

The History of Galilee, 1538–1949

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Mysticism, Modernization, and War

M. M. Silver

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Dedicated to a future university in Galilee

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Introduction

This is the second and final volume devoted to the history of Galilee. The first, released in September 2021,¹ covered the subject from the late Second Temple period of Jesus and of the anti-Rome revolt in Galilee, through the Crusades. The present volume picks up the topic from sixteenth century Kabbalistic mysticism in Safed and ends with a survey of 1948 events known either as Israel's War of Independence or the Palestinian Nakba.

As in the previous volume, the rationale for the chronological markers and timeline (1538–1949) is explicated in the text, but I should note that the several century gap separating the two books reflects my intention of producing a relatively detailed and wide-ranging history that does not aspire to survey every decade or measurable topic in Galilee's past. Instead, based on the premise that Galilee's history attains singular import in world history as the place where monotheism multiplied, I have focused on trends, personalities, and events which highlight creative tensions, clashes, and accommodations between cultures of the three great religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as the richly complex story of one people, the Druze, who branched out from Islam. As in the first volume, the organization of chapters around prominent themes in Galilee's past—Kabbalist mysticism, Druze consolidation, Palestinian modernization, Zionist pioneering, Israeli-Arab warfare—follows a discernible chronology, and gives prominence to particular individuals, such as Isaac Luria, Fakhr al-Din, and Zahir al-Umar, who appear to personify or symbolize these selected themes. I have also tried to continue and amplify the interpretive rhythms of the earlier volume, by writing about warfare in the region as a clash between conflicting cultural systems that is largely reflected in the careers of prominent soldiers and statesmen, by insisting that Galilee spirituality is somewhere to be found in the complicated contents of religious systems that took root in the region (for instance, the

Mishnah, in the previous volume, and Kabbalah in the present one), and in other ways.

Due to the esoteric, sometimes baffling, nature of Kabbalistic concepts and practices, I judged that some brief background about Jewish mysticism would be necessary in this volume. This volume's somewhat breathless opening attempts to supply this background and, simultaneously, to build a chronological bridge to the finish line of its predecessor—we begin here with the composition of the *Zohar*, in late thirteenth century Castile, exactly the time when the Crusades in Galilee were crashing to an end in our first volume. Just as this volume's opening analysis of the roots of sixteenth century Safed Kabbalah is necessarily cursory, some of its concluding sections, including a rapid-fire discussion of Galilee's development in Israel after the 1948 war, are pronouncedly schematic. To do more, in my judgment, would require the production of another volume whose methods and spirits would, at this stage, lack a reasonable measure of historical perspective.

This volume differs from its predecessor in that its chronological sequence is suspended in one particular chapter, more or less in the middle of the book. In chapter 3, "The Quest for the Historical Galilee," the survey focuses less on successive "real-time" events, and instead investigates what the region of Jesus's childhood has meant to commentators and religious tourists from an array of modern settings, for example, nineteenth century theological study in Europe or early twentieth century Protestantism in the United States. Yet, at least loosely, this interruption adheres to the volume's chronology (it is placed between discussions of Galilee in late Ottoman Palestine and of the early Zionist pioneering initiatives in Galilee); and, in some ways, chapter 3 is a continuation of the earlier volume's analysis of Jesus, the gospels, and Galilee.²

Nothing in the production of this volume encouraged me to scale back the promotional catchphrase we used in the introduction to its predecessor: Galilee's history is, I believe, the Greatest Story Never Told. Interactions, even interdependencies, in the development of the three monotheistic cultures have been glossed or obscured because of the ethnocentric shielding and boosterism in discrete Galilee narratives developed by historians who imagined themselves as representing primarily the "Jewish," "Christian," or "Islamic" viewpoint. When Galilee's history is reconstructed within its own distinctively multicultural texture, much in the axiomatic posturing of these nationalist narratives is exposed as shibboleth. Just as readers of the last volume will have noticed considerable departure from (among many other things) the way Jewish History narratives constructed a political and normative timeline of Temple *hurban* destruction and dispersion from Eretz Israel, the present volume insists on the revision of many ponderously formulated

ideas relating to the timeline and roots of the Israeli-Arab conflict, to the putative “western” determinants of modernization in Palestine dating from the Napoleonic invasion, to the character of American Protestant engagement with the Holy Land, and to many other items. Once the perspective of the region’s own leaders and cultures is incorporated in an avowedly multicultural frame, the one-sidedness of conventional, nationalist understandings of salient historical topics becomes more apparent.

Due to the intricate semantics and content unfamiliarity of some topics in this particular volume, such as Kabbalah, or Druze faith, I have sometimes wondered how to present the inner workings of one of the religious cultures to readers from other cultures; and to mitigate this issue in some small way, we have appended a brief glossary to this volume. Generally, I have not written a single word in either of these volumes with a fixed, particular ethno-religious profile of a reader in mind, and I consequently hope that this study might have some small measure of cross-cultural appeal.

That said, this book, like many non-fiction works, emerges from a specific professional context that maintains, unwittingly or deliberately, its own ethno-cultural norms. So I should add a word here about how I have imagined myself to be confronting these rules.

One aim in this Galilee history project has been to challenge the parochial rigidity of Jewish Studies methodologies, particularly as they pertain to Israel/Zionist topics of concern. Though you would not know it were you to judge matters in terms of the self-congratulatory atmosphere of Association for Jewish Studies gatherings, very little methodologically innovative writing has been devoted to these topics since Jewish Studies gained institutional footing mainly by virtue of philanthropic endowments, more than a generation ago. Controversies generated by “post-Zionist” scholarship at the end of the last century rapidly dissipated as “I say tomato, you say tomahto” sort of bickering about narrowly framed issues; and the substantive contribution of the newly critical scholarship sponsored by scholars such as Benny Morris, particularly pertaining to 1948 refugee issues, has been elided and bowdlerized by misguided initiatives undertaken by right-wing Israeli governments, and by various pro-Israel lobbying factions in the United States. The extent to which this lobbying, implicitly or avowedly undertaken in the name of an undemocratic future of the Jewish State founded on the continuing occupation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the post-1967 territories, hamstringing Jewish Studies scholars is difficult to determine, but my own experiences have rarely been encouraging in this respect. Whenever I attended such Jewish Studies conferences in North America, and expected my own affiliations and interests to have some small measure of street credibility, in view of

Galilee's demographic diversity and pluralistic cultures, I encountered ignorantly sublimated perceptions of how the “center” and “periphery” have been constructed on the political compass of Israel's post-1967 geography by right-wing elites, and, increasingly, evangelical groups. Hence, in addition to the intents and expectations I alluded to in the earlier volume's introduction, I should acknowledge here that this two volume history of Galilee has been produced partly with an aim, however quixotic, of inducing shock treatment in the methodological nervous system of a scholarly establishment whose normative-geographical assumptions regarding where history has happened, and where it should continue to happen, are ever more powerfully coopted by undemocratic forces.

As in the case of the preceding volume, this book is dedicated hopefully to a future university in Galilee, an institution based on principles of liberal

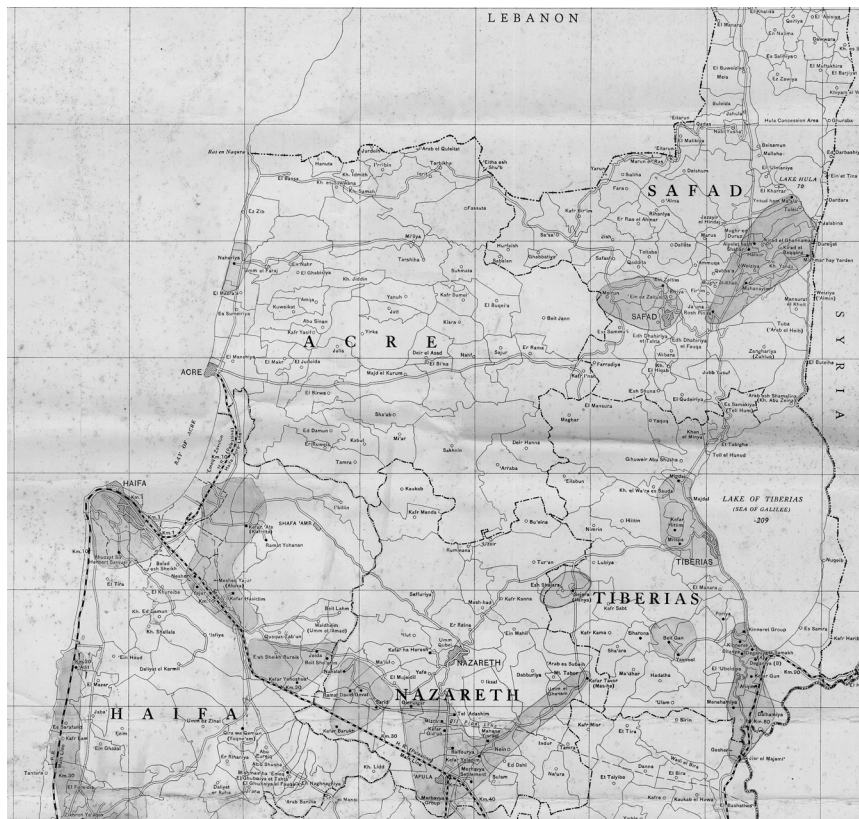


Figure 0.1 Map of Galilee during the British Mandate Period. *Source:* Courtesy of Tel-Hai College Historical Maps Archive.

humanism and inter-faith dialogue which I have tried to evoke and incorporate in this history project.

NOTES

1. M. M. Silver, *History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021).
2. *Ibid.*, 51–94.

Chapter 1

Kabbalistic Galilee

FROM CASTILE TO GALILEE: LURIANIC KABBALAH'S REENACTMENT OF THE IDROT

Kabbalah came to Galilee from Spain. The engine propelling this journey was *Sefer Ha-Zohar, The Book of Splendor*, written by Moses de Leon, who lived in a small town, Guadalajara, in Castile, and died around 1305 (his death was roughly coterminous with the 1291 fall of Crusader Acre, and the close of the Frankish settlement movement in Galilee, the endpoint of our earlier volume, *The History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE*). Precise details about this mystical text's composition, including the question of whether de Leon had collaborators, have intrigued scholars ever since Gershom Scholem uncovered and disclosed the basic facts of the *Zohar*'s composition in his influential *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, which was first published in 1941.¹ For several centuries, stretching into the modern era, the *Zohar* was a canonical text, ranking with the Bible and the Talmud, Scholem explained. The text, as he described it, reads like a "mystical novel." It attributes its authorship to Rashbi (Shimon Bar Yochai). Rashbi, his son Eleazar, and friends and disciples wander to and fro in the text, discussing "all manner of things human and divine."²

Galilee's place in the *Zohar* has similarities to the way the region is mythologized in some Christian writing, that is, it is an imaginary landscape.

Nobody in the circle of Spanish Jewish Kabbalists out of which the *Zohar* emerged really knew Galilee, or possessed reliable information about what the region had been like over a thousand years before, in the period when the text's putative author, Rashbi, had supposedly hidden in a cave in flight from Roman persecutors, and collaborated with other Tannaitic sages in the period of the Mishnah's composition. In fact, the numerous distortions and

errors laden within the *Zohar*'s depiction of Galilee were, for Scholem, "the most convincing proof possible" that the text was an exercise in pseudepigrapha, written by someone who had "never so much set foot in Palestine." Entire villages popped up on Galilee's landscape in the *Zohar* as a result of de Leon's misreading of Talmudic passages. Following Shmuel Klein, a preeminent authority on Galilee's landscape in Hebrew sources, Scholem cites "Kapotkia" as an exemplification of how the *Zohar* fictionalized Galilee. The Jerusalem Talmud has some critical references to "Kappadocians in Sepphoris"—twisting these allusions, the *Zohar* invents a Galilee village, Kapotkia, which never existed.³

"The tale of a great holy man, Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai [Rashbi], followed by a group of faithful disciples as he wanders about the Holy Land, especially the Galilee, has a familiar ring to it," writes Arthur Green. On this interpretation, Galilee's landscape is utilized in this classic medieval Jewish mystical text, the *Zohar*, to promote a "counter myth to the gospel tales of Jesus and his apostles."⁴ In the *Zohar*'s climactic section, the *Idra Zuta* (Lesser Assembly),⁵ Rashbi sacrifices himself in ecstatic (and highly sexualized) union with God—as a "precisely choreographed" death carried out before an assembly of loyal devotees, Green points out, Rashbi's death is analogous to Jesus's martyrdom.

The political frame of the Galilean Kabbalists in the *Zohar* similarly has parallels in early Christianity. More than any of the Tannaim, Rashbi personified anti-Roman defiance;⁶ and his reputation in this regard has parallels in the saintly stories of early Christians who were persecuted by the Romans.

While the *Zohar* did not exactly elevate Rashbi to divine status, it mythologized his reputation to the point where he has become the closest thing to a Jewish saint on contemporary Israel's landscape (a million people annually visit his Meron gravesite, a quarter to half of these being Orthodox, mystically inclined, Israelis and tourists who come during the Lag B'Omer holiday⁷). Green believes that this line of interpretation, suggesting how the cornerstone text of Jewish mysticism, the *Zohar*, consolidated as a Galilee counter-narrative to the New Testament depiction of Jesus and the gospels, can be extended to Rashbi's much mythologized image. "The *Zohar* remains on the Jewish side of the great theological divide" imposed by Christian faith in the Incarnation, but it "comes very close to crossing it," he writes. In the *Zohar*, Rashbi appears as the last in the line of Judaism's prophetic or political heroes, such as Moses, Aaron, King Solomon; and his antecedents are depicted as "heirophants or mystagogues, priests who perform unfathomable mystery rites that are vital to the world's survival." Taking the priestly torch from them, Rashbi "may be partly shaped as [an] alternative to the human-divine person of Christianity," Green concludes.⁸

The *Zohar*'s use of Galilee exemplifies how the region is crucial in the interlocked dialogue of monotheistic culture. As in the example of the Book of Matthew's supersession motifs, Galilee figured in the early rise of Christianity as the theater of a counter-narrative to Jerusalem, Temple-based, Judaism. In Matthew's counter-narrative, the moral idealism of the Sermon on the Mount opposes the alleged doctrinaire rigidity of the Pharisees. The angle of opposition reverses in medieval Jewish mysticism. The *Zohar*'s climactic Idra scene, its description of the Kabbalist brotherhood, and its semi-divine characterization of its heroes, foremost among them Rashbi, constitute a counterpart Galilee narrative to the gospels.

Tellingly, as the centuries passed by, Galilee's sociopolitical landscape became increasingly malleable in historical mystification. Latter-day ideologists revisited Galilee and cherry-picked its ancient heroes and inspirational images in order to serve their own contemporary purposes. This phenomenon is best known in the modern era's search for the historical Jesus, in which (as Albert Schweitzer demonstrated) nineteenth century theologians refashioned Jesus's biographies to suit the sociopolitical trends and moral fashions of their own time.⁹ But the use and abuse of Galilee's history goes yet farther than that. Here we are seeing medieval Jewish mystics turning Rashbi and other Tannaim into Kabbalists, in the absence of an evidentiary warrant for this transformation. A reader of *History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE* will recall scattered elements of magic and supernaturalism in Tannaitic culture, as illustrated by myths of Judah HaNasi's superhuman dealings with Roman emperors, or the fire-throwing power of Rashbi and his son Eleazar, as they emerged from their Galilee cave.¹⁰ Such myths were the product of retroactive imposition wrought by Talmudic commentators, and they were quite modest, compared to the baroque mysticism of *Zohar* Kabbalism, and the way it refashioned Rashbi and his circle (as noted in the earlier volume, scholars disagree about whether there are any mystical precedents in Tannaitic culture which can be viably connected to Kabbalah's consolidation, centuries later¹¹). The Tannaim are much more directly aligned as the ancestors of the non-mystical (albeit not essentially rational) tradition of Jewish legal codification, as exemplified by their master-work, the Mishnah. In fact, in the course of this chapter on sixteenth century Safed, we will see that figures like Joseph Karo, the preeminent codifier of Jewish law, *halacha*, who had a much more logical historical connection with the Tannaim, became enmeshed in an intricately complicated relationship with the Kabbalists, who issued illogical, but creatively powerful and emotionally seductive, claims of soulful connection with the Tannaim.

Why did such mystification of early, post-Second Temple, Galilean Jewish culture begin in thirteenth century Spain, in the *Zohar*? As Green points out,

the *Zohar*-era Kabbalists had strong political reasons to identify with the Tannaim, and particularly with Rashbi, who was the most trenchant anti-Roman rebel among these sages. With the Reconquista picking up steam, and Spain's Jews under increasing pressure to convert, the Kabbalists took solace as they refashioned the story of second century Tannaim who ensured Judaism's survival, while fighting off Roman persecution (the fact that the Tannaim put Judaism in a new, nascent Talmudic mold probably also appealed to these Kabbalists, who revitalized Judaism by adding mystical creativity to it). Rashbi often figures in the *Zohar* as a metaphor for Jewish self-fortification against antagonistic Christians in Spain—as Green puts it, “the true addressee” of the *Zohar*'s oppositionist counter-narrative was “the oppressor in whose midst the authors lived.”¹²

It bears mention both that the *Zohar*-era mystics were hardly unique when they took huge liberties with the slice of Galilee history useful to them, and also that this mystification of Galilee's past did not only occur on the complicated axis of Jewish-Christian relations over the ages. Muslims have made much use of politicized anachronisms lifted out of Galilee history, as exemplified (as we witnessed, in volume 1) in polemical recycling of Saladin's victory at Hattin.¹³ Christian analogues to the way the *Zohar* (and, later, Lurianic Kabbalah) took mythologized refashioning of Tannaitic culture to extremes can be found in Crusader-related remembrance, as illustrated by wild changes interpolated in the story of Tancred's doings in Galilee, and elsewhere in the Holy Land region.¹⁴

Mystification of Galilee in the *Zohar* stems not exclusively from its factual inaccuracies and distortive content, such as the presentation of Tannaite codifiers of Jewish law as Kabbalists. The text's genre also plays a role. In this respect, Scholem's classification of the *Zohar* as a “mystical novel” is suggestive. The image of Rashbi and his devotees wandering about Galilee, and other parts of Eretz Israel, has recently instigated extended commentary;¹⁵ and, in terms of genre classification, this image can be seen as belonging to an intrinsically Jewish literary form, one evocative of the wandering of Biblical patriarchs like Abraham and Moses. In the mystics' own Jewish imagination, the wandering motif metaphorically reflected the solitude and yearning searches of the maternal side of divinity, *Shekhinah*. But the *Zohar*'s proto-novelistic form has also been seen by interpreters as further evidence of the interplay of gentile trends and medieval Jewish mysticism. The text's picaresque character anticipates Cervantes, who wrote some 300 years later; and outside of this Spanish literary context, the Galilee peregrination of Rashbi and his followers has, Green points out, analogues in medieval troubadour romances, such as Chaucer's fourteenth century *Canterbury Tales*.¹⁶

Galilee's landscape is charged with messianic expectation in the *Zohar*'s climactic “Idra” sections, Idra Rabba (Greater Assembly)¹⁷ and Idra Zuta

(Lesser Assembly).¹⁸ Serving as a bridge between late thirteenth century Castile and mid-sixteenth century Safed, these are the *Zohar* passages of greatest pertinence to our history of Galilee. As successors in *gilgul* transmigration of souls,¹⁹ Isaac Luria and his followers believed that they were faithfully reenacting and resurrecting the Idra assemblies held in the same Galilee locale by Rashbi and his followers in the second century. The culture of sixteenth century Safed, in fact, is framed by the Kabbalists' convocation of their own Galilee Idra. This is a remarkable image of history repeating its own repetition. First came the Tannaim; then came the Spanish Kabbalists; then came the Lurianic mystics. All of them convened in a Galilee assembly, either in the actual region or in some mystically configured representation of Galilee.

Hebrew University of Jerusalem scholar Yehuda Liebes demonstrated at length that these two Idra sections are unusual in the *Zohar*.²⁰ Whereas, in general, this classic text of medieval Spanish Kabbalah deals (as Scholem emphasized) with issues of personal, mystical salvation, the focus in the Idrot is national redemption. Immersed in creative allusion to Talmudic sources, sexual suggestiveness, and elaborate Kabbalist imagery of sefirot and other icons, these Idrot sections cast Rashbi as a messianic figure who ecstatically sacrifices himself so as to propel his own lost, post-Temple hurban generation toward a messianic future.

In a fascinating display of erudition, Liebes details how the *Zohar*'s staged Idra assembly, and the metaphorical imagery associated with Rashbi and others in this convocation, are molded out of precisely computed, and palpably felt, national messianic expectation. The way Rashbi and others are seated (with two rabbis, Eleazar and Abba on his sides) mimetically symbolizes number three and number ten alignments of the Kabbalistic sefirot; Rashbi's opening assembly statement, associating himself with one solitary "pillar," has voluminous connotative resonance in Jewish scripture, cosmic creation stories, and Kabbalist imagery (including phallic symbols); the mathematical weights of the letters of the Tetragrammaton and correlate computations, Liebes concludes, register the *Zohar* circle's messianic tallying of the precise date of the end of days (the Kabbalists' computation yielded 1334, about fifty years from the 1280s period of the text's composition—though, of course, according to the text's pseudepigraphic professions, it was written in the Tannaitic second century).²¹ Meanings of some of these esoteric Kabbalist terms (e.g., "sefirot") will be discussed later in this chapter, and recapitulating Liebes's dissection of the *Zohar*'s mystical minutiae need not concern us here. We hew to the Idrot sections' main messages. Delving exegetically through the *Zohar*'s wondrous esoteric layering, Liebes uncovers two main themes.

The first features the Idrot sections' confessional character wherein Rashbi reveals Kabbalah's innermost mysteries to a select group of devotees,

immediately before his own sacrifice. The thematic issue here is Kabbalah's *status*, either as an elite mystical theology revealed only to select initiates, or as an inclusively popular doctrine which assigns to every person a role in the *tikun* repair of the cosmos. In truth, Kabbalah combines both these characteristics (a fact that perhaps explains its status today as the aspect of Judaism that has high profile, celebrity star power, as exemplified by self-proclaimed devotees such as Madonna, and slickly promoted "Kabbalah Centers" around the globe;²² this popular appeal stems paradoxically from the fact that Kabbalah is known to be enigmatically mysterious, and difficult to understand, and thereby promises to masses of subscribers in Kabbalah centers, in Beverly Hills, Rio de Janeiro, and Hong Kong, secret spiritual insights designed exclusively for select initiates). Rashbi, in the Idrot, explains recondite symbolism and intricate creation and cosmological beliefs to a small group of disciples. Concurrently, this Kabbalistic disclosure is recorded in a poetically inveigling text which, despite (or because of) its abstruse complexity and inconsistency, was destined, and perhaps deliberately designed by de Leon, for wildfire popularity, over the centuries, in Jewish communities in Europe and beyond.

To be sure, this elite-popular tension is wedged deeply not just into these Idrot sections, but into the *Zohar*, in general. However, once we take into account Liebes's persuasive interpretation of the Idrot as a sustained messianic narrative, this popular versus elitist issue becomes contextualized in a broad, rich frame. In many ways, Kabbalah is undeniably an idiosyncratic, parochial Jewish mystical creed. Yet its popularity, and universality, can be attributed, in part, to texts like the *Zohar*'s Idrot sections, which hold out the promise of personal and national redemption, and which have an innately exciting format. The reader is overhearing the secret confession of a semi-messiah that was supposed to be his parting gift to a small group of initiates, immediately before his self-sacrifice. As a kind of mystical gospel of Judaism, the *Zohar*'s Idrot assemblies recapitulate the "messianic secret" motif in the Book of Mark. On this analogy, Galilee's landscape connects the climactic sections in the classic text of Kabbalah to the climactic sections of the canonical basis of Christianity, the New Testament.

In the *Zohar*, the messianic secret disclosure relies on Galilee stage props. With his son Eleazar and also Rabbi Abba, Rashbi witnesses lightning strike the Sea of Galilee. Interpreting this occurrence as though it were a symbol of a Talmudic account of tears shed by God (Berakhot 59a), Rashbi concludes that the time has come for his great disclosure. "We have been awakened in the secrets of the letters of the Holy Name, in the mystery of His awakening to His sons," he declaims. "Now I must disclose what no one else has been allowed to disclose."²³

In the case of this first theme, we reached Galilee after a somewhat exhausting exegetical march. In contrast, the Idrot sections' second theme, that of the Spanish Kabbalists' deeply felt identification with the Tannaim, prominently foregrounds Galilee's landscape. De Leon and his mystical confederates expressed this connection in dimensions of time and space. In temporal terms, the Spanish Kabbalists believed they belonged to a forsaken, largely hope-bereft, generation. Liebes cites one *Zohar* passage as being particularly illustrative of the "negative opinion that the author had of his own generation": "Mark now, in future generations the Torah will be forgotten, the wise of heart will assemble in the holy *Idra*, and there will be none to close or open. Alas for that generation! There will be no generation like the present until the Messiah comes."²⁴ Like the Tannaim before them, the Spanish Kabbalists viewed themselves as a theologically initiated elite in an intermediary generation. Their mission was essentially to hold their ground, engage *tikun* practices, and prepare for the not-imminent, but not distantly remote, advent of the messiah.

In truth, the Idrot sections of the *Zohar* are not just an imitative reenactment of Tannaitic experience in Galilee. Framed in Galilee's landscape, they represent a *dialogue* between the Spanish Kabbalah and the Tannaitic Mishnah relating to Judaism's messianic character. The *Zohar*'s Rashbi projects more than a straightforward sense of emotional-political identification which connected de Leon and his circle to the heroic Tannaim. The mythologized Rashbi, in this canonical Kabbalah text, is an improved version of the historical Rashbi. In other words, Kabbalah carries out *tikun*, repair, of Jewish history itself. Or, still more precisely, the *Zohar*'s theologically refined mysticism repairs the more rudimentary, non-ideological, mysticism which conferred to posterity the image of the "historical" Rashbi in the first place. In this way, Kabbalah turned Galilee into a utopia. In contrast (as we have seen²⁵), Galilee, in second century Tannaitic culture, was a post-hurban region of promise; but, in theological-cosmic terms, it was at the time a rather more indefinite venue, often steeped in melancholic longing for the Temple in Jerusalem, and not regarded as utopia.

This progression in Galilee imagery, from the elemental mysticism of the Tannaitic era to the elaborate Kabbalah of medieval Spain, is exemplified by the conclusion of *Idra Rabba*. When the assembly participants adjourn, they are greeted by a fine aroma, prompting Rashbi to exclaim: "The world is blessed because of us." In the *Zohar*, Galilee is firmly grounded in messianic expectation. In contrast, earlier mysticism that is associated with the Tannaitic period lacked this messianic buoyancy. When, after twelve years, Rashbi and his son first emerged from their cave, their malodorous greeting was a Galilee landscape burned by anything to which they set their eyes.

As an antithesis to a messianic blessing, a heavenly voice instructs Rashbi: "Have you come to destroy my world? Get back into your cave!"²⁶

As Liebes interprets it, whenever de Leon's reflections became gloomy about the spiritual state of his own generation in Castile, whenever his meditations presumably turned to the thought "what could possibly be worse than this," he drew strength from Rashbi's plight. Without question, hiding in a cave in Galilee after the Temple's destruction in Jerusalem, and after cataclysmically failed rebellions against Rome, was worse than anything de Leon was complaining about in Guadalajara. In objective terms, as Liebes emphasizes, the *Zohar* author's identification with Tannaitic heroes was an imaginative stretch, a genuine leap of faith. The only real connection between de Leon and Rashbi was the belief that the Kabbalah was preserving Judaism's messianic essence, just as the Tannaim had done after the hurban: "We should bear in mind that R. Simeon [Rashbi] died more than a thousand years before the *Zohar* was written, so that its author could not have attributed any more to him than the sustenance of the nation in exile," noted Liebes.²⁷

As we will see, this holding pattern sort of messianic anticipation took on a new, nuanced meaning in the dreams and realities of the sixteenth century Kabbalists in Isaac Luria's Safed circle. In the case of the *Zohar*, the heroic struggle waged by Rashbi and other Tannaim, their courageous endeavor to preserve remains of Jewish life and revitalize Judaism after two catastrophically failed rebellions against the Romans, inspired de Leon and his circle. On the precipice of despair, these Kabbalists found comfort and regained hope by imaginatively communing with the transmigrated souls of the Tannaim, by identifying heart and soul with the rebirth of Judaism in second century Galilee.

Much as we think of medieval Christians as living in a bleak time of darkness, sustaining themselves by imaginatively recreating in their consciousness a messianic narrative of first century Galilee, so too did medieval Jews, in their new mystical doctrine of Kabbalah, rejuvenate their faith by reclaiming and reconstructing a messianic narrative of second century Galilee. Much as medieval Christians reenergized their culture by taking up the sword on a long, dramatic march to the Holy Land in the Crusades, so too did medieval Spanish Jews revitalize their culture by bequeathing to their descendants, post-Expulsion Jews, a spiritual armory, Kabbalah, which was taken with them on a long, dramatic journey of re-settlement in sixteenth century Safed.

LIFE IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY MYSTICAL SAFED

What was life really like in sixteenth century Kabbalistic Safed? What was the reality behind the ornate mysticism? As a guide for the examination of

such questions, we have one outstanding source. Rabbi Solomon Shlumil of Dresnitz immigrated to Safed in 1602 and composed four letters to friends and relatives between 1607 and 1609.²⁸ His letters seep with public relations promotion and cannot be taken at face value;²⁹ still, they movingly document the experiences and impressions of a Jewish enthusiast whose journey to Safed entailed the abandonment of his previous life commitments. Though they can be seen as the attestations of a messianic fanatic, one who is derelict about his earthly responsibilities, the letters nonetheless have an engaging candor. While exaggerated, Shlumil's effusive descriptions of Galilee's Kabbalistic culture reflect authentic desire to document realities in the beloved Galilee town.

In his third letter, Shlumil confesses that he came to Safed in search of higher worlds, having embarked on his journey from Central Europe as an ascetic penitent: "I renounced all pleasure and enjoyment in this world, and I made my way back to God via fasting, mourning and weeping, sackcloth and ashes."³⁰ He set off for Galilee alone, divorcing his wife when she refused to make the journey, and leaving behind a thirteen-year-old daughter (these last disclosures are in his second letter). He was twenty-eight years old when he arrived in Safed, during the Sukkot holiday in 1602, shorn of everything, "with no possessions." His first year in the mystical mountaintop town was uneasy, since nobody in the Lurianic brotherhood wanted to share Kabbalistic secrets with him. After remarrying in Safed, he obtained some Lurianic books from his father-in-law (named Saruk). In the next few years, these circumstances changed for the inquisitive, mystically yearning, immigrant—he acquired so much information about Lurianic Kabbalah that scholars today rate Shlumil as the main disseminator of folkloristic legends about Safed's sixteenth century Kabbalistic era.³¹

Isaac Luria, who passed away in 1572 at the age of thirty-eight after living in Safed for less than three years, had been dead for thirty years when Shlumil arrived in town. Hence, information about Luria (who is known as "the Ari," the lion) which Shlumil collated was retrospective. The town he surveyed during the first decade of the seventeenth century lacked a leader; Safed was just past its mystical heyday. Shlumil testified that he interviewed a few of the Ari's students who had lingered in Safed, but mostly the miraculous information he collected about Luria and his circle came from ordinary Safed residents whom he met in the town's streets, markets, and synagogues. In the thirty years that elapsed after Luria's death, legends about him and his mystical doctrines had permeated in Safed, well beyond his small circle of disciples.³²

Shlumil's second letter, dated July 19, 1607, is encyclopedic in its survey of Safed's religious, social, and economic spheres. Its enthused, optimistic hue is colored as much by the author's satisfying five year experience in the

town as it is fashioned by the ulterior motive of attracting interest, in the form of immigrants or charity funds, on Safed's behalf. The letter constitutes the best representation we have of what life in Galilee's Kabbalistic era must have been like, at least when experienced by someone sympathetic to its mystical grounding.

Safed, Shlumil reported,³³ had 300 rabbis, 18 yeshivas, 21 synagogues, and one major house of study attended by 400 boys and young men. Unlike Jewish instructors in Constantinople, who were generously paid, Safed's teachers were idealists who received modest compensation. During Thursday morning prayers, Shlumil reported, Safed's Chief Rabbi, Moses Galante, directed worshippers to thank overseas donors for encouraging settlement in Eretz Israel. Gentiles in Safed, or elsewhere in Galilee, did nothing to obstruct holy worship in the town: "Even when we spend full days outside in prayer, in tallitot and tefillin, and cry out in prayer to the Almighty, at the graves of our revered tzadikim, nary a gentile will utter a disrespectful word," reported Shlumil.

Providing an abundance of products at cheap prices, Galilee's economy was bullish, Shlumil testified. The comparison between Safed's bountiful daily life, and the sorrowful scarcity of life in exile, made him weep. Shlumil's enthusiastic, detailed portrait of the early seventeenth century Galilean economy is eye-catching: "Ships come from the ends of the earth, from Venice and Spain and France and Portugal and Constantinople, loaded with grain and olive oil, raisins and figs and honey and silk and soap, good as the sand on the beach."³⁴ Shlumil's list of easily purchased, relatively low priced, products includes honey, raisins, dried figs, eggs, chicken, fish, "all kinds" of legumes, lentils and jams, carobs, oranges, lemons, melons, and watermelons. Vegetables, "which taste like nothing you have ever eaten," could be purchased, "almost for free," throughout the year. Corroboration of Shlumil's idyllic portrait of sixteenth century Safed overflowing in delectable fresh produce can be found in Haim Vital's *Sefer Ha-Peulot* (discussed later in this chapter), where the line between medicinal remedy and gourmet epicureanism sometimes stretches thin. Vital elaborates on dairy products (yogurt, buttermilk, groats) and different types of wine (raisin wine is his favorite). Vital's treatise includes a recipe for a *halwayat* dessert prepared from sesame seeds, honey, dried figs, and specially sweetened figs and starch.³⁵

In his dithyrambic descriptions, Shlumil's main selling point for Safed is its salubrious, therapeutic way of life. Its restorative power results as much from the everyday roster of fruits and vegetables, and their luscious quality ("sesame oil and sesame that is as sweet as honey and has the taste of manna"), as from the miraculous powers of Lurianic mysticism. In fact, the relevant passages in Shlumil's rendering of Safed as socioeconomic paradise have nothing to say about Kabbalistic belief and ritual. Travel brochure

boosterism, not supernatural mysticism, has the prerogative. Come to Safed, and live like a prince, Shlumil boasts—he testifies that Jews in the Galilee town live to the age of ninety or one hundred. Owing to the pure air and water, life in this mountainous stretch of Eretz Israel is remedial. “Overseas almost all people [Jews], young and old, are afflicted by boils, on their knees and thighs,” observed Shlumil. “In Eretz Israel, God be praised, not a single person, young or adult, suffers from boils. Instead, thank God, all are as clean as gold.”

In his richly informative and insightful study, *The Legend of Safed: Life and Fantasy in the City of Kabbalah*, Eli Yassif, emeritus professor of Jewish Folklore at Tel Aviv University, positions Solomon Shlumil of Dresnitz, and his influential four letters, on the legendary side of Safed’s ledger, and contrasts these documents with a number of sober and negative reports about Safed in its famed Kabbalistic era which were written both by gentiles and Jews. Such analysis makes sense because Shlumil (as we will see) is a purveyor of much legendary material about the mystical experiences of the Ari and his followers. And antithetical descriptions of Safed, as a “lower” realm of pestiferous crowding in this era, are not hard to find.

