simeon Sofer, a founder of *Maḥizzei ha-Dat*, had also initiated, early in 1883, the establishment of a *Hovevei Ziyon* group in Krakow.⁵³ This unusual initiative on the part of Rabbi Sofer—a prominent leader of Orthodoxy in its early stages in Eastern Europe—demonstrates the expectations entertained at first by the Galician *haredim*, who hoped that the movement to settle the Land of Israel might hold back the penetration of modernity and assimilation.⁵⁴ It appears that only toward the end of the decade did the Galician Hasidim begin to draw connections between the *Haskalah* and *Hibbat Ziyon* and to express reservations about the movement, and those reservations did not become firm until 1892. In the Eastern Galician community of Borislav, a *Hovevei Ziyon* group was established that consisted of Hasidim and *maskilim*

51 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 68–69.

52 M. Bosk, “The Jews of Krakow during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Krakow: A Center of Jewish Life*, ed. A. Bauminger, M. Bosk, and N. Michael Gelber (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1959), 104–106; letter of Simeon Sofer to the leaders of the communities in Galicia (1878) and letter of Joshua Rokeach of Belz to Simeon Sofer (1879), in S. Sofer, *Iggerot soferim* (Vienna: Schlesinger, 1928), 70–72, 75; Salmon, “The Struggle,” 349 et seq. On the support of *Maḥizzei ha-Dat* for *Hibbat Ziyon* in 1883, see Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 28.

53 J. H. Birnbaum, “Krakow,” *Ha-maggid* 27, no. 3 (1883): 20–21.

54 Bosk, “The Jews of Krakow,” 106–107.

alike. The former may have hoped that the latter would repent once they became involved in settling the Land. However, at the end of the 1880s, when word came from the Land of Israel that the settlers were not rigorously observing the commandments, the admorim decreed that “we must not support sinners” and “must not join with the wicked,” and the group in Borislav was disbanded.⁵⁵ The confrontation in Galicia over Hovevei Ziyon thus took place at the same time as the corresponding confrontation in Russia following the polemics over the Biluim and the sabbatical year.⁵⁶

The principal arguments raised by Galician haredim against settlement in the Land of Israel pertained to the Haskalah values that the nationalist settlement movement had absorbed. Toward the end of the 1880s, these arguments were complemented by doubts about the Zionist program’s chances of succeeding, given the increasing hostility of the Ottoman authorities, and even by concerns about the competence of the movement’s leaders.

The late 1880s saw a growing tendency to step back from the settlement enterprise, apparently on account of the controversy already mentioned over the Biluim and the matter of the sabbatical year. It was reported that Aaron Perlow of Koidanov told his Hasidim that “anyone who contributes to Hovevei Ziyon will lose the reward in the world to come that he is entitled to for all the charitable acts he has performed and will perform throughout his life.”⁵⁷ It should be emphasized that such statements, although becoming more frequent at the end of the 1880s, had not yet determined the stance of the masses of Hasidim who were active at the time in Hovevei Ziyon. What is evident, however, is the continuing erosion of their support. That trend characterized the arguments of the various streams of haredim, who maintained, primarily, that because those who wanted to rebuild the Land of Israel came from non-observant circles, their desires would not be fulfilled. By their very nature, redemption and the Holy Land could not be associated with casting off the yoke of the commandments. Any such association was contrary to divine will and could not flourish: “Any assembly that is not

55 Y. E. H., “Letters from Galicia,” *Ha-maggid* 34, no. 35 (1890): 285. According to Alfasi, the reference is to the admor of Belz.

56 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 28.

57 Letter from Hayyim Zundel Maccabee to Ussishkin, in Druyanow, *Sources* 2, document 819, 570; Laskov, *Sources* 6, document 1231, 188–189.

for the sake of Heaven cannot endure.”⁵⁸ The deliberations conducted by Mahizzei ha-Dat during 1892 removed any doubt about where they stood: in the present circumstances, “it is better to dwell on foreign land in America than to hasten the End by dwelling in a colony [settlement] in the Holy Land that does not please the pure-minded.”⁵⁹

Galician Jews struggled with the issue of Zionism, and the subject of settling the Land of Israel never left the communal agenda during the final two decades of the nineteenth century. The admorim grappled with the question of how to avoid giving up all enthusiasm for settling the Land while steering clear of any commitment to joint efforts with people who renounced the commandments. One can therefore find in the Galicia of that time Zionist groups that sought to operate independently, with no ties to the international organizations. An example is Degel Yehuda of Lvov, established in the summer of 1893.⁶⁰ Until 1895, however, one could still hear calls for joint efforts by Hasidim and maskilim in matters related to the national awakening. During those years, it was widely believed among Galician Jewry that it was possible to take an integrative position that would combine the strengths of both movements in a joint struggle against assimilation. Hasidism would “maintain our purity, our values, and all the delights of our religion,” while Haskalah would bring to nationalism “the wisdom that is the glory of those who adhere to it and brings happiness to those who possess it.”⁶¹

Ahavat Ziyon

The Ahavat Ziyon organization was founded in December 1896 in Tarnow and eventually had branches throughout Galicia and Bukovina. It was headed by Hasidic figures such as Rabbis Asher Isaiah Horowitz (d. 1934) of the Ropczyce-Dzikov dynasty, the rabbi in Rymanow and Krakow; Rabbi Feiwei Shreier (1819–1898), the rabbi in Bohorodczany; Rabbi Aaron Marcus of Krakow (1843–1916); and Rabbi Zechariah Mendel Abraham of Sieniawa.⁶² The organization’s greatest achievement was its enlistment of Rabbi David Moses Friedman, one of the leading

58 A. Steinberg, *The Rabbis’ Opinion* (Warsaw, 1902), 84; see also *ibid.*, 73.

59 S. Shapira, “To the Settlement in the Land of Israel,” *Qol mahizzei ha-dat* (1892): 17, 3–5 and publisher’s notes.

60 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 28–29.

61 I. Even, “Hasidism and Assimilation,” *Ha-maggid he-hadash* 4, no. 26 (1895): 207.

62 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 29.

Galician admorim, and Rabbi Isaac Schmelkes of Lvov.⁶³ Emblazoned on the organization's banner was the commitment to establish settlements in the Land of Israel based on "the Talmud and the *Shulhan arukh*."⁶⁴

Rabbi Ezekiel Schraga Halberstam (1813–1899) of Sieniawa, head of the Sanz dynasty and the eldest admor of the generation, attacked the Ahavat Ziyon association and called for its disbanding. That demand, pressed even prior to the First Zionist Congress in Basel, grew out of his opposition to the secular character of the settlements in the Land of Israel. Halberstam utterly rejected Mohilever's position in an article included in the book *Shivat ziyon* favoring non-observant residents of the Land of Israel over fully observant Diaspora residents. He spoke out sharply against the members of the Hibbat movement: "... they are full of air in their efforts to mislead Israel." He likewise argued that the immigrants to the Land of Israel "have not even a glimmer of fear of Heaven, and some of them violate the Sabbath publicly."⁶⁵

He added that funds sent to benefit settlement in the Land were at the expense of the Old Yishuv, and that those who spoke well of the Zionists meant only "to mislead people into traveling to the Land of Israel and living as they see fit, as do the heads of the colony, who violate the Sabbath publicly."⁶⁶ He likewise blamed Zionism for the Turkish Sultan's change in policy that prevented Jews from entering the Land.⁶⁷

The rivalries between the Sanz court and the Sadigura court doubtlessly had a bearing on their differing attitudes toward Zionism. The greatest supporter of Zionism in Galicia was Rabbi David Moses Friedman, and the greatest opponent was Ezekiel Schraga Halberstam, the rebbe of Sieniawa (son of the rebbe of Sanz). Sanz and Sadigura were key Hasidic dynasties in this part of Eastern Europe. Their difference on the question of the Land of Israel was characteristic of Hasidim. In Lithuania, even before the leadership of the traditional commu-

63 Dienstag, *Titten emet le-ya`aqov*, 86.

64 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 29.

65 N. M. Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia, 1875–1918* 2 (Jerusalem: Mass, 1958), 337–339, n. 16. The statements are cited as well in Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 29. Alfasi claims that the statements in *Shivat ziyon* on which the admor comments were not, in fact, in the book, but he is mistaken. The admor correctly quoted Mohilever and, from the admor's perspective, Mohilever's comments stray far from any haredi norms.

66 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, 69.

67 Ibid., 70.

nity was firmly established, there never arose a situation in which one prominent leader publicly favored Zionism and another issued an open letter attacking it. The Hasidic public, however, was fragmented into sub-communities, and Hasidic leaders were not as committed to one another as the Lithuanian leaders were. The admor of Chortkov could thus speak out in praise of Zionism while the rebbe of Sanz argued against it.⁶⁸

Following the call issued by the rebbe of Sanz, many people left the Ahavat *Ziyyon* association.⁶⁹ The association continued to function, however, and, in 1898, it established the Maḥanayim settlement. It strove to operate independently of the Zionist Organization so as to hold on to its haredi supporters,⁷⁰ but once it lost most of its supporters it became a local organization within the Zionist Organization framework.⁷¹

After Herzl's rise to prominence, Maḥziqei ha-Dat began to raise practical objections, contending that the Basel program could never be carried out. In response to the First Zionist Congress, the periodical *Qol mahziqei ha-dat* already acknowledged that the Galician admorim and rabbis did not support political Zionism. As 1899 approached, the criticism began to mount in Galicia, just as it did in Russia.⁷² The newspapers showed sporadic interest in what was happening in Zionist circles, but that interest was accompanied by pessimistic assessments contending that the Turkish Sultan would never agree to the settlement of Jews in the Land of Israel, and, even if a charter were issued, no Jews would be ready to immigrate to the Land of Israel.

The Hasidic Stance toward Zionism in the Time of Herzl

Support with Reservations—The Admor of Chortkov

The Hasidic leader whose position was apparently most sympathetic to the Zionist idea was, as mentioned, Rabbi David Moses Friedman of Chortkov. Chortkov Hasidism, which was a part of the Ruzhin dynasty, wielded considerable influence throughout Galicia, Bukovina, and

68 Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia* 2, 343–345.

69 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, 71.

70 Ibid., 356–358.

71 Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia* 2, 332–377; S. Stein, *Maḥanayim: A Short-Lived Settlement* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1978); Alfasi, *Hasidism and the Return to Zion*, 30.

72 Ibid., 72.

Romania, and promoted settlement of the Land of Israel even before Herzl's appearance, making its admor a prime candidate for Herzl's attentions.⁷³

Acting as liaisons between Herzl and the admor of Chortkov were the rabbi of Botoșani, Leibush Mendel Landau (1862–1920),⁷⁴ and Aaron Marcus, a German maskil who became a Hasid and was close to Chortkov Hasidism.⁷⁵ In a letter to Herzl dated 6 May 1896, Marcus argued that the Chortkov court supported Zionism and raised the possibility of gaining the support for Zionism of three million Polish Hasidim.⁷⁶ Herzl replied two days later, thanking Marcus and welcoming the enlistment of the Hasidim in the Zionist cause, but emphasizing that there would be no theocratic regime in the Jewish state.⁷⁷ A letter from Herzl to one of the Galician Zionist leaders makes it clear that Herzl hoped to have Orthodox help in raising funds for the “National Fund” and that he recruited Marcus, with his ties to Polish Hasidism, to that end.⁷⁸

In December 1896, Herzl himself wrote to the admor of Chortkov, requesting a meeting with him and a preliminary meeting in Vienna with his son, Rabbi Israel Friedman of Chortkov. Herzl alluded to the difficulties that had kept him from meeting with the admor earlier and evidently hinted as well at his plans for potential cooperation between the Chortkov court and the Zionist organization.⁷⁹ Herzl sent the letter with Rabbi Leibush Mendel Landau, but it evidently never reached the admor. Some have suggested that Landau was concerned that direct contact between Herzl and the Chortkov court would alienate other

73 The rebbe of Chortkov worked on behalf of the settlement of the Land of Israel in the context of an intra-Jewish initiative shortly before Herzl's appearance. The initiative originated in the Land of Israel and was led by Meir Hayyim Beck of the Old Yishuv. See Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia* 2, 782, n. 9.

74 Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, 84. In his journal, Herzl confirms that it was Landau who suggested to him that he meet with the admor; see Herzl, *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, edited by Raphael Patai and translated from the German by Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl and Yoseloff, 1960), 1, 424 (6 January 1897).

75 I. Rafael, *Early and Later Personages* (Tel Aviv: Zioni, 1957), 381; Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia* 2, 782–783.

76 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 309 (8 May 1896); *ibid.*, n. 40.

77 *Ibid.*

78 *Ibid.*, 626, n. 112.

79 Letter from Herzl to the Admor David Moses Friedman, 28 December 1896, in Herzl, *Letters: From the Beginning of the Zionist Enterprise to the First Congress* (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1961), 184.

Hasidic dynasties from the Zionist Organization.⁸⁰ A more reasonable hypothesis is that Landau never delivered the letter because he knew of the admor's opposition to Zionism and the Jewish state and therefore doubted his mission would have any effect whatsoever. Yet another opinion is that the admor's assistant declined to accept the letter.⁸¹ On the other hand, we know that in his initial reaction to the Zionist Organization, the admor of Chortkov was not concerned about the participation of secularists in the movement. As he put it, "We Hasidim will bolster the internal structure, creating yeshivot that will disseminate Torah and piety, and they [the secularists] will tend to external affairs."⁸² His son, Rabbi Israel Friedman, likewise expressed support for the movement and was prepared to join in working within it on condition that it not impair haredi interests.⁸³ Later, Israel Friedman would join Agudat Yisrael.

Aaron Marcus, who set haredi support for Zionism as his principal goal,⁸⁴ persuaded Herzl to send him to Chortkov to receive the admor's approbation for a conference of rabbis to support the movement. Marcus arrived in January 1900, and the admor allowed him to direct a request to Benjamin Weiss, the chief rabbi of Chernovtsy, to promote a conference of rabbis that would support Oẓar ha-Hityashvut, the economic arm of the Zionist Organization.⁸⁵ Because a rabbinic conference in Vilna was imminent, the admor proposed that the matter be brought before it, hoping that Marcus could get Herzl to promise to meet the demands of the haredim. He assumed that if the rabbis of Russia and Galicia could be persuaded to favor the initiative, the support of traditional Jews would be ensured, even if the Hungarian rabbis opposed it.⁸⁶ When the Russian and Galician rabbis considered the matter, they

80 Ibid., note. See also Feller, "Herzl and the Rebbe of Chortkov," 289–292.

81 A. Feller, *ibid.*, 291.

82 Dienstag, *Titten emet le-ya`aqov*, 78, 96.

83 Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia* 2, 783. See also Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, 85–86. On Rabbi Israel Friedman's position, see the memoirs of Jacob Mazeh: "As far as Zionism is concerned, it is on its face something very precious, but they ruined it by public Sabbath desecration, may God help us, and eating non-kosher food, may God reserve and save us; that repels most Jews" (J. Mazeh, *Memoirs* [Tel Aviv: Yalkut, 1936], 3, 56).

84 Alfasi argues that Marcus's great desire to bring the Hasidim into the Zionist fold led him to give Herzl imprecise information about Hasidic support for Zionism; Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, 79–80.

85 Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia* 2, 784.

86 Ibid., 786. See also the letter from Rappoport, the admor of Chortkov's secretary, to Aaron Marcus, 1900, in Alfasi, *Hasidism and the National Awakening*, 277.

evidently requested that the Zionist executive committee clarify its position on non-observance of the commandments in the Land of Israel. When the questions went unanswered, Marcus bitterly wrote to Herzl that the Zionist leadership's disrespect for haredi Judaism "was now the established legacy of our young intelligentsia."⁸⁷ This harsh letter symbolized, in effect, the closing of the door on the last chance to convince the haredi leadership in Galicia and Poland to join in the Zionist enterprise. It also marked the end of Marcus's Zionist career.⁸⁸

Anti-Zionists: Mahziqei ha-Dat

The publication of Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* and the preparations for the First Zionist Congress resulted in increased pressure on haredi society to organize itself in opposition to Zionism. Leading the organizational effort were agents of the two central elements within haredi society, Hasidim and Mitnagdim: the admor of Lubavitch, Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson, and the "Black Office" in Kovno.

The "Black Office" was established in the 1890s as an anti-Zionist haredi organization.⁸⁹ It was directed by Jacob Lifschitz and backed by the rabbi of Kovno, Zvi Hirsch Rabinowitz—the son of Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor—and by Schneerson. In a public letter issued in July 1899, the Black Office determined that Zionism was more dangerous than any previous false messianic movement, for it meant to "uproot all the laws of the Torah and the commandments."⁹⁰

Possessed of an extreme anti-modern outlook, Schneerson was one of the most prominent Hasidic figures in Russia and one of the most important activists in organizing haredi Judaism. Alert to the needs of the public, he led Chabad during the difficult period from the 1890s to World War I and laid the foundation for its operations during the Soviet period. His concerns about the secular tendencies prevalent within the traditional public led him to his anti-Zionist stance. In a pastoral letter,

87 Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia* 2, 786–787.

88 Marcus's support for Zionism began when he worked together with Rabbi Simeon Sofer of Krakow to establish a Hovevei Ziyon group called Rosh Pina; see Bosk, "The Jews of Krakow," 106.

89 Salmon, "The Struggle," 349–363; Salmon, "The Book *Shivat ziyon* and Its Historical Background," in *Eshel be'er sheva* 2 (1980): 337–340. On the effort in 1893, see Lifschitz, *Sustainers of the Religion*, 41.

90 The letter was published by Duberosh Torsh under the name "*Setirat zeqinim*" ["Contradicting the Elders"], National Library L854, and republished in S. Z. Landau and J. Rabinowitz, *Or la-yesharim* (Warsaw, 1900), 50–52.

he shared with his followers his opinion that Zionism was a secularizing movement, something to be shunned by anyone concerned about his spiritual wellbeing. The opinions he expressed in that letter border on opposition to the Land of Israel and to anything associated in modern times with the commandment to settle the Land. He determined that “there is [now] no commandment [to settle the Land], not as a matter of biblical law and not as a matter of rabbinic enactment.” Accordingly,

the commandment to settle the Land is solely a matter of its sanctity ... on condition that [the settlers] be among those who carry out the Torah and the commandments punctiliously.

Because the Zionists detract from the sanctity of the Land, there is no commandment to settle it, and it is even permissible for those who live there to leave. Schneerson formulated the haredi stance to its full extent, utterly rejecting all the Religious Zionist arguments in favor of Zionism and calling for a war to the finish against it.

In June 1899, the emissary of the admor of Lubavitch and the Black Office developed a plan to unite all the elements of haredi society—Hasidim, Mitnagdim, and even rabbis endorsed by the government—in an anti-Zionist stand. The plan was never put into effect because its proponents’ intentions were publicized prematurely. The only activity carried out by the joint initiative was the publication of *Or la-yesharim*, a book that set out the positions of the haredi leadership regarding Zionism. The book represented all streams within haredi Judaism—Hasidim and Mitnagdim, Eastern and Western Europeans—and even included a perspective from the Land of Israel. Among the contributors to the book was Schneerson.⁹¹

The haredi organizational effort gathered force in 1901 with the publication in Berlin by Rabbi Elijah Akiva Rabinowitz of the first issue of *Ha-peles*, a haredi periodical with a clear anti-Zionist perspective. About a year later, the foundations were laid for the establishment of a *Maḥziqei ha-Dat* organization in Russia, similar to the organization of the same name in Poland. Establishing the organization in Russia took

91 On the activity surrounding the publication of *Or la-yesharim*, see Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 346–358.

more time because of the need to obtain a proper license.⁹² The organization's platform dealt with all of the haredi interests, including control of communities, educational institutions, and haredi literature. It attacked those who reduced the entire Torah to the Hebrew language and national history.⁹³ Despite the bitterness of the Russian haredim toward those who threatened them, and however great the differences between haredim and non-haredim with respect to Zionism, the Russian haredim never considered emulating the Germans and Hungarians by splitting their communities into separate haredi and non-haredi organizations.⁹⁴ The organization attracted Hasidim and Mitnagdim alike from throughout Russia and Poland, under the leadership of Rabbi Elijah Hayyim Meisel of Lodz and Rabbi Samuel Weinberg, the admor of Slonim.

The place of religion in the Jewish national movement was a fiercely debated issue from the movement's earliest days until the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901.⁹⁵ The organizing of the "Democratic Fraction" within the Zionist Organization, with its call for the Zionist program to include cultural activities—opposed by the religious groups because of the potential for secularization—was the breaking point for the haredim. From that point on, haredi Judaism, for the most part, took an approach that was hostile toward Zionism. It had become absolutely clear that the haredim were a minority within the Zionist movement that insisted on being granted rights. The line within haredi society between supporters and opponents of Zionism was now clearly drawn.

Summary

The haredi positions with respect to Zionism had already been shaped by the spring of 1900, but two more years were needed to establish social organizations that would embody those positions. The year 1902 saw the publication in Poland of *Orah le-ziiyyon* and *Da`at ha-rabbanim*,⁹⁶ two books that expressed the haredi, anti-Zionist views of Polish rabbis, most of them Hasidim. The books did not include statements by the first-line haredi leaders in Poland, but they relied heavily on the earlier *Or la-yesharim*. The admorim, leaders of the central Hasidic courts, did

92 Lifschitz, *Sustainers of the Religion*, introduction.

93 Lifschitz, "Sustainers of the Religion," 465–476, 533–549. The quotation appears on p. 470.

94 Lifschitz, *Sustainers of the Religion*, 13, note.

95 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 235–367.

96 E. S. Z. Weingut, *Orah le-ziiyyon* (Warsaw, 1902); Steinberg, *The Rabbis' Opinion*.

not join in a single public declaration; rabbis who were secondary to the *admorim* also had a voice.

From 1902 on, Eastern European Jewry—the communities in Russia and Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Galicia—encompassed two factions regarding anything associated with Zionism. The larger faction began to organize against Zionism, forming *Mahziquei ha-Dat* groups. The smaller group organized within *Mizrachi*. In Russia, the two organizations were formed only in 1902, although each had roots going back further. The foundation for *Mahziquei ha-Dat* was in the reaction of traditional society to the forces that threatened it. It tended to insularity, and its activities had a defensive tone. *Mizrachi*, meanwhile, was determined to become part of the nationalist challenge while maintaining a halakhic way of life. At that point, the rift between the two sorts of *haredim* in Eastern Europe became more pronounced—a rift that had far-reaching consequences on historical developments during the ensuing years.

IX. THEODOR HERZL AND ORTHODOX JEWRY

Herzl came to Zionism from the Western-liberal Jewish world. He was given no Jewish education, and the spoken language in his home was German, “the mother tongue, the language of culture.”¹ The nationalist conversion he experienced was certainly not a religious one. These basic facts account in large part for Herzl’s opinions and behavior, as manifested in both his literary and his political activity during his nine “Zionist” years (1895–1904). Jewish tradition and all it entailed served during those years only as a means toward his primary objective: the mobilization of the Jewish people in an effort to establish a national home through the acquisition of an international charter for a Jewish state.

Herzl’s Principles

Herzl’s Zionist utopia was formulated in his two principal works, *Der Judenstaat* (1896) and *Altneuland* about six and a half years later. A careful examination of the utopian elements in these volumes reveals a position unchanged in its broad outlines, both overall and with respect to matters of religion. Herzl understood from the outset that the success of the Zionist movement would depend on Orthodox Jewish support. Reform Judaism—or Liberal Judaism, as it was then known in Germany—was identified with the idea of civic and political integration in the country of residence. Herzl referred to the advocates of this trend derisively as *Mauschel* (a pejorative derivative of the name “Moshe”), borrowing the term from antisemitic literature. “Mauschel is an anti-Zionist,” Herzl began an article on the subject, and all of Mauschel’s characteristic features derive from his anti-Zionist stance.² Herzl perceived the Orthodox, unlike the Liberals, as an organized Jewish public that was dedicated to Jewish nationalism. He did not anticipate the potential tension between traditional Jewish religion and modern nationalism,

1 A. Bein, *Theodor Herzl: A Biography* (Tel Aviv: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1961), 16.

2 T. Herzl, *Herzl’s Writings in Ten Volumes* (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1960–1961), vol. 1, 163–168.

nor, at the outset, did he recognize the distinctions between the different shades of Orthodoxy—or of Liberalism, for that matter. As far as he was concerned, whoever did not identify with Reform was Orthodox. At first he tried to elicit support from Western European Orthodoxy, and only later did he approach its Eastern European counterparts. Although initially confident that he would secure support from each group, he was ultimately disappointed by both.³

Herzl developed the basic features of his Zionist utopia during the period between June 1895, when he composed the first entries in his diary, and the publication of *Der Judenstaat* in February 1896. The Orthodox appear in this plan primarily as a means of bringing the masses to Zionism. As early as 15 June 1895, Herzl wrote in his diary that “the rabbis will be pillars of my organization and I shall honor them for it. They will arouse the people, instruct them on the boats, and enlighten them on the other side. As a reward, they will be formed into a fine, proud hierarchy which, to be sure, will always remain subordinate to the State.”⁴ He leaves no doubt that ultimate sovereignty lies with the State and that the rabbis could be bought off with favors. In general, this approach combines a certain cynicism toward religion and its functionaries with a recognition of their sway over the masses. For that reason, he never proposed separation of church and state.

Herzl made no attempt to hide his basic beliefs: “I am not one of the believers of perfect faith and will never be one of them.”⁵ Nonetheless, he was certain that the Orthodox would be satisfied with his declaration that he was “not planning anything contrary to religion,” and that it was his intention “to work with the rabbis, will *all* rabbis.”⁶ He added that in the liberal western state he sought to establish, “no pressure will be exerted on anyone’s conscience,” although it was clear to him that “the subtle suasions of civilization will have an effect on all”⁷ and that in the end, Orthodoxy would be malleable.

Herzl approached Rabbi Dr. Moritz Güdemann of Vienna, promis-

3 On Herzl’s confidence in securing Orthodox support, especially in Eastern Europe; see J. Rappoport, “A Letter from Theodor Herzl to the Rebbe of Chortkov,” *Zion* 4 (1939): 351. See also T. Herzl, “The Solution of the Jewish Question” (1896), in Herzl, *Herzl’s Writings* 1, 27–28.

4 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 104.

5 T. Herzl, *Journal* 1 (Tel Aviv: Neumann, 1960), 86.

6 *Ibid.*, 109.

7 *Ibid.*, 106.

ing him an appointment as the “first bishop of the capital.”⁸ At the same time, he also undertook to “build a more beautiful Sadagora for the Wonder Rabbi,” a reference to the head of the Hasidic court there.⁹ These two personages symbolized for Herzl the two sides of Orthodoxy, Western and Eastern, and he believed that each of them could be similarly tempted by offers of honor and power.

Herzl's Utopia

In presenting the principles of his political philosophy, Herzl made clear his disdain for democracy and preference for an aristocratic form of government: “I am against democracy... I am thinking of an ‘aristocratic republic’ ... in keeping with the ambitious spirit of our people.”¹⁰ It is important to note in this context that Herzl thought the social and political issues of the Jewish State need not be governed by the will of the majority. “Politics must work from the top down,” he declared in his “Speech to the Rothschilds,” which served as a draft for *Der Judenstaat*.¹¹ His purpose was to create a modern nation. If this objective could be achieved “with friendly persuasion,” fine and good, “but if need be, we shall push it through by brute force.”¹²

Herzl went on to define sharply the place of religion and religious functionaries in the Jewish state. Although national unity was indeed based on “the faith of our fathers,” which served to unify the ranks, behavioral norms in the new national society would rest on science alone: “Faith unites us, science makes us free,” he reiterated.¹³ At the same time, Herzl expressed contempt for the rabbis, claiming that they were interested only in power: “We will certainly not allow dark cravings for power to arise in the hearts of our rabbis.”¹⁴ On the contrary, “We shall know how to restrict them to their temples, just as we shall restrict our professional soldiers to their barracks.” In other words, religion, like the

8 Ibid., 37. See Wistrich's introduction to Güdemann, *Nationaljudentum* (1995), 7–8.

9 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 155.

10 Ibid., 169–170.

11 Ibid., 169.

12 Ibid., 170.

13 Ibid., 171.

14 Herzl, *Journal* 1, 130. In Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, the formula was less extreme. Instead of “dark cravings for power,” he writes “theocratic velleities on the part of our clergy.” Cf. *Der Judenstaat*, 100.

military, would be mobilized in the service of the nation, and the rabbis and generals “will have no privileged voice in the State which confers distinction upon them and pays them.”¹⁵ By guaranteeing that the state would pay their salaries, Herzl sought to secure the religious functionaries’ total obedience to state institutions. These would be composed of a prince and a parliament and government that would not be elected through democratic means.¹⁶ As far as Herzl was concerned, this system was not just a matter of opportunism or interest, but one of principle, the result of a liberal worldview on social matters and an autocratic philosophy on political matters. Indeed, the religious communities would function autonomously, but they would have no authority in the social or political realm.

The description of the synagogue in *Der Judenstaat* is simultaneously picturesque and significant: “The Synagogue will be visible from afar, since the old faith is the only thing that has kept us together.”¹⁷ It is an entirely symbolic institution that is given no normative significance. Religious communities, held in contempt by Herzl, are meant to exhaust their energies on idle debate: “Full autonomy for the communities in all parish-pump politics. Let the gabbers play parliament to their heart’s content.”¹⁸

Der Judenstaat allows for the existence of other religions and national groups and guarantees them “protection with honor.” Jewish religious communities in *Der Judenstaat* are not given a status superior to that of the non-Jewish ones. Moreover, Herzl had no doubt that in the event of a conflict between particular social interests, such as those of religion or its functionaries and the interests of the Jewish state, the latter would emerge victorious.

What is the image of Orthodoxy in the utopian novel *Altneuland*? The figure of the new national Jew is represented by David Litwak, portrayed as “grave and free, healthy and cultured, a man who could stand up for himself.”¹⁹ On the other hand, Orthodoxy is portrayed by Rabbi Samuel (Shmuel), “an old man, frail and bent, very gentle and mild.... Rabbi

15 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 171.

16 Ibid., 165–170.

17 Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, 59.

18 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 211.

19 Herzl, *Altneuland*, 55.

Samuel had brought comfort and spiritual aid to the men of Newville.”²⁰ His political views are summarized in the observation that ““it was plain he was not on the side of ... the defiant opposition,”²¹ whose socialist ideas were of course at odds with the liberal western capitalist outlook espoused by Herzl. However, Rabbi Samuel’s role ought to be limited to encouragement and support for the likes of David Litwak.

It was also Herzl’s contention that thanks to the influence of the cultured European states on Orthodox Jews, the latter had come to realize

that they could expect nothing from fantastic miracle-workers, but everything from their own strength. No single person, they saw, could bring about their salvation, but only the reawakened and reinvigorated soul of the whole nation.²²

It followed that there should be no Orthodox opposition to Zionism. In fact, however, it was already evident by 1890 that Orthodoxy had, for the most part, rejected the Zionist movement. Since we know that Herzl wrote *Altneuland* between 1899 and 1902, it is obvious that he either failed to appreciate this reality or chose to ignore it, for in his novel, it is still the Orthodox who mobilize in the name of the national idea and who bring about the national revival: “God decides what instrument he chooses for his inscrutable ends. That is how the sensible pious Jews argued when they enthusiastically joined us in our national work. That is how the Jewish nation again rose from the depths.”²³

By the time Herzl wrote *Altneuland*, he had already begun to distinguish between the Eastern European rabbis, exemplified by Rabbi Samuel, and those of Western Europe, including the more modern Orthodox individuals of the Moritz Güdemann variety, as portrayed in the novel by Dr. Geyer. In their attitude toward Zionism, there was no difference between the West European Orthodox and Liberal trends. These “opportunistic rabbis,” epitomized by a character known as Dr. Geyer, accommodate to the immediate interests of the wealthy Jews who, out of fear for their property, oppose the national idea and devise the notion

20 Ibid., 106.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., 83.

23 Ibid.

of a “Jewish mission.” Dr. Geyer indeed changes his tune and becomes a Zionist, although he continues to play a negative role in Newville. In the novel, Geyer joins the socialist Mendel, who argues that property in Newville belongs only to its veteran residents, in contrast to the more tolerant view that each person is to be accepted, “be he Jew or Gentile, white or yellow or black.”²⁴ Herzl argues that this view is justified by the debt owed by the Jewish State to humanity, which had been the source of ideas and science which are now internalized in Newville. It should be borne in mind that for Herzl, belonging to the Jewish religion and to the Jewish nation were not identical. In a letter to Max Nordau, he stated that the latter should not be apprehensive about his marriage to a Christian, and that in the future Jewish State, those with a non-Jewish religious identity would also be part of the Jewish nation.²⁵

The Western European Rabbis: Güdemann, Adler, and Kahn

At the outset of his Zionist activity in June 1895, Herzl thought he could obtain the funds for his enterprise from the Rothschilds and secure mass support from the Orthodox. This accounts for Herzl’s initial approach to Dr. Moritz Güdemann, the chief rabbi of Vienna and a graduate of the conservative Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau. Güdemann’s status as the religious leader of the very prominent Jewish community in the Austro-Hungarian capital made him a desirable potential partner in Herzl’s eyes. As Herzl was already familiar with the anti-nationalist stance of the Liberal rabbis in Germany, he did not seek their support. He considered Güdemann, known for his struggle against Reform in Vienna and his opposition to the anti-nationalist stance of his predecessor, Dr. Adolf Jellinek, to be a supporter of his ideas. In a letter to Güdemann dated 11 June 1895, Herzl explained: “(and I hope I was not mistaken) your assistance seemed assured from the outset.”²⁶

The dialogue between Güdemann and Herzl lasted for more than six months, from mid-1895 until after the publication of *Der Judenstaat* in February 1896. Herzl mobilized all of his resources in an effort to

24 Ibid., 107–119; see also Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 404.

25 Letter from Herzl to Nordau, January 1898, Herzl, *Letters* 3, 66. See letter from Herzl to Wolpe, 26 May 1898, Herzl, *Letters* 3, 131: “In my eyes, by the way, the wife of a Jew becomes a Jew, anyway, through marriage. Moses was married to a Midianite woman.”

26 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 78.

persuade Güdemann to support his initiative. Güdemann no doubt grappled with the issue during these months and from time to time even conveyed positive impressions of Herzl's plan. However, on 14 May 1896, a year after their first contact, Herzl noted in his diary that Güdemann had abandoned him.²⁷ Did Herzl deceive himself when he approached Güdemann, or did he misread the rabbi's thoughts? It would seem that Güdemann had indeed sent Herzl mixed messages. Following their last long conversation on 3 November 1895, Herzl sounded disappointed with the rabbi: "Of a man he was only the beard and the voice. He implored me over and over again to leave the rabbis out of the whole business, for they command no respect."²⁸ An additional encounter took place at the end of December when Güdemann arrived at Herzl's home just as he was lighting the Christmas tree. Herzl did not think it necessary to offer an apology, noting privately that for all he cared, Güdemann could call it a "Hanukkah tree."²⁹ This was a demonstration of Herzl's readiness to transfer the acculturated norms of Western European Jewish society to the envisaged Jewish State. While it seems that Güdemann, after reading the proofs of *Der Judenstaat* and hearing of its publication, became enthusiastic about Herzl's ideas,³⁰ contact between the two men ended at the beginning of February 1896.

It is difficult to imagine Güdemann's thoughts from that time until the publication, about a year later, of his own book *Nationaljudentum*. Herzl learned from others that Güdemann had already developed his reservations about the Jewish State during February and March 1896. Herzl recounted that he had heard from his publisher, Breitenstein, that Güdemann defined his own national stance as "religious," in contrast to Herzl's position, which he described as "political." He characterized Herzl, in traditional terms, as one trying "to anticipate Providence,"³¹ that is, the coming of the Messiah. Clearly, Herzl was insufficiently aware of Güdemann's affinity with the Breslau Seminary outlook as it had crystallized during the 1880s.

27 Ibid., 1, 350. Robert Wistrich links the break between Herzl and Güdemann to "a fundamental misunderstanding on both sides." I would suggest that Güdemann's anti-national stance was a reaction to Herzl. See his introduction to M. Güdemann, *Nationaljudentum* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Dinur, 1995), 8.

28 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 261.

29 Ibid., 285.

30 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 287–288, see also Herzl, *Herzl's Writings* 1, 62–63.

31 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 316–317.

Güdemann expressed the view of the religious stream to which he belonged. Thus, he spoke out against Jewish political nationalism and in favor of the “Jewish mission.” This view had been prominently expressed as early as 1884, when Güdemann’s teacher, Heinrich Graetz, had declined an invitation to participate in the Katowice Conference of Hovevei Ziyyon.

Another rabbinic personality approached by Herzl was Dr. Hermann (Naphtali) Adler, chief rabbi of the British Empire. Adler had been ordained by Solomon Judah Rapoport (Shir) of Prague, whose Orthodoxy was far from unequivocal. He inherited the Chief Rabbinate from his father, Nathan Adler, in 1891. Unlike his father, a traditionalist who could be considered Orthodox, the son’s spiritual world was closer to that of Conservative Judaism.³² He was also much more involved with Hovevei Ziyyon than Güdemann had been. He was active in all aspects of the movement and even let his name be listed in *Shivat ziyyon*, a book published in 1891 by rabbis aligned with Hovevei Ziyyon. Nevertheless, unlike Güdemann, he was unequivocally opposed to Herzl’s ideas. Herzl described the traditional practices in Adler’s home in positive terms—unlike his expressions of distaste for the traditional practices with which he had been familiar—yet he obtained from Adler not an iota of sympathy for his ideas.³³ While Güdemann had reacted positively to the galley proofs of *Der Judenstaat*, Adler’s reaction was hostile from the start: he called the idea “impractical and at the same time dangerous.”³⁴ Moreover, nine years after writing his approbation for *Shivat ziyyon*, he contributed to *Or la-yesharim*, an anti-Zionist ultra-Orthodox tract, thereby displaying the reversal in his attitude. It was a turnabout that paralleled the general shift that was taking place at the same time in Eastern Europe.

Adler’s ideology was formulated in a book, the essence of which he had already preached to his London congregation after the First Zionist Congress. In contrast to Güdemann, whose position was based in principle on objecting to modern national attributes in Judaism, Adler put forward essentially “bourgeois” arguments about the impracticality of trying to realize Zionism’s political ideas.³⁵

32 See Salmon, “The Attitude of Haredi Society,” 423–424.

33 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 278–279.

34 Ibid., 287; see also Herzl, *Herzl’s Writings* 1, 63.

35 H. Adler, *Religious versus Political Zionism* (London: Isaacs, 1899); see also Salmon, “The Attitude of

The third renowned rabbinical personality whose support Herzl sought was Rabbi Zadoc Kahn, from 1890 the chief rabbi of France. Like Adler, Kahn was a prominent member of *Hovevei Ziyon*, and he served as head of the movement in France. Moreover, it was he who had influenced Baron Edmond James de Rothschild to support the new Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. Kahn received Herzl enthusiastically and expressed sympathy for his ideas, but the contact between the men more or less ended there. Herzl himself doubted that he would gain the support of French Jewry and made little effort to win the Jews there over to the movement.³⁶ Meanwhile, Kahn was concerned about the loyalty of French Jewry to France itself, and he did not ally himself personally with political Zionism.

In summing up, it can be said that in the first stage of his Zionist activity during 1895 and 1896, characterized by the crystallization of his ideas and the publication of *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl failed to win the support of even one of the three most prominent rabbis of Western European Jewry. Yet, as late as October or November 1898, he still labored under the delusion that his only problem lay with the “mission Jews,” the “*Protestrabbiner*,” and the “protest bankers,” while the Orthodox, in general, such as Mohilever in Russia and the Sephardi *Hakham* Moses Gaster in London, were on his side.³⁷

The Orthodox Question at the Early Zionist Congresses

Another move to win the Orthodox camp over to the nascent Zionist movement was attempted during the preparations for the First Zionist Congress. Beginning in January 1897, Herzl made repeated efforts to enlist two well-known German-Jewish Orthodox personalities as central speakers at the congress. One was Willy Bambus, founder (in 1883) of the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* and its long-time general secretary as well as editor of the German-language *Zion*. The other was Dr. Hirsch Hildesheimer, an active supporter (along with Bambus) of *Hovevei Ziyon*'s endeavors in the Land of Israel and editor of the German Orthodox *Jüdische Presse*. The proposed lecture topics, settlement in the

Haredi Society,” 423–424; Letter from Herzl to Gaster, 11 August 1898, Herzl, *Letters* 3, 173.

36 See Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 285.

37 See *Jewish World*, 7 October 1898 and Herzl, *Herzl's Writings* 2, 26–27; see also *Die Welt*, 2 December 1898, translated from the Hebrew translation in Herzl, *Before the Nation* 1, 283.

Land of Israel and charity organizations, were of no great interest to Herzl. It was winning the support of these two central Orthodox figures for the Zionist organization that he valued most.³⁸

Although their names appear on the roster of central speakers in a flyer distributed by Herzl in April 1897, it was clear by late April and early May that the two men would not identify with a Jewish national movement of a political nature. They were not prepared to go beyond working with Hovevei Ziyyon in encouraging increased productivity within the Yishuv and, later, in the establishment of certain educational institutions.³⁹ The reality was that moderate German neo-Orthodoxy of the Esriel Hildesheimer variety did not accept political Zionism. As for the more extreme neo-Orthodox school of Samson Raphael Hirsch, it was not even prepared to support Hovevei Ziyyon.

Herzl's failures in Western Europe led him to seek Orthodox support for the Zionist Organization in Eastern Europe. As has been noted, in a draft of *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl wrote about approaching the rebbe of Sadigura. However, he never took any practical steps in that direction. About a year after composing the draft, he wrote in his diary that Aaron Marcus, a Krakow-based scholar and Orthodox German Jew who had moved to Galicia, had assured him of the support of the Polish Hasidim. Herzl was pleased with this potential source of support, but hastened to emphasize that he was not about to establish a theocratic state.⁴⁰ Only in late December 1896 did Herzl take steps to establish contact with the Eastern European Orthodox leadership. The move was prompted by Marcus and by Leibush Mendel Landau, the rabbi of Botoșani. They urged Herzl to invite Rabbi Israel Friedman, the son and eventual successor of the rebbe of Chortkov, David Moses Friedman, to come to Vienna to discuss the issue of Zionism.⁴¹ As was discussed previously in this volume, Landau never delivered the letter.⁴²

In the hope of winning Polish Hasidism over to the Zionist Organization, Herzl maintained contacts with the Chortkov Hasidic

38 See Herzl's letters to Bambus, 21 January, 21 March, and 26 March 1897, Herzl, *Letters* 1, 196, 222, 231. On Herzl's efforts to invite them to the congress and his willingness to make concessions about the topic of their lectures and the wording of their invitation, see Herzl, *Letters* 1, 237, 247.