As illustration, Yassif cites an outsider’s view of Safed, from the year 1568 (i.e., on the eve of the Ari’s arrival in town), published by a German visitor, Ludwig von Rauter. This observer talks about Jews in Safed, at its mystical acme, in a denigrating tone which foreshadows the way Zionist pioneers in the early twentieth century derisively described Orthodox Jews in Galilee and elsewhere as residents of a lifeless “Old Yishuv.”³⁶ “The city sits on a mountain and is inhabited by 2000 Jews, most of them elderly, and they come here from all lands when they are already old, both men and women, their desire being to die in the Holy Land,” wrote von Rauter. Safed’s streets were filled with impoverished, ailing refugees who fled overseas persecution, he added.³⁷

Also, a negative “insider’s” view of Safed, dated fifteen years before Shlumil’s letter, was published by one of the city’s distinguished scholars, Rabbi Moses Alsheikh. In Constantinople, on a fund-raising mission, Alsheikh published a troubling report about contemporary life in Safed, whose title betrays its somber tone, “Hazut Kasha” (Disturbing Vision). To some extent, its lugubrious tone is the mirror image of Shlumil’s upbeat report due to the two authors’ differing intentions, one being to coax overseas donors into disbursing charity for Safed, the other probably aiming to cajole overseas Jews into immigrating to it; and Rabbi Alsheikh’s missive was also responsive to a passing calamity, a famine, which he describes in vivid, perhaps histrionic, detail (“There are no buyers and no sellers, the currency no longer buys anything . . . [residents are] hungry and thirsty, beaten, weeping and screaming, dragged, hidden and imprisoned”). Still, this letter refers to non-transient hardships and challenges faced by Jewish Galileans

(including an onerous poll tax), and its overall tone of despair can be taken, comparatively, as a “Lower Safed” contrast to Shlumil’s “Upper Safed,” as Yassif suggests. “The land is miserable, the land has crumbled . . . its agony doubled,” wailed Rabbi Alsheikh.³⁸

Still, binary contrasts between celestial, “Upper” Safed, and mundane, “Lower” Safed, can be over-drawn (and this sort of opposition is downright hackneyed in its constant recirculation in books about Jerusalem). Most texts (from Kabbalistic Safed or elsewhere) which remain attractive to scholarly study after centuries are polyphonic, and cagey about binary oppositions. This is exemplified by Shlumil’s second letter, a text where a renowned publicist of Lurianic Kabbalah tells European Jews to come to Safed because they can buy delicious watermelons in its markets, not because its Kabbalists will teach them how to commune with Rashbi’s soul.

In the aforementioned passages, Shlumil and his readers are indeed wrestling with a contrast, but not really one which opposes the “upper” magical sefirot of Lurianic Kabbalah and the “lower” pedestrian daily realities of Safed. Whatever the exact price of raisin and figs in early seventeenth century Safed markets, and despite the limits of Shlumil’s capacity for documentary realism (what does it mean to say that sesame “has the taste of manna”?), he is undeniably writing about the *viability* of life at the time in Galilee, about how a Jewish immigrant might easily attain what we would call today a “healthy lifestyle” in Safed. How could such a promising, but not celestial, reality, one which apparently typified Shlumil’s several years in Safed, fit in the Jews’ archetypal cosmology, which was rife with contrasts between the unbearable but unavoidable burdens of life in Exile, and some future messianic return to paradise in Eretz Israel?

Here, as shown in many different ways in Yassif’s study, is where Lurianic Kabbalah played a role, functioning as a kind of mediating therapy which managed tensions wrought by the discovery of a third way, a viable way of life in Eretz Israel, living in the footsteps of the Messiah. Sixteenth century Safed was messianic in expectation, but not fact; and it happened to be a quite reasonable place to live. Lurianic Kabbalah taught followers to imagine that they were one step away from messianic experience. This mysticism enabled Jews to sidestep the fact that they were dwelling in Eretz Israel “merely” because it was viably possible to do so; immersed in Safed’s enthrall, Kabbalists never needed to think about how their settlement in Galilee could be said to undermine the Jews’ traditional, existential opposition between exilic life in the Diaspora, and messianic return to Eretz Israel. They were eating watermelon, raisins, honey, and dry figs, but they were not in paradise.

This footsteps of the messiah sort of perspective links second century Tannaitic Galilee and sixteenth century Kabbalistic Galilee. In both circumstances, following tragic experiences, Jews found themselves in a place,

Galilee, where they were not exactly supposed to be; they were metaphysical truants, dodging the normative timeline of the Exile and Return narrative. In both cases, there is a wealth of evidence documenting how Jewish cultural and socioeconomic life had viability, if not flourish, in the post-traumatic Galilee home. The Mishnaic origins of the Talmud and the Lurianic Kabbalah roots of Jewish mysticism can be thought of in terms of this structural commonality: major adaptations in Jewish religion and cultural life were brought about by circles of codifiers or mystics who were trying to make sense of the anomalous continuity or viability of their life in Galilee, in Eretz Israel, in a fine, inspiring home which was not messianic paradise.

KABBALAH MADE OF WOOL

Safed mysticism emerged out of relative comfort. Kabbalah was made of wool.

The wool trade in Safed rode the crest of innovations in the textile industry in late medieval times.³⁹ Sixteenth century wool work was part of the newly consolidated “domestic system” by which employers put out textile materials to rural workers, who generally worked in their own homes. Laborers returned finished products to employers and were paid on a piecemeal or salary basis. In essence, the home venues of these workers turned into mini-factories because the laborers neither bought nor sold materials and finished products. The domestic system widened the worker playing field by bypassing guilds in various textile branches. No longer restricted to members of these self-regulating guilds, labor was now available to a wider pool, including women and children.

Among established classes, demand for wool products increased steadily in this late medieval period, and the textile branch came to dominate productive labor in entire regions (in Castile, a third of the work force was engaged in wool work). By the time of their expulsion in the late fifteenth century, weaving labor was the number one work field for Jews in Spain. Dispersed in the sixteenth century, Jews sought to rebuild their lives in textile work, with Salonika steadily becoming attractive to Jews in this respect (discussions of Jewish rebirth in sixteenth century Safed can obscure the fact that Salonika probably hosted in this period the world’s largest and most socio-economically vibrant Jewish community⁴⁰). The establishment of Ottoman rule in Palestine in 1517 triggered a rise of Jewish immigration; and possibly some of the newcomers to Safed had been discouraged by work conditions in Salonika, despite the textile boom in the Macedonian capital. Venetian ships were streaming toward Palestine, carrying valuable and common metals (gold, silver, copper, and iron), and also textiles. This import of materials

from the sea was crucial, contributing to the ascendance of Safed Jewry, compared to Jerusalem, in the sixteenth century.

Safed is not mentioned in the Bible, and reference to Galilee's alluring hilltop town in Talmudic literature is shaky.⁴¹ About half a century before the Battle of Hattin, the third Crusader King (Fulk) built a major fortress in Safed. Control of this bastion passed back and forth between Saladin and the Templar Order, before the Mamluks gained control of Safed in 1266, making it the capital of a province which combined Galilee and Lebanon.⁴² Baibars tore down the main frame of the Crusader fortress and turned the structure into a *kullah* castle tower—in our previous volume, we observed the Arab traveler, Dimashki, marveling about this castle, “one of the wonders of the world,” around 1300.⁴³

Mamluk rule was not forbidding to Jewish settlement in this scenic Galilee enclave. In 1481, an Italian rabbi (Joseph de Montagna) described a “fine” Jewish community of 300 householders in the Safed area. Seven years later, a more prominent Italian rabbi, Obadiah of Bertinoro, reported that Jews in Safed and elsewhere in Galilee were living tranquilly alongside Arabs; but he also noted that these Jews were poor, many of them relying on peddling.⁴⁴ Yet another seven years later, another Italian Jewish visitor (apparently a follower of Obadiah) composed a lengthy report about Safed Jewry, reiterating the figure of 300 householders (this number's repeated circulation in various Safed attestations in this period is somewhat suspicious). This observer cast a spotlight on the area's salubrious character (“I saw men in Safed who are far older than sixty or seventy years” old), its cheap and well-stocked markets, and the holy aura stirred by sacred Jewish burial places strewn near the city. When Ottoman forces pushed Mamluk counterparts out of Galilee in 1516, local Jewish communities apparently endured incidents of attacks and looting (perpetrated both by retreating Mamluks and by local Arab villagers) that were unlike Jerusalem's relatively placid circumstances at this moment. But Safed Jewry recovered quickly within a few years; and in 1522, one Jewish traveler, Moses Basola, recapitulated the same figures (300 householders) and the same optimism of the earlier, Mamluk-era, reports about Safed Jewry (the nuance in his report was its suggestion that Sephardic Jewish exiles from the Iberian Peninsula were coming to outnumber indigenous, Arabic-speaking, Jews, *Mustarabim*, in Safed).⁴⁵ None of this, however, foretold the birth of one of the most famous, and culturally influential, episodes in Jewish History, Galilee's Kabbalistic era.

Kabbalistic legends utilized numerous cloth and wrapping images, perhaps most strikingly via the idea that ten drops of semen which spilled through Joseph's fingers, when he resisted the sinful advances of his master Potiphar's wife, form protective soul garments for journeys between sefirot worlds.⁴⁶ Outside of these imaginative realms, Kabbalah's conquest in Safed's

everyday sixteenth century realities was clothed in wool. The entire timeline of Safed's Golden Age, dating from the arrival of assertive or authoritative figures like Jacob Berab and Karo in the 1530s, to the Ari's death and the decline of Safed Kabbalah in the 1570s, coincides with the wool industry's thriving period in the city. This is in no way coincidental.

Various socioeconomic factors are cited in explanations of Safed's rise, relative to Jerusalem, following the establishment of Ottoman rule in the country. References to onerous Ottoman taxes in Jerusalem⁴⁷ are as standard as they are unsupported. Interestingly, in his brilliant, trail-blazing, essay on "Safed in the Sixteenth Century," Solomon Schechter blamed internal Jewish issues in Jerusalem—"a rather ungenerous spirit" among the city's Jewish notables, which resulted in discouragingly heavy taxes imposed on Jewish newcomers to the city—along with "rapacious and extortionate" Muslims in the Jerusalem area.⁴⁸ In fluctuating measure, such factors impacted on Jewish settlement decisions regarding Jerusalem and other venues in the country, in many different periods. What was new and decisive in the early sixteenth century was the wool trade and its concentration in Safed.

A walled city, Jerusalem was better protected than Safed in this era. But the Galilee town was relatively close to the sea; and since Jaffa's port was in disrepair, Safed, rather than Jerusalem, had access to the region's main port in early Ottoman times, Sidon.⁴⁹ The main thing, writes Shmuel Avitsur, was that "neither Jerusalem nor any other town in the country . . . [was] endowed with the natural conditions and resources required for the development of the wool industry, under the technological circumstances of this period."⁵⁰ Safed alone was extraordinarily blessed with such natural attributes. Large-scale dying of wool, and, more importantly, the fulling process by which wool cloth is pounded, scoured, and cleaned with soap products, depended on springs (available in the Ein Zeitim village, next to Safed), and streams in Meron, Ein Poem, Yakhin, and also the upper part of the Ammud River.⁵¹

Remains of Safed's largest sixteenth century fulling mill can be found today at Wadi Tawahin at the head of the Ammud River. It was known at the time by Jewish and Arab residents, and on maps, as *tachunet al-batan*.⁵² Fulling mills, known under the Spanish name *batan*, appear prominently in reports about Safed's landscape in this area—for instance, in his book about *gilgul* soul transmigration, Haim Vital's eye-popping survey of sacred burial sites in Galilee refers repeatedly to these wool treatment mills.⁵³

In the mid-sixteenth century, Safed became a town branded by daily prosperity in wool and by nightly richness in mystical imagination. These tensions and contradictions between daytime comfort and nighttime fantasy warrant consideration: Jews were entering modern life with cultural baggage whose seams, stitched in cross strokes, were splitting.

The Kabbalists preached emotional control; and their ideology imposed fastidious control over human activity, since its wrong-spirited or wrongly executed character could damage cosmic processes of *tikun* repair. At the same time, some of these mystics, such as Moses Galante, were active players in Safed's booming wool trade; and others, including (debatably) Isaac Luria himself, were successful business traders in other fields. However comfortably they were living in the material world, the Kabbalists were haunted and anxious about their intimate lives—laden in the fact that they were perpetually pining for transmigration to other souls, and for holy release on Shabbat, are hints about their maladjustment in daily pursuits and in intimate married life. The idea that their transmigration transport would be protected by garments of semen poignantly exemplifies this Kabbalistic intermingling of everyday textile occupations, chronic neuroses, and messianic dreaming. When such considerations are taken together, it should be no surprise that Kabbalah processed the success of Safed's wool trade in mixed messages.

Haim Vital's famous dream diary, *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*, tellingly illustrates how sixteenth century Safed mystics struggled to make sense of material richness wrought by wool's domestic system (essentially an autobiographical memoir, Vital's book of dreams is discussed at greater length later in this chapter). In fact, relevant sections in Vital's book can be found among opening items in a long documentary roster which records how, in modernity, precocious, self-styled, Jewish communal leaders wrestled with the meaning of prosperity woven out of textile trades (for American Jews, the endpoint in this discussion is Abraham Cahan's 1917 masterpiece, the autobiographical novel *The Rise of David Levinsky*).

In *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*, Vital discloses a dream⁵⁴ in which he walked out of Safed on a road that went through nearby Galilee hills and villages. In one hamlet, he came across the reincarnated Rabbi Josiah, a second century Tanna, who, according to the Jerusalem Talmud, requested a modest burial ("bury me in the shrouds of children since I am not ashamed of my actions"). Josiah was living as a hermit, and Vital, ever inquisitive, asked him about "his path of isolation and asceticism." Suddenly, this monastic Tanna started to produce for Vital a luxurious silk garment, shaped as a wide belt (after he awakened, Vital speculated that this outfit's shape was dictated by Genesis 3:7). Vital blissfully watched the Tannaitic sage weave this garment on a loom—the soothingly pleasant weaving, in the dream, is a kind of physical projection of the Tanna's reassuring words about "the wholeness of [Vital's] souls and the delightful rewards which await him in the world to come." In the course of this dream, Vital identifies Psalm 45:8–9 as an authoritative proof-text for Safed's sixteenth century, wool-based prosperity ("all your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia").

In general, as Eli Yassif emphasizes, dreams and mystical ruminations of the Safed Kabbalists can be seen as attempts to process their unexpected or ironic situation of living well in Eretz Israel, but not in fulfillment of messianic promises. But when it comes to Vital, Yassif treats this Lurianic Kabbalist's dreams as projections of his own personal misery, of what Yassif regards as Vital's semi-deranged psychological state. However, this Rabbi Josiah dream, I think, relates to a matrix of historical, economic, and social issues in Jewish life, and not to Vital's private state (which was not necessarily unbalanced). Vital's dream asks a legitimate question, one which surely engaged the Lurianic Kabbalists: could they allow themselves luxuries wrought by wool weaving, when their predecessors, the Tannaim, had preached daily modesty? Though Vital's dream conveyed mixed messages, it clearly demarcated the socioeconomic border which separated the second century Tannaim from the sixteenth century Kabbalists. This border was woven in Galilean wool.

Vital's "Practical Kabbalah" (*Sefer Ha-Peulot*) treatise, also surveyed below, includes detailed instructions for spot removal from garments, and for dyeing garments. Dyeing, Vital discloses, requires precise measures of alum, Armenian earth and cotton, and carefully regimented boiling and drying of the garments. Quality blue dye consists of urine and indigo, whereas flax-leaved daphne is the basis of green dye, he explains. Such passages in Vital's how-to handbook illustrate how the intricacies of the garment trade were second nature knowledge for the Kabbalists.⁵⁵ Contrary to the impression conveyed by studies of Jewish mysticism, the Safed Kabbalists did not live exclusively in imaginary worlds of *sephirot* and *tsimtsum*. They also dwelled in an everyday work world woven in wool.

Safed's wool boom finds citation in travel literature in 1535, months before luminaries like Karo and Berab settled in the city, and, one way or another, promoted its paramount status in the Yishuv. "Whoever saw Safed ten years ago, and also sees it today," wrote Rabbi David dei Rossi in a 1535 letter, "is witnessing a genuine miracle. Jews are arriving, and settling in the town, all the time, and the clothing trade is expanding day by day."⁵⁶ He estimated that Safed manufactured some 15,000 suits each year, and declared that all Jews, men and women, in the wool trade were making a good living.⁵⁷ The town was booming in many respects, including demography. By mid-century, the routinely cited figure for Safed's population, 300 Jewish households, had leaped geometrically: Avitsur estimates that Safed's Jewish population, at the peak of the wool boom, ranged from 17,000 to 20,000.⁵⁸ The population growth was caused by the influx of victims of the inquisitorial expulsion from Spain and Portugal. In 1556, two-thirds of Safed's population was comprised of such immigrants, whereas in 1526 the Mustarabim had accounted for 56 percent of the town's Jews.⁵⁹ Textile was easily the dominant work field. In

the mid-sixteenth century, up to 7,000 Jewish men, women, and children were engaged by wool production in Safed.

After 1575, Safed's Jewish population dropped quite steeply. One factor causing this decline was politics, pivoting on an episode wherein Ottoman Sultan Murad III issued a *surgun*, removing 1,000 well-established Galilee Jews to Cyprus. However, global changes in wool textile production, including the rising transport cost of bringing textile material to the Galilee hilltop, were primarily responsible for Safed's socioeconomic decline. Concurrently, Isaac Luria's death in 1572 precipitated a drop in Kabbalistic activity in Safed. The Kabbalistic town's preeminence in Galilee history therefore lasted half a century, from 1525 to 1575. Basically this is fifty years of wool and wonder.

A few technical and sociopolitical aspects of wool work in Safed merit mention. The scope of the town's textile trade is estimable: at the acme of the wool boom, from 250 to 300 tons of fiber were brought to Safed in a given year.⁶⁰ Also deducible is wool's profitability: about a seventh of revenue recorded in the country in this early Ottoman era can be chalked up to textile work in Safed.⁶¹ On the other hand, some basic features of sixteenth century textile trade elude estimation and documentation. Nobody knows, for instance, how thread was yarned from wool fibers. No record exists of Jewish women yarning thread via spinning wheels—presumably this stems from the way patriarchal dynamics in court adjudication and its documentation, and in other affairs, cast women's work into oblivion. Wool production in Spain was heavily reliant on spinning wheels in this pre-industrial revolution period, and these devices were easily transportable; so there is reason to believe that spinning wheels were active in Galilee, Avitsur hypothesizes.⁶²

Fulling techniques impacted both on Galilee's development and on its social hierarchy. Because of the need for river and stream outlets in fulling work, textile work never became concentrated in inner Safed's courtyards. That, in terms of sixteenth century domestic system parameters, the town's center never became a production hub meant that Safed's bucolic, rural character was tenaciously preserved—had it been otherwise, colorful features of Lurianic Kabbalah ritual, such as the departure from the synagogue to pray communally in the fields on Shabbat eve, could not have developed. The rural outlay of textile work is exemplified by one statistic from the start of Safed's textile boom, in 1525: seventeen weaving houses were registered in Ein Zeitim, the aforementioned hamlet located outside of Safed.⁶³

Along with other factors, fulling work prevented sixteenth century textile activity in Safed from having a social leveling effect. I see no reason to conclude that wool weaving in this period was less capital intensive than garment production in later socioeconomic eras of Jewish history, such as the "sweat shop" context of Jewish immigrant worker communities on Manhattan's

Lower East Side in the early twentieth century. In this early twentieth century, New York City, setting, work in needle trades had discernible leveling and social mobility effects. Solomon Schechter, the famed head of the Jewish Theological Seminary, who was perceptively aware of wool's prominence in Safed's sixteenth century economy, idealized Jewish solidarity in the mystical town; his view was somewhat distorted because he anachronistically back-shadowed the leveling and social mobility traits of textile work in his own New York City Jewish world of 1908. Schechter stressed the "simple life" led by all strata of Jews in Safed. Claiming they were realistic, Schechter cited Shlumil of Dresnitz's aforementioned 1607 letters, which rhapsodically note that no Jew in Safed is "ashamed to go to the well and draw water and carry home the pitcher on his shoulders."⁶⁴

The truth is that the operation of a fulling mill was expensive. A lease cost a hefty annual sum of 25–37 florin.⁶⁵ A non-wealthy Jew who sought to operate a fulling mill faced enormous risks in taking large loans; and he would have been compelled to drive hard bargains and adopt other proto-capitalist behaviors non-suited to overly idealized depictions of Safed's Kabbalistic piety.⁶⁶ Generally, labor-intensive techniques in the wool field were such that anyone whose subsistence depended on this work could never have had the time to indulge the highly taxing ritual and penance Kabbalistic schedules enforced by Luria and his disciples. Reflecting the socioeconomic realities of the domestic system and capital-intensive wool production, Lurianic Kabbalah is an ideological system built in a world of increasing social stratification, one where the brunt of cultural activity was carried out by a labor-exempted elite. Sixteenth century Safed was not an egalitarian society of pious simplicity, as Schechter and many others have suggested.

In Safed, textile work declined, whereas in Salonika this field retained long-term durability. What happened to wool in Safed? Changes in world trade routes, the Macedonian town's advantageous location on the northwest corner of the Aegean Sea, and other macro-level or physical factors account for the greater resilience of Salonika's Jewish economy, but there were also perhaps determinative differences in the way textile work was organized by Jewish communities in the two towns. In Salonika, prominent officials in the Jewish community's religious school institutions controlled a share of finished wool products, and also apparently supervised production schedules of some weavers. This intervention in the textile economy was designed to guarantee wages for teachers in the Talmud-Torah institutions (as well as minimal clothing for their pupils). Also, Salonika wool work had stable markets, including supply to the Ottoman army, and to some high Turkish officials. Safed's textile economy operated more freely. Some Safed notables who had active involvement in its Kabbalistic culture, such as Rabbi Moses Galante, made their living from wool trading, and there are also identifiable

connections between Safed charity institutions and its textile activity; but, in general, the wool trade in Safed seems to have been less organized, and therefore more vulnerable to market fluctuations, than its Salonika counterpart.⁶⁷

Such fluctuations proved fatal to Safed's textile sphere in the 1570s. European markets were glutted with over-supply of wool products; adjusted trade routes to the Levant now featured Izmir and Iskenderun as ports of entry, to the detriment of Safed. The most consequential shift in global wool markets was caused by Elizabethan England's massive investment in this sphere, a trend which included trade agreements between England and Turkey. In Galilee, Wool importers were unable to fetch attractive prices in Sidon in 1574, this being an early warning sign of the sphere's steep subsequent decline in the region.⁶⁸

This, however, does not mean that Rabbi Solomon Shlumil of Dresnitz was mendacious in 1607 when he wrote about Safed's socioeconomic situation in a soaring, optimistic vein. Some energy and output remained in the town's textile sphere for years after the 1574 turning point.⁶⁹ Also, wool was dominant, but never monopolistic, in Safed's economy. The same visitor, David dei Rossi, who attested to eye-popping wool production in Safed in 1535 (15,000 suits a year!), provided an impressive depiction of diversified work activity in the town. His account might be exaggerated, but it shows that the town's economic activity was not wrapped, head to toe, in wool. In addition to massive trade in wool, dei Rossi reported, Safed exported smaller but significant quantities of "gall nuts, oil, honey and silk"; and villages near the town contributed crimson silk, Cordovan carpets, pepper, cloves, ginger, and cane-spices.⁷⁰

DONA GRACIA BUILDS A WALL IN TIBERIAS

Not just the domination of wool in Safed's socioeconomic spheres, but sixteenth century Safed's status in Galilee as a whole, can be over-estimated. Galilee in this period was attracting Jewish immigrants of varying temperament—and gender. The common denominator in the revival of Jewish identity in Galilee in this period was not Safed mysticism, but rather the region's function as a haven for persecuted Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, and their descendants. Before we probe the mysteries of Safed Kabbalah, a very different, and deeply inspiring, vignette of Jewish revival, in a neighboring Galilee town, Tiberias, merits at least passing mention.

A larger than life character, Dona Gracia Nasi (Gracia Mendes Nasi, 1510–1569) has become the subject of an outstanding Israel-based Sephardic heritage publication project in historical fiction,⁷¹ and she is also a familiar figure in a romantic strand of Israeli historiography, where she is viewed as

forerunner of proto-nationalist or Zionist Jewish intercessors, patrons, and statesman, such as Moses Montefiore, Baron Edmond de Rothschild, or even Theodor Herzl.⁷² Scholars who helped develop modern models of Jewish historiography, such as Cecil Roth, were fascinated by her life, almost obsessively so;⁷³ and, in North America, interest in her life continued into the twenty-first century, with the publication of a rousing titled biography, *The Woman who Defied Kings*.⁷⁴

Indeed, defying kings and queens, and shrewdly managing her late husband's banking fortune, Dona Gracia became a champion and defender of Jews persecuted by inquisitorial Catholicism. As much as anyone in this early modern, sixteenth century period, she represented the principle of Jewish solidarity; and she played this role on a grand, international stage, leaving her native Portugal and re-settling, under circumstances of tremendous risk and tension, in Belgium and Italy, before finding an accommodating home in Constantinople. At home at last in the Ottoman Empire, she directed, in collaboration with her nephew cum son-in-law, Joseph Nasi, a project aimed at establishing an independent Jewish enclave in Tiberias.

Born into a New Christian (Crypto-Jewish) family, she was originally named Beatrice de Luna.⁷⁵ At the age of seventeen, Beatrice married a banker, Francisco Mendes Benveniste, whose prodigal fortune came from trade in the East Indies. She became a widow after seven years of marriage; thereafter, throughout several decades of activity in a milieu of court intrigue, religious fanaticism, legal entanglement, and family drama, she retained possession of a large part of Francisco's fortune and also that of her late husband's brother, Diego (who died in 1543).

Key contemporary royal figures, such as Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and Charles' sister Mary of Hungary, kept close track of Dona Gracia's doings, monitoring the level of her Christian observance and hungrily watching her handle her family fortune. Evasively dodging the Inquisition by settling temporarily in financial or cultural capitals such as Antwerp and Venice, Dona Gracia faced one tempestuous event after another in her home life, starting with her brother-in-law Diego's arrest, and also including gold-digging marriage offers proposed to her daughter Anna by powerful Christian suitors (defying such fortune-seeking suitors who were closely connected to European royalty, Beatrice staged her daughter's kidnapping).

The extent of Beatrice/Dona Gracia's commitment to the welfare of fellow Crypto-Jews in this period of European drama and wandering is hard to ascertain. In many locales she could not have expressed her Jewish sensibility openly, because doing so would have entailed loss of property and freedom. However, even in this New Christian period of her life, she appears to have substantively supported Jewish publication efforts (including an important Spanish translation of Jewish scripture, the Ferrara Bible) and other

expressions of Jewish devotion. She also appears to have used agents from the family banking house to facilitate the escape of some unspecified number of persecuted Crypto-Jews.

To borrow a term from the struggle against American slavery, Dona Gracia headed an “underground railroad” system for the benefit of these mortally threatened kinsmen. Sources documenting this rescue work combine cryptic hints, obsequious encomia, and little precise detail; generally, they evince fervent appreciation of Dona Gracia as a Jewish heroine. Writing about a famous section of Samuel Usque’s 1553 *Consolation for the Tribulation of Israel*, Cecil Roth, one of her first biographers, claimed “that there is no such panegyric to a woman in the whole of Jewish literature.”⁷⁶ Thanking the Almighty for Dona Gracia’s devotion, Usque wrote, “She it is who at the beginning of their journey greatly helps your necessitous sons, who are prevented by penury from saving themselves from the pyre; as they undertake so long a journey, her [doings] give them strength.”⁷⁷

Dona Gracia became a full-fledged Jewish political figure in the mid-1550s after she settled in Constantinople and enjoyed the support of Ottoman rulers. In Turkey she was at liberty to express publicly her Jewish belief and devotion. At this time, Pope Paul IV issued his notorious Bull, *Cum nimis absurdum*, formalizing the Jewish ghetto framework. At Ancona, on Italy’s eastern (Adriatic coast), the Pontiff’s policies precipitated a horrific series of anti-Jewish acts, including the brutal murder of two dozen hapless victims; in response, hoping to punish inquisitorial Catholic authorities at Ancona, Dona Gracia organized a boycott action among local Jewish merchants. This protest tolled some economic effect, but it proved too difficult to rearrange Jewish trade via the alternative harbor of Pesaro, while countermanding reservations harbored by Jews who remained in Ancona, including skeptical rabbis and self-interested merchants. Nonetheless, in its mid-sixteenth century context, the decision of a wealthy Jewish widow to use a family banking fortune as a lever in an international boycott action against an anti-Semitic Italian town was unusual and bold, to say the least.

As Safed’s population rose notably in this early sixteenth century period, due to the arrival of mystic Kabbalists, the prospect of Tiberias’ development started to intrigue Dona Gracia. This was a creative, visionary interest. In the years when religious luminaries like Joseph Karo were reaching Safed, Tiberias, perched on the edge of the Sea of Galilee, was unmoored, adrift in desuetude. Its role as a center of Jewish life and learning had lasted through the early thirteenth century, when Maimonides’s remains were brought to the city for burial; but, by the end of the Crusader period, the town was in ruins, and Jews stayed away from Tiberias for centuries, viewing it as an unsafe and irretrievably damaged locale.

Dona Gracia petitioned the Ottoman sultan on July 17, 1560, asking for concession rights as a tax farmer in the Tiberias district.⁷⁸ Within a decade, this arrangement would multiply the Sublime Porte's tax revenue by a factor of ten, she promised. The authorship of this petition confused scholars for centuries, since an important memoir from the time, called *Vale of Tears* and written by a physician named Joseph Ha-Kohen (originally published in 1558), attributed the petition to Dona Gracia's relative, Joseph Nasi; but the document's composition has been definitively connected to her,⁷⁹ and scholars today regard Dona Gracia as the initiator of the Tiberias revival project. Persuaded of the plan's potential, Sultan Suleiman lavishly funded the construction of a wall to protect Tiberias' prospective Jewish settlers, providing thousands of gold pieces for this purpose. The sultan also delivered a salary, sixty aspers a day, and eight bodyguards, to Dona Gracia's on-site overseer, Rabbi Joseph ben Adret. Completed in 1564, the wall, less than a mile in length, was hardly prodigious, but it symbolized Jewish intentions to build an independent enclave which would be based in Tiberias, and which would include seven neighboring villages referred to in the lease agreement forged between Suleiman and Dona Gracia. Also, thanks to the firman obtained from the sultan, Jewish agricultural work in Tiberias was initiated, featuring the planting of mulberry trees for silk.

That something new was afoot in Galilee can be sensed by the backlash instigated by the Tiberias wall's construction. Muslim detractors rued the Jews' return to Tiberias; there is record of a local Arab revolt against the wall (aware of Suleiman's support for the Jewish project in Tiberias, the local governor, based in Damascus, promptly and harshly repressed this Arab rebellion, executing two of its leaders). On the Christian side, the French consul in Constantinople was agitated by Dona Gracia's Tiberias project. He worriedly wrote to superiors in Paris about how she planned to coronate her relative, Joseph Nasi, as "King of the Jews" in the Galilee city. Relating to the French diplomat's histrionic response, Andree Brooks writes: "The idea that Jews would consider regrouping as a nation—even an embryonic one—seemed to horrify the Christian world . . . [The French consul's observation] certainly bolsters the opinions of historians who have since maintained that the Tiberias project was part of a larger attempt to revive statehood."⁸⁰

FROM HALACHA TO KABBALAH: THE MYSTIFICATION OF RABBINICAL JUDAISM IN SAFED

Safed's catapulting status as the capital of Jewish renewal and messianic aspiration after the Iberian expulsion became manifest in 1538. That year, a

rabbinical cadre in the Galilee town attempted to revive rabbinical ordination practices (*semikhah*) in the Holy Land. Ostensibly, this meant that Galilee would have restored authority, as one of rabbinical Judaism's premier venues. Some 1,300 years after rabbinical Judaism originated and consolidated in Galilee, in the Tannaitic period, the region, through Safed, would once again play a prime role in the rebirth of Judaism, following the traumatic agony of the Jews' expulsion from Spain. For these reasons, the year 1538 symbolizes Galilee's reemergence in the modern era and serves as the formal starting point on this volume's timeline.

As it turned out, however, sixteenth century Safed would attain epochal status in Jewish history, but not as the center of rabbinical Judaism's revitalization. Instead, Safed became the capital of Jewish mysticism, of Kabbalah. This migration from halacha to Kabbalah, on the eve of early modernity, is memorably delineated in the spiritual wrestling of Jewish law's outstanding codifier, Joseph Karo.

In Jewish tradition, rabbinic authority passed on from Moses to judges and prophets in the Biblical period, and then to the sages of the Talmudic era after the destruction of the Second Temple. At some point in the medieval period, ordination rights and processes dissipated, though individuals gained appointment as rabbis. This imperfect state of affairs agitated medieval Jewry's foremost sage, Moses Maimonides, who declaimed that should "all Palestinian sages unanimously agree," the high-charged business of accrediting rabbis could resume.⁸¹ Maimonides's dictates on this ordination issue lacked decisive precedent and evidence. They were not entirely consistent, and some fine points (e.g., why should "unanimity" among turf-protecting, ego-influenced, rabbis really be required) bred confusion.

The initiative for ordination renewal in Safed was promoted by Jacob Berab (1474–1546), who settled in Safed in 1537 after fleeing the inquisition in Portugal in 1492, and serving for years as a rabbi in Fez. Berab, according to historian Jacob Katz, invested this ordination initiative with messianic import, assuming that the resumption of *semikhah* in Eretz Israel would be an important catalytic step ushering the arrival of the messiah.⁸² This "activist" messianic orientation, Katz explains, hinged on the idea that human actions necessarily preceded and set the stage for the supernatural occurrences of messianic time, as suggested by Isaiah 1:26 ("and I will restore your judges as at first . . . afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city").

Berab convened twenty-five Safed rabbis. Their 1538 resolution in favor of renewing ordination was sent, via a messenger, Solomon Hazzan, to Jerusalem for ratification. Jerusalem's chief rabbi, Levi ibn Habib, upheld a "passive" viewpoint on messianic matters, believing that bold gestures such as ordination renewal undertaken by mortals had no necessary connection to

messianic events whose unfolding were determined by God's will alone. This divergence between active and passive messianic orientations undergirded the ordination dispute, Katz claims, though ibn Habib coated his opposition with formal argumentation about inconsistency in Maimonides's stance. Meantime, Berab's allies in Safed were probably driven by self-interest in addition to messianic aspiration, since renewed rabbinic investiture promised solutions to various communal issues, such as fine collection. Also, ordination-bestowed authority would allow Safed leaders to formalize various punitive rituals that were openly sought by mystics in the town, some of whom were internally tormented by their own past ordeals in Inquisition era Spain, and sought recognized mechanisms for expiation from sin. A Jewish spiritual power struggle between Jerusalem and Safed, the ordination dispute became marred by ill-feeling and innuendo (Berab's antagonist, ibn Habib, did not wear impenetrable argumentative armor, since he was known to have been baptized in Portugal during his teenage years); and, rather than renegotiating with his Jerusalem counterparts, Berab left the country under unclear circumstances.

No consensus for renewed semikhah got swept up within Safed's messianic currents in this period. This, however, did not prevent sages from ordaining younger students on an ad hoc basis. Berab conferred semikhah upon four persons, including Joseph Karo, who succeeded him as Safed's preeminent religious figure. Karo proceeded to ordain several other figures, including Moses Alsheikh, who, in turn, granted semikhah to Haim Vital, an emotionally volatile character whose writings and activities provide an incomparable window to Kabbalistic Galilee in the sixteenth century, as we will continue to see.

Safed's emergence raised the question of mystical Kabbalah's status as a source of transformation in Jewish consciousness and daily communal life. What might Kabbalah's power be, relative to the inherited traditions of Jewish life regulated by religious law, by halacha?

More than anything else, Joseph Karo's impressive, and complicated, career crystallized this question. Karo's biography shows how mysticism and rationalism are enduringly intertwined as complements in Jewish consciousness. His life story attests to this sort of yin and yang between the rationally ordered and mystically inspired components of Jewish life, but it does more than that. Karo's biography points to deep, often agonized, dimensions of Jewish psychology and emotionality in this era, and to Kabbalah's remedial impact upon the traumatized sages of sixteenth century Safed, the most prominent locale of Jewish restoration after the horrific expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula. Kabbalah played a curative role in many other locales in this era,⁸³ but Galilee's Safed stands out as the place where mysticism relentlessly seduced and altered traditional patterns of Jewish communal life, and (in

some ways) competed with halacha—Safed Kabbalah impregnated accepted scriptural interpretations and daily rites with startling new meanings and associations. Never formally repealing the normative halachic authority of early modern Judaism, Kabbalah nonetheless transported rabbinical Judaism to esoteric or richly imaginative spheres which would, in the future, prove susceptible to subversive messianic interpretations (as in the example of the Sabbatean movement), or to creatively new modes of communal organization (e.g., the Hassidic movement). Searching for divine sparks required for individual and cosmic processes of repair (tikun), the Kabbalists were also playing with fire in the sense that such feverishly imaginative re-interpretation of Torah and ritual could quite possibly undermine whatever “plain” or habitual meaning early modern Jews ascribed to the anchors of their tradition. The creative tension by which preeminent protectors of Jewish law negotiated with the spiritually tempting powers of Safed Kabbalah is colorfully illustrated by Karo’s biography.

Details of Karo’s youth are sketchy. His biographer, Zwi Werblowsky, proclaims that the study of Karo’s life, and the lives of other famed Jewish rabbis, is typically a “thin cloth of hazardous combinations of guesses, wrapped round a meagre skeleton of assured fact.”⁸⁴ The key source of information about turnstiles in Karo’s career is a mystical diary, *Maggid Mesharim* (Preacher of Righteousness, hereafter referred to as M.M.), first published in the mid-1640s. Formally presented as exegetical commentary on weekly Torah portions, M.M. unpacks a series of mystically charged confessions. As decades and centuries passed, Karo’s authorial relation to this fascinatingly revealing text was skeptically challenged, but Werblowsky painstakingly establishes M.M.’s overall autobiographical authenticity.⁸⁵

Relying on what can be extracted from this mystical text and other sources, Werblowsky writes that Karo lived eighty-seven years, from 1488 to 1575. His family tradition marks Toledo as its point of origin, but Karo’s exact birthplace is unknown. He apparently spent most of his first ten years in Portugal, and then escaped the Inquisition by re-settling in Turkey in 1498. These peregrinations apparently had an Egyptian interval; and Berab served as Karo’s mentor during this interim period. From 1522 to his arrival in Safed in 1537, Karo lived mostly in Adrianople and Preveza. In Safed, following the 1538 ordination dispute, Karo quite possibly believed that he would win glory and credit for spearheading the revival of semikhah in Eretz Israel. He married three times, at least. At the height of his fame, in the mid-1550s, Karo’s renown in Safed, the incandescent arena of Jewish mysticism, ironically rested on his prodigious contribution to the codification of Jewish law. His magnum opus, *Beit Yosef*, was a halachic compilation to whose prodigious scope and ambition Karo himself attested: “I have included all laws occurring in halakhic literature . . . with their sources in the Babylonian

and Palestinian Talmuds, *Tosefta*, *Sifra*, *Sifre*, *Mekhila*, commentators and codifiers . . . and every law fully explained therein.”⁸⁶ Karo’s name, however, became indelibly connected with a much more compact halachic codification, the *Shulkhan Arukh*, authored in Safed in 1563 and published two years later in Italy: the text, whose name literally means “Set Table,” became the most authoritative, widely consulted, compilation of Judaism’s laws.

Yet Karo was singing opera in a theater whose patrons preferred ballet. Six years after Karo rested his pen after completing the *Shulkhan Arukh*, Isaac Luria, a charismatic mystic, arrived in the Kabbalah capital, Safed. As we will see, during his brief few years in Safed, Luria became a spiritual sensation, the focus of a semi-messianic cult of extraordinary character. Arguably, no Jew since Jesus had ever been lavished with such saintly devotion by followers⁸⁷ (to be more precise: this Lurianic cult is an intermediary between the “real” Rashbi of Tannaitic times, the Zohar-mythologized Rashbi, and today’s aforementioned adulation of Rashbi’s Galilee grave; the crucial link is a belief, which the Ari encouraged, holding that Rashbi’s soul and Luria’s were, or are, bonded). At the time, in sixteenth century Safed, this swell of excitement about Lurianic Kabbalah put the elderly Karo in an uncomfortable position. Formerly revered as Safed’s preeminent authority, Karo was deeply devoted to Kabbalah, but he was not an inspiring mystic; and his fame derived from expertise in the comparatively tedious codification of the ritualistic minutiae of Jewish law. In another era, Safed sages would have adulated his monumental achievements in the realm of halacha. But in the sixteenth century they were mesmerizingly drawn into the mystical orbit of Lurianic Kabbalah, to the point where they boldly touted its progenitor as the generation’s salvationist figure, as Messiah, son of Joseph (*Mashiah ben Yosef*).⁸⁸

One Luria disciple, Haim Vital, who won monopoly rights to disseminate calculatedly the Kabbalist wisdom of the deceased master,⁸⁹ was acutely conscious of how Safed’s sages had slighted the aging Karo when they relegated halachic expertise and idolized mysticism, lifting Luria and his system to daring messianic heights. Vital’s highly intriguing tell-all record of dreams and visions, *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*, includes a number of passages in which Lurianists, first and foremost Vital himself, supplant Karo in various exalted, celestial occurrences. In these dream sequences, Karo appears respectful but benumbed when he encounters complex Kabbalistic practice or disquisition in the new Lurianic mode.⁹⁰ In one of the most audacious sequences in this dream diary (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter), Vital ascends to heaven and is invited by God to sit beside Him on the right, in a place that had formerly been reserved for Karo. The Almighty explains that he has found a less illustrious place for Karo, implying that Lurianic Kabbalah has supplanted halacha as the surest approach to God’s favor.⁹¹

The rivalry with Lurianic Kabbalah is one of two main sources responsible for the dolorous quality of Karo's *M.M.* The other is the political-cultural situation of sixteenth century Safed, tellingly delineated by Solomon Schechter. Renowned as the patriarch of Conservative Judaism, and, earlier, as one of the discoverers of the Cairo Genizah, Schechter was the first commentator to highlight how the development of Lurianic Kabbalah is intertwined with the Inquisition backgrounds of many Safed mystics in this period.⁹² Layered in the breathtaking landscape of the Galilee hilltop town was the tormented asceticism of emigrants from Inquisitorial Spain and Portugal, or the offspring of these traumatized exiles, Schechter claimed. To be sure, no exact measure can be made of how Kabbalist beliefs and rites in Safed in this period functioned as expiation for Jewishly denigrating practices coerced by the Inquisition; nonetheless, Karo's *maggid* diary conveys strong hints about how much weight is carried by this factor, by the political-cultural background of the Safed Kabbalists.

In fact, the most conspicuous single force responsible for Karo's angst in *M.M.* is a figure of self-denial related not to Lurianic mystical excess and asceticism, but rather to Jewish martyrdom in the Inquisition crisis. This is Solomon Molcho, born Diego Pires in Lisbon in 1501. The son of converso parents, Molcho was inspired by events in the life of a self-proclaimed Jewish messiah, David Reuveni, particularly an episode when Reuveni made overtures to the Pope. Molcho decided to re-convert to Judaism via a self-performed, and nearly fatal, circumcision procedure. In Salonika, Molcho dazzled local Kabbalists with his mystical visions and ascetic proclamations, before being burned at the stake by the Inquisition in Italy.⁹³ *M.M.*'s most unsettling passages convey promises that should Karo persist with impeccably righteous behavior, he will be rewarded by a noble death of painful martyrdom, one that will replicate Molcho's sacrificial experience.

Karo's *maggid* diary implies that Safed was pocketed with distinguished sages who themselves had survived, or whose families had endured, by adopting some expedient response to the Inquisition. Try as they might, embracing one act of self-flagellation after another, and flying, imaginatively, in a heavenly direction via creatively ornate, practically taxing and (sometimes) self-punishing mystical practices, they may never have felt to be spiritual equals to compatriots who never made the climb to Galilean Safed, and who sacrificed themselves to the Inquisitorial Church by not concealing their Jewishness. In Karo's case, this sort of Inquisition survivors' guilt found expression in suicidal fantasy. That Molcho's martyrdom served as a lugubrious reference point for Karo illustrates how the emotionality of sixteenth century Safed was steeped in Inquisition trauma, perhaps no less than it was elevated by Kabbalah.

Many beguiling aspects of Kabbalah attract scholarly interest, including its view of pious followers' active role in the repair of cosmic, divine realities, and its rococo concerns about masturbation, marital relations, and other forms of illicit or condoned sexuality that are expressive of an ambiguous duality between modern permissiveness and medieval asceticism.⁹⁴ However, from our Galilee viewpoint, the *historical* line of interpretation insightfully broached by Schechter most richly contextualizes Kabbalah. Schechter wrote of Safed Kabbalah as a search for "total regeneration of the heart" following the horrors of inquisitorial Spain: "The inducement held out [by Safed] to the exiled from Spain and Portugal was not only that they would in the new country be allowed to serve their God, without let or hindrance, but also that an opportunity would be granted them of a total regeneration and total renewal of the heart."⁹⁵ In functional, communal terms, sixteenth century Safed played a role in Jewish continuity comparable to second century Tannaitic Galilee. Mysticism in this late medieval moment did what the codification of Talmudic legalism had done in late antiquity, allowing Jews to re-invent their culture and overcome (to some extent, at least) a still palpable trauma, the Iberian Inquisition and expulsion in the case of Kabbalistic Galilee, the failed Roman revolts, in the case of Tannaitic Galilee.

Karo's maggid diary compellingly warrants this *historical* way of thinking about the consolidation of Lurianic Kabbalah in Safed and also about this mystical theology's relations with past Jewish experience of ideological innovation in Galilee. Broadly viewed, the *Shulkhan Arukh* completed the project Judah HaNasi initiated, after the second, catastrophically unsuccessful, Jewish revolt against Rome. Like the Mishnah, Karo's codification sought to regularize Jewish behavioral norms and insulate them against whatever hardship might be brought to Jews from the outside. Still, for Karo, halacha was not enough, and he sought comfort in Jewish mysticism—and, attesting to how sixteenth century Safed mysticism was immersed in trauma, it is impossible to separate Karo's mysticism from his longing for martyrdom, on the model of Solomon Molcho. Wanting to extricate himself from the memory of moral compromise on the Iberian Peninsula, the codifier of what we today call Orthodox Judaism secretly wanted to be burned and impaled. Self-torment on this level, writes Karo's biographer, was a new ingredient in the mix of Jewish mysticism: "Karo's desire to be burned alive 'for the sanctification of the Name' seems to be unique in the history of Jewish piety."⁹⁶

Karo's M.M. unfolds as a dialogue with an angelic interlocutor, the maggid.⁹⁷ In the Lurianic tradition, a maggid is a prophetic device comparable, to some extent, to other vehicles of revelation such as dreams, or visitations of the prophet Elijah. Unlike these other prophetic agents, a maggid emanates from an individual's utterances and mental state; and its angelic quality is proportionate to the person's level of righteousness. Everything a person says

potentially molds the *maggid*, and a sage gets the type of *maggid* he deserves (Vital explicated the *maggid* phenomenon in his *Sha'ar Ha-Gilgulim*—“Every word that is uttered creates an angel . . . when a man leads a righteous and pious life, studies the Law, and prays with devotion, then angels and holy spirits are created from the sounds which he utters”).⁹⁸

Karo's *maggid* demands absolute observance of ritualistic commands, devoted scriptural study, and awed reception of its own mystical revelations. The devil's temptation is unceasing, Karo's *maggid* repeatedly tells him. Should he allow himself to be distracted for an instant, he will forfeit two great rewards promised to him as a dedicated codifier of Jewish law and as a dutiful mystic: life in Eretz Israel, and purifying martyrdom akin to Molcho's immolation. The *maggid* continually chastises Karo for minor transgressions, and then grants him amnesty on condition that he never hereafter stray from his scrupulous religious routines:

I have, after all, revealed to you deep secrets, and so from this day forward you must exercise caution in your thoughts and actions, and always heed my teachings, never deviating for them even for a second; up to now, you have frequently deviated from them, allowing the archangel of death [Samael] and its serpent to hound you; but the Almighty did not allow them to control you, since you always return to a state of worshipful awe. . . . And I will grant you the privilege of ascending to Eretz Israel and uniting with Solomon⁹⁹ and studying Torah with your brotherhood, and I will also allow you to be burned as a martyr in full public view, in dignity and joy, so that all your sins and indignities will go up in flames, and you will ascend as pure wool, and enjoy eternal rest.¹⁰⁰

In many passages, Karo's *maggid* takes the guise of the mystical female divinity, *Shekhinah*, who functioned (among many other things) in Kabbalah as a symbol of exile, and who demanded unadulterated devotion from mystical devotees in Safed. *Shekhinah* is conceptualized in Lurianic Kabbalah as a “bitter, chastising mother who admonishes those of her children who have deserted her,” writes Lawrence Fine.¹⁰¹ The fate of *Shekhinah*'s quest for home depends on the good behavior of children like Karo; but the extent to which these mortals act out of free will is questionable, since *Shekhinah* has divine insight and understanding about their thoughts and actions; and, in a fashion that combines marriage counseling and prophecy, she ceaselessly influences and directs their emotional affairs. Karo's *maggid*/*Shekhinah* conveys pertinent information about the past and present disposition of his various wives, including revelations about their male identities in former lives, and about how the proper understanding and management of these past soul iterations (*gilgulim*) can lead to harmonious conclusions.¹⁰² The *maggid*'s revelations concerning Karo's private life include disclosure that he will have

a homely but religiously distinguished son, as a kind of modified extension of his own impressive scholarly career but marred personality. The *maggid* explains that this son will be extraordinarily wise:

You have done well to marry a virtuous and good wife who is a scholar's daughter. But know that your son will have a somewhat ugly face and bad eyes. He will be very poor but his heart will be open to study Torah; for that reason he will not be completely blind. . . . In Kabbalistic knowledge he will far exceed my beloved Solomon.¹⁰³

Like a mother admonishing a disobedient child, the *maggid* warns Karo to control his temper and ignore infuriatingly provocative behavior of his peers.¹⁰⁴ Such concern about emotional states such as anger betrays cultural tendencies in Safed's sixteenth century milieu. Tormented by traumatic events of persecution and exile which led them to Galilee, the Kabbalists appear to have made a special effort not to succumb to bitter anger. Mystic legends persisted of evil *dibbuk* spirits infiltrating the bodies of men and women as punishment for fits of anger—in the spiritual anatomy of Lurianic Kabbalah, various problematic emotions were diagnosed as being isolated in one extremity of a spiritual body, whereas anger poisoned a soul as a whole. Vital elaborated on the pathology of anger in one of his books: "All other transgressions injure only a single limb of the body, whereas the quality of anger injures the soul in its entirety, altering its character completely. . . . When an individual loses his temper, his holy soul deserts him altogether; in its place a spirit of an evil nature enters."¹⁰⁵

M.M. establishes that for years, following Berab's abortive attempt to resurrect ordination procedures in Safed, Karo imagined that he himself would consummate this step, one which could trigger messianic processes. One passage in M.M. strikingly reflects Karo's personal ambitiousness, his messianic leanings, and also his powerful, if idiosyncratic, bent for self-martyrdom:

And because you have devoted yourself to the cause of the restoration of ordination, you shall be found worthy to be ordained by all scholars of Palestine and the diaspora. Through you I shall restore ordination . . . and thereafter you will be burned for the holiness of my Name and share in the resurrection of the dead.¹⁰⁶

In this passage, Karo's *maggid* plays a role comparable to the *Idra* in the *Zohar*. Just as the preeminent mystical text of medieval Judaism, the *Zohar*, accorded to Rashbi messianic import in the national redemption of the Jews, so too does the mystical *maggid* afford to the authoritative figure of Jewish legal codification in early modern times, Joseph Karo, singular significance in

the process of national, messianic fulfillment, this time triggered by the restoration of semikhah ordination processes in Safed. Rashbi's sacrificial end in the Idra assembly is prophetically awarded to Karo by the maggid. The three—Karo, Rashbi, and (as we will see) the Ari—personify a richly diverse array of classic texts and ideological orientations in Judaism, the Mishnah, the *Zohar*, Lurianic Kabbalah, Jewish legal codification, mysticism, political rebellion. Yet this comparison between the *Zohar*'s Idrot, the maggid's promise to Karo and (as seen later in this chapter) the Lurianic circle's *gilgul/yihud* reenactment of the Idrot, casts light on an identifiable, unified set of Galilee issues and motifs: (1) the preordained, or ecstatically willing, sacrifice of a spiritual circle's leader;¹⁰⁷ (2) a gathering of the elite faithful either in a well-staged convocation or assembly, or via renewed ordination practices; (3) the perception of crisis in the authority of Jewish law. Reflection about these three parameters, I believe, points us toward a fundamental commonality in monotheistic consciousness. For what are the New Testament gospels about, if not the examination and enactment of these three Galilee themes?

Moreover, M.M. raises an intriguing ambiguity about the character of Karo's career, nudging it toward this conception of monotheistic unity in diversity. The deepest purpose of Karo's lifetime achievement, the codification of Jewish law in the *Shulkhan Arukh*, was (and is) to delineate clear behavioral and normative boundaries between Judaism and other faiths and cultures, foremost among them Christianity. Apart from rigidly Orthodox circles, in which there is difficulty thinking about Jewish laws outside of divine dimensions, many Jews are willing and disposed to contemplate halacha in at least a semi-secularized way, and recognize the extent to which its functions and aims feature boundary drawing, communal self-preservation, and differentiation from other religions. Can these functions and aims ever be fully victorious? What, really, is the meaning of Karo's existential turn to mysticism, of the conspicuous, vast penetration of Kabbalistic thinking in his consciousness? It is hard to relate to such questions without thinking about M.M., and Karo's career in Safed, as an admission of the spiritual limits of halacha, of the codification of Jewish law that he himself personified.

Are we going too far if we hear an echo of the Gospel of Matthew's strictures in Karo's maggid? Is there not a hint of censure about Karo being a Pharisee in its excoriations?

To be sure, the maggid represents many things, pertaining to gender and sexuality (via the Shekhinah imagery), to Judaism's exilic perceptions, and to the "regular" moral realm of behavioral propriety and piety. Also, as Werblowsky points out, the maggid symbolizes the Mishnah;¹⁰⁸ but it is, I think, more precise to say that this mystification of the Mishnah is self-undermining, conveying a critique of the Tannaitic project, and implying that a massive compendium of religious law can never really constitute spiritual

fulfillment. Would Karo be hearing regularly from the *maggid*, and suffering torment in its presence, had his *halacha* compilation sufficed for his soul? As we will see, the Ari's self-proclaimed spokesman, Haim Vital, rather petulantly and cruelly rubbed this question in Karo's face, using his dream diary to underscore how the rationalistic-legal side of Judaism, *halacha*, needed to be supplemented by a mystical or spiritual dimension. Nobody seemed to be noticing that this had been exactly the insistence of Matthew's circle of Jesus followers, who compiled the gospel concurrently with the Tannaitic sages' Mishnah project, perhaps just around the corner in Sepphoris, or in some other Galilee venue.

LEGENDS OF LURIA

What the scholar Eli Yassif calls the "Legend of Safed" draws heavily from the on-the-street data collection and reportage undertaken by Rabbi Solomon Shlumil of Dresnitz during his five years in the town, and the subsequent embellishment and dissemination of Shlumil's work in a unique hagiographic text, called *Shivhei ha-Ari* (In Praise of the Ari). This text, writes Lawrence Fine, "is among the first works of its kind in Hebrew literature, a full-fledged set of hagiographical narratives set around the life of a single individual"¹⁰⁹ (we will not take up a controversy about Shlumil's relation to another hagiography of the Ari, called *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari*, revolving around claims made by the Israeli Kabbalah scholar Meir Benayahu).¹¹⁰

This saintly biography, *Shivhei ha-Ari*, attests to how Tannaitic Galilee, some 1,500 years earlier, was a fountain of spiritual inspiration for Luria and his circle of Kabbalistic followers. Among many other things, *Shivhei* reports that Rashbi himself transmigrated across space and time, and persuaded the Ari to leave Egypt and settle in Safed, where he could establish a spiritually elevated brotherhood.¹¹¹ Beyond this specific issue of Tannaitic-Lurianic Kabbalah mystical symbiosis, the "legend of Safed," essentially Isaac Luria's saintly biography, is an integral part of Galilee's cultural history. In periods following Jesus's life, just a few Galilee topics are comparably redolent of charismatic aura—Tancred's establishment of the Galilee fiefdom and Saladin's triumph at Hattin in the Crusader era, Acre's resistance to Napoleon under Jazzar Pasha, and Zionist pioneering in the late Ottoman and early British Mandate periods. For this reason, *Shivhei*'s magical biography of the Ari, and its rendering of the legend of Safed, warrant summary here. The synopsis is not comprehensive, but it includes enough detail to give the reader a feel for the legend. Largely I withhold external, interpretive commentary, hoping to retain the text's folkloric allure, and its deep, unalloyed faith.

Luria was born in 1534 in Jerusalem.¹¹² According to *Shivhei*,¹¹³ Luria's father Shlomo was tested by the Biblical prophet Elijah after the Ari's birth—Elijah asked Shlomo to await his appearance on the day of Isaac's circumcision; and the father dutifully heeded this order, even when the prophet tarried. Luria was only eight when his prodigious mastery of Talmud set him apart in his community, but his progress as a religious scholar was interrupted by his father's death. Too impoverished to raise her son in Jerusalem, Luria's mother moved to Egypt, where the Ari was raised by her brother (Mordechai Franes). Up to the age of fifteen, Isaac's education in Cairo was entrusted to a rabbi, Betsalel Ashkenazi, who himself was a student of a prominent scholar and exiled Spanish Jew, David ibn Zimra.¹¹⁴ In Cairo, Luria attained a copy of the *Zohar* from a merchant, another exile from Spain. Luria spent an exhausting six years poring over the text, consulting with angelic mentors about the intent of the Kabbalist book's purported author, Rashbi, sometimes enduring various self-punishments as a way to elucidate the *Zohar*'s secret meanings.¹¹⁵

The exact nature of Luria's doings in Egypt is unclear, but the legend conveys some magical detail regarding this six year period of isolated study, when he was in his twenties, on an island on the Nile, called Jazirat al-Rawda, owned by his uncle.¹¹⁶ Night after night, angels hovered around Luria, offering escort to a kind of visionary yeshiva, where his study would be supervised by Rashbi, or other Tannaitic notables such as Rabbi Akiva.¹¹⁷

The character of the Ari's revelatory dreams is passed on to us, via the *Shivhei* hagiography, by declared witnesses, such as an Egypt-born, Jerusalem sage, Abraham Ha-Levi. This rabbi testified to an encounter with the Ari in which the latter explained that his mystical experiences were too overwhelming for words. Luria claimed that eighty years would not suffice for him to relate all his mystical insights about specific Biblical incidents, such as Balaam's donkey (*Numbers* 22:21–39).¹¹⁸

In another suggestive Safed legend, Luria reiterates this view about how abundant mystical knowledge overpowers the capacity of language. His explication refers not just to Kabbalah's proliferating streams of meaning, but also conveys hints about his own limited powers of articulation, perhaps resulting from an actual defect (this issue of Luria's actual physical state—broadly, what sort of man he was in “real life”—is elusive).¹¹⁹ Of course, Judaism and other religions put a premium on the physically inarticulate prophet—Moses is an appropriate prototype in this connection, because the Ari's soulful lineage is often traced back to Moses.¹²⁰ However, the passage cited below invites psychological interpretation and not just contextualization within the prophetic frames which Lurianic Kabbalah itself generated. Putting his mystical insights into words, Luria suggests, somehow infantilizes him. The comparison between mother's milk and mystical knowledge is

revealing—words wean Kabbalists from spiritual cleaving (*devikut*) to God, just as their devotion to mysticism, beginning in their early adolescent years, unhinged them from emotional dependence on their own mothers, transforming these familial emotions into spiritual love for God. No amount of pen and paper would suffice from him to write down the copious mystical knowledge known to his soul, Luria tells his brotherhood:

Whenever I open my mouth to tell you some Torah secret, an abundance proliferates like an over-flowing river, and I search in a bag of tricks for something that would help you build some sort of small pipeline you might use [to reach this esoteric knowledge]; I know that were I to elaborate, you would miss everything, like an infant whose throat chokes from trying to swallow milk all at once. So I advise each of you to write down what you hear from me, so there will be a record for generations to come.¹²¹

Luria's mystical powers overwhelmed his body's mortal senses. One telling legend, in this connection, refers to the Ari's practice of taking devotees outside on Shabbat eve. Luria would shut his eyes, and relate how a plentitude of spirits hovered toward him at this holy moment, seeking to share light with him. Opening his eyes and viewing this phenomenon confused him.¹²²

Luria apparently left Egypt in late 1569. Supplementing the hagiographical *Shivhei*'s explanation that Rashbi urged him to relocate in Galilee, scholars note that members of Egypt's rabbinical elite in this period viewed themselves as being in temporary exile, and in active preparation for life in Eretz Israel. "It is the intention of all of us to return and to dwell in the land of Israel," proclaimed David ibn Zimra.¹²³

Now settled in Safed, Luria protected the honor of the town's devout citizens. He used his mystical insight to identify their honest motives and to defuse overly suspicious interpretations favored by ecstatic members of his own mystical brotherhood. In one legendary incident, a certain Safed sage awakens early on a weekday morning in order to join a prayer quorum (*minyan*), and spies a local married woman who is wearing Shabbat finery and is apparently engaging in an illicit tryst with some visiting merchant. Intending to expose and punish the suspected woman, the worshipper tries to summon a kind of Orthodox vice squad; the Ari stifles this persecutory maneuver, revealing that the woman had merely participated in a business meeting with a messenger sent by her husband. This legend concludes with the astounded busybody informer falling to his knees, and genuflecting in honor of Luria, who tersely tells the man to go and pay tribute to the falsely accused woman.

The legendary narrative continues. Impressed by incidents such as Luria's defense of this wrongly accused woman, most members of the mystical brotherhood conclude that he is a prophet, but two remain skeptical. Later

on, this pair stops Luria in the street, demanding to see evidence of his prophetic attributes. The Ari replies modestly, but while he demurs, an agitated man brushes against Luria; this man's troubled state disappears after Luria instructs him to undertake some ritual immersions. Perplexed, the pair of suspicious sages chases after the man, who explains how Luria correctly sensed his sinful state¹²⁴—the man confesses to having wrongfully had sex with his wife, apparently outside of the time, Sabbath eve, designated for marital sex among the Kabbalists.¹²⁵

When stripped of their mystical trappings, Luria plays a rather conventional role as a Jewish communal leader in these Safed legends, protecting the decency of ordinary residents, including women, and judiciously monitoring behaviors slated either for the prosaic weekday world or for the sacred Sabbath day. In Kabbalah, sex and Shabbat have densely packed meanings and presumed consequences, mostly relating to hopes for respite from exile and for potential repair of shattered vessels and shattered unions. While Luria's judgments and actions are clearly in tune with these mystical interpretations, he also appears in the legends as a moderate on matters of virtue and vice, cooling down overly zealous vice squads, but also warning and implicitly punishing mystical fellows who have deviated from their ascetic weekday routines and indulged sex outside of the strict schedule allotted to it on the Kabbalist calendar.

When studying Jewish law, Luria exerted himself strenuously, lavishing six interpretations on particular points of halacha, and then adding a seventh, Shabbat-related, meaning. He told members of his brotherhood that such prayer exercise was crucial, as his own sweat helped erode broken cosmic shells, *klippot*, whose continuing existence obstruct messianic process.¹²⁶

Safed legends attribute to Luria divinatory powers in palm reading, sensing a person's forehead, augury, automatic speech, and angelic consultation.¹²⁷ They insist that Luria could read other people's thoughts, and that he had special abilities to consult with past spirits, typically in *yihud* rituals on gravesites.¹²⁸

Luria constantly heard voices and warnings, and used this ability to forestall natural calamities. In one legend, he hears forecasts about a coming locust infestation and manages to identify the cause of this impending disaster. Here is the sequence: One Kabbalist student, Jacob Altarats, is wallowing in self-pity in his dwelling, accosting the Almighty for his poverty and bad luck (water barrels he fills with a week's worth of water have just somehow broken; his personal misfortune coheres with Kabbalist images of ruin wrought by broken vessels). Luria urges his students to collect some coins to allay Altarats's despair, and their magnanimity has wondrous preventive effect. After the disgruntled Altarats vows that he will, in the future, refrain from imprecation against God, the locust outbreak is averted.¹²⁹

The legends also depict Luria as a healer. Some anecdotes cast the eager devotee, Haim Vital, as the object of Lurianic diagnosis and healing. For example, after Vital suffers for three months with an eye ailment, Luria reveals that this bout with blindness happened because Vital violated strictures of the Shema prayer, and the priestly benediction (*birkat kohanim*). Should Vital stop staring at his mentor, Luria, during such prayers, he will regain *Shekhinah*'s favor; thanks to this diagnosis, Vital regains his sight.¹³⁰ The prophetic Luria can also predict the time of death of Safed's denizens—one anecdote casts him in this oracular role, as he sits with fellows in an olive tree grove, and accurately announces the death of some compatriot in Safed, which is a three-hour walk from the site where they are studying.¹³¹

Luria could also divine coming events in the lives of his devotees. In one legend, a devotee takes leave of Luria, before heading off from Safed to make a life in another locale. Luria reveals to him that he will wed the daughter of a wealthy townsman, but the wife will pass away after six months, and he will be left with a nest egg of 600 gold coins. Curious, the young man presses Luria to explain the confusing logic of these events—as it turns out, in previous lives, the wife-to-be was a male, and an unreliable business partner, who stole the same amount of gold from the devotee's past self, and also made this man's earlier iteration miserable for half a year. Future events in this disciple's life in his new home will thus constitute compensation.¹³²

One young man in Safed was ill for years. His parents consulted with doctors and were convinced that the son suffered from chronic ague. Neighbors doubted this diagnosis and eventually compelled the father to consult with Luria, who took the young man's pulse and promptly announced that an evil spirit, a *dibbuk*, had entered the sufferer's soul.

In the legendary narration, Luria communicates with the spirit, who explains that the young man in a former life was a cruel communal charity official in Safed. In the spirit's former life, he had implored this charity *gabbai* for funds, but the recalcitrant official let him starve. The spirit has returned now for vengeance. Arguing that he was attacking the body of a youth who had not harmed him, and that the callous sin had been perpetrated in another life, Luria persuades the spirit to abandon this vengeful plan. The spirit consents to this act of exorcism, but warns that it will return to the body and kill the young man if in the coming week he is allowed to be alone with any woman. Luria carefully explains this provision to the young man's parents, but they remain insufficiently aware of its imperiousness. An aunt in Sidon hears about her nephew's miraculous recovery and visits him in Safed. At the time of this visit, the boy's parents are carelessly away, preparing a celebratory banquet; after the aunt kisses her sleeping nephew, the angry spirit returns and chokes the young man. When he hears about this unhappy conclusion, Luria takes steps to ensure that these events never become known to gentiles.¹³³

Safed's most famous sixteenth century dibbuk visitation involves an evil spirit belonging to a man who had studied in Egypt with one of Luria's devotees, Rabbi Joseph Ashkenazi. The spirit infiltrates the body of a poor widow, a lonely woman who needs to work to support herself and some children, and whose plight stirs commiseration in town (in fact, in this legend, the dibbuk visitation and eventual exorcism is said to stir revivalist religious fervor throughout Eretz Israel). Residents exhort the spirit to leave the widow in peace, but it is utterly uncooperative until Haim Vital arrives in the house. The spirit recognizes Shekhinah's presence in Vital, and turns its face, before opening up and disclosing its travails to the mystic sage—the exorcism then turns into a kind of tag-team healing process engaging both Vital's and Luria's powers.

The exorcism therapy reveals the causes of the dibbuk visitation. For a quarter century, the spirit has wandered in torment, under punishment for adulterous sins, particularly for siring a number of *mamzer* bastard children (he will wander the earth in various forms until the last of these illicit offspring dies). Like the gargoyles on a medieval church, this legend is ornate in gothic detail. It features the ever-inquisitive Vital's interrogation of the spirit about its death (the adulterer drowned at sea), its failure to gain relief (its drowning occurred too quickly for it to recite expiatory prayers), its past travails and incarnations (the spirit was unable to find a sufficiently virtuous Jew for infiltration during a stint at the Strait of Hormuz, and it had a gruesome term inside a deer's body), and its future fate (more atoning needs to be done before the spirit can gain admittance to hell, where it will incur a dozen years of torture, before it can gain a purified state acceptable for entry into heaven).

Arguably, the ornate detailing of the dibbuk's biography is, in this legend, a distraction. As happens in many other Kabbalistic contexts, the real nemesis in this legend is not the demonic force, but rather secularity. The focus becomes apparent when Vital's inquiries shift from the dibbuk and move on to the victim of its infiltration, the hapless woman. The dibbuk's explanation as to why it chose this target relates to two issues: the somewhat irascible woman is punished for anger, an emotional state of special concern to the Kabbalists (as mentioned above), and, more importantly, because of her secularist disposition. The spirit tells Vital it quickly seized a spiritual window, and snaked into the woman's body after she threw a mild tantrum at her stove, hurling some rags and fulminating following an unsuccessful attempt to ignite it. When Vital sounds incredulous about the proportionality of this punishment—Kabbalist morality often stresses appropriate scale, *mida*, in punishment and expiation—the spirit backtracks and discloses that the woman participates in annual Passover seder rituals in an unholy state, doubting the veracity of tales of miraculous intervention in the Exodus from

Egypt. So the exorcism comes to hinge on the woman's affirmation of her belief in God and on the reiteration of her devoted belief in the story of the Exodus from Egypt. In the end, Luria manages to extricate the spirit harmlessly, using one of the woman's fingers as a portal.¹³⁴

In the legend's coda, Luria solicitously protects Vital, correctly worrying that the spirit will seek vengeance against his junior partner. It is in this connection where Vital learns of his descent from Cain—paradoxically, this pedigree was viewed as a virtue in the Kabbalist universe, since Cain was believed to have retained a small, but extremely high quality, degree of goodness, and to have been, in some interpretations, superior, as the firstborn, to his brother Abel (Scholem viewed this recasting of Cain as “one of the most remarkable and strangest parts of Luria's doctrine”).¹³⁵

In another legend, Luria walks about a mile north of Safed, to Ein Zeitim, to enact yihud communion with the second century Tanna, Rabbi Judah bar Ilai (meanings of “yihud” are discussed later in this chapter). A crow hovers around them, and these two united sages recognize that it hosts the punished soul of an extortionate tax agent named Shabtai, who had worked in Safed. In no mood to assent to the punished tax gouger's pleas for expiatory prayer, Luria scares the crow back into flight.¹³⁶ A similar tale relates how Luria and his devotees spot a rat, the reincarnation of a wayward *malshin* (squealer), a disloyal Jew whose sins include disclosing incriminatory information about others to gentile authorities. Luria shuns the squealer's pleas for expiation and watches as it is forced back into a mouse hole.¹³⁷

Another legend: one of Luria's young devotees, Samuel Uceda, enters a study session, and Luria surprises the brotherhood by the awed respect he accords to the youthful Uceda. Always attentive to his mentor's acts and mental state, Vital asks Luria about this unusual show of deference; Luria explains that he was paying respect not to Uceda, but to the Tanna Pinchas Ben Yair (a relative of Rashbi), whose soul joined that day with Uceda, in reward for some good deed perpetrated by the young sage. Curiously desirous to ascertain the nature of this holy act, Vital later chases down Uceda. Uceda modestly downplays his action, but he also describes a vignette which implicitly undermines the semi-utopian images of Safed's socioeconomic realities that were disseminated by publicists like Rabbi Solomon Shlumil of Dresnitz. Uceda relates how he had awakened early to join the requisite, minyan, prayer quorum; and then, when walking to synagogue, he heard howls and cries coming from a house. Its weeping residents, naked and desperate, explained that robbers had marauded in their house that night, and had stolen everything, including their clothing. Uceda loaned his own clothing to the father of the family; he went to pray wearing a Shabbat outfit he had subsequently fetched from his own home. For this good deed, Uceda won the visit of the Tanna's soul.¹³⁸

And one last, especially revealing, legend: One Shabbat eve, Luria entreats his disciples to follow him on an impromptu journey to Jerusalem, because the location of the red heifer's ashes has been revealed to him. It is a propitious moment because the role of the red heifer in the inception of Temple prayer has sanction in the Torah (Numbers, 19) and in the Mishnah; Luria is telling his Safed brotherhood that the moment has come to rebuild the Temple, and make sacrifices there for Shabbat. More than that, the end of the *galut* exile is on hand, proclaims Luria. Pettily, his devotees demur. Some duck out of making the trip, while others whine about needing to take leave of their wives before the journey. Significantly, the fastidious hesitation of his disciples infuriates Luria—anger, generally a Kabbalistic vice, becomes warranted when Safed's sages miss this opportunity for restored Temple worship. Never since the time of Rashbi had there been such an auspicious messianic moment, Luria cries angrily; but it has passed by, unredeemed, because of his devotees' pedestrian concerns. Life in *galut* exile will therefore continue.¹³⁹

As in many other instances in the Kabbalistic tradition that was passed on from the *Zohar* to Lurianic mysticism, this key legend is deeply immersed in Christian scripture. It echoes Jesus's strictures about absolute loyalty, including the promise that followers who leave their family behind will be rewarded a hundredfold (Mark: 10: 29–30). As is apt to happen in Kabbalah, in this legend the Lurianists transpose fundamental, distinctive Jewish beliefs, dreams and symbols (Temple restoration, the red heifer) upon a theological template borrowed at least partly from Christianity.