39 Letter from Herzl to Bambus, 24 April 1897, Herzl, *The Letters* 1, 253; letter from Herzl to Hildesheimer, 9 May 1897, Herzl, *The Letters* 1, 273–275.

40 Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 1, 347.

41 See Herzl, *The Letters* 1, 184, and Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia* 2, 782.

42 See *ibid.*, 782–783; Rappoport, "A Letter from Theodor Herzl," 351–352.

leadership for more than three years. David Moses Friedman was the focus of these efforts because his sphere of influence in Galicia and Bukovina fell within the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and other rebbes visited him at his Vienna residence. The Chortkov Hasidic court also held considerable sway over the Jewish public and had recently been involved in attempts to revive the Jewish agricultural settlement in the Land of Israel.⁴³ There were also rumors that Friedman supported the Ahavat Ziyon Society that had been established in Tarnow in December 1896. Herzl also benefited from the influence that his supporters Rabbi Landau and Aaron Marcus had at the Chortkov court. It would seem indeed that Friedman was not initially averse to cooperating with secular Jews.⁴⁴ Furthermore, when they met in December 1897, Rabbi Israel Friedman told Herzl that the Chortkov court was favorable to Zionist activity, but sought first to guarantee Orthodox interests within the Zionist Organization.⁴⁵ However, no evidence has come to light of further contacts during the next two years.

It would appear that the crisis between the Zionist Organization and Orthodoxy following the Second Zionist Congress also affected communications between Herzl and Chortkov. Despite the crisis, however, Marcus did not let the matter drop, and after a lengthy correspondence which went on for two years, he succeeded in putting together a coalition of rabbis and rebbes from Galicia, Bukovina, Poland, and Russia, including the rebbe of Chortkov, who were prepared to enter into negotiations over the possibility of joining the Zionist Organization. Herzl did not display great interest in the initiative, perhaps because he was preoccupied with the controversy over the place of cultural work and educational activity in the Zionist program precipitated at the Third Zionist Congress and the attendant appearance of political groupings (fractions) in the Zionist Organization. In any event, when Marcus realized in March 1900 that his efforts were not leading anywhere, he slammed the door on the Zionist Organization.⁴⁶ There is no doubt that the closure of Marcus's initiative ended any hope of winning the sup-

43 Klausner, *The Movement to Zion in Russia* 2–3, 261–264. See Herzl, *The Complete Diaries* 2, 495: Herzl receives M. H. Beck, the son of the famous publisher in Jerusalem, who informs him that he is establishing an agrarian bank under the auspices of the rebbe of Chortkov.

44 See Yosef Salmon, "Zionism and Anti-Zionism in Traditional Judaism in East Europe," in Almog, Reinhartz, and Shapira, *Zionism and Religion*, 50–52.

45 Gelber, *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia* 2, 783.

46 Ibid., 786–787.

port of Eastern European Orthodoxy for the Zionist movement.

Herzl had convened the First Zionist Congress without Orthodox participation, and had received only a greeting from Samuel Mohilever, who served as the leader of the Orthodox stream of *Hovevei Ziyyon*. Only in May 1897, some two years after the beginning of his efforts among Orthodox figures in Western Europe, did Herzl approach Mohilever. At their meeting, Herzl praised Mohilever's activities in *Hovevei Ziyyon* as well as his devotion to "the spirit of our people, our holy Torah, and our history."⁴⁷ Mohilever could not attend the congress due to illness, but the letter he wrote setting out the guidelines for Religious Zionists was read to the audience and received an enthusiastic response. His statement included a demand that "the Torah, which is the source of our life, must be the foundation of our regeneration in the land of our fathers." This statement of principle meant simply that the Zionist movement's public activities had to function according to halakhic norms.⁴⁸

The enthusiastic response to Mohilever's message reflected the sense that he served as something of a counterweight to the *Protestrabbiner*, whose opposition greatly troubled the Zionist leadership. Still, the overall atmosphere at the conference was one of hostility to Orthodoxy, expressed most prominently in the exchange between Herzl and Rabbi Asher Cohen, the rabbi of Basel, who had been sent by the Orthodox rabbis of Switzerland and Germany to examine the attitude of Zionism toward the lifestyle of Orthodox Jews. Herzl gave his assurance that "Zionism does not intend anything that might offend the religious views of any stream within Judaism."⁴⁹ This general response failed to reassure Cohen. On the contrary, it implied recognition of the legitimacy of other religious trends in Judaism, something that would certainly discomfit the Orthodox.

In his opening address at the First Zionist Congress, Herzl declared that "Zionism constitutes a return to Judaism even before a return to

47 Herzl, *The Letters*, 301.

48 See *Protocol of the First Zionist Congress* (Jerusalem, 1947), 96. The quoted passage in the text is from the English translation of Mohilever's message, in A. Herzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1970), 403.

49 *Protocol of the First Zionist Congress*, 162. See also Salmon, "The Response of the Eastern European Haredim to Political Zionism," 56–58. In a letter he wrote to Rabbi Asher Cohen after the congress, Herzl thought it necessary to state that neither side had given in to the other over matters of principle: "We met without making dishonorable concessions"; letter from Herzl to Cohen, 18 September 1897, Herzl, *Letters* 3, 8.

the Land of the Jews.”⁵⁰ This sentence has been subjected to considerable interpretation. There were even some Orthodox who saw it as an expression of Herzl’s return to traditional Judaism. But there can be no doubt that this was not what Herzl meant. It was nothing more than a romantic call for a return to “the ancient home,” to the Jewish past, and to a sense of national togetherness, before the physical return to the Land.⁵¹

The Second Zionist Congress and the preceding Russian Zionist Conference (held in Warsaw in August 1898) were crucial for determining the attitude of Eastern European Orthodoxy toward the Zionist Organization. Unlike at the First Zionist Congress, an organized group of Eastern European rabbis was present to express the attitude of the Orthodox leadership on the issue of Zionism. Their very presence seemed to confirm the reports that Herzl had received from Eastern Europe before the congress indicating that there was broad support, among traditional elements as well, for the Zionist Organization.⁵² But matters later proved to be more complicated.

It is possible to foresee the events at this congress from the outcome of the Warsaw Conference, in which traditionalists represented about ten percent of the participants, a proportion that was far below their proportion in the Russian Zionist Organization. Not understanding the democratic rules that governed the Zionist Organization, they presented a sort of ultimatum: accept their position or they would withdraw from Zionism. It was already evident at the Warsaw Conference that the “free-thinking” Russian Zionists were agitating for the extension of Zionist activity to the realm of education and culture, contrary to the movement’s western leadership, which sought to concentrate on political activity alone. In opposition to the Russian Zionist position, the traditionalists demanded that a rabbinical committee be established to supervise the educational-cultural activities of the Zionist Organization. But this proposal was rejected by the majority at the Warsaw Conference and later at the Second Zionist Congress as well.⁵³

While the Russian Zionists had been hesitant and passive at the First

50 See First Zionist Congress, Stenographic Report (Tel Aviv, 1978), 7.

51 See Salmon, “The Response of the Eastern European Haredim,” n. 39. See also Bat-Yehuda, “The Cultural Question,” 66.

52 See Salmon, “Zionism and Anti-Zionism,” 322–325, especially notes 46–50.

53 Ibid. 326–329.

Zionist Congress, they came to the second armed with a fighting spirit that had been fortified by the Warsaw Conference decisions. In these circumstances, Herzl's attempts to reach an understanding between the rabbis and the freethinkers of Russian Zionism ran aground. Moreover, the freethinkers were significantly represented in the various congress committees, whereas the traditionalists were left outside the organization's influential circles. The Eastern European rabbis were also at a disadvantage in comparison with the group of distinguished, university-educated rabbis from Western and Southern Europe such as Moses Gaster from London, Aaron Ehrenpreis from Croatia, Mordecai Sonnino from Naples, and Isaac Rülff from Berlin. Herzl preferred the presence of these university-educated rabbis in the movement's institutions, failing to understand that they did not represent Eastern European Orthodoxy. One might say that in contrast to the Eastern European radical Zionists and the conservative rabbis of Western and Southern Europe, the authentic representatives of the Eastern European Jewish masses had been pushed aside. This had far-reaching implications for the future development of the Zionist movement.

In Herzl's opening address to the Second Zionist Congress, he called for the "conquest of the communities." Although this call was probably aimed primarily at the Western European religious streams that expressed opposition to the Zionist Organization in the context of the *Protestrabbiner* declaration, it could also be interpreted as being directed against Eastern European Orthodoxy.⁵⁴ Was this a conscious intention on Herzl's part, or had he succumbed to pressures at the Congress? The answer is not clear, although it is evident that the demands of the Eastern European traditionalists were, as a matter of principle, unacceptable to him. To be sure, without succumbing to ultra-Orthodox dictates, he did his best to defer the decision about instituting educational-cultural activity in the Zionist organization. However, with the establishment of the Democratic Fraction and its appearance at the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901, Herzl could not defer the issue any longer. In any case, it was already too late, for after the publication of the anti-Zionist

54 Theodor Herzl, "Opening Address at the Second Zionist Congress," in Herzl, *Herzl's Writings* 2, 17 (the wording has been softened somewhat in the English translation). When Herzl repeated this slogan before the Third Conference of Austrian Zionists (June 1903), he most certainly included the Eastern European Orthodox who comprised the majority of the communities in question. See Herzl, *Before the Nation* 2, 213.

Or *la-yesharim* in March 1900, and the failure of the Marcus initiative, the leadership of Eastern European Orthodoxy had made up its mind to oppose the Zionist Organization.

The Mizrachi Movement

With the Fifth Zionist Congress Herzl and Orthodoxy entered a new stage of relations, now centering on that minority within Orthodoxy that had remained loyal to the Zionist Organization and had formed the Mizrachi movement. A small group of rabbis led by Reines and Jacob Samuel Rabinowitz participated in the Congress, while most of the Eastern European Orthodox world remained outside of the Zionist Organization. Herzl was now unable to withstand the organized block of the Democratic Fraction. Although it constituted only some thirteen percent of the total number of congress delegates, there was at this time no other organized group that could serve as a counterweight to balance the political scales. Thus, a decision was reached in the Cultural Committee of the congress to oblige all Zionist societies to engage in educational activity.⁵⁵

The leadership of the Zionist Organization had failed to preserve its purely political approach and to prevent the inclusion of educational and cultural issues in the Zionist agenda. A group of those who continued to advocate the earlier view rallied to Mizrachi in a desperate attempt to halt the erosion in the organization's position. However, the great majority of the Mizrachi movement itself, led by Zev Yavets, realized that it was impossible to preclude cultural activity of a national character. Thus, at the Russian Zionist Conference held in Minsk in the summer of 1902, an agreement was reached between Reines, the leader of Mizrachi, and Ahad Ha-Am, the spiritual leader of the Democratic Fraction, to divide educational matters between the two streams represented in the Zionist Organization: the freethinkers and the Orthodox, or in the language of the period, the "traditional nationalists" and the "progressive nationalists," with overall responsibility left to the Zionist associations in every country.⁵⁶

55 Bat-Yehuda, "The Cultural Question," 72. For the Democratic Fraction's influence on Herzl at the Fifth Zionist Congress, see Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 372–375.

56 Bat-Yehuda, "The Cultural Question," 75–78.

Formally, the Zionist Organization was released from responsibility for educational affairs. Practically, however, the Minsk Conference had approved what had in fact been developing in the movement, namely accelerated educational and cultural activity in the Zionist societies, including those of Mizrachi. Mizrachi itself, at the Lida Conference of 1903, approved the compromise reached at the Minsk Conference, which in actuality reflected the desire of most of its members to engage in cultural and educational matters, in accord with their own outlook.⁵⁷ Herzl reconciled himself to these decisions and concentrated his efforts on obtaining a charter for the Jewish State.

A study of Herzl's writings, diaries, speeches, and articles clearly shows that after the Second Zionist Congress, his interest in Orthodoxy waned. As a practical matter, he gave up on any effort to win its support for the Zionist Organization.

57 Ibid., 78–80.

X. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MIZRACHI MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

The two volumes of *Shivat ziiyyon*, edited by the journalist and author Abraham Jacob Slutsky, were first published in Warsaw in 1891¹ and then reissued in 1899 without significant changes. They consisted of rabbinical letters from all over Russia and Poland (in particular from Lithuania) advocating the Zionist idea as expressed in the Hibbat Ziiyyon movement (also known as Hovevei Ziiyyon). The publication, supported by the Odessa Committee which was founded in 1890 to further Hovevei Ziiyyon settlement in the Land of Israel, was meant to bolster the dwindling support for the movement in the traditional circles of Russo-Polish Jewry. The threat of secularism—the movement’s leaders and many of the immigrants to the Land of Israel in the 1890s were non-observant—was eroding the support provided at first by the traditionalists. By the end of the century, many of them were leaving the new Zionist organization.² The publication of *Shivat ziiyyon* represented an attempt to prove that traditional religion and Zionism could coexist fruitfully.

The third edition of *Shivat ziiyyon* was published in New York by the American Mizrachi movement in 1916. It was not an exact replica of the European editions—many of the original rabbinical letters were omitted, and new ones were added—but it, too, was published in the new American context for propaganda purposes. The late date of the American publication reflects the tardy evolution of Religious Zionism in America. It took time for the founding assumptions of European Zionism to become accommodated to the American social context. The Orthodox Jews who emigrated from Eastern Europe to America had to face the challenge, new to them, of cooperating with the Reform Jews of Western Europe who were already established there.

These factors delayed the establishment of the Mizrachi movement in America and led to differences in its historical development.

1 See Salmon, “The Book *Shivat ziiyyon*,” 331–335; Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 177–199.

2 Ibid., 279–367.

Religious Zionists in America

Certain features of the Zionist movement in the United States set it apart from its counterparts in Europe. Founded while the *Hovevei Ziyyon* movement was still active in Europe, it is frequently treated in the literature as largely an import by Eastern European immigrants.³ However, it eventually grew to include the leadership elite of all sections of American Jewry, including the Reform movement. At a relatively early stage, it incorporated figures who had not come from Eastern Europe: Germans such as Bernhard Felsenthal and Gustav Gottheil, Central Europeans such as Max Heller and Stephen Wise, and also English Jews.⁴ Early American Zionism was surprisingly reminiscent of the European Zionism of the 1860s and 1870s in its search for Jewish self-identity.⁵ Although the American Zionists were not threatened by a sense of physical danger, they were sharply aware of their Diaspora status and of the difficulties, at least in the first and second generations, of adapting to the American way of life.⁶ The fact that many local Zionist societies also functioned as *landsmanschaften* (benefit societies based on geographical origins) indicates that their members sought to create their own intimate social milieu because they felt alienated from their New World environment.⁷

Orthodox Zionists in the United States faced special difficulties in carving out their place in the Zionist Federation. The term “Orthodox” is problematic in the American context. Until the second decade of the twentieth century, everything that was not explicitly “Reform” was considered “Orthodox.” The distinctions between Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox, which were well defined in Germany by the mid-nine-

3 B. Halpern, “The Americanization of Zionism, 1880–1930,” *American Jewish History* 69 (1979): 15–33.

4 See M. Meyer, “Reform Judaism and Zionism in America,” *Ha-ziyyonut* 9 (1984); and E. Friesel, “The Significance of Zionism and Its Influence on the Religious Movements of American Jewry,” in *Zionism and Religion*, edited by Almog, Reinharz, and Shapira, 207; and J. Sarna, “Converts to Zionism in the American Reform Movement,” in *ibid.*, 33–53.

5 J. Katz, “Idea and Actuality in Jewish Nationalism: A Study of the Factors behind Its Emergence,” in Katz, *Jewish Nationalism*; Katz, “The Jewish National Movement: A Sociological Analysis,” *Bi-tefuzot ha-golah* 12 (1970). For America, see A. Goren, “Zionism and Its Opponents in American Jewry,” in *Zionism and Its Jewish Opponents*, ed. Avni and Shimoni, 356.

6 Meyer, “Reform Judaism,” 109; Federation of American Zionists, *The Aims of Zionism* (New York: n.p., 1889) (a declaration of principles in which Gottheil expressed doubts about the future of Jewish life in America).

7 See Friesel, *The Zionist Movement in the United States*, 40; and see Halpern, “The Americanization of Zionism,” 17 for a description of the Austro-Hungarian Society in New York.

teenth century, took at least another half century to gain currency in the United States.⁸ Like its German counterpart, American Reform Judaism was largely hostile to the developing Jewish nationalist movement. In Europe, the leadership of the *Hibbat Ziyon* movement was drawn mainly from Eastern European Jewish intellectuals who were not religiously observant and traditional rabbis who were receptive to a modern way of life.

As the Zionist movement evolved, the Eastern European leadership of *Hibbat Ziyon* was increasingly replaced in the World Zionist Organization by Central and Western European Jews. In America, however, by the 1890s, the original Eastern European leadership was already being challenged by a vocal minority of Reform rabbis such as Gustav Gottheil (1827–1903), Bernhard Felsenthal (1822–1908), and Max Heller (1860–1929), as well as by Orthodox and Conservative rabbis, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi, such as Henry Pereira Mendes (1852–1937), Sabato Morais (1823–1897), Alexander Kohut (1842–1894), Bernard Drachman (1861–1945), and Marcus Jastrow (1829–1903).

Whereas Zionism provided an escape from alienation for the Eastern European immigrants, the Western and Central European Jews viewed it as a means to avoid disappearance in the great American melting pot. It was therefore questionable whether such different social aims could achieve satisfaction within a single Zionist movement; years passed before the two factions learned to live with each other within the Zionist Federation of America.

During the *Hovevei Ziyon* period, the leaders of the Eastern European wing of the movement were Dr. Joseph Isaac Bluestone, editor of the *Hibbat Ziyon* Yiddish paper, *Shulamis*, and Wolf Schur, who edited the Hebrew Zionist journal, *Ha-pisgah*. Bluestone represented Modern Orthodoxy (known in the historical literature as the “Orthodox maskilim”⁹), then in the process of organization, while Schur voiced the views of the radical Russian intellectuals. In Bluestone’s opinion (supported by the publisher Kasriel Sarasohn and the prominent rabbis

8 Y. Shapiro, *Leadership of the American Zionist Organization: 1897–1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 26, refers to the Conservatives as the “neo-Orthodox.” Often the term “conservative” was simply used as a synonym for “Orthodox.” See C. S. Liebman, “Orthodoxy in Nineteenth Century America,” *Tradition* 6, no. 2 (1964): 132–140.

9 H. B. Grinstein, “Orthodox Judaism and Early Zionism in America,” in *Early History of Zionism in America*, ed. I. S. Meyer (New York: American Jewish Historical Society and Theodor Herzl Foundation, 1958), 219.

Jacob Joseph, Dr. Hillel Klein, Zvi Hirsch Masliansky, Moses Zebulon Margolies, Henry Pereira Mendes, and Bernard Drachman), the Land of Israel would provide a physical refuge for persecuted Jews and a spiritual safeguard against assimilation in America.¹⁰ For Schur and his supporters (especially the author Alexander Harkavy, the former Biluist Dr. Moses Mintz, and the journalist Leon Zolotkoff), Zionism filled the role of providing a sense of national identity for secular Jews. Despite their divergent world views, the groups that formed around Bluestone and Schur were able to cooperate and form a common front against the Central Europeans, who were mainly Reform or Conservative Jews.

The first American Jews to respond to Herzl's call were members of *Hovevei Ziyon*: Wolf Schur, Rabbi Meir Kupstein, and the journalist Michael Singer, among others. They founded the *Zentralverein der Amerikanische Zionisten*.¹¹ Support soon came from the Central European group of Reform leaders as well: Felsenthal, Gustav and Richard Gottheil, Benjamin Szold, and Stephen Wise. Although several American Jews attended the First Zionist Congress (1897), none of them represented an American Zionist organization. Shortly after the congress, various Zionist societies were formed, mainly in New York and its environs. These societies quickly coalesced into two competing organizations: the Federation of Zionist Societies of Greater New York and Vicinity, led by Richard Gottheil, and the League of Zionists of the United States of North America, headed by Philip Klein and Michael Singer.

Although the two organizations united, after a single year, to establish the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ, 1898), internal conflict continued to influence the early history of American Zionism. The executive committee in Vienna, headed by Herzl, made every effort to deal evenhandedly with both groups, in keeping with its preference for avoiding involvement in the internal politics of local organizations. A delegate from each organization attended the Second Zionist Congress, and both were elected to the Zionist executive committee: Gottheil representing the Federation and Klein, the League.

The dispute was neither over trifling matters nor was it, in the main, a question of personal animosities. The mutual mistrust stemmed from

10 H. B. Grinstein, "The Memoirs and Scrapbooks of the Late Dr. Joseph Isaac Bluestone," *PAJHS* 25 (1939): 54.

11 Friesel, *The Zionist Movement in the United States*, 26–27.

profound cultural and ideological differences, as the tensions between the Western European “uptown” Jews and the Eastern European “downtown” Jews found strong expression in the Zionist arena. The Eastern Europeans refused to recognize their Central European brethren—especially those identified with the Reform movement—as “authentic,” “national” Jews; Jewish nationalism and Reform, they believed, were mutually exclusive.¹² The Eastern Europeans, whether Orthodox or radical maskilim, voiced this distrust again and again in their correspondence with the executive committee in Vienna. The Westerners, for their part, did not believe in the Eastern Europeans’ organizational ability or public standing.¹³ Developments in the Zionist movement in the United States paralleled those in the European Zionist Organization. In both cases, the masses of Eastern European Zionists demanded leadership, and the Westerners finally gave in.¹⁴

The Beginnings of Mizrahi in America

The conflict-ridden milieu of the American melting pot goes far toward explaining why the Mizrahi movement was established in America so much later than it had been in Europe. Splinter group after splinter group formed and dissolved along the lines of the two divides: Eastern and Central European Jews vs. Western European Jews, and halakhically-observant Jews vs. non-observant Jews. Among those who refused to join the FAZ were the Zionist societies of Cincinnati and Minneapolis and the Chicago Knights of Zion, which was founded in October 1898. In addition, Bluestone, although a member of the New York Federation, founded the Free Sons of Zion, an independent Zionist order, in the face of FAZ opposition. In the succeeding years, various attempts were made to establish a second American federation, composed entirely of Eastern European Jews, for example, the United Zionists of Greater New York and Vicinity, under the leadership of Bluestone, Klein, Adam Rosenberg, Moses Mintz, and Rabbi Joseph Zeff.¹⁵

12 M. Bar-Ilan, *From Volozhin to Jerusalem* (Tel Aviv: Committee to Publish the Writings of Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan, 1971), 448–451.

13 Friesel, *The Zionist Movement in the United States*, 29–51.

14 See M. I. Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1975), 149–150.

15 Friesel, *The Zionist Movement in the United States*, 45.

When Herzl finally chose to favor Gottheil over Klein, the latter dropped out of Zionist activity for a while. In 1902, Bluestone was recognized by the Zionist executive as the legitimate representative of the league (now called the United Zionists, as a federation distinct from that headed by Gottheil) to the Sixth Zionist Congress.¹⁶ In December 1903, an American branch of the Mizrahi movement (established within the Zionist Organization in 1902) was founded in order to oppose the League.¹⁷ Klein agreed to cooperate with the new Mizrahi organization and even headed it, but this did not calm the troubled waters. Some secular Eastern European American Zionists were unwilling to identify with an Orthodox organization or to be subordinated to a federation controlled by Central European Jews. When the United Zionist Movement fell apart in 1905, so did American Mizrahi.¹⁸ Only in 1913, long after the Mizrahi World Organization was founded at the Pressburg Conference in 1904, did the revival of the American Mizrahi movement begin.

In 1936, the American Mizrahi movement published a jubilee volume to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding.¹⁹ Why did Mizrahi reckon its existence in the United States from 1911, when in actual fact it was not formally established until 1914? Was the organization simply trying to add three years to its seniority? It is true that there was a loose American organization associated with Mizrahi as early as 1912. After the American visit of the artist Hermann Struck (1911), an attempt was made in June 1912 to establish a Mizrahi center in St. Louis under Rabbi Dov Baer Abramowitz.²⁰

However, only on the eve of the Eleventh Zionist Congress (1913) were demands to organize Mizrahi societies voiced in America. Although a national organization of Mizrahi representatives was indeed established in the summer of 1913, and delegates were sent to the

16 Grinstein, "The Memoirs and Scrapbooks," 58.

17 Friesel, *The Zionist Movement in the United States*, 135–136.

18 Ibid., 51; Grinstein, "The Memoirs and Scrapbooks," 59.

19 P. Churgin and A. L. Gelman, eds., *Mizrahi: Twenty-fifth Anniversary Anthology* (New York, 1936).

20 E. Friesel, *The Zionist Movement in the United States, 1897–1914* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz Ha-me'uhad, 1970), 136. In the *American Jewish Year Book: 1915–1916*, 310, the founding of the Mizrahi Organization in America is dated to 5 June 1912. On Abramowitz and his leadership, see Bar-Ilan, *From Volozhin to Jerusalem*, 68. See also A. Patashnik, "The Movement between the Two World Wars," in *A Vision of Torah and Zion: Articles on the History of Religious Zionism*, ed. S. Federbush (Jerusalem, 1960), 217–218. See also *Ha-ivri*, no. 8-9 (1913): 56.

congress and to the Mizrahi Conference following it,²¹ this organization seems to have been ignored by the organizers of the National Mizrahi Conference which took place in Cincinnati one year later. It is from the latter that the Mizrahi Organization of America began to count its conferences.

The Cincinnati Conference of May 1914, which “officially” established the Mizrahi Organization of America, was attended by seventy-three delegates from about thirty local organizations that came together under the Mizrahi banner. After an agreement to set up a branch of the organization in the United States was made between the American Mizrahi delegates to the Eleventh Zionist Congress (with the sanction of FAZ) and the Mizrahi World Organization, Rabbi Meir Berlin,²² the secretary of the parent organization, was invited to America to promote the establishment of the new branch. His speaking tour from November 1913 to June 1914 gave tremendous impetus to the movement, due to his prestige as the son of the revered Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin of Volozhin (the Netsiv) and his exceptional rhetorical and organizational abilities.²³ Berlin did not encounter the objections to Zionism among the ultra-Orthodox in America that he had found in Eastern Europe. Even the rabbis who had been opposed to Zionism took a different position upon emigration. They apparently felt that ultra-Orthodoxy had no future in America and were thus able to “anticipate only one hope—to return to the land of their fathers.”²⁴

Rabbi Berlin gave various reasons, overt and covert, for the choice

21 See *Ha-ivri*, no. 2 (1913): 15. The society’s announcement in St. Louis implies that it had secured the agreement of the executive of the Mizrahi World Organization for the attempt to establish Mizrahi in the United States; see *Ha-ivri*, no. 4 (1913): 31. Rabbi Dov Baer Abramowitz of St. Louis and Rabbi Aaron M. Ashinsky of Pittsburgh were elected to the Mizrahi executive that was constituted at the Vienna Conference, after the Eleventh Zionist Congress; *Ha-ivri*, no. 6-8 (1913): 48. In reparation for the Eleventh Zionist Congress, American Mizrahi collected some 800 shekels. For details of the St. Louis conference and the institutions established, see *Ha-ivri*, no. 10-11 (1912): 76-77.

22 Rabbi Berlin was invited to America not to organize the Mizrahi Movement but to help increase its ranks. This is implied in the reports in *Ha-ivri*, no. 13 (1913): 92; *Ha-ivri*, no. 1 (1914): 5-6; and *Ha-ivri*, no. 4-5, 34.

23 See reports in *Ha-ivri* (1914), nos. 4-5, 30, 34-36; no. 6, 43-46; 7, 49; no. 8, 58-59.

24 *Ha-ivri* (1914), no. 11, 84. Jeffrey Gurock writes that most Orthodox rabbis in the United States supported Zionism because they were disciples of Russian rabbis who had themselves favored Zionism. But where were the disciples of those rabbis who had objected to Zionism in Russia? Had they not emigrated to the United States as well? See J. Gurock, “The Orthodox Jewish Organizations in America: 1880-1930,” in Almog, Reinhartz, and Shapira, *Zionism and Religion*, 270.

of Cincinnati as the venue for the conference. Overtly, the city was centrally located in the North American continent. Moreover, Cincinnati boasted a strong Mizrachi society, which included experienced organizers and wealthy members, such as Prof. Nathan Isaacs, its chairman, and Rabbi Abraham Jacob Gershon Lesser, head of the strong Orthodox community, who was considered dean of the Orthodox rabbis of the time. The covert reason was the desire to combat Reform Judaism on its home ground—in Berlin’s words,

to establish a spiritual center [in Hebrew, a *merkaz ruhani*, for which Mizrachi is an acronym], which might prove a rallying point between the ultra-Orthodox and Reform Jewry of America.²⁵

Mizrachi and the Zionist Federation

By the time the central Mizrachi organization was founded in America, various Zionist societies in New York, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis had already identified themselves with the Mizrachi mode of Zionism, and practical activities such as the purchase of land in the Land of Israel had been undertaken. As a purely Eastern European movement, American Mizrachi was inclined to active involvement in matters of settlement and education rather than to “spiritual” issues of the sort associated with *Aḥad Ha-Am*.²⁶

Despite the existence of Mizrachi societies in New York and Pittsburgh, the center of activity shifted to the Midwest. Berlin had been received with particular warmth there, and even non-Orthodox groups, such as the Chicago Knights of Zion, had opened their doors to him. Most of the delegates at the First Mizrachi Conference in Cincinnati came from the Midwest (Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and

25 Bar-Ilan, *From Volozhin to Jerusalem*, 472–475. The idea of swaying the masses in Cincinnati with Zionist enthusiasm as an anti-Reform measure was common to the American Zionist movement as a whole. See Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 166–167. See also Patashnik, “The Movement,” 218–219. For a declaration that the convening of the Mizrachi conference in the Reform stronghold was deliberate, see *Ha-ivri* (1914), no. 5, 58.

26 After World War I, American Mizrachi sent word to the Land of Israel that its members intended to emigrate and settle in the Land. See Berlin’s letter to the World Mizrachi Center, Jerusalem (10 January 1921), in M. Bar-Ilan, *Letters of Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan*, ed. Nathaniel Katzberg (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1976), 109.

Toledo); only a few attended from New York, Pittsburgh, and Baltimore. Rabbi Dov Baer Abramowitz of St. Louis was elected president (he had been serving in that capacity since the St. Louis conference of the previous year), and the majority of delegates elected to the central committee were Midwesterners.

The delay in the establishment of the Mizrahi movement, which some scholars (e.g., Friesel) attribute to weaknesses within the Orthodox camp,²⁷ can be better explained by the independent stance of the Religious Zionists. Even before the official founding of the Mizrahi movement, the Mizrahi societies remained aloof from the American Zionist leadership, which was Western or Central European and non-observant. Although American Mizrahi agreed to cooperate with the FAZ, it insisted on its right to act as an autonomous body. The Cincinnati conference passed a resolution against joining the FAZ. The FAZ leadership, which had assisted in the founding of the Mizrahi movement of America, thus felt misled.²⁸ The protracted conflict simmering between the two groups impeded the Mizrahi organizational process. It was reignited by the election of Louis Brandeis as president and by the return of Jacob de Haas (who had earlier been vehement in his attempts to suppress the non-conforming United Zionists) to the secretariat.²⁹ Even when the leadership of the FAZ came into Eastern European hands with the appointment of Louis Lipsky, the Mizrahi's fears were not allayed.

However, as the center of Mizrahi activity shifted progressively from the Midwest to New York, cooperation with the FAZ increased. At the Second Mizrahi Conference, held in New York in 1915, a decision was made to transfer the movement's organization department—headed by Berlin—to New York. Although the central office remained for the time being in St. Louis, a shift in the orientation of the Mizrahi organization began to be felt. Once the central office also moved to New York, after the Third Conference (1916), a chapter in the history

27 Friesel, *The Zionist Movement in the United States*, 137.

28 On the visit to Chicago, see *Ha-ivri*, no. 6 (1914): 43.

29 Nathaniel Katzberg suggests that when Meir Berlin came to the United States, he harbored irredentist views of Mizrahi's position in American Zionism. In this respect, Katzburg agrees with Grinstein; see "Orthodox Judaism and Early Zionism in America," 221. Another possibility is that Berlin was influenced by the position of the majority in the American Mizrahi. See Bar-Ilan, *Letters of Rabbi Meir*, 18–20 and notes. Urofsky also is of the opinion that Berlin, upon his arrival in the United States, found that American Mizrahi leaders mostly favored cooling relations with the FAZ. See Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 102.

of the American Mizrachi came to an end. The Midwestern leadership was replaced by leaders who had recently emigrated from Europe: Berlin was elected president, and Rabbi Judah Leib Fishman (later known as Rabbi Maimon) became a member of the central committee. Berlin clearly declared his conception of American Mizrachi as an integral part of the World Zionist Organization and a member of the World Mizrachi Organization, ready to cooperate with any element within the Zionist camp: "One should not force any Jew out of the organization for the building of the Land of Israel."³⁰

Although East Coast representatives, who favored cooperation with the FAZ, now took a more prominent place in the Mizrachi leadership, relations with the FAZ remained strained for many years. On one side, the organization was aware that its grassroots support came from Eastern European Jews who were suspicious of the Federation. On the other, the leadership of the FAZ feared that Mizrachi might trespass upon its turf. In addition, the Mizrachi movement was reluctant to subordinate its educational and public activities to the authority of the Zionist Organization of America (established in 1918) or to the Zionist Provisional Committee. The independence of American Mizrachi had already incurred a heavy cost when, at the outbreak of World War I, the FAZ leadership tried to block Berlin's return to the United States.³¹

American Mizrachi's Principles

More than any other Zionist organization, Mizrachi was concerned about the difficulty of maintaining a Jewish, particularly an Orthodox, identity in America. Mizrachi members in the United States were convinced that the Zionist movement was duty-bound to establish a state in the Land of Israel to which all Jews, including American Jews (and especially Orthodox Jews), should immigrate. A resolution to that effect was adopted at the First Mizrachi Conference in Cincinnati: "Mizrachi's major goal is to establish a safe life for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, based on Torah and Judaism,"³² and each delegate received, along

30 M. Berlin, "Mizrachi and Its Task," in *An ofener brif zu ale shuliden in amerika* (St. Louis: Hamizrachi, 1915), 7; M. Berlin, "What the Mizrachi Demands," *Ha-ivri*, no. 2 (1914): 10.

31 Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 241.

32 D. B. Abramowitz, "The Mizrachi Settlement Fund," in *Di Mizrachi Bevegung* (St. Louis: Mizrachi, 1915), 12–15, 21. See also Rabbi Abraham Jacob Gershon Lesser's address to the Cincinnati

with his voting card, the slogan: “to the East, to the East!... Only there does my soul seek its fulfillment!” Such sentiments went far beyond the scope of the debate as reflected in the pages of *Shivat ziiyyon* in the days just before World War I.

However, by the time of the Third Mizrahi Conference, held in Chicago in 1916, two rival approaches had emerged. The first demanded concentration on practical work in the Land of Israel, while the second advocated greater involvement in the contemporary American Jewish scene for the preservation of Jewish religious life. The latter won the day, determining the character of the Mizrahi movement in America for many years to come.³³ Mizrahi fought, for instance, for a five-day work week, which would make Sabbath observance possible. The slogan “work in the present” in America distinguished the American Mizrahi movement from its counterpart in Europe. Whereas the European movement was mostly concerned with the salvation of Jews, Mizrahi in the United States had inscribed the salvation of Judaism on its banner.³⁴

The outbreak of World War I, which caused the cessation of Mizrahi activity in Germany, and the strong leadership of Rabbi Meir Berlin brought American Mizrahi to the center of the world Mizrahi movement. During the war years, the headquarters of the World Mizrahi Organization, as well as those of the “Temporary Zionist Executive,” were established in New York. Mizrahi took a prominent part in the intensive Zionist activities of those years: the founding of the Joint Distribution Committee; the organization of aid to the communities of Eastern Europe; the establishment of the American Jewish Congress,³⁵ and the establishment of the Anglo-American Inter-Allied Mizrahi Bureau, which served as the base for international postwar Mizrahi activity.³⁶ The American Mizrahi movement also grew to an impressive size, boasting thousands of members in more than a hundred societies scattered throughout the United States and Canada.³⁷ In the four years between the First (Cincinnati) and Fifth (Philadelphia) Mizrahi Conferences, membership increased several hundred percent, an in-

conference in *Ha-Ivri*, nos. 9-10 (1914): 68; and the address by Judge Spiegel in the same issue.

33 J. L. Maimon, *For the Time and for the Generation: Essays and Articles* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1965), 61.

34 See Rabbi Ashinsky's address to the Cincinnati conference in *Ha-ivri*, no. 11 (1914): 82.

35 Bar-Ilan, *From Volozhin to Jerusalem*, 513-516, 525-528.

36 Bar-Ilan, *Letters of Rabbi Meir*, 29 (introductory chapter).

37 *Memorial Book of the Fifth Annual Conference of Mizrahi in America* (N. p., 1918).

crease that paralleled that of the FAZ. By the time of the first meeting of the American Jewish Congress in December 1918, American Mizrahi had become one of the most important Zionist organizations in the United States.³⁸

Mizrahi's Use of the Book *Shivat Ziyon*

At the Second Mizrahi Conference in New York (May 1916), it was agreed that Daniel Rosenthal would publish an American edition of *Shivat ziyon*. In his introduction, Rosenthal explained that the original edition was out of print and that Slutsky himself had transferred the publication rights to the Mizrahi organization in 1913.³⁹ In its republished version, the book was undoubtedly designed to serve as propaganda for the Mizrahi organization, as suggested by its distribution in the New York branches of Mizrahi and the inclusion of the resolution of the Third Mizrahi Conference (Chicago, 1916) at the head of the volume. That resolution bore the stamp of practical Zionism—with its emphasis on concrete activities in the Land of Israel (settlement, education, and aid to new immigrants)—that characterized the American Mizrahi movement. The main supporter of the republication of *Shivat ziyon* was apparently Rabbi Judah Leib Fishman, who arrived in America after having been expelled from the Land of Israel (together with other leaders of the Yishuv) by the Turkish authorities. Until his return to the Land of Israel after the war, Fishman was very active in the American Mizrahi Movement.

The Mizrahi leadership elected at the New York conference of May 1915 authorized Rosenthal to republish *Shivat ziyon* as a series of pamphlets.⁴⁰ However, because of a lack of funds, the intention to print all of the letters that had appeared in the original text was put aside

38 See Bar-Ilan, *From Volozhin to Jerusalem*, 527–528. For the Zionist Movement in general and the struggle to establish the American Jewish Congress, see Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 178, 183. Gedaliah Bublick, one of the most prominent Mizrahi leaders in the United States, also chaired the founding committee of the congress; see Patashnik, “The Movement,” 221, 245.

39 The list of delegates at the Vienna conference indeed included Slutsky's name. See *Ha-ivri* 4, nos. 6–8 (1913): 51.

40 Slutsky, *Chapters from Shivat ziyon*, title page. The Mizrahi conference at Vienna was held in the summer of 1913, and not in 1914, as Rosenthal claims; it therefore preceded the Eleventh Zionist Congress. According to the report in *Ha-ivri*, Slutsky, who was a member of Mizrahi, had already transferred the publication rights to the book to World Mizrahi at the Mizrahi meeting in Hamburg in May 1913; see *Ha-ivri* 4, no. 1 (1913): 5.

and they selected only some letters for publication.⁴¹ We may assume that Rosenthal consulted Fishman in the selection of the letters, such as those of Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, who had headed the traditional sector of the *Hibbat Ziyon* Movement, and of Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines, the founder and first leader of Mizrahi. On the other hand, an article by Rabbi Fishman was added.

While the letters of Rabbis Kalischer and Guttmacher were chosen because of their authors' roles in the pioneering stages of Zionist activity, those of Berlin, Eliasberg, Meir Leibush Weiser (the Malbim), Trunk, Spektor, and Levin of Dinaburg were chosen more for their authors' prestige in Eastern European traditional society than for their content. Indeed, the editor explained that he had intended to hold the letters of the Malbim, Trunk, Spector, and Levin for the second pamphlet, but their brevity allowed him to find space for them in the first. The letters were accompanied, for the most part, by biographical annotations by Rosenthal, assisted by Fishman.

The article by Fishman, which was added to this edition, deserves attention. Judah Leib Fishman was born in Bessarabia in 1875 and officiated as rabbi of the town of Ungeni. His career spanned three generations of Religious Zionism. He participated in the movement from the time of *Hibbat Ziyon* to the founding of the State of Israel. A scholarly figure who knew how to combine his literary work with political activity, his contribution to Zionist thought and to the organization of Religious Zionism on an international level was most impressive. Only one personality in Religious Zionism, Rabbi Meir Berlin, may be compared to him. However, the latter—inasmuch as he died in 1949—had no influence upon the development of the State of Israel. Fishman's article in *Shivat ziyon*,⁴² which had previously appeared in the Mizrahi movement's journal *Ha-ivri*, gives his impression of the religious life of the pioneers in the *moshavot* in the Land of Israel. His purpose was obviously to counteract the rumors that the pioneers were secularizing the Holy Land, which had induced doubts about whether Religious Zionists should support the settlers.

Although Fishman's article in *Shivat ziyon* contributed nothing es-

41 On the title page, the editor indeed thanks Rabbi Fishman for the biographical information about the rabbis whose letters he published.

42 Slutsky, *Chapters from Shivat ziyon*, 30.

sentially new to Religious Zionist thought, another article, which he also wrote in America and published there years later as a pamphlet in Hebrew and Yiddish, was destined to become the ideological program of the Mizrachi World Organization. Here, Fishman went beyond the bounds of Religious Zionist thinking in his insistence that Jewish identity was primarily national rather than religious. Fishman's personal courage and spiritual boldness, evident throughout his years of Zionist activity, enabled him to deliver a clear-cut denunciation of the Agudat Yisrael opposition to Zionism. His extreme view, however, was never accepted by the Mizrachi movement as a whole. Nevertheless, we may view Fishman's assertion that the Torah was nonexistent unless the Jewish people lived in their homeland as an extension of the revolutionary article by Mohilever, expressing a preference for non-observant Jews living in the Land of Israel over observant Jews of the diaspora, that opened the European editions of *Shivat ziiyyon*.

The American edition of *Shivat ziiyyon* thus became the official manifesto of the Mizrachi movement in the United States⁴³ and may be given credit, at least in part, for the impressive increase in Mizrachi membership during and after World War I. Whereas thirty Mizrachi societies sent delegates to the First Mizrachi Conference in Cincinnati, two hundred and thirty participated in the Eighth Conference.⁴⁴ The Mizrachi movement took over the leadership of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, which laid the foundations of modern Orthodoxy in America.⁴⁵ Mizrachi made great contributions to Jewish life and education in both America and in the settlement in the Land of Israel.⁴⁶ Indeed, more American Mizrachi members fulfilled their Zionist ideology by actual settlement in the Land of Israel than did members of any other American Zionist group.

43 J. Fishman, *The Mission of Mizrachi* (New York, 1917).

44 Patashnik, "The Movement," 222.

45 Ibid., 220–221. The leader of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, Rabbi S. E. Jaffe, joined the Mizrachi. See *Ha-ivri*, nos. 4–5 (1914): 30; Gurock, "The Orthodox Jewish Organizations in America," in Almog, Reinhartz, & Shapira, *Zionism and Religion*, 267–275.

46 Patashnik, "The Movement," 221–222.

XI. THE LIDA YESHIVAH: A UNIQUE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING

Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines, the founder and first leader of the Mizrachi movement, is remembered for his crucial role in the founding of the first Religious Zionist movement. Less well known is his ideological and practical innovation in the founding of a modern yeshivah in which secular as well as religious studies were pursued. Reines founded two such yeshivot in Lithuania, one in Świąciany in the 1880s and another in Lida during the first decade of the twentieth century.¹

Rabbi Reines was a bold communal figure who did not hesitate to express his opinions or to take steps that the local rabbinic leadership might find unacceptable. He sharply criticized the educational practices of the traditional yeshivot, grounded in casuistical argumentation and associative inferences, and blamed them for the social difficulties in which Eastern European Jewry found itself.² On the basis of an incisive analysis of the crisis facing the yeshivot and traditional education and to the distress of the rabbis of the time, he established his own yeshivot.

Reines wrote prolifically on halakhic matters and proposed methods

1 The most important studies of Reines, his life, and his oeuvre include the following: H. Reines, "Isaac Jacob Reines, a Jewish Leader," in *Jewish Leaders, 1750–1940*, ed. L. Jung (New York: Bloch, 1953); J. L. Fishman, *The Mizrachi Book: Anthology in Memory of Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines on the Thirtieth Anniversary of His Death* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1946); M. S. Shapira, *R. Moses Samuel and His Generation: Essays and Letters from the Bequest of Rabbi Moses Samuel* (New York: 1924), 141–152; B. Ziv, "Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah," *Ha-avar* 16 (1969); I. Klausner, "The Initial Establishment of Mizrachi by Rabbi I. J. Reines," in *The Book of Religious Zionism* 1, ed. I. Rafael and S. Zalman Shragai (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1977); G. Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights: Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1985); J. Shapira, *Philosophy, Halakhah, and Zionism: On the Intellectual World of Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines* (Bnei Brak: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-me'uhad, 2002); A. Manor, I. Gnozovitz, and A. Landau, eds., *The Lida Book* (Tel Aviv: Association of Lida Émigrés in Israel, 1970), 94–134; M. Packer, "The Fervent Young," *Ha-ivri* 7, no. 11 (1917); Levinson, "Education in Mizrachi's Work," *Ha-ivri* 7 (1917): 10–11; Bin-Nun, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines: A Biographical Sketch," *Ha-ivri* 7, no. 11 (1917): 5–9. Reines's writings on the subject of the Lida yeshivah include I. J. Reines, *The Two Luminaries* (Pietrikow, 1913); I. J. Reines, *Mishkenot ya' aqov (On the Yeshivah at Lida)* (Lida, 1910); I. J. Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah in Lida* (Vilna, 1907); I. J. Reines, *Remarks on the New Yeshivah: Collection of Printed Materials and Circulars from the Central Zionist Archive*, 4 Nisan 5665 [9 April 1905]; and I. J. Reines, *Qol ya' aqov* (Lida, 1908). On the Świąciany yeshivah, see I. J. Reines, *On the Świąciany Yeshivah: Complete Plan* (Mayence, 1880).

2 Ibid., 298–299.

of analysis and logical inference that differed from those conventionally used in learned circles. However, he was better known for his homiletical and aggadic books, in which he treated this sort of literature in an original way, using it as a guide and a model for his life.³ During the final two decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, he composed some key texts of Religious Zionist thought. The most important was *A New Light on Zion* [*Or ḥadash al ziiyyon*], dedicated to Theodor Herzl. In these books, Reines used rabbinic sources as the basis for a defense of the Zionist idea against its slanderers and detractors within haredi society. He enlisted in political Zionism at the time of the Third Zionist Congress (1899), when most of the rabbinic public in Russia and Poland had already left the movement. As the preeminent leader of the minority within the haredi community that continued to support the Zionist movement, he was close to Herzl and a sharp disputant of Aḥad Ha-Am. In 1902, he founded the Mizrachi movement after he realized that the Zionist movement would not avoid cultural activities that displeased the haredim. With the establishment of Mizrachi and the agreement at the Minsk conference of Russian Zionists in 1902 to assign responsibility for education to local Zionist groups, he effectively accepted the division of cultural and educational activities between the two spiritual streams within the Zionist Organization, the religious and the secular.

Although Reines had no formal secular education, he was immersed in the literature of the time and was sensitive to social trends within the contemporary Jewish world.⁴ In the modernized yeshivah of Świąciany, he aimed to educate a generation of men who would combine the roles of rabbi and “official rabbi”⁵ in a single office-holder who would be seen as legitimate by both the Jewish community and the Russian government. He incorporated secular studies into the yeshivah’s curriculum and led the yeshivah from 1882 to 1884. The yeshivah did not last long, however, because of the opposition it encountered within traditional society in Russia and Poland and within the Świąciany community it-

3 Shapira, *Philosophy, Halakhah, and Zionism*, 74–77.

4 D. Aloni, “In Rabbi Reines’s Circle,” in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 127.

5 **Translator’s note:** The “official rabbi,” referred to in Hebrew by the somewhat disparaging term “*rav mi-ta’ am*,” was a position mandated by the Russian government; its incumbent was required, among other things, to maintain certain community records. It required a knowledge of Russian and other skills, but its incumbents might lack extensive rabbinic education.

self. In 1905, Rabbi Reines established the Lida yeshiva. He did so at a time when a number of young religious men sought the assistance of Mizrachi after having been turned away by the traditional yeshivot on account of their Zionist sympathies. He established the Lida yeshivah on the basis of the same principles he had used in Świąciany, and achieved considerable success there. Even though similar institutions already existed in Germany and Hungary,⁶ this was a daring and pioneering effort within Russian and Polish Jewry. In his Zionist initiatives and in his educational efforts, he was motivated by an interest in saving the haredi community from the dissolution that threatened it.⁷ In this chapter, we will examine the interrelationship between the political doctrine and the educational doctrine that underlies Religious Zionism as understood by Reines.

While the Świąciany yeshivah lasted for only two years,⁸ the Lida yeshivah lasted for ten (1905–1915) and closed only because of an external development, World War I.⁹ The factors contributing to the comparative success of the Lida yeshivah included the gradual disintegration of haredi Jewry in Russia, the weakening of Jewish centralized authority, the manifest penetration of the Haskalah into traditional (that is, pre-modern) Jewish society, and the Russian acculturation of the Jewish community.¹⁰ The power enjoyed by the haredi leadership

6 I am referring here to the modern yeshivah established by Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer in Hungary in the 1850s and to the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin established some twenty years later. See I. Unna, "Asriel Hildesheimer," in *Jewish Leaders*, ed. Leo Jung (New York: Bloch, 1953), 215–231; Eliav, "Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer's Role in the Spiritual Struggle of Hungarian Jewry," 59–86; M. Eliav, "Torah and Worldly Life in Hungary," *Sinai* 51 (1962): 127–142.

7 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 8, 21, 25; Reines, *Mishkenot ya`aqov*, 7; Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 3–5, 12; Reines, *On the Świąciany Yeshivah*, 7; Reines, *Remarks*, 2. See further, M. Reines, *Nezah yisra'el*, 47; J. J. Weinberg, "The Leader," *Ba-mishor* 34 (1940): 8–11; J. J. Weinberg, *Li-peraqim Collected Speeches, Talks, and Essays* (Warsaw, 1936), 417; Shapira, *Philosophy, Halakhah, and Zionism*, 295–298.

8 Salmon, "The Beginnings of Reform," 161–162; Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 35–44.

9 Some students were drafted into the army, others left because of difficult wartime conditions, and the efforts to reestablish the yeshivah in the Ukrainian city of Elisavetgrad were abandoned on account of the pogroms there; see M. Cohen, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines," in Fishman, *The Mizrachi Book*, 100–101; S. Polachek, *Novellae of the Illui of Metshet*, ed. J. L. Goldberg (New York, 1947), 28–29.

10 The Haskalah movement made gains notwithstanding the *numerous clausus* legislation enacted during 1886–1887 under the reign of Tsar Alexander III. By the end of the nineteenth century, the movement numbered some 60,000 to 70,000 Jews, up from a handful at the beginning of the century and only a few hundred at its midpoint. The 1896 census showed that about a quarter of the Jewish population knew Russian; see J. Slutsky, "The Growth of the Jewish-Russian Intelligentsia," *Zion* 25 (1960): 236–237. According to the JCA, between 1878 and 1895 more

in Russia during the early 1880s had diminished by the early twentieth century to the point that it could no longer shut down political or social initiatives that challenged the old ways. In these circumstances the Mizrachi movement got its start (in 1902), and so did the Lida yeshivah.

Lida itself was an economically and culturally vibrant Jewish community during the late nineteenth century and remained so until World War I. Of the nine thousand residents in the city, more than five thousand were Jews—a ratio not unusual for Jewish communities in White Russia. Its proximity to Vilna exercised considerable influence. Some of its youth already studied at modern Jewish schools or Russian schools in Lida itself and nearby cities, and some went to Vilna to study. Situated at a railway junction, Lida had the atmosphere of a large and open city. Zionist activity of various sorts made its contribution, and hundreds of students who came to the town's yeshivah from all over Russia added a sense of the wide world. But because the town rabbi also served as head of the yeshivah, there were potential obstacles to the opening of a new yeshivah and a Mizrachi chapter in this center of Jewish life in Lithuania and White Russia.¹¹

After the failure of the Świeciany yeshivah, Rabbi Reines did not abandon his program of educational reform, which he sensed would respond to the challenges of the time. At first, he hoped that these reforms would be instituted by the Hovevei Ziyon movement in the Land of Israel, but that movement was more interested in establishing and developing new settlements than in educational issues.¹² As

than a quarter of the students in Jewish elementary schools studied in secular schools as well. The spread of Haskalah and secular studies at the turn of the twentieth century is evident from the following data: the number of Jews enrolled in secular high schools almost quadrupled between 1886 and 1911, growing from 14,438 to 52,578. And despite the *numerus clausus*, the number of Jews who acquired higher education doubled over that period, from 1,856 in 1886 to 4,266 in 1907. It should be recalled that thousands of Jews studied in institutions of higher education to which the *numerus clausus* did not apply. See I. Trotzky, "Jews in Russian Schools," in *Russian Jewry 1860–1917* (New York: Yoseloff, 1966), 408–415; S. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, trans. by I. Friedlaender (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1916); S. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, ed. J. Frumkin (Philadelphia, 1920), vol. 3, 160–164; J. S. Raisin, *The Haskalah Movement in Russia* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1913), 273, 292, 295–302.

11 A. Landau, "Lida through the Ages," in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 27–31.

12 Such a suggestion was made in 1887 to Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, leader of the haredim within the Hibbat Ziyon movement. See J. L. Fishman, *Biography of Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines* (Jerusalem: 1934), 11; see also Bin-Nun, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines," 9. Mohilever's earlier opposition

early as 1895, Reines initiated efforts to establish a modern yeshivah in Lida, but he found scant support and was unable to gain a government license.¹³ Ultimately, however, the alienation of the young, the pressure they applied on the Mizrahi leadership, and the changing attitude of the Russian government toward the Jews enabled him to establish his yeshivah in Lida.

The idea of establishing a new sort of yeshivah took shape within a group of students who had been persecuted in the traditional yeshivot because of their support for Zionism and for Mizrahi. Under the leadership of Rabbi Jacob Berman—later a founder of the Mizrahi educational system in the Land of Israel—they demanded overall reforms in all yeshivot, including the introduction of secular studies and religious studies other than classical rabbinics into the curriculum. They also sought to change the reliance on “rabbinic emissaries” as fund-raisers for the yeshivot.¹⁴ At a Mizrahi conference in Lida in 1903, this group of students secured the establishment of a committee to look into ways in which a Mizrahi yeshivah might be established. At the first international Mizrahi conference held in Pressburg in 1904, it was decided to establish a Mizrahi yeshivah that would be supported by the movement’s local chapters.¹⁵ But Reines was disinclined to limit support for the yeshivah to Mizrahi, and sought a broader public base of support.¹⁶

to Hildesheimer’s proposal to establish a yeshivah in Petaḥ Tiqva shows his preference for settlement over education, consistent with the *Hibbat Ziyyon* platform; see Fishman, *The Book of Samuel*, 28. On Reines’s contacts with Mohilever, see Fishman, “History and Development of Mizrahi,” 314.

13 Ben-Porat, Yudelowitz, Ben-Asher, et al., “Lida,” *Ha-meiliz* 34 (1895), nos. 145, 164, 199, 211; Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 283–285; Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 21.

14 Klausner, “The Initial Establishment of Mizrahi,” 358.

15 J. Berman, *Recollections of Eastern European Jews during the First Half of the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. Bar-Asher (Jerusalem, 1976), 11–12; Cohen, “Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines,” 96–97.

16 Moshe Cohen’s argument that the Lida yeshivah was established as a Zionist yeshivah does not square either with Reines’s own statements or with those of the yeshivah’s leadership at the time. A Zionist group was formed by the older students at the yeshivah under the leadership of their teacher Pinḥas Schiffman, but their effort was not supported by the yeshivah’s powers-that-be and was disparaged by Rabbi Solomon Polachek. See Ziv, “Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah,” 82–83; Packer, “The Fervent Young,” 11–12. Malkiel Packer argued that Reines assumed that education in Torah together with Haskalah would lead naturally to Zionist leanings, but that position is neither proven nor necessarily logical. See also Levinson, “Education in Mizrahi’s Work,” 10. Had the Lida yeshivah been a clearly Zionist institution, it would not have gained the support of the JCA or of Baron David Günzburg, nor would it have received governmental recognition—recognition that was conditioned on the recommendation of Feivel Getz, the advisor to the Education Department in Vilna. All the individuals here mentioned were blatant anti-Zionists; see Cohen, “Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines,” 96–98. That said, it is true that many of the students at the Lida yeshivah came

Hoping to gain support from the haredi rabbinic leadership in Russia, which opposed Zionism in general and Mizrachi in particular, he established his yeshivah as an independent entity. Since it was established to operate in the spirit of the Mizrachi resolution, however, it prevented modern students in the traditional yeshivot—members of Mizrachi—from establishing their own separate yeshivah. As noted, Reines never saw his yeshivah as an arm of Mizrachi and its program. Rather, he sought to retain some of the values and institutions of haredi society.¹⁷

In the circulars published by Reines in connection with the establishment of the yeshivah, he compared the effort to that of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai in establishing the yeshivah at Yavneh following the destruction of the Second Temple, in that both were intended to save Judaism: "... It is a time in which we are waging a difficult and intense war against the spirit of apostasy and nihilism."¹⁸ In the Święciany yeshivah effort, Reines had emphasized the need to prepare students to earn a living and to train men who could serve as official rabbis. Now, however, he was alarmed about signs of disintegration within the Jewish community, assimilation, and abandonment of Jewish values.¹⁹ His purpose was "to save the young generation from confusion, from misgivings about the relationship between Judaism and humanity at large."²⁰

Lida at the time had already seen a rapidly advancing secularization of its young people, a move to acquire secular education—often in Russian schools—and the initial establishment of socialist cells, ranging from Bundist to Social-Revolutionary in their orientation.²¹ Reines had profound faith in the power of education to change a person.²² It was clear to him that the traditional yeshivot were failing to meet the needs of the time and were not providing their students with the education they needed to sustain themselves in the world. As a result, they

from Zionist families (ibid., 98). See also Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 285.

17 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha'ar* 2, 18. The two primary goals of the Lida yeshivah were to stem the exodus from the *heders* (traditional Jewish schools offering no secular education) to public schools and the rehabilitation of the rabbinate as an institution. In addition, it aspired to blend the roles of the traditional rabbi and the official rabbi. Cohen, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines," 95–96.

18 Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 286.

19 S. Zack, "The Lida Yeshivah," in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 110.

20 P. Schiffman, "The Great Yeshivah," in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 117.

21 Landau, "Lida through the Ages," 30–31.

22 Shapira, *Philosophy, Halakhah, and Zionism*, 302.

were driving young men away. He also understood that the students who remained in the traditional yeshivot were there because they had no choice, and that the institutions did not contribute to their students' self-esteem. He firmly maintained, therefore, that the Lida yeshivah had to confront modernity through a program of secular studies that would suit the needs of the time and had to change the students' negative impressions of themselves.²³ His initiative paralleled, in time and place, that of the Musar movement, which had a similar perception of the roots of the crisis, although it offered a very different solution.

Before the opening of the yeshivah, Reines provided a detailed explanation of the circumstances forming its background. He dealt at length with the economic situation that required teaching the students a profession or trade that would allow them to earn a living, discussed the contemporary role of rabbis, which required, among other things, that they have a general education, and talked about the poor self-image of the students in the haredi yeshivot. The program of studies reflected new ideas that favored, instead of traditional casuistry, a mode of Talmud study that emphasized straightforward logic and was directed toward resolving actual halakhic questions. The program included the study of Hebrew, Bible, Jewish history, Jewish literature and bibliography, and secular studies at the same level as those offered in the government schools. The yeshivah was divided into six classes, study there was to be over a period of six years, and supervision of the students' religious and moral lives was provided. Next to the yeshivah was a library, containing appropriate Hebrew books.²⁴

Although the yeshivah at Lida resembled that at Święciany in its primary goals and curriculum, its educational goals were clearly and substantially influenced by the public support it enjoyed and by the spirit of the times. In an announcement issued in 1882 by the Święciany yeshivah, Rabbi Reines's principal interest was in securing governmental recognition for his institution, something he thought would help the Jewish minority in Russia obtain equal rights. As a practical matter, that interest was expressed in his readiness to conform his school's secular curriculum to that in the government's educational

23 Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 286–287; D. Vinogradov, “The Night of the Ninth of Av in the Home of the Yeshivah's Founder,” in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 125.

24 Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 287–288.

system and to appoint teachers who had graduated from the government rabbinical seminaries.²⁵ He anticipated that the graduates of the Świąciany yeshivah would be recognized by the government and would serve as “official rabbis.” When Reines set out to design the program for the Lida yeshivah, however, what concerned him most was the internal crisis facing haredi society. He therefore chose Rabbi Solomon Polachek (“the *illui* [Talmudic prodigy] of Metshet”) as the head of the yeshivah²⁶ and Rabbi Elijah Berkovsky as its spiritual overseer.²⁷ Rabbi Polachek was a devoted student of Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik, one of the great scholars of the time and a leading opponent of Reines. With his appointment, Reines hoped to weaken haredi opposition to the yeshivah, and he ultimately succeeded in doing so. Polachek and Berkovsky had grown up in the yeshivah world and had not graduated from government-supported rabbinical seminaries. In appointing them, Reines gave some ground with respect to his method of study, yielding to the conventional methods in the Lithuanian yeshivot of the time.²⁸ His purpose was to secure the approval of the haredim, and to that end he set aside the ideas for a Mizrachi yeshivah which had been adopted by its founding committee.²⁹ He also steered alumni toward continuing their study in traditional yeshivot, thereby demonstrating that he saw the Lida yeshivah as complementing the traditional insti-

25 J. Kovarsky, “Świąciany,” *Ha-levanon* 19 (1882): 7, 52; *ibid.*, no. 29, 288; See also Shapira, *R. Moses Samuel and His Generation*, 42–43. In 1873, the rabbinical seminaries in Vilna and Zhitomir were closed, and therefore could not provide teachers for the Lida yeshivah. Teachers of secular studies, however, were recruited from the teachers’ seminary in Vilna led by Dr. Joshua Steinberg.

26 The Illui of Metshet was a student and protégé of Rabbi Hayyim of Brisk; see also S. Bialovlotzky, “The Lithuanian Torah Centers,” in *Lithuanian Jewry*, ed. Lipitz, et al., 204; Meir Berlin, “One of the Seekers,” *Ha-zofeh*, 10 Elul 5698 [1938], no. 212; A. Karlin, “Halakhic Literature,” in *Lithuanian Jewry*, ed. Lipitz, et al., 262; Polachek, *Novellae of the Illui of Metshet*, 13–21. The secular education of the Illui of Metshet was similar in its scope to that of traditional rabbis (*ibid.*, 16). Meir Berlin’s argument that the Illui of Metshet acquired a degree of sympathy for Zionism is not based on any public statement. See D. Tidhar, “Rabbi Solomon Polachek,” in *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers of the Yishuv* (Tel Aviv: Tidhar, 1969), vol. 18, 5326–5330; Cohen, “Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines,” 99. See also Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 291; A. Rabinowitz, “The Young Horodishchi,” in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 116.

27 Ziv, “Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah,” 82; see also Polachek, *Novellae of the Illui of Metshet*, 27.

28 M. Czinowitz, “On the History of the Lida Yeshivah,” in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 104–105; M. Goldberg, “Biography of the Illui of Metshet,” in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 122–124.

29 Berman, *Recollections of Eastern European Jews*, 11, 14. On matters related to the yeshivah, Reines looked to the entire haredi community, drawing no distinctions between Zionists and their opponents; see Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 12.

tutions rather than displacing them.³⁰ Forgoing a full identification of the yeshivah with the Mizrachi movement cut off a source of funding and necessitated sending emissaries to raise funds for the yeshivah, something that distressed not only the young people of Mizrachi³¹ but also Reines himself.³²

As early as 1882 Reines had declared, "Life and its demands are pounding on the gates of our study halls. If we do not open them ourselves, they will force their way in and endanger the entire structure."³³ He reiterated that view of the situation in his speech at the opening of the Lida yeshivah in 1905,³⁴ but differences can be seen between his earlier perspective and his later one. After the establishment of the Lida yeshivah, Reines declared that "the door has thereby been broken down, and much of the building is crumbling."³⁵ In his prospectus for the Świąteczny yeshivah, he cast most of the blame for the crisis in hare-di society on the maskilim who had favored acculturation over vigorous assertion of Jewish uniqueness, but in his comments on the founding of the Lida yeshivah, he placed the blame on the Jewish bourgeoisie:

They reached the point of seeing the Talmud as the source of all iniquity and injustice and all those who engage in its study as sinful, foolish, and narrow-minded. As a result, they came to treat scholars as morally and mentally impaired, despising them greatly. That attitude of disdain then passed to all strata of the people, permeating them and leading to open hatred for every scholar.³⁶

Reines's sense of crisis grew out of the actual experience of the Russian Jewish community in his time. He witnessed the visible in-

30 L. G., "The Lida Yeshivah's Students Reminisce," in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 130.

31 Berman, *Recollections of Eastern European Jews*, 12.

32 Letter from Rabbi Reines to Mordecai Ben-Hillel Hakohen, 1907, Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem: the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Mordecai Ben-Hillel Hakohen Archive.

33 Weinberg, "The Leader," 9.

34 Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 11.

35 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 22.

36 Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 11.

roads of the Haskalah, the waves of westward emigration, the renewal of pogroms at the beginning of the twentieth century, the hostile policies of the Russian government toward the Jews, the Jews' own economic decline, and the intensification within the Jewish community of the revolutionary spirit.³⁷ This new state of affairs was complicated and threatening, and the educational program devised for the Świąciany yeshivah did not offer an adequate response. The challenge was no longer merely that of how to train a new cadre of rabbinic leaders that would be acceptable to the government and to the maskilim, but that of how to maintain a committed haredi community.

The yeshivah's educational innovation lay in its providing training in the basic matters needed to earn a livelihood. It therefore emphasized the study of such subjects as arithmetic and languages. In Reines's assessment, the conflict between haredim and maskilim had reached a crucial point, and now they were two camps arrayed against each other rather than a majority resisting the incursions of a misguided minority. He believed that the influence of the maskilim had grown, for they were armed with "natural and practical weaponry" while the haredim relied only on "moral weaponry."³⁸ To put it differently, the maskilim dealt with matters related to this world, while the haredim were concerned only with the world-to-come. In his curriculum, Rabbi Reines officially recognized the force and the legitimacy of these motives and needs,³⁹ and included a full complement of knowledge that "prepared one for life."⁴⁰ He saw no conflict between these new emphases and reforms and the demands of the Torah. Rather, he saw them as pertaining to the neutral domain of concern for practical life,⁴¹ although he acknowledged that his program took time away from study of Torah.⁴² He included in his yeshivah's program subjects the need for which had not yet been recognized by the traditional yeshivot, and he saw his work as

37 S. Dubnow, *History of the Jews*, vol. 5 (South Brunswick: Yosseloff, 1973), 512–666.

38 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 6.

39 Ibid., 8. Joseph Shapira has aptly noted that when Reines established the Świąciany yeshivah, he already understood that general education was not merely a tool for earning a living but also a human value. In Reines's words, "a broad knowledge ... of the sciences is needed by every person as an aspect of his humanity" (Shapira, *Philosophy, Halakhah, and Zionism*, 295).

40 Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 7; see also Reines, *Remarks*, 1; Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 8; Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 4; Weinberg, *Li-peraqim*, 423.

41 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar*, 213.

42 Ibid., 23.

an expansion rather than a narrowing of the curriculum. That approach entailed an indirect criticism of the values of the traditional yeshivot, which recognized only the ideal of Torah study without any “material considerations”⁴³ and neglected the education of the majority of the young people, who would not hold rabbinic positions and would have to earn a living.

Rabbi Reines emphasized the economic factors that contributed to the crisis, but did not disregard the weakening of personal faith in the tradition and its paragons. It followed that the values of the haredi community had undergone change. Secular learning was no longer seen merely as preparation for earning a living; it was, in addition, a source of social esteem, and rabbis who lacked it “suffered from diminished status and disdain.”⁴⁴ Accordingly, those loyal to the haredi value system were obliged “to introduce a bit of the beauty of Japheth into the tents of Shem; otherwise, who will guarantee that our sons will not go out and seek nurture in foreign fields?”⁴⁵ In other words, Reines realized that preservation of the haredi way of life required paying attention to quotidian needs and providing education suited to dealing with them.

The program at the Święciany yeshivah had been designed to strengthen rabbinic institutions, but that was only a secondary goal at Lida. In the early 1880s, Reines witnessed a decline in the authority of the rabbinic office as an institution, that is, in the manner in which rabbis were appointed and supported. A quarter century later, by contrast, the root of the problem lay in the rabbis’ lack of qualifications. In those times, “a congregation wanting to appoint a [rabbinic] leader required candidates to have not only knowledge of Torah but also other, worldly knowledge.”⁴⁶ Among other things, the Lida yeshivah set itself the goal of training a new generation of rabbis who would gain the respect of their congregants,⁴⁷ after which “the honor of the rabbinate would be

43 Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 11.

44 P. Schiffman, “The Yeshivah in Lida”; Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 1; Reines, *Mishkenot ya`aqov*, 8.

45 Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 1; see also, Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 23. (**Translator’s note:** The terms “beauty of Japheth” and “tents of Shem” allude to a rabbinic interpretation of Gen. 9:27, which suggests that the Greek appreciation of beauty—extended to encompass secular study—has a place in Jewish life.)

46 Ibid., 8. See also Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 5; M. D. Yudelowitz, *Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines: His Life and Work* (Warsaw, 1920), 25.

47 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 12, 14.

reinstated, the crown of the rabbinate would be restored to its glory, and peace would be upon Israel.”⁴⁸

Rabbi Reines assumed that a graduate of this sort would satisfy the government’s requirements and be appointed an “official rabbi,”⁴⁹ something he had wanted to achieve at the Świeciany yeshivah. He meant thereby to put an end to the duplication of rabbinic offices—a traditional rabbi and an “official rabbi” serving side by side in each community.⁵⁰ He hoped that this new sort of training would bring about not only broader knowledge but also the “self-respect” that would put an end to the system in which rabbinic offices were obtained through practices that were “degrading and humiliating to the rabbi.”⁵¹

Having become increasingly less optimistic about the prospects for the political integration of Jews into Russia, Reines came to stress the attitude of the community, rather than the state, toward the rabbis. A balanced analysis of the declared goals of the Lida yeshivah’s founder shows that the most important one was the reeducation of the *ba`alei batim*, the lay people, who ultimately held the reins of Jewish leadership. His premise was that the crisis in the haredi community had been brought about by the scarcity of Torah-educated *ba`alei batim*, who “cherished the Torah and its scholars.”⁵² In 1907, Rabbi Reines wrote that “our highest obligation now is to direct our attention to our future merchants and men of affairs, educating them on the knees of the Torah and the Talmud in the first instance. And they will remain loyal, building the entire house of Israel on that basis, along with its rabbis and scholars.”⁵³

It was hoped that the modern yeshivah would contribute to the realization of that goal in several ways. First, the students would gain

48 Ibid., 15.

49 Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 12.

50 Jacob Raisin takes this view as well; Raisin, *The Haskalah Movement*, 295–296. But if Reines’s criticism of haredi society in general and its educational institutions in particular are taken into account, it appears that his principal intention was to alter “the tradition of Vilna and Volozhin” and to develop a new type of rabbi. He expressly said that the alumni of his yeshivah were expected to be able to serve either as traditional rabbis or as official rabbis, or to hold both offices simultaneously. See Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 14; Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 12–13; Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 6; Reines, “Isaac Jacob Reines,” 289. See also Cohen, “Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines,” 96; Ziv, “Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah,” 83.

51 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 14.

52 Ibid., 13a; see also Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 9–11.

53 Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 11.

the secular education needed to earn a living, to their own satisfaction and that of their parents. It would also resolve difficulties in marriage resulting from the cultural gap between young women, who usually attended secular schools, and young men, who were usually educated exclusively in traditional educational institutions.⁵⁴ He wrote that “while students coming out of this sort of yeshivah will have directed most of their efforts to study of Talmud and halakhic codes, secular studies will nevertheless not be foreign to them, and they will know something of the ways of the world and polite behavior. Students of this sort will please enlightened girls.”⁵⁵ In this way, he believed, the traditional pattern of marriages uniting rabbis’ families and those of lay communal leaders would be strengthened, and the structure of haredi society reestablished. The yeshivah would also train teachers of secular subjects and diminish the haredi concern about the influence of secular teachers on their children.⁵⁶ The training within a single yeshivah of teachers of both religious and secular subjects would allow for the presentation of a unified worldview within the haredi education system.⁵⁷ Rabbi Reines thus saw the curriculum of the Lida yeshivah as a tool with which to reintegrate *ba`alei batim* and rabbis within the haredi community on the basis of a blending of Torah and general education.⁵⁸

Reines’s analysis of haredi society and the way in which he took account of it in designing an educational program represented, without doubt, a new conceptual departure and a daring approach to the problems of the time. At the same time, Reines did not see his program as a revolutionary change in values, but rather as an attempt to find new ways to bolster the foundation of traditional society in new social circumstances “for which, and for whose demands, it was unprepared.”⁵⁹ His critique of haredi society was confined to a sober assessment of circumstances and their consequences:

54 Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 5; Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 24–25; Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 11.

55 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 13.

56 Ibid., 27.

57 Ibid. See also Reines, *Mishkenot ya`aqov*, 10; Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 13–14.

58 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 10, 15; Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 11; Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 6; Reines, *Remarks*, 1.

59 Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 5.

Why should we be angry at the young people who submit to the demands of life and society and go off in all directions? We must acknowledge our own sin, for we have failed to pay attention to the lot of the younger generation. We have not yet done anything to enable it to continue to study God's Torah as in the past; we have not yet done anything to give it the knowledge needed to maintain itself; we have not yet attempted to do anything to ensure its future standing in society.... To this day, students do not receive the knowledge they need when they enter into marriage, when they acquire rabbinic ordination, when they come to engage in trade and commerce, or when enter into human society.⁶⁰

But while Rabbi Reines continued to maintain that his only purpose in establishing the yeshivah was the preservation of haredi society, his students saw the integration of Torah, faith, and secular education as an innovation in values—a positive attitude toward modernity.⁶¹

Reines distinguished his effort from the “Torah and worldly life” (*torah im derekh erez*) concept developed in Germany by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, and declined to adopt the way of life of German Orthodoxy. His opposition to Hirsch's ideas was not ideological, but grew instead out of his displeasure with the means used by Hirsch to preserve the haredi community. In principle, he agreed with Hirsch:

It is clear to me that the aforesaid great Rabbi [Hirsch], in his efforts to succeed in this regard, directed his attention particularly to showing the true consistency of Torah with life, for he showed them that it was possible to be a faithful Jew, and continue to be counted among the haredim, while still meeting all the demands of life.⁶²

Recall that in Germany, “the demands of life” included knowing the national language, conforming one's attire to that worn by non-Jews,

60 Reines, *Remarks*, 1.

61 Packer, “Reines and His Yeshivah,” 17.

62 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha'ar* 1, 45.

shaving one's beard and side-curls, frequenting the theater and artistic exhibitions, studying in secular schools, learning a profession, and so forth.⁶³ As for Hirsch himself, Reines wrote:

Without doubt, his intentions were for the sake of Heaven, for it is known that he was a thoroughly righteous man, all of whose actions were for the sake of Heaven. And given the conditions prevalent in Germany, it may be that all his actions were well-suited to Jewish interests as well. But given the conditions that prevail in our parts, any attempt to institute such practices would be, in effect, an abandonment of religion.⁶⁴

Reines thus denied the possibility that haredi society in Eastern Europe could emulate the way of life and educational practices of Western European Orthodoxy, for the two groups were facing utterly different conditions. The severity of the religious and social crisis in the Jewish communities of Western Europe accounts for Hirsch's flexibility:

It should be recognized that in Germany when these means were employed, they had nothing left to lose, for Torah study there had declined markedly, great Torah scholars were very few, and ignorance [of things Jewish] had spread throughout the Land. In addition to all that, secularism had taken root to the point that Judaism was in great jeopardy. Were it not for the alertness of the aforesaid great Rabbi [Hirsch] in Frankfurt and our teacher, the great Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer, may the memory of the righteous endure to the world to come, in Berlin, Judaism would have had no remnant in Germany.⁶⁵

If we examine those areas not subject to "laws of the Torah," such as the structure and content of institutions, professional training, cus-

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., 24a.

toms, social life, and norms of external appearance and secular knowledge vis à vis Torah study, we find Reines open to a great degree of flexibility in matters related to the norms of the haredi community. He seems to be edging toward the conclusion that the appropriate degree of flexibility depends on the local conditions and changing times.

The Lida yeshivah differed from Orthodox educational institutions in Germany in its attitude toward Jewish nationalism. A strong spirit of nationalism held sway within Lida, while in Germany that spirit was held back by the Orthodox opposition to Zionism on the eve of World War I.⁶⁶

The curriculum at the Lida yeshivah was broader and richer than that at Święciany and extended beyond professional and rabbinical training. Reines argued that “the yeshivah must provide its students suitable knowledge of Bible, the Hebrew language and its practical grammar and usage, Jewish history from a traditional Jewish perspective, the literature of Israel, and needed bibliographical information.”⁶⁷ All of these made up the educational norms of the nationalist phase of the Haskalah.⁶⁸ It is noteworthy that this enrichment of the curriculum with Haskalah and nationalist elements involved primarily Hebrew subjects. The program of secular studies was designed to meet the requirements of the Russian gymnasium and of the state. “The yeshivah must provide studies in secular knowledge to the same extent as a municipal school, that is, complete and proper knowledge of the spoken and written Russian language, general and Russian history, general and specific geography of all five portions of the world, arithmetic, geometry, algebra, and a certain degree of natural science.”⁶⁹ It is evident today that Reines’s educational platform manifested a positive attitude

66 The hostility to Zionism on the part of Western European Orthodoxy became more intense when Zionism began to involve itself in education and culture, as discussed in chapter 5 of this book. The Orthodox saw the adoption of the Tenth Zionist Congress’s educational and cultural program as a declaration of a culture war between haredim and secularists regarding the future character of the Jewish people. The result was a crisis within Mizrachi and the departure from it of an important segment of its leadership in Western Europe, including the leaders of World Mizrachi in Frankfurt; see *Ha-modia*, no. 47-48 (1911): 750–751. Reines’s son, Abraham Ber, who had been named his assistant at the Lida yeshivah, generated opposition among the student body on account of his sympathy for German Orthodoxy, within which he had lived for some time; see Ziv, “Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah,” 82. On the younger Reines’s role, see also Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha’ar* 2, 15–16.

67 Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 6.

68 Packer, “Reines and His Yeshivah,” 16.

69 Ibid.

toward Jewish nationalism. Nevertheless, he was not optimistic about fulfilling that vision immediately.

With respect to religious studies, Reines reverted to the program designed for the Święciany yeshivah, which included selected passages from the rabbinic literature: “The yeshivah must provide its students with knowledge of Gemara, with Rashi’s commentary and Tosafot and the commentaries of the earlier and later halakhic writers [*rishonim* and *aharonim*] to the extent needed by a rabbi in Israel.”⁷⁰ The program was designed to give the student broad familiarity with Talmudic literature in its entirety, and the overall thrust was to set principles from a halakhic perspective. Religious studies were given priority, and seven hours a day were assigned to them, while secular studies were given three hours a day.⁷¹ The yeshivah adopted the system used in the secular schools—students were divided into classes, and progression from one class to the next was on the basis of final examinations, as was the award of the diploma, which was equivalent to rabbinic ordination.⁷²

The Lida yeshivah responded to the demands of the Haskalah not only in curriculum-related matters, but also in such externals as the appearance of the institution. In the yeshivah’s architectural design, Reines emphasized aesthetic values, making sure that the building was light and airy, and even providing for a garden around it. All of these improvements were consistent with his critique of conditions in the existing yeshivot, reflected in his statement that “no longer will God’s students be weak, bent, and dejected; the light of God will shine on them, and they will be glorious.”⁷³ One student at Lida spoke highly of his yeshivah in comparison with others because, among other things, “every week they would wash the floor and sometimes the windows and benches.”⁷⁴ This offers an interesting parallel between the Lida yeshivah and those Eastern European yeshivot that were influenced by the Musar movement.⁷⁵ The Lida yeshivah’s Talmud teachers had received

70 Ibid.

71 Reines, *Remarks*, 3–4.

72 Ibid.

73 Reines, *Qol ya`aqov*, 6.

74 Yudelowitz, *Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines*, 27. The students at the yeshivah wore buttons engraved with the words “Yavneh and its sages”; see Ziv, “Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah,” 81.

75 The yeshivot of the Musar movement differed from Lida in that the former emphasized study of Musar literature and the external appearance of the students, while the latter emphasized general education. Despite the efforts of Rabbi Nathan Zvi Finkel and his son, Rabbi Eliezer Judah Finkel,

the same training as the Talmud teachers at the traditional yeshivot, but the teachers who taught Hebrew subjects were haredi-maskilim, most of them affiliated with Mizrachi, and those who taught secular subjects were graduates of the rabbinical seminary in Vilna, which received government support.

The three groups of teachers thus differed from one another in their social and intellectual backgrounds, and differences among the teachers produced tension and even dissent among the students. Unlike similar yeshivot in Germany, the Lida yeshivah could not find teachers who combined halakhic studies, Hebrew, and secular learning, and could thus serve as models of enlightened integration. Another reason for the dissatisfaction felt by most of the students was that the Hebrew teachers had Zionist leanings that were not shared by the teachers of halakhah.⁷⁶

The yeshivah had five classes, two of them preparatory. Each class had a rabbi-educator, called a *rosh yeshivah* (head of the yeshivah). Secular studies and Hebrew subjects were learned between afternoon prayers and evening prayers; the scope of secular studies was the same as that in general high schools. In 1913, a sixth class was added in which rabbinic training would be completed. There were no secular studies in that class.⁷⁷ The yeshivah also included a *qibbuz*—what would today be called a kollel—to provide a structure in which married men could continue their studies, which was supported by Raphael Getz of Moscow, the son-in-law of Kolonymus Zev Wisotsky.⁷⁸ Rabbi Reines himself did not teach at his yeshivah, but did deliver discourses on Sabbaths and festivals.⁷⁹ Alumni of the Lida yeshivah became rabbis, businessmen, or teachers.⁸⁰

The Lida yeshivah was subject to direct and indirect influences by

to attract the Illui of Metshet to the Slobodka yeshivah, an important Musar institution, the Illui remained at Lida. He even declined to take a position in a religious school in Kelem, then under the influence of Rabbi Simḥah Zisel, another leader of the Musar movement. See Tidhar, “Rabbi Solomon Polachek” (Heb.), *Inziqlopediayh le-haluzei ha-yishuv*, vol. 18, 5326–5330. Elijah Berkovsky, the spiritual overseer of the Lida yeshivah, had previously taught at Musar yeshivot; see Polachek, *Novellae of the Illui of Metshet*, 27; Ziv, “Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah,” 82.

76 Ziv, “Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah,” 82–83.

77 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 15.

78 See Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 288; Chinitz, “The Lida Yeshivah,” in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 132.

79 Packer, “Reines and His Yeshivah,” 17.

80 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 26–27.

the new social movements developing within the Jewish community, of which Mizrachi was only one. Reines's decision in principle to avoid involving the yeshivah in Zionism or Socialism, which was then making waves within Russian and Polish Jewry, was not carried out in practice.⁸¹ Even from Reines's perspective, the yeshivah's educational message was linked to the nationalist idea. Many of the students drawn to the yeshivah came from Zionist homes, and the yeshivah included a Mizrachi Zionist organization. Most teachers of Hebrew subjects, led by Pinḥas Schiffman and Moses Cohen, were part of the movement. Reines himself, in letters requesting funding from Ussishkin or Wolfson, could not avoid expressing his hope that the yeshivah's alumni would join the Zionist movement.⁸² Even though the man appointed head of the yeshivah was similar in outlook to those who held the corresponding office in the large haredi yeshivot, he could not prevent many of his students from joining Mizrachi or even secular organizations.

The yeshivah's students came from families at the margins of haredi society, families drawn to Haskalah and Zionism,⁸³ and so their children were easily attracted to Haskalah and secularism. The charge that the yeshivah was responsible for secularization, therefore, could not be avoided. Reines could not prevent it from being portrayed in the haredi community as a yeshivah that "behaves in a secular manner." He denied the charge as slanderous, but was forced to acknowledge that "many students who were not fit came here in the first years."⁸⁴ The influence of the socialist movements was also felt in the life of the yeshivah.⁸⁵ One way or another, Reines lost the support of haredi society and the public base on which he hoped to develop his yeshivah.⁸⁶

81 Packer, "Reines and His Yeshivah," 16–18.

82 Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 295–297.

83 Ziv, "Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah," 81, 84; Cohen, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines," 98.

84 Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 16–17; 23. Ḥayyim Ze'ev Reines hints that the Lida yeshivah attracted many students who, but for Lida, would have attended secular schools; see Reines, "Isaac Jacob Reines," 290.