As noted before, social structures in Kabbalah, such as the Ari's brotherhood of devoted disciples, and also monastic tendencies, correspond uncannily to trends in Christianity. Though it is not clear whether the Jewish mystics consciously readapted these scriptural adages, symbols, rites, and social structures, or unwittingly absorbed them, Arthur Green convincingly argues that this process picked up momentum through the thirteenth century, and penetrated into the *Zohar*; Jews were responsive at this time to a majority Christian culture, one particularly assertive and confident as the Reconquista proceeded apace.¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, this trend continued among Luria and his circle in Safed, where there was no strong Christian reference group.

KABBALISTIC CONTENT IN THE AGE OF ISAAC LURIA

According to Lurianic Kabbalah, in the beginning the infinite, conceptualized as endless light, contracted. In transliteration from Hebrew, the infinite is known as *eyn-sof*, and the moment of creation via contraction is called *tsimtsum*. Worlds within worlds, the space wherein human consciousness and

life became possible, result from this endowment of finite space by *eyn-sof*. Hence, life as we fallibly know it results from a paradox, a moment of endless ambiguity: contraction (a concept pregnant, of course, with connotations of human birth) breeds a limit, an interrupted negation, of the infinite *eyn-sof*; but, for us, this contraction makes possible everything that we experience in life.

Jewish mysticism scholar Gershom Scholem called this idea of *tsimtsum* “one of the most amazing and far-reaching conceptions ever put forward in the whole history of Kabbalism.”¹⁴¹ The conception raises a number of vexing questions. One is the issue of why exactly *eyn-sof* contracted in this moment of creation. In *Etz Haim* (Tree of Life), the 1573 foundational text of Lurianic Kabbalah, written by Isaac Luria’s disciple, Haim Vital, the question is treated in a somewhat brusque, inconclusive way. Vital, whose cast of mind tended more to diagnosis and description, rather than speculative cosmogony, points out that the infinite could never exist in the absence of consciousness. Paradoxically, God needed its own limitation, in the *tsimtsum*, so that It, and reality itself, could gain recognition, and thereby become complete. “Calling Him Lord means that He has servants and that He is a lord over them,” Vital declares at the onset of *Etz Haim*. “It is the same with the rest of the names and also with the attributes—‘merciful, gracious, slow to anger,’ etc. (Exodus 34:6). He could not have been described by these attributes unless there were creatures in this world who could call Him ‘slow to anger,’ etc.”¹⁴²

As a cornerstone text of Jewish mysticism, *Etz Haim* has a complicated publication history. The handling of Luria’s teachings was considered an extremely consequential, sensitive issue; Vital gained custodial control of the Ari’s system in dealings with confederates in this Lurianic fellowship that were marred by various pedestrian ego issues.¹⁴³ Vital’s own understanding and appreciation of Lurianic Kabbalah appears to have evolved; various inconsistencies in his presentations raise questions about whether this form of mysticism can fairly be called a “system,” though the Israeli scholar Ronit Meroz has labored arduously to establish a kind of overarching analytic frame within Vital’s explication of the Ari. This frame, she argues, passed through successive phases.¹⁴⁴ Also, Meroz and other scholars have tussled with the issue of the extent to which Vital faithfully transmitted his teacher’s beliefs, compared to the extent to which he interposed his own interpretations (one reasonable-sounding hypothesis presents Luria’s Safed circle as a philosophical school, akin to the Socratic model, wherein the teacher and students jointly refine ideas in a back-and-forth educational process).¹⁴⁵ Such discussion is not scholastic quibbling—instead, it applies to the fundamental question of whether a distinctive brand of Jewish mysticism consolidated in Galilee, in the 1570s. As it turns out, this cardinal question pivots on the issue of Luria’s viewpoint on the implications of creation, in the *tsimtsum*.

Lawrence Fine, an emeritus scholar at Mount Holyoke College and author of an outstanding biography of Luria, approaches this question by giving precedence to Vital's expositions, while supplementing them with other explications of Lurianic Kabbalah which were composed and eventually published (sometimes under false attribution as Vital's own writing) by other disciples such as Joseph ibn Tabul and Moses Yonah.¹⁴⁶ On Fine's syncretic reconstruction of Lurianic Kabbalah, *tsimtsum* is not really a matter of divine largesse, a sacrifice rendered by the unadulterated infinity of pure light, *eyn-sof*. Instead, *eyn-sof* "was actually made up of radically diverse elements." In this mixture, some particles of harsh judgment, called *ha-dinim*, comingled with a larger portion of positively empowering force, compassion, called *rahamim*. Adhering to a general tendency in Kabbalah to associate female traits with demonic qualities, these two elements within *eyn-sof* seem to be gendered, and *ha-dinim* is associated with femininity. From the divine standpoint, *tsimtsum* is a morally necessary act whereby *eyn-sof* purges itself of impurities of strict judgment.¹⁴⁷ The interaction of mortal forces in lower worlds is a cosmology of repair; and man's quest for spiritual improvement is a battle to remove evil necessarily deposited by the almighty *eyn-sof*, in its contraction.

In Lurianic Kabbalah, the lower worlds are described and designated in detail, with their basis being Isaiah 43:7 ("everyone that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory"). Closest to *eyn-sof*, and least accessible to the Kabbalists' techniques of time-space defiance, is the world of emanation, called *atzilot*. Next comes the world of creation, *beri'ah*, the home of archangels and high prophets; in visionary experiences, Kabbalists have some access to this world. Next, the world of formation, *yetzirah*, is closest to our own; it is the world to which Kabbalistic techniques of inference and vision are most readily applicable. The world we know, *asiyah*, the world of action, is the outer layer of reality, the place of planets and stars, the visible universe.¹⁴⁸

In one of his writings, Vital elaborated on how the *tsimtsum* bred the four worlds:

At the beginning of creation, when the Blessed One withdrew its presence all around in every direction, it left an empty space in the middle, surrounded on all sides by the light of *eyn-sof*, empty precisely at the centermost point. . . . So the withdrawn light converged beyond and in the middle remained a vacuum. Then all of the foulness and density of judgment within the light of the *eyn-sof* became measured and it was separated [from *eyn-sof*]. Descending and gathering into the empty space, it became transformed into an amorphous mass out of the foulness and density of the power of Judgment, surrounded in all directions, above and below, and on all sides, by the light of *eyn-sof*. Out of this mass emanated the four worlds: Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action.¹⁴⁹

Emanated light poured into this mass (*golem*) within ten packets or vessels, called *sefirot*. This spilling of light in the sefirot was cast in an anthropomorphic form, molding the primordial man (*Adam Kadmon*). Adam Kadmon is visualized in this human shape owing to the Kabbalists' fidelity to *Genesis*' statement about how humans are cast in the image of God (these events of *tsimtsum*, it bears mention, occur before the drama of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden). The sefirot are described at length in Lurianic Kabbalah—*keter* (crown), the first sefirah, represents will and desire to create, and other sefirot represent various cognitive, emotional, and aesthetic qualities (the ten are *keter*/crown, *chokmah*/wisdom, *binah*/understanding, *chesed*/love, *gevurah*/strength, *tiferet*/beauty, *netzach*/endurance, *hod*/splendor, *yesod*/foundation, *malkhut*/kingdom).¹⁵⁰ Implications of the way the sefirot are conceptually aligned, as one consecutive line (proceeding from *malkhut* to *keter*), or as three parallel rows, are reviewed at length by Vital¹⁵¹—however adducible such cosmic geometry might be, the whole project is undermined, at least to some extent, by the author's periodic disclaimers wherein the reader is reminded that Kabbalist imagery is metaphorical because emanations of the non-apprehensible *eyn-sof* are themselves not readily apparent to sense appreciation. Starting his analysis with the debut of sefirot imagery in the *Zohar*, Scholem elaborated on the intriguing ambiguity of this aspect of Kabbalah: "The difficulty lies precisely in the fact that the emanation of the Sefirot is conceived as a process which takes place *in* God and which at the same time enables man to perceive God."¹⁵² Whether they are fully comprehensible or not, these Kabbalistic images have an appealingly dynamic character. They evoke a moral system that creatively teases adherents about central questions as to whether moral and spiritual ideas are fluidly positional and relative, or whether they might be absolute truths. The ten sefirot are continually transmuting in new shapes, and they are elegantly amenable to kaleidoscopic "worlds within worlds" types of formulations (each of the four worlds, for instance, can be depicted as having their own three rows, or one long line, of ten sefirot).

Drawing on the *Zohar*'s *Idra Rabba* and *Idra Zuta* (greater and lesser assemblies), Lurianic Kabbalah visualizes the transfiguration of sefirot as long and short faces, called *partzufim* (the term means "faces," though in some translations it is rendered as "personifications"). The *partzufim* consist of *Arikh Anpin* (long face), associated with the first sefirah, *keter*, and therefore most proximate to *eyn-sof*, and also an image of sheer compassion; *Abba* (father) and *Imma* (mother), which personify two other sefirot, *chokmah* and *binah*; two children, male and female, of *Abba* and *Imma*, called *Zeir Anpin* (small face) and its female counterpart, *Nukva*, the first personifying six sefirot, and the second representing *malkhut*. Whereas the intermediate *partzufim*, *Abba* and *Imma*, are permanently united, and their coupling emanates as an energy

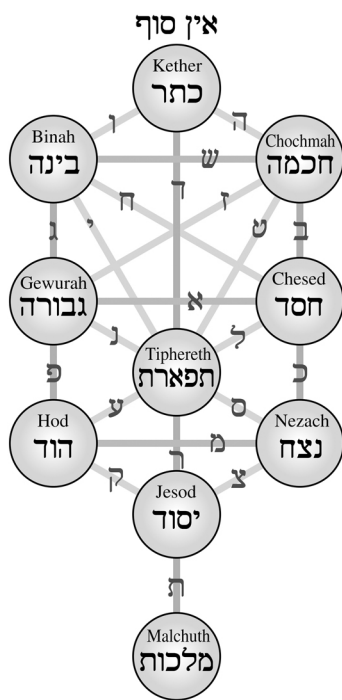


Figure 1.1 Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

source for all the worlds, their children are separated throughout the course of the week, and join exclusively on Sabbath eve, their union momentarily pouring divine love and blessing into our world. Over the normal week, Nukva dwells among us in this world, her attendance being correlated to Judaism's feminized image of continuing divine presence on earth, the *Shekhinah*.¹⁵³

The baroquely elastic and expansive character of this imagery is the result of the Kabbalists' effort to connect their imaginative flights of fancy to normative Judaism. The Kabbalists were remarkably creative and adroit when it came to planting their esoteric cosmology, their "tree of life," on the ground of accepted belief, ritual, and exposition in halacha and the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible). The Kabbalists wrapped their exotic symbols and interpretations around familiar images in Judaism's conventional narrative of creation; this confluence of scriptural reference and mystic semiotics yields Kabbalah's characteristic blend of readily understandable reference and scarcely comprehensible, bizarre signs. Observe, for example, how the image of the seven kings of Edom (*Genesis* 36:31) interacts with Kabbalist symbolism in this passage, one where the Torah's story of creation folds within Lurianic Kabbalah's mystical cosmology:

[The sefirah] did not possess the capacity to bear the light, and [thus] shattered, [becoming] the “kings who ruled in the land of Edom,” that is the aforementioned mass created from the power of Judgment. These seven died, [as did] the six dimensions of *Zeir Anpin* along with Malkhut.¹⁵⁴

Generally, the appearance of the seven kings of Edom is useful in Kabbalist creation and prehistory narratives since they are said, in *Genesis*, to have “reigned in the land of Edom before any king ruled over the Israelites.” In the *Zohar*, as Fine explains, the kings of Edom figure in trial and error experimentation concerning the creation of worlds. In the *Idra Rabba*, these kings represent *din* (judgment), and they were originally brought down by God on the assumption that the earth could be ruled on the basis of this attribute alone. In time, it became clear that *din* was insufficient as a force facilitating human affairs; new attributes such as compassion and mercy, *hesed and rahamim*, became necessary.¹⁵⁵

In *tsimtsum* creation, according to Lurianic Kabbalah, emanating light from *eyn-sof*, conveyed in the ten sefirot (or vessels), became overpowering at some point. Keter, the highest sefira, comprised of pure light, proved capable in this conveyance; but further down the line, at the point of the *tiferet* sefira, the vessels shattered, becoming broken shells, called *klippot* (this whole process of catastrophic disruption in creation is known as the breaking of the vessels, *shevirat ha-kelim*). The vessels’ shards descended into the lower worlds and effectively become the basis of our own, far from perfect, daily reality; yet some sefirotic light clings to the shards, providing divine sparks of inspiration for our life.¹⁵⁶ On some Lurianic interpretations, the aforementioned seven kings of Edom imposed vessel-shattering impurity of harsh judgment (*din*) in this *shevirat ha-kelim* process. Also, Fine, following the arguments of the scholar Elliot Wolfson, insists that sexual conceptualizations figure as causal elements in this “shattering of the vessels” calamity. In Lurianic accounts, gendered sefirot images represent the spilling of semen (*keri*) outside of harmonious sexual union (*zivvug*), and they yield a broken vessels cosmology of sexualized predicament: “female waters” (*meyyin nukvin*) remain disjoined from “male waters” (*meyyin dukhrin*).¹⁵⁷

Prior to humanity’s epoch, divinity had gone a long way toward repairing (*tikun*) defects caused by *shevirat ha-kelim*. The entirety of the world *beri’ah*, and the first four sefirot in the world *yetsirah*, had ascended to the level previously occupied solely by the world *atsilut*. This ascent of worlds and sefirot accelerated on Sabbath days. Meantime, Adam and Eve had been created via the union of *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukva*—Adam *ha-Rishon* (the first man) was born with capacity for ascent to higher worlds, but his sin curtailed the entirety of this ongoing process of *tikun*. Haim Vital was adamant on this point: the human form was endowed with the capability to ascend to higher

worlds, and so Adam's sin was essentially a second shattering episode: "If Adam ha-Rishon had not transgressed at the Tree of Knowledge, he would have been able to raise up all the worlds to still higher levels."¹⁵⁸

Adam's ritualistic practices prior to the original Sabbath would have consummated *tikun* mending process which was in motion prior to his birth, Luria scholar Fine explains. Some souls departed from Adam before his sin and were thus not implicated by it, but other souls descending from this first man plunged into the broken world realm of *klippot*. These humans, Adam's descendants, therefore inherited the mission of cosmic mending, of *tikun*. Lurianic Kabbalah prescribed an astoundingly demanding regime of prayer worship and lugubrious self-flagellation, and also endowed its suitably qualified adherents with capabilities of ascent to higher worlds and communion with departed souls in *yihud* grave prostration rituals.¹⁵⁹ But the truest fulcrum of Kabbalistic *tikun* repair is Shabbat devotion. Just as the multi-layered *shevirat ha-kelim* process of shattered vessels culminated in a Shabbat drama, with Adam's relinquishing his capacity to ascend to higher worlds on this special day, so too is Lurianic Kabbalah's presumptive morality, whereby mortals effectively take up divine cudgels to repair the shards of a broken world so that redemption may someday come, centered on Shabbat devotion. On Sabbath, Jews make amends for Adam's sin and seek to repair the world.

Lest we lose ourselves in Lurianic Kabbalist content summary, we should take a step back and try to place this admittedly confusing imagery in historical contexts. Without maliciously disparaging the stimulating creativity of this brand of Jewish mysticism, many readers, I assume, are asking "what is all this bizarre terminology and symbolism *really* about?" I am sure that many historians would address that question from differing angles; broadly, I will hazard some of my own thoughts.

When divested of layers of esoteric imagery, Lurianic Kabbalah, like the *Zohar* before it, can be thought of as an ideology of Jewish restoration in Galilee and the Holy Land. Much of our analysis has proceeded with this view of Kabbalah in mind. But it bears mention that the recondite symbolism of Lurianic mysticism has an additional function, acting as a prophylactic against outright secularism. The *tsimtsum*, *sefirot*, and other symbols constitute an alternative cosmology, a mystical way of looking at the heavens unadulterated by the religion-disturbing advances of science in the Copernican age.

It is, however, crucial to mention that Lurianic Kabbalists may not have really viewed their mystical ideology as a sheer *alternative* to empirical investigation. Some might have been thinking of it as a *supplement* to science (perhaps not completely unlike the orientation of religiously devout scientists today). In fact, we devote the next section of this chapter to evidence suggesting that Luria's most fanatic disciple, Haim Vital, never abjured scientific

experimentation as a side pursuit (in fact, Vital's "Practical Kabbalah" activity in magic and science was so extensive that it might be misleading to regard it as an extra-curricular sort of engagement).

However one inter-connects science, magic, and mysticism in Jewish culture, it is always necessary to remember that Lurianic Kabbalah consolidated in an early modern period when science and secularity were just around the corner. Broadly, Kabbalah progressed in a logical sequence: in many ways, the *Zohar* consolidated as a mystical alternative to Maimonides's rationalist approach to Judaism, which many Jews feared could lead to heresy of some sort.¹⁶⁰ Centuries later, Lurianic Kabbalah evolved as a new brand of Jewish mysticism responsive, in some way, to the rise of science in the Copernican age.

Not just in rivalry with science, but also in another, historical, context, Lurianism's cosmology and symbolism provided new justifications for faith and for intensively revitalized prayer ritual. I am referring specifically to the frame of Jewish history. Implicitly, Kabbalah's ascent in the Lurianic form in Safed, just decades after traditional sources of normative Judaism, Torah and Talmud, proved insufficient as means to stave off the Spanish Inquisition's horrors of persecution and exile, reflects collapsed faith in the power of traditional Judaism as an autonomous pathway to messianic redemption. When viewed from the functional standpoint of ideology, the rise of Zionism, the modern agenda of Jewish restoration in Eretz Israel, operated similarly, once the power of what in subsequent centuries became the amalgamated norm of traditional Judaism (Torah, Talmud, and Kabbalistic mysticism) to stave off modern catastrophe in exile was overturned by the Holocaust.

Kabbalah's allure in our contemporary reality is explicable because its distinctive justifications about the utility of prayer and belief, as means toward the attainment of individual or collective redemption, still feel relatively modern and compellingly moral. The presumptiveness of Kabbalah's moral cosmology, whereby mankind's evident fallibility is emphatically *not* positioned in complete submission relative to divine reality, reflects many trends—the penetration of Hellenic ideas of godly mortality within the monotheistic faiths; early trends in what became, in the seventeenth century, the scientific revolution, whereby human understanding was vested with the power to perfect the flawed realities of nature endowed on earth by God; and so on.

In modern Jewish culture this inherent presumptiveness of Lurianic Kabbalah, wherein human activity possesses the power to repair flaws in reality that are symptomatic of limits, or even errors, in God's work in creation, gave rise to a plentitude of posturing, insight, and ideological innovation. The scholar Gershom Scholem famously argued that the seventeenth century false messianic movement led by Sabbatai Zevi was inspired by Lurianic Kabbalah

(his view has been contested by a later generation of scholars¹⁶¹). Arguably, much later turns in modern Jewish culture, both of a very broad character (including Zionism's insistence that *halutz* pioneers could do settlement restoration work which had been traditionally set aside as the sole jurisdiction of God and messianic time), and also specific characterizations in twentieth century Jewish theology (e.g., Martin Buber's "I and Thou" philosophy, or Abraham Joshua Heschel's notion of "God in Search of Man") were predicated, to some degree or another, on Lurianic Kabbalah's presumptive cosmology of moral repair, wherein God and man cooperate in *tikun*.

Partly because these twentieth century theologians became involved in inspiringly iconic moments of political activism, as exemplified by the famous photograph of Heschel striding with Martin Luther King in the 1965 Selma march,¹⁶² Kabbalah-redolent concepts, particularly "Tikun Olam," have become closely linked with Jewish morality, at least in the minds of modern-oriented Jews outside of Israel. To be sure, the dots are not scrupulously connected in such referencing of Lurianic Safed.¹⁶³ And, in a cunning irony, *both* liberal-minded American Reform Jewish families who frequently engage social activist "Tikun Olam" work (for instance, when a son or daughter become Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah age), and mystical, typically ultra-nationalist, Jews who climb up to Meron on the Lag B'Omer holiday, incontrovertibly believe they are engaging a genuinely *Jewish* Kabbalist tradition, whereas (as we have shown at length) Zohar mysticism and its offshoots are thoroughly immersed in interaction with Christianity, probably more so than any other branch of normative Judaism. This, however, does not mean that Kabbalistic influences on contemporary Jewish practices, left-wing and right-wing, secularized and liberal, Orthodox and ultra-nationalist, are inauthentic or weak. The image of sixteenth century Safed Kabbalists on a Galilee hilltop as social activists, of a sort, who idealistically believed in personal and cosmic repair is correct—or at least so I myself think, writing from the same hilltop, centuries later. This image has been powerfully consequential in Jewish affairs and beyond them.

HAIM VITAL'S DREAMS OF POWER

If truth be told, the Lurianic Kabbalists went some steps beyond idealism. In a mystical, unearthly way, these mystics were preoccupied with the intoxicant of power. They were utopians who were animated by the belief that the correct calibration of the Ari's mystical system, or of some other magical or scientific method, would enable them to transcend beyond laws of time and matter. Death need not stop them.

Lurianic Kabbalah's death-defiance practices are of great import in Galilee history. Grave veneration, a phenomenon not intrinsic to Jewish culture,¹⁶⁴ won ideological ratification in Lurianic Kabbalah via this mysticism's adaptation of two evolving concepts, *gilgul* and *yihud*. The aura or sanctification accorded by the application of these concepts at Galilee gravesites was pivotal in the region's sixteenth century Jewish revival. Some scholars have gone as far as to suggest that the desire to commune at the graves of the *Zohar*'s Tannaitic protagonists is what propelled the Lurianic-era Jewish mystics into Safed in the first place.¹⁶⁵ On this interpretation, sixteenth century Safed Kabbalah as a whole can be thought of as a stylized, on-site, reenactment of the *Zohar*'s climactic Idrot sections wherein not just the elite in the Lurianic brotherhood, but also mystical hangers-on cut in the mold of Shlumil of Dresnitz, settled in the Galilee hills to soak up the energy emanating from their Tannaitic graves, and their promise of soul transport, cosmic tikun, and immortality. The nucleus of this phenomenon was the actual Idra convocation reenactments carried out by Luria and his followers at Meron, in elaborate staging and esoteric belief that is documented by Shlumil, among others (Luria sat at Rashbi's spot in the Idra, Shlumil reported, and the Ari positioned Vital where Rabbi Eleazar sat).¹⁶⁶

This remembrance and reenactment culture elevated Galilee's status in Jewish culture. Centuries before, the Tannaim had convened the Sanhedrin in the region by necessity, largely as refugees from Jerusalem after the hurban and the failed Bar Kochba rebellion. Now the Kabbalists sanctified Galilee by worshipping the Tannaitic graves. "With his identification of many new gravesites, Luria helped shape the emerging mythos of the Galilee," writes Pinchas Giller.¹⁶⁷

After Luria gave his mystical nod, Vital proceeded to provide details about Galilee graves. These details are found in Vital's mystical tour guide to Galilee, the aforementioned chapter of his *gilgul* volume (*Sha'ar Ha-Gilgulim*), which reveals causes to venerate Biriyya, Avnit, Akvarah, Gush Halav, Ein Zeitim (where Luria believed Jesus's grave was found) and other Galilee sites.¹⁶⁸ Vital is also the prime source of information concerning Lurianic Kabbalah's beliefs and rituals in the realms of soul transmigration and gravesite communion (Vital devoted two treatises, *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, and *Sha'ar ha-Yihudim*, as well as passages in his *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot* to the latter, the *yihud* ritual).¹⁶⁹ The specifics of Lurianic "yihud" belief in gravesite communion—circumstances in which it could be conducted off-site, at home; angularity and motions required by the prostrate practitioner on a grave; contemplation of divine names; proper nighttime hours for the practice; and so on—are fascinatingly described in Lawrence Fine's volume on the Ari and his Kabbalistic fellowship, and need not occupy us here.¹⁷⁰

Briefly it suffices to mention how the Lurianic modification of the relevant, immortality-related, concepts, *gilgul* and *yihud*, reflect Safed Kabbalah's power-related aspirations to gain control of Judaism's theological-historical narrative and of communal Jewish modes.

Gilgul belief in the transmigration of souls¹⁷¹ has no deep roots in medieval Jewish theology (through the tenth century, important Jewish theologians such as Saadia Gaon remonstrated against reincarnation-related beliefs). It entered Kabbalah around the twelfth century, possibly in interaction with the Gnostic-animated Catharist movement in southern France, Scholem speculated. Later, Zohar-era mystics ruminated about whether the *gilgul* concept applied only to lower souls, to those of sinners (largely in sex and procreation realms), which transmigrated in a kind of experiential surrogate of hell. Or, they wondered, maybe the concept had much wider applicability, and included the migration of the souls of pious persons, perhaps in *tikun* processes. These ruminations were framed around a tripartite division of the soul as *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*; and various new innovations, such as the *tikun*-related idea of soul sparks, and also the *ibur* concept, referring to the incarnation of a soul in a body at the moment of birth, enriched and complicated these reflections and discussions.

The sixteenth century Safed Kabbalists added a few crucial modifications to this *gilgul* discourse. The way these innovations are related to Lurianic mysticism's power-related ambitions can be quite precisely delineated.

The notion that souls divide into their own families, that there are family tree type lines of soul migration, circulated in Safed before the Lurianic brotherhood consolidated. Solomon Alkabetz, the author of the *Lekah Dodi* Shabbat eve song, is credited with popularizing this notion around 1550.¹⁷² In effect, the idea privileged a mystical fellowship such as Luria's circle by allowing its leaders to claim elite, soul-family, pedigree. Even more than people today who become relatively obsessed with tracing their own family trees, Kabbalists like Vital were positively fixated with following how their souls ascended from points of origins in Biblical patriarchs and prophets. The last part of Vital's dream diary, whose epigraph is "these are things told to me by my later teacher [Luria] which relate to my life and to the roots of my soul," illustrates how soul-genealogy issues cemented dependencies on the master in a Kabbalist brotherhood, and also could become a monomaniacal obsession for a disciple, as well as a source of his self-confidence and his own aspirations for power.¹⁷³ In the Lurianic circle, soul ancestry beliefs reached their power pinnacle with the Ari's presumptive soulful descent from Rashbi, a pedigree immersed in messianic claims.¹⁷⁴

One specific, power-enabling, implication of *Gilgul* conceptualization featured its impact upon the structure of the Lurianic brotherhood. *Gilgul* was an *alternative* to actual family pedigree. Vital explicitly spelled out that the

souls of parents and children usually do not derive from the same soul root (“Particularly among those who transmigrate, they [souls] have no relations to fathers in most cases”).¹⁷⁵ This belief elevated the status of Luria’s circle to that of a messianic fellowship in which the soulful pedigrees of members theoretically took precedence over their actual family ties. As we observed in the legend of the red heifer and the missed, Shabbat eve, messianic window of opportunity, not all members of the Ari’s group were, practically speaking, willing to oblige this prerogative at the expense of their own, real-life, family commitments; but the expectation that a mystical initiate owed his highest debts of honor to his soul-family and to his mystical brotherhood nonetheless remained.

Finally, the creative latitude taken by Lurianic mystics in tracing *gilgul* lineages also reflected their ambitiousness. In the sphere of historical and theological narratives, they were making a power claim. These Safed Kabbalists believed they were endowed with the right to transform Biblical antiheroes into laudatory, soul-family, inheritances. We have seen this in the example of Vital’s proud assertion that Cain could be found at the start of his soulful heritage;¹⁷⁶ Scholem, it will be recalled, termed such twists in Jewish normative iconography “one of the strangest parts of Luria’s doctrine.”¹⁷⁷ Actually, the scrambling of normative reputations of icons is a typical maneuver undertaken when an ambitious group makes its own power claims against established leaderships within a particular political culture. Much later in the modern period, some power-seeking Zionists, buoyed by Nietzschean “transvaluation” ideas circulated by writers like Micah Yosef Berdichevsky, challenged rabbis and traditional Jewish norms by adulating Biblical antiheroes, precisely as Vital claimed Cain’s soul to be his own.

Generally, the Safed Kabbalists had no doubt that they were the true prophetic leaders of their people. Luria’s peculiar mystical creed was their staff of power, and they clutched the wand in the hope that it would empower them to rule over realms well beyond wherever they were. It is hard to find any limit in their dreaming—one of the implications of this fact is that the image of the “Lurianic brotherhood” was inherently dissoluble from the start, because its members were engaged instrumentally with this variant of Kabbalah, viewing it as a mystical means to power rather than valuing it for whatever intrinsic, in-the-moment, cleansing insight and inner-peace it might have offered. This way of thinking of Lurianic Kabbalah as a power-oriented mystical utopia is borne out by the career of Haim Vital.

Why is it important to follow this line of interpretation? Here, as in many other discussions of Kabbalah, we proceed under the long shadow cast by Gershom Scholem’s revisionist agenda regarding Jewish mysticism.¹⁷⁸ Scholem’s writings brim with breathtaking knowledge of how Kabbalah consolidated in a give and take dialogue with non-Jewish mysticisms; but the

popular (and in many cases, scholarly) understanding of his contribution created a humorless, parochial, orthodoxy about what he called the “messianic idea in Judaism.”¹⁷⁹

The first effect of this new dogma about Jewish mysticism was to utterly disqualify the critique voiced by important nineteenth century promoters of Jewishness’ semi-national revival, such as the historian Heinrich Graetz, who viewed this Safed stage of Kabbalah as a self-inflicted wound in Jewish history, and as neurotic irrationality.¹⁸⁰ That biting derisive voice was imprudent, and it expressed its own psychological anxieties, but it belongs in the discussion; Scholem basically kicked it out of the classroom. More portentously, Scholem’s scholarship was taken as meaning that “the messianic idea” is an abiding, singularly Jewish, phenomenon. Scholem, who maintained connections with peace and coexistence groups in Mandatory Palestine, between the world wars, would not have intended it, but this line of interpretation about the “messianic idea” proffered an enabling permit to ultra-Orthodox Jews of a mystical bent. Today, these Orthodox mystics, the zealots who throng at Rashbi’s grave, claim to be exclusive heirs of Safed’s mystical tradition; often deliberately, their doings are affixed to extremist nationalist ideologies whose agenda is to nullify Palestinian statehood demands, and to rationalize land-grabs and continuing military violence against Arab civilians. I see no reason to disparage or de-legitimize the self-perception of these Orthodox groups who assemble at Rashbi’s grave in the belief that they are reenacting Idra-type experiences—this Lag B’Omer phenomenon is a moving tribute to the power of Galilee cultural traditions, as well as to the triumph of the second century Tannaitic campaign to save and revive Judaism, following the ruinous rebellions against Rome. But there is equally no reason to believe that these contemporary Orthodox mystics operate in a direct continuum with the Ari and Vital, as their sole descendants. Haim Vital belonged to the totalizing culture of early modernity in which precocious figures were still beholden to late medieval, magical and mystical, thought patterns, but nonetheless brought the scientific method to their treatment of problems. Optimistically, they believed that all problems could be solved, albeit not always by mystical means. Vital’s legacy belongs as surely to today’s Azrieli Faculty of Medicine in Safed as it does to Rashbi’s grave on the adjacent, Meron, hilltop.

WHO WAS VITAL?

Haim Vital Calabrese was born in Safed, in 1542.¹⁸¹ His father, Joseph Vital Calabrese, was a well-established scribe in the town. Haim studied in Safed’s yeshivas and regarded Rabbi Moses Alsheikh as his most trustworthy teacher in mystical subjects. The conventional biographies note that Vital studied

alchemy for “two and a half years” when he was in his early twenties (in the 1563–1565 period), but this is a misleading description.¹⁸² After Luria’s arrival in Safed, Vital hesitated for nine months, and then joined the Ari’s brotherhood in spring 1571. After Luria’s 1572 death, Vital, as mentioned, asserted himself and became the sole executor of the Ari’s mystic system and legacy, even coercing fellow Kabbalists to sign an agreement along these lines. The breaking point occurred in 1575, a year that apparently inspired messianic hopes, and then brought about disillusionment when the messiah tarried; after two years, in 1577, the pact of discipline among the Ari’s disciples was dissolved, and Vital relocated for a hapless stint as the head of a yeshiva in Jerusalem.

Between 1586 and 1592, Vital re-settled in Safed, due to motivations, and in circumstances, that have not really been clarified. Shlumil of Dresnitz relates that the gravely ill Vital fell into a coma in Safed in 1587, and that Kabbalists exploited this opportunity to circulate hundreds of pages of Vital’s summaries of Lurianic Kabbalah. Through this sequence, the Ari’s secret teachings won public dissemination overseas, first in Italy (Vital’s dream diary has entries underscoring Luria’s strictures against dissemination of his system; and Vital claims to have lived with guilt about how his injudicious teaching of Luria’s ideas outside of the brotherhood circle brought about his master’s death; this is the background to Vital’s disinclination to disseminate his records of Luria’s system after the Ari’s passing). Vital moved to Damascus in 1598. He endured a miserable stint as rabbi of the Sicilian communal synagogue in the city. Among other problems, he struggled with his health—starting in 1604, he suffered periodic bouts of blindness. He assembled materials for *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot* between 1609 and 1612 in Damascus, and died in the city in 1620.

Vital was an extremely assertive self-publicist, and virtually nothing which he says about his life can be taken at face value. The reason why scholars have been inveigled by Vital’s self-presentations has two aspects: first, Vital stands out in Jewish History as an early autobiographical writer, and, second, this autobiographical writing is often embarrassingly self-confessional, so there is a disposition to be indulgent toward this early modern Jew who generously disclosed the facts of his interesting life to posterity, and also toward someone who evidently did not feel a need to hide his warts. These are powerful considerations, and Vital’s extraordinary status should be viewed in a broad context sketched by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi in his influential 1982 volume, *Zakhor*: until the modern era of secularity, Jewish writing lacked the sort of historical consciousness by which an individual life or lives could be presented in a relatively realistic vein.¹⁸³ Excellent commentaries on Vital’s revealing dream memoir, *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot* underscore how it can be regarded as the first Jewish autobiography.¹⁸⁴

These claims require modification on a few levels, however. The status of Vital's dream diary can be over-estimated. Vital was, in general, an autobiographical-oriented writer, and some of his other texts, including *Sha'ar Ha-Gilgulim*, convey important stylized facts of his life, including Vital's self-laudatory account of why Isaac Luria came to Safed in 1570, and of the nature of his relationship with the Ari. Also, Vital might have been a generation or two ahead of other autobiographical writers, but it is important to note that there was nothing necessarily revelatory about Lurianic Kabbalah which propelled him toward this sort of composition. In fact, Vital's great nemesis during the final, Damascus, phase in his life, during which he assembled his dream diary, was Rabbi Ya'akov Abulafia—several of Vital's dreams depict Abulafia being subjected to abuse and humiliation, as vindictive punishment for his well-known skepticism about the mystical powers attributed to Lurianic Kabbalah. Abulafia drew inspiration from an important Venetian rabbi, Leon of Modena, who publicly debunked the magical aura of Safed Kabbalah.¹⁸⁵ Leon, who was born more or less at the time when Luria arrived in Safed, also authored a well-known autobiography,¹⁸⁶ suggesting that sixteenth century, renaissance-related currents of individuality in the Mediterranean region, rather than specifics of Lurianic Kabbalah, or the specifics of its detraction, precipitated this new genre in Jewish writing.

Jewish autobiographical writing was empirically unreliable from its start. Factual stylization, and outright fibbing, in this genre has attracted some scholarly attention, but researchers like Michael Stanislawski analyze later, nineteenth century, texts—that is, they are looking at texts released at a later time when self-embellishment had clearer political purposes, in view of established publication networks, and consolidating ideological-political movements, such as Zionism, which availed by the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁷ In contrast, it is far from clear that Vital even intended texts like *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot* to be published (his son Shmuel posthumously attended to the release of Haim's revealing, late writings).

Generally, fabrication in Vital's memoir writing derived from the peculiarities of the author's self-understanding and his relations to a small brotherhood of mystics. The moment he became committed, in sixteenth century career terms, to his role as Luria's main protégé, Vital wore a costume. He outfitted himself in his writings as a full-time practitioner of Kabbalah's arduous regime of rituals and penance activity; but there is no proof that he wore this costume 24 hours a day in his private life, not even during the exciting two and a half year period of Luria's presence in Safed. In fact, the internal evidence in his writing points in a completely different direction.

One example can suffice at this point. In his memoir writing about his life as a Lurianic mystic, Vital puts elaborate emphasis on how, under the Ari's guidance, he strictly refrained from shedding a drop of human or animal blood;

this restraint stemmed from the episodes of violence in his soul's transmigratory history, whose point of origin was Cain. Yet in his other, non-mystical, costume, in what can be called (attuned to sixteenth century standards) his scientific smock, an outfit in which Vital dabbled not only in "alchemy" but also in a wide array of metallurgical, medicinal (therapeutic and diagnostic), psychological, and other pursuits, he was an enthused and engaged dissector of animals, and advocate of the medical use of their mutilated parts. The editor of a useful recent Hebrew collection of Vital's scientific writing organizes the chapters under headings such as "activities carried out by nature," and "activities not undertaken by the author but examined by him,"¹⁸⁸ which seemingly disassociate Vital, in some measure, from the volume's vivisectionist contents. However, as suggested by this editor, and by other commentators on this aspect of Vital's life, Vital's scientific compositions are disorganized precisely because they express such a remarkable degree of extensive involvement and enthusiastic curiosity. In his scientific costume, Vital experimentally chopped up animal parts in an exact mirror image reversal of what he abstemiously refrained from when he wore his Kabbalistic garb.

It is impossible to read Vital's scientific reportage without sensing that this sort of activity spilled out well beyond the neatly confined two and a half years of "alchemy" Vital confesses to in his Kabbalistic writing. Among other things, Vital refers to preparing 2,000 amulets as prophylactics against nocturnal emissions,¹⁸⁹ clearly implying that this was a long-term engagement which persisted because diagnostics and preventive rituals in Lurianic Kabbalah concerning the unwanted spilling of sperm were disturbingly inefficient.¹⁹⁰ One scholarly authority on the lives of the Lurianic mystics, Meir Benayahu, flatly asserts that Vital engaged in scientific experimentation throughout his life.¹⁹¹ Bos discloses that Vital continued with medical-related experimentation throughout his period in Safed, and then, after his relocation to Damascus in 1598, he broadened his research in the magical sciences. In 1604, Vital consulted with an Arab exorcist, Ibn Ayyub, about his eye affliction, and there is record of another such consultation in 1609.¹⁹²

Complicated inter-relations between Vital's scientific experimentation and his proclaimed absolute devotion to Lurianic mysticism have escaped notice partly because a comprehensive account of the different sides of Vital's life has never been written, even though Kabbalah scholar Gershom Scholem brought Vital's scientific writing to the public eye almost a century ago, in 1925.¹⁹³ Possibly, this side of Vital's activity has often been overlooked due to a lingering indefiniteness in Jewish mysticism scholarship about the status of "practical Kabbalah," and about the radical ambiguities it stirred, as a Jewishly illicit form of black magic, among gentiles.¹⁹⁴

Another problem is that Schechter, Scholem, and others who set frames for studying sixteenth century Safed and Kabbalah wrote decades before

historians published probing works about the interplay of magic, religion, and science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as exemplified by Keith Thomas's monumental 1971 study, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.¹⁹⁵ Schechter set the tone when he wrote about sixteenth century Safed as a "revival camp in permanence, constituted of penitents gathered from all parts of the world."¹⁹⁶ The description overplays the emotionality and expiation layers of this community—characters like Vital certainly exhibit no shortage of self-involved angst about their own sinfulness, but what are we to do with a publication which documents how he spent thousands of hours looking for the right mix for a cosmetic against wrinkles, and other, suchlike, prescriptions?

More recently, Yassif's portrayal of Vital as a wretched outcast of questionable mental stability seems over-drawn. Fairly or not, Yassif exclusively identifies failure and misery in every career twist that ensued in Vital's life, after Luria's death: "He left his beloved Safed, and, for reasons that are not clear, lived in Jerusalem for a brief period and then spent his final years in poverty and social isolation in Damascus." In Damascus, Yassif continues, "Vital was far away from Safed, where he had reached the acme of his life. He was a social and religious outcast, not accepted by the city's Jewish community leadership. . . . On top of all that, there was his short stature, threadbare clothing, debilitated appearance, white hair and blindness, all of which no doubt added to his wretchedness and sense of having been wronged."¹⁹⁷

Yassif has a rich, folkloric grasp of multiple roles played by dreams and dream interpretation in Jewish culture. Yet ultimately his interpretive method is Freudian, its object being to show how Vital's dreams provided psychic release for his inner sense of futility and failure. No doubt, the two broad themes of *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*—Vital's abject self-loathing due to his failure to import the Ari's spirit of mystical revival, *tshuva*, to Damascus, and his encyclopedic survey of his soul-history, through Cain and Rabbi Akiva—abide well with Yassif's focus. Yet the focus is too narrow. There is no way of judging whether Vital might have simply kept his diary log at low emotional moments, or alternatively, whether he imagined himself drafting a literary masterpiece in a confessional vein. When we bear in mind that Vital continued with his scientific experimentation up to his death in 1620, this image of him as living in miserable despair, relieved only by wish fulfillment in dreams, is untenable. A man who keeps up in his insistence that medicinal cures can be found for epilepsy, and that altered psychological states can be arranged so as to help the persecuted endure torture, has preserved something fundamentally optimistic in his heart and mind.

According to the scholar Gerit Bos, Vital's scientific treatise, *Sefer Ha-Peulot*,¹⁹⁸ belongs to a genre of "catch-all recipe books," or "do it yourself formularies," known as "books of secrets." Comprised of information culled (often with "slight discrimination") from medical, alchemical, and other

sources, these were “enormously popular” publications in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Vital’s volume refers repeatedly to Arab terms and practices, but, Bus points out, no such book of secrets treatise has been found in Arabic; so Vital’s scientific engagements and enthusiasms were somewhat unusual in their Ottoman context.¹⁹⁹

Sefer Ha-Peulot describes various branches of magical research and praxis.²⁰⁰ It details a necromancy technique, *she’elat halom*, by which the dead are summoned to answer a sufferer’s question in a dream (the technique entered Spanish Kabbalah as early as the thirteenth century). Vital describes magical tricks and optical illusions; one is a kind of séance ruse featuring a frog croaking on the other side of a wall. Chanting recitations and jewelry pieces useful in winning favor from a monarch, or from an aggrieved rival, are detailed, as are special incantations to protect travelers from robbers, from losing their way, and for shortening distances in a telekinetic technique called *kfitzat ha-dereh*. Having lived in settings where Jewish victims, or their descendants, of inquisitorial persecution were conspicuous, Vital reviewed methods of enduring torture; he recommended imagining an acronym from Psalm 91:14 in the color purple. To ward off the evil eye, Vital would, upon rising in the morning, suck five grains of salt, and then spit them into an earthen pot and urinate on them. In *Sefer Ha-Peulot*, magical recipes for preserving memory retention win special attention, reflecting centuries of concern about the subject in Judaism and Islam, religions that depended on the conveyance of oral traditions from one generation to the next. As a recipe for strengthened memory retention, Vital writes: “Take three leaves of the *Rubus sanctus*; on the first leaf, write TTYTTYTH, on the second SSS, and on the third leaf PPPYH; then erase the names with wine or water, and drink the liquid.”

Should a reader suspect that a deceased neighbor hid his fortune, Vital had a plan. It involved boiling the dead neighbor’s intestines, retrieving their excreted fat, and turning the fat into a buried treasure-sensitized candle. At the end of this elaborate prescription for finding treasures, Vital added an enigmatic disclaimer (“an Israelite is forbidden to do so”) whose reference is unclear. Bos speculates that the author was a little anxious about this recipe’s indulgence of “black magic,” though the proviso might simply allude to one step in the prescription, calling on the treasure seeker from taking three drops from his own finger, which transgresses Jewish strictures against the wounding of the body. Other passages seem less self-conscious in their presentation of what some would consider illicit black magic. For example: “A wonderful poison to kill someone—take nitric acid after it has been used to separate gold and silver” (to calibrate the dosage needed for the poison to be lethal, Vital instructed the reader to conduct tests on dogs).

Sefer Ha-Peulot extensively furnishes medical prescriptions, many for common ailments. For headaches, Vital recommended taking some bread

crumbs, kneading them in fine wine, adding a touch of dry mint, and transferring this potion to a linen cloth, which is to be applied to the forehead. For toothaches, a sufferer was to boil the lower jaw of a lamb, and then insert the relevant bone, with its teeth, in his or her mouth, three or four times, until the pain abated. For hemorrhoid patients, Vital prescribed frying snails in sesame oil, and adding a dab of wax to this palliative cream. In cosmetics, Vital's prescription for lightening a woman's skin featured a mercury-based cream; for freckle removal, one useful potion featured lemon juice and eggshells, and another promising method was the nightly application of bat's blood to the freckles (bat's blood could also be used to stop unwanted hair growth).

Himself an avid dream diarist, and beholden to a Lurianic mystical creed whose rituals and beliefs put a premium on late-night activity, Vital's *Sefer Ha-Peulot* assertively prescribed remedies for sleep disorder. The Ari taught his followers how to work wonders at night, and he specifically warned Vital about the dire consequences on his soul's transmigration that would result should he indulge violence of any sort. But in his book of secrets, Vital tells the world about how he beat insomnia by mutilating canines and decapitating bats—one remedy for sleep disorder was to bind the head of a dead bat in a black cloth and put it under one's pillow, and another was to take a live bat, pull out its teeth with iron tongues, and hang them on one's body. Another cure of this sort: to help someone bit by a rabid dog, Vital recommended removing the liver from the dog, roasting it, and feeding it "to the patient before he begins to bark, for after that there is no cure." At least some of these prescriptions, it should be emphasized, were tested, active remedies. Vital makes clear that he was a practicing physician. One section documents how he treated a two-year-old boy, who suffered from bladder stones, with potions.

One passage in *Sefer Ha-Peulot* ties together a number of themes: Vital's continuing experimentation with magic and medicine, the prerogative he implicitly gave to science as a way of promoting Lurianic objectives even when this medical remedy obviously transgressed specific injunctions dictated by the Ari, lingering Kabbalist anxieties about masturbation and illicit sex, and Vital's self-identification as a physician, as a supplement, or kind of second-life, to his role as Lurianic protégé. The section describes a twenty day old infant who suddenly "chokes" and refuses to nurse, and dies after a few days. Vital's assumption is that the demonic Lilith visited and asphyxiated the baby. This was a strange, almost incomprehensible, occurrence, he wrote, because "I have written these well-known amulets more than two thousand times and they were always effective" in warding off Lilith. Desperate to save the child, and belatedly cognizant that an amulet had somehow lost its charm, he "put circumcised foreskin in the mouth of the infant and gave him some blood from a newborn hedgehog."

Vital recommended a potion that would determine whether or not a woman is a virgin. This was a mixture of three dried figs, water, and a pinch of pure frankincense; some minutes after drinking it, the young woman would yawn “with such intensity that tears will come from her eyes,” if she were a virgin. His cures for male impotence were medicinal and psychological. As a medicinal aphrodisiac, he recommended an electuary made out of dates steeped in goat’s milk, pine apples, and honey; as the concoction boils, various spices (ash-tree, galingale) could be added to it. But Vital also reflected that an impotent man might find himself able to perform sexually were he to add joy to his life, including in his relations with his wife (Bos thinks that Maimonides’s stress on psychological factors influenced Vital).

Sefer Ha-Peulot includes a small measure of etiology. Vital opines, for instance, that the problem with a small child who cries constantly could stem from parental neglect, abdominal pain, or the youngster’s temperament. This diagnosis, needless to mention, is antithetical to dibbuk-type descriptions we have reviewed in the Ari legends, tales in which Vital is an active participant.

Haim Vital, in sum, had two day jobs, one as a scientist and physician obliged to late-sixteenth century and early seventeenth century experimental standards, and the other as a mystic committed to Luria’s version of Kabbalah. In both these day jobs, he was a problem solver. At night, Vital had a third occupation, as a diarist whose dream log unconsciously or deliberately resolved key existential dilemmas and settled various sociopolitical scores. If we must be Freudian, we can regard this night job as an exercise in wish fulfillment. Whether Vital was problem solving, or fulfilling secret desires, at work, his goal was increased power, either in the transcendence of time and space, or in the control of Jewish messianic events. We turn to his night job now.

Vital opens the first of four parts of his dream diary with a declaration of this section’s personal authenticity, claiming “these are the things which occurred in my life since my birth.”²⁰¹ This first part ends in a grand, messianic vein, with a vision of Vital heading a regenerated world in which the erroneous rival religions, Islam and Christianity, have exhausted themselves and capitulated, and are ready to re-amalgamate as part of Judaism. With astonishing bravura, Vital imposes himself as a divine prophet who replaces the besmirched and degraded false prophets of Islam and Christianity.

Arising out of Vital’s keen awareness of historical contexts, the dream anticipates, by a decade, the millennial anniversary of Islam’s origins in the hijrah. Muhammad appears in the dream, his face smeared in ink, his clothes, tattered, and confesses that his debasement is justified: “I misled this tremendous nation; and my [prophetic] time, a thousand years, has expired.”²⁰² As though forcefully reenacting the messianic poetic vision in Alkabets’s hymn, *Lekhah Dodi* (discussed below), Muhammad is detained by a militia of six

guards, who grab him from the right and from the left, maneuvering to bring him to Judaism, in the center. Before this conversion can take place, the dream's participants halt their march, espying activity in an outhouse by the side of the road—Jesus (“the son of Miriam”), “covered in shit from head to toe,” emerges from it.²⁰³ He too confesses the duplicity of his divine posturing (Christianity's “time has gone by” and is now “meaningless” and “nullified”).

Confused by this turn of events, “millions” of Muslims seek the true religion and are directed, apparently by prophetic voices, to the white-bearded Rabbi Akiva. Akiva no longer being in this world, the mass of ex-Muslims are redirected to Akiva's “disciple,” Vital, who “in this generation” is living in everyday reality, while also maintaining a presence in the world to come. Vital “is now the head of all the Jews whom you have witnessed,” these lost, former Muslims, are informed.²⁰⁴

This dream, which one scholar calls the “most audacious” one recorded by Vital,²⁰⁵ illustrates how the delusional fantasies of grandeur coaxed by Lurianic Kabbalah could easily pour onto historical and political dimensions. Whether or not culturally devastating phenomena in the seventeenth century, particularly the false messianic campaigning of Sabbatai Zevi (who was born fourteen years after this date of this dream), were causally generated by Lurianic Kabbalah depends on how one evaluates the contents of Sabbatean ideology, and their sources, particularly as interpreted and articulated by the movement's public relations prophet, Nathan of Gaza. But Vital's dream diary categorically shows how seeds of politicized messianic grandiosity were sown by Lurianic Kabbalah.

Lurianic Kabbalah imaginatively fought for Jewish restoration against the two rival monotheisms, but in practical reality its ongoing struggle for status in Judaism was waged against established rabbinical Judaism, whose authority was rooted in Jewish law. “One of the fundamental facts of the history of Kabbalah in general, and Lurianic Kabbalah in particular, was its capacity to remain completely within the field of ‘orthodox’ or normative Judaism, despite radical innovations in the arenas of both religious thought and practical piety,” notes Lawrence Fine.²⁰⁶ The statement is indisputable, but it leaves us to ponder about how we ought to relate to Luria's acolytes, particularly Vital, who were frequently antinomian in a *declarative* sense, exclaiming for all the world to hear that Kabbalah had prerogative over halacha.

Consider, for example, this anecdote, taken from one of Vital's “regular” mystical writings, not his dream diary—Kabbalistic praxis, such as *yihudim*, has precedence over Torah, Vital declares here:

Once I was with him [Luria], after a period of a month in which I was side-tracked, and did not carry out a single one of the *yihud* [soul communion] rituals that he had arranged for me. He saw it on my face [and said] . . . you are

causing grave damage. Souls which want to unify with you will escape from you. I pled with him, saying that all I had wanted to do was deal with the Torah during this period, particularly since [there was no sign] that these souls were going to come to me. Nevertheless, he responded, I should carry out the yihudim each day, because this ritual took precedence over the Torah, because through it upper words converge and unify.²⁰⁷

This was not, in spirit, an insurrectionist pronouncement. Vital had no known intention of breaking away from Judaism; and, as we observed in the final dream of the first part of his *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*, he viewed himself as a prophet of Judaism's ascendance in a messianic process wherein disengaged followers of other religions would come to him and Judaism.

Still, was there not something implicitly renegade in Vital's ongoing scientific experimentation? What exactly did putting a bat's head under your pillow, as a remedy for insomnia, have to do with anything that halachic Judaism or Lurianic Kabbalah prescribed as nighttime activity? And the way Kabbalistic fantasies belittled halachic authority remains open to interpretation. Vital and his mystic cohorts left an ambiguous message about Kabbalah's relation to Judaism's rabbinic establishment; and so, perhaps inevitably, some future movements which drew from the Ari's ideology, such as Hasidism, remained within the Jewish fold, whereas the Sabbatean and Frankist movement did not.²⁰⁸

Vital's most provocative propaganda against halacha was conveyed in his dreams. Naturally, Joseph Caro loomed in them as a kind of intermediary bridge, because he was, on the one hand, the veritable personification of Jewish law, thanks to his *Shulkhan Arukh* compendium, but was also, on the other hand, a mystic enthusiast who cultivated a relationship with a magical presence, the maggid, which was strikingly similar to Vital's supernaturally volatile relationship with his mentor, the Ari.

Karo came to Galilee and Safed when he was about fifty years old; and the progression and emphases of his life made it seem as though he were the fulfillment of the Galilean Tannaitic project of the Mishnah, the codification of Jewish law. His maggid, in its guise as the Mishnah, scolds Caro for not exclusively applying himself to this halachic project ("Behold I am the Mishnah which corrects man, I have now come to speak to you," Karo's maggid declares).²⁰⁹ Vital would naturally have seen Karo's mystical inclinations as a mere accessory to his activity as a codifier of Jewish law. Compared to Karo, Vital and fellow Kabbalists became much more fervently attached to Lurianism on the basis of a very different biographical and spiritual progression. Vital was a dyed in the wool Safed native. His activities and ideologies had nothing to do with returning to Galilee and the world of rabbinic Judaism that had originated in the region. For him, Safed was a ladder to a

yet higher world—mysticism was an extension of Galilee, and it was a way to go beyond it. Moreover, these mystical flights were an allegory for transcendence beyond the norms of halacha.

Vital struggled ambivalently with Galilee's Tannaitic bequest to himself and to Lurianic Kabbalah. On the one hand, the Ari and his students communed in gilgul and yihud praxis on the Galilee graves of the Tannaim. Yet the intermediary in this soul fellowship was the *Zohar*, a mystical text apocryphally associated with Rashbi which happened to have no definite relationship with what the Tannaim had accomplished in Galilee (a well-known scholarly view holds that Luria and his circle regarded the *Zohar* and its authorial attributions as being "completely real,"²¹⁰ but one wonders whether this is necessarily true). The only thing the Lurianic Kabbalists knew for sure was that the Tannaim were definitively associated with the Mishnah, with rabbinical Jewish law, a force which seemed to drag against the Kabbalah's powers to transport its practitioners to splendid eternal realms of the soul. For all these reasons, in Vital's imaginary dream life, not just Karo and halacha, but also the Tannaim, appear as problematic predecessors and imperfect influences.

The second part of *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*, whose header declares "these are some of my dreams, I have forgotten many of them,"²¹¹ has fascinating sections which document Lurianic Kabbalah's fantasy of replacing halacha as the authoritative basis of Jewish life. One remarkable, extended dream,²¹² dated on a Sabbath eve in 1566 (four years before Luria's arrival in Safed), depicts Vital weeping because of his months-long failure to consummate his marriage with his new wife, Hannah. The references to nocturnal emission and Vital's temporary impotency connect to other episodes in the dream diary,²¹³ but in the dream's own internal context, Vital's weeping and seed-spilling reflect anxieties about non-sexual potency, specifically Kabbalah's authority relative to the Mishnah and Jewish law. The disconsolate husband meets a neighbor, Rabbi Haim ha-Levi Ashkenazi, who convinces Vital to partake in Sabbath eve rituals in what became the famed Lurianic style—going out to the fields in Safed, and meeting the Sabbath Queen. The dream vividly cites real-life landscape markers of Safed's golden Kabbalistic period, particularly the caravansary ("khan") adjacent to the town's western wall.

The caravansary marks what Yassif calls a "liminal zone," a border between Safed's "real and mythic realms."²¹⁴ Instantly, as the dream passes the khan, it turns out that Vital's neighbor is Elijah the prophet, who effortlessly leaps up what ambiguously appears as an actual Safed hill, and also as a high tower to heaven. The weepy Vital finds himself perched at the foot of a precarious ladder (its three rungs have separations equivalent to the height of a man). Fortuitously, Vital's mother is on hand to lift him into the heavenly garden. Here, Yassif's Freudian references to Oedipal impulses in Vital's

mysticism sound like under-statement: his mother is described as being “dignified and beautiful”; Vital’s entry to paradise depends upon his penetration through a flaming portal; his success in this act does not entail the loss of his soulful purity (in fact, Vital uses his cotton wool hair to pass through this flaming vaginal portal unscathed, in a sequence suggesting affirmation of Kabbalah’s theories about how ritualistic purification can turn sex into a salvationist experience). Even in this new, mystical-heavenly setting, Vital’s dream draws forth real images from Safed’s landscape (tellingly, wool fiber brings him to heaven!) and from his own life (he apparently went prematurely gray, hence the white hair).

Elijah reappears and escorts Vital to God’s chamber. En route, they pass by the garden of paradise, where white geese are paddling on a lake, “reciting passages from the [Mishnah] tractate *Shabbat*.” He later learns that the geese harbor “the souls of Tzadikim, the masters of the Mishnah”—in other words, they are Tannaim, consigned to a pleasant eternity of drinking from heavenly rivers and eating apples, but never allowed, in human form, to enter the highest chamber. Vital’s polemical message in this dream holds that the Tannaitic Mishnah, and *halacha* which came out of it, cannot take pious Jews to the innermost recesses of heaven.

When Vital enters God’s chamber, and witnesses the Almighty “looking like the Ancient of days, with a snow-white beard,” he finds that Kabbalists (called “Bnei Aliyah” in Vital’s diary) are with God, sitting on “majestic carpets and couches, learning Torah from Him.” Vital, of course, is awestruck, but God invites him to sit by His right side. “How can I sit at this place, which has been prepared for Rabbi Joseph Karo,” Vital asks. God commands him not to worry because He has prepared a lesser place for Karo in this chamber. The suggestion is that Karo’s mystical experiences with the *maggid* have rendered him eligible for an afterlife with the mystical elite, the Bnei Aliyah. On the other hand, Karo’s fixation with *halacha* keeps him at the lower end of this elite line-up.²¹⁵

Commentators have noted the “huge amount of presumption” laden within this sequence, whereby Vital, a twenty-four year old, unknown, Kabbalist, executes this power coup in heaven, supplanting the elderly Karo, the revered authority of Jewish law.²¹⁶ However presumptuous, the dream is a political polemic devised to celebrate Kabbalah’s arrogation of authority, as the praxis in Judaism solely endowed with power to bring followers directly to God.

Vital keeps shifting mirrors, hoping to coax the reader into seeing the dream’s events as a natural sequence, rather than as a projection of his own, and his Lurianic brotherhood’s, ambitious power bid in Jewish culture. For instance, as though to disavow any interest in exerting influence in affairs of the “mundane world,” Vital asks God for permission to remain in heaven (the Almighty responds that while the highest place in heaven will remain

reserved for Vital, his soul still awaits completion in the lower world, and He dictates an oath of Torah allegiance to Vital).

The dream ends by folding within itself, in an adroit flourish which anticipates the way novelists, starting with Cervantes half a century later, would experiment creatively with interactivity between dream life and real life. Vital relates how he descended on the ladder from heaven “and found myself in the mundane world, in the midst of the dream,” but did not see around the caravansary any of the extraordinary items which had been there when he first climbed up the ladder. So Vital has dreamed that he was having a dream about heaven, or, as Yassif puts it, “the tension between the mythic and the real is situated *within* the dream.” Yassif adds that the end of this dream is a “unique” interpretive moment, even when viewed by the standards of a text whose extraordinary status in Jewish culture is widely acknowledged.²¹⁷ Both in his interpretation of this dream, and in general, Yassif suggests that the relationship between the mythical Safed and real Safed is a binary contrast; but, I think, each pole in this opposition has a little bit of the other pole pocketed within it.

There was a little bit of Safed “reality” in the mystical sefirot which the Kabbalists invented, just as there was a touch of mystic aura in Safed’s real-life fulling mills and dyed wool. Writing as a resident of Safed, a town that has lost much of its ambiance but still has its charms, I sometimes see how this dynamic of internal contestation within its binary contrast of ultra-Orthodox spirituality, on the one hand, and prosaic daily scrambling to keep a medical appointment, avoid mid-afternoon congestion in the town center, and find a parking place, on the other hand, remains in effect. Orthodox activists in the town who spend the better part of their days and nights in other-worldly contemplation know how to play power politics about municipal budget allocations. By the same two-sided token, beguiling turns of phrase infuse into pedestrian transactions a trace of the town’s alluring mystical tradition (when I pay the neighborhood grocer, he faintly strikes this chord by saying something like, “thanks, Tzadik”).

Yet Vital’s tricky dream-within-dream passage can be read on a different level. It is actually the moment in his dream diary when Vital *stops* winking and is no longer disposed to add plot twists and imaginary provisos to soften the blow of his power-oriented messages. His talk about how he is dreaming about having a dream is a statement of control. Decades later, as an emblem of worn-out European chivalry, Don Quixote will prove unable to know where his dreams end, and reality begins. In contrast, Vital, Kabbalistic Safed’s most prolific spokesman, exhibits scientific precision when he distinguishes between the imaginary and the real. For the benefit of the reader, he prioritizes the relative merits of Kabbalah and halacha, and distinguishes between the wheat and the chaff. Vital’s powers of discernment are to be

trusted and he is leaving no doubt about what his dream says, namely, that Kabbalah is Judaism's, and mankind's, highest truth.

LEKHAH DODI: SIXTEENTH CENTURY SAFED, SHABBAT, AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Kabbalah in sixteenth century Safed creatively transformed Shabbat observances in Judaism. Its profound impact can be heard today in synagogues of all denominations on Friday eve, relatively early in "Kabbalat Shabbat" (welcoming of Shabbat services), in the "Lekhah Dodi" liturgical song. The moment when congregants approach the song's end, and stand and turn westward to greet the Shabbat bride, marks the divide between the profane week and the holy day of rest. Even for secularized worshippers, this is a stirring, uplifting instant whose fundamental meaning of welcoming the Shabbat is deeply felt and understood. The same thing, however, cannot be said about the words and contextual details of the song, which have fascinatingly recondite roots in Safed's Kabbalistic culture, and which convey richly overlapping meanings. The "real" meanings of this cornerstone of Shabbat ritual are almost willfully non-examined and not known—and, paradoxically, this adds to Lekhah Dodi's power, as though Jews draw inspiration from its mystery.

Especially in American Reform synagogues, but to some extent in almost *all* Jewish denominations and synagogues, up to and including Orthodoxy's modern flank, prayer rituals were refashioned in modern times so that they became more understandably friendly to congregants. Also, if any generalization can be affixed to Jews in the modern era, it is that they have been a knowledge-driven people. Its esoteric lyrics being user-unfriendly, and mostly non-understood, Lekhah Dodi's cherished canonical status bucks against such trends.

Outside of Israel, most worshippers in non-Orthodox services are not substantively literate in Hebrew. Yet many can make sense of most of the song's lyrics—the words themselves are basic, even though they sound like a riddle when strung together, as in the example of the final line of the second verse, סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה (sof ma'aseh b'makshava tehila, literally meaning "the end of a deed is in its premeditation"). For those who know Biblical Hebrew, lyrics in Lekhah Dodi sound familiar, though a bit scrambled (as exemplified by the song's first words, recited after its chorus refrain, שמור וזכור shamor v'zakhor, "observe and remember," which reverse the Biblical order of these two connotative words). Taken together, such considerations suggest that this Kabbalat Shabbat staple ought to be an exegetically inviting song, since its words are within the ken of worshippers, and because congregants would be positively disposed to explore the between-the-lines meanings of a song

which joyfully divorces them from the drudgery and anxiety of the everyday week, and transports them to a holier realm on the Shabbat day of rest.

The opposite is the case, I think. With their differing levels of Jewish literacy, Shabbat eve worshippers are at least dimly aware that there is something “Kabbalistic” about *Lekhah Dodi*; but the song’s charm derives precisely from the fact that its cryptically resonant words are rarely, if ever, dissected (perhaps this restraint is doubly admirable in our contemporary world, where we are habitual vivisectionists of information, “Googling” everything under the sun, to make sure nothing is hidden from our view). Perhaps this restraint attests to the respect Kabbalah commands in Jewish culture. The opposite, but also plausible, explanation of *Lekhah Dodi*’s status would be that modern Jews have been embarrassed by the baroque intricacy of Kabbalist imagery and concepts, and so have preferred to hear their recitation as music, without delving “rationally” into their meanings.

However you want to think about the particularities and spiritual power of *Lekhah Dodi*, my own purpose here is to contextualize it in its Galilee setting. Galilee’s duality is that it is, simultaneously, about the common roots of the monotheistic faiths, and also about how they became irreversibly separated. Since humanity’s noblest purposes can only be achieved when this duality is thoughtfully embraced, when we are rational and realistic about what makes us different, and also warmly sustained by our spiritual commonality, the study of Galilee’s history is as spiritual as it is scholarly.

Two defining prayers in Christianity and Judaism are indelibly written out of Galilee’s spirit and landscape. In its fullest version, in Matthew, the Lord’s Prayer is a petition promulgated on a Galilee hilltop, just as is *Lekhah Dodi*. In their deepest meaning, both prayers express yearning for a celestial kingdom, and both provide comfort to the worshipper in their uncompromising belief in this other realm, one liberated from (as the Christian prayer puts it) the “temptation” and “evil” of our daily world. It would not be too much to say that in a pure spiritual sense, the two prayers are united, and one.

Yet in terms of their actual cultural backgrounds, their social intent, and their small details, the two prayers could not be more different. In fact, their purpose is to distinguish their own community of believers from other monotheistic possibilities. In the previous volume, we discussed how supersession logic of rebellion and rivalry against Judaism threads polemically through the Book of Matthew.²¹⁸ Similarly, we will see how *Lekhah Dodi* expresses hopes of Jewish restoration in Jerusalem and Eretz Israel, how it reinforces concepts of Jewish chosen superiority, and how it denies the long-term viability of other monotheistic faiths, imagining that Muslims and Christians will convert to Judaism in a messianic moment (its images are rougher toward Christians than Muslims). In fact, for better or worse, these two Galilee prayers impose forbidding dividing walls: just as no self-respecting Jew would ever recite

the Lord's Prayer, the idea of a Christian congregation singing Lekhah Dodi seems (at least to my own Jewish eyes) ridiculous.

Lekhah Dodi's author, Solomon Alkabets (1505–1576),²¹⁹ arrived in Safed at the age of thirty, after having lived in, or visited, Salonika, Preveza, and Edirne. A student of Kabbalah in Salonika, he delivered a sermon shortly before his migration to Galilee in which, with messianic fervor, he expounded about the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. Once in Safed, he composed a well-known letter to his Kabbalistic cohorts in Salonika, claiming that he overheard a conversation between Joseph Karo and his *maggid*. The *maggid*, Alkabets reported, urged anyone known to Karo who dwelled in the Diaspora to “make haste” and “go up to the Land of Israel.” The *maggid*'s exhortation was draped in imperative, messianic hues: “Awake, O drunken ones, for the day comes when a man must cast away his gods of silver. . . . Go up to the Land of Israel.”

In Safed, Alkabets made an important contribution to Kabbalah's development, serving for a time as mystical instructor to Moses Cordovero (1522–1570). Cordovero and Alkabets became brothers-in-law, and the former also became Safed's most adulated Kabbalist in years prior to Isaac Luria's brief stint in the town. Members of the Ari's brotherhood, particularly Haim Vital, claimed that Cordovero was aware, in his life or in a *gilgul* transmigration, of the inferiority of his soul and of his mystical system, compared to Luria's soul and the Lurianic version of Kabbalah. In a complicated process whereby Vital passed the torch to Israel Sarug, who, in the final years of the sixteenth century, lobbied among Kabbalists in Italy, Lurianic Kabbalah attained exalted status and great popularity, easily running past mystical outlooks that preceded the Ari's arrival in Safed.²²⁰ It bears mention, however, that perceptive observers of sixteenth century Safed culture, such as Solomon Schechter, wondered aloud about whether there were important qualitative differences between Cordoverian Kabbalah and Lurianic Kabbalah.²²¹ “It would be a fascinating task to compare and contrast the personalities and ideas” of Cordovero and Luria, noted Scholem. “For they differ as much from one another as they are intimately related to each other.”²²²

Though the actual overlap in Safed between this triad, Alkabets, Cordovero, and Luria, only lasted months, it is reasonable, at least in some issue-specific contexts, to think of rival Kabbalistic schools in Safed. For instance, one of the most dramatic images of Safed's mystical culture features Luria leading his followers out of the synagogue on Shabbat eve, so that they could sing odes to the advent of the holy day in God's outdoors. The two brothers-in-law, Cordovero and Alkabets (who wrote the centerpiece song which Luria's followers recited, in this outdoors ritual), actually opposed Luria's innovation, insisting that Shabbat prayers stay inside the synagogue.²²³ This all goes to show that the author of Lekhah Dodi was heavily immersed in the spiritual life of Safed, as well as in its spiritual politics.

Key images in Lekhah Dodi consolidated in decades and places earlier and far from sixteenth century Safed. For instance, the association of Shabbat with feminine images, a bride and a queen, was not standard until the compilation of the *Zohar* in thirteenth century Spain. Before then, medieval commentators such as Maimonides sometimes linked Shabbat to male, kingly, imagery.

Jewish worship did not have standard liturgical ritual for Shabbat eve, Kabbalat Shabbat, prayer until sixteenth century Safed. Some antecedents appear in sources: in Jerusalem in 1488, an Italian rabbi, the Bartenura (Obadia ben Avraham of Bertinoro) sounded a little surprised when he wrote to his father about how in Muslim countries, Jews customarily went to synagogue on Friday evenings, wearing cleanly pressed attire, singing hymns of praise.²²⁴

When, a few decades later in Safed, Kabbalat Shabbat rituals were ironed out, the mystics double-layered the feminized meaning of welcoming the holy day of rest. The Shabbat bride was also a queen; and so Alkabets's composition is suggestive both of newlyweds' intimate union, and also a coronation wherein a male worshipper who observes Shabbat wears a crown. This double-tracked significance is reinforced resoundingly in the song's final words, an exhortation inviting both a bride and a queen: Boi Khalah, Boi Khalah.