85 M. Cohen, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines, of Blessed Memory: Recollections and Characteristics," *Sinai* 3 (1939): 360; Packer, "The Fervent Young," 12.

86 I. J. Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 16–17, 33–35. Regarding the visit of Rabbi Ḥayyim Ozer Grodzinsky, see Berman, *Recollections of Eastern European Jews*, 13. On Reines's conversation with the Ḥafez Ḥayyim, see Reines, *Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 11b–12a; Ḥ. Reines, "Isaac Jacob Reines," 283. On the attitude of Rabbi Ḥayyim of Brisk, see Polachek, *Novellae of the Illui of Metsket*, 17. Most of the haredi criticism of *The Two Luminaries* was directed at its author's Zionist position; see S. N. Gottlieb, "When the Luminaries Are Deficient," *Ha-modi`a* no. 14–22, 27–29 (1914). A response to Gottlieb appears in the article by Y. Z. Amitin-Shapiro, "When

But despite the lack of haredi support, Reines was able to muster public support that allowed him to achieve at Lida what he failed to achieve at Świeciany.⁸⁷ He gained the favor of progressive groups within the Jewish establishment: the wealthy, the religious maskilim, and the Jewish philanthropic organizations. Prominent individuals and groups such as the family of Baron Günzburg,⁸⁸ the Wisotsky family,⁸⁹ and the St. Petersburg branch of the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA)⁹⁰ provided material and moral support to the yeshivah. Other supporters included prominent Haskalah figures such as Dr. Abraham Elijah Harkavy, a scholar and leader of the Society for Promoting Haskalah in Russia; the physician and writer Dr. Judah Leib Benjamin Katznelson ("Buki ben Yogli"), who served as official rabbi in St. Petersburg; Dr. Moses Elazar Eisenstadt; and Dr. Leon Rabinowitz, the editor of *Ha-meiliz* and *Der Tog*.⁹¹

During the first decade of the twentieth century, the haredi leadership lost much of its influence within Russian Jewry. Unlike the situation in the 1880s, when Rabbis Isaac Elhanan Spektor and Israel Salanter were able to prevent Baron Günzburg from founding a rabbinical seminary in Russia,⁹² the haredi leadership could not affect Reines's plans for the yeshivah in Lida.⁹³

Criticism Is Deficient," *Ha-modi'a*, no. 27-29 (1914).

87 Reines, *Mishkenot ya'aqov*, 9; Shapira, *R. Moses Samuel and His Generation*, 143.

88 See Berman, *Recollections of Eastern European Jews*, 12; Reines, *Mishkenot ya'aqov*, 4, 11–12. The Lida yeshivah's financial reports show that most of its support came from private funding; see, further, Zack, "The Lida Yeshivah," 246. On the support provided by Getz and Günzburg, see Shapira, *R. Moses Samuel and His Generation*, 243–244. On the yeshivah's solid economic standing, see Reines, *The Mission of the Holy Yeshivah*, 3. Baron Günzburg agreed to raise funds for the yeshivah (*ibid.*, p. 4) and even bequeathed his famed library to it (Ziv, "Recollections of the Lida Yeshivah," 82).

89 Cohen, "Recollections and Characteristics," 360; Shapira, *R. Moses Samuel and His Generation*, 143–144.

90 On the JCA's support for the yeshivah, see the notice by B. Pollack included in Reines's report in *Mishkenot ya'aqov*. Dr. Emile Meyerson, the Paris administrator of the JCA, visited the yeshivah; see Cohen, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines," 100.

91 Cohen, "Recollections and Characteristics," 361; Shapira, *R. Moses Samuel and His Generation*, 146. It is evident from all this that Reines was able to enlist a non-Zionist group of supporters for his yeshivah, thereby carrying out his intention to prevent the institution from becoming dependent on the Mizrahi movement.

92 See Lifschitz, *Zikhron ya'aqov* 3, 225–234. On the haredi stance toward the Świeciany yeshivah and on the efforts of Aaron David Günzburg to establish a rabbinical seminary, see J. Lifschitz, *Words of Peace and Truth* (Warsaw: Alexandergriz, 1884).

93 The haredim themselves acknowledged the decline in the influence of the rabbinic leadership; see E. A. Rabinowitz, "U-va-*hai* yitten et libbo," *Ha-modi'a* 1 (1910): pamphlet 2, 17–21; E. A.

To gain support from the communal leadership for the founding of the Świąciany yeshivah, Reines needed to have the moral support of the haredi leadership.⁹⁴ That was no longer the case when the Lida yeshivah was founded. The Mizrachi movement, the nationalist circles within the Haskalah movement, haredi maskilim,⁹⁵ and wealthy Jews at the margins of haredi society provided sufficient economic and public support to sustain and expand the yeshivah.⁹⁶ As a practical matter, the Lida yeshivah surpassed the other great yeshivot in its economic stability and public standing,⁹⁷ and even gained governmental recognition.⁹⁸ Still, Reines could not gain the support of Western European Jews.⁹⁹ Agreement was reached with many communities in Russia, especially those remote from the centers of Jewish settlement, to support the study of their young men interested in serving as official rabbis at the Lida yeshivah.¹⁰⁰ Most of the students came from Vilna, Minsk,

Rabinowitz, "On the Question of the Rabbinate," *Ha-modi'a* 1 (1910): pamphlet 5, 65–70; S. J. Feinberg, "The Rabbinate and the Hebrew Press," *Ha-modi'a* 1 (1910): pamphlet 5, 74. In 1910, the rabbinic commission in St. Petersburg demonstrated the failure of the haredi leadership to direct Jewish society in Russia. For the first time, the haredi leadership joined with the maskilim in agreeing that each group would run its own institutions in the manner it saw fit; *ibid.*, pamphlet 3, 32–42; pamphlet 7, 102; pamphlet 16, 148–149. In a decision running counter to that one, it was determined that the rabbi of a community was required to have a broad secular education; *ibid.*, 22–24; vol. 2, pamphlet 26, 407–408. The editors of *Ha-modi'a* criticized Raphael Getz of Moscow for establishing a rabbinical seminary without securing the authorization of the haredi leadership. Recall that Getz was one of the leading contributors to the Lida yeshivah and to the yeshivah of Rabbi Hayyim Chernowitz ("Rav Za'ir") in Odessa, a yeshivah even more inclined toward Haskalah than that in Lida. *Ha-modi'a* criticized only the Odessa yeshivah; *ibid.*, 2, pamphlet 41, 641–643.

94 On Reines's effort to persuade Rabbi Reuben Halevi of Dvinsk to serve as spiritual overseer of the Świąciany yeshivah, see *Ha-me'iliz*, no. 44 (1883): 698.

95 Rabbi Jacob Maze's support for the Lida yeshivah is representative of this group; Zack, "The Lida Yeshivah," 246. On the support provided by these groups, see also Shapira, *R. Moses Samuel and His Generation*, 143; Cohen, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines," 100.

96 Getz and the maskilim in St. Petersburg continued to support the Lida yeshivah even after Reines's death, as well as the yeshivah's move to Elisavetgrad; see Polachek, *Novellae of the Illui of Metshet*, 28. Interestingly, the haredim attacked the efforts of these groups to effectuate reforms in the yeshivot and even demanded that the donations be subject to oversight by the haredi leadership; see, e.g., *Ha-modi'a*, above, n. 92.

97 Cohen, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines," 100.

98 Reines, *Qol ya'aqov*, 17; Reines, *Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha'ar* 2, 33–34. The yeshivah received governmental recognition in 1908. On the suggestion of the millionaire Baruch Leibowitz to move the yeshivah to Vinitza in Podolia, see Shapira, *R. Moses Samuel and His Generation*, 144.

99 On a journey to England subsidized by Rabbi Abba Werner and Rabbi Israel Zangwill, Reines was unable to raise any support, monetary or moral, for his yeshivah. See Cohen, "Recollections and Characteristics," 361.

100 Reines, *Qol ya'aqov*, 12–13.

Grodno, Lomzhe, Kovno, and Kiev—that is, Lithuania, White Russia, and eastern Poland—but some came from more remote areas such as the Caucasus Mountains, Siberia, and Moscow.¹⁰¹

In 1910, more than 300 students were enrolled at the Lida yeshivah.¹⁰² Some were preparing themselves for the rabbinate, some to serve as teachers in Hebrew schools, and some would earn their living in other areas following the conclusion of their studies.¹⁰³ Many applicants to the yeshivah were turned away because of a lack of space. At one point, only about 10 percent of applicants were accepted.¹⁰⁴ After the outbreak of World War I and Rabbi Reines's death in late summer, 1915, the Lida yeshivah, along with the Jews of Lithuania, were exiled to the Russian interior. The yeshivah reopened under Rabbi Polachek's leadership in the city of Elisavetgrad in eastern Ukraine and was closed permanently after the pogroms there in 1917.¹⁰⁵ Thereafter, the Lida yeshivah served as the model for the Mizrachi movement's educational system in the Land of Israel and for Neo-Orthodox institutions in the United States, especially the Rabbi Isaac Elhanan yeshivah. One can see the continuity with Lida in the shared values, the common grounding in the Mizrachi movement, and in considering the students and teachers at the yeshivah who later became prominent in the Mizrachi movement in the Land of Israel.¹⁰⁶ The continuity was thus ideological, social, and personal.¹⁰⁷

In summing up, we should note the overlap between the political-organizational efforts of Rabbi Reines as the founder of the Mizrachi

101 Reines *Mishkenot ya`aqov*, 6; *ibid.*, *Qol ya`aqov*, *ibid.*

102 Reines claimed that the number of students had not grown more because of a lack of resources and limitations imposed by the government; see Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 2, *sha`ar* 2, 34; *ibid.*, *Mishkenot ya`aqov*, 6. On the need to limit the number of students in the yeshivah, see Cohen, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines," 100.

103 Reines, "Isaac Jacob Reines," 260.

104 Bat-Yehuda, *The Man of Lights*, 297.

105 Polachek, *Novellae of the Illui of Metshet*, 27–29.

106 The continuity was represented by Rabbi Jacob Berman, who was connected with the Lida yeshivah and then served as head supervisor of the Mizrachi educational system in the Land of Israel. Another example is Rabbi Pinḥas Schiffman, a teacher of Hebrew subjects at the Lida yeshivah and later principal of the Talpiyot Seminary; see Shapira, *R. Moses Samuel and His Generation*, 7; Levinson, "Education in Mizrachi's Work," 10; Cohen, "Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines," 101.

107 Later, in 1922–1928, the Illui of Metshet served as head of the Rabbi Isaac Elḥanan Yeshivah in New York; see Polachek, *Novellae of the Illui of Metshet*, 29. See also H. L. Gordon, "The Illui, Rabbi Solomon Polachek," in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 114; Goldberg, "Biography of the Illui of Metshet," in *ibid.*, 122–124.

movement within Zionism and his educational efforts as the founder of an educational system blending Orthodoxy and Haskalah. These two aspects of his life's work were based on the same system of ideological and practical values leading toward maintaining a nationalist-Orthodox community capable of sustaining its way of life by accepting some of the new ways of thinking and acting instead of closing the door on them as did most of the haredi community.

Reines took a stance that placed him at odds with all the forces in the Jewish community of his time—he differed with the haredim in Eastern Europe, the Orthodox in Western Europe, and the acculturating Jews in Russia. The synthesis he established, blending Judaism and nationalism, Judaism and modernity, clashed with every other stream in Jewish society. Reines was not a man of coalitions and cliques. He operated as a path-breaking individual who was confident that he recognized the truth and would not compromise it. Of himself, he said: "... Every ideal that has its 'lunatic' will ultimately succeed; every ideal that lacks such a 'lunatic' will ultimately fail."¹⁰⁸ In simple language, one can say almost that he looked for opposition.¹⁰⁹ Even within Mizrachi, not everyone agreed with him. Nevertheless, Reines promoted his synthesis in practice as well as in theory. The nationalism he supported brought about the separate organization of advocates of enlightened Religious Zionism, and the new educational doctrine became the symbol of Religious Zionism and its central concern.¹¹⁰

Especially noteworthy is the seemingly paradoxical relationship between Reines's efforts in the Diaspora to establish a modern yeshivah and his Zionist activity. The former aimed to reinforce the Diaspora communities, while the latter implied negation of the Diaspora. He was not alone in this ambivalence, which was shared by the advocates of "spiritual Zionism" at the Zionist Congresses. Recall as well that Reines never associated his yeshivah with the Mizrachi movement,¹¹¹ and left

108 Cohen, "The Restless Man," in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 119.

109 H. L. Gordon, "From the Leaders of the Nation," in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 111–112. See also Meir Berlin's insight regarding haredi opposition to the Lida yeshivah: it was based not on the yeshivah's innovativeness, but on Reines's challenge to the earlier yeshivot. Berlin, "An Innovator and Implementer," in *The Lida Book*, ed. Manor, Gnozovitz, and Landau, 115.

110 The haredi critique of Zionism stressed the ties between Reines's educational and Zionist doctrines and even shed light on their anti-haredi consequences; see E. A. Rabinowitz, "The Ways of Zion," *Ha-peles* 3 (1903): 639–649.

111 Reines himself refrained from importing Zionist ideology into the Lida yeshivah, although he

open the question of their relationship. Accordingly, supporters of the yeshivah who never accepted Zionism, such as Baron David Günzburg and Dr. Emile Meyerson (the executive director of the JCA) confronted Reines with the open contradiction between his affirmation and negation of the Diaspora.¹¹² The sharpest challenge to his position was pressed in 1907 by the writer Mordecai Ben-Hillel Hakohen, who had recently immigrated to the Land of Israel. In exaggerated terms, he suggested that Reines “leave the lands of the Diaspora and immigrate to the Holy Land, moving his yeshivah there as well.”¹¹³

In his response, Reines gave voice to many important aspects of his nationalist-Zionist doctrine and his educational theory. In his view, the Zionist expectation of immediate, radical redemption of Diaspora Jewry was unrealistic. The immediate threat to the existence of Jewish society in Russia was assimilation, and radical Zionism offered no solution to that problem:

Now, let his honor do a simple calculation and tell me: What does the real-life situation demand? Should our yeshivah be in the Land of Israel? There is no need for it in the Land of Israel itself, and the Land of Israel has not yet become a spiritual center able to influence the lands of the Diaspora with its Torah and its light. Or should it be, rather, in Russia? Most of our people are to be found there; it is a place where the influence of proponents of Torah is evident; and a national calamity is about to face us there—there is massive departure from the tents of Judaism, and the day is not far when a child will be able to count the number of people studying Torah and Judaism.

He concludes:

was aware that the Hebrew teachers were doing so. But when he saw signs of secular socialism becoming stronger among his students, he did not avoid setting before them his Religious Zionist outlook; see Packer, “The Fervent Young,” 12.

112 Cohen, “Recollections and Characteristics,” 362–364.

113 Letter from Reines to Mordecai Ben-Hillel Hakohen, 1907, Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem: The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Mordecai Ben-Hillel Hakohen Archive.

Where is it more urgent to work for the dissemination of Judaism—in Russia, [where Jews are] now moving toward assimilation, or in the Land of Israel, where the very air is suffused with Judaism? Where is the lack of young men filled with Torah and wisdom felt more—in Russia or in the Land of Israel? And where is the more fertile pasture for their future labors—here or there? Who is now being nourished by whom—Russia by the Land of Israel or conversely? In the future, who will build the Land—the handful of people now there, or the entire House of Israel, now in the Diaspora? And so, whose Jewish, national, and human education takes precedence—that of the minority, in the Land of Israel, or that of the majority, in the Diaspora?... Yes, establishing a yeshivah in the Land of Israel is a nice ideal, but it is not grounded in real life and will have no influence on life, no hope of succeeding.... Not so the establishment of a modern yeshivah in the Diaspora. It has a foundation in contemporary life, it has a future, and it has the ideal of preparing [students'] hearts for future ideals. It follows that it has an ideal in the present, and its effort will be rewarded. In truth, is it not an ideal to educate and raise Jewish children, people who in the future will raise high the banner of our people and its rebirth and work on its behalf?¹¹⁴

In this response, we see the point of contact between Reines the Zionist and Reines the educator. The modern yeshivah in Lida aspired to provide Jewish youth with spiritual preparation for the national redemption and strengthen their Jewish consciousness. As he saw it, educational institutions in the Diaspora could close only when “the Diaspora ends.”¹¹⁵ An educational institution is an instrumentality of the community, and it can function only from within.

There are similarities between Rabbi Reines’s modern yeshivah and the Orthodox educational system in Germany, both of which deviated

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.

from the path of the traditional haredi yeshivot in Eastern Europe. However, at the time under discussion, on the eve of World War I, the leadership of the haredi yeshivot joined forces specifically with Orthodoxy in the West because of its opposition to Zionism and its desire to maintain haredi ideology in the Diaspora. They came together in 1912 to establish Agudat Yisrael, which opposed Reines's Zionist Mizrachi movement.

In the final analysis, an educational doctrine is but one element in a broader ideology, and it is that broader ideology that determines the historical role of the educational doctrine.

XII. MESSIANISM AND NORMALIZATION IN SECULAR ZIONIST THOUGHT

Messianism and Zionism

From its earliest days, Zionism was marked by an internal contradiction. On the one hand, it set at the top of its agenda the transformation of the Jewish people into a “normal” nation, one like all the others, and it identified itself in terms of nation, territory, homeland, and political self-definition. On the other hand, it held fast to the Jewish messianic idea. This simultaneous affirmation of normalization and messianism produced an inner conflict that has never been resolved. The dilemma was particularly difficult for secular Zionism, which wanted more than Religious Zionism did—both more normalization and more messianism.

Messianism was the traditional Jewish value that secular Zionism sought to preserve more than any other. Gershom Scholem noted that the messianic idea, more than other essential ideas of Judaism, acquired a place within secular movements that did not regard the history of the world as an act of divine providence.¹ Zvi Werblowsky, the historian of Jewish thought, adds that Zionism was also “the first redemption movement that succeeded in remaining within the historical dimension.”² Secular Zionism was more interested in the messianic idea than was its religious counterpart, and it is no coincidence that the most prominent students of Jewish messianism came from the ranks of secular Zionists.³ In this regard, Israel Kolatt correctly distinguished between the messianic idea and the messianic movements. Even if the messianic *idea* has a place within both streams of Zionism, secular and religious alike, only secular Zionism extolled the messianic *movements*, which its religious counterpart considered to be false messianism.

Secular Zionist thinkers saw themselves as carrying on the revo-

1 I. Kolatt, “Zionism and Messianism,” in *Messianism and Eschatology*, ed. Z. Beres (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1984), 420. For a discussion of secular messianism, see G. Scholem, *Devarim be-go: Heritage and Revival* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), 2, 577–582 (“Thoughts on Jewish Theology”). (Scholem’s comment is here paraphrased in English from Kolatt’s Hebrew citation of it.)

2 Z. Werblowsky, “The Crises of Messianism,” *Hazut* 2 (1956): 89.

3 J. Liebes, “Sabbatean Messianism,” *Pe`amim* 40 (1989): 5.

lutionary and antinomian line of messianic movements—negating the observance of halakhah and bringing messianic tidings to the world. Religious Zionism, by contrast, took pains not to identify the Zionist movement as messianic.⁴ As Werblowsky explains it, Jewish Orthodoxy feared Zionism: “It feared disillusionment (a fear that had chilled Orthodox messianism since the time of Shabbetai Zevi), and it especially feared messianism, for messianism implied a fundamental change in life.”⁵ Werblowsky attributes the social and political failure of Orthodoxy to its unresponsiveness to the messianic challenge of Zionism: “It now needed a new vision, a new formulation [of the messianic idea], a fundamentally new framework for life—but that was what they feared.”⁶

Traditional Messianism

These observations require us to define traditional messianism and clarify which of its components were taken up by secular Zionism. For if it were suggested that the religious and secular forms of Zionism differ simply in their sources of authority, one could respond that a utopia by its very nature is transcendental, regardless of whether its force is attributed to divine command or to deterministic historical laws.

No one will deny that the traditional Jewish messianic idea is inseparably bound up with the idea of redemption. That redemption entails the exiles’ return to the Promised Land, the restoration of the Davidic monarchy, religious ritual components pertaining to renewal of the Temple cult in Jerusalem, the establishment of a society governed by halakhah, rational and spiritual religious elements (“being free [to engage] in Torah and its wisdom”), and mystical religious elements of “*tiqqun elyon*” (supernal, or cosmic, repair).⁷ Messianic teachings comprised restorative or rational elements side by side with apocalyptic,

4 S. Almog, “Messianism as a Challenge to Zionism,” in *Messianism and Eschatology*, ed. Zevi Beres (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazarm, 1984), 437–438. Almog shows that even among secular Zionists, there were some, such as Brenner, who saw the messianic movements in a negative light. In general, however, the movements were regarded positively. For Berdichevsky and Thon, it was messianism that anchored Zionism within Jewish history.

5 Werblowsky, “The Crises of Messianism,” 90.

6 Ibid., 90–91.

7 Liebes argues that the Sabbatean teachings make almost no mention of political and national redemption; Liebes, “Sabbatean Messianism,” 5, 9–18.

catastrophic elements, to use Scholem's terminology. The messianic idea in Israel became part of an infinite array of worldly and spiritual utopias imagined by advocates of the idea.⁸ The entries for "messianism" and "redemption" in the Jewish literary lexicon became quite rich over time, including content, illustrations, and terminology, and the subject engaged Jewish literary creativity and imagination at peak levels.

The Zionist idea of normalization incorporated elements of self-definition, national territory, productivity, cultural authenticity, the end to exile and minority status, the return to nature and to the land, and the end of social classes. None of these conflicted with the traditional messianic idea, although not all of them had been included within it. In any case, its principal concern was redemption, not a personal messiah.

Where the Zionist idea diverged from traditional messianic notions was in its rejection of human passivity. The first to try to overcome Jewish passivity were the "heralds of Zionism" from within the Orthodox camp, men such as Rabbis Kalischer, Alkalai, and Mohilever, who spoke of redemption by stages and cited rabbinic statements and kabbalistic ideas laden with traditional messianic significance. They made no attempt to argue that the nationalistic idea they advocated was indifferent to or severed from the messianic idea. Instead, they sought to correlate the relevant statements from within the tradition with their contemporaneous reality and the actual historical process for which they were calling. As noted, they did not identify the Zionist movement with the messianic era, but saw it as playing a limited role in the process of redemption. They employed the concepts of *athalta di-ge'ula* ("beginning of redemption") and *it'aruta mi-le-tata* ("awakening from below"; the idea that God's redemptive actions will be triggered by human actions of one sort or another), which were taken from the traditional stock of ideas involving the messiah. This was their attempt to build a bridge between traditional messianism and the reality of their time, a bridge made up of stages or openings. Nevertheless, the essential realization of the messianic idea remained secreted within the divine mysteries and separate from actual history. Accordingly, we can say that Religious Zionism did not entail, for the most part, a transfer of concepts from the religious to the secular world.

For generations, the following statement in the *Talmud Yerushalmi*

8 Scholem, *Devarim be-go* 1, 157.

was interpreted as referring to the messianic age:

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba and Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta were traveling through the Arbel Valley at daybreak, and they saw the morning light as it burst above the horizon. Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said to Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta, “Such is Israel’s redemption: it begins bit by bit and gathers momentum as it proceeds.”⁹

The statement is echoed throughout Religious-Zionist literature and was interpreted there in the immediate sense of redemption by stages—in other words, redemption bit by bit.¹⁰

Religious Zionist literature also made use of the following statement in the Zohar:

Rabbi Judah began and said, “Who is she that looks forth as the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners” [Song of Songs 6:10]. This verse has been interpreted and we have learned it. But “who is she who looks forth” refers to Israel. When the Holy One Blessed Be He raises them up and brings them out of exile, He will open for them an extremely fine and small opening of light. Then He will open for them a slightly larger opening, and later still, He will open for them the heavenly gates that open to the four corners of the world.¹¹

9 JT [ms. Leiden], *Berakhot* 2c; for another version of the statement, see *ibid.*, *Yoma* 40b. Maimonides does not associate this passage with the Messiah, and most of the traditional commentators on the *Talmud Yerushalmi* likewise interpret it with reference not to the Messiah but to redemption of any sort, such as that which took place in the time of Mordecai and Esther. See, e.g., *Penei mosheh* ad loc.

10 It is used in that sense in *Midrash tehillim: Shoher tov*, ed. Solomon Buber (New York, 1948), 187, Ps. 22, sec. 13. The redemption is there associated with the King Messiah. According to Buber, part of that midrash is quite early and is cited often in the *Talmud Yerushalmi*. It is used in a similar sense in the introduction to Maharal’s *Ner mizvah*. Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer cites the passage in the name of Rabbi Solomon Plessner (Kalischer, *Derishat ziyyon*, 90). In that connection, he determines that the midrash in the Jerusalem Talmud and its parallels in Song of Songs Rabbah correspond entirely to the passage from the Zohar discussed below.

11 In his Hebrew edition of the Zohar (from which the passage in the text has been translated), Reuben Margolis comments: “This means that their salvation will not come about all at once. Instead, it will be like the dawn, whose light grows until it is day” (*The Zohar*, ed. R. Margolis [Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1964], 170).

Kalischer reworked the statement in his own words:

The beginning of the redemption will be a trifle, like the glow at dawn; then as beautiful as the moon; then as bright as the sun; and then as awesome as an army with banners, making four periods: like dawn, like the moon, like the sun, and like an army. Redemption will first be given to the Land itself, in which souls will be rooted and which will provide its produce to Israel, and that will be accomplished through a bit of ingathering. Next will be the building of an altar and the bringing of sacrifices, when we gain the permission [to do so] that God will graciously cause the rulers to grant us.¹²

Kalischer here identifies his own time as the first stage of the redemption, “like the dawn”; elsewhere, he goes further and identifies it with the second stage:

And the wise will perceive that the time of [our] emancipation by the Emperor Napoleon I and by Holland was the first glimmering, and then came emancipation in other states. And now that the likes of Rothschild and Fuld are close to the seats of governmental power, we are already in the stage of “beautiful as the moon,” and we can anticipate “bright as the sun.”¹³

Rabbi Kalischer sought to dovetail the movement to settle the Land of Israel, which he headed, with his version of the traditional messianic idea. In 1864, two years after publishing *Derishat zivyon*, he published a commentary on the Passover Haggadah in which he gave the entire messianic idea a territorial reinterpretation, translating it into political liberation without the intervention of a personal messiah. A similar tack had been taken even earlier by Rabbi Judah Alkalai. The two were exceptions to the rule we noted earlier, that Religious Zionism generally

12 Kalischer, *Derishat zivyon*, 97.

13 Ibid., 90.

did not transform religious values into secular ones.¹⁴ The successors to these first-generation Religious Zionist thinkers were less concerned about the degree of correspondence between the traditional messianic idea and their contemporary reality. It was enough for them to cite the general formulation that their times represented “the beginning of redemption.”

The midrash of the “Three Oaths” (BT *Ketubot* 111a) also has messianic overtones: “What are these three oaths? One, that Israel would not scale the wall [i.e., undertake mass immigration to the Land of Israel]; one, that the Holy One Blessed Be He adjured Israel not to rebel against the nations of the world; and one, that the Holy One Blessed Be He adjured the idolaters not to oppress Israel excessively.” Another version appears in Song of Songs Rabbah (2:7): “... that [Israel] not rebel against the governments; that they not hasten the End; and that they not reveal their mystery to the nations of the world; and that they not scale the wall from the Diaspora.” Orthodox opponents of Zionism also translated this midrash into their own historical reality. But even if the midrash did not necessarily pertain to the messianic era, Religious Zionists saw a need to interpret it so as not to contradict the Zionist idea. They showed thereby that it was relevant to their time, as Aviezer Ravitzky has demonstrated.¹⁵ It should be noted that the midrash appears in rabbinic literature in numerous contexts unrelated to messianism, as Mordecai Breuer has shown.¹⁶

Messianic Terminology in Secular Zionist Thought

At the same time that Rabbis Kalischer and Alkalai were applying the messianic idea to their contemporary political reality, Moses Hess was doing something similar—not, however, in the name of belief in God but in the name of mankind’s autonomous moral awareness. He expressed himself in terms of “sacred history” (*heilsgeschichte*), an idea borrowed from the Christian religious world, but his impending utopia of social justice was drawn, in essence, from his moral consciousness. Judaism here accounts at most for the framework that affirms a future involving

14 Salmon, “Rise of Nationalism,” 10–11.

15 Ravitzky, *Messianism*; see also, E. Holzer, “The Evolution of the ‘Three Oaths,’ in Religious Zionist Thought,” *Da`at* 47 (1991): 129–145.

16 Breuer, “Discussion of the Three Oaths,” 49–57.

“the development and education of humankind” and integrates the individual with the universal. We already see here a secular messianic component constructed from an application “of the principles of the Torah of Moses” side by side with a utopian vision of a society built on socialist principles. It was Max Nordau who unambiguously declared that Zionism and messianism were overlapping ideas: “As a practical matter, messianism and Zionism have been identical concepts for thousands of years; and one cannot readily differentiate within Jewish ritual, without resorting to casuistic interpretations, between the prayers that yearn for the coming of the promised Messiah and those that plead for the similarly promised return of the people to its historical homeland.”¹⁷

The messianic ideal permeated the socialist Land-of-Israel movement. Berl Katznelson declared in 1917 (in the agricultural commission) that the Hebrew worker was performing the “work of redemption.”¹⁸ His observation was in reaction to the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, which “announced the redemption.”¹⁹

The flag bearer of secular messianism during the first two decades following the establishment of the State of Israel was David Ben-Gurion, who saw the establishment of the State as “a messianic event”²⁰ and expressed that position at an American Zionist convention in May 1951. The establishment of the State, in his view, ranked with other great events of Jewish history such as the exodus from Egypt and the encounter at Sinai. Its great significance was not limited to the history of the Jews dwelling in the Land, but extended as well to the history of the Jewish people overall and even to the history of the world: “The redemption of Israel is intertwined with the redemption of mankind, and our prophets’ vision of the end of days had a universal, humanity-wide nature that did not give up or even diminish its specifically Jewish content.”²¹

It was clear to Ben-Gurion that Jewish messianism in the Land of Israel was part of a process of universal redemption “that would be interwoven with a new society for all humankind.”²² He also tied the future

17 M. Nordau, *Zionist Writings 2*, ed. B. Netanyahu (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonut, 1955–1962), 90–91 (“Zionism,” 1902).

18 B. Katznelson, *Writings* (Tel Aviv: Mapai, 1947), 1, 63.

19 *Ibid.*, 65.

20 Ben-Gurion, *A Vision and a Path* (Tel Aviv: Mapai, 1951–57), 48.

21 *Ibid.*, 153.

22 D. Ben-Gurion, “Concepts and Values,” *Hazut* 3 (1957): 8.

of the State to a messianic idea in the process of being realized: “The vision of Jewish redemption is a messianic vision ... and the fact that [the State] was created is only the beginning.”²³ The Zionist Organization may have lost this focus, and “the desire for the return to Zion may not be the desire burning within the hearts of its members,”²⁴ but those forging the State in practice—“Israeli youth and immigrants from the eastern [i.e., Arab/Muslim] lands”—will carry on the process.²⁵

Ben-Gurion included within his concept of messianism the impulse to immigrate to the Land—“the ancient attachment to the anticipation of redemption”—as well as the substantive activity undertaken there, combining the religious messianism taught by Kalischer and Alkalai and the secular messianism taught by Katznelson.²⁶ Messianism inspired the Zionists and provided them with values and goals. Its source was in the Hebrew Bible—“the vision of the prophets”—but it drew as well on “contemporary reality and its historical trends.”²⁷ Ben-Gurion was not alone within the Labor movement leadership in believing that the establishment of the State was consistent with messianism. Zalman Shazar likewise viewed the early days of the State in kabbalistic terms, as the “beginning of redemption,” for the ingathering of exiles had not yet been completed.²⁸

Even during Zionism’s years of crisis, in the mid-1960s, Ben-Gurion maintained his view of Zionism as a messianic movement, although he toned down his expressions of that position. He began to distinguish between the nineteenth-century Zionists, who were moved by “the conditions of life of European Jewry,” and the founders of the Jewish State, who were impelled by “the messianic yearnings of the Jewish people for national redemption on the land of its fathers.”²⁹ In this comparison, we see Ben-Gurion applying messianic notions to the Jewish State of his time—as if the realistic program of early Zionism had been transformed, with its accomplishment, into a messianic program.

The terminology of Jewish chosenness—“a special nation,” “a light unto the nations”—endured into the 1960s even without the messi-

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 9.

26 Letter from David Ben-Gurion to Natan Rotenstreich, 13 January 1957, in *Hazut* 3 (1957): 21.

27 Ibid., 25.

28 Z. Shazar, “At the Gates of the Conference,” *Hazut* 4 (1958): 73.

29 A. Ben-Or, “Without a Vision, a Nation Is Undone,” *Moznayim* 46 (1966): 479.

anic support structure. Proof for realization of the idea was found in Israel's increasing assistance to Asian and African nations, which was interpreted in those terms. Still, it appears that even Ben-Gurion was attentive to the intellectual trends of the day. The messianic excesses of the 1950s, expressed most prominently in Ben-Gurion's debate with Natan Rotenstreich, could not continue in a time of low spirits and soul-searching. On the other hand, the blurring of the messianic teachings' sources of authority and force made it possible for Ben-Gurion to apply these sources to the benefit of the Jewish State by harmonizing them with contemporary circumstances.

Secular scholars within Israeli academia and Zionist society undertook an empathetic study of the messianic idea and messianic movements. They included Joseph Klausner, Yehezkel Kaufmann, Aaron Zev Eshkoli, Yehuda Kaufman (Even Shmu'el), Ben-Zion Dinur, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Zalman Shazar, and Gershom Scholem. In the introduction to his 1927 book *Ha-ra'ayon ha-meshihi be-yisra'el* ["The Messianic Idea in Israel"], Klausner wrote: "During the twenty-five years that have passed since parts of this book were published, the idea of redemption has spread in Israel, bursting into peoples' hearts like a mighty flood. Together with this idea came another, organically tied to it: socialism in the sense of equality and justice." Klausner here attacks Marxist socialism, characterizing it as "a socialist idea foreign" to Judaism, and ultimately declares that "Zionist socialism must be prophetic, suffused with the Jewish messianic idea, or it will not exist at all." At the beginning of the book, Klausner states that the messianic idea comprises territorial and spiritual elements, and concludes:

... Only when the two overflow and become one mighty river will the Hebrew, Zionist movement be able to regard itself as heir to the messianic idea, which, though changing its form in accord with events and circumstances, has always remained at the base of a single great aspiration: to redeem Israel from its enslavement and to bring salvation to all humankind.³⁰

30 J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Completion of the Mishnah* (Jerusalem: Ha-poalim, 1927), 9.

Gershom Scholem's attitude toward messianism was ambivalent. On the one hand, he wrote that "messianism attests to the powerful vitality that endures within the nation's heart," but on the other hand, he warned of "messianism's price."³¹ One cannot easily avoid the sense that, in issuing his warning, he changed from a scholar studying messianism to a proponent of a political position. He viewed Sabbateanism as a legitimate Jewish movement, but rejected messianic Zionism.³²

In the introduction to his edition of *Midreshei ha-ge'ulah* (Midrashim of Redemption),³³ Yehuda Kaufman notes that his efforts to publish the work were encouraged by Chaim Nahman Bialik and later, Isaac Greenbaum. He concludes the introduction with the hope "that we are the last to yearn and the first to be redeemed." In Kaufman's view, the "prophetic vision" is essentially messianic: "All the national defects will be remedied then. Instead of dispersion, there will be an ingathering of the exiles; instead of exile, the homeland; instead of divisiveness, unity; instead of foreign culture, the culture of Israel."³⁴ It was the prophets who fired up Ahad Ha-Am's imagination in his day, and subsequently Ben-Gurion's. Scholem himself acknowledged that only the nationalistic historians manifested the proper degree of sympathy and understanding for the Sabbatean movement.³⁵

Criticism of Secular Messianism

An early critique of messianic thought in Zionism and within the Yishuv can be found in the writings of Joseph Hayyim Brenner. Later, following the establishment of the State, it was the philosopher Natan Rotenstreich who challenged Ben-Gurion's view of the matter. The critique pertained as well to the understanding of Zionist history:

31 G. Scholem, *Explications and Implications* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1990), 273.

32 He put it this way: "The longings for liberation, expressed so tragically in the nihilistic doctrine of the Sabbateans, do not attest to the destructiveness of the forces at play here. On the contrary, the historian is obligated to see the positive within this negative, the constructive longings secreted behind all the documents related to this disaster, behind the reprehensible and dissolute actions." G. Scholem, *A Good Act Achieved through a Bad One: Studies and Sources on the History and Evolution of Sabbateanism* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1974), 14–15.

33 J. Kaufman, *Midrashim of Redemption* (Tel Aviv: Mossad Bialik, 1954).

34 *Ibid.*, 22.

35 "Only two people have thus far shown any sign of truly understanding the complexities of the Sabbatean soul; they are S. I. Horowitz & Z. Rubashov"; Scholem, *A Good Act Achieved through a Bad One*, 15.

... the great impetus to Jewish revival in recent times came from the confrontation with problems regarded as arising out of [historical] reality itself, that is, in what could be called a realistic consciousness rather than a messianic consciousness.³⁶

Pedagogic considerations supplemented the critique. Israeli youth were repelled by overstatement, and “the messianic self-assessment appeared to young people in Israel as a manifestation of rhetorical excess.”³⁷ The intensifying disillusionment with communism called for “an emphasis on the relative nature of every human achievement ... and not ... for a blurring of the boundary between the meta-historical standard and historical reality.”³⁸

Yeshayahu Leibowitz also criticized the identification of the State with the messianic process, deconstructing the values of Israeli society in the course of his effort to draw lines between religion and the state and between messianism and the state. In striving to set the performance of the commandments at the center of the Jewish religion, Leibowitz summarily displaced both prophetic ethics and messianic vision as central components of Judaism.³⁹

Rotenstreich later broadened his criticism of Ben-Gurion’s conception of secular messianism, which he blamed for the State’s maladies or, at least, for those of Ben-Gurion and his circle. The subject arose again in the context of the controversy over the “Lavon Affair,” in the opening essay of his 1962 collection *From the Foundation*, where he set forth in writing the intellectuals’ critique of Ben-Gurion’s position regarding the Lavon Affair. Rotenstreich declared that “the alternative state of mind, which looks to approve what transpired, is rooted in a claim that we in any event find ourselves in the midst of a redemptive situation.”⁴⁰ He warns that “our attempt to portray ourselves in a redemptive posture manifests the narcissism of a generation glorying in its achievements and attributing to itself cosmic standing.”⁴¹ Expanding his critique,

36 N. Rotenstreich, “The Consciousness of the Need for a Homeland,” *Hazut* 3 (1957): 13.

37 Ibid., 14.

38 Ibid., 27.

39 Y. Leibowitz, “Universal Problems and National Problems,” *Hazut* 4 (1958): 73–74.

40 N. Rotenstreich, “Clarifying Our Fundamentals,” in N. Rotenstreich, *From the Foundation* 1 (Tel Aviv: Amikam, 1962), 19.

41 Ibid., 22–23.

Rotenstreich condemned the use of the concept of “special nation” in the context of human achievements: “Let us not make the standard for measuring achievement correspond with the meaning and standing of ‘special.’”⁴²

In his soul-searching following the “Affair,” Pinḥas Lavon himself adopted a stance that altered the place of the messianic conception implicit in the Zionist enterprise. He remained unwilling to renounce “the messianic imperative” outright, but he called for all Zionist activity to be conducted in the human sphere, without reference to meta-historical factors: “... we must know how to create a nation that is not a copy of other nations, but one that shapes an image of life and a way of life that express ... a redemptive idea to all humanity.”⁴³ All these anti-messianic pronouncements, however, were sporadic and focused on the dispute with Ben-Gurion. Only after the Six-Day War did the issue gain renewed vitality.⁴⁴

At the time of the Yom Kippur War, the term “messianism” began to take on a negative connotation. Amnon Rubinstein correctly noted the great wave of opposition to messianism that appeared following that war in Israeli journalism and literature. Journalists began to make frequent use of the term “the messianic right” as a pejorative. A review of newspapers and periodicals since 1974 shows the term “messianism” recast by spokesmen for secular Israeli society to mean irrationality, delusion, misanthropy, derangement, fanaticism, and militancy. Led by Yeshayahu Leibowitz, the group included such writers as S. Yizhar, A. B. Yehoshua, and Amos Oz.⁴⁵ They were joined by academics, prominent among whom were Zvi Lamm and Janet Odey,⁴⁶ educators and journalists such as Zvi Raʿanan,⁴⁷ the historian Yigael Eilam, and politicians from the left and the center. From there, the viewpoint spread to the press and began to gain prominence along with the term “the messianic right.” Leibowitz attacked the messianic idea in all its forms—religious and secular:

42 Ibid., 31.

43 P. Lavon, “Beyond the Barriers,” in Rotenstreich, *From the Foundation*, 80.

44 A. B. Yehoshua, *Between Right and Right* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), Preface.

45 A. B. Yehoshua, “The Danger of Treason to Zionism,” *Bi-tefuzot ha-golah* 71–72 (1974): 31.

46 J. Odey, “Gush Emunim: Origins and Ambiguities,” *Bi-tefuzot ha-golah* 79–80 (1976): 95–109.

47 Z. Raʿanan, “Judaism between Modernization and Messianism,” *Bi-tefuzot ha-golah* 77–78 (1976): 76.

What is called the messianic idea is a malignancy that has attached itself to Judaism and has been the curse of Judaism throughout the ages. One who means to worship God has no need for a messiah. The messiah is a substitute for belief in God.... The messiah who comes is always a false messiah.⁴⁸

With pronouncements such as these, the Jewish theologian Leibowitz made himself the leader of Israeli secularism. He who had defined himself as the bearer of Maimonides' intellectual heritage now disregarded Maimonides' declaration that "one who does not anticipate [the Messiah's] coming denies not only the other prophets but even the Torah [itself] and Moses our master."⁴⁹ A. B. Yehoshua picked up Leibowitz's train of thought, adding an attack on secular Zionist messianism: "Zionism entailed an act of renunciation—renunciation of messianism, of religious redemption, of the eschatological vision." Elsewhere, he argued that authentic Zionism means "less messianism, less concern about long-range pseudo-messianic goals, and more concern about immediate problems."⁵⁰ In his book *Between Right and Right*, Yehoshua broadened his argument and, echoing Brenner's views, even challenged Jewish claims to be a chosen, treasured nation:

We must see ourselves as an integral part of humankind, neither superior nor inferior, different only within the normal range of difference obtaining among all nations, races, religions, and tribes.... We have no special message for the Gentiles and have no a priori mission.... The Jewish people is a people like all peoples.⁵¹

Yehoshua may have gone further than anyone else within mainstream Israeli society in his efforts to free himself from the basic premises of classical Zionism, to the point of denying the Jews' historical right to

48 Y. Leibowitz, "On the Fate of the Jewish People," (Symposium), *Bi-tefuzot ha-golah* 75-76 (1975): 42; see also Y. Eilam, "The Crisis of Zionism: The Crisis of Judaism," *Bi-tefuzot ha-golah* 75-76 (1975): 54-55.