These two female images, the bride and the queen, are also representations of an overarching vision of divine femininity, the Shekhinah. Generally, this Shekhinah image is one of Kabbalah's most significant innovations. In the Talmud and Midrashim, no references of Shekhinah as a feminine part of God can be found. Kabbalah's development of this concept was thus controversial—for strict Talmudists, Scholem notes, “the conception of Shekhinah as the feminine element in God was one of the main stumbling blocks in approaching the Kabbalist system.” Nonetheless, the idea had a strong popular pull, and the female side of God became “part and parcel” of Judaism among communities in Europe and elsewhere.²²⁵ Other commentators have hinted that the rise of Shekhinah's role in Kabbalah attests to the impact of Christianity upon the Spanish Kabbalists in the age of the *Zohar*, in the late thirteenth century—there are parallels linking Christianity's mother Mary imagery and Jewish mysticism's Shekhinah.²²⁶

In Safed, Shekhinah's solitude, the way she is “imagined in Kabbalah as the receptive female who possesses no divine light or vitality of her own,”²²⁷ became a troubling issue. In fact, pre-Lurianic Kabbalah, the culture from which Alkabets's song emerged, was fixated with this problem of Shekhinah's solitude. For these Safed mystics, “Shekhinah was hardly an abstraction . . . but a reality, an active protagonist in their psychological and religious lives.”²²⁸ Karo's M.M., for example, brims with anxiety about Shekhinah's loneliness. In many passages, Karo's maggid appears to

be Shekhinah herself; and M.M. contains exhortations about Shekhinah, for example, “through you Knesset [assembling] Israel shall arise and be lifted up,” which echo in Alkabets’s writing.²²⁹ Remarking on Karo’s influence upon Alkabets and Cordovero, Werblowsky cites a ritual observed by pre-Lurianic mystics in Safed: they would walk around the town in bare feet, “as a token of participation in the exile of Shekhinah.”²³⁰

In Kabbalah’s sefirot conceptualizations, Shekhinah was represented by malkhut. Cosmic harmony is disrupted because malkhut’s union with her male lover, the sefirah tiferet, is broken by human sin.²³¹ Ostensibly, the motivation of Lekhah Dodi’s beseeching demand for Shabbat observance is to bring an end to Shekhinah’s exilic solitude. Its rapturous expectation of physically intimate union with the bride, and of a crown endowed by the queen, is sometimes expressed explicitly in sefirot references, as exemplified by repeated allusions to tiferet. Yet there are also implicit suggestions of how the tiferet-malkhut union is connected to other sefirot, particularly binah; and these were easily processed by Kabbalists (malkhut and binah are both feminized sefirot, the first existing in a lower realm, and so the hierarchy between these two evokes a daughter-mother relationship; but some verses in the song create a revolving sense whereby results and causes tumble interchangeably, and hence the binah/higher versus malkhut/lower hierarchy is far from locked and rigid). Some of these suggestions were conveyed by musical arrangements which, by the end of the sixteenth century, framed the chanting of Lekah Dodi. According to Kabbalah scholar Moshe Idel, Cordovero and Alkabets accorded great import to the song’s music, believing that it evoked exhortative expectation of union between Doda (the male, representing the sefirah tiferet) and the bride (malkhut, equivalent to Shekhinah).²³²

Among Kabbalists, the song’s first words (after the refrain), *shmor v’zakhor* (literally, observe and remember, expressed in an imperative voice), were fraught with meanings connected both to worldly realities, and also to sefirot realms. “*Shmor*” was associated with the night (among other meanings, this admonition to “observe” or “safeguard” refers to the Kabbalist norm of saving sexual intimacy for a precise late-night moment on Shabbat), and also with femininity and thus malkhut. “*Zakhor*” connoted daytime activity, and the male sefirah, tiferet. The order of the words, *shmur v’zakhor*, which (as mentioned) reverses familiar Biblical phrasing, reflects Kabbalah notions of Creation whereby feminine forces precede masculine ones.²³³ *Shmor* and *Zakhor* are, in this complex song, not just calls for types of human activity. They are also independent female and male entities whose coupling symbolizes the welcoming of the Shabbat. By the Kabbalist view, Jews light two candles on Shabbat eve in their tribute.²³⁴

The song’s form is Kabbalistic. As Reuven Kimelman explains, its first, second, and final (ninth) verses relate to Shabbat, whereas its six middle

verses envision Jewish rebirth in Jerusalem and Eretz Israel; the refrain “lekhah dodi” laces between these two blocs. This six-three-one pattern recapitulates, in words, the alignment of the sefirot. As explained by the Hebrew poet, Todros ben Judah Halevi Abulafia, who lived in thirteenth century Spain, the alignment of the ten sefirot derives from Creation, wherein six of them represent the six regular weekdays, one sefira stands for Shabbat, and three (Keter, Hochma, and Binah) are free-floaters.²³⁵ The six weekdays, in this Kabbalistic arithmetic, also represents 6,000 years since Creation (they are called the “six edges of tiferet”).

As the full song is performed in Kabbalat Shabbat services, the “lekhah dodi” refrain is recited ten times, as a reflection of the total number of sefirot. But, as the author Alkabets explained, the refrain, whose initial recitation opens the song, stands for the highest sefirah, keter, which holds the largest quantity of *eyn-sof* divine energy; and so “lekhah dodi’s” repetition as the song’s chorus represents the apportioning of *eyn-sof* to the other sefirot in it.²³⁶ Since the Kabbalists imagined the movement of sefirot as somersaulting reversal, the bottommost sefirah, malkhut, often plays the same function as the top entity, keter (such rotations of high and low were later conveyed in Hasidic art²³⁷); but to make things still more complicated, this lowest sefirah, frequently associated with Shekhinah, is sometimes called “atara” (another word for crown) as exemplified in the final verse of *Lekhah Dodi* (come, in peace, crown of her husband, בואי בשלום עתרת בעלה).²³⁸ The lifting up of lower realms is an inherent (though not quite preordained) part of the design of unification (*yihud*) and repair (*tikun*). The two crowns in *Lekhah Dodi* are positioned in a state of interchangeability, as an expression of the Kabbalists’ pious confidence in unification and repair of higher and lower words.

Probably the most sonorous but enigmatic line in the song, *sof ma’aseh b’mahashavah tehilah* (a fulfilled deed is premediated), which formally closes the discussion of the meaning of Shabbat at the end of verse two, conveys this faith in the unification of worlds. Out of context, this phrase would plainly mean something like, “think it through first, before you act”; but within the mystic cosmology of the song, the phrase implies that the everyday world before us unfolds within a higher plan (essentially, the sentiment here is what people express when they look out at a drab shopping mall parking lot, and exclaim, as a matter of faith, that “there must be something more than this”). A reader exhausted at this point by the cryptically strange Hebrew symbolism in this song will be relieved to know that we have spared him or her Gematria computations of Hebrew letters and word repetitions (based on variations of 35 and 70) in the song, which were of great import to Kabbalists.²³⁹ Once we labor through the mystic intricacy of this seminal composition in Jewish prayer liturgy, we reach its core message, its earnest yearning, and its hopeful affirmation, concerning how our daily actions in our imperfect world are

enveloped within some larger divine design, *sof ma'aseh b'mahashavah tehilah*.

Now, speaking, if I may, for the many who believe that we are all in trouble if there is no meaning in inter-faith reflection, who believe that the monotheistic faiths must, ultimately, be in search of the same thing, I want to ask: what are Christians looking for in the Lord's Prayer, when they affirm, "Thy Kingdom come/Thy will be done in earth/as it is in heaven"? Are not these two signature Galilee prayers about the unification of heaven and earth? Are not "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done" and "*sof ma'aseh b'mahashavah tehilah*" synonymous? Is it unreasonable to transpose the Kabbalistic imagery to the Christian worshipper kneeling by a bed, and picture him or her wearing a mortal crown, *atara*, which will someday be exchanged for a celestial crown—is not this the central image of both prayers? And, turning to the thesis of this book (and its predecessor), I ask you to think about how difficult it was for religion to communicate the audacity of this image in *standardized* prayer, be it in Matthew and the Sermon on the Mount, or the Kabbalah and Shabbat eve liturgy. Speaking in my own vernacular, isn't it rank arrogant *chutzpah* for founders or perpetrators of religions to expect that followers will repeat, on a daily or weekly basis, belief in a preordained design whereby all the crap of daily life which we wear on our heads, as our crown of thorns, will reconfigure as a jewel in our celestial crown? Where did this *chutzpah* come from? Fortunately, from the standpoint of inter-faith dialogue, there is one definitive answer to this last question. It was on Galilee hilltops where Jesus and apostles, and Kabbalistic mystics, were inspired to canonize prayer as the coronation of belief. Here, in Galilee, on its modest stony mountains, monotheism found the courage to proclaim itself as being in the neighborhood of heaven.

Just as the Book of Matthew unfolds dualistically, with one path stressing monotheistic continuity (as in 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them"), and the other path ending in a mission to the gentiles and the supersession of Judaism, so too is *Lekhah Dodi* double-edged, with much of its imagery about unification counterpoised by phrases and visions connoting Judaism's separation from, and superiority to, the two other monotheistic faiths, Christianity and Islam. While the premier prayers of Galilee evoke unification of heaven and earth, they also reinforce, in one way or another, the necessity of monotheism's separation into different faiths, each with its agenda of supersession or superiority. This would not be the place to ponder possible moral significances of this elemental duality—our task here is to explore, briefly, how *Lekhah Dodi* also becomes a liturgy of monotheistic division, and how, on some levels, its visions of unification are proto-nationalist, suggesting that if the three faiths come together in a messianic moment

of melding, it will be on strictly Jewish terms, via the conversion of Muslims and Christians to Judaism.

These divisions are manifest in the eighth verse, the last one devoted to the theme of Jerusalem's restoration, which opens with the words "yamin usmol tifrotzi," or, "between right and left, burst forth." The normative center in this declaration, explains Kimelman, can be seen on different levels, with respect to time, space, individual or group life, and the sefirot. If the entity in the middle is thought of as time, these words in verse eight refer to Shabbat; if the reference is to the sanctification of place, the song is talking about Jerusalem. The words seem also to allude to the people of Israel, and possibly also to the "malkhut" sefirah.²⁴⁰ To some extent or another, worshippers today are conscious of such a range of interpretative possibilities. More surprising are the esoteric designations, known to Kabbalists in this era, whereby the object to be avoided on the right is Islam, and the still more forbidding and objectionable object on the left is Christianity.²⁴¹

As Kabbalah often does, the moral geography in this prayer song coopts familiar Biblical icons, scrambles them in its own esoteric hierarchies, and exploits their powerful resonance to endow its rather bizarre alignments with authority. In this eighth verse's right and left images, the Kabbalists imagined that Jacob, as Judaism's normatively pure patriarch, was positioned in the center, as a kind of male representative foil to the non-sefirot symbols of the center in this verse, such as Shabbat or Jerusalem, all of which have feminized status; on the right, as the bridge to Islam, is Abraham, and on the left, the conduit to Christianity is Isaac.²⁴² Ishmael and Esau are also connected to these right-left polarities, as are the sefirot hesed (linked to Islam) and gevurah (twinned to Christianity)—hesed, meaning compassion or mercy, being a valued quality, this imagery morally preferred Islam to Christianity. Kabbalists, such as Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov, who explicated the preferences in this esoteric imagery, lived in fifteenth century Spain, and might have sensed the coming Inquisitionist persecution of Jews. In any case, they envisioned Jews as personifications of light, Christians as darkness, and Muslims as a kind of curtain between the two.²⁴³

In Kabbalistic morality, evil is overcome not by its destruction, but rather by its purification. Lekhah Dodi's imagery is thus highly suggestive of the elimination of monotheistic impurity in Christianity and Islam via the conversion of followers of these two faiths to Judaism.²⁴⁴ Follow-up lines in verse eight have a semi-missionary ethos, describing how, via the messiah ("ish ben pritzi") in an act of cosmic unification, the God of Israel will be revered (v'et Adonai ta'aritz) by these converts, and this transformation will inspire God's Chosen People to rejoice (v'nismehah v'nagila). Restoration visions in Kabbalah fuse the rebirth of Temple Judaism in Jerusalem to the Creation cosmology whereby shattered vessels wait to be repaired; and also, in our

case at hand, they associate the end of Shekhinah's exile with the return of impure monotheistic peoples to their Jewish core. In this connection, Rabbi Cordovero was quoted by one of his students, Abraham Galante, as opining: "There will be no liquidation of the [broken] vessels; instead, their embittered, rough sides will be taken away by God, so that they will be left with their sweet, good side."²⁴⁵

From the vantage point of twenty-first century values of diversity, this poem's messianic images of wayward religions being returned to their Jewish origins sounds coercively proselytizing. Yet, within the ethnocentric frame of early modernity, it was impossible for Kabbalists to imagine restoration as anything other than foes becoming Jewish. In fact, viewed from the standpoint of these sixteenth century Jewish mystics, who belonged to an oft-abused religious minority, Kabbalah's ethic of repair, *tikun*, through mending was non-vindictive, and rather idealistic. Broken vessels, and all other forms of impure discard, were not, in the thoughts of these powerless Kabbalistic dreamers, wished away in vicarious fantasies of vengeful annihilation. They were to be purified by mending.

So, in its poetically allusive way, *Lekhah Dodi* reinforces the validity of contemporary faith in *tikun olam*. The Safed Kabbalists on monotheism's shared Galilee hilltop were social activists of a sort who idealistically believed in personal and cosmic repair.

NOTES

1. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 156–204; Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 85–138.

2. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 156–157.

3. *Ibid.*, 169.

4. Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 90–91.

5. The word "idra" means "threshing floor," and it is associated in Midrash sources with the Sanhedrin. In loose translation, it can be taken as referring to a Galilean assembly.

6. M. M. Silver, *History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 128–30.

7. A gruesome demonstration of mass reverence at Rashbi's gravesite in Meron occurred as this book was drafted, in April 2021, when forty-five Lag B'Omer celebrants were trampled to death in this Galilee area.

8. Green, *Guide*, 92.

9. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910). For the

American variant of this phenomenon: Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

10. Silver, *History of Galilee I*, 118–19, 130.
11. Ibid., 135, 161.
12. Green, *Guide*, 86–89.
13. Silver, *History of Galilee*, 261–2.
14. Ibid., 245.
15. David Greenstein, *Roads to Utopia: The Walking Stories of the Zohar* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).
16. Green, *Guide*, 74.
17. *Zohar* III 127b–145a.
18. *Zohar* III 287b–296b.
19. The “gilgul” idea of souls of deceased persons transmigrating and entering the bodies of living ones has a richly complicated history in Jewish mysticism and derives from the interplay between Jewish spiritualists, Gnosticism, and Christian streams. Scholem’s explication is an essential introduction to the subject: Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), 197–250.
20. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 1–84.
21. Ibid. (for the computation resulting in the year 1334, 9).
22. See, for instance, the “Kabbalah Centre” website: <https://kabbalah.com/en/>
23. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 8.
24. Ibid., 5.
25. Silver, *History of Galilee I*, 100–3, 149–50.
26. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 7.
27. Ibid., 4.
28. *Sefer ha-'Ari ve-Gurav*, ed. Ya'akov Moshe Hillel (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1992). For the publication history of these letters, see Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 85, 383 (n. 18), and Eli Yassif, *The Legend of Safed: Life and Fantasy in the City of Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), 245 (n. 2).
29. Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 5, 15.
30. *Sefer ha-'Ari ve-Gurav*, 39.
31. Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 5.
32. Ibid.
33. These descriptions are taken from *Sefer ha-'Ari ve-Gurav*, 23–31. See also Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 11–12.
34. The translation here is from Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 12.
35. Gerrit Bos, “Hayyim Vital’s ‘Practical Kabbalah and Alchemy’: A 17th Century Book of Secrets,” *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, vol. 4 (1995), 95.
36. “Yishuv” is a Hebrew term conventionally used in reference to the Jewish community on Palestine in its various, pre-1948 periods (e.g., Ottoman Palestine and British Mandatory Palestine).

37. Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 19.
38. Ibid., 16.
39. Unless noted otherwise, information in this section relies on Shmuel Avitsur, "Safed: A Center of Wool Textile Industry in the Sixteenth Century," [Heb.], *Sefunot*, vol. 6 (1962), 41–69.
40. Shmuel Avitsur, "Toward a History of the Wool Textile Industry in Salonika" [Heb.], *Sefunot*, vol. 12 (1971–1978), 148.
41. Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1908), 202; Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 41. The Jerusalem Talmud mentions summits in Safed from which fire signals marked the start of festivals in the Second Temple period.
42. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 42.
43. Silver, *History of Galilee I*, 235–36.
44. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 42.
45. Ibid., 43–45.
46. Ibid., 308–9.
47. Ibid., 47.
48. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 207.
49. Acre's rebirth was still decades away, as explicated in the next chapter.
50. Avitsur, "Safed," 51.
51. Avitsur, "Safed," 51; Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 48.
52. Avitsur, "Safed," 54, 65.
53. Haim Vital, *Sha'ar Ha-Gilgulim* [Heb.] (Safed: Berkhat Or Le'Zion, 2005) hakdama, 37, 390–399.
54. Haim Vital, Morris Faierstein (ed.), *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot The Book of Visions: The Diary of Haim Vital* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2005), 99–100. An English translation of Vital's dream diary can be found in Morris Faierstein (ed.), *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).
55. Bos, "Hayyim Vital's 'Practical Kabbalah and Alchemy,'" 96.
56. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 52.
57. Ibid., 48.
58. Avitsur, "Safed," 73.
59. Ibid., 53.
60. Ibid., 63. That the import routes for this raw material stretched over a distance of 800 miles says something about the lack of long run viability for the wool trade in Safed.
61. Ibid., 71.
62. Ibid., 57.
63. Ibid., 72.
64. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 208.
65. Minted in gold, a florin's value, through the sixteenth century is not definitively estimated; some estimates range from \$140 to \$1,000. Internet sites convey interesting, albeit non-authoritative, discussions of currencies mentioned in this volume, for example: <https://1632.org/1632-tech/faqs/money-exchange-rates-1632/>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florin>

66. Avitsur, "Safed," 64.
67. Ibid., 61.
68. Ibid., 75.
69. Avitsur (73) implies that several thousand Jews remained engaged in wool work throughout this period of decline.
70. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 48–9.
71. Yitzhak Gormezano Goren, *Ha-sheker ha-kadosh: Donah Grasyah be-Lisbo'ah, Portugal* (Bnei Brak: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2010).
72. Yaakov Harozen, *Donah Grasyah v'medinat hayehudim b'tveria sh'begalil* (Tzur ot: n.p., 1980).
73. Cecil Roth, *The House of Nasi: Dona Gracia* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1947); Cecil Roth, *The House of Nasi: The Duke of Naxos* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1948).
74. Andree Aelion Brooks, *The Woman Who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Dona Gracia Nasi, a Jewish Leader During the Renaissance* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2002).
75. This description relies on Brooks's biography as well as Roth's volumes.
76. Roth, *Dona Gracia*, 76.
77. Ibid., 77.
78. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings*, 437.
79. Ibid., 438.
80. Ibid., 442.
81. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 51–52.
82. Jacob Katz, "The Controversy on the Semikah (Ordination) between Jacob Bei-Rav and the Ralbah," [Heb.], *Zion* (1951), 28–45.
83. For discussion of the impressive reach of Lurianic Kabbalah, and other kabbalistic streams, in this era, from North Africa to Eastern Europe: Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 118–20; Gershom Scholem, *Shabbetai Zevi ve'hatenuah ha-shabtayit b'yamei haiyav*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987), 35–74.
84. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 84.
85. Ibid., 9–37.
86. Ibid., 96.
87. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 122.
88. Ibid., 322–326.
89. As disseminator and teacher of Luria's Kabbalistic visions, Vital held this monopoly for just a short time, and his motives and maneuvering in this episode were complex. Gershom Scholem, "The Document on Solidarity of Luria's Disciples," [Heb.] *Zion*, vol. 5 (1940), 133–60; Ronit Meroz, "Faithful Transmission Versus Innovation: Luria and His Disciples," in Peter Schafer, Joseph Dan (eds.), *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: Fifty Years After* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 257–74. Though, as mentioned, Luria enjoyed unprecedented levels of saintly adoration, it is not entirely accurate to depict Vital solely as Luria's student. Vital, who had a feverish mind and almost uncontrollable ambitions, sometimes thought of

himself as the real son of David messianic prodigy for whose cultivation Luria had come to Safed in the first place.

90. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 140–6; Vital, *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*, 76, 95–96.

91. Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical*, 23, 85.

92. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*; Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 1–2.

93. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 116–17.

94. See, for instance, David Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 101–20.

95. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 203.

96. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 152.

97. For discussion of roots of this term's association with revelation, see Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 265–266.

98. *Ibid.*, 78.

99. References to Shlomo/Solomon in M.M. refer either to Molcho, or also to Solomon Alkabets, a kabbalist whose journey from Salonica to Palestine influenced Karo in various ways. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 91–105.

100. Joseph Karo, *Maggid Mesharim* (Hebrew translation; editor, Yosef Ben Yitzhak Hachohen) (Jerusalem: Mendeli, 2007), Genesis: 29–34.

101. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 63.

102. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 112–14, translates the maggid's revelations and explanations about the male *gilgul* ancestry of Karo's third wife.

103. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 119 (his translation).

104. Karo, *Maggid*, Genesis: 44–45.

105. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 90.

106. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 127 (his translation).

107. Though this criterion might not exactly apply to circumstances of the Ari's death, Vital composed self-confessional passages implying that illicit disclosure of his master's doctrine precipitated Luria's death, perhaps as a semi-martyr (Vital's guilty conscience in this respect is discussed below).

108. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 109–11.

109. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 2.

110. Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 244 n. 8.

111. *Shivhei ha-Ari* [Heb., n.a.] (Jerusalem: Or Hahokma, 1998), 21 (no author cited).

112. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 24.

113. *Shivhei*, 16–17.

114. *Shivhei*, 18; Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 29–32.

115. *Shivhei*, 19.

116. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 35.

117. *Shivhei*, 20.

118. *Ibid.*, 21.

119. The issue of Luria's physical strength and real-life capabilities is not clearly resolved in scholarly analyses. Fine tends to emphasize Luria's real-life competence, meticulously detailing accounts of his work as a commercial trader in a noticeably

broad Middle East network. Just three days before his death, Fine notes, admirably, this Kabbalistic demiurge, the inventor of a richly intricate mystical system, was still dealing with accounts in peppers and cucumbers (Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 32–34). This image of Luria as an eminently practical businessman, complementing his alter-ego as mystical pioneer, is useful in a number of contexts—for instance, it helps explain the volatility in his relationship with Haim Vital, who was neither a charismatic religious teacher nor a practical everyday administrator. Yassif takes another view, presenting Luria as a rather sickly scholar unable to accomplish much in the everyday world (an interesting observation offered by Yassif about Lurianic Kabbalah, highlighting how, in miraculous legends of the Ari, he has superior, divination-type, knowledge about everyday realities in Safed, but never actually *does* anything in them, dovetails with this skepticism about his physical well-being). To reinforce his skepticism about Luria's practical competence, Yassif cites a recollection written by Haim Vital, which alludes to his master, the Ari, as being “sickly and broken,” and discloses that during the half year of autumn and winter chills in Safed, Luria bypassed ritual immersion. In contradistinction to Fine's image of Luria, Vital's recollection describes a scholarly invalid who was dependent upon his mother. Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 197–220 (217–18 for Vital's anecdote). In his pioneering essay, Schechter staked a middle ground between these positions, speculating that Luria was not a self-made or talented businessman; “he had some competency granted to him by his rich uncle and father-in-law” (Schechter, 268).

120. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 329–30.

121. *Shivhei*, 32–33. It bears mention that Luria backtracks soon after making this statement, and indicates that Vital really should be the sole scribe, owing to the particularities of Vital's soul ancestry.

122. *Shivhei*, 107.

123. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 79.

124. *Shivhei*, 27.

125. For discussion of Shabbat sexuality norms in mystical Safed: Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 200.

126. *Shivhei*, 32.

127. *Ibid.*, 34. For a stimulating discussion of Luria's diagnostic skills, as a “physician of the soul”: Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 150–86.

128. *Shivhei*, 104.

129. *Ibid.*, 116–17.

130. *Ibid.*, 63.

131. *Ibid.*, 65.

132. *Ibid.*, 109.

133. *Ibid.*, 88–90.

134. *Ibid.*, 90–95.

135. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 333–334. Vital refers to his Cain ancestry, and this theory about Cain's high-level goodness (which stems from the *Zohar*), in Haim Vital, *Sha'ar Ruah HaKodesh* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Ha-Ari Sacred Publication Series, 1961), hakdama, 38. Scholem opined that “the Gnostic element in the reevaluation of Cain's soul, which is now perceived as a ‘great soul,’

is one of the most remarkable and one of the strangest part of Luria's doctrine, within a system that was strictly Jewish." Gershom Scholem, "Gilgul: The Transmigration of the Soul," in Scholem, *Godhead*, 236.

136. *Shivhei*, 74.
137. *Ibid.*
138. *Ibid.*, 77.
139. *Ibid.*, 108.
140. Green, *Guide*, 86–98.
141. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 260.
142. Donald Wilder Menzi, Zwe Padeh eds., *The Tree of Life: Chayyim Vital's Introduction to the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria, The Palace of Adam Kadmon* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1999), 4.
143. Gershom Scholem, "A Document by the Disciples of Isaac Luria," *Zion*, vol. 5 (1940), 133–60.
144. Ronit Meroz, "Teachings of Redemption in Lurianic Kabbalah" [Heb.], PhD thesis, Jerusalem, 1988.
145. Ronit Meroz, "Faithful Transmission"; Shifra Assouline, "Messianic Biography as a Personal Story" in Rabbi Haim Vital's *Book of Visions, Kaballah*, vol. 36 (2017).
146. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 124–125.
147. *Ibid.*, 126–7.
148. Menzi and Padeh introduction, *Tree of Life*, xx–xxii.
149. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 131–132. The translation is his re-working of Daniel Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), 94, and the text is Vital's *Derush she-Masar*.
150. Mezni and Padeh, *Tree of Life*, xxiii–xxix.
151. *Ibid.*, 37–54.
152. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 209.
153. Menzi and Padeh introduction, *Tree of Life*, xxxvi–xxxvii.
154. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 135.
155. *Ibid.*
156. Mezni and Padeh, *Tree of Life*, 134–135.
157. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 137; Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
158. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 142.
159. For an excellent description of this prayer regime and transmigration practices: Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 187–300.
160. Green, *A Guide*, 19–21.
161. Moshe Idel, "'One from a Town, Two from a Clan': The Diffusion of Lurianic Kabbala and Sabbateanism, a Re-Examination," *Jewish History*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Fall 1993), 79–104.
162. For an overview of Heschel's politics and theology: Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

163. For an enlightening survey of anachronism, and use and abuse, in usages of “Tikun Olam,” see Jonathan Krasner, “The Place of Tikkun Olam in American Jewish Life,” *Jewish Political Studies Review*, vol. 24, no. 3–4.

164. Lurianic yihud brought Jewish grave veneration into the modern era, capping a complicated and protracted medieval process whereby earlier ideas associating impurity with the dead, and conjuring dread of graves as the loci of restless, malevolent spirits were replaced by notions of rejuvenating communion with the deceased’s soul. There is some evidence of medieval Jewish mourners respectfully prostrating at gravesites, but this form of *hishtathut* lacked the elaborate physicality and mystification of the Lurianic yihud rituals. For surveys of this transformation in medieval-to-modern Jewish thinking about graves, and of the major impact of Lurianic yihud upon Galilee’s mystical resonance: Pinchas Giller, “Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee: The Veneration of the Sacred Relics in Classical Kabbalah,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, vol. 4, 147–69; Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 268–75.

165. Giller, “Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee,” 158.

166. Sefer ha-’Ari; Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 302–4.

167. Giller, “Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee,” 160.

168. Haim Vital, *Sha’ar Ha-Gilgulim*, 390–9; Gilner, 160.

169. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 260.

170. *Ibid.*, 259–99.

171. This discussion relies on Scholem, “Gilgul.”

172. *Ibid.*, 224.

173. Vital, *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*, 134, 134–97.

174. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 314–15.

175. Scholem, “Gilgul,” 235.

176. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 333–339.

177. Scholem, *Godhead*, 236.

178. Amir Engel, *Gershom Scholem: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017); David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Master of the Kabbalah* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

179. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995).

180. Scholem changed his position regarding key claims made by Graetz regarding the Kabbalah and its origins, but his hostility toward Graetz and others who stressed “rational” sides of Judaism was consistent. Biale, *Gershom*, 139–40.

181. The biographical details in this section are taken from Faiersstein’s introduction, *Jewish Mystical*.

182. Faiersstein, *Jewish Mystical*.

183. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982).

184. Michael Oron, “Dream, Vision and Reality in Haim Vital’s Sefer ha-Hezyonot,” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* (1992), 299–309; Assouline, “Messianic Biography,” 31–77; Faiersstein, Translator’s Introduction to *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*.

185. These connections are well explicated in Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 46–58.
186. Marc Cohen (ed.), *The Autobiography of a 17th Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena's Life of Judah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
187. Michael Stanislawski, *Autobiographical Jews: Essays in Jewish Self-Fashioning* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).
188. Haim Vital, *Sefer Ha-Peulot* [Heb.] (n.l: n.p., 2014). The volume, a second edition, is privately circulated and sold under Orthodox Jewish auspices.
189. Bos, "Hayyim Vital's 'Practical Kabbalah and Alchemy,'" 63.
190. One Luria disciple, Moses Yonah, produced a detailed diagnostic catalogue on masturbation, and Kabbalah accorded cosmological import to illicit seed spilling (Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 177–179). Vital's admission that he prepared 2,000 amulets to ward off Lilith, the demonic exploiter of spilled semen, points both to the duration of his extra-curricular scientific experimentation and also to his unstated doubts about the potency of Lurianic rituals to forestall evil.
191. Meir Benayahu, *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari* (Jerusalem: Hanhagoth, 1967), 290–306; Bos, "Hayyim Vital's 'Practical Kabbalah and Alchemy,'" 56.
192. Bos, "Hayyim Vital's 'Practical Kabbalah and Alchemy,'" 64.
193. *Ibid.*, 56.
194. In the line of mysticism running between the Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah, "black magic" won the approbation of influential gentile counterparts from the very start, as exemplified by Liebes's discussion of Gnostic counterparts to Moses de Leon and his circle. Vital's enthusiasms in *Sefer Ha-Peulot* were supported by this sub-tradition of gentile counterparts who, in Liebes's words, viewed "black magic as a way to white magic and even to prophecy." Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 17.
195. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971).
196. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 242.
197. Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 70, 160.
198. The publication has had several names. Bos calls it *Kabbalah Ma'asit*, or Practical Kabbalah, which is problematic because of the term's long, often pejorative, associative history. Another name that circulated was *Sefer Ha-Refuot* (ספר הרפואות), *Book of Cures*, but the text describes metals and other non-medicinal activities. Thus, we use the broad and generic title, *Sefer Ha-Peulot*, Book of Actions.
199. Bos, "Hayyim Vital's 'Practical Kabbalah and Alchemy,'" 58.
200. The information in these sections is drawn from Bos's article.
201. Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 47.
202. *Ibid.*, 70–71.
203. For discussion of possible Talmudic precedent of this polemical image: Peter Schafer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 88.
204. Vital, *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*, 70–71.
205. Faienstein, *Sefer Ha-Hezyonot*, 27.
206. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 188.
207. Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, hakdama 38, 400.
208. Scholem describes the mix of antinomianism and non-radical enthusiasm in this legacy in *Major Trends*, 291, 330.

209. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 109.
210. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 255.
211. *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 72.
212. Ibid., 73–78.
213. Ibid., 136–137.
214. Yassif, *The Legend of Safed*, 124.
215. Ibid., 126.
216. Ibid.
217. Ibid., 128.
218. Silver, *History of Galilee*, 76–82.
219. The biographical information about Alkabets relies on Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 50–51.
220. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 257.
221. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 258.
222. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 252.
223. Reuven Kimelman, *The Mystical Meaning of Lekhah Dodi and Kabbalat Shabbat* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), 17, 22.
224. Ibid., 13.
225. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 229.
226. Green, *A Guide*, 95.
227. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 59.
228. Ibid., 62–63.
229. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic*, 112.
230. Ibid.
231. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 59.
232. Idel's interpretation is cited by Kimelman, *The Mystical Meaning of Lekhah Dodi and Kabbalat Shabbat*, 30.
233. Kimelman, *The Mystical Meaning of Lekhah Dodi and Kabbalat Shabbat*, 40.
234. Ibid., 41.
235. Ibid., 46.
236. Ibid., 47.
237. Batsheva Goldman-Ida, *Hasidic Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 266.
238. Kimelman, *The Mystical Meaning of Lekhah Dodi and Kabbalat Shabbat*, 47.
239. Ibid., 48–52.
240. Ibid., 86–87.
241. Ibid., 94.
242. Ibid.
243. Ibid., 97.
244. Ibid.
245. Ibid., 98.

Chapter 2

Ottoman Galilee

THE DRUZE CRUSADER

In the 1620s, Galilee, along with other parts of Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, were ruled by a Druze prince, Emir Fakhr al-Din. The unusual impression made by this remarkable figure can be gleaned from three contemporary accounts, all written by well-placed European observers.

The first record, dated 1621, was written by a French aristocrat named Sieur Des Hayes de Courmenin, who had been sent to Lebanon by King Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu and instructed to defend Franciscan interests in the Holy Land, in opposition to Armenian claims. Branching out from his base on Mount Lebanon, Fakhr al-Din had come to rule Palestine, “the entire country between the Mediterranean and Lake Tiberias,” reported this nobleman. The emir’s control was especially prominent in the north: “He rules all of the Upper Galilee, as well as the greatest part of the Lower Galilee and Phoenicia, where the cities of Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, and St. John of Acre are situated along the Mediterranean shore.” The emir’s annual income, this nobleman reported, totaled 900,000 livres, though he had to relinquish about a third of this sum as tribute to the Ottoman sultan. Enforcing military training exercises on Fridays, Fakhr al-Din kept all able-bodied men in the region’s villages on call—within two days, he could call up an army of 10,000 foot soldiers and also 800 cavalymen, called *Soqmans*. “The factor that makes him most formidable vis-à-vis the Sultan,” concluded King Louis XIII’s emissary, “is the fact that his lands include several nearly inaccessible mountains, the approaches to which are [so] strongly fortified that they provide him with a perfect refuge.”¹

In 1630, when Fakhr al-Din’s power reached its pinnacle, a Norman traveler named Gilles Fermanel inserted a telling biographical description of the

emir in an extensive report on the Holy Land. Fakhr al-Din, wrote Fermanel, was “about seventy [actually he was 58], but in very good health, being still active and adept at all sorts of [military] exercises.” The report continued:

We could only marvel at the way he ate, consuming more than all four of us. He was a clever, witty man, well-versed in several sciences, being an expert herbalist, philosopher and astronomer with a strong bent for natural magic, and was generally considered to be one of the most accomplished individuals in the Turkish empire.²

The emir, Gilles Fermanel continued, welcomes vessels from many parts of Christendom at his ports. He oversees a lively trade in silk and cotton with “the French, the English, the Venetians and . . . the Grand Duke of Tuscany.” Fakhr al-Din “is of the tribe of the Druze, who are indifferent to all religions, having neither temple nor mosque.” Yet the Druze, Fermanel clarified, believe in one God, and “hold that they were once Christians, having taken refuge in their mountains after the loss of the Holy Land.” In fact, Fakhr al-Din “claims to be descended from the race of Godfrey of Bouillon” and asserts kinship ties with the Grand Duke of Tuscany. All told, the emir was a complicated character who “act[ed] very pious” with Muslims, while concurrently telling “Christians that he is fondly attached to their religion.”

Over and again, Emir Fakhr al-Din led Christians to believe that were they to send forces to his region, he would lead them on a new Crusade in the Holy Land aimed at restoring Jerusalem, while “asking very little for himself,” this observer reported.³ He was a latter-day Druze Crusader.

The third and final contemporary report, the most biographically sweeping, was submitted as an appraisal of Fakhr al-Din’s life following his 1633 capture by the Turks (he was executed two years later). Its author was the emir’s personal physician, the Franciscan Eugene Roger. There is reason to believe that this biography reflects how Fakhr al-Din himself viewed the events and achievements of his own life.⁴

The emir’s ambitious policies, Roger observed, caused unease and resentment among Ottoman-appointed sheikhs and pashas in Damascus, Tripoli, and elsewhere. They had real cause for worry. Fakhr al-Din’s ambitions extended beyond the consolidation of his forefathers’ conquests in Lebanon’s mountainous Shouf district; in fact, the emir “desired to extend his sovereignty as far as he could.” Besieged with complaints lodged by jealous local sheikhs, the Turkish Sultan, Ahmed, decided in 1613 to restrain the Druze prince, sending an armada of sixty galleys and concurrently ordering the Pasha of Damascus to attack on land, with his force of 30,000 men. Cornered, Fakhr al-Din fled by sea for Tuscany, taking with him four wives (in fact, he only took one), fifty servants, Druze and Muslim, and some 20,000 gold

marks. He was received by Florence's Grand Duke Cosimo II de Medici and also had an audience with Pope Paul V in Rome.

The exiled Druze prince and his retinue stayed in Italy for five years. During this protracted period, Fakhr al-Din unhesitatingly divulged to the Grand Duke and others his objective of "ruining" the Ottoman Empire; and he declared that "recovering the Holy Land for Christianity would be a straightforward matter."

Returning to Palestine after this five year sojourn in Italy (in 1618), Roger reported, the Druze prince "proceeded to acquire sovereignty" in northern stretches of the country. He fortified his control of Galilee by operating fifteen fortresses. Finally, in a passage whose veracity has remained in dispute, the emir's physician insisted that Fakhr al-Din never abandoned his goal of wresting control of the Holy Land for Christendom, and fully "intended to have himself baptized upon entering Jerusalem."⁵

Who was this Druze Prince of Galilee? How did it come about that a Druze clan leader took up the title once worn by Tancred, presenting himself as an indigenous Middle East heir to Crusader rulers? Was Fakhr al-Din's posture



Figure 2.1 Fakhr al-Din, from Eugene Roger, *Le Terre Sainte*. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

of being different things to different people—a Muslim dutifully observant of the Ramadan fast, and a Christian to-be who told European princes and clerics that (as Roger phrased it) “he had no desire more passionate than to rid the Holy Land from all Turks and Jews”—representative of a Druze practice of spiritual and political dissimulation? How did Fakhr al-Din’s five year period of exile in Italy influence his orientation as a ruler? Did this emir, often regarded as the founder of modern Lebanon, seek to westernize the region, in line with the post-Renaissance landscape he encountered in Tuscany? How can his military power, described in one report as the ability to mobilize 10,000 soldiers on just two days’ notice, be related to his Druze background?

The career of this extraordinary individual pays tribute to the Druze people’s status as a kind of wild card in the history of Galilee, and in Lebanon beyond it. The Druze have an uncanny ability to alter the political balance of power in the region while keeping everyone in it, and in Europe beyond it, guessing as to their ultimate cultural-spiritual orientation. Who, as a matter of fact, are the Druze?

THE DRUZE: MYTHS AND DEMOGRAPHY

Druze history is transnational, belonging to a region comprised today primarily of Lebanon, Israel, and Syria. Toward the end of the twentieth century, scholars estimated the total world Druze population at about 1 million, with about 40 percent of that population residing in Lebanon (Druze comprise roughly 10 percent of the residents in that country), and another 40 percent living in Syria. Israel, the sole country which compiles reliable statistics regarding its Druze population, had 75,000 Druze citizens in 1988 (15,000 of whom dwelled on the Golan Heights, the remainder being in Galilee and the Haifa region). At this time, some 15,000 Druze lived in Jordan, and perhaps 75,000 Druze lived outside of the Middle East, in the United States, Australia, and elsewhere.⁶

Long regarded as a mysterious, reclusive people whose religion is known in full only to an elite cadre (known as the *uqqal*’), Druze in western countries have in recent decades initiated public outreach efforts, including various American Druze organizations (an impetus for such work was controversy and confusion caused by the 1970s civil war in Lebanon).⁸ Partly as a result of this organizational effort, a reasonable amount of sound information about the Druze is today available. Publications take different stances on a set of controversial issues, including the racial-national origins of the Druze;⁹ the character of the group’s founder, the renegade Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim (al-Hakim bi Amr Allah); and the relationship between the Druze faith and Islam.¹⁰ Despite the lack of consensus about such issues, a reliable account of

roles played by Druze individuals and communities in the history of Galilee, and its outlying regions, can be produced.

An early record of Druze settlement was provided around 1165 by the Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela.¹¹ He chided what he perceived as promiscuous, and incestuous, festivals and practices among the Druze, but also noted that the Druze “are friendly to the Jews.”¹² Benjamin’s geographic citations, alluding to Druze settlements starting 10 miles from Sidon, and extending to Mount Hermon, are in the vicinity of contemporary concentrations of Druze communities,¹³ meaning that this is not a wandering people.

Through the WWI era, travelers and academics marshaled a bewildering number of hypotheses concerning the racial and cultural origins of the Druze.¹⁴ Druze were described as being descendants of the Samaritans, Hittites, Persians, and more. Henry Light, in an 1818 publication, speculated that the Druze were descendants of members of the tribe of Israel who fled from an enraged Moses after the affair of the golden calf.¹⁵

A calculated misrepresentation of Druze ancestry was prominent in the seventeenth century period of Fakhr al-Din’s rule. As indicated in the aforementioned reports, this emir spent a five year period of exile in the Medici court in Italy, and, hoping to make his name known beyond the Shouf district, he cultivated diplomatic alliances and pursued economic ties with Europeans. Assuring such potential western allies of his ability to lead a new Crusade that would wrest Jerusalem from Ottoman control, Fakhr al-Din allowed various rumors about his own Christian orientation to circulate. The question of whether the emir really felt committed to Christianity, or whether these professions were shaped by the Druze practice of willful dissimulation, *taqiya*, continues to exercise biographers¹⁶—indisputably, in conversations with notables such as the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Viceroy of Sicily, or the Pope, Fakhr al-Din represented himself and his people as having descended from European forefathers who took part in the Crusades.¹⁷ On this fabricated genealogy, the Druze descended from the house of Lorraine through Godfrey of Bouillon. Fakhr al-Din and others suggested that the name “Druze” was derived from that of a certain Crusader, Comte de Dreux, who led his Frank regiment to the mountains of Lebanon, after the fall of Acre.¹⁸

Records of Druze settlement in Galilee stretch back to the thirteenth century.¹⁹ One medieval chronicler, Shams al-Din al-Dimashki (1236–1327), referred to Druze communities around the Zabud Mountain, near Safed. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, another chronicler (the Qadi of Safed, Shams ad-Din al-Uthmani) reported that most of the villages around Safed were Druze. Scholars assume that the zenith of Druze ethno-national power in the region, the period of Fakhr al-Din’s rule (1590–1633) witnessed a rise in Galilee’s Druze population, since the Ottoman district (*sanjak*) of Safed fell under his authority.

This sequential timeline warrants comment. The first years of Fakhr al-Din's rule are the stretch when Haim Vital tried unsuccessfully to regroup in Safed, and then left the country, effectively bringing Galilee's Lurianic mystical period to an end. In terms of headline-grabbing in Galilee history, the Druze became the successors of the Safed Kabbalists.

The most authoritative record of seventeenth century Druze residence in Galilee was compiled by Abad al-Malik Ashrafani, a Damascus-based chronicler. His account refers to nine Druze villages in three Galilee districts, named as-Sahil (southwest Galilee), ash-Shaghur (mid-Galilee), and al-Hama (east of Tiberias). Most of the villages he mentioned no longer exist, though at least two (Yarka, Jatt) remain today in Israel.

Records of eighteen Druze settlements in Galilee and Mount Carmel between 1961 and 1983 reflect demographic stability. Over this generation, the total Druze number consistently comprised 60 percent of the population in these villages (in contrast, the Christian population's share in these villages dropped sharply over this period).²⁰

DRUZE ORIGINS AND EARLY HISTORY

The Druze people emerged as a result of Islam's continuing controversy about lines of succession following the passing of the prophet Muhammad.²¹ The weakening of the Sunnis' Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad in the ninth and tenth centuries was coterminous with complex processes of consolidation and fracture within Shia political cultures. One Shia offshoot, the Ismaili sect, managed early in the tenth century to attain sovereignty as the Fatimid empire in North Africa, where most Muslims were Sunni. Maintaining policies of toleration and respect for Muslim, Christian, and Jewish groups, the Fatimid caliphs pushed hard toward Egypt, also a Sunni area, finally capturing the country in 969 under the leadership of al-Muizz Li Din-Allah. Al-Muizz built a new city, Cairo, to serve as the caliphate's capital, and he adorned it by laying the foundations of the al-Azhar mosque, which also became a university center. Geographically, the Druze became rooted on Lebanese hilltops far from Cairo, but the community's syncretic religion stems from this Fatimid culture of learning, one which encouraged the application of Greek thought in the interpretation of Islamic ritual and duties.

Specifically, the Druze people were created by a schism within the Fatimid caliphate. This rupture was precipitated by the ascent to the throne of an eleven-year-old boy, al-Hakim bi Amr Allah in 996, whom we met in volume 1.²² Al-Hakim succeeded his father, Al-Aziz bi Allah, whose twenty-one year rule was distinguished by the Fatimid caliphate's expansion across North Africa to the Atlantic, and by a continuing ethos of intellectual curiosity and spiritual tolerance (al-Aziz married a Melkite Christian woman).²³

Al-Hakim proved to be a restless, and extremely controversial, ruler. As he grew into his teens, his caliphate in Cairo sponsored various scientific initiatives, including the construction of an astronomical observatory and the hosting of various experts in philosophy, mathematics, and medicine. The young caliph must have been looking for answers to a number of riddles about the physical world, but the specific issue which appears to have overwhelmed him was religious. Claiming descent through Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad and wife of the first Shia imam, Ali, the Ismaili movement was saturated in messianic expectation; but after almost a century and five Fatimid caliphs, this messianic promise remained unfulfilled. This sense of unrequited expectation became overwhelming at the time of al-Hakim's rule.²⁴

The Druze religious movement dates from the thirteenth year of al-Hakim's reign, 1009–1010, when various Ismaili religious figures in Cairo began to speak of the caliph as the incarnation of messianic promises.²⁵ At this time, al-Hakim and his followers reversed Fatimid policies of tolerant inclusiveness, destroying the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, clamping restrictions on the Muslim Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, and persecuting local Jews and Christians. Acts undertaken by al-Hakim and his circle over the next eleven years crowned the renegade caliph's reputation among outside commentators, including Edward Gibbon, as a certified madman.²⁶

In contrast, subsequent Druze writers never denied the extraordinary character of al-Hakim's actions, yet stressed their allegorical and symbolic import. For them, al-Hakim's "freakishness only serves to intensify the belief in his superhuman character. His extraordinary character proves his divine nature."²⁷ Outside this circle of Druze interpreters who accorded messianic significance to this rebellious Fatimid caliph, some commentators observe that at least some measure of al-Hakim's reforms, including regulations concerning weights and measures, were clearly rational, and they also discern a reasoned pattern in police measures he enforced against perceived vices.²⁸ What cannot be denied on any interpretation is al-Hakim's status as founder of a religious community whose sociopolitical continuity over the next millennium is an exceptional phenomenon in its volatile region.

A thousand years ago, in 1021, Al-Hakim disappeared mysteriously. The whereabouts and causes of his passing remained in dispute (this subject has inspired more speculation and commentary than any other aspect of the caliph's controversial twenty-five year reign),²⁹ though many outsiders contended that his sister, Sitt al-Mulk, a target of the moralizing caliph's attacks, colluded in al-Hakim's murder. In any case, the caliph's disappearance provoked a prolonged period of persecution (known as *mihna*) of followers of *Tawhid*, the Druze faith, that was instigated by al-Hakim's son,

Ali al-Zahir. For stretches of the mihna, the Druze leadership went underground. The fact that this new religion emerged in a threateningly violent context, scholars assume, “left an indelible mark on the Druze psyche to this day,”³⁰ contributing to the community’s norms of solidarity, on the one hand, and perhaps also impacting on its reclusive wariness, on the other hand.

The controversial al-Hakim’s first prominent follower was Hamza ibn Ali, who hailed from Zozan in eastern Iran. During the last years of al-Hakim’s rule, Hamza won designation as an imam (this being a departure from a long-standing tradition whereby such ascent depended upon a definable birth-line to the house of the prophet Muhammad); and he issued a religious call, a *dawah*, for followers of a new faith revolving around the idea of al-Hakim’s rule as the beacon of a new religious order.³¹

From the start, Hamza and cohort issuers of the *dawah* operated as though they were initiating a new religion, rather than a mere offshoot of Islam. Theologically, they were united around a self-image whereby they were Muwahhidun, believers in one God whose message had been revealed by al-Hakim; but these early Druze proselytizers were divided by tactical issues, including the issue of whether the *dawah* ought to be promoted by reasonable argumentation, as Hamza insisted, or by brute force.

One of al-Hakim’s messengers, a rival of Hamza’s named Muhammad al-Darazi, was discredited for having advocated spreading the faith by sword. Before he was assassinated (perhaps at al-Hakim’s behest) al-Darazi brought the Druze faith to southern Lebanon, the region which became its heartland; and, ironically, converts to Tawhid, and also the very name of the faith itself, were derived from the name of this soon-to-be disgraced proselytizer, al-Darazi (the converts were known as *duruz*).³²

However much it was complicated by internal power struggle and by the persecutory mihna, the *dawah* period of conversion and recruitment proceeded with manifest efficacy and persistence for twenty-six years after its initiation by Hamza. The *dawah* was formally ended in 1043, meaning that for about the past 980 years the Druze have been, in principle, a closed community, with no new members accepted in the faith.³³

The final phase of Druze enrollment, 1037–1043, was handled “almost single-handedly” by another one of Hamza’s lieutenants, Baha al-Din al-Muqtana, a figure of exceptional competence and stamina.³⁴ Formally titled as the imam’s deputy, as *al-muqtana*, Baha al-Din supervised the codification of the Druze faith via the collection of 111 epistles (*al-hikma al sharifa*, the Noble Wisdom, composed by al-Hakim, Hamza, and Baha al-Din himself), which after an elapse of four centuries, were compiled in six books, *Kutab al-Hikma* (Books of Wisdom).³⁵

DRUZE RELIGION

The Druze religion is monotheistic and avowedly opposed to anthropomorphized conceptualizations of God, though it acknowledges that a human-like reflected image (*nasut*) of God can reveal itself to believers.³⁶ In fact, Druze theology refers to a series of ten successive divine revelations, culminating with the phenomenon of al-Hakim, the most perfect such manifestation.³⁷ On the Druze cyclical view of history, periods of revelation alternate with occultation—the divine essence (*lahut*) is unknowable, but *nasut* reflections are accessible to humans during times of revelation.³⁸

A main tenet of Tawhid is an elaborately detailed belief in reincarnation (*tanasukh*). The Druze believe that the soul of a deceased person immediately occupies the body of a newborn. A soul transmigrates only to a human body. The soul is inseparable from the body, and the well-being of the body has significance to the Druze, since their faith associates an impure body with an impure soul.³⁹ As the Druze see it, the number of all souls of believers and non-believers has been fixed since Creation, and so when one Druze dies another is born.⁴⁰ These ideas about reincarnation preclude Islamic or other religions' concepts about a Day of Judgment, heavenly paradise after death, and predestination.⁴¹ On the other hand, some informed commentators have cited Druze funeral sayings and rituals which portray China as a kind of heaven in the east. "When a good Druze is dead in the Lebanon, he is supposed to be reborn in China," wrote Hitti.⁴² It is not clear whether China's folkloristic allure stems from a legend about Hamza's escape to China from Cairo, where he joined up with al-Hakim.⁴³ Druze military valor is sometimes attributed to this religious conviction about the soul's transmigration immediately upon death.⁴⁴

Hamza and his followers interpreted Islamic law, *sharia*, as allegory, and the Druze do not heed the five pillars of Islam.⁴⁵ Various ritualistic practices between the two faiths are strikingly different. Muslim men are circumcised, whereas this is not a religious obligation among the Druze; polygamy is permitted by Islam but not in Druze culture; divorce proceedings, in practice,⁴⁶ are easier to carry out in Islamic society, compared to Druze communities.

A distinguishing feature of Druze religious culture is the principle of *taqiya*, or dissimulation,⁴⁷ which condones forms of deception in relations with non-believers. Unlike Shia Muslims, the Druze do not valorize martyrdom, and so this principle allows a Druze to deny his faith in times of mortal danger, if such dissimulation protects himself and his family.⁴⁸ Some accounts of *taqiya*'s origins are historical⁴⁹ and focus on the *mihna* period. According to this theory, by adopting practices of secrecy and evasiveness, the Druze managed to shield themselves from persecutors. Another view, promoted by the twentieth century Druze scholar and Lebanese politician Kamal Jumblatt,

explicates *taqiya* as a theologically motivated practice. On this interpretation, various Druze texts and doctrines are themselves misleadingly amenable to superficial explication; in keeping with Gnostic influences, the real meaning of these doctrines is accessible only to a religious elite.⁵⁰ A related explanation involves calculations harbored by Hamza and Baha al-Din in phases of *dawah* proselytizing: resulting from concerns about the recruitment of spiritually competent persons, aspects of Druze faith were outwardly misleading, their true import known only to religiously insightful recruits. According to the Israeli Druze scholar Kais Firro, this variant of *taqiya* deception in the Druze recruitment campaigns led to the subsequent partition of Druze society, one which lasts through the present day, between the initiated religious elite, the *uqqal*, and the uninitiated, ignorant *juhhal*.⁵¹

The sheikhs, religious leaders, who constitute the *uqqal* can be identified by specific dress, including white skull caps, black baggy pants, and robes.⁵² There may be no specific, written codes regulating *uqqal* conduct, but initiation into this male order apparently follows a rigid process of peer monitoring; abstinence from smoking, drinking, and other vices; and demonstrations of modesty and piety. Many initiates to the *uqqal* begin this process at relatively advanced ages. This religious elite has one titular chief, *shaykh al-uqqal*—within Druze society, the position is symbolic, but this head sheikh sometimes gains authority under the legal circumstances of the outlying society, as in the case of the Lebanese state which recognizes sectarian courts for a number of different groups, including the Druze. Members of the *uqqal* elite are privy to secrets of Tawhid which cannot be revealed to the unknowing masses of believers, the *juhhal*.

The practical significance of such retention of esoteric knowledge among members of the *uqqal* is open to interpretation. Druze communities are religiously inclusive to an extent that is often not recognized by outsiders. Druze settlements hold Thursday night religious services, typically in some community center type installation (called a *majlis*). The first parts of these services, covering various religious and ethical principles, are open to *juhhal*, though toward the end only *uqqal* notables remain to observe secret aspects of Druze worship. Some claim that this form of religious elitism has produced “spiritual impoverishment” among the masses of Druze, the *juhhal*.⁵³

The maintenance of esoteric practices among a privileged religious elite has long spawned sensational rumors about the Druze, including a long-standing suspicion about funny business worship of the Golden Calf by the mysterious *uqqal*.⁵⁴ Rather more intriguingly, there is perhaps room to speculate about a possible influence exercised by Druze practices of esoteric knowledge, and by Druze initiation rites, upon European freemasonry, an influence possibly mediated by the Crusaders (Druze sometimes served as guides and allies with Crusaders against shared Muslim enemies).⁵⁵ Suggestive in this connection is

the similarity between the five pointed Druze star, and the like-colored and identically five pointed Masonic Order of the Eastern Star.⁵⁶ It bears mention that following 1860 clashes between Druze and Maronites in Lebanon, the former temporarily became a subject of notoriety in Christian Europe, in the context of the so-called Eastern Question; stereotypical shades in rumors about Druze society and religion can sometimes be traced to this particular controversy.⁵⁷

One telling consequence of Druze reclusive secrecy is their disappearance from historical records and consciousness, essentially from the end of the *dawah* in 1043 until the onset of Ottoman times in the sixteenth century.⁵⁸ There is some record of Druze activity in the Crusader period, but the lack of documentation and knowledge about their culture and settlement patterns in the Mamluk period is striking.⁵⁹

FAKHR AL-DIN AND HIS LEGACY

In 1585, when he was thirteen, Fakhr al-Din's world was shattered after Ottoman authorities, wary about the entrenchment of local Druze rulers from the Ma'n clan in the Shouf, brought about his father's death. His mother, Sitt Nassab, hid two of her sons, including Fakhr al-Din, sending them away to the care of Maronite Christians from the al-Khazin clan of the Mount Lebanon region. Though there are other accounts as to how the young emir survived this early Ottoman assault on his family, this vignette about Druze-Maronite solidarity coheres most logically with Fakhr al-Din's subsequent career—as ruler in Lebanon and Palestine, the Druze emir actively promoted Maronite migration into the Shouf (where these Christian peasants worked in the cultivation of mulberry trees for silk production), apparently as compensatory payback for the refuge the al-Khazin clan had provided to him in his early teenage years.⁶⁰

Fakhr al-Din became a strong, energetic young man, short in size (enemies from the Sunni Sayfas family of Tripoli joked about how an “egg could fall from his pocket without breaking,” it being so close to the ground). He spoke Turkish, in addition to his Arabic mother tongue, and he later became proficient in Italian. Roger, the Franciscan physician, claims that the young emir was learned in astronomy, botany, and chemistry.

Fakhr al-Din assumed his hereditary role as Druze prince in 1593, at the age of twenty-one, and seems to have come into his own over the ensuing decade. By 1602, his rule expanded beyond Mount Lebanon, and included Safed in the south, a point he valued strategically as being on the route to Jerusalem. His assistants and advisers included Sunni Muslims, Maronite Christians, and Jews. According to one recent biographer, it is “impossible” to ascertain exactly how Fakhr al-Din related to his own Druze ancestry and identity

throughout this early period of his rule. At home, he was a Druze; “abroad, with his turban and entourage of Muslims, he was taken for a Muslim.”⁶¹ Whether it was genuinely felt, or, more likely, generated out of the *taqiya* principle of dissimulation, the Christian element in Fakhr al-Din’s identity became pronounced in 1604–1605, when the Druze prince first devised “his grand design, aiming to seize control of the approaches to Jerusalem and the Holy Places in order to prepare the way for a general onslaught against the Ottomans in that region.”⁶² This neo-Crusade strategy envisioned a Druze-Christian alliance wherein Fakhr al-Din would gain leverage for a campaign against the Turks, and Europeans would win local support for a campaign to regain Jerusalem. The Druze prince’s first approach in this connection was made in 1605 to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando I.⁶³

The Medici court at this time was immersed in intrigue and wild dreams about the prospect of regaining Jerusalem, with the intercession of local enemies of the Turks, specifically the Druze. The extent to which Ferdinando (who died in 1609) and his Medici successors really believed in the viability of such a Crusade is difficult to determine, but the evidence proves that they consulted regularly with the Druze emir about the utility of such a strategic alliance. For instance, in late 1605 Ferdinando I solicited the opinion of a Venetian traveler named Raffaele Cacciamari—this Venetian told the Grand Duke that 20,000 Druze fighters and another force of 20,000 local Christians, coupled with 10,000 soldiers from Europe organized by Ferdinando, would suffice for such a Crusade. “With the help of God you could become King of Syria and Jerusalem, without great expenditure,” Cacciamari promised.⁶⁴

About two years later, the Grand Duke sent a few envoys, led by a Frenchman named Hippolyte Leoncine, to work out formal terms of an alliance with Fakhr al-Din. The Druze emir asked for some military supplies and advisers, including the services of a European engineer who would locally cast a dozen cannons. Audaciously, Fakhr al-Din demanded that the Pope issue a bull threatening to excommunicate any Christian who failed, upon request, to proffer assistance for this envisioned Crusade. And the Druze prince asked for assurances that the Medici court would provide refuge to himself and his family, should future events in the Levant force him to flee—this was the clause which Fakhr al-Din subsequently exploited, during his five year sojourn in Tuscany and Sicily and Naples.⁶⁵ Later, during private conversations about this prospective Crusade held with the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Pope and the Viceroy of Sicily, Fakhr al-Din expounded his theory about Druze descent from the count “de Dreux,” and dropped enticing hints about his own pro-Christian orientation. His physician, Roger, attested that such hints were sincere, and that the Druze prince extended his rule from Lebanon into Galilee so as to prepare the stage for Christian re-conquest of the Holy Land:

These princes of the House of Ma'n, Druzes by nation, have always been Christian at heart, and dreamed only of recovering the Holy Land, and exterminating the Arabs who occupied it, so that Christianity would flourish there once again. These were his reasons for his [Fakhr al-Din's] policy of gradually extending his dominion into Galilee.⁶⁶

Returning from Italy in 1618, Fakhr al-Din landed at Acre, and took up a campaign against the Tripoli-based Safya clan, wresting areas in North Lebanon and central Syria after just a few months. Aware that the Druze prince had become invincible in the region, local Shia leaders, who had been excluded from Fakhr al-Din's political-military councils prior to his Italian exile, contributed troops to the emir. By 1620, Fakhr al-Din's dominion stretched along the coast as far south as Gaza, and swept up most of Upper and Lower Galilee (he never reached Jerusalem); the emir based himself in Beirut, where he built a lavish Italian-styled palace.⁶⁷ The Druze prince's military campaigning reached its dramatic highpoint during a November 1623 battle at Anjar, on the edge of the Bekaa valley, wherein the Druze prince's force of 4,000 men, badly outnumbered by a combined, Shihab-Sayfa-Harfush, force, won a crushing victory. This solidified Fakhr al-Din's political status, as the Turks were compelled to recognize formally his Ma'n family's existing control of three districts, Safed, Nablus, and Aljun, and also to confer to the Ma'ns three new districts (defined either as sanjak or as a smaller nahiye), Gaza, Bekaa, and Lajjun.⁶⁸

By the mid-1620s, Fakhr al-Din's formidable military status enabled him to concentrate on domestic reforms in the vast region under his control. The Druze prince sponsored large civil engineering projects, including bridges at Beirut and Sidon. Via his connections with the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the emir arranged for Florentine artists, including the architect and sculptor Francesco Ciolo, to undertake various projects in the region; and this import of Italian experts extended also to medical and agricultural spheres.⁶⁹ Exotic gifts made their way from Tuscany to Lebanon, including one of Galileo's telescopes (the scientist lived at the time in Tuscany under Medici protection). According to T. J. Gorton, whose 2013 biography focuses on Fakhr al-Din's interaction with the Medici court, the Druze prince "did not want to remake Lebanon in the image of Tuscany," but his improvement agenda for the region was nonetheless "clearly inspired" by what he had observed in Italy. The Florentines, Fakhr al-Din believed, knew how to produce "a little of everything," iron, tin, copper, marble, hides, oil, wheat, corn, such, milk, flax, timber, and so on.⁷⁰

Fakhr al-Din's ties to the Duke of Tuscany, and his ongoing interest in forging alliances with Christian powers, triggered a process of rejuvenation in Nazareth.⁷¹ Through the seventeenth century, the locus of Jesus's childhood

remained a “sleepy little hamlet.” Christian presence in the city had been curtailed after the 1291 defeat of the Crusaders by the Mamluks; and over the next 250 years, Christianity scarcely penetrated the town’s borders (a 1556 Ottoman survey found 232 households in Nazareth, just seventeen of them belonging to Christian families). In 1620, the Franciscan Brothers, in concert with European traders and French diplomats, staked a claim in the ruined area in Nazareth where the Crusaders’ Church of the Annunciation had stood. This Franciscan push to rebuild the sacred facility depended on sanction and largesse provided by Fakhr al-Din, who sought European support as he consolidated his rule. The Druze emir convinced the Muslim qadi in Safed to deliver a legal deed for the property to the Franciscans. What was to become the new Catholic Church of the Annunciation was built by some Lebanese Maronites hired by the Franciscans.⁷²

In keeping with dynamics already in swing in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, this Catholic surge in Nazareth piqued the interest of the Greek Orthodox, who believed that the Annunciation had transpired in a cave adjacent to the town’s main water depot, Mary’s Well. Wary that Franciscan activity in Nazareth could be exploited as a pretext for European intervention, Ottoman rulers provided some support to the rival Christian group, the Greek Orthodox. After Fakhr al-Din left the stage in 1635, Nazareth’s new, Bedouin, leadership, swayed by the Greek Orthodox and backed by the Turks, jailed a Franciscan leader and compelled the Brothers to pay for the ringing of their church’s bells.⁷³ Through the second half of the seventeenth century, Nazareth was administered by the Ottomans as part of the Safed sanjak, while the new Bedouin power group, the Turabays clan, controlled the Lajjun sanjak,⁷⁴ included the fertile Jezreel Valley, called Marg b. Amir. The area was not tranquil, and Nazareth residents reportedly fled the town on repeated occasions in this period.

Despite this decades-long downswing after his death, Fakhr al-Din had set in motion the process of Christian revival in Nazareth. This was not exactly the Crusade he had discussed, with hyperbolic swagger, in the Italian courts, but it nonetheless constituted a process of Christian restoration in Galilee—and, in the next chapter, we will see how deeply Nazareth’s rejuvenation moved and inspired Christian pilgrims in late Ottoman times, stretching into the British mandate period.

Details of Fakhr al-Din’s capture in 1633, and execution two years later, remain clouded by legend,⁷⁵ but accounts of his downfall bear a strong imprint of foreknown inevitability, since the Druze prince had been publicly campaigning for the defeat of the Ottomans since he brazenly divulged his European-Druze Crusader plan in 1605. Never a realistic goal for the leader of a mountain-based clan, the announced anti-Ottoman plan tempted fate. No matter how extensive the emir’s conquests, the Ma’ns would always remain provincial players, compared to the Turks; and when a competent, ruthless

figure, Murad IV, became Sultan in 1623, the clock started ticking, in terms of Fakhr al-Din's preordained downfall a decade later.

After the establishment of the Lebanese Republic in 1943, Fakhr al-Din became lionized as "Father of the Nation" in school textbooks and traditions of many, though not all, of the country's ethno-national groups.

ZAHIR AL-UMAR AND THE RISE OF ACRE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Zahir al-Umar, a Galilee native from the Zaydani clan, attained the imposing title "Shaykh of Acre, Amir of Nazareth, Tiberias, Safed, and Shaykh of all of [the] Galilee" in 1768, at the peak of his activity. The regional authority implied by this title was considerable. In fact, Zahir's ascendance is virtually unprecedented in the history of Galilee. Many centuries earlier, the Crusader prince Tancred won a similar honorific; but, it will be recalled, Tancred's period of influence in the region was quite brief, whereas Zahir was the pre-eminent figure in Galilee for three decades, starting in the mid-1740s.

As Galilee headed into modern times, its spinning wheel of religious influence and political power had these revolutions: the Kabbalist Isaac Luria's era of Jewish mystical ascendance in Galilee was succeeded by the political rule of the "Druze Crusader," Fakhr al-Din. The next Prince of Galilee, Zahir al-Umar, brought Muslim politics and power into the region's modern period.

After Zahir was killed at the age of eighty-five in summer 1775, and until the period of Egyptian rule in Palestine in the 1830s, Galilee was controlled by a series of strong figures, most notably Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar (who was born in the late 1730s and died in 1804). However, unlike these successors, Zahir's career was harmoniously tied to socioeconomic trends in Galilee. In contrast to al-Jazzar, who was born in Bosnia, Zahir rose to power based on his deep knowledge of the region's society and economy; and Zahir demonstrated genuine dexterity in the economic sphere, successfully connecting Galilee agricultural produce, particularly cotton, to an international trade network via French merchants. The fact that Zahir's capabilities and personal achievements were closely interwoven with the rise of the key Galilee port, Acre, is a singular feature of his career in this early modern period. There is probably no comparable Palestinian Arab figure in the history of the region—curiously, while Zahir's career has received fairly extensive scholarly treatment,⁷⁶ he is not a familiar figure outside of Palestinian national circles, despite some salutary attempts to popularize his achievements in historical fiction.⁷⁷

The origins of the Zaydani family are not entirely clear, and scholars have provided different estimates regarding the date of its nomadic patriarchs' arrival in the Tiberias district, and the nature of the clan's connection to

the Qaysi faction in the region's ongoing Qaysi-Yamani rivalry.⁷⁸ Zahir's father, al-Umar, operated as a tax-farmer, a *multazim*, in Tiberias. Galilee was in this period undergoing a transformation in administrative power—in 1677, the Ottomans sent their own official to govern the Lajjun sanjak, nudging away the Turabays, who had held control of parts of northern Palestine for 150 years.⁷⁹ By the time of al-Umar's death in 1706, Zaydani family members had, at one time or another, asserted control of all parts of Galilee, from Tiberias to Acre on its east-west axis, and from Safed to Nazareth on its north-south axis.⁸⁰ After their father left the scene, Zahir's brothers formally transferred responsibility for their *iltizams* tax farms to him, since he was the youngest sibling, barely a teenager, and a less apt target for punishment in case the family fell into arrears in its tax collecting duties.

Zahir obtained some formal schooling and, at some point between 1713 and 1718, he demonstrated his skills as a fighter, leading the defense of a Western Galilee village, Bi'ina (the locus of the St. George de La Baena lordship in the Crusader period), against the governor of Sidon.⁸¹ Active in trade in this period, Zahir frequently visited Damascus, and he married a woman connected to this illustrious city's elite. She refused to settle in Zahir's small home village, Arraba (or Arav, where the Tanna founder of rabbinical Judaism, Johanan ben Zakkai, spent two weary decades) and insisted that their family move to Nazareth.

Having forged alliances with members of the Saqr clan, who were known as unruly disrupters of commercial traffic on the route between Safed and Nablus, Zahir rose quickly in Galilee. Around 1730 he became the *multazim* in Tiberias. His popularity became manifest later in the decade, when struggling farmers in the Jiddin district appealed to Zahir, asking him to oust an oppressive local strongman, Ahmad al-Husayn. Gaining ascendancy in Jiddin, Zahir controlled villages such as Tarshiha and Abu-Sinan in this mountainous area.⁸²

In 1740, when Zahir took control of Safed, the whole Eastern Galilee was under his authority. Owing partly to his equitable treatment of Christians in Nazareth, he acquired a reputation of fairness among all peoples in his domain; and non-Muslims began to gravitate to Galilee areas under his rule.⁸³

Lured by possibilities of profitable cotton export via the Acre port, Zahir started to drive westward to the Galilee coast. He was quickly becoming the dominant force in a new power center in the Ottoman Empire, though his ascent was not necessarily a unique phenomenon. As the historian Thomas Philipp points out, Zahir's consolidated stature in Galilee was not unparalleled elsewhere in the empire—the rise of the Azm clan in Damascus was comparable to the Zaydani ascent in Galilee (the Azms held the governorship of the city for over a quarter century, until 1775).⁸⁴

Threatened by Zahir's meteoric rise, one Azm ruler, Sulayman Pasha al-Azm, who held governor posts both in Sidon and Damascus at various intervals beginning in 1733, launched a series of efforts to stifle his rival, the most important being a ninety day siege which Sulayman personally led against Zahir in Tiberias in 1742. This attack, like its predecessors, was unsuccessful; and its details bear witness to Zahir's popularity among Galilee's diverse populations, including Jews.⁸⁵

In fact, Jewish experiences during this Tiberias siege were vividly documented by a local rabbi, Jacob Berab. Born in Safed, Berab was the name-sake descendant of the sixteenth century rabbi who, after fleeing from the Inquisition in Portugal, initiated the aforementioned, controversial effort to renew ordination practices in Galilee; and this eighteenth century Berab was also the son-in-law of Haim Abulafia, the rabbi who (as we will see) championed Jewish rejuvenation in Tiberias.⁸⁶

Berab's memoir, *Zimrat Ha'aretz*, stresses how Zahir's regime provided Jews and others security, "putting a chill in the spine of plunderers and thugs," keeping thieving Bedouin off the roads.⁸⁷ Sulayman Pasha's siege, Berab records, began on September 8, 1742, and featured weeks of cannon-ball attack which frightened Tiberias residents, but tolled few casualties and relatively little physical damage. The city's Jews followed closely as Zahir weighed the strategic pros and cons of turning to his brother Sa'ad in Dayr Hana and bringing in reinforcements. Some 1,700 years after Josephus, as a Jewish military commander, dealt with intricate and confusing cross-currents of political loyalties in Tiberias, now the city's militarily defenseless Jews had to make fateful political choices of their own. Siding with Zahir, they were particularly impressed by his shrewd understanding of how Sulayman Pasha's leverage vis-à-vis the Ottoman administration was seasonal, deriving from his authority over routes used by Muslim devout during the Hajj season. The Jews also banked on Zahir's strong connections with European traders and diplomats.

For Berab and his community, the most grueling stretch of the siege came when Sulayman Pasha cruelly forced several Jews from Safed to take part in an effort to dig an underground tunnel passage into Tiberias (the digging went nowhere). Enormously relieved when Zahir decisively fought off Sulayman, Jews in Tiberias decided to commemorate the date of the siege's conclusion (December 1) with celebrations, "as though it were Purim."⁸⁸

Zahir had been cultivating contacts with Acre-based French merchants since 1731. He retained a local Greek Catholic, Yusuf al-Qassis, as his agent in the city, and fully understood the prospects of the growing cotton trade.⁸⁹ After Sulayman's death in 1743, the Damascus governorship was held by the less bellicose As'ad Pasha al-Azm; and a fourteen year period of relative calm unfolded in relations between Zahir and Damascus. In this interval,

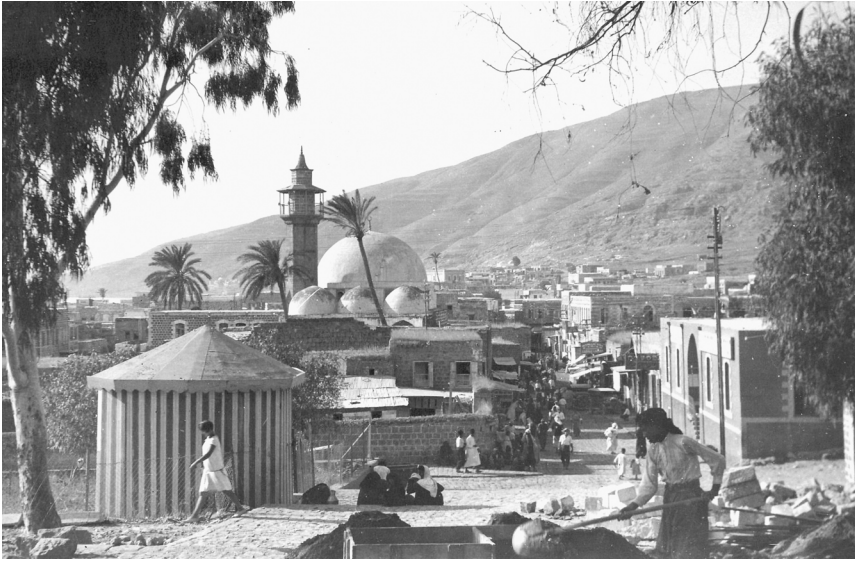


Figure 2.2 Al-Omari Mosque, Named for its Builder, Zahir al-Umar, in Background of View of Tiberias in the 1930s. *Source:* Wikimedia Commons.