49 *Mishneh torah, Hilkhoh melakhim* 11.

50 A. B. Yehoshua, "A Return to Ideology," *Bi-tefuzot ha-golah* 75-76 (1975): 40.

51 Yehoshua, *Between Right and Right*, 63-64.

the Land of Israel: “The concept of historic right has no objective moral validity when applied to the return of the Jewish people to its land.”⁵² Yehoshua’s attempt to replace the historical right with “the right of endangered existence”—which would justify the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel on the grounds that there is no real alternative—makes no sense and is unrecognized in international law or diplomacy.

The drive to reduce Zionist aspirations runs as a recurring motif through numerous writings by secular thinkers during the period in question. In a 1977 interview, Amos Oz extolled Zionism’s accomplishments—“We have taken impressive first steps toward curing the Jewish sickness”—but also disparaged the exaggerated expectations activated “by messianic impulses rather than historical impulses.... For me, Zionism is specifically the return to history.”⁵³

In a systematic study of Zionist history, Amnon Rubinstein sought to restore Zionism’s non-messianic aspect:

The idea of a national revival for the Jews drew its initial inspiration from the successful growth of modern national liberation movements ... in the second half of the nineteenth century. But these national movements were bereft of any messianic message.⁵⁴

Rubinstein wants to free Zionism not only from the messianic idea but also from the ideas of “a treasured nation,” and of “the severance of the Jews from all the other nations, as well as their millennial role.”⁵⁵ To support his argument, he cites such Zionist thinkers as Herzl, Nordau, Berdichevsky, Brenner, and Klatzkin. But he also had something to say about pre-Six-Day War Religious Zionism and “... how ready the Religious-Zionist segment was to accept the general assumptions of Zionism.”⁵⁶ Rubinstein explains that the anomaly of Jewish existence in the Diaspora ended with the establishment of the State. The State’s difficulties in gaining acceptance in the world as a state like all others

52 Ibid., 78.

53 A. Oz, “The Secret of Zionism’s Attraction,” *Bi-tefuzot ha-golah* 81-82 (1977): 86.

54 A. Rubinstein, *The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back* (New York: Schocken, 1984), 21.

55 Ibid., 35.

56 Ibid., 49.

result not from any unique characteristics of the Jewish State but from other causes. He sees no justification for the anger at the world felt in Israel on the eve of and in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. The anger grew out of the perception that the world had turned its back on its obligations to Israel, thereby intensifying the Israeli sense of isolation. In Rubinstein's view, however, the world's reaction had a rational political explanation. Part of the blame for Israel's low standing among the nations must be placed on Israel itself, on Israel's unwillingness to offer a reasonable response to the new challenges presented during the period following the 1967 war. The Zionist vision requires political solutions, not a dependence on "speculations about a meta-historical dimension."⁵⁷

Exercising hindsight, political thinkers such as Rubinstein accuse Israeli public opinion of corrupting basic Zionist ideas (which he terms "Herzlian"⁵⁸) related to the political auto-emancipation of the Jewish nation. Rubinstein acknowledges that this line of thought arose primarily in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War,⁵⁹ when Israel's military and political weakness became clear, especially with the decline in its standing in world public opinion.⁶⁰ But Rubinstein himself is not entirely satisfied by the account of events in this area related to messianic excitement and disappointment. Later in his report on the post-Six-Day War period, he cites the crisis of socialist Zionism as an added factor strengthening the religious community and the religious understanding of events in Israel during the period in question.⁶¹

As an amateur historian who is himself a product of the period, Rubinstein gets caught up in an incoherent explanation of historical developments, an explanation in which the crisis of socialist Zionism, post-Six-Day War messianism, post-Yom Kippur War disillusionment, and the founding of Gush Emunim form a paradoxical sequence of

57 Ibid., 165.

58 Ibid., 72–82.

59 Ibid., 81–82. Rubinstein did not write his book until 1980. Shulamit Hareven disputes the idea that the Yom Kippur War provides the background for the controversy at issue, but there is nothing to support her view, even if it is true that messianic religious ideas became widespread within national Religious Zionism even earlier; see S. Hareven, "A Sociological Model vis à vis Reality," *Bi-tefuzot ha-golah* 79–80 (1976): 105. Also see Rotenstreich's correct response to Hareven in his article "Religious Faith and Political Concepts," *ibid.*, 111.

60 Rubinstein, *The Zionist Dream Revisited*, 82.

61 Ibid., 96–98.

events. But while Rubinstein fails in his effort to produce a causal explanation of the events, he nevertheless speaks accurately about the events themselves: “The power of the ‘Synagogue Militant’ has been nourished by a strange alliance with the secular majority.”⁶² In his view, the sense of crisis within Zionism is not something imposed on it by outside forces. Rather, “a more pragmatic, less idealistic and consequently less apocalyptic, attitude is necessary in order to bring Israel back to the past course which led her to unassailable peaks.”⁶³ Sound Zionism

wanted the new dwellers of the old forsaken home to become new liberated Jews and to act as orderly good neighbors among the older members of the family of nations.⁶⁴

A Reaction: Religious Zionism

Among the voices protesting the anti-messianic trends in secular Israeli thought since the Yom Kippur War and the effort to shrink the Zionist platform was that of Harold Fisch, a Bar-Ilan University literary critic, whose *The Zionist Revolution: A New Perspective* appeared in 1978.⁶⁵ Fisch—a leader of the “Greater Israel Movement”—argues that it is fundamentally wrong to understand Zionism in terms of modern nationalism and a drive toward Jewish normalization. As he understands it, Zionism draws on the traditional Jewish myth of redemption, which was responsible for the migration of Jews to the Land of Israel, even in pre-Zionist times. In that respect, Zionism has shown little self-awareness.⁶⁶ In his desire to dwell in the land of his forebears, a Jew seeks redemption. From this point of view, “Zionism has scarcely begun, as yet, to define the society that it will attempt to create in its liberated land.”⁶⁷ The spiritual fathers of Fisch’s concept of messianic redemption

62 Ibid., 119. It goes without saying that a historian should not characterize as “strange” events or linkages between events that he does not understand.

63 Ibid., 182.

64 Ibid., 183.

65 H. Fisch, *The Zionist Revolution: A New Perspective* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1978)

66 Ibid., 26.

67 Ibid., 38.

are Moses Hess,⁶⁸ Aaron David Gordon,⁶⁹ Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook,⁷⁰ and Martin Buber.⁷¹ According to Fisch, Zionist history from 1897 to 1973 unfolded as a messianic process—not by choice of the Zionists, but by dint of divine impetus.⁷² Fisch tries to base his view on the Christian reaction to the State, which draws heavily on the messianic conception. He thus seems to have taken messianism in its secular model and attempted to give it religious force.

Religious Zionism after the Yom Kippur War involves messianic positions requiring separate consideration, beyond the scope of this chapter. It is enough here to say that over the years, secular Zionism underwent two transformations: first, the transformation of the traditional messianic idea into a secular one; and second, the invalidation of the messianic idea and the complete withdrawal from it.

In one way secular Zionism, which inherited the messianic idea from the religion of Judaism, has now returned it to Religious Zionism.⁷³ And yet the Zionist quest for normalization has not managed to free the Jew from the need to justify his collective existence through some notion of mission, whose essence is secular messianism. The failure to respond to this need constitutes a sword of Damocles hanging over Israeli society.

68 Ibid., 40.

69 Ibid., 55.

70 Ibid., 59.

71 Ibid., 66.

72 Ibid., 78.

73 Rubinstein, *The Zionist Dream Revisited*, 117–126.

XIII. “RENEW OUR DAYS AS OF OLD”: A ZIONIST MYTH

Myth and Utopia

The penultimate verse of the Book of Lamentations beseeches God to “renew our days as of old” (Lam. 5:21). The verse has entered the Jewish liturgy and over the ages has been associated with hopes for social improvement, redemption, new starts, and a return to the past. In its plain meaning in Lamentations, it pleads for a return to the conditions that existed before the destruction of the First Temple—to political independence and nearness to God.¹ Other prayers in the liturgy look to the past as well, such as “Restore our judges as they were earlier and our counselors as before,” but they look to a specific period in the past when God was in His Land, or Israel had political autonomy. The verse “renew our days as of old” differs from those specific requests in that it looks to an undifferentiated past, not to some specific point within it. In the mythical understanding, this unspecified past is an era of perfection that preceded the flawed present. “Renew our days as of old” therefore took on clearly mythical associations—religious, historical, and utopian.

The religious model of this verse—a flawed present from which one hopes to return to a perfect past—became a part of Zionist thought as well. It can be seen as a utopian myth, a myth that establishes a future. The utopian myth in Scripture resembles the model of the “garden” and the “city”—the Garden of Eden and the City of God, imagery that appears in various cultures.² The verse “renew our days as of old” was variously interpreted within Zionism, sometimes in mutually contradictory ways, but it sums up the Zionist experience more effectively than any other biblical verse. The Book of Lamentations mourns the destruction of the Land and the nation, so it is only natural that the text be applied to nationalist matters.

1 Y. Klein, *Encyclopedia of the Biblical World: Megillot* (Jerusalem, 1987), 159; A. S. Hartom, *Bible Commentary: Hamesh megillot, Eikhah* (Tel Aviv, 1965), 65. Joining the appeal to “renew our days as of old” to the thought at the beginning of the verse—“Take us back, O Lord, to Yourself, and let us come back”—and repeating it at the end of the scroll allude to its origin as a plea appended to the final lamentation in the scroll.

2 Elbaum-Dror, *Yesterday's Tomorrow*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1993), 17–19.

The idea of “return” was treated by Zionists as a basis for demanding legitimation as a nation and rights to the Land. It also carried implications of a return to the past, the restoration of past glory, political self-definition, national-territorial identification, and redemption and rehabilitation. This aspect of return looked to the past, to a past supposedly to be renewed and restored, but a second aspect looked toward the future—a future of complete redemption and final rehabilitation, of full spiritual perfection. This two-directional interpretation left its traces in both the secular and the religious streams of Zionism.³ The former aspect can be considered regressive, in that it sees the present as inferior to the past, even to the distant past, while the latter is progressive, expecting improvement over time.

The verse “renew our days as of old” functioned as a guiding mythos for Zionist thought and action. It served both Zionist ethos and Zionist ritual in two senses: the past as a touchstone for identity and guide to action, and the past as the starting point of a continuum leading to a more perfect future.⁴

One should clarify whether the past being looked to is real or imagined, partial or comprehensive, and answer the same questions for the future as well. Are we dealing with a utopia or with a realistic vision? What are the Jewish and non-Jewish sources that go into the image of the future? One might also consider the integration of the two aspects and the sources on which they draw. Mircea Eliade is certainly right in calling the collective memory ahistorical⁵ and primarily archetypal. It follows that every conscious and planned action in human society is actualized only to the degree that it emulates or returns to the archetype.⁶ Still, there is room to probe its content and sources as well as how it came to be formed.

The concept of “renew our days as of old” is centered, in Zionist

3 For the idea in Religious Zionism, see Schwartz, *Religious Zionism*, 63–82. Schwartz describes the messianic consciousness of the Religious Zionist and the desire to construct “a total religious society in the Land of Israel.” He emphasizes the revolutionary nature of the Religious Zionist’s drive to become a new sort of person, religiously and socially. As he sees it, the claim to historical continuity and maintenance of the tradition is part of Religious Zionist apologetics and of the bivalent language it uses.

4 On the tension between natural and apocalyptic messianism, see the excellent article by Greenwald, “Myth in the Reality of Epistemology, History, and Research,” *Mada `ei ha-yahadut* 38 (1998): 190–191.

5 M. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Pantheon, 1954), 44.

6 See *ibid.*, 34–35.

thought, on the mythos of the Land of Israel—the territory that Jews do not inhabit but believe to have been promised to them as their homeland, and to be the place where they are destined to realize their national existence. These points are made quite plain in the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel:

Eretz-Israel [the Land of Israel] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious, and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained statehood.... After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.⁷

The Jews were a nation without a territory, and a territorial mythos was needed to fill in the gap.

Zionism, it must be stressed, is a national movement possessed of a highly developed historical consciousness. It does not simply assert historical rights to "the Land of our fathers," but presents itself as a link in a continuous historical chain. History also affords its demands a degree of pathos, manifested in part in the names chosen by some Zionist groups, such as the Association of Ancient Maccabees and the Association of Hasmoneans. In an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* of January 1896, Herzl proclaimed with pathos that a generation of glorious Jews would rise from the earth, and the Maccabees would return to life.⁸ The antiquity of the mythos bolsters its contemporary force.

Moses Hess, a herald of Jewish nationalism and European socialism, had already suggested that Judaism be defined as a historical nation with a universal mission. Hess sought to join the regressive and progressive viewpoints through the paired concepts of "Sabbath of nature"—the story of creation—and "Sabbath of history," representing the future perfection of mankind. Natural creation concluded with the creation of the world, but historical creation requires a regime of social equality and moral perfection. Jewish nationalism is constructed in accord with both

7 Published in the *Official Gazette*, No. 1 of 5 Iyar, 5708 (14 May 1948).

8 *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 January 1896; in H. Merḥavyah, *Voices Calling to Zion* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1977), 189. (The wording of Herzl's comment is a paraphrased English rendering of Merḥavyah's Hebrew translation; the original English was not available.).

elements: the divine law of social morality was given to Israel at Sinai, but it will be realized only with the contemporary revival of Israel.⁹ One has to wonder, though, whether Hess was thinking about restoring Judaism as of old or about guiding its revival in accord with the historical model he created. He certainly did not have an image of a well-defined past to which he wanted to return or from which he wanted to draw social programs for the present. For Hess, the past served as a rich source of ideas for a just social regime. Examining that past shows it to be essentially modular; it is not based on a specific historical period. Hess spoke of replicating certain past institutions, such as the Sanhedrin, in the future, but he did so mainly to enact the new society's laws.¹⁰ The past, as Hess saw it, was primarily a historicist mythos. It was not entirely an invention, for he referred to a realistic past of "commandments and customs that can provide continuity with ancient institutions,"¹¹ but this observance of the commandments and customs was grounded not in their divine authority nor in their past observance, but in their capacity to be an inspiration for the future, as Hess envisioned it.

A position quite the opposite of Hess's, one strongly opposed to modernity, was taken by Rabbi Akiva Joseph Schlesinger, a herald of the haredi outlook in Hungary and the Land of Israel, to which he migrated in 1870. In his Hebrew booklet, *The Book of the Society of the Restoration of Things to Their Former Glory*, Schlesinger depicted a Jewish society in the Land of Israel that replicated what he supposed to be the society of long ago. This society corresponded to that of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai, down to the appointment of officers over groups of one hundred and groups of fifty.¹² The nation would be divided into tribes (up to twelve in number, in correspondence with the biblical tribes), each with its banner. Its prince would be from the tribe of Judah and his seat would be in Jerusalem.¹³ The overall society pictured in Schlesinger's writings was not that of a single historical time; rather, it was a pastiche of historical fragments, including rules having a partial

9 In an introduction to the Hebrew translation of Hess, Martin Buber noted that Hess's idea was modern rather than romantic. M. Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem and Other Jewish Writings* (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1983), 10. On the terms "Sabbath of nature" and "Sabbath of history," see M. Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), 17–19.

10 M. Hess, "Letters on Israel's Destiny," in Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem and Other Jewish Writings*, 208.

11 M. Hess, "My Belief in the Messiah," in *ibid.*, 171.

12 Schlesinger, *Book of the Society of the Restoration of Things to Their Former Glory*, 9b.

13 *Ibid.*, 28b, 29a.

basis in the halakhah, such as a prohibition on selling or leasing real estate in the Land of Israel to a Gentile. Schlesinger's utopian mythos was the most extreme one within modern Jewish literature. He posits a past totally grounded in the image of "a people that dwells apart, not reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9).

Schlesinger's utopia also incorporates present-day isolationist aspirations—aspirations that Jews in the Land of Israel would use no language other than Hebrew, even in commercial dealings, that the people would have only Hebrew names, and that their attire would be clearly Jewish.¹⁴ The picture is not that of a real past but of a mythical one of purported Jewish isolation—an isolation appearing in no realistic account of history. Schlesinger hoped to establish a Jewish entity in the Land of Israel that was absolutely closed off from its surroundings, opposed to modernity, and severed from the non-Jewish world. It was an utterly regressive image of the world that cast the Jew into a pre-modern world divested of national character. It was an invented past meant to correspond to Schlesinger's present aspirations.

Zionist Myths

The Abandoned and Deserted Land

A prominent place in Zionist thinking is held by the mythology of the Exile, its circumstances, and the fate of the Land. The claim is that the Jews were expelled from the Land of Israel and that, since the expulsion, the Land has sat desolate, "mourning for its children who have been separated from it in distant lands these two thousand years." That was how it was put by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a reviver of Hebrew as a modern language, in his 1879 programmatic article "A Weighty Question."¹⁵ The Land of Israel is a fertile land, "flowing with milk and honey," but only for its children, the Jews. In the circumstances of the Jewish exile, the Land became a Land "bereaved of its people dwelling in Europe" that will regain its fertility only when it is restored to Jewish ownership: "... the time has now come for us, the Jews, likewise to work for this great event."¹⁶ A 1922 Zionist Organization memorandum emphasizes this

14 Ibid., 29b, 32a.

15 E. Ben-Yehuda, "A Weighty Question," *Ha-shahar* 9 (Nisan 5639 [1879]): 363–364, in *Merhavyah, Voices Calling*, 136.

16 Ibid.

motif of restoring the deserted Land. The Jews want “to revive, through their energy and sacrifice, a Land that had previously been home to a living and fertile culture and that had long been deserted, standing desolate.”¹⁷ The myth of the abandoned, deserted Land helped strengthen the demand to be given ownership rights to it, but the absence of Arabs from the myth removes it from reality as well.

The Return to Zion

As it defined itself, Zionism aspired to embody a third return to Zion, following the earlier ones in the time of Joshua and in the time of Ezra. This perspective generated equivalence between the earlier returns and this final one, an equivalence having operative implications.

Return to what and on whose part? The concept of “return” incorporates a variety of values and world views. Its mythological overtones suggest that the return is to a more perfect situation, one in which the Jew is more at ease with his world, his God, and his environment, and in which he is no longer dispersed and oppressed among the nations. Herzl put it as follows in his article “The Solution of the Jewish Question”: “We will live at last as free men on our own soil and die in peace in our own homeland.”¹⁸ The concept of “return” is bound up as well with the Lurianic legend of Israel’s return to its Land as corresponding to God’s return to Zion in order to repair the breach in the higher worlds. It is a return to the primeval situation in which the God of Israel and the people of Israel dwelt in harmony in the Land of Israel. It is the same concept that affords a reparative, redemptive dimension to the prayer that “our eyes shall witness Your return to Zion with love.” Implicit within that prayer is a religious request that Divine providence be extended to Israel, but specifically within the Land of Israel.

The “return to Zion” is one of the most prominent of the mythological demands that Zionist thought drew from the religious tradition. But here the mythological demand clashes with reality. Rabbi Judah Alkalai, a forerunner of Zionism within Sephardi Jewry, made it clear that in this generation we are not speaking of a comprehensive return of the Jews to their Land. Unlike the return from Egypt, when the Israelites entered a

17 Zionist Organization memo, July 1922, in H. Merhavayah, *Zionism: Collected Political Documents* (Jerusalem: Ahiasaf, 1944), 228–229.

18 T. Herzl, *Zionist Writings: Essays and Addresses 1* (New York: Herzl, 1973), 33.

developed land, the present return would be a partial one, to a destroyed and desolate land. The return from Egypt was a mass movement; the contemporary return would be decorous and dignified; it would take place slowly until the Land was built up and firmly established.¹⁹ But the distinction between the past return and the present one does not diminish the former's symbolic, mythological value for those pursuing the latter. It was Hess who called the contemporary return "the end of the third exile," drawing no distinctions between past and present.

Moreover, the concept of "return" was a vital part of Zionist consciousness, for the returnees were an ethnic group that did not reside in a single territory. The desire to afford that group a territorial identity beyond its national identity gave the return its central position in Zionist thought. Peretz Smolenskin, one of the earliest Jewish nationalist thinkers, may have invoked the Land of Israel solely as a spiritual heritage—"its ancestral memory and the heritage bequeathed to it"²⁰—but after the pogroms, the Land of Israel became a realistic destination, preferable to Spain or America: "Only there can they be truly and eternally saved," for only there are they tied to "the memory of their fathers."²¹

The Land of Our Fathers

Another mythic concept that figures prominently in Zionist literature is the overarching notion of "the Land of our Fathers." This concept reflects a desire to return to a utopian past, to the national home and Land, to an embracing and comforting territory. In his opening address to the First Zionist Congress, Herzl justified the need for a charter calling for the establishment of a Jewish State on the grounds that the return of the Jews specifically to the Land of their fathers, to their historic homeland, was what they craved.²² And in his speech before the German Kaiser in Jerusalem, on 2 November 1898, he presented his demands for the recognition of the Jews' rights to "the Land of our Fathers."²³ But this heavily laden concept did not necessarily correspond to histori-

19 Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, 73.

20 P. Smolenskin, *Essays* 1 (Jerusalem: Keren Smolenskin, 1925–1926), 209 ("A Time to Speak").

21 Ibid., 3, 118–119 ("Let Us Seek Our Way").

22 Herzl, *Zionist Writings*, 1, 133 (from Herzl's opening speech at the First Zionist Congress, 29 August 1897).

23 Ibid., 2, 30–31 (from Herzl's speech before the German Kaiser in Jerusalem, 2 November 1898).

cal reality. Historical inquiry raises doubts about whether the Land of Israel was ever the exclusive possession of the Jews dwelling within it and certainly about its having been a protective and calming territory.

The Promised Land

The mythic call for the return to the Promised Land served as both political and ideological currency between Jews and non-Jews. In 1891, William Blackstone, an American evangelist and missionary, suggested to American President Benjamin Harrison that the Jews be returned to the Land of Israel, their divinely assigned homeland and their inalienable “possession.”²⁴ That formulation was the standard one used by Evangelical Christians who believed in the Old Testament, and even the Turkish ambassador to Washington, who rejected the Zionist call for a sovereign state in the Land of Israel, spoke of “the ancient, Promised Land, the historical inheritance of Abraham.”²⁵

From the viewpoint of Max Nordau, Herzl’s right-hand man and a founder of the Zionist Organization, the mythos of the promised Messiah was a mythos of “the nation’s return to its historical homeland, which was likewise promised.”²⁶ Similar ideas could be heard in the speech by Menahem Ussishkin before the Paris Peace Conference on 27 February 1919. His speech echoed the Zionist assertion of rights to the Land of Israel as the land promised to the Jewish people. Ussishkin put it simply, describing it as:

The historical claim of the Israelite nation: to be returned to its borders and to restore to the children of Israel the Land that was divinely promised to them four thousand years ago.²⁷

This seems to have been the first time that a Zionist text of real-world political importance relied in this way on the mythos of the Promised Land. The text was presented to a public international forum of the

24 Ibid., 42 (William Blackstone to the President of the United States, memorandum in anticipation of the international conference to clarify the demands of the Jews, March 1891).

25 Ibid., 42 (Comment of the Turkish ambassador to Washington with regard to Zionism, April 1899).

26 Nordau, *Zionist Writings*, 2, 90–91 (“Zionism”).

27 Speech by Ussishkin before the Paris Peace Conference, 27 February 1919, in Merhavyah, *Zionism: Collected Documents*, 161.

Great Powers, and it is fair to assume it would not have been presented had it not been expected to be well received. Ussishkin was no romantic here; he was an experienced politician.

The Negative Mythos

Myths can inspire caution as well as emulation, for the past abounds in negative models as well as positive ones. When Smolenskin preached a cultural Jewish nationalism, a "nation of the spirit," he was harshly criticized by Ben-Yehuda, who warned against emulating the prophet Jeremiah and Josephus Flavius, whose writings helped the enemies of the Jews destroy their Land.²⁸

According to Judah Leib Pinsker in his essay "Auto-emancipation," Jewish history is marked by a sense of misery, describing the Jews as "... our people, miserable these thousands of years." The solution to this suffering lies in making the Jews into a nation and enabling them to acquire a homeland for themselves. Equal standing will make it possible for the Jews to claim their rights "on the basis of equal standing and reciprocity and of mutual respect as well."²⁹ Herzl, too, did not want to renounce Western culture. The events of the past did not provide a model to be imitated, and the myth of "renew our days as of old" was a threat as well:

Whoever wants to found a state today must not go about it in the manner that a thousand years ago would have been the only possible one. It is foolish to revert to old levels of civilization.³⁰

For Aaron David Gordon, an ideologue of the Hapoel Hatsa'ir (Young Labor) movement, it was clear that the sought-after revival implied "something that had not existed for ages."³¹ The mythos of "renew our days as of old" thus obstructs the vista of that revival and limits it, and it would be wrong to speak of replicating the past in the present. Pre-exile

28 E. Ben-Yehuda, *A Dream Come True: Selected Writings on Language*, ed. R. Sivan (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1979), 49 ("A Letter to Ben-Yehuda, Kislev 5641 [winter 1880–1881]).

29 J. L. Pinsker, *Auto-emancipation* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1952), 39, 41, 65.

30 Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, 50.

31 A. D. Gordon, *Selections from the Writings of Aaron David Gordon*, ed. J. Agus (Jerusalem: Zionist Organization, 1958), 152.

national life is not the model to be imitated. Contemporary nationalism must be established on “entirely new footings”;³² it is something newly born. What once existed is not necessarily what one should aspire to.

But even the proponents of revolutionary Zionist thought could not free themselves of the myths of the past, for without them, Zionist nationalism lacked any basis whatsoever. Unlike other Jewish nationalist streams, only Zionism relied on history. Nordau well understood that even radical Jewish nationalism needed the historical mythos, and that the idea of the “ancient nation” had a role to play, as history provokes and feeds the national sense even when it does not provide a model worthy of reconstructing:

... the excitement about Jewish history and martyrology felt by modern, educated Jews, the arousal of their sense of ethnic worth, their dignified aspiration to save an ancient nation ...—all of these make them want to drench an abandoned and desolate land with their sweat, to work it with their hands until it once again is the fertile garden that it was in ancient times.³³

The Past as Partial Model

Aḥad Ha-Am, like his predecessors Hess and Smolenskin, looked to the past as a source of ethical inspiration, but he did not consider the return to the past to be directed toward a real unit of time. “The Torah in one’s heart” and prophetic morality were the values on which he based his teachings. “Torah in one’s heart” is a spiritual value,³⁴ and Jewish morality is a human value,³⁵ values that he found in the Jewish history of the First and Second Temples and hoped to adopt for the new national movement.

Herzl, too, did not avoid using the past and treating it as a mythic model and symbol for areas that were of interest to him. Despite his liberal-progressive stance, the past sometimes played an important part in his thought. Herzl believed that in the miracle at the Sea of Reeds Moses established a model for the future, in which the Jews would dem-

32 Ibid., 298.

33 Nordau, *Zionist Writings*, 2, 92, 101–102 (“Zionism”).

34 Aḥad Ha-Am, *Collected Writings*, 51–54 (“The Torah in One’s Heart”).

35 Ibid., 159–164, 373–375 (“National Morality” and “On the Fence”).

onstrate the wonders of technology to the world.³⁶ Herzl even used the biblical ideal of "each man under his vine and under his fig tree" as an emblem for the society that would be established in the Land of Israel.³⁷

The national poet, Chaim Nahman Bialik, likewise adopted a modular approach to the past, discussing it in his speech at the opening ceremonies for the Hebrew University in 1925. The model is that of a small and poor land that nevertheless produced spiritual giants who influenced all mankind—the bearers of monotheism, including Jesus of Nazareth. What follows from that is the hope that the third return to Zion will bring with it a gospel of redemption for all of mankind.³⁸ The modular approach to a past that can be useful for the future was also voiced by labor movement leader Berl Katznelson: "I know of no literary work better able to teach hatred of slavery and love of liberty than the story of the enslavement in and exodus from Egypt."³⁹ The past here is a concept, an instrumentality of morals—a ritual and literary past.

A similar approach was taken by Gordon, who was a Labor movement intellectual. He compared the return to Zion in his time to the return from Babylonia. Although the latter began slowly, those who returned hastened to establish their center in Jerusalem. Similarly, the return in our time must establish its center in the Land of Israel. In this view of things, Jerusalem and the Land of Israel are the same:

One thing we can learn from our ancestors who returned from Babylonia is that if we want a truly vibrant movement, we must establish the center of the movement here in our Land.⁴⁰

Repudiating the Diaspora

It is not only the Land of Israel and its past that sustain the mythology of Zionist thought; the Diaspora is a rich source of myths as well. Exile and its repudiation are a central axis of Zionist ideology, appearing as leading ideas among the earliest Zionist thinkers. One of the most prominent was Moses Leib Lilienblum, whose seminal Hebrew article "On Israel's

36 Herzl, *Altneuland*, 26–27.

37 Ibid., 160–163.

38 Herzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, 221–222.

39 Katznelson, *Writings*, 6, 391.

40 Gordon, *Selections*, 150.

Revival in the Land of Its Fathers”⁴¹ appeared in late 1881 and early 1882. In his article Lilienblum maintained that antisemitism was characteristic of the Jewish Diaspora, flowing from Israel’s alienation from its surroundings. The goal of national redemption was to return Israel to its Land, where it would no longer be alien. The historical precedent that inspired Lilienblum was the time of Cyrus, when “the children of Israel returned to the Land of their fathers and national life.”⁴² That the Jews lacked such trappings of nationhood as language and land was no obstacle in Cyrus’s time and would not be one now.

The extreme repudiators of the Diaspora, those in the school of Herzl and Nordau, went furthest in mythologizing the past. Exile was understood as an undivided whole, marked by no differences among times or places. Russia and Poland of the nineteenth century, Spain during its Golden Age, Babylonia during the Geonic period, and the Land of Israel following the destruction of the Temple—all eighteen hundred years were seen as an undifferentiated mass. In addressing the Second Zionist Congress, Max Nordau declared: “Only now can we give ourselves an accounting of the horrible destruction wreaked on us during these eighteen hundred years of exile.” Diaspora Judaism is “an enfeebled Judaism, a Judaism on the defensive, a Judaism void of substance.”⁴³ The yearning for power—“the lost sinewy Judaism”—is the characteristic of “the Zionism that calls Judaism to a new life.” This yearning sees even the failed Bar-Kokhba rebellion as Judaism at its best—“the great Bar Kokhba’s hopeless war, which only the contemptible acolytes of success can consider to be less grand than the brilliant Hasmoneans.”⁴⁴ Two years later, in 1900, Nordau offered an even sharper formulation: “We will renew our ties to our ancient tradition: we will again be thick-chested men, with tensed limbs and a powerful gaze.”⁴⁵

Those taking socialist positions likewise repudiated the recent past in favor of the distant. Nahman Sirkin, one of the fathers of Jewish socialism, stressed that exile was an inferior stage in the history of the

41 M. L. Lilienblum, *On the Revival of Israel on Its Ancestral Land* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1953).

42 Ibid., 112.

43 Nordau, *The Jewish Question*, 73 (“Speech to the Second Zionist Congress”).

44 Ibid., 72.

45 Nordau, *Zionist Writings*, 1, 187 (“Muscular Judaism”).

Jewish people. He maintained that since losing their national and political independence in the Land of Israel, the Jews had lived a strange life, without historical precedent—the life of a nation without a land.⁴⁶ The most distant past is the foundational past, which must be renewed. Correcting the anomaly of exile is among the missions of the national movement.

Gordon distinguished between a Jewish nation living within nature and a Jewish nation severed from nature. The symbolic “two millennia” served as the dividing line between the former and the latter. In Gordon’s view, the past to which Jews were returning was a real past, in which the nation was tied to the Land: “... To its Land and its culture, which grows out of its Land and its labor.”⁴⁷ But given the real present, the past takes on a mystical quality: “... The natural spirit of the national homeland, mixed with the spirit of the nation ... that is the source of the nation’s supernal bounty.”⁴⁸ Despite his utter rejection of the Diaspora, Gordon had to acknowledge that “the force of religion helped us endure all through our long days of exile.” Given that, he asked, could “such a force be void of all imaginative abilities?” In identifying exile with religion, Gordon does not deny the force of religion entirely. He sees a need to refine religion, to give it a “more enlightened form”⁴⁹ within national life, rather than to throw it to the dogs.

Religious Zionism

The messianic idea held center stage in the consciousness of Religious Zionism, but not in practical terms. It was primarily a progressive idea, a concept of the future. The Messiah had not yet come. The present and the past join in messianic hopes for the future, and Religious Zionism therefore shows almost no romantic longing for the past. Rabbi Mohilever put it this way:

For some two thousand years, we have been hoping for the coming of our righteous Messiah, who will redeem us from our bitter exile and gather our dispersions from the four corners of the world to our Land, where we will

46 Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, 255.

47 A. D. Gordon, *The Writings of Aaron David Gordon* (Tel Aviv: Hapoel Haza`ir, 1925–1929), 1, 94.

48 Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, 293.

49 Gordon, *The Writings of A. D. Gordon*, 5, 216.

dwelt in tranquil security, each under his vine and under his fig tree.⁵⁰

The vector runs from past to future, not from present to past. “Each under his vine and under his fig tree” is not a picture of the past; it is a hope for the future. Mohilever was preceded in this regard by Rabbis Alkalai and Kalischer, “the heralds of Zionism.”

Alkalai’s writings all deal with end-reckonings and redemption,⁵¹ and they served as a foundation for Kalischer’s writings, especially when he considered the stages of redemption.⁵² Kalischer concentrated more on halakhic matters, however—the commandment to settle the Land, the renewal of sacrifices, and the fulfillment of the commandments that depend on the Land.⁵³ The commandments do not draw their authority from the past, for the past is not superior to the present as a model for a society that lives in accordance with halakhah. Later, these traits would continue to mark the Religious Zionist parties. The members of Hapoel Hamizrachi who were not motivated by messianic considerations likewise saw the revival of the Land as flowing not from the past but from the obligation to observe the commandments in the present. In the words of their leader, Samuel Hayyim Landau:

... the Torah is not merely a commandment or a duty for those who are building the Land; it is a primary condition for that building and, in its essence, a driving force and mover of the national revival flowing from it.⁵⁴

Yearnings for the past are likewise excluded from the messianic underpinnings of the thinking of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, the most original thinker of Religious Zionism. The past is entirely linked to the future in a single continuum: “Redemption is ongoing and it continues. The redemption from Egypt and the coming complete

50 J. Fishman, “The Life of Rabbi Samuel,” in Fishman, *The Book of Samuel*, 69.

51 Alkalai, *Complete Writings*, 2, 551 et seq. See also, in this same collection, the pamphlets he published during the 1860s.

52 Kalischer, *Derishat zivyon*, 97, 99.

53 Ibid., 82 (“*Sha’ar zivyon*”), 102; see also *ibid.*, 122.

54 S. H. Landau, *Writings of S. H. Landau* (Warsaw: Hashomer Hadati, 1935), 37 (“*le-veirur shittateinu*”).

redemption are a single action that never stops."⁵⁵

That said, some strains of Religious Zionism did not resist the impulse to reconstruct history on the premise that it was possessed of foundational authority. The historical mythos was the fuel that drove the national engine, filling in the gaps within the halakhic commands. According to Alkalai, the leaders of the return would be the elders. They would be in charge of the ingathering of the exiles, raise the banner of Torah, institute observance of the commandments that depend on the Land, and restore the crown to its ancient majesty. The reference to the elders was meant to recall the institution of the elders which received Moses on his return from Midian to Egypt.⁵⁶ The founders of *Petaḥ Tiqvah* spoke in their by-laws of the mythic attraction felt by a Jew to the Land of Israel: "For the soul of every Israelite man yearns for its roots, that is, the portion of our fathers."⁵⁷ In a proclamation to the Diaspora published in *Havazelet* after the first wave of pogroms in 1881, the writer, evidently Israel Dov Frumkin, spoke of the Land of Israel as the defense against antisemitism:

Only in Jerusalem will they be consoled, and only there will they realize all our hopes to achieve greatness and honor, as a light to the nations and a banner for the peoples, as we return to our ancient youth; and from Zion will go forth Torah and the world of the Lord from Jerusalem.⁵⁸

Rabbi Mordecai Eliasberg, one of the most important heralds of Religious Zionism in Eastern Europe, took a broad mythological view. Dwelling in the Land represented full harmony between "natural science" and "religious sanctity." One who affirmed one affirmed the other. "Natural science" encompassed general learning, political science, and so forth. "Religious sanctity" encompassed matters related to religion. Exile drove a wedge between the two wisdoms, as the maskilim affirmed one while the traditionalists affirmed the other, but the return to the

55 A. I. Hakohen Kook, *Orot* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1961), 44.

56 Alkalai, *Complete Writings*, 1, 282 ("qol qorei").

57 I. D. Frumkin, "A Voice from a City," in Druyanow, *Sources*, 3, document 113, 294–301. On the identity of the writer, see Druyanow's comment, *ibid.*, 294n.

58 *Ibid.*

Land would reunite the two.⁵⁹ Another Religious Zionist myth was formulated by the founder of the Mizrahi movement, Rabbi Reines. He cited rabbinic sources which stated that the Land of Israel responded with fruitfulness only to the Jews, who cherish its dust. Jewish settlement in Russia had no hope of succeeding because Jews have a spontaneous link only to the soil of the Land of Israel,

for only this Land, which is prepared to be worked and prepares those who work it, only this Land is fit and suitable for the Jews, for it corresponds to their temperament.⁶⁰

The Restorational Approach

The concept of national revival was imbued with an element of renaissance and restoration—the reappearance of the old in its full perfection. One can easily imagine that the concept of “revival” is laden with numerous Christian associations stemming from Evangelical Protestantism. The idea of the millennium and the second coming of Jesus, and the connections drawn between that event and the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, encouraged Christians, especially millenarian Evangelicals, to take notice of the Jews’ return to their Land. The idea of the return began to resonate in Christian literature concerning the Jews and, perhaps, in the terminology used by Jews in their contacts with Christians.

In an Order of the Day issued in April 1917 following the conquest of Gaza, the British officer in charge of the forces in Palestine declared that “there is almost no doubt that we are awakening the ancient Jewish Land of Israel to new life, allowing the Jews to fulfill their dreams, dreams of Zion in their homeland.”⁶¹ The British General Edward Chaytor used similar language in writing to John Henry Patterson, commander of the Jewish Brigade, when resisting a Turkish counter-attack on the banks of the Jordan: “... very close to the point at which your ancestors first entered the Land of Israel under the command of Joshua.”⁶² King George V

59 M. Eliasberg, *The Golden Mean* (Warsaw: Shuldberg, 1897).

60 Reines, *Nezah yisra'el*, 46–47.

61 Merhavayah, *Zionism: Collected Political Documents*, 92 (“Agenda of Sir Archibald Murray,” 19 April 1917).

62 Ibid., 93 (General Chaytor to Col. Patterson, “Appreciation of the Jewish Brigade,” 9 March 1920).

of Great Britain stated, in an interview with Chaim Weizmann in February 1918, that "it is written in Holy Scripture that the Jews will return to the Land of Israel. I am happy that my government is assisting in that."⁶³

Ideas about restoration and remembrance of the pre-exilic past drew their expressions from Christian and Jewish literature alike. The idea of restoration was not only raised with Christian audiences but was an inseparable part of the inner Jewish experience, and was used in addressing non-Christian audiences as well. In April 1918, Weizmann appeared before representatives of the Arab and Armenian communities in Jerusalem and argued that the Jews fought courageously for the Land of Israel, from which they had been forcibly evicted.

But our ancestors never renounced their rights to it, and we are therefore not coming now to the Land of Israel so much as returning to our borders—returning in order to link the bright tradition of our past to the future.⁶⁴

Following the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, the leaders of the Zionist Organization proclaimed:

You who are downtrodden and weary from two thousand years of wandering ... you now have the ability to liberate yourselves from the dependency and torments of exile and to live in your Land, the Land in which the Hebrew spirit and the ancient national glory will recover and be restored to life.⁶⁵

A speech by Menahem Ussishkin before the Paris Peace Conference on 27 February 1919 seems to echo the idea that Israel's revival in the Land of Israel represented a restoration in the Christian sense, for he was addressing himself to a Christian audience:

(Translator's note: In this and the following references, the original English was unavailable. The quotations in the text are retranslations into English of the author's Hebrew translations of the original.)

63 Ibid., 171 (excerpt from the remarks of H. M. King George V to C. Weizmann, February 1918).

64 Ibid., 173 (from a speech by C. Weizmann to the Arab and Armenian representatives in the palace of Governor Storrs, 28 April 1918).

65 Ibid., 110–111 (declaration of 18 December 1917).

I stand before you, the leaders of the world, in the name of the largest grouping of Jews, the Jews of Russia, in order to express here the historical demand of the Israelite nation: to be restored to its borders and to return to the Children of Israel the Land that was divinely promised to it four thousand years ago—the Land in which our fathers dwelt and in which they established a great and eternal culture. This Land was taken by force from the Israelite nation by the Romans 1850 years ago ... and now I, a child of those exiles, in the name of the oppressed nation, come before you, the political and cultural heirs of the Romans, and demand of you: return our historical stolen property to us.⁶⁶

This text relies on the principle of returning lost property to its owner, and there is no doubt that Ussishkin crafted it to be well received by its audience.

British political and military figures were strongly influenced by notions of restoration. It is in that light that one must understand the perspective of the first British High Commissioner in Palestine, Herbert Samuel, who made use of typically English ideas in explaining his mission. As early as November 1919, he spoke of the past as providing guidance for the future. In his view, the Jews of the Land of Israel were “healthy Jews ... equipped once again to produce sages and scholars, poets and philosophers, musicians and men of science.”⁶⁷ What Jewish past was Samuel alluding to here? Was it not a past that was entirely the fruit of his imagination? In a speech before the Zionist Organization in London on the eve of his departure for the Land of Israel in June 1920, he declared his belief in the eternity of Jewish life, a life marked by the idea of “not living solely for yourself or for those near you but for all mankind.”⁶⁸ The ethos of the Jews suffering for humanity is an entirely Christian ethos implanted in Jewish soil.

As said at the outset, the restorational claim was at the heart of the

66 Ibid., 161 (from a Hebrew speech by M. Ussishkin before the Paris Peace Conference, 27 February 1919).

67 Ibid., 186–187 (from a speech by Herbert Samuel on 2 November 1919).

68 Ibid., 187 (from a speech by Herbert Samuel at the farewell party given by the Zionist Organization before his departure for the Land of Israel, June 1920).

demand to "renew our days as of old" in Zionist thought and policy. The Zionist Organization used the idea of restoration when it presented its claims to the international community. That presentation relied on the Land of Israel having been a Jewish commonwealth in the distant past and on the Jews' aspirations to return to their Land, aspirations that had never wavered.

But while they affirmed the myths described in this chapter, the Zionist leaders were well aware of the risks they took in basing their claims exclusively on those myths and the demands for restoration. On that basis, one can understand a Zionist Organization memorandum from July 1922:

If the Jews today want to be given the opportunity to restore the ruins of their national home, they must base their demands not solely on the Jewish State of long ago but on the fact that the hopes and prayers of the Jewish nation, from the time it was exiled until today, have been directed towards Zion.⁶⁹

To sum up, it is no exaggeration to state that the Zionist myth of "renew our days as of old" served as the basis for Zionist ethos, ritual, ideology, and policy. It is doubtful that there is any other nationalist movement in which historical myths have played so central a role in consciousness and action.

69 Ibid., 220–228 ("Memorandum from the Zionist Organization to the League of Nations Council," July 1922).

XIV. RELIGION AND SECULARISM IN THE ZIONIST NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The Zionist national movement was a secularizing phenomenon. For many who aligned themselves with it, especially among the young, it brought about a changed way of life and set of beliefs as they turned from religious observance to rejection of the commandments and from faith in a higher providential power that guides the universe to a belief that only man is responsible for his fate and actions. Many symbols that were adopted from the tradition underwent a process of secularization. Prominent examples are Israel's national flag—an adaptation of the prayer shawl—and the military oath taken at the Western Wall, the site where Jews throughout the ages came to pray.¹ Zionism also offered a national ideology in which religion was but one component of the national identity, and in some extreme cases, nationalism was seen as a replacement for religion.² The positions I will survey here generally did not speak of secularism severed from national identity or of nationalism utterly divested of all religious elements. Rather, they moved the source of authority from God to man.³

The secular positions and modes of behavior were not essential elements of the movement's platform, but they became its reality. The movement, to be sure, included Religious Zionists, but for people who were inclined to secularization even before joining the movement or as they joined it, Zionism served as a bridge or passageway from the traditional world to the secular. Becoming part of the nationalist-Zionist enterprise made the transition from tradition to secularity a more moderate spiritual step, for many elements of Zionism had roots in the tradition, including opposition to assimilation, objection to religious reform, support for the return to the Promised Land and the ingather-

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- 1 A. Shapira, "Religious Motifs in the Labor Movement," in *Zionism and Religion*, ed. Almog, Reinharz, and Shapira, 313; E. Don-Yehiya, "Secularization, Denial, and Integration, Traditional Jewish Concepts and Terminology in Socialist Zionism," *Kivvunim* 7 (1980).
 - 2 See G. Shimoni, "Zionism as Secular Jewish Identity," *Kivvunim* 9 (1996), an excellent and comprehensive article.
 - 3 C. S. Liebman & E. Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 6–10, 19.

ing of the exiles, and belief in a process of redemption. The difficulty of distinguishing between tradition and secularism led some haredim to respond by adopting a stance of extreme opposition to nationalist-Zionist ideology or activity. This was articulated by Rabbi Eliezer Gordon of Telz, a leading rabbi of the time who had initially supported Zionism: "Zionism ... 'purifies the impure and defiles the pure,' and I have no wish ... to defile my pure ones."⁴ That Zionism was the means through which some Jews returned to Judaism, albeit a Judaism of a secular sort, was a phenomenon that Religious Zionists proudly pointed to, but it made no impression on haredi society overall, for its members accurately recognized that the principal vector was from the religious-traditional world to the secular.⁵

That the nationalist-Zionist movement was established in the yeshivot, synagogues, and study halls says something about the public it was able to attract to its cause. Because of that character, it was not long after it arose as a political movement in the late 1890s that it came to be regarded, by its leftist antagonists in Eastern Europe, as the "house movement" of young synagogue-goers, a movement of those who continued to study Torah, if only casually in their spare time. The call for settling the Land of Israel, for returning to Zion, and for fulfilling traditional aspirations gave Zionist activity a degree of traditionalist legitimacy. It was this fact that led its haredi opponents to note its dangerous capacity to exert influence within their ranks, and to emphasize how it wreaked havoc and led people astray by pretending to be something other than what it really was. The haredi opponents of Zionism disparaged it in extravagant terms, attacking it as being worse than the Reform movement or Karaism, and characterizing it as a deviant movement in the Sabbatean mold.⁶

The exchange of religious identity for national identity was evident in Zionist ideology and the way that ideology was acted on. It was something known and approved by the movement's thinkers and leaders, and was instilled in the consciousness of its members.⁷ The Zionist

4 Ribner, *The Great Scholar Rabbi Eliezer Gordon*.

5 J. Goldstein, "The Struggle between Haredim and Secularists," *Yahadut zemanenu* 2 (1985): 244.

6 Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 177–178. See also Chapter 5 of this book.

7 On the views of Berdichevsky, Brenner, Sirkin and Borochoy, Yizhak Elazari-Volcani, and Jacob Klatzkin, see Shimoni, "Zionism as Identity," 22–39, 52–57; see also Goldstein, "The Struggle," 256–257.

idea of normalizing the Jewish nation likewise threatened traditional ideas and beliefs regarding Israel as the chosen people, God's treasured possession.⁸

Ideological Models

From an ideological perspective, secularism had several models through which it reinterpreted religion in a secular manner, transforming it from a divine-transcendental force into a human force. Six such models can be identified and will be reviewed here, with examples of how the proponents of a nationalist ideology knowingly used them to borrow traditional religious values and secularize them. These six models illustrate the use of literary materials and religious values for nationalist-Zionist purposes.

1. Social Order

The first model was that of social order. Its premise was that the social order implicit in the Bible was the one best suited for adoption and development within the nationalist society. The outstanding exemplar of this approach, of course, was Moses Hess, a colleague of Marx and Engels and later among the founders of German Social Democracy. In Hess's view, Judaism was a religion with a universal mission, a religion of unity interested not only in the redemption of the individual but also in the redemption of society, nature, and the world.⁹ Hess preached "not a new religion, but a renewal of the existing religion."¹⁰ "The ideal of perfecting the world under divine sovereignty, the ideal of the messianic age, which all of our prophets foretold,"¹¹ was relocated from the religious world to the socialist world that Hess wanted to construct. Hess had no doubt that Jewish law had to be reformed to suit contemporary needs, but the reform was to be done only by Jews who settled in the Land and who chose "from among themselves a great Sanhedrin to bring about changes in religion consistent with the needs of the new society."¹² In

8 A. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 342–350; see also Shimoni, "Zionism as Secular Jewish Identity," 8.

9 Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 17–18.

10 Hess, "Letters on Israel's Destiny in Human History," 197.

11 *Ibid.*, 204.

12 *Ibid.*, 208.

other words, religion offered a just mode of social governance, and that was its strength. Its commandments were subordinate to contemporary human considerations.

2. *The Function of the Nation*

A second, utterly different model was propounded by Peretz Smolenskin. Born in Monastyrshchina, White Russia, and educated in schools of the Odessa Haskalah, he edited the important Hebrew periodical *Ha-shahar*, which was published in Vienna beginning in 1868. Smolenskin himself stopped observing the commandments while still in Russia, but he articulated his fully developed position only after settling in Vienna. In his programmatic article “Eternal Nation,” published in *Ha-shahar* in the early 1870s, he declared that

in the past three hundred years, numerous laws and rules not imagined by our ancestors came into being, overpowering us, to the point that it is impossible for a person to observe all of them and live by them.¹³

It was clear to Smolenskin that the halakhah could be and had to be reformed: “If the entire nation wishes to reform or nullify, it has the authority to do so, and no one has the power to object.”¹⁴ The authority to issue halakhic rulings passed, in his view, from the rabbis to the masses, and religion overall was the national glue “that bonds and unites the hearts of all Israelites wherever they dwell.” In considering the functions of the nation, “we must take account not only of religious faith but also of land, sovereignty, language, and all other institutions that draw the hearts of other nations and unite them”; in other words, he was speaking of nationalizing religion. Still, he warned that religious reform of the Western European sort, which strove to negate the nationalist elements of religion, “will surely undermine the entire structure, and no remnant or recollection of this nation will remain.”¹⁵ For Smolenskin, religion becomes a mechanism used by the nation, similar to language and culture. As such, he believed that it must be preserved and protected.

13 Smolenskin, *Essays* 1, 29 (“Eternal Nation”).

14 Ibid., 32.

15 Ibid., 33.

3. *The Moral-Cultural Vision*

Aḥad Ha-Am, the greatest secular philosopher of Zionism, initially thought in the same terms as Smolenskin. The intellectual platform he constructed for the secret society Benei Moshe treated religion as one of the things created by the nation. The elements of nationalism included

our ancestral land and its settlement, our ancestral language and its literature, the memory of our ancestors and their history, the essential customs of our ancestors and their national way of life as it continued from generation to generation.¹⁶

All of these were in the nature of “true national assets, shared and beloved by all.” For Aḥad Ha-Am, it was clear that “the national spirit” was “superior to all the other spirits wafting through the factions of Israel,”¹⁷ and it followed that it was superior to religion as well.

In the intense polemics waged during the early 1890s between Benei Moshe and its opponents, Aḥad Ha-Am declared that in matters of faith and belief, “peace among these sects could never be based on unity with regard to belief—a goal that could never be achieved—but only on the basis of that sacred quality, the quality of tolerance with respect to faith and belief.” Matters of religion are “personal opinions.”¹⁸ Later, Aḥad Ha-Am would develop his ideas regarding moral norms, which he placed above religion. He determined unambiguously that “the form of God changes in accord with new moral concepts,”¹⁹ and that “national morality, which flows from the spirit of the nation and its historical life,” is binding on “all adherents of nationalism.”²⁰

Without doubt, Aḥad Ha-Am believed that in any culture-war between Jews who observed halakhah and those who violated it, the latter would emerge victorious. He expected that victory to be the product of education, both formal and informal, and he therefore defended the schools established by Benei Moshe and initiated the publication of the encyclopedia *Oẓar ha-yahadut*, intended to replace “practical religion.”

16 Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 440 (“Failed Experiment”).

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 57 (“Words of Peace”).

19 Ibid., 261 (“National Morality”); see also Shimoni, “Zionism as Secular Jewish Identity,” 8–17.

20 Aḥad Ha-Am, *Complete Writings*, 162; Shimoni, “Zionism as Secular Jewish Identity,” 9.

“Knowledge of Torah” would take the place of “observance of Torah”: “... a person will first learn to read Hebrew and will then read [the encyclopedia], thereby coming to know all of Judaism.”²¹ Judaism is defined here as “everything the nation of Israel teaches us to know and the qualities of its national spirit.”²² For *Aḥad Ha-Am*, knowledge of Judaism was a substitute for the observance of its commandments.

4. *The Atheistic Approach*

An atheistic outlook filled with hostility toward halakhic Judaism was articulated at the beginning of the twentieth century by the important Zionist-Socialist thinker *Nahman Sirkin*. In his “Call to Jewish Youth,” published in 1901, he declared:

... the practical Jewish religion, brilliantly characterized by Heine as not a religion but a tragedy, is seen by Socialist Zionism as the primary obstacle blocking the Jewish nation’s path toward culture, science, and liberty. Practical religion destroys the Jewish mind and the Jewish soul, cutting off any independent action and shackling the nation in the shackles of slaves.²³

Sirkin rejected any synthesis between modernity and tradition, believing that *Aḥad Ha-Am*’s views were “nothing more than a useless rationalization of the Jewish bourgeoisie.”²⁴

But it was Joseph *Hayyim Brenner*, the leading writer of the Second Aliyah, who more than anyone took up the banner of rebellion against the tradition. Unlike his predecessors, he held that religion was not central to Judaism: “... The principal forms of individual and national life are not nourished and sustained by religion.”²⁵ Moreover, “religion itself, with all its ceremonies and follies, is only a part of the ways of life that people willfully created for themselves and subjected themselves to.”²⁶

21 *Aḥad Ha-Am, Complete Writings*, 106 (“On the Jewish Treasure in the Hebrew Language”).

22 *Ibid.*, 113, in the supplement.

23 *N. Sirkin, Writings of Nahman Sirkin* 1 (Tel Aviv, 1939), 68–69.

24 Shimoni, “Zionism as Secular Jewish Identity,” 29.

25 *J. H. Brenner, Collected Writings* 2 (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame’uhad, 1961), 57 (“In Life and in Literature”).

26 *Ibid.*; see also Shimoni, “Zionism as Secular Jewish Identity,” 32–33.

According to Brenner, even the Bible had no preferred standing in the national literary corpus: “I have been free for some time now from the hypnotic spell cast by the twenty-four books.” On the other hand, he included the New Testament “within our national heritage”:

I see no fundamental difference between the ascetic worldview and submissiveness before God of the prophet from Anatot and those of the prophet from Nazareth.²⁷ ... My national consciousness takes no account of ... anything above or beneath sensory perceptions; no account of heaven, of the creator of the world, or of what may be after death.²⁸

Unlike Aḥad Ha-Am, Brenner maintained that the question of Judaism in his time was not “the existence of Judaism,” for “we have nothing to do with Judaism.” He declared that “the question of our lives is that of the place of productive labor for us as Jews.”

Brenner also denied messianism: “Israel has no Messiah—let us overcome our fears and live without a Messiah.”²⁹ His Jewish ideal was that of the creative Jew:

To work, to create modes of Jewish labor, to speak our Jewish language, to derive our spiritual nourishment from our literature, to strive on behalf of our free national culture, to defend our national honor, and battle openly for our existence.³⁰

Brenner’s strident opposition to the tradition and its advocates was not popular among all his colleagues in the labor movement. Among its detractors were people such as Berl Katznelson, R. Benjamin, and Aaron David Gordon, nor was it accepted by Aḥad Ha-Am, Bialik, Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz, or Menahem Ussishkin.³¹ The journal *Ha-po`el*

27 Brenner, *Collected Writings*, 58.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 59.

30 Ibid.; Shimoni, “Zionism as Identity,” 34–36.

31 Guvrin, *The Brenner Affair*, 56; see also J. Frankel, “Natural Myth in the Second Aliyah,” in *Religion, Ideology and Nationalism in Europe and America* (Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel and the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1986), 376–377. Anita Shapira’s distinction between

ha-za`ir, which published Brenner's article, thereby lost the support of the Odessa Committee, and the article was the focus of a two-year journalistic argument over freedom of speech and freedom of thought.³² The one-sided step taken by the Odessa Committee led the writers in the Land of Israel at the time to unite in defense of Brenner and *Ha-po`el ha-za`ir*.³³ Nevertheless, Brenner's ideas never became the leading ideology within all the factions of the Land of Israel labor movement. It is doubtful that one can explain the polemics overall in terms of a dichotomy between "conscious enmity" on the one hand and "active religiosity" on the other, for spiritual stances are a blend of conscious and subconscious, mind and feeling.³⁴

5. The Messianic Stance

A more widespread secular attitude within the New Yishuv was the messianic position.³⁵ Its proponents encompassed thinkers from all of the political streams, ranging from academics on the left, most prominently Gershom Scholem, to academics on the right, including Joseph Klausner. They included writers, such as Berdichevsky, Shai Ish Horowitz, and Joshua Thon; teachers and scholars, including Yehezkel Kaufmann, Yehuda Kaufman (Even-Shmu'el), and Aaron Zev Eshkoli; and labor movement thinkers such as Zalman Shazar, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, and David Ben-Gurion. They saw the messianic idea as something linking Jewish history, with its religious components, and Zionism.³⁶ The point was overall redemption, not personal messianism. Zionism also entailed the pathos of revolution and change in the progressive meaning of the historical advance "from servitude to redemption."

religion, tradition, and "yiddishkeit" is problematic, for it reflects concepts pertinent to the writer's time rather than the time of her subjects. It also is difficult to accept the generalization that "the Haskala movement was anti-religious in character." It is true that the national movement borrowed many of its attitudes toward religion from the Haskalah, but the question is far more complex and requires a separate examination. See Shapira, "Religious Motifs," 302–305; see also I. Kolatt, "Religion, Society, and State during the Time of the National Home," in *Zionism and Religion*, ed. Almog, Reinhartz, and Shapira, 337–340; Don-Yehiya, "Secularization, Denial, and Integration," 38.

32 Guvrin, *The Brenner Affair*.

33 Goldstein, "The Struggle," 257.

34 Shapira, "Religious Motifs," 311.

35 H. Ben-Israel, "The Role of Religion in Nationalism: Some Comparative Remarks on Irish Nationalism and Zionism," in *Religion, Ideology and Nationalism in Europe and America*, 339–340. For this passage, see the chapter on messianism.

36 Almog, "Messianism as a Challenge to Zionism," 437–438. See the chapter on messianism.

Nordau had already noted the parallel, if not the overlap, between Zionism and messianism. The religious element transferred to secular Zionism was the yearning for redemption.³⁷ Klausner added social utopia to the emotional element, so the messianic idea also came to encompass the social-ethical principle of equality. In that way, several models at times came together in a single doctrine. Secular Zionism drew from the traditional messianic idea its great aspiration “to redeem Israel from its servitude and to bring salvation to all mankind.”³⁸ The universal mission borne by Zionism is the product of the messianic legacy.

Yehuda Kaufman, who published *The Midrashim of Redemption*, showed a link between the messianic idea and the vision of the prophets. In his view, the prophetic vision was messianist in its essence.³⁹ Of interest in this regard is the position of Gershom Scholem, whose attitude toward messianism was ambivalent. In his words, “messianism attests to the powerful vitality present at the nation’s heart,” yet he warns of “the price demanded by messianism.”⁴⁰ There is no escaping the sense that in issuing his warning, Scholem was acting not as a scholar of messianism but as an advocate of a political position. He saw Sabbateanism as a legitimate Jewish movement but rejected messianic Zionism.⁴¹

6. *The Prophetic Vision—The Bible*

David Ben-Gurion instilled his ideology of Judaism into the Zionist pioneering idea, identifying pioneering with messianism. The pioneer is the “man of virtue” who embodies the messianic vision, as described in the Torah and in the words of the prophets of Israel.⁴² Ben-Gurion raised the banner of prophetic Judaism: “Hebrew prophecy was national, international, and cosmic. From it, we learned that national redemption was impossible without social justice, and the converse. This is its ancient source, the origin of our faith and our Zionist-Socialist aspirations.”⁴³ He continued:

37 Nordau, *Zionist Writings* 2, 90–91 (“Zionism,” 1902).

38 Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, 9.

39 Kaufman, *Midrashim of Redemption*, 22.

40 Scholem, *Explications and Implications*, 273.

41 G. Scholem, “A Commandment Fulfilled through a Transgression,” in *Studies and Texts Concerning the History of Sabbateanism and its Metamorphoses* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1954), 14–15.

42 J. Becker, *The Thought of David Ben-Gurion* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1959), 21.

43 Ibid., 22.

Our profound human yearnings for a world of justice, brotherhood, peace, and kindness, like our Jewish yearnings for the revival of Israel and the centering of the nation in its homeland, flow from and draw on the Bible.⁴⁴ ... Biblical Judaism is the greatest human creation of its sort, and it alone can perfect the world and achieve national and general human justice.⁴⁵

True Judaism is realized through morality:

The Israelite God on high is the embodiment of good, justice, and kindness, and only one who embraces these qualities is close to God and a truly religious person.⁴⁶

That lesson, too, is learned from the prophetic writings.

Normative Judaism is biblical Judaism alone. In taking that position, Zionism sought to bolster the rejection of the Diaspora experience, for the Bible, unlike the Talmud, was considered a product solely of the Land of Israel. The Bible also served as a model of just social governance, well-suited to the socialist perspectives of the members of the Second and Third Aliyah.⁴⁷ One cannot avoid the impression that making the Bible the focus of Judaism produces a sort of Protestant version of Judaism. The historical leap taken by Protestantism past fifteen hundred years of Catholic theology parallels the historical leap taken by Ben-Gurion's Judaism over twenty-two hundred years of rabbinic culture. According to Ben-Gurion, from the time of the Exodus from Egypt until the destruction of the First Temple,

from Moses our father to Jeremiah the prophet ... our nation produced most of its eternal creations and gave the world the personalities whose glow and teachings and vision will never dim.⁴⁸

44 Ibid., 23.

45 Ibid., 26.

46 Ibid., 3.

47 Shapira, "Religious Motifs," 314–315; Don-Yehiya, "Secularization, Denial, and Integration," 34.

48 Becker, *The Thought of David Ben-Gurion*, 32.

In taking these positions, Ben-Gurion continued in the path of the scholars Joseph Klausner (who added the Second Temple period to the biblical period) and Samuel Abba Horodezky.⁴⁹ Ben-Gurion's consciousness was based on a historical leap from the prophetic past to the present and the future, as he knowingly disregarded twenty-two hundred years of the nation's history, during which it produced most of its cultural and spiritual oeuvre. The Bible as the centerpiece of the Jewish experience also sums up the concept of Yizhak Tabenkin, leader of the Me'uḥad stream within the Labor movement and, later, the Aḥdut Ha-Avodah Party. For Tabenkin, however, the Bible did not convey some specific message or value, but was, rather, the reflection of the Jewish nation:

The Bible exerted an influence on all generations of Jews, and not only through its values or religious content. For the Bible is the spiritual reflection of the life of a nation of active men, a nation that conquers a land, a nation of labor, a nation of "life in this world." The Land, the struggles for its conquest, life within it, the formation of the Hebrew personality, the unity of the tribes, the original attitude toward the universe, nature, love, and death, the insights with respect to life, the poetry and agony, the social and national wars—all are reflected in the Bible with brilliant artistic simplicity.⁵⁰

The Bible does not bear specific moral values. Rather, it serves as a source of nourishment for the emotional link between the Jew and his land. It is the literary medium that bonds the Jew to the landscape of his homeland.

The Reality: A National Way of Life

Side by side with the foregoing intellectual models, there was constructed a new, secular Land-of-Israel reality—a reality with its rituals and ceremonies and one that drew its framework and inspiration from tradition, which it instilled with new content. Secular nationalism made

49 Ibid., 32–34.

50 Y. Tabenkin, "The Intellectual Origins of the Second Aliyah," *Devarim 2* (Tel Aviv, 1972), 24.

Passover and Shavuot into festivals marking the seasons of the year, agricultural productivity, and political liberty. In a rewritten Passover Haggadah, the story of the exodus from Egypt gave way to narrative and poetic passages recounting the accomplishments of the settlement and the new State. Passover became entirely a grain-harvest festival, Shavuot a first-fruits festival, Sukkot an ingathering festival, and Hanukkah a festival of military prowess. These rituals and ceremonies developed particularly in the new settlements—the kibbutzim and moshavim.⁵¹

It was agreed that the status quo with respect to religious matters would be solidified in legislation which established days of rest coinciding with the traditional Jewish holidays. Oaths were to be administered in court on a Hebrew Bible; matters of marriage and divorce were to be assigned to halakhic authorities and conducted in rabbinic courts, and memorial and mourning ceremonies were to follow traditional patterns.⁵² It should be noted that this status quo continued to be strictly adhered to after the founding of the State, even though the majority of the Jewish population in the Land of Israel had already become ideologically secular during the years of the Mandate. Public Sabbath desecration, compulsory anti-religious education, or the raising of pigs could dismantle governments. Sociologists refer to this sort of secularism as Civil Religion,⁵³ and historians refer to it as a “religiosity” or as “secular religion.”⁵⁴

51 Shapira, “Religious Motifs,” 317–322; Don-Yehiya, “Secularization, Denial, and Integration,” 39–40.

52 Holocaust Memorial Day and the Memorial Day for Fallen Israeli Soldiers have elements drawn from European nationalism, but they are marginal to the traditional quality of the entire commemoration.

53 Liebman & Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel*, 1–24.

54 Shapira, “Religious Motifs,” 306, 311. It is difficult to accept the suggestion that every manifestation of passion within a society is either “religious passion” or “messianic passion.” The extension of religion to all social phenomena blurs the distinctive reliance of religion on transcendental authority. As an aside, it may be noted that just as there is religious passion, there can also be religious boredom, and just as there is messianic catharsis, so can there be messianic rhetoric and banality. Not every ethnicity is religious, and not every manifestation of rationalism is secular. Spiritual characteristics are universal characteristics, appearing in every human system. The use of traditional terminology does not necessarily demonstrate the user’s spiritual quality or affinity to tradition, for language often is used as an analogy. It takes time for the language of secularism to develop into non-traditional language and to respond to the intellectual qualities of the people using it. See also Don-Yehiya’s correct observation in “Secularization, Denial, and Integration,” 30–32 and n. 4, 40–44.

XV. THE “NEW JEW” IN RELIGIOUS ZIONIST THOUGHT

Introduction

The study of the idea of the “new Jew” in Religious Zionist thought is an integral part of the study of the Zionist utopia overall.¹ Conceptually, it occupies a place between utopia and program—in fact, the doctrines we are about to consider might be treated under the rubric of “programmatic utopia.” The word “utopia” literally means “no place”—and, as a corollary, “no time”—while the Religious Zionist conception calls for a program, a social plan having time and place, Zionist aspirations for a new Jew also entail a time and a place. The promulgators of these ideas believed that they could be implemented in a time that is of this world and in a place that is the Land of Israel. Still, these terms do not rise to the level of a plan of action that can be voted on and then put into effect, so in that sense, they remain utopian aspirations. The idea of the new Jew in Religious Zionism is individualistic and subjective, meaning that members of a single movement simultaneously spoke of different, sometimes opposing, aspects of the new Jew that they imagined.

The new Jew in Religious Zionism differs in an important way from his counterpart in Zionism generally. He draws on two sources, and his strength flows from different spheres—natural and super-natural, human and divine. As allies in a modern nationalist movement, Religious Zionists are bound to a rational, human, and not necessarily messianic initiative, but as believers loyal to the religious tenets of their forebears, they are committed to the messianic idea. These parallel forces lead the Religious Zionist to oscillate between the image of the modern rationalist Jew and that of the pre-modern Jew who passively awaits the day of his redemption.

In thought and practice, Religious Zionism generated many models for Jews who wanted to simultaneously maintain halakhic Judaism and Jewish nationalism—that is, both tradition and modernity. The associated tension between tolerance and intolerance—tolerance in political

1 For a thorough study of the subject, see Elbaum-Dror, *Yesterday's Tomorrow*.

matters, intolerance with regard to halakhic matters—was a constant force within the Religious Zionist world. It brought down governments in the State of Israel over such matters as education, Sabbath observance, and kashrut, and over fundamental halakhic questions of Jewish identity, such as the recurring question of “Who is a Jew?”

The Religious Zionist is an Orthodox Jew, one who defends halakhah against desecration and modernity, but simultaneously joins in the national struggle, even though it represents a positive response to modernity. In other words, the Religious Zionist process is one of embracing modernity and bringing it into a national society that observes the commandments. This dualism between tradition and modernity and between tolerance and intolerance leads to a sort of internal tension within Religious Zionism and to its swaying between “left” and “right.”

In this chapter, we will trace the evolution of the idea of the new Jew within Religious Zionism from its inception to our own day. We will begin with Religious Zionist doctrines that present a profile of the new Jew and then deal with a key subject that Religious Zionism continues to confront: the messianic idea in Jewish midrashic literature. The believing Zionist’s dual loyalty—that is, his simultaneous commitment to modernity and pre-modernity—is a central characteristic of his historical development. The analysis here will be organized around a diachronic tracing of the Religious Zionist’s confrontation with the two complicated worlds to which he is committed. No attempt will be made to cite everything published within Religious Zionism on the subject of the new Jew. We will only explain the characteristics that appear prominently in its leaders’ discourses.

The teachings to be examined represent Religious Zionism in all its eras: its forerunners, *Hibbat Ziyyon*, the Zionist Organization, the Yishuv between the two world wars, and the Yishuv during the remainder of the period preceding the establishment of the State of Israel. It will include the various organizations founded by Religious Zionists: Mizrachi, Hapoel Hamizrachi (Religious Labor Zionists), the Chief Rabbinate, and the Religious Kibbutz movement.

Religious Zionism’s new Jew is the twin of general Zionism’s new Jew, and may be even closer to the new Jew of Socialist Zionism. The aspirations of the Religious Zionist—to design a new Jew having a national identity with a state of his own, who participates in Western

culture and earns his living in a productive manner on the basis of social justice—are the same as those of Zionists in general.

Total Utopia

In comparison to the social programs that were widespread over the course of Jewish history, some of which were implemented in practice, the Religious Zionist program is strikingly revolutionary by any standard.² What marks the Religious Zionist utopia is that it is the program not of a sect, but of an avant-garde group that marches ahead of the camp. I am referring here, however, to an internal revolution within traditional Judaism, not to some extra-traditional movement of assimilation or secularization. If we were to compare, for example, the Gaon of Vilna, leader of the Mitnagdim (the opponents of Hasidism) with Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, who established the Hasidic movement, would we find them all that different in their halakhic behavior, their understanding of the Exile, their messianic expectations, or even their attire? If we were to compare the figure of Jacob Barit, a prominent mid-nineteenth-century Talmudic scholar in Lithuania, to that of Samuel Joseph (Rashi) Fuenn, a leading Lithuanian *maskil* of the same period, with respect to education, daily behavior, and external appearance, would they be all that different? To be sure, these comparisons are not between the most extreme figures in each camp. For example, I am not comparing the maskil Yehuda Leib Gordon to Rabbi Hayyim of Brisk. I am, rather, juxtaposing normative figures who represent the middle ground within the social groupings at issue, for those are the individuals to be considered in comparing movements. These comparisons show that the Hasidic revolution, or even the revolution wrought by the Haskalah, were not nearly as all-inclusive as the Religious Zionist revolution.

To appreciate the latter, we can compare, for example, Rabbi Isaiah Shapira—the pioneer-rebbe, a founder of Hapoel Hamizrachi, who at

2 See D. Schwartz, “From Origins to Fulfillment,” in *Religious Zionism*, ed. A. Cohen & I. Harel (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2004), 25. I disagree with Schwartz’s chronological divisions. Religious Zionism, as an ideological matter, begins with the heralds of Zionism. Its theoretical principles were already formulated, for the most part, during that early period. The principles of cooperating with secular Zionists, accepting their leadership, and engaging in political activity date from the *Hibbat Ziyyon* period. Bringing Mizrachi into the Zionist Organization (in 1902) was a step in furtherance of the “democratic praxis” established within the Zionist Organization a year before Mizrachi was established.

the end of his life raised turkeys and grew roses—to his father, Rabbi Elimelekh Shapira of Grodzisk, who was a Hasidic rebbe to thousands of followers. Similarly, we can compare Rabbi Meir Berlin, a leader of Mizrahi—broadly educated, speaking various languages, wearing a clipped beard and a short suit jacket—to his father the Netsiv, head of the Volozhin yeshivah, a man wearing a full beard and a long coat and lacking a general education. In both cases, we find personal worlds as remote from each other as east from west. Thus the Religious Zionist course, simply put, was a revolutionary one in Jewish terms. It designed a new Jew in all personal respects: identity, values, behavior, education, community, external appearance, and religious practice. These characteristics were built into Religious Zionist thought from the beginning. However, I should state at the outset that we are speaking not of a single type of new Jew but of various types of new Jews that gained expression in Religious Zionist utopias at various times.

In the early 1950s, Jacob Katz coined the term “forerunners of Zionism.”³ He suggested a definition for the beginning of a social movement: “... We are bound to begin the history of the ‘forerunners of Zionism’ at the point at which the ideas advocated by the forerunners were translated into action, and not when these ideas were in formation.”⁴ In a further statement pertinent to our inquiry, he continued: “The Zionist movement grew out of economic, political and social pressures, but in the course of its development, in the definition of its goals, and even in the choice of its means, it was guided by an idea which was not simply the product of such pressures.”⁵ The Zionist utopia was set at the center of the Zionist idea as a practicable utopia—that is, a utopia whose practicability was an inseparable part of its presentation. Katz’s article makes a further contribution to our inquiry in its identification of two rabbinic figures as forerunners of Zionism—Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer and Rabbi Judah Alkalai.

Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer

First among the Religious Zionist thinkers was Rabbi Zvi Hirsch

3 Jacob Katz, “The Forerunners of Zionism,” *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 7 (spring 1978): 10–21. The Hebrew version of the article was published in *Shivat zivyon* 1 (1950): 91–105.

4 Ibid. (English), 13.

5 Ibid., 14.

Kalischer. Kalischer, though identical in aspects of external appearance to an Eastern European rabbi, nevertheless was a figure who embodied the “new.” Possessed of a general education, he could read German and engaged in polemics with the German philosophers of his time. In his famous work *Derishat ziiyyon*, he had already discussed a national revival similar in its essence to the European nationalist movements. He wrote of the productive Jew supporting himself with the labor of his hands⁶ and fulfilling all the commandments, including those dependent on the Land—that is, those related to agricultural work. He also dealt with messianism, though not of the traditional sort but rather a messianism that had been transformed into political liberty: “... That is the essence of redemption, namely, our being free men” and “those who come to rebuild the ruins ... are referred to as ‘Messiah.’”⁷ He was calling for a modernization of Jewish society along the path of nationalism. Kalischer and Alkalai came, respectively, from the region of Posen and from the Balkans, but their successors, the second generation of forerunners of Zionism, were primarily Eastern European.

Yehiel Mikhel Pines: Writer, Journalist, Activist

It was Yehiel Mikhel Pines, a native of Ruzhany in Lithuania and perhaps the greatest of the Religious Zionist thinkers, who spoke of a synthesis of traditional and modern education. He characterized himself and others like him as “those who want to go forward in the spirit of the times with

6 Kalischer accepted the criticism of the maskilim with respect to the abandonment of agriculture and saw working the land as the principal occupation of Jews in the Land of Israel—those already there and those to come in the future. He sought to establish a study hall in which economics and agriculture would be taught together with religious subjects. Although he defended those who lived off the charity of the *haluqah*, he accepted the moral critique of the practice. He believed that carrying out his program would help the Jews of the Land of Israel escape their harsh poverty: “But there are many who would decline to donate to the poor of the Land of Israel, wondering why they should support people who choose to be idle; they are lazy, engaging in no craft or labor, and relying for support on the Diaspora.... Total negation of that argument is the point of the counsel offered at length in this, my book. Thanks to the Society for the Settlement of the Land of Israel, fields and vineyards will grow for the Jews there, raising the prospect of salvation for those living in the Land of Israel, who now suffer great deprivation and hunger, for the handfuls gathered from all lands cannot suffice to feed those who await food.... And a further benefit [of the project] is that we will have the privilege of fulfilling the commandments that depend on the Land” (Kalischer, *The Zionist Writings*, 27–28). He also accepted the historical analysis of Rabbi Isaac Ber Levinson, according to whom agriculture had been the primary profession in ancient times, engaged in as well by the sages; *ibid.*, 28.

7 See chapter 1 of this book.

respect to all science and learning, without straying even a hairbreadth from the way of faith.” His writings encompass all aspects of the new Jew on the Religious Zionist model. Above all are national identity (“to ignite a fire of love and national attachment”); a national identity bound up with modernity (“my heart longs to see Jerusalem in its beauty as one of the glorious cities of Europe”); restoration of ancient glory (“a time when Israel will flower in its beauty, its might, and its existence”); and the creation of a Land into which the exiles are gathered (“from the ends of the earth they will stream there, to remember it, to work it, and to preserve it”).⁸ Pines and Ben-Yehuda—at first alien to each other but later close—formulated a shared Zionist utopia that they made into the basis for the *Tehiyyat Yisra’el* society: “to revive the nation of Israel ... and to restore to it its past glory”; “to revive the Hebrew tongue as the people’s spoken language.”⁹ But while the language spoken in the settlements would be Hebrew, it was clear that the new Jew would also know the local language, Arabic, and would be well schooled in history and the sciences.¹⁰ Pines was the first Religious Zionist and perhaps the first Zionist who acknowledged that realizing Zionism entailed personal risks to the point of self-sacrifice: “He must know that he will be putting himself in danger, lest he be felled by an arrow or lest a stone embed itself in his forehead.”¹¹

Though highly tolerant of the Biluim, he was hostile to Benei Moshe, for the latter wanted to turn their non-observant way of life and their values into the national norm. Pines and others disavowed any revolutionary posture, representing themselves as heirs to the Jewish sages of earlier generations—a posture that is itself characteristically Orthodox. Pines wrote as much to *Aḥad Ha-Am* in 1895: “But the nationalism that I want is the nationalism of Rabbi Judah Halevi and of Nahmanides, of blessed memory, a nationalism embraced within religion and within which religion is embraced, a nationalism whose soul is the Torah and life-source is the commandments.”¹² The Religious Zionist’s unwillingness to acknowledge the revolutionary character of his stance produces a striking gap between consciousness and action. At the heart of the

8 See chapter 3 of this book.

9 *Ibid.*, 103.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*, 109.

12 Y. M. Pines, “An Open Letter to *Aḥad Ha-Am*,” 1.

matter is not only a lack of revolutionary consciousness but also an impulse toward apologetics vis à vis the anti-Zionist Orthodox world.

Rabbi Samuel Mohilever: The Rabbi of Hovevei Ziyon

A contemporary of Pines and, like Pines, one of the greatest Religious Zionist leaders, Rabbi Samuel Mohilever served as rabbi of Radom and Bialystok. Other contemporaries included Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor of Kovno, Rabbi Yosef Dov Ber Soloveitchik, and the Netsiv of Volozhin. He was the second Religious Zionist leader, preceded only by Pines, to speak of a synthesis between secular and traditional education, and it was he, going even farther than Pines, who coined the maxim, "Without wisdom there is no piety and without piety there is no wisdom ... to unite these two divine offspring, faith and knowledge."¹³ He also was far-reaching in his statements regarding the need to make Jewish society productive: "Our ancient ancestors were tillers of the soil and shepherds, the greatest Talmudic rabbis were craftsmen, and none of this dimmed the brilliance of their stature."¹⁴ Mohilever's new Jew was a Jew who worked together on communal matters with Jews who were non-observant. Despite the growing opposition over the years to such cooperation, Mohilever maintained his stance consistently. He based his approach on the principled position that Jews who settle in the Land of Israel and fail to observe the commandments are preferable to those who heed the commandments but live outside the Land, as was cited earlier: "... The Holy One Blessed Be He prefers that His children dwell in His Land, even if they do not observe the Torah properly, than that they dwell outside the Land and observe the Torah properly."¹⁵ This far-reaching negation of the Diaspora had never previously been heard in Religious Zionism.

Mohilever drew a sharp distinction between the Zionist movement's public activities, which had to conform to the halakhah, and the private lives of the movement's members, in which the movement does not get involved. On the one hand, "our Torah, the source of our life, must be the basis for our revival in the Land of our ancestors." Yet, on the other

13 See chapter 5 of this book, 168.

14 Ibid., 177-178.

15 Ibid.

hand, “I do not mean by this to reprove individuals with regard to their conduct.” That distinction has guided the politics of Religious Zionism to our own day. The Religious Zionist is a Jew, devoted to halakhah, the Land, and the nation, as inscribed in Mizrahi’s slogan: “the Land of Israel, for the people of Israel, in accord with the Torah of Israel.”

The Admor Rabbi Hayyim Israel Morgenstern of Pilow-Kotsk

A grandson of the Kotsker Rebbe (Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotsk), and hence from one of the prominent streams of Polish Hasidism, Hayyim Israel Morgenstern was part of the third generation of Religious Zionists. His contribution to Religious Zionist thought was important both because of his Hasidic origins and because of its radical content, such as its teaching that a Religious Zionist should have a tolerant attitude toward his non-observant brethren. Many of his ideas echo those of Mohilever. His comments about the identity of those participating in the national enterprise are far-reaching and surprisingly daring. That the national revival movement was led by non-observant Jews, he said, was something rooted in divine mystery: “Even though the activists are not so righteous, we have already learned that God sometimes takes more pleasure in simple Jews—than in those who are entirely righteous.”¹⁶ He preceded Rabbi Kook in arguing that there was a hidden dimension to the estimation of Jews: “... All who dwell in the Land are righteous even if they do not appear so, for were that not so, the Land would expel them.”¹⁷ These assumptions rejected the conventional distinction between Jews who fulfill the commandments and those who do not with respect to the legitimacy of their actions within the framework of the national movement. Moreover, those who do not fulfill the commandments but nevertheless lead the national movement do so by God’s choice.

State and Nationalism in the Thought of Rabbi Hayyim Herschensohn: Between America and the Land of Israel

Rabbi Hayyim Herschensohn (1857–1932) was one of the most original

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 237–238.

Religious Zionist thinkers. Unlike his predecessors, he was born in the Land of Israel. His origin in Safed and his subsequent residence in the United States afforded him a breadth of vision and judgment that may account for the scope of his thought. His treatment of halakhah and modernity differentiates him from many other Religious Zionist thinkers.¹⁸ Like other Religious Zionists, he identified religion with nation. In his view, those who rejected nationalism in favor of religion undermined Israel's destiny as much as those who placed nationalism ahead of religion.¹⁹ Even if the principles of nationalism were learned from the general European environment, they could be fully integrated within the Jewish religion.²⁰ With his arrival in America, he modified his essential doctrine, coming to see Jewish nationalism as a factor incorporating religion within it. Through a penetrating reading of the Bible, he concluded that a Jew who sins remains a member of the Jewish people,²¹ indicating that religion is one of the Jewish national characteristics, and that the fundamentals of Jewish nationalism are its ethnic components, as is the case among the other nations of the world.²² This idea, which departed from mainstream Religious Zionism, found an ally in Rabbi J. L. Maimon, who developed a similar line of thought while in America.²³ Herschensohn also developed a concept of Jewish nationalism as a covenant of nationhood, a covenant at Sinai rather than a covenant of blood.²⁴ The Religious Zionist believes that his ideas are applicable to all Zionists and that nationalism without religious content cannot endure. Ultimately, Herschensohn came back to the model of Reines and others

18 See D. Zohar, "Nationalism and Zionism in the Thought of Rabbi Hayyim Herschensohn," in *One Hundred Years of Religious Zionism*, ed. D. Schwartz and A. Sagi, vol. 1 (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003), 143. See also Schwartz, "From Origins to Fulfillment," 37–38.

19 Zohar, "Nationalism and Zionism," *ibid.*, 148.

20 *Ibid.*, 149.

21 In reaching that conclusion, he did not cite BT *Sanhedrin* 44a: "A Jew ... though he has sinned, remains a Jew."

22 *Ibid.*, 153. Zohar identifies elements of ethnic nationalism in the thought of Rabbis Reines and Nissenbaum as well and goes so far as to say that Herschensohn's concept represents "pristine" Religious Zionism, but that claim is not confirmed in the writing of the rabbis and the principal Zionist writers such as Kalischer, Mohilever, and Pines or in that of Reines himself. The hard-to-understand statement that Reines requested of Herzl, suggesting that Zionism "has nothing in common with religion," was made in a polemical context, responding to the accusation that religious Zionism had messianic elements. Reines's statements both before and after *A New Light on Zion* (Vilna, 1902), contradict that unsustainable statement; *ibid.*, 154. See also chapter 5 of this book.

23 See chapter 10 of this book.

24 Zohar, "Nationalism and Zionism," 161–163.

who assumed that the return to Zion was the first step on the way to the return to the religion of Israel and the integration of Torah and life.²⁵

The Teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook: The Unity of Opposites

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook (1865–1935), a member of the fourth generation of Religious Zionists, was born in Latvia. He came to the Land of Israel in 1904 as the rabbi of Jaffa and was chosen to be the chief rabbi of the Land of Israel in 1921. His concept of the new Jew was much more complex than those thus far described, and was replete with paradoxes and dialectics. Though he had harsh things to say about Zionists who rejected the commandments, he nevertheless saw them as heralds of the redemption. In his words,

our generation is a wondrous generation, a generation full of surprise, and it is very difficult to find a precedent for it in our entire history. It comprises various opposites, a disorderly mix of light and dark prevailing together; it is lowly and inferior yet grand and exalted ... it is entirely guilty yet entirely virtuous.²⁶

The Diaspora Jew is cut off from Judaism's internal roots, from the material and spiritual sources and strength implanted in the soil of the Land of Israel. Only the new Jew is united with the roots of Judaism, and he integrates general culture into his Jewish roots. To a degree, Kook maintained the ideas of the admor of Pulawy, who had said that the divine mystery allows for non-observant Jews to participate in and even to lead the building of the nation.²⁷ It is precisely those who breach the boundaries, "those having the audacity of the 'messianic time,' who will attain the status of angels on high ... and whom the angels on high will consult to learn what God wishes."²⁸ Kook took so radical a position as to maintain that "the people of the New Yishuv draw their strength

25 Ibid., 177–178.

26 A. Rosenak, *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2007), 36.

27 Ibid., 35.

28 Ibid., 39.

from sources of holiness that are above the holiness embodied in the people of the Old Yishuv.”²⁹

The problems involved in seeing Rabbi Kook as a Religious Zionist have already been considered by Dov Schwartz and Avinoam Rosenak.³⁰ Both in his dialectic doctrine and in his political attachment to organizations outside of Mizrahi—such as Degel Yerushalayim and the General Committee of Knesset Yisrael—Kook positioned himself only on the threshold of Religious Zionism, at least insofar as it was a political organization.³¹

Rabbis Moses Avigdor Amiel and Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel

Rabbis Moses Avigdor Amiel (1883–1946) and Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel (1880–1953), members of the fifth generation of Religious Zionists, served together as chief rabbis in Tel Aviv (1935–1939). Rabbi Amiel was one of the most original thinkers in Religious Zionism, and his vision of the new Jew was that of a democrat, one enthusiastically committed in the name of individualism to equality between men and women. Rabbi Uziel agreed with him on that,³² and the issue served as the dividing line between them and Rabbi Kook. Uziel served as the Rishon Leziyyon (Sephardi chief rabbi) from the late 1930s until after the establishment of the state, the counterpart to his Ashkenazi colleague Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog.

Amiel differed from rabbis of Religious Zionism in his view that the Torah of Israel took precedence over the Land of Israel. He also maintained that Zionism contained Haskalah elements that could lead a Jew to apostasy.³³ Nevertheless, he saw Zionist action as a fulfillment of a commandment between a person and his nation—a new concept he introduced into the discussion—that entailed as well commandments

29 Ibid., 42.

30 See Schwartz, “From Origins to Fulfillment,” 46–51; Rosenak, *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook*, 42.

31 Schwartz, “From Origins to Fulfillment,” 46. He calls Rabbi Kook “the ‘Haredi-nationalist’ opposition to Mizrahi.”

32 See M. Hillinger, “Individual and Society, Nation and Humanity: A Comparative Study of the Socio-Political Theories of Rabbi Moses Avigdor Amiel and Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel,” in *One Hundred Years*, ed. Schwartz and Sagi, vol. 1, 97.

33 See A. Rosenak, “Zionism as a Spiritual, Apolitical Revolution in the Thinking of Rabbi Amiel,” in *One Hundred Years*, ed. Schwartz and Sagi, vol. 1, 294.

between a person and his fellow.³⁴ He envisioned a universalist Zionism whose purpose was “to improve the world under divine sovereignty,” not a rationalist Zionism grounded in the Gentile’s hatred of the Jew and ultimately leading to nationalism.³⁵ This tension between the religious and the nationalist, the particular and the universal, is especially extreme in Amiel’s case,³⁶ but it must be acknowledged that these ideas can be seen in Religious Zionist thinking in general—its lack of logical consistency and the disquiet that hovers over its spiritual world.³⁷

Uziel’s concept was simpler. He saw Zionism as restoring Israel to its Torah, as a vehicle for returning to religion.³⁸ (On that premise, he was aligned with the classical Religious Zionist thought of Rabbis Kalischer, Mohilever, and Reines.) Accordingly, it was forbidden for an observant Jew to shun Zionism. Even when a secular Zionist gives up observing the commandments, he does not give up the sense of identification with his family, which is a concept bound up with a commitment to the nation, in Amiel’s teaching, and at the same time brings secular Jews closer to religion.³⁹

Religious-Pioneering Bodies

Let me turn now from the thinking of individuals to the general ideas of two organizations. One is Hapoel Hamizrachi, a Land-of-Israel party of religious pioneers established in 1921. The other is a settlement organization unique both within Religious Zionism and within its ideological context, namely Hakibbutz Hadati (the umbrella organization of religious kibbutzim). Both organizations were social assemblages, bearers of ideas that formed part of Religious Zionist thinking but that internalized modernity, socialism, and communitarianism more than did other streams of Religious Zionism. In contrast to the individualist thinking previously described, the social assemblages of these two movements formed a framework within which efforts were made to realize the principles standing behind the utopian concept. These efforts were more systematic and comprehensive than those we have seen thus far.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., 297.

36 Ibid., 306.

37 Ibid., 296–305.

38 See S. Razabi, “Zionism and Cooperation with the Secular in the Thinking of Rabbi Uziel,” in *One Hundred Years*, ed. Schwartz and Sagi, vol. 1, 316–317.

39 Ibid., 317–318.

Hapoel Hamizrachi

A socialist version of the new Jew emerged within Religious Zionism: namely, the man of Hapoel Hamizrachi. The members of this organization were part of the Third Aliyah and had come to the Land of Israel from Russia and Poland.⁴⁰ To a substantial degree, it was organized on the model of the Histadrut labor organization, but it was also a reaction to the Histadrut. From its beginning in 1921, Hapoel Hamizrachi was caught between the Left and the Right in Land-of-Israel Jewish politics.⁴¹

The Religious Zionist socialist, by dint of his outlook, is a moderate socialist. He opposes the class struggle, values building the Land more than victory over the capitalists, and favors national interests over more particular interests. He points an accusatory finger at the Left, as if to say that the latter favors party interests over national interests. As a political matter, the religious socialist prefers the Hapoel Hatsa'ir party over the more radically socialist Ahdut Ha-Avodah. Religious Zionist socialism has a more utopian flavor than does Marxian "scientific" socialism. The Religious Zionist socialist opposes political violence and prefers the method of persuasion through what he calls the "moral sense." He therefore dissociates himself from the Socialist International, distinguishing between Jewish socialism and socialism in general.

Jewish socialism lacks basic prerequisites to socialist development:

Our nation is still deprived of the most basic right: the right to work. For us to be able to work, to learn to work, we need those means of production known as country and land. Without these, there will be no free nation and there will be no free labor.⁴²

Our socialism, according to the people of Hapoel Hamizrachi, is "Jewish socialism."⁴³

Hapoel Hamizrachi affirmed private property, opposed nationalization of property, rejected the theory and practice of class struggle, and

40 See A. Fishman, "Hapoel Hamizrachi, 1922–1935," in *One Hundred Years*, ed. Schwartz and Sagi, vol. 2, 303–317.

41 See Salmon, *Religion and Zionism*, 368.

42 Ibid., 372.

43 Ibid., 373.

avored binding arbitration of labor disputes. The individual comes before the community, and society will be improved through the improvement of its members through personal morality, instilled by education. Exile impaired the moral conduct of the Jew. A return to the pre-exilic period implies improving the Jewish individual by returning to a rural way of life and manual labor. Redemption is not only national and social; it is religious. It was to be a Jewish renaissance.⁴⁴

Hakibbutz Hadati

Another sort of new Jew to rise out of the fields of Religious Zionism, and the most radical model of all, was the religious kibbutznik. Although the model's roots go back to the 1920s, the first religious kibbutz (Tirat Zvi) was established only in 1937. The idea originated in Germany, influenced by the youth movement Blau Weiss (Blue-White) and the idea of the secular kibbutz. Many Religious Zionists considered the idea of the kibbutz to be alien to Judaism, noting Judaism's individualism in contrast to the collectivism of the kibbutz.⁴⁵ The idea was to establish a cooperative enterprise based on individual, not hired, labor and to do so in a challenging location where it would contribute to the building of the Land—usually on the borders of the Zionist settlement, such as the Gaza area, the Beit She'an valley, or Gush Etzion. There was a strong sense of being the avant-garde, of leading the camp. At the same time, the religious kibbutzim wanted to be situated in settlement blocs, not only for economic reasons related to mutual assistance but also to satisfy their unique needs related to religious education and culture.⁴⁶

The religious kibbutz was marked by a sense of Jewish mission and new creation,⁴⁷ a belief that it was setting the model for proper national life. In contrast to other versions of Religious Zionism, which stressed consistency and continuity with the Jewish past, religious kibbutzniks spoke of the new creativity, of a new Jew. The movement saw itself as avant-garde not only for Religious Zionism, but for the entire enterprise of settling the Land of Israel.⁴⁸ With respect to communal

44 Ibid., 374.

45 See H. Ulman, "From Rodgas to Tirat Zvi," *Shragai* 3 (1989): 205.

46 Ibid., 205, 215–216.

47 Ibid., 206.

48 See H. Y. Peles, "The Development of the Religious Kibbutz to the Outbreak of the Second World War," *Shragai* 3 (1989): 190–191.

socialism, it was as radical as the other kibbutz movements, perhaps the most radical among them.⁴⁹ Its symbols were taken from the nation's ancient traditions. The religious kibbutz revived ancient rituals related to settling the Land, such as those involving not picking fruit from a tree until its fourth year, publicly setting aside priestly gifts and tithes, dedicating of the first shearing of a sheep, cutting an *omer* of early grain, and lighting signal fires on mountain tops to mark the start of a new lunar month.

In addition, it sought ways to fulfill commandments dependent on the Land without relying on the formal sale of the Land to a Gentile for certain purposes. Its approach to halakhah was more emotional than jurisprudential, as in the effort to permit agricultural work during the sabbatical year without sale to a Gentile. With respect to its socialist concepts, the movement resembled its secular counterpart, as it did in all social matters except for observance of halakhah.

Was Religious Zionism Messianic?

Dov Schwartz, a prominent scholar of Religious Zionism, defines Jewish messianism as "a messianic concept that interprets present-day historical events as preliminary or advance stages in the process of redemption promised in the sources." He added: "An approach of that sort is common to all Religious-Zionist thinkers."⁵⁰ This definition of messianism does not distinguish between the idea of redemption and the messianic idea. As I see it, one must distinguish between redemptive events taking place within history which allow us to speak of redemption of the soil, of the Land, or of the nation, all as metaphors, and extra-historical messianic events.⁵¹ The Religious Zionists never sought to apply to their

49 Ibid., 192–193.

50 D. Schwartz, *Religious Zionism between Logic and Messianism* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), 10n.

51 In this context, we must contend with Maimonides' view of the messianic idea. Ravitzky has distinguished between two messianic models in Maimonides' thought—a political, "realistic" model and a utopian one. The former is addressed to Israel and contemplates a continuation of the natural order of the world; the latter encompasses all humanity and "represents a hypothetical-ideal society." A. Ravitzky, "By Human Means': Messianic Times in the Thinking of Maimonides," in *Al da`at ha-maqom: Studies in Jewish Thought and Its History* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1991), 75–77. Although Maimonides' "supernatural" messianism is not beyond nature, it, too, strives to transcend history, for the King Messiah must be wiser than Solomon and a prophet approaching Moses in stature; *ibid.*, 79. Ravitzky acknowledges that Maimonides, in his messianic concept, mixes realistic and utopian components; *ibid.*, 85n. Even the restoration he hopes for is

activity even Maimonides' minimalist view of the messianic era, for the conditions Maimonides sets for the King Messiah cannot be met in our time.⁵²

Some students of Religious Zionism distinguish between a messianic stream and a non-messianic stream within the movement. The messianic stream includes the "heralds," Rabbi Kook, and others, while the pragmatic stream includes such figures as Reines and Joseph Dov Soloveitchik.⁵³ I believe no such distinction can be drawn and maintain that there is no messianic stream within Religious Zionism⁵⁴ other than the virtual messianism of Rabbi Kook's school, which was in opposition to Mizrahi's approach.⁵⁵ Yet, even Kook's messianism was rhetorical, not programmatic.

The members of Mizrahi and Hapoel Hamizrahi did not accept Rabbi Kook's opinions on matters of ideology or on matters of halakhah.⁵⁶ Despite the personal ties between Kook and the leaders of Religious Zionism, and despite Religious Zionism's seeming support for the Chief Rabbinate, the differences between them had far-reaching effects on everything related to the place of the rabbinate in the leadership of Religious Zionism.⁵⁷ This issue has been posed in various ways, and the

mythological rather than realistic, for it contemplates the restoration of a past that never truly existed; *ibid.*, 85–87. The Maimonidean messiah must defeat all the nations surrounding Israel and make it possible for sages and prophets to be free to study Torah. It is clear as well that Maimonides links the messianic era with the life of the world-to-come. See *ibid.*, 96–97. Is this messianism "by human means"?

52 Zvi Werblowsky explained that messianism is "a utopia never yet seen by a human eye, and that even the imagination can contemplate only through mythological symbols"; Z. Werblowsky, "Messiah and Messianism," *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, vol. 24, 612.

53 See, e.g., J. Garb, "Messianism, Antinomianism, and Force in Religious Zionism: The Case of the Jewish Underground," in *Religious Zionism*, ed. A. Cohen and I. Harel (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2004), 327. Garb questions the conventional understanding that Gush Emunim ("the Bloc of the Faithful," a movement calling for Jewish settlement in and control of all the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean) is a "mystical/messianic movement"; see *ibid.*, 336, 343. "Gush Emunim is a Religious-Zionist movement in the classical sense, more than it is a mystical/messianic movement" (*ibid.*, 344). See also Razabi, "Zionism and Cooperation," 309.

54 The issue has been dealt with by Razabi, *ibid.*, 308–309.

55 See Hillinger, "Individual and Society, Nation and Humanity," 141–142. See also J. Avineri, "Rabbi Kook and His Practical Links to Religious Zionism," in *One Hundred Years*, ed. Schwartz and Sagi, vol. 1, 42–44, 51, 53, 56, 58, 61, 65. On the thinking of Rabbi David Hakohen ("the Nazir"), see Schwartz, *Religious Zionism*, 141 et seq; *idem*, "From Origins to Fulfillment," 46–51; and Garb, "Messianism, Antinomianism, and Force," 327.

56 On women's suffrage, see Avineri, "Rabbi Kook and His Practical Links to Religious Zionism," 52–60. On milking cows on the Sabbath, see *ibid.*, 73.

57 *Ibid.*, 74.

wording of the matter has been subject to a degree of restraint. I would argue, however, that the principle of making redemption into a process whose origins are natural was meant to neutralize any acute messianic belief in our time. In a different context, Samuel Almog puts it this way: "Religious Zionism's clear-cut distinction between messianic faith and the injunction to dwell in the Land of Israel was not adequately understood by its secular opponents."⁵⁸

The Religious Zionist figure to whom the most pronounced messianic outlook has been attributed is Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer. Jody Myers argues that Kalischer's whole idea of settling the Land was subordinate to the idea of restoring animal sacrifices, a clearly messianic impulse.⁵⁹ In my view, however, the idea of restoring animal sacrifices was raised prominently during the 1830s in the context of polemics with the Reform movement, which favored rejecting the idea of sacrifices and wanted to stop praying for their restoration. The idea of restoration was already rejected in the 1860s, when it ran into sharp opposition within the Orthodox community. The most persuasive proof for my understanding that Kalischer was a non-messianic thinker grows out of his commentary on the Passover Haggadah, published in 1864, two years after his well-known book *Derishat zivyon*. According to Kalischer, those coming to settle in the Land of Israel are called "messiah." The traditional messianic idea of divine intervention in history through some super-human persona is thus neutralized by those simple Jews who wrap up their affairs in the Diaspora and immigrate to the Land of Israel. The content of redemption is transferred from building the Temple, smiting Israel's enemies, and gaining universal recognition of the God of Israel to achieving political liberty.

Attaining emancipation in Europe is the first step in that direction, but absorption into the environment is not the answer to the problem of Jewish existence. Antisemitism will only increase with respect to those Jews who give up their identities. It was precisely the Jews in ancient Egyptian slavery who maintained their Jewish identity who were redeemed from exile. Renewing settlement in the Land of Israel is the start of a human initiative to achieve redemption, which consists of political

58 Almog, *Zionism and History*, 64.

59 J. Myers, *Seeking Zion: Modernity and Messianic Activism in the Writings of Tsevi Hirsch Kalischer* (Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003). For a concise statement of these ideas, see idem, "The Messianic Idea and the Zionist Ideologies," 3–13.

liberty. The matter of animal sacrifices appears only as a later stage, one not subject to human initiative.⁶⁰

Moreover, according to Jewish End-reckonings based on midrashic sources, the year 5600 (1840) was supposed to be the year of redemption, in which cosmic events were to occur in the world in the wake of a messianic appearance. That expectation roused many Jewish communities, including those in the Land of Israel and in Western Europe, to take various preparatory steps.

The rabbis we term “heralds of Zionism,” Kalischer and Alkalai, began their literary work on the eve of the Jewish year 5600, no doubt under the influence of the overall outlook. Their turn toward the realistic idea of settling the Land and redeeming the Jews from their political servitude came in the wake of the letdown caused by the year 5600 passing without a messianic revelation.⁶¹ For Alkalai, the intervention of influential Jews such as Montefiore and Crémieux on behalf of the Jews of Damascus raised hopes for renewed settlement in the Land of Israel. Here, too, the traditional messianic idea was exchanged for a modern one, as those prominent Jews became a sort of messiah. Alkalai assigns them the standing of Messiah son of Joseph, who according to various Jewish traditions will precede the coming of Messiah son of David, but their existence does not entail any hastening of the End or any abatement of the miraculous quality of the Messiah son of David’s appearance. That miraculous appearance is moved to a time beyond time, and the traditional messianic idea is once again neutralized and superseded by a modern idea: that of creating a reality through diplomatic activity.⁶²

Alkalai’s identification of real historical events with the redemptive process and the Messiah are indications of his transference of meta-temporal ideas onto real events. According to Rabbi Alkalai, every Jewish organization established to help Jews, even something like the Alliance Israélite Universelle, can be seen as a harbinger of the Messiah.⁶³ In an article written in the early 1950s, Jacob Katz wrote that Alkalai “began with folk messianism and ended with modern nationalism.”⁶⁴

60 See chapter 1 of this book.

61 See J. Katz, “Messianism and Nationalism in the Thought of Rabbi Judah Alkalai,” in his *Jewish Nationalism: Essays and Studies* [*Le’umiyut yehudit: masot u-mehqarim*] (Jerusalem: Hasifriyah Haziyyonit, 1979), 310-313.

62 Ibid., 314-318, 320.

63 Ibid., 328.

64 Ibid., 336.

These are the Religious Zionists whose ideas set the foundation for all ensuing Religious Zionist thought.

The New Jew and Redemption

Rabbi Samuel Mohilever left few writings. The ideas he expressed during the 1870s suggest that he adopted Alkalai’s views, namely that the redemption in our time would be “low-level, by natural means”—not by means of the Messiah, but through the efforts of “the wise and noble leaders within our nation, who are fit to stand in the palace of a king, the great lords.”⁶⁵ In his main programmatic article with regard to the values of the *Hovevei Ziyon* movement, he said nothing of the messianic idea.⁶⁶ His contemporary, Pines, likewise did not deal at all with the messianic idea, and the Netsiv of Volozhin expressly stated: “Nowadays, when we are sunk in Exile and persecution is being renewed, we are forbidden to mention the idea of redemption with respect to settling the Land.”⁶⁷

A representative treatment of the messianic idea appears in the book *Shivat ziyon*, published by the writer and journalist Abraham Jacob Slutsky in 1891–1892. Among the prominent rabbis who supported the movement was the Netsiv of Volozhin, who was even selected as “advisory officer” of the *Hovevei Ziyon* movement at its 1887 conference. Although we know that he harbored mystical ideas about the movement, the Netsiv never even hinted at the issue of messianism, nor did Rabbis Spektor or Friedman.⁶⁸ In Slutsky’s book, which incorporates the views of all the *Hovevei Ziyon* rabbis, one finds no real messianic claims. One of the strongest voices in it is that of Rabbi Jonathan Eliasberg, the rabbi of a town in Lithuania (and the son of Rabbi Mordecai Eliasberg, who was eulogized by *Aḥad Ha-Am* in his Hebrew article “After the Death of a Scholar”). Jonathan Eliasberg sided with Kalischer’s view that one must act—“Let the Land of Israel be settled by our brethren”—but that once in the Land, one must await the Messiah. In contrast to those believers who were certain of the Messiah’s imminent coming, Eliasberg acknowledged that “We have not yet attained the standing to have the

65 See J. Salmon, “Rabbi Samuel Mohilever: The Rabbi of *Hovevei Ziyon*,” *Ziyon* 56 (1991): 50.

66 See Slutsky, *Shivat ziyon: Collected Articles*, 71–80.

67 See Razabi, “Zionism and Cooperation,” 308.

68 Slutsky, *Shivat ziyon: Collected Articles*, 80–83.

glorious majesty of the Eternal appear to us before all who live.”⁶⁹

All the Talmudic and midrashic sources that warn against hastening the End—that is, the Messiah—are deployed in these texts to neutralize any intention to settle in the Land of Israel on account of messianic redemption.⁷⁰ In contemporary language, they clarified that they were discussing “the Land of Israel as an economic question,” or a national question, not as a spiritual or messianic question.⁷¹

Another leading voice heard in the book is that of Rabbi Zebulon Barit, rabbi of the Lithuanian town Plungian. In sharp language, he rejects those who are concerned about hastening the End through settlement activity:

Those who say that this is hastening the End do not deserve to have their words and dreams responded to, for who would be foolish enough to think that this is the future redemption? And even those who consider it the beginning of the redemption say only that there is a commandment to redeem our Land and restore its ruins and they consider that to be redemption of the Land, but certainly not the redemption of Israel that will happen when God shows mercy to His people and reveals His holy might before all the nations.⁷²

The entire concept of redemption by stages—a natural stage and a miraculous one—is meant to distance the Zionist enterprise from messianism. Anyone who argues that “the beginning of redemption” is in any way messianic redemption disregards the division between the natural stage and the miraculous stage of the process. It goes without saying that no traditional Jewish thinker would reject the redemption outright, and Maimonides has said that to deny the coming of the Messiah is to deny God. Rabbi Nahum Grinhaus, rabbi of Trakai, Lithuania, put it this way: “At the outset, the Israelites will settle in the Holy Land to work its soil, and the mountains of Israel will grant their produce; that is now. For the world to come: ‘After that, God will return to redeem us and will

69 Ibid., 94.

70 Ibid., 105–106 (statement by Rabbi Benjamin Bailey).

71 Ibid., 112 (statement by Rabbi Zebulon Barit of Plungian).

72 Ibid., 115.

send us His righteous Messiah, to work signs and wonders.”⁷³ We can also find more spirited statements concerning the link between activity in the present and the messianic future, such as the argument that one who delays participating in the settlement enterprise delays the coming of the Messiah, for the concept is that messianic redemption must await redemption by natural means, which is our responsibility. That formulation appears in the writings of Rabbi Joseph Jaffe, a Lithuanian rabbi who served in various communities and spent his later years in Manchester:

Regarding the settlement of the Holy Land, we believe with complete faith that God will gather our dispersions with signs and wonders ... but the miraculous activity will not begin before our complete desire for it,

that is, before we have done our part in settling the Land, “for it is an obligatory act on which the beginning of the miracle depends.”⁷⁴ The hope for the coming of messianic redemption appears here as an incentive to settle the Land.

Rabbi Samuel Feinberg of Nesvitzh in White Russia said in passing, “it is only so that our spark of hope in these bad times is not extinguished that we have been left the comfort of this belief that our redemption will be supernatural.”⁷⁵ Nevertheless, he concluded: “By the merit of this charitable commandment, may we soon be privileged to see the complete, supernatural redemption.”⁷⁶ These texts cannot be read without an understanding of the subtext: there is no immediate messianic expectation here, for otherwise there would be no need for all the discourses on redemption through natural means. Of interest are the comments of Rabbi Kalonymous Levin of Dinburg, Latvia, who argued that there was no need for concern that enlisting in the Zionist cause would expose one to the risk of false messianism: “... No one purchasing land in the Land of Israel sees the act as in any way supernatural.”⁷⁷ Slutsky, the book’s editor, summed up the matter, maintaining that members of *Hovevei*

73 Ibid., 125.

74 Ibid., 136.

75 Ibid., 149.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., 159.

Ziyyon who were traditional believed that “the settlement movement is initial preparation on our part for the future redemption.” That position is consistent with rabbinic statements and the views of Jewish thinkers through the ages; it contains nothing new.⁷⁸

A clear statement on the matter was made by Rabbi Jacob Samuel Rabinowitz of Sopotskin, Lithuania, who led the Eastern European Orthodox supporters of Herzlian Zionism until the appearance of Rabbi Reines. In a speech before the general assembly of Russian Zionists in Warsaw in the summer of 1899, he declared that

Zionism has no relationship, connection, or similarity, God forbid, to the false messianic movement that led many of our people astray ... it will not be misled by hallucinations or imaginings, will not hasten the End, and will not set out to do things beyond our ability. Nor does it have any bearing at all on the belief in the true Messiah, whom we hope for at the end of days.⁷⁹

Reines, leader of Religious Zionism in Herzl’s time and later, likewise spoke strongly on the matter. In his 1902 book, *Or hadash al ziyyon*, he forcefully stated that Zionism “is a material matter having nothing to do with religious matters.”⁸⁰ Even if this was a polemical remark conflicting with comments he made elsewhere,⁸¹ from other sources it is clear that he believed Zionism had nothing to do with messianism.⁸² In another statement, he aligned himself with those who argued for redemption

78 Ibid., 247.

79 See S. J. Rabinowitz, *Religion and Nationalism* (Warsaw: Halter, 1900), 127–128.

80 See Reines, *A New Light on Zion*, 26–27.

81 See his ensuing comments on the commandment to settle the Land of Israel, *ibid.*, 35–36, and on the ties between the nation of Israel and its Land, *ibid.*, 62. He argues that the entire Zionist movement is “spiritual and moral,” thereby contradicting himself. See *ibid.*, 104. See also J. Shapira, “Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines,” in *One Hundred Years*, ed. Schwartz and Sagi, vol. 1, 400. Although it appears throughout the literature, the view that Reines adopted a pragmatic approach that neutralized the Jewish-religious aspect of Zionism is simply wrong, and relies on an errant sentence that made its way into *A New Light on Zion* and that Reines himself contradicts. See also Razabi, “Zionism and Cooperation,” 309.

82 Here, too, it is necessary to step back and recognize that Reines here and there spoke of “the future redemption” and, in that context, quotes Isa. 65:17—“For behold! I am creating a new heaven and a new earth.” And even though he never explained how the contemporary settlement of the Land was tied to the redemption, he nevertheless generated a messianic atmosphere. See Shapira, “Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines,” 122. See also Razabi, “Zionism and Cooperation,” 308.

in stages, regarding the present stage as the natural one: “Among the preconditions to the miraculous redemption is that there first be a consensus among governments to settle Israel on their Land.”⁸³ The duty to act applies only at the natural stage. The miraculous, messianic stage is deferred beyond history.

The Balfour Declaration and the establishment of the British Mandate under international treaties following World War I raised quasi-messianic expectations within Religious Zionism.⁸⁴ I would say that the religious person has a problem in identifying God’s will. That identification is made through the reflection of reality. If something succeeds, that proves that God favors it, while if it fails, it proves that God is ill-disposed toward it or rejects it. The attitude of religious Jews toward the Zionist movement therefore varies with reality. The approval of the Odessa Committee (1890), the convening of the First Zionist Congress in Basel (1897), the Balfour Declaration, and the establishment of the State are indications of divine support. In contrast, the transformation of *Hovevei Ziyon* into something inconsequential, Herzl’s failure to gain a charter, the first (1922) and second (1939) White Papers, and the Holocaust all provide evidence of God’s anger and His reservations about Zionist ideology and practice.⁸⁵

The Balfour Declaration and the decisions at the San Remo Conference led a thinker such as Rabbi Hayyim Herschensohn, with his dualistic Religious Zionist differentiation between religion and nationalism, to declare that the time was that of the “beginning of redemption.” That term connotes an optimistic outlook, even one of anticipation, but it is unrelated to the messianic idea, for it neither sets a time for the end of Exile nor includes all the characteristic elements of the messianic era.⁸⁶

83 See Reines, *The Two Luminaries*, part 1, 53. See also Schwartz, *From Origins to Fulfillment*, 32–33.

84 The reference here is to documents in the 1985 edition of *Shivat ziyon*. Among the additional documents are two written by rabbis not previously known to be supporters of the Zionist movement: Rabbi Abraham Duber Shapira of Kovno, one of the leading Torah scholars of the time, and Rabbi Meir Simḥah Hakohen of Dvinsk, author of *Or sameiah*. They explain that in light of the decisions reached at the Peace Conferences in Paris (1918) and San Remo (1922), the “Three Oaths” that forbid, among other things, large-scale immigration to the Land of Israel are to be viewed as cancelled—a quasi-messianic situation. See Slutsky, *Shivat ziyon: Collected Articles*, 321–323.

85 See M. Ḥalamish, “The Question of the Land of Israel in the World of Hillel Zeitlin,” in *One Hundred Years*, ed. Schwartz and Sagi, vol. 1, 207.

86 See Zohar, “Nationalism and Zionism,” 169. Yoska (Joseph) Aḥituv explains how the concept of “beginning of redemption” can be maintained even in my view. See J. Aḥituv, “Toward a Non-Illusory Religious Zionism,” *One Hundred Years*, ed. Schwartz and Sagi, vol. 3, 18.

A similar expression is “footsteps of the Messiah,” which connotes exciting events that are not actually messianic.⁸⁷

The establishment of the State raised new hopes of redemption. Were these hopes messianic? Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel, then the Sephardi chief rabbi, seemed to indicate so. Moshe Hillinger of Bar-Ilan University casts Uziel as a “messianic Religious Zionist,”⁸⁸ basing his conclusion on an article by Uziel published in *Sinai* in 1948, just before the State was established.⁸⁹ But despite his excitement about the prospect of the State, Uziel made clear that “this news of redemption is abridged and very confined within its narrow limits, and it is extremely sad in that it is denied the glory and grandeur of Zion and Jerusalem.”⁹⁰ Complete redemption remains “a hope and a prayer ... the flowering of the Land, its construction, and the ingathering of exiles are footsteps of redemption.”⁹¹ He maintained that the British authorities’ abuse of the Yishuv and the hardships of the War of Liberation were in the nature of “pains of redemption.” Uziel even called for the convening of a Sanhedrin under the rubric of “I will restore your judges as before” (Isa. 1:26), and referred to aspects of Maimonides’ concept of redemption.⁹² None of that, however, means that he saw his generation as the generation of the Messiah.

Summary

Until the Six-Day War, the Religious Zionist was excited by the redemptive process in which he was taking part. At the same time, the new Jew of that background did not believe in false messianism. He was a realist to the extent that Zionism is a realistic movement. Despite the various forms taken by the new Jew within Religious Zionism, some features are shared by all thinkers within the movement: the utopian vision of all Jews returning to observance of the commandments; a clear separation between the present and the messianic time in the future; and the lack of separation between the Jewish religion and the Jewish nation.

87 See Halamish, “The Question of the Land of Israel,” 208.

88 See Hillinger, “Individual and Society, Nation and Humanity,” 139.

89 B. M. H. Uziel, “Torah and the State,” *Sinai* 22 (1948): 117–125.

90 *Ibid.*, 117.

91 *Ibid.*

92 *Ibid.*, 124. See also Razabi, “Zionism and Cooperation,” 322.

The programmatic utopia of the new Jew within Religious Zionism was achieved in part, and its completion beyond time continues to be longed for. One can say that the new Jew born within Religious Zionism represents the fullest development of the Jew who is the product of Jewish civilization. He combines within him a set of values that blend tradition and modernity. He is a rabbinic scholar, he is learned in the sciences, he is involved in the world, and he looks forward to the Messiah. He takes responsibility for his state, his nation, and his community. The constant tension between old and new is part of his existence. Some individual Religious Zionists escape that tension by joining the secular world; others do so by joining the haredi world. But those who leave only show that the difficulty exists and says nothing about the validity of the phenomenon itself.

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INDEX

- Abraham ben David (Ra'abad) 50
 Abraham, Zechariah Mendel (of Sienawa) 241
 Abramowitz, Dov Baer 272, 272n20, 273n21, 275, 276n32
 Adler, Herman (Naphtali) 184n69, 258, 258n35, 259
 Adler, Nathan 119n18, 184, 195, 256, 258
 Ahad Ha-Am 14, 23, 26, 44, 46, 89, 110, 112, 170, 172, 176-179, 204-206, 208n63, 209n68, 211, 213-226, 265, 274, 282, 317, 334, 348-350, 362, 375; *Complete Writings of Ahad Ha-Am* [Kol kitvei ahad ha-am] 176n44-45, 213n3, 214n12, 215n18, 220n48, 224n66-67, 69-70, 73, 225n76-81, 226n84, 348n16-20, 349n21-22 ; *Derekh ha-hayyim* (The Way of Life) 214, 216n21, 220, 220n48, 224; *Letters of Ahad Ha-Am* [Iggerot ahad ha-am] 218n39, 222n55
 Aharonson, Shalom Hakohen 185n73
 Ahituv, Joseph 155n175, 380n88
 Alexander III 283n10
 Alfasi, Isaac (Yitzhak) 185n73, 227, 227n1, 228n4-5, 7, 229n9, 230n14-15, 231n17, 232n20, 232n23-24, 235n34, 236n38-39, 237n44, 239n51-52, 240n55-56, 241n60, 62, 242n64-67, 243n69-71, 244n74, 245n83-84, 86
 Alkalai, Judah 25, 32n56-58, 33n61, 83, 100, 164-165, 170, 310, 312-313, 315, 330, 338-339, 360-361, 374-375; *Complete Writings of Rabbi Judah Alkalai* [Kol kitvei ha-rav yehudah alqal`ai] 32n56-58, 34n61, 338n51, 339n56
 Almog, Samuel (Shnuel) 11n3, 15, 15n15, 181n57, 189n89, 309n4, 351n36, 373
 Aloni, Dov 282n4
 Alshekh, Moses 115
 Alter, Isaac Meir (of Gur) 235, 236-237, 238n49
 Alter, Judah Leib (Sefat Emet) 155, 235
 Altschuler, Mordecai 201, 201n41
 American Zionist Congress 38
 Altschuler, Mordecai 201, 201n41
 American Zionist Congress 38
 Amiel, Moses Avigdor 367-368
 Amitin-Shapiro, Y. Z. 299n86
 Anti-Zionism 161-191
 Arkin, Ahiezer 174n38
 Asher, Asher 121, 193n1, 194
 Ashinsky, Aaron M. 273n21, 277n34
 Ashkenazi, Abraham 138-139, 139n96
 Atlas, Elazar 184
 Auerbach, Meir 131n60, 139-140, 141n112, 142, 144, 146-147, 149n147
 Avineri, Shlomo 15
 Avineri, Joseph 372n57-58
 Avni, Haim 181n57, 186n75, 186n79, 227n2, 268n5
 Azriel, Aaron 138
 Bachrach, Jacob 151, 151n159
 Bailey, Benjamin 376n72

- Bambus, Willy 259, 260n38-39
 Bar-Asher, Moshe 285n15
 Bar-Ilan, Meir 2701n, 272n20,
 274n25-26, 275n29, 277n35-36,
 278n38
 Barit, Jacob 359
 Barit, Zebulon 33n60 (Zulun), 376,
 376n73
 Bartal, Israel 228n6
 Barzilai-Eisenstadt, Joshua (Bar-Li)
 172, 208, 209n68-71, 213-214,
 214n8, 214n11, 221, 221n53,
 222n55, 224, 224n66, 226
 Bat-Yehuda, Geula 182n62-63,
 183n66-67, 188n84-85, 189n87-
 88, 263n51, 265n55-56, 281n1,
 283n8, 285n13, 286n16,
 286n18, 287n23-24, 288n26,
 298n78, 299n82, 302n104;
*The Man of Lights: Rabbi Isaac
 Jacob Reines [Ish ha-me'orot:
 rabbi yizhaq ya`aqov reines]*
 281n1, 283n8, 285n13, 286n16,
 286n18, 287n23-24, 288n26,
 298n78, 299n82, 302n104
 Bauminger, Aryeh 239n52
 Beck, Meir Hayyim 244n73, 261n43
 Becker, Jacob 352n42-43, 353n48
 Bein, Alex 251n1, 256n24, 265n55
 Beit-Halevi, Israel David 129n53,
 141n111, 142n116, 147n135,
 176n43
 Belkind, Israel 226
 Ben-Asher, 285n13
 Ben-Avigdor (Abraham Leib
 Shalkovich) 213, 219n46,
 222n59, 223n60, 224n73
 Ben-Barukh, Benjamin 186n79
 Benei Moshe 23, 26, 109-111, 172,
 176-178, 203-211, 213-226,
 348, 362
 Ben-Ephraim, Y. 216n20, 216n22,
 217n31
 Ben-Gurion, David 314, 314n20-22,
 315, 315n23-27, 316-319, 351-
 354
 Ben-Hillel Hakohen, Mordecai see
 Hakohen, Mordecai Ben-Hillel
 Ben-Israel, Hedva 12n4, 351n35
 Benjamin, R. 350 (see my note
 there)
 Ben-Or, A. 315n29
 Ben-Refael, Joseph 127, 128n45,
 128n48-49, 129n52, 132n66,
 133n70, 134n75-76, 135n79-82,
 136n84
 Ben-Tovim, Isaac 204n51, 205, 210,
 221, 221n53
 Ben-Yehuda, Eliezer 22, 103, 152,
 168, 173, 199-201, 203, 205,
 209n68, 209n72, 329, 333,
 333n28, 362
 Ben-Zvi, Yitzhak 316, 351
 Berdichevsky, Micah Joseph 309n4,
 321, 345n7, 351,
 Berkovsky, Elijah 288, 298n75
 Berlin, Hayyim 159
 Berlin, Meir 273, 273n22, 275,
 275n29, 276-277, 279, 288n26,
 303n109, 360
 Berlin, Naftali Zvi Yehuda (Netsiv of
 Volozhin) 28n45, 29, 29n46,
 30n50, 106-107, 111, 159, 169-
 173, 175n41, 198, 199n30, 202-
 203, 273-274, 274n25-26, 360,
 363, 375
 Berman, Jacob 285, 288n29,
 289n31, 299n86, 300n88,
 302n106
 Bernfeld, Simeon 78n81, 79n85,
 173n33
 Bialik, Chaim Nahman 9, 16n18, 44,
 226, 317, 335, 350
 Bialovlotzky, S. 288n26
 Bienstock, Lev 207, 219
 Bin-Nun, Y. 281n1, 284n12
 Birnbaum, Jonathan Halevi 239n53
 Blackstone, William 332, 332n24-25

- Bloch, Joseph Samuel 157
 Bluestone, Joseph Isaac 269-270,
 270n10, 271-272
 Boehm, Max Hildebert 11n3
 Bornstein, Abraham 33n58, 35,
 143n122, 145, 229, 232, 235,
 235n33, 236, 236n40, 237
 Borochoy, Dov Ber 345n7
 Bosk, Meir 239n52, 239n54,
 246n88
 Brandeis, Louis 275
 Brenner, Joseph Hayyim 41, 46,
 309n4, 317, 320-321, 345n7,
 349-351; *Collected Writings* [*Kol*
 kitvei y. h. brener] 349n25,
 350n27-30
 Breuer, Mordecai 25n39, 32n51, 85,
 187n81, 313; *Discussion of the*
 Three Oaths in Recent Generations
 25n29, 32n51, 32n54, 33n58,
 33n60, 313n16
 Brill, Yehiel 79n85, 95, 118-119,
 119n18, 121-122, 122n23-25,
 123n26, 124-125, 139, 147,
 149n147
 Brojde, Aryeh Leib 150n153
 Buber, Martin 324, 328n9
 Buber, Solomon 311n10
 Bublick, Gedaliah 278n38
 Bunim, Simhah 233n24, 234,
 238n49

 Chadwick, Owen 12, 12n5, 13n8
 Chayes, Zvi Hirsch 78
 Chaytor, Edward 340
 Chinitz, Nahum 298n78
 Chorin, Aron 65
 Churgin, Pinhas 272n19
 Cohen, Asher 262, 262n49, 359n2,
 372n55
 Cohen Joseph Isaac 60n3
 Cohen, Leopold 188
 Cohen, Moses 283n9, 285n15-16,
 286n17, 288n26, 292n50, 299,
 300n89-91, 301n95, 301n97-98,
 302n102, 302n106, 303n108,
 304n112
 Cohen Tzvi 7
 Cordovero, Moses 146
 Corfu etrogim 27-28, 94-97, 116-
 131, 133-135, 137-140, 143-
 146, 148-159
 Crémieux, Adolphe 374
 Cyrus 336
 Czernowitz, Samuel 8, 10, 13,
 215n15-17, 19, 214n6, 216n20,
 24, 26-27, 217n29-31, 33,
 218n34, 36, 39, 219n41-42, 44-
 45, 220n47, 221n52-54, 222n55,
 223n60-61, 63-64, 226n85;
 Benei Moshe and Their Time [*Benei*
 mosheh u-tequfatam] 214n6,
 8, 10, 13, 215n15-19, 216n20,
 24, 26-27, 217n29-31, 33,
 218n34, 36, 39, 219n41-42, 44-
 45, 220n47, 221n52-54, 222n55,
 223n60-61, 63-64, 226n85
 Czinowitz, Moshe 288n28

 Daalder, Hans 11n1
 Danziger, Israel Isaac 149n149
 Deinard, Ephraim 143n124,
 158n181, 158n183, 158n186,
 159n189, 159n191
 Derekh, Solomon 112n54, 115n1
 Deutsch, Simeon 68, 68n55
 Diamant, Benjamin
 33n60(DiamAnt), 116n4,
 119n15, 119n17, 125n34
 Diaspora (Diaspora Jews) 14, 18-21,
 23-24, 27, 30, 41, 44, 52-65, 72,
 79-81, 106, 114, 116-117, 120,
 136, 144, 147, 161, 168, 174,
 198, 201-202, 206, 210, 227n2,
 234-237, 242, 268, 280, 303-
 306, 313, 321, 335-337, 339,
 353, 361n6, 363, 366, 373
 Dienstag, Benjamin 230n15,

- 237n44, 238n49, 242n63,
245n82
- Dinner, Joseph 165
- Dinov, Zvi 193n1
- Dinur, Ben-Zion (Dinaburg) 14,
14n12, 52, 52n5, 76, 76n76,
168n22, 225n82-83, 316
- Diskin, Sonya 198
- Diskin, Yehoshua Leib 26, 89,
173n35, 198, 201
- Dizengoff, Meir 226, 229, 230n10,
230n15, 231, 231n19
- Don-Yehiya, Eliezer 344n1, 344n3,
351n31, 353n47, 355n51,
355n53-54
- Dov Ber (Maggid of Mezhirichi) 359
- Drachman, Bernard 269-270
- Druyanow, Alter (ed.) *Sources on the
History of Hibbat Ziyyon and the
Settlement of the Land of Israel*
[*Kotavim le-toledot hibbat ziyyon
veyishuv erez yisra'el*] 28n44-45,
29n46-47, 106n32-33, 107n35-
36, 108n38, 153n167, 169n24,
175n40-41, 198n24, 26-28,
199n30, 201n41, 230n11-12,
232n22, 240n57, 339n57-58
- Duran, Simeon ben Zemah (Tashbez)
57n21
- Duran, Solomon ben Simeon
(Rashbash) 57n21-22
- Eastern European Jewry (Orthodox)
161-191, 249, 281
- Ehrenpreis, Aaron 264
- Eibenschutz, Israel Joshua 142n114-
115, 142n118, 143n120,
149n149
- Eiger, Judah Leib 232
- Eilam, Yigael 319, 320n48
- Eisenberg, Aaron Elijah 226
- Eisenstadt, Moses Elazar 300
- Eisenstadt, Shmuel (Samuel) Noah
11n1, 43n71
- Eger, Akiva (of Posen) 76, 77n78,
128, 140n105
- Elazari-Volcani, Yizhak 345n7
- Elbaum-Dror, Rachel 325n2, 357n1
- Eliade, Mircea 326, 326n5-6
- Eliasberg, Jonathan 162n2, 170,
178-179, 375-376
- Eliasberg, Mordecai 34n62, 94,
129n54, 165-167, 178-179, 193,
225, 279, 339, 340n59, 375
- Eliav, Mordecai 166n18, 283n6
- Elior, Rachel 228n6
- Elisar, Jacob Saul 208n65
- Emanuel, Luis 147n137, 195n11,
196n13, 196n15-17, 197n18-19
- Emmanuel, Jonah 190n91
- Engels, Friedrich 346
- Epstein, Barukh Halevi 126, 126n41
- Epstein Zalman 151n157, 224n66
- Erez (Alexander Zederbaum)
147n138, 148n141, 149n145,
150, 150n156, 151n157,
152, 158n184-185, 159n190,
159n192
- Eshkoli, Aaron Zev 41, 316, 351
- Etkes, Immanuel 70n60, 77n78,
162n3
- Ettlinger, Jacob 79n86, 119n18,
122n24
- Falk, Joshua 60n31
- Federbush, Simon 227, 227n1,
272n20
- Feigenbaum, Israel Iser Hakohen
237-238, 238n45-48
- Feigenbaum, Nahum 155n171
- Feinberg, Samuel (of Nesvitzh)
33n60, 377
- Feinberg, Saul Jacob 301n93
- Feiner, Samuel 165n12, 165n14
- Feller, A. 245n80-81
- Felsenthal, Bernhard 268-270
- Fisch, Harold 323, 323n65, 324
- Fishman Aryeh 16, 369n42

- Fishman, Judah Leib (Rabbi Maimon) 21n27, 30, 167, 230n14, 276, 277n33, 278-280, 281n1, 283n9, 284n12, 285n12, 338n50, 365
- Fogel, Moshe Zevi 237n44
- Frank, Louis 187
- Frankel, Dov 165n13, 166n15
- Frankel, J. 350n31
- Freiden, Israel 70n62
- Friedland, Nathan 77n78, 84n96
- Friedland, Moses Aryeh Leib 178
- Friedlaender, I. 284n10
- Friedman, E. E. 168n22, 185n73
- Friedman, David Moses (of Chortkov) 35, 229, 241-244, 244n73, 244n79, 245, 245n80, 245n86, 252n3, 260-261
- Friedman, David (of Kralin) 86, 159, 168, 192, 198
- Friedman, Ina 15n15
- Friedman, Isaac, (of Buhushi) 34, 229-232, 232n20
- Friedman, Israel 244-245, 245n83, 260-261
- Friedman, Jacob (of Husyatin) 231
- Friesel, Evyatar 268n4, 268n7, 270n11, 271n13, 271n15, 272n17-18, 20, 275, 275n27; *The Zionist Movement in the United States, 1897-1914* [*Ha-tenu`ah ha-ziyyonit be-arzot ha-berit be-shanim 1897-1914*] 268n7, 270n11, 271n13, 271n15, 272n17-18, 20, 275n27
- Frumkin, Israel Dov 149n146, 174, 184, 193, 201, 209-210, 339, 339n57-58
- Frumkin, Jacob 284n10
- Fuenn, Samuel Joseph (Rashi Fuenn) 96, 108n37, 132, 169, 171, 175n41, 359
- Funkenstein, Amos 346n8
- Gafni, Isaiah 11n3
- Gaggin, Abraham Hayyim (Rishon Le-ziyyon) 138
- Gamzu, Mordecai Ber 158n188, 159n193
- Ganis, Pinhas 230n15
- Gaon of Vilna 135n82, 359
- Garb, Jonathan 372n55, 372n57
- Gaster, Moses 259, 259n35, 264
- Gelber, Nathan Michael 239n52, 242n65, 243n68, 243n71, 244n73, 244n75, 245n83, 245n85-86, 246n87, 260n41-42, 261n45-46; *The History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia, 1875-1918* [*Toledot ha-tenu`ah ha-ziyyonit be-galiziyah, 1875-1918*] 242n65, 243n68, 243n71, 244n73, 245n83, 245n85-86, 246n87, 260n41-42, 261n45-46
- Gelman, Aryeh Leib 272n19
- George V, King 340, 341n63
- Getz, Feivel 285n16
- Getz, Raphael 298, 300n88, 301n93, 301n96
- Gnozovitz, Isaac 281n1, 282n4, 284n11, 286n19-20, 287n23, 288n26, 288n28, 289n30, 298n78, 302n107, 303n108-109
- Goldberg, Judah Leib 283n9
- Goldberg, Moshe 288n28, 302n107
- Goldschmidt, Eliezer 115n1
- Goldstein, Joseph 214n7, 218n35, 218n38, 218n40, 221n51, 222n56-59, 223n63, 226n85, 227n2, 228n3, 345n5, 345n7, 351n33
- Gordon, Aaron David 44, 324, 333, 333n31, 335, 337, 337n47, 337n49, 350
- Gordon, David 25, 99-100
- Gordon, Eliezer 16, 168, 168n22, 345

- Gordon, Hirsh Leib 302n107, 303n109
- Gordon, Yehuda Leib 92, 92n13, 153, 165-166, 168, 170, 172-173, 173n33, 192-193, 359
- Goren, Aryeh 268n5
- Gottheil, Gustav 268, 268n6, 269-270, 272
- Gottheil, Richard 37-38, 270
- Gottlieb, S. N. 299n86
- Graetz, Heinrich 258
- Grajewski, Pinhas 68n55
- Greenbaum, Isaac 227, 227n2, 317
- Greenberg, Abraham 169, 209n68
- Greenwald, Itamar 326n4
- Grinhaus, Nahum 33n60, 376
- Grinstein, Hyman B. 269n9, 270n10, 272n16, 272n18, 275n29
- Grodzinsky, Hayyim Ozer 299n86
- Güdemann, Moritz (Moses) 157, 186, 252, 253n8, 255-258
- Günzburg, David 285n16, 300, 300n88, 304
- Gur, Judah 226
- Gurock, Jeffrey 273n24, 280n45
- Guttmacher, Elijah 84n96, 142, 143n120, 148n144, 279
- Guttman, David 71
- Guvrin, Nurit 41n70, 350n31-32
- Haas, Jacob de 275
- Hakohen, I. M. (Kagan, Hafets Haim) 28n43
- Hakohen, Bezalel Katz 95, 127-128, 128n45, 128n48-49, 132n66, 133n70, 139n72-73, 134n75-78, 135n79-82, 136n84; *Hora'at Heter* 128-131
- Hakohen, Meir Simhah (of Dvinsk) 379n86
- Hakohen, Mordecai Ben-Hillel 218n39, 222, 222n55, 289n32, 304, 304n113
- Hakohen, Yom Tov Lippman 109n39
- Halamish, Moshe 379n87, 380n89
- Halberstam, Ezekiel Schraga 242
- Halevi, Eliezer 68, 68n54
- Halevi, Judah, 23, 110, 362
- Halevi Meshulam Issachar 119n14, 119n16
- Halevi, Naftali Hertz 208, 209n67
- Halevi, Reuben 301n94
- Halpern, Ben 268n3, 268n7
- Halprin, Zalman 237n44
- Hareven, Shulamit 322n59
- Harkavy, Abraham Elijah 300
- Harkavy, Alexander 179, 179n52, 270
- Harrison, Benjamin 332
- Hartom, A. S. 325n1
- Hasida, Amram 58, 59n27, 65
- Haskalah 72n66, 88, 91-92, 95-96, 99, 123, 126, 129, 152, 161, 163, 165n12, 167, 170, 183n66, 184, 189, 193, 239-241, 283, 284n10, 285n16, 290, 292n50, 296-297, 299-301, 303, 347, 351n31, 359, 367
- Hatam Sofer (Moses Sofer) 18-20, 25, 48, 51, 51n3, 52-68, 75-76, 78, 83, 96, 127, 134-135, 239; *Discourses* 19n22-23, 54n16-17, 59n27, 60n31, 60n33, 61n35, 62n37, 63n40, 64n41-42, 66n47-51, 67n52-53; *Hatam sofer al ha-torah* 54n15, 54n17, 239
- Hayes, Carlton J. 11n1
- Hayyim of Brisk see Soloveichik, Hayyim
- Hazan, Elijah 158
- Heilman, Samuel C. 48n74, 85
- Heller, Joseph A. 214n5, 215n15, 220n47, 223n60-63, 224n67, 224n73
- Heller, Max 268-269
- Henikh, Hanokh (of Alexander)

- 236-237
 Herschensohn, Hayyim 365-366,
 365n24, 379
 Hertzberg, William 199-200,
 331n19, 337n46
 Herzl, Theodor 35-37, 44, 170, 180-
 181, 183, 186, 188, 219n46,
 225, 232, 236, 243-246, 251-
 266, 270, 272, 282, 321, 327,
 327n8, 330-336, 365, 378-379;
Altneuland (Old-New Land) 36,
 180-181, 251, 254, 254n19,
 255, 255n20-23, 335n36-37; *The
 Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*
 244n74, 244n76-78, 252n5,
 253n9-13, 254n15-16, 254n18,
 256n26, 257n27-31, 258n33,
 259n36, 260n40; *Der Judenstaat*
(The Jewish State) 36, 181, 246,
 251-253, 253n14, 254, 254n17,
 256-260, 333n30; *Zionist*
Writings: Essays and Addresses
 330n18, 331n22-23
 Herzog, Isaac Halevi 33n.58, 367
 Hess, Moses 25, 43, 45, 164-166,
 166n16, 313, 324, 327-328,
 328n9-11, 331, 334, 346, 346n9-
 12; *Rome and Jerusalem* 328n9-
 10, 346n9
 Hildesheimer, Esriel 79n86, 84n96,
 166, 166n18, 260, 283n6, 285,
 295
 Hildesheimer, Hirsch 259
 Hildesheimer, M. 166n18
 Hillinger, Moshe 367n34, 372n57,
 380, 380n90
 Hirsch, Maurice de 216, 218n34,
 220n47
 Hirsch, Mendel 186
 Hirsch, Samson Raphael 25, 32n54,
 48, 79, 79n85, 166, 166n17,
 186, 190n91, 260, 294-295;
Iggerot zafon 79, 79n85
 Horodezky, Samuel Abba 227
 Horowitz, Asher Isaiah 241
 Horowitz, Shai Ish 317n35, 351
 Idelsohn, Abraham 226
 Isaac, A. 235n34
 Isaac, Israel (of Alexander) 149
 Isaacs, Nathan 274
 Israel of Radin (Hafetz Hayyim) see
 Hakohen, I. M.
 Isserlein, Israel 56n21
 Jacob of Lissa (Lorberbaum) 76,
 77n78
 Jaffe, Hillel 206, 219
 Jaffe, Joseph 33n60 (Jaffee), 377
 Jaffe, Mordecai Gimpel (of Ruzhany)
 86-88, 89n4, 94, 107, 107n35,
 111, 122-123, 126, 129n54, 167,
 170-171, 174, 193, 202-203
 Jaffe, S. E. 280n45
 Jastrow, Marcus 269
 Jellinek, Adolf 256
 Jewish nationalism 13-16, 21, 40-
 42, 71n64, 73, 86, 99-100, 163,
 164n6, 165n10, 166, 200, 212,
 226, 239, 251, 268n5, 271, 296-
 297, 327, 333-334, 357, 365
 Joseph, Jacob 269-270
 Josephus Flavius 333
 Jung, Leo 281n1, 283n6
 Kahana, Nahum Mikhel 126,
 126n36, 128n47
 Kahn, Zadoc 256, 259
 Kalischer, Zvi Hirsch 19-21, 25,
 27, 51, 53, 70-71, 74-84, 100,
 164, 164n6, 165, 170, 238, 279,
 310, 311n10, 312-313, 315,
 338, 360-361, 361n6, 365n24,
 368, 373-375; *Derishat ziyyon*
 32n57, 77, 77n80, 79, 81n87-88,
 164, 311n10, 312, 312n12-13,
 338n52-53, 361, 373
 Kalisker, Abraham 228

- Kaniel, Joshua 207n62, 208n64,
 209n68-69, 210n75
 Karlin, Aryeh 288n26
 Karlinsky 204n49-50
 Karo, Joseph 74, 146
 Karpas, Jacob Moses 129
 Katz, Eliezer 52n4
 Katz, Jacob 11n1, 47-48, 51n2-3,
 70n60, 76n75, 85, 164, 164n6-
 8, 165n9, 165n11, 268n5,
 360, 360n3, 374n63-65, 375;
*Halakhah in Straits [Halakhah
 ba-meizar]* 48n74, 51n2, 53n8-
 9, 53n11, 54n13, 66n46; *Jewish
 Nationalism: Essays and Studies
 [Le'umiyut yehudit: massot
 u-mehqarim]* 164n6, 165n11,
 268n5
 Katzberg, Nathaniel 69n57, 70n60,
 274n26, 275n29
 Katzenellenbogen, Meir 115
 Katznelson, Benish 178
 Katznelson, Berl 44, 314, 314n18-
 19, 314-315, 335, 335n39, 350
 Katznelson, Judah Leib Benjamin
 300
 Kaufman S. Z. 151n157
 Kaufman, Yehuda (Even-Shmu'el)
 41, 316-317, 351-352, 352n39
 Kaufmann, Yehezkel 316, 351
 Kimmerling, Baruch 13n7, 13n9,
 14, 14n14
 Klafish, Samuel Zanwil 126, 202
 Klatzkin, Jacob 321, 345n7
 Klausner, Joseph 41, 185n74,
 232n21, 316, 351-352, 354
 Klausner, Israel 98n2, 218n37,
 231n18, 232n21, 261n43,
 281n1, 285n14
 Klein, Hillel 38, 270-272
 Klein, Y. 325n1
 Kluger, Solomon 130n58, 144n127
 Kohut, Alexander 269
 Kolatt, Israel 308, 308n1, 351n31
 Kook, Abraham Isaac Hakohen 23,
 31, 114, 141, 170, 183n66, 324,
 338, 339n55, 364, 366-367, 372
 Kopelman 201
 Kovarisky, J. 288n25
 Kremer, Hayyim Jacob 150n154
 Krieger, Joseph 200
 Kupstein, Meir 270

 Lamm, Zvi 319
 Landau, Abba 281n1, 282n4,
 284n11, 286n19-21, 287n23,
 288n26, 288n28, 289n30,
 298n78, 302n107, 303n108-109
 Landau, B. 172n30
 Landau, Ezekiel Halevi 118n8
 Landau, Leibush Mendel 244-245,
 260-261
 Landau, Samuel Hayyim 338,
 338n54
 Landau, Solomon Zalman 185n73-
 74, 246n90
 Landsofer, Jonah 56n21, 57
 Lapidot, Alexander Moses 33, 88,
 90-91, 93n16, 121n20, 123, 126,
 162, 178, 179n51, 193, 222
 Laskov, Shulamit 22n33, 103n19,
 153n168, 172n32, 173n35,
 175n41, 205n53, 230n10,
 230n15, 231n17, 231n19,
 240n57
 Lavon, Pinhas 318-319, 319n43
 Lederhendler, Eli 41n68
 Lehman, Marcus 166
 Lehren, Akiva 100, 102, 194
 Lehren, Zvi Hirsch 59
 Leibowitz, Baruch 301
 Leibowitz, Yeshayahu 42, 318,
 318n39, 319-320
 Leiner, Gershon Hanokh Henikh
 (of Radzyn) 96, 132, 132n70,
 135n82, 154, 158, 232
 Leiner, Mordecai Joseph Elazar 158
 Lerman, Elijah 148n139

- Lesser, Abraham Jacob Gershon 274, 276n32
 Levi, Solomon Zalman 139 (see Levy, Solomon Zalman)
 Levin, Herschel 68n54
 Levin, Kalonymous 279, 377
 Levin, Shemaryahu 226-227, 227n2
 Levin-Epstein, Elijah Zev 213n4, 215n19, 216n24, 216n26-27, 217n28, 219n44, 221n53, 222n55, 222n59
 Levinson, Isaac Ber 361n6
 Levinson, Y. 281n1, 285n16, 302n106
 Levinstaum, Steve 85
 Levkowitz 155
 Levontin, Z. R. 201n41, 216n21, 222n55, 224n67
 Levy, Solomon Zalman 139
 Lichtenstein, Hillel 48
Lida Book, The 281n1, 282n4, 284n11, 286n19-20, 287n23, 288n26, 28, 289n30, 298n78, 302n107, 303n108-109
 Lida Yeshiva 39, 281-306
 Liebes, Judah 308n3, 309n7
 Liebman, Charles S. 13n9, 268n8, 344n3, 355n53
 Lifschitz, Jacob 49, 60n34, 95-96, 101n11, 102, 121, 124, 129n53-54, 131, 132n68, 135, 136n83, 149, 161n1, 163n4, 166n17, 183, 193-194, 230n10, 246, 248n92-94, 300n92; *Sustainers of the Religion* [*Mahziqei ha-dat*] 163n4, 166n17, 230n10, 246n89, 248n92-94; *Words of Peace and Truth* [*Divrei shalom ve-emet*] 300n92
 Lilienblum, Moses Leib 30, 35, 86, 88-93, 111, 165-166, 168-172, 173n33, 177, 192-193, 202, 214, 214n8, 218, 222, 222n55, 336; *Orhot ha-talmud* 86, 88, 89n4
 Lipa, Karl 41
 Lipitz, Dov 98n1-2, 185n74, 288n26
 Lippe, Karpel 230-231, 231n16
 Lipsky, Louis 275
 Lisak, M. 43n71
 Litwak, David 254-255
 Lubarsky, Abraham Elijah 172, 213-214, 224
 Lubitzky of Paris, Rabbi 30n50
 Lunz, Abraham Moses 123n27, 150, 196; *Jerusalem* 150n154
 Luria, Hayyah Zipporah 98
 Luria, Hayyim 27, 32n57, 76
 Luria, Isaac 146
 Luria, Shemaryahu 86, 98-99, 192
 Luz, Ehud 15-16, 167, 167n20-21, 183n66; *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement (1882-1904)* 15n17, 167, 167n20-21, 183n66
 Mabbit see Trani Moses ben Joseph
 Maccabee, Hayyim Zundel 108n38, 232n22, 240n57
 Maggid (Steinschneider) Hillel Noah 118n8, 129n53, 133n70-71
 Maimon, Judah Lev see Fishman, Judah Leib
 Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon, Rambam) 18, 57n22, 69, 311n9, 320, 371n53, 372, 376, 380
 Maisel, Joseph 193n1-2, 195n7-9, 196n14, 197n22, 199n31, 201n40
 Malachi, Eliezer Rafael 112n54, 115n1, 117n6, 137n86, 138n94, 141n109, 147n135, 207n60
 Mannheimer, Isaac Noah 78
 Manor, Alexander 281n1, 282n4, 284n11, 286n19-20, 287n23, 288n26, 288n28, 289n30, 298n78, 302n107, 303n108-109
 Marcus, Aaron 190, 241, 244-246, 246n88, 260-261, 265

- Marcus, Solomon 143n123
 Margolies, Moses Zebulon 270
 Margolies, Zalman 59n27
 Margoliot, Isaac 91, 93, 128, 129n56, 149-150
 Margolis, Menashe 222
 Margolis, Reuben 311n11
 Margoliyot, Ephraim Zalman 118
 Marx Karl 346
 Maskil Le-eitan Abraham Isaac 158n184
 Maskil Le-eitan, Naftali 151-152, 158, 158n182, 158n188
 Masliansky, Zvi Hirsch 215n15, 270
 Mazeh, Jacob 222, 245n83, 301
 Mehmet Ali 77
 Meisel, Elijah Hayyim 112, 144, 167, 248
 Meisels, Dov Berish 141n112
 Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk 228
 Mendes, Henry Pereira 269-270
 Merhavyah, Hen-Melekh 327n8, 329n15-16, 330n17, 332n27, 340n61-62
 Messiah (messianism, messianic) 15n15, 19, 32, 33n61, 40-42, 44, 46, 54, 60-61, 71, 75-77, 82, 84, 142, 238, 257, 310-324, 326n3, 328n11, 332, 337-338, 346, 350-352, 355, 357-359, 361, 365n24, 366, 371-381
 Metternich 61
 Meyer, I. S. 269n9
 Meyer, Michael A. 77n78, 268n4, 268n6
 Meyerson, Emile 300n90, 304
 Michaelson, Zevi Ezekiel 149n151
 Mintz, Moses 270-271
 Mizrahi Movement 26, 37-39, 136, 211, 265-282, 284, 289, 300n91, 301-302, 306, 340
 Mohilever, Samuel (Shmuel) 7, 20-21, 27, 29, 29n47, 31, 35, 106, 111, 114, 153n168, 159, 163, 167-171, 177-178, 182, 202-203, 205, 229, 230n15, 231-232, 242, 242n65, 259, 262, 279-280, 284n12, 310, 337-338, 363-364, 365n24, 368, 375
 Montague, Samuel M. 121, 194
 Montefiore, Moses 68, 100-103, 120, 138, 193-195, 197, 234, 374
 Morais, Sabato 269
 Morgenstern, Aryeh 98n2, 99n4
 Morgenstern, Hayyim Israel 34, 229, 232, 232n24, 233, 233n24, 233n27, 234-235, 236n38, 364
 Morgenstern, Isaac Zelig 236
 Morgenstern, Menahem Mendel (of Kotsk) 232, 364
 Motzkin, Aryeh Leib 226, 227n2
 Motzkin, Gabriel 11n3
 Moyal, Abraham 201-202
 Murato 137
 Myers, Jody E. 76n75, 78n81, 373, 373n61
 Nahmanides (Moses ben Nahman, Ramban) 18, 61, 110, 362
 Nahshoni, Judah 52n4, 58n26, 63n38
 Napoleon 61, 312
 Nathanson, Joseph Saul 132
 Natonek, Joseph 68, 165-166, 166n16
 Nehorai, Michael Zevi 183n66
 "New Jew" 7, 104, 153, 357-381
 New Yishuv 29-30, 46, 52n4, 81, 98, 106-107, 113, 151, 151n158, 153, 156, 159, 175, 200-209, 220, 226, 351, 367
 Nissenbaum, Isaac 16n18, 112n53, 177n46, 209n68, 217n28, 365
 Nobel, Nehemiah 187, 187n82-83
 Nordau, Max 44, 256, 256n25, 314, 321, 332, 334, 336, 352; *Zionist Writings* [Kotavim ziyyoniyim]

- 314n17, 332n26, 334n33,
336n45, 352n37
Noverdikran, Hannah 199n33
- Odey, Janet 319, 319n46
- Old Yishuv 21, 26, 52n4, 69, 72, 81,
95, 98, 100, 107, 112-116, 124,
151-153, 156, 174, 184, 190,
192-193, 197-202, 205-211,
221, 231, 242, 367; *One Hundred
Years of Religious Zionism* [Me'ah
shenot ziyyonut datit] 365n20,
367n34-35, 368n40-41, 369n42,
372n57, 378n83, 380n88
- Or la-yesharim* [*Light for the
Righteous*] 183-184, 184n69,
185, 190, 246n90, 247-248, 258,
265
- Orthodox anti-Zionism 16, 161-
191, 261n44
- Oz, Amos 42, 319, 321, 321n53
- Palaggi, Hayyim 116n5
- Packer, Malkiel 281n1, 285n16,
294n61, 296n68, 298n79,
299n81, 299n85, 304n111
- Patai, Raphael 244n74
- Patashnik, Aaron 272n20, 274n25,
278n38, 280n44, 280n46
- Patterson, John Henry 340, 340n62
- Peles, Hayyim Y. 371n50-51
- Perlow, Aaron 240
- Petuchowski, Jacob A. 78n82
- Piekarz, Mendel 228n6, 229n8,
233n26, 236n38
- Pines, Yehiel Mikhel 21-23, 25-26,
49, 86-89, 91, 94-95, 98-114,
120-122, 124-127, 129n54,
142, 147-149, 153n167, 165-
167, 169-171, 175, 179, 187,
192-212, 221-222, 361-363,
365n24, 375; *Binyan ha-arez*
98n3, 104n21, 104n23, 111n49,
193n4, 195n7-11, 196n13,
196n15, 210n74, 210n76-80;
Concerning Etrogim from Corfu
117n7, 118n10, 119n16; *Emet
mei-erez* 110n44, 112n52, 207,
207n59, 209; *On settling the
Land of Israel* 22n31, 101n11-
12, 120n19
- Pines, Yeruham Fishel 23n35
- Pinsker, Judah Leib 29, 29n46-47,
35, 106n32-33, 111, 153n168,
168-171, 175n41, 202, 214,
214n8, 225, 333, 333n29
- Plessner, Solomon 311n10
- Pogrebinsky, Yohanan 213n4,
216n21, 218n39, 222n55,
223n60, 224n67
- Polachek, Solomon (of Metshet)
283n9, 285n16, 288, 288n26-
28, 298n75, 299n86, 301n96,
302, 302n105, 302n107
- Political Zionism 37, 40, 164,
165n13, 166n15, 181n57, 182,
183n66, 223, 232, 243, 252-
266, 282
- Pollack, B. 300n90
- Pollack, Joshua 19n22
- Porat, Dan, *The Polemic over Land
of Israel Etrogim, 1875-1889*
115n1, 137n86, 140n108,
141n113, 143n120, 147n136,
149n146-147, 151n158,
153n166
- Poslover, Abele 118n8
- Preil, Joshua Joseph 179
- Ra'abad (Abraham ben David) 59
- Ra'anani, Zvi 319, 319n47
- Rabbiner, Zev Aryeh 168n22
- Rabinowitz Aaron 288
- Rabinowitz, Alexander Ziskind 350
- Rabinowitz, Elijah Akiva 161n1,
182, 188, 247, 300n93, 301n93,
303n10
- Rabinowitz, Joseph 185n73-74,

- 246n90
 Rabinowitz, Judah Leib 179
 Rabinowitz, Leon 173n33, 300
 Rabinowitz, Samuel Jacob 182-183, 188, 265, 378, 378n81
 Rabinowitz, Saul Pinhas (Shefer) 179, 209n67
 Rabinowitz, Zvi Hirsch 129n53, 246
 Rafael, Isaac 115n1, 227n1, 232n24, 236n38-39, 244n75, 277, 281n1
 Raffalovich, Isaiah 210
 Raisin, Jacob S. 284n10, 292n50

 Rapoport, Solomon Judah (Shir) 258
 Ravitzky, Aviezer 16, 19n20, 32, 114n58, 313, 371n53, 372n53
 Razabi, Shalom 16, 368n40-41, 372n55, 375n69, 378n83, 379n84, 380n94
 Raz-Krakovitzkin, Amnon 43n71, 45n73
 Reines, Abraham Ber 296n66
 Reines, Hayyim Z. 281n1
 Reines, Isaac Jacob 21, 23, 23n36, 38-39, 114, 136, 170, 182, 183n66, 188-189, 265, 279, 281, 281n1, 282-306, 340, 365n24, 366, 368, 372, 378, 378n83-84; *Mishkenot ya`aqov (On the Yeshivah at Lida)* 281n1, 283n7, 293n57, 300n87-88, 300n90, 302n101-102; *A New Light on Zion [Or hadash al ziyyon]* 282, 365n24, 378n82-83; *The Two Luminaries [Shenei ha-me'orot]* 281n1, 283n7, 285n14, 286n17, 289n35, 290n38, 290n40-42, 291n45, 291n47, 292n50-52, 293n54-58, 294n62, 296n66, 298n77, 298n80, 299n84, 299n88, 301n98, 302n102, 379n85
 Reines, M. 23n36
 Reinhartz, Jehuda 12n4, 13n10, 186n79, 189n89, 261n44, 268n4, 273n24, 280n45, 344n1, 351n31
 Reinitz, J. 69n57
 Religion and Nationalism 11-12, 14n14, 15n17, 200, 378-379
 Religious Nationalists (nationalism) 93, 95, 97, 112
 Religious Zionism (Zionists) 7, 14-17, 20-26, 35, 37, 39-44, 48, 53, 79, 85, 87, 98, 109, 164, 167, 175, 179-180, 183n66, 189-190, 234, 247, 262, 267-268, 272, 275, 279-283, 303-304, 308-313, 321, 322n59, 323-324, 326n3, 337-340, 344-345, 357-381
 Ribner, Z. A. 16n19, 345n4
 Rivlin, Hillel 99
 Rivlin, Isaac Zvi 211
 Rivlin, Joseph Joel 95, 98n1, 99n1, 124, 124n29, 192-193, 200, 207n62, 208-209, 210n75
 Rivlin, Zalman Hayyim 200
 Rokeach, Elazar 174, 201-202
 Rokeach, Joshua (of Belz) 239, 239n52
 Romm, Hannah 137n85
 Romm, Moses 118n8-9, 118n12, 119n13, 129, 129n55-56, 130n57-59, 131n61-63; *Tokheihah megullah* 118n8-9, 118n12, 128-131, 135
 Rosenak, Avinoam 366n28-29, 367, 367n32, 367n35
 Rosenberg, Adam 271
 Rosenblit, Pinhas 187n82-83
 Rosenthal, Daniel 278, 278n40, 279
 Rosenthal, Joseph 201

- Rotenstreich, Natan 42, 47, 315n26, 316-319, 322n59
 Rothschild, Edmond James de 30, 77, 79, 105-106, 108, 172-173, 173n35, 174, 175n35, 194, 204, 207n58, 253, 256, 259, 312
 Rubinstein, Amnon 42, 319, 321, 321n54, 322, 322n59, 323-234; *The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back* 321n54-56, 322n57-61, 234n73
 Rubashov, Z. 317n35
 Rülff, Isaac 264

 Sacks, Moses 68
 Safrai, Zev 155n175
 Sagi, Avi 155n175, 365n20, 367n34, 368n40, 369n42, 372n57, 378n83, 379n87, 380n88
 Salant, Benesh Benjamin 137, 146, 193
 Salant, Judah Leib 137, 146
 Salant, Samuel 140, 174, 198, 208n65
 Salomon, Joel Moses 137n90, 193, 199, 208-209
 Samet, Moshe 48n74, 85
 Samuel, Herbert 342, 342n67-68
 Sandler, Abraham Elijah 151n158
 Sapir, Elijah 196
 Sapir, Jacob 119n18, 120n18, 125, 137-139, 141, 149, 149n147
 Sarasohn, Kasriel 269
 Sarda, Rubina 157
 Sarna, Jonathan 268n4
 Schepansky, Y. (Israel) 57n21-22
 Schiff, Maharam 48
 Schiffman, Pinhas 285n16, 286n20, 291n44, 302n106
 Schlesinger, Akiva Joseph 19-20, 25, 43, 48, 51, 69-75, 83, 199, 328-239; *The Book of the Society of the Restoration of Things to Their Former Glory* 19n24, 69n56, 71n63, 71n65, 72n67, 73n69, 328, 238n12-13, 239n14
 Schlesinger, E. Y. 53n7
 Schlesinger, Mordecai Eliezer 71
 Schmelkes, Isaac (of Lvov) 242
 Schneersohn, Shalom Duber 185n72-73
 Schneerson, Samuel (of Lubavitch) 230
 Schneerson, Shalom Dov Ber (of Lubavitch) 49, 183-184, 229-230, 246-246
 Schneerson, Shlomo Zalman (of Kupys) 34, 229-230, 232
 Schochetman, Baruch 214n8, 222n55
 Scholem, Gershom 41, 308, 308n1, 310, 316-317, 317n31-32, 351-352
 Schramm, Lenn J. 15n17
 Schur, Wolf (Zev) 269-270
 Schwartz, Dov 16-17, 23n34, 326n3, 359n2, 365n20, 367, 367n32-35, 368n40, 369n42, 371, 371n52, 372n57, 378n83, 379n86-87, 380n88; *From Origins to Fulfillment* 359n2, 365n20, 367n32-33, 372n57, 379n85
 Schwartz, Joseph 116n5, 123, 137
 Secular Zionist 14, 41, 163-164, 308-324, 359n2, 368
 Seer of Lublin 143n124, 234
 Shabbetai Zevi 309
 Shahor, Ziskind 28n45, 199n30
 Shalkovich, Abraham Leib see Ben-Avidor
 Shapira, Abraham Duber (of Kovno) 379n86
 Shapira, Anita 189n89, 261n44, 268n4, 273n24, 280n45, 344n1, 350n31, 353n47, 355n51, 355n54
 Shapira, Elimelekh 144, 360

- Shapira, Hayyim Elazar (of Munkacs) 114
- Shapira, Isaiah 359
- Shapira, Israel 16n18
- Shapira, Joseph 281n1, 282n3, 283n7, 286n22, 290n39, 378n83, 379n84
- Shapira, M. L. 156n177
- Shapira Moses Samuel 281n1, 288n25, 300n87-89, 300n91, 301n95, 301n98, 302n106
- Shapira S. 241n59
- Shapiro, Yonatan 269n8
- Shazar, Zalman 41, 230n14, 315, 315n28, 316, 351
- Shimoni, Gid'on 12n4, 13n10, 181n57, 186n75, 186n79, 227n2, 268n5, 344n2, 345n7, 346n8, 348n19-20, 349n24, 349n26, 350n30
- Shimshi, Zvi 229n9
- Shlomo Leib of Lentsche 238n49
- Shmeruk, Chone 228n6
- Shreier, Feiwei 241
- Silberman, Samuel Muni 139
- Silver, Michael 60n30
- Simeon bar Yohai 55, 58, 105
- Simon, Aryeh 214n5, 215n15, 218n39, 220n47, 223n60-63, 224n67, 224n73
- Singer, Michael 270
- Sirkin, Nahman 46, 336, 345n7, 349, 349n23
- Sivan, Reuben 333n28
- Slouschz, David 222
- Slutsky, Abraham Jacob (A. Y.) 33n59, 148n143, 209n67, 209n69-70, 209n72, 222, 267, 278, 279n42, 283n10, 375, 378, 379n86
- Smith, Anthony D. 11n1-3, 12n4, 13
- Smolenskin, Peretz 26, 45, 150, 165-166, 168, 331, 331n20-21, 333, 347-348
- Sobalsky, Isaac 158n183, 159n189
- Sofer, Ben-Zion 62n36
- Sofer, Hayyim (of Munkacs) 132
- Sofer, Joseph Moses 75
- Sofer, Moses see Hatam Sofer
- Sofer, Simeon 132, 239, 239n52, 246n88
- Sofer, Solomon 66n46
- Sokolow, Nahum 150, 156, 190
- Sokolowsky 109n40-41, 204n47-48
- Solomon, Joel Moses 137n87, 139
- Soloveitchik, Hayyim (of Brisk) 49, 163, 288, 288n26, 299n86, 359
- Soloveitchik, Yosef Dov Ber 107, 112, 167-168, 173, 173n37, 180, 363, 372
- Sonnino, Mordecai 264
- Spektor, Isaac Elhanan 31, 88, 94-96, 111, 117, 121, 124-129, 131-132, 132n70, 133, 135-136, 140, 151n158, 154, 159, 168-171, 202, 246, 279, 300, 363, 375
- Spiegel, Frederick 277n32
- State of Israel 17, 36, 40, 191, 279, 314, 327, 358
- Stein, Samson 243n71
- Stein-Ashkenazi, Esther 216n23, 221n50, 222n59
- Steinberg, Abraham 241n58, 248n96
- Steinberg, Joshua 288n25
- Sternberg, Joseph 237n44
- Stern, Joseph Zechariah 88, 90, 90n7, 91-94, 126-127, 129, 129n54, 165, 193
- Stern, Moshe 166n18
- Strasson, Jacob Samuel 152, 152n164, 158n183
- Struck, Hermann 187, 272
- Sultan, Turkish 237, 242-243
- Szold, Benjamin 270
- Tabenkin, Yizhak 46, 354, 354n50
- Tanhum, Gershon 127n44, 128
- Teitelbaum, Joel (of Satmar) 32, 114
- Thon, Joshua 309n4, 351

- Trani, Moses ben Joseph (Mabbitt) 122, 123n26, 139
- Traub, Avraham Shmuel 86
- Treitschke, Heinrich von 12, 12n7
- Trunk, Israel Joshua 132n70, 145, 145n130, 146, 153, 171, 202, 234, 279
- Trunk, Yehiel Isaiah 141n111
- Tschekhnov, Abraham 238n49
- Tsur, Jacob 16, 180n55, 186, 186n75-80, 187n82, 190n91
- Tyumkin, Zev 204, 221n53
- Twersky, Isadore 71n64
- Urofsky, Melvil I. 271n14, 274n25, 275n29, 276n31, 278n38
- Ulman, Havah 370n47
- Unna, Isaac 283n6
- Ussishkin, Menahem 108n38, 169-170, 177, 22n55, 226, 229-231, 231n19, 232n22, 240n5, 299, 332-333, 341-342, 350
- Uziel, Ben-Zion Meir Hai 367-368, 380
- Vinogradov, Daniel 287n23
- Vital, David 14
- Wachs, Hayyim Elazar 115n1, 129n53, 132, 140-145, 147-150, 153-157, 168; *Responsa nefesh hayyah* 142n119, 143, 143n120, 144n126-129
- Weinberg, Jacob Jehiel 283n7, 289n33, 290n40
- Weinberg, Samuel (of Slonim) 248
- Weingarten, Samuel 52n4, 53n7, 54n14, 68, 68n55
- Weinrib, Dov 13-14
- Weiser, Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Mikhel (Malbim) 126, 279
- Weiss, Aaron 227n2
- Weiss, Benjamin (of Chernovtsy) 245
- Weiss, Jacob 51n3
- Weizmann, Chaim 9, 226, 341
- Werblowsky, Zvi 308, 308n2, 309, 309n5-6, 372n54
- Werner, Abba 301n99
- Wise, Isaac Mayer 157
- Wise, Stephen 268, 270
- Wisotsky, Kolonymus Zev 201-202, 220n47, 298
- Wistrich, Robert S. 253n8, 257n27
- Wolfson, David 299
- Wolfson, Moses David 92, 93n14
- Yardeni-Egmon, Galyah 112n54, 115n1
- Yavetz, Zev 86, 189
- Yehoshua, A. B. 42, 319-321; *Between Right and Right* 319n44, 320, 320n51
- Yellin, David 201n40, 211
- Yellin, Itta 193n1, 198n25, 199, 199n32, 199n34, 201n41-43, 205n54
- Yellin, Joshua 199
- Yizhar, S. (Smilensky, Yizhar) 319
- Yohanan ben Zakkai 286
- Yudelevich, David 226
- Yudelowitz, Mordecai Dov 285n13, 291n46, 297n74
- Zack, Simeon 286n19, 300n88, 301n95
- Zahavi, Zvi 52, 52n4; *From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl* 52, 52n6, 59n27, 65n43, 67n52
- Zangwill, Israel 301n99
- Zederbaum, Alexander (Erez) 147n138, 148n141, 149n145, 150, 150n156, 151n157, 152, 152n162, 158n184-185, 159n190
- Zeff, Joseph 271
- Zehariah Mendel Abraham (of

- Sienawa) see Abraham,
 Zechariah Mendel
 Zemah Zedeq
 Zilberstein, Mordecai 153n169
 Zionist Congress 35, 41, 44n72,
 180-188, 190, 242-243, 246,
 248, 258-266, 270, 272-273,
 278, 282, 296n66, 303, 331,
 336, 379
 Zionist Myth 325-337, 340, 343
 Zionist nationalism 15, 18, 34, 40,
 334
 Zirelson, Judah Leib (of Priluki)
 182-183, 188
 Ziv, Y. B. A. 152, 152n165
 Ziv, Ben-Zion, *Recollections of the*
 Lida Yeshiva 281n1, 285n16,
 288n27, 292n50, 296n66,
 297n74, 298n75-76, 299n83,
 300n88
 Zizling, Judah Idel 158n188
 Zohar, David 365n20-22, 365n24,
 366n26-27, 380n88
 Zohn, Harry 244n74
 Zolotkoff, Leon 270