Zahir gradually consolidated his hold on Acre, though for many years he kept his home a few miles from the city, in a castle at Dayr Hana. After 1750, Zahir fortified Acre, starting with the construction of wall ringing around the coastal city.⁹⁰

Thanks to Zahir's rule, Acre became the only city in the Arab Middle East to experience a major growth spurt in the eighteenth century. It transformed from a small fishing village of 400 souls to a bustling commercial center with 25,000 residents.

The demographic composition of this growing eighteenth century city is not sufficiently clear. Philipp, the author of a study of Acre's ascent in this period, estimates that the city's population spurt was jump-started by an influx of Christian newcomers, Greek Catholics from Damascus and Aleppo, and Greek Orthodox from Nazareth. Having become a "predominately" Christian city during the eighteenth century cotton boom, Acre's majority subsequently became Muslim, this historian concludes.⁹¹ Also, in the early nineteenth century, Acre gained a significant Jewish presence. Unlike Christian counterparts, the Jewish newcomers were not enticed by the prospect of cotton trade profits; and they enjoyed some passing success in the city under the protection of Haim Farhi, the most talented member of a prosperous Jewish banking family who served as an adviser to the turbulent ruler, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, and also to his successor Sulayman Pasha, before being slain in a brutal political murder in 1820.

Zahir's signal contribution to Acre's impressive resurgence, after centuries of insignificance following its historic role as a Crusader capital, derived from two factors. First, he promoted security on trade and travel routes between the port city and Galilee villages east of Acre where cotton was cultivated. Traditionally, road security in the region had importance mainly in terms of a local ruler's obligation to protect Muslim pilgrims en route to Mecca on the Hajj journey; because merchandise was conveyed via beasts of burden, and because road improvement could possibly be encouraging to marauders or military rivals, local leaders left the set of roads connecting Damascus, Acre, and Nablus in chronic disrepair. As he emerged as the dominant figure in Galilee, Zahir had different incentives in this transport sphere, mainly because he needed cotton products to move smoothly westward, from the villages to French ships in port. He thus rigorously enforced travel security, and his efforts won renown (regarding roads in Zahir's realm, it was said that "a woman could travel with gold in her hand, without anyone confronting her on the road and without her being afraid in the least"⁹²).

Second, Zahir regularized activity in cotton export, basically by developing a monopoly. This was a notable development because Galilee and other regions under the purview of the two *eyalet* provinces in the Ottoman administration, Sidon and Damascus, typically lacked any semblance of cohesive economic policy, through the eighteenth century⁹³ (later, in the early nineteenth century, the Nablus region came to dominate cotton production in the country).⁹⁴

As foreign traders, French cotton merchants in Galilee were protected by semi-autonomy "capitulation" concessions granted by the Ottoman administration. They operated as a self-regulating guild, a *nation*, in a fashion comparable to the *millet* communal structure imposed historically on select non-Muslim minorities in the Turkish empire (though, of course, foreign traders in a *nation* retained a measure of legal immunity because they were not Ottoman subjects). Operating fairly freely in Galilee during the first decades of the eighteenth century, several *nation* merchants forged direct links with village notables, buying cotton directly from village producers and bypassing any representatives of the Sidon governorship.

Prior to Zahir's ascendancy in Acre, these direct transactions in Galilee villages were increasingly founded on creative credit techniques. The French traders knew that after they reached Marseilles, they could sell cotton products for ten times their purchasing price in Galilee; and so they were willing to proffer village notables various forms of credit loans, sometimes paying off the peasants' seasonal tax dues in exchange for access to their future harvest (merchants also purchased olive oil and grain via these credit arrangements).⁹⁵ The thrust of Zahir's economic policy was to eliminate such grass roots transaction between the *nation*'s merchants and Galilee villagers, and

to ensure that his own agents, headed (after 1761) by a Greek Catholic merchant, Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, had exclusive selling rights for Galilee cotton in this thriving export trade.

For a quarter century, starting with the arrest of an overly independent French merchant in 1746, Zahir was relatively systematic in this monopolization campaign,⁹⁶ though there were always loose ends in this triangular relationship between his administration, peasant producers, and French merchants.⁹⁷ Once the cotton trade was taken out of the hands of local village producers and centralized in Zahir's Acre-based administration, the stage for continuing conflict about sales prices was set. Now and then, the *nation's* French merchants imagined that if they united and exercised discipline, they could force al-Sabbagh to slash prices; mostly, however, these attempts to tame Zahir's cotton monopoly failed, owing to internal competition between French traders who were continually tempted by surging sales prices of the imported goods in Europe and therefore found it hard to exercise acquisition discipline in Acre.

Meantime, Zahir and his agents were enriched by the monopoly. By and large, Zahir won a reputation for "sound agricultural policies,"⁹⁸ avoiding a trap by which his monopoly's price manipulation and middleman commission rates might drive Galilee's peasant crop producers to starvation. Such a dynamic leading to peasant penury is usually attributed not to Zahir, but rather to his successor, al-Jazzar, who was also notorious for acts of outrageous cruelty, including the bodily mutilation of advisers such as Farhi;⁹⁹ however, scholars in the past generation emphasize that Acre export trade monopolization enforced by Jazzar's more moderate-tempered successor, Sulayman Pasha al-Adil, and devised by Haim Farhi, also led to intolerable deprivation in the Galilee countryside.¹⁰⁰ In Zahir's day, popular resentment about profit-gouging in the cotton monopoly seems to have become focused on al-Sabbagh, who became fabulously rich, possessing a fortune of 20 million francs while trying to disguise his greed by wearing rags and subsisting on olives and cheese.¹⁰¹

In theory, al-Jazzar and his successors had the means to withstand any village rumbling about inequities in the cotton monopoly's price schemes and profit margins. Jazzar never really had an ideologically motivated military force at his command; but he had ample funds to pay temporarily arranged bands of mercenaries of various ethnic composition for defined periods (his military capability was famously demonstrated by Acre's successful repulsion of Napoleon's attempted invasion in 1799), and so he could have easily stifled any economic-motivated revolt in the Galilee countryside. However, the problem faced by al-Jazzar and his successors was not popular dissent, but rather changing dynamics in cotton markets. Al-Jazzar's own personal background featured valuable military training under the Mamluks in Egypt, but

precious little experience in commerce; unlike Zahir, who had grown up in Galilee managing aspects of the Zaydani family business, he lacked a feel for changes in the cotton markets, and these circumstances were fateful for Acre.

When the French Revolution erupted in 1789, Galilee already had two strong cotton export rivals in the Ottoman Empire, Izmir and Salonika; and, in the early nineteenth century, the slave production system in the American south came increasingly to dominate world cotton export.¹⁰² Such developments meant that the earlier high-water phase of Zahir's rule, up to the early 1770s, was a unique period in the socioeconomic history of Galilee, an era when cotton and administrative competence propelled Acre's temporary growth. The figures show that French demand for raw cotton from the Levant rose fivefold from 1700 up to years before the 1789 Revolution, and the data on British cotton imports from Turkey in this period show the same leap.¹⁰³ Cotton played a role in the rise of Palestinian nationalism's iconic, early figure, Zahir al-Umar, comparable to the contribution made by wool production in the ascent of Lurianic Kabbalah in Safed, two centuries earlier.

Maddened by the decline of Galilee cotton profitability, al-Jazzar booted French cotton merchants out of Acre in 1790 (he subsequently regretted this expulsion and tried to reverse it). After Acre's cotton monopoly lost effect, al-Jazzar and his successors managed to sustain profit-accumulation in the city for some time, largely by promoting trade in grain and other export items with British and European merchants who sought creative solutions in the period of the Napoleonic wars, when France's "continental system" blocked many trade centers in Europe.

Al-Jazzar, in fact, enjoyed such a high level of prosperity that he indulged major urban projects in Acre, ranging from military re-fortification to the construction of a splendid mosque. Still, the combination of shrewd economic policy, popular support, and French cotton demand rendered the rule of his predecessor, Zahir al-Umar, a singular phenomenon in the history of Galilee. While al-Jazzar's defense of Acre against Napoleon constituted a "brilliant" personal triumph, and the "greatest possible service" any provincial ruler (*vali*) could provide the Sublime Porte,¹⁰⁴ the truth is that the coastal city reached its peak in Zahir's day. Acre lacked a socioeconomic foundation to sustain the remarkable growth which Zahir's shrewd rule had stimulated.

Zahir's hold on Galilee began to unravel at the end of the 1760s, largely because of ploys undertaken by a power rival, Uthman Pasha al-Kurji, governor of Damascus. Uthman first challenged his enemy in Haifa, the coastal settlement south of Acre which had been claimed by Zahir years earlier. This bid for Haifa led nowhere, but Uthman was effectively using his leverage in Istanbul and severing Zahir's links to power networks in the Ottoman Empire. Isolated, Zahir strengthened his hand by striking up alliances with Shia fighters, the Metualis, who were based northwest of Safed, in the mountainous

area later called Jabil Amir. Uthman, in turn, forged allies with the Metualis' rivals in this region, the Druze, and he also coaxed the Turks into allowing his own sons to become governors in Tripoli and Sidon.

In the 1770s, Zahir allied with a Mamluk leader from Egypt, Ali Bey al-Kabir, in a move that led to several key short-term gains. After several years of sparring with Uthman, Zahir theoretically became the ruler of Palestine as a whole, adding governorship control of Ramla, Lod, Gaza, and Jaffa to his mini-empire in Galilee.

This spread of his power base was short-lived, however. Zahir and Ali-Bey were taking advantage of power vacuums left by the Ottomans, who were distracted and frightened by their war against the Russian empire. Fatefully, Zahir and Ali Bey forged a makeshift alliance with the Russian fleet, led by Alexei Orloff. The Russian ships gave the Zahir-Ali Bey forces some limited support in a few key venues, including Jaffa and Beirut; but this maneuver with the Russians infuriated the Turks, much to Zahir's strategic detriment.

The character and implications of Zahir's break with the Ottomans remain in debate among historians. Stressing ways Zahir consistently retained links with the Ottomans throughout his career, formally keeping his title as *multazim* to the Sidon governor, the Israeli historian Amnon Cohen insists that Zahir ought not to be seen as a rebel.¹⁰⁵ But this conclusion appears counter-intuitive: allying with the Porte's bitter rivals, the Russians, at a time of war was a drastic step in Zahir's career; and, in regional terms, it marked a departure. Joudah, who conceptualizes Zahir's career as a sustained revolt by a Palestinian fighter against the country's Ottoman rulers, paints the import of this Russian alliance in broad strokes: "For the first time in the modern history of the Near East, a local leader sought military alliance and assistance from a European power, namely Russia, against his Muslim sovereign."¹⁰⁶ Other historians basically concur with this sweeping assessment, using the phrase "penetrated system" to describe the effect wrought by the Zahir-Ali Bey alliance with the Russians.¹⁰⁷

Ultimately, from Zahir's perspective, the turn to the Russians backfired. Once the Turks signed the Kucuk Kainarce peace accord with the Russians in 1774, they were free to lavish systematic support to Zahir's local rivals; and this clinched the octogenarian Galilee ruler's demise.

In the field, the turning point leading to Zahir's final defeat occurred when his alliance failed to sustain its occupation of Damascus. Ali-Bey's force impressively gained control of Damascus, but its commander, Muhammad Abu-Dhahab, abruptly withdrew from the city, perhaps due to moral reservations about waging war against the Sultan's troops.¹⁰⁸ Encouraged by his enemy's demonstration of lost resolve, Uthman Pasha renewed his offensive; regrouping, the Ali Bey-Zahir alliance managed to rout its enemy in a major battle fought near Lake Hula in late 1771.¹⁰⁹ Later, Ali Bey and Zahir spent an

exhausting nine months trying to regain control of Jaffa. Ali Bey was killed by Dhahab in Egypt in 1773, but at this time Zahir seemed to be maneuvering skillfully in Palestine's north. Zahir had both Metualis and Druze on his side when he set siege to Beirut, and successfully dislodged the Ottoman's caretaker, al-Jazzar (Zahir's future successor in Acre) from this Lebanese city in summer 1773. In ensuing months, Zahir had control of the whole Syrian coast, from Gaza to Beirut, as well as most key inland settlements in Palestine (Jerusalem remained outside of his reach).

In his last months, Zahir was preoccupied by ungainly skirmishes against troops led by his own sons, particularly Ali, who were scrambling to fortify their control of various Galilee villages. Some commentators impute a kind of Greek tragic character to this late phase in Zahir's career, but Cohen points out that Zahir's sons were motivated not so much by parricidal rage as by fear of losing "prime cuts" of Galilean real estate to Uthman in the event of their aged father's death. Also, this intra-familial fighting followed a "fixed set of rules," Cohen demonstrates. In one instance, fighting against one of his rebellious sons, Zahir fell from his mount; after he yelled "I am Zahir," one of his son's soldiers, an ostensible enemy, helped the elderly Galilee hero back to his horse, before returning to fight Zahir's men.¹¹⁰

Zahir was killed when an Ottoman bullet struck his neck, as he attempted to flee Acre in August 1775. The city was in this period blockaded and shelled by the Turkish navy admiral, Hasan Pasha al-Jazayiri. The Ottomans arrested two of Zahir's sons, along with his controversial financial adviser, Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, and confiscated a large fortune, some 41 million piasters, accumulated under Zahir's rule.

Throughout the ups and downs of his career, Galilee remained Zahir's solid power base. Historians have noted how the combination of cotton prosperity and Zahir's capable governance transformed Eastern Galilee, turning "villages" like Tiberias and Nazareth into "urban centers."¹¹¹ From the Christian standpoint, Zahir's indelible contribution to Galilee was his deft resurrection of the process Fakhr al-Din had initiated in Nazareth, promoting its rebirth. Zahir had compelling strategic reasons to fortify his control in Nazareth's region, many of them connected to the adjacent, fertile valley, Marg b. Amir. Supported by Nazareth residents, his forces in 1735 won a battle in this historic, Jezreel Valley, area; and subsequently Zahir lined the valley with a string of fortresses, while also building a government house (*Saraya*) in Nazareth which he used as his own residence when he stayed in the town. During this decade, Zahir extended patronage to the Franciscans, who exploited the opportunity to renovate a convent next to the re-built Church of the Annunciation.¹¹²

Much as had happened with the Druze emir, Fakhr al-Din, Zahir's dealings with the Franciscans were shaped by his European strategy. As he asserted

control over cotton production in Galilee, Zahir needed to minimize grumbling among French merchants and maintain good relations with France; and extending support to the Franciscan Brothers was useful in this connection. It bears mention, however, that Zahir also displayed an indulgent attitude toward the Eastern church. Through the 1730s, Franciscan and Greek Orthodox clerics bickered about sacred sites in Nazareth. Finally, in 1741, Zahir formalized Greek Orthodox control of the Mary's Well site, where, nine years later, these Christians built St. Gabriel, the Greek Orthodox Annunciation Church.¹¹³

While economic and security considerations largely explain why Zahir gave precedence to Nazareth's development, Christian residents in the town believed that Galilee's Muslim ruler had a special, spiritual bond with them. In Nazareth, notes Haifa University scholar Mahmoud Yazbak, legends circulated about how Zahir had stopped at Mary's Well, en route to the decisive 1735 military showdown. Praying for support, he promised Jesus's mother that he would supply oil for lanterns at the nearby Greek Orthodox church should he win the battle.¹¹⁴

ORTHODOX JEWISH SETTLEMENT AND EVENTS IN GALILEE, 1777–1839

As a consequence of his relatively tolerant attitude toward non-Muslims, Zahir al-Umar catalyzed the recovery of key locales of Jewish settlement in Galilee. In 1740, Zahir invited Haim Abulafia, then rabbi of Izmir and a native of Hebron, to preside over Tiberias' rebirth. The elderly Abulafia, whose grandfather had been a rabbi in Tiberias, embraced the opportunity, believing that Zahir's invitation constituted the start of the messianic age, *atchalta de'geulah*. In effect, this rabbi was renewing initiatives Dona Gracia had undertaken in Tiberias almost two centuries earlier.

For a few busy years, Abulafia stewarded the construction of a new Jewish neighborhood ringing the coast of the Sea of Galilee. This neighborhood featured a splendid new synagogue, *Mashmiya Yeshua*, and was surrounded by a protective wall. Rabbi Abulafia fired off high-charged, messianic-tinged, letters to the diaspora, and his enthusiasm inspired Jews in Safed, many of whom moved to Tiberias, where they felt safer. As it happened, for decades, Jews in Safed considered this rabbi and his descendants to be their chief rabbis, even though the Abulafias remained in Tiberias. Optimistic and energetic, Rabbi Haim Abulafia encouraged Jewish settlement in several other Galilee enclaves, including Shfaram, Kfar Yasif, and Peki'in. In months leading up to his death, at the age of eighty-four in 1744, the rabbi studied plans to develop various agricultural and small trade projects for his followers.

Hence, under Zahir's patronage, persistent Jewish visionaries such as Abulafia set the stage for waves of later, religious Jewish pioneers who came

to live in Galilee late in the eighteenth century, and in the first decades of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁵

In 1777, some 300 Jews, many of them members of the recently established Hasidic movement, settled in Safed. Their immigration was governed by a number of causes and calculations. Following several years of warfare and political uncertainty in the final years of Zahir's regime, the Ottoman sultan reestablished control in Palestine; and the strong-armed al-Jazzar asserted his presence in the country's northern region, presumably stabilizing it.¹¹⁶ In these years, Jews in Eastern Europe faced attacks and persecution, the low-point occurring in 1768 when Cossacks and peasants destroyed synagogues and massacred Jews in the Ukraine and Poland. Following the partition of Poland in 1772, Hasidic communities suddenly found themselves residing in competing monarchies, in Austria, Russia, and Prussia. The same year, Hasidic Jews were disoriented by the death of their spiritual leader, Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezhibezh; also, in 1772, the Vilna Gaon, the leader of the Mitnagdim, the religious Jewish camp steadfastly opposed to Hasidism, formally ostracized the Hasidic movement.¹¹⁷ For such reasons, Hasidic Jews reasoned that the formation of a small elite group of immigrants to Eretz Israel might inspire and fortify their movement in a period of isolation and turbulence.¹¹⁸

Viewing themselves as emissaries of fellow Hasidim, and of Diaspora Jewry as a whole, these immigrants believed that their endeavors in the Holy Land would strengthen the Jewish people's connection with God, and would become connected, in one way or another, with the start of messianic time. "We are standing in the courtyard of the Lord's house and on His holy mountains as emissaries of His holy people, to perform the commandments written in the Torah,"¹¹⁹ one of these Hasidic pioneers wrote.

This immigration began in March 1777 when several dozen Hasidim left locales in White Russia and embarked on a half year journey to Galilee.¹²⁰ Their leader was Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, then forty-seven, and he was assisted by Rabbi Israel of Polotsk and Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk (Abraham Kalisker). The journey leg between the Black Sea and Istanbul proved treacherous, and some fifty Hasidic aspiring immigrants fell overboard in a barge accident (thirty survived).¹²¹ All told, a group of 300 Hasidic immigrants made it to Acre in September,¹²² and then continued on a one day donkey journey to reach Safed. Many decades had gone by since such a large infusion of Jewish immigrants had reached Eretz Israel.¹²³

These immigrant Hasidim had an invitation from Jerusalem's community of 3,000 Jews to join their *kehillah* in the holy city, but this was not really a viable option. Ashkenazi Jews in this period were wary of settling in Jerusalem due to the possibility that they might be compelled to repay a debt that had lingered since 1720, when an East European Jewish group, led by

Judah he-Hasid and animated by messianic emotion associated with Sabbatai Zevi's controversial movement, defaulted on payments, and fled the city.

Safed was an attractive option for these Hasidic immigrants because of its roots in Kabbalistic mysticism. The town featured alluring symbols and sites, first and foremost Rashbi's venerated grave.¹²⁴ Possibly, the hilly Galilee town's climate was more palatable to these relocated Polish Hasidim; and Safed had vacant residences, resulting from earthquakes in 1759–1760 (which killed several dozen Jewish residents).¹²⁵ Also, al-Jazzar displayed a fairly welcoming attitude, requiring after 1777 a low annual poll tax (2,000 piasters), and allowing the Jews to rebuild holy structures that had been devastated by the earthquakes seventeen years before.¹²⁶ With this group's arrival, Safed's Jewish population jumped from 150 to 450. As months went by, sobered by socioeconomic hardships of settlement, the immigrant leaders, Menahem Mendel and Abraham of Kalisk, warned Hasidic comrades in East Europe not to organize another influx of newcomers, at least for the time being.¹²⁷

In Eastern Europe, the Hasidic movement stayed within the purview of traditional Judaism, but its members' enthusiastic prayer style and overall emotionalism distinguished them from compatriots from other Jewish subgroups, most notably the Mitnagdim, who adhered to a more rationalistic approach, and who chose authoritative rabbinical elders on the basis of their erudite command of scripture (in contrast to the pastoral skills and charismatic style which propelled tzadikim to leadership positions in the Hasidic movement). Without question, in Ottoman Palestine, the Hasidim remained within the boundaries of what would become known as "Orthodox" Judaism; but their ardent, even raucous, prayer style startled foreign visitors, as well as Sephardic Jews who had never before observed such a joyously unencumbered manner of upholding mitzvot commandments. Christians who visited Galilee in this early modern period incredulously observed Safed's emotionally overwrought Hasidim, taking note of Jewish worshippers who "appeared as if determined at once to take heaven by storm, springing upon their toes, beating their breasts, and groaning and crying simultaneously at the highest pitch of their voices."¹²⁸

In this late eighteenth century period, some 150 Sephardic Jews lived in Safed and were integrated in the Galilee milieu. They spoke Arabic and sometimes had work in Arab villages, laboring as construction workers, silversmiths and silk-weavers, and as storekeepers and peddlers. The Hasidic newcomers, in contrast, were not aptly integrated in Galilee workplaces because, as their leaders, Menahem Mendel and Abraham of Kalisk, as well as Rabbi Israel of Polotsk, explained, "we do not know the language and the customs of the country."¹²⁹ Safed's two, Sephardic and Hasidic, Jewish groups had cause to misunderstand or mistrust one another. They worshipped

in separate synagogues, each group observing its own prayer customs; and, in 1801, roughly a generation after his group's arrival in town, one of the trio of Hasidic leaders, Rabbi Abraham, admitted that his group did not share some of its core mystical beliefs and practices with its Sephardic counterpart.¹³⁰

For their part, the Sephardic Jews were Turkish subjects, and thereby became responsible for paying all taxes owed by Safed's Jews to the Porte's representatives—the town's Hasidic residents were neither *rayahs* (subjects) nor economically self-sufficient. From the Sephardic perspective, these Hasidic settlers were potential economic burdens, and were also immoderately inflexible about various fine points of Jewish observance, including the use of a particular type of knife in kosher meat butchering. Despite such causes for suspicion, relations between the two groups seem to have remained positive for some time, as evidenced by the marriage of Rabbi Menahem's son Moshe to the daughter of a reputable Sephardic family in Jerusalem. After a few years, however, Sephardic concerns about tax disbursement became more acute; and tensions in Safed's Jewish community worsened as a result of bitter disputes between the Hasidic newcomers and the town's few Mitnagdim.

Looking for a more tranquil setting, in 1781 Rabbi Menahem took seventy-five followers to Tiberias, whose 700 or so Sephardic Jews were, he believed, "completely righteous."¹³¹ Tiberias' Jewish community had been in a downswing, its decline connected to Zahir's death and skirmishes connected to his sons. Conditions in Tiberias were rough at first for Rabbi Menahem's group; it dwelled in crowded quarters, and worshipped in the rabbi's own private dwelling. These circumstances improved when the Hasidim moved to courtyards sub-let from al-Jazzar, located outside of the town's Jewish quarter. Rabbi Menahem was busy at work on the construction of a new synagogue for his Hasidic community when he died suddenly in 1788. This was a setback for Galilee Jewry, as Menahem had been the driving spirit in this ground-breaking Hasidic immigration.¹³²

His legacy is complicated, however. Though it might have regarded Safed as its mystical center, the Hasidim never developed mass settlement momentum in the Holy Land, whereas their movement thrived and grew demographically in Eastern Europe. Rabbi Menahem and his followers lacked the will or the wherewithal to become socioeconomically self-sufficient in Galilee; and so they became increasingly dependent upon charity hand-outs (delivered in what would become known as the *halukah* system) from Hasidic counterparts in Eastern Europe. Very early after the Hasidic arrival in Safed, Rabbi Menahem was forced to send his lieutenant, Rabbi Israel of Polotsk, to Europe on a fund-raising mission. This practice of harvesting donations among diaspora Jews became routinized and also increasingly expansive (before his death in 1783, Rabbi Israel canvassed West European locales such

as Holland for funds).¹³³ In effect, these early exercises in *halukah* reversed or flattened the Hasidic immigrants' perceptions of themselves as spiritual *shlichim*, or emissaries. Originally they thought of *shlichut* mainly in terms of their own exemplary presence in Safed or Tiberias—as *shlichim*, they were religious pioneers of a sort, whose life in Galilee would enrich and inspire the hopes and prayers of Jews who remained in *galut* exile, in diaspora countries. However, as years passed, the meaning of *shlichut* transformed, becoming associated with overseas charity solicitation. A Holy Land emissary became someone like Rabbi Israel who left the Yishuv on prolonged fund-raising missions in the diaspora.¹³⁴

Meantime, self-perceptions and messianic expectations among Hasidic Jews who remained in Tiberias or Safed became more moderate. In the 1780s, the group's leaders ruled out Holy Land settlement as an option for non-wealthy Hasidic masses of Eastern Europe. "I advise them for their own good to set aside the idea of coming to Eretz Israel," pronounced Rabbi Menahem. "I never believed a person without means should come to Eretz Israel," testified Rabbi Israel.¹³⁵

NAPOLEON IN GALILEE

Expecting that the capture of the Crusaders' northern capital would be a short affair, Napoleon Bonaparte launched his siege on Acre on March 19, 1799. Jaffa, after all, had earlier fallen to the French invader in just 72 hours. Napoleon needed to defeat Ottoman forces on the ground around Acre during the spring so as to preempt a possible Turkish pincer movement; the Turks were apparently maneuvering to land new forces in Alexandria in the summer.

His objectives in the Acre attack were diverse. In Napoleon's vision, the Holy Land would become a northern protective buffer solidifying the colonization of Egypt by the French. By seizing control of the Holy Land, he would prevent the British from exploiting the country's coastline while they enforced a naval blockade in the region. Also, Napoleon hoped that the country's minority groups would emerge as natural allies for the French.¹³⁶

British admiral Sidney Smith, who sailed into Acre on a seized French ship, the HMS *Tigre*, articulated the prevailing view about Napoleon's designs, opining that Bonaparte's objective was to use Acre as a base for continued global adventurism and conquest. Acre is "in itself not worth defending," declared Smith, "but we feel that by its breach, B.[Bonaparte] means to march to farther conquests."¹³⁷

To a large extent, the solvency of the Ottoman sociopolitical system was at stake during the battle for Acre. The region's minorities—Maronite Christians, Druze, Bedouin—clearly predicated support for the French

invasion upon the outcome of the fight in Acre.¹³⁸ Apprised of this fact, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, the local ruler who was never known for his collegiality, displayed extraordinary tenacity during this historic battle.

Smith's naval convoy arrived just four days before Napoleon's depleted army of 13,000 men. His British support force would prove crucial to al-Jazzar's impressive defense of Acre. Ironically, while lending invaluable assistance to this Muslim battle against western colonization, Smith grounded himself at an old Crusader site, a lighthouse perched on a small isle in Acre harbor known as the "Tower of Flies" (apparently because Crusaders believed the site was the ancient city of Ekron, where in Biblical times homage had been paid to the "Lord of the Flies," Ba'al-zebu).¹³⁹ For his part, Napoleon set up his command base on a mound south-east of the city's walls, then named Mount of Richard Couer de Lion, after the English Crusader hero, and subsequently remembered as Napoleon's Hill. Fighting alongside Smith was an old rival of Napoleon's, Antoine de Phelippeaux, a French émigré who loathed the Revolution and who had incurred Bonaparte's jealousy many years earlier, when the two were students at the Ecole Militaire in Paris, and the cadet Phelippeaux out-performed the future French ruler.¹⁴⁰

The English sea commander set up an artillery battery on this inlet, and it pounded away at Napoleon's left flank. Looking back at this harassment from the Tower of Flies, the French revolutionary emperor later fumed about how Smith "made me miss my destiny."¹⁴¹

Al-Jazzar's forces fought with persistence, and they caught Napoleon by surprise. Acre's local defenders were better trained and better paid than regular Ottoman forces,¹⁴² and they fought resolutely in a do-or-die spirit. After his earlier victory in Jaffa, Napoleon truculently ordered his men to execute that city's captured 3,000 soldiers. Such bloody conquest policy displayed by the invading French force backfired; the Jaffa massacre unleashed a plague which afflicted Napoleon's men.¹⁴³ And it stiffened the resolve of al-Jazzar's fighters northward on the coast, rather than terrifying them into submission, as Bonaparte had expected it would do.¹⁴⁴

Acre's walls and towers, re-fortified since Crusader times, proved more durable and formidable than Napoleon's engineers had surmised. Impatient, not quite the seasoned military commander he would become, Napoleon opted for short-cuts, neglecting various engineering preparations (laying mines below towers, digging parallel trenches to protect soldiers during assaults, etc.) which had become standard in such a siege.¹⁴⁵ "All our maneuvers, our works, and attacks were made with that levity and carelessness which over-confidence inspires," Napoleon later admitted, referring primarily to military engineering negligence.¹⁴⁶ The French invaders, a force of 12,000–13,000 soldiers (some of whom were deployed in skirmishes and supply raids in outlying Galilee regions), lacked the overwhelming numerical advantage

which assailants traditionally required in such a siege on a walled city, one which (in this case) was perched on the sea and which enjoyed naval support volunteered by France's arch nemesis, England. Some 7,000 men mustered in al-Jazzar's army, and these were bolstered both by a civilian population which was effectively organized by Haim Farhi, and by ample ordnance (including some 4,000 cannonballs) delivered from the British.¹⁴⁷

Details of Napoleon's first, main assault against the Acre walls, launched on March 28, have been recorded in detail,¹⁴⁸ and need not be recapitulated here. In retrospect, this first attack appears to have been fateful, the moment when the momentum of Napoleon's adventure in the Near East was reversed, ensuring that the region as a whole would not become a French colony, and that Palestine would remain under Ottoman authority. The problem was not casualties suffered by Napoleon's force, since these apparently did not exceed a few dozen. Instead, the French squandered a critical mass of artillery ordnance; and so in subsequent raids on Acre they lacked ammunition needed to break through its walls.¹⁴⁹

According to legend, at the height of this first French assault, panic began to spread inside Acre's walls, with some Muslim soldiers abandoning their posts and several residents leaping into boats to flee. At this moment, al-Jazzar grabbed a pistol and sprinted toward the French, restoring town morale by yelling to his Arab compatriots, "what are you afraid of? *They* [the French] are starting to flee."¹⁵⁰ Then, on March 30, after this turning point phase of the battle of Acre, al-Jazzar executed about 100 Christian residents of the town, viewing them as a pro-French fifth column; the bodies were stuffed in coffee and rice crates and thrown into the sea.¹⁵¹ Al-Jazzar proved to be a ruthless, capable defender of Galilee against early western colonialism (his ruthless, complicated personality has been brilliantly delineated by an Acre-based novelist, Ala Hlehel).¹⁵²

The failed French campaign against Acre lasted through mid-May—all told, a two month debacle. Napoleon recorded that he sponsored eight assaults and twelve sorties.¹⁵³ He lost 3,000 men either in battle or due to plague and associated infirmities, though at the time his bulletins attested to just 500 French casualties (as opposed to 15,000 for the enemy).¹⁵⁴ "Had St. Jean d'Acre fallen," Napoleon fulminated in retrospect, "I should have changed the face of the world. . . . The fate of the East lay in that small town."¹⁵⁵

Throughout spring 1799, Galilee was ruled by the French. Seven hundred years after Tancred claimed the title, Napoleon effectively became Prince of Galilee, controlling a small kingdom whose borders were strikingly similar to those ruled by his noble Crusader predecessor.¹⁵⁶ French rule in the region stiffened after the failure of the first assault on Acre in late March. Napoleon realized that the Acre campaign would not be like the rapid-fire conquest of Jaffa, and so he needed to secure supplies and win local support for what

would now be a weeks-long battle in Acre. He also needed to establish a firm presence in Galilee, lest local adversaries exploit a power vacuum and team with Ottoman forces so as to push the French southward into Egypt. Two specific worries for Napoleon were, first, a force controlled by a Mamluk strongman, Sulayman Pasha al-Adil, a former protégé of al-Jazzar who broke away from his mentor years before Napoleon's invasion and who tenaciously vied for control of the Sidon province, and, second, soldiers stationed in Nablus who, under the command of Ahmed Bey al-Tukan and Yusuf al-Jarrar, were mobilizing to help repulse the French invaders at Acre.¹⁵⁷

Napoleon's side of the ledger was thin. The French interloper had few outright local allies. The most important local friend was one of Zahir al-Umar's sons, Abbas ibn Zahir al-Umar—together with 300 cavalymen, Abbas had shown up at Napoleon's Hill just at the start of the French siege on Acre, and offered his services. Abbas, who had quarreled with al-Jazzar and the Ottomans, and had thus been hiding in Druze villages in Mount Lebanon, was appointed "Sheikh of Tiberias" by Napoleon. Enjoying a measure of local support, Abbas was probably Napoleon's best card in a bid to win Muslim support in Palestine.

Ill-advisedly, the French allowed a less popular Muslim figure, Mustafa Bashir (another former protégé of al-Jazzar who had fallen out of favor with his suspicious mentor), to wield control in Safed. Local residents had been hoping that Abbas's rule would be extended. With lackluster responses from Muslims nominally under his jurisdiction, Bashir was unable to carry out military tasks allotted to him by the French, particularly in connection to the Daughters of Jacob Bridge, on the upper Jordan River.¹⁵⁸ Napoleon kept making promises and overtures to non-Sunni Muslim minorities in the north (Shia Muslims and Maronite Christians in Lebanon, Druze, Bedouin, and Galilee Christians), but responses were tepid.¹⁵⁹ Minority groups in the region were accustomed to dangers and opportunities posed by regime change; and, though some Christian leaders were evidently excited by the prospect of French rule in the country, all the minorities withheld formal commitment to Napoleon so long as the scales did not tip in his favor in Acre. It did not help when Admiral Smith's men enlightened these minorities as to pro-Muslim propaganda Napoleon had disseminated when his forces first reached Alexandria. As a rule, reactions in Galilee, and elsewhere in the country, to Napoleon's attempted imposition of revolutionary or westernized power, were conflicted and complicated.

Napoleon glossed this reality with great delusional gusto. Through May, he strolled the Acre coast, boasting to deputies about how he would "stir up the people of Syria who are disgusted at the ferocity of Djezzar [al-Jazzar], and who pray for his destruction at every assault." Napoleon expected to "arrive at Constantinople with large masses of soldiers," overturn the Ottoman

Empire, and “perhaps” return to Paris via Vienna, “after having annihilated the house of Austria.”¹⁶⁰

Napoleon had no choice but to forestall local antagonism in Galilee. As he made his way up from Egypt and was then stalemated in the first assault on Acre’s walls, Napoleon lost troops and supplies; and he could not call in reinforcements from the metropole because the English blocked sea routes. In spring 1799, Napoleon’s army depended upon Galilee for provisions.

This was not a miserable dependency. More than anywhere else in the Near East, Galilee reminded the French newcomers of their native land. In Western Galilee, the French had generous access to fruits and vegetables (in the early phase of their campaign, wine from Safed’s vineyards remained, alas, out of the French soldiers’ reach). Thanks to grist mills turned by water flowing in the Naaman River, French soldiers ate decent bread. They purchased milk, cheese, and meat from locals, and their horses had pasture to graze.¹⁶¹ For the French, Galilee was the Holy Land’s version of the Riviera.

They successfully adapted military strategy in tune with the region’s inviting conditions. On April 16, in the most dramatic French military engagement in the north apart from the Acre siege, a badly outnumbered force of 6,000 Frenchman out-battled 20,000 Muslim soldiers on Mount Tabor. The turning point came when Napoleon unexpectedly rushed with some men to replenish his bedraggled main force, commanded by Jean Baptiste-Kleber—the element of surprise in this foray, Napoleon himself attested, was aided by wheat fields in the Jezreel Valley, which obscured his forces from the enemy’s field of vision.¹⁶²

Characteristically mixing enlightenment and practicality, Napoleon decided not to confiscate farm produce in Galilee. Instead, during the months of French presence, Galilee food markets were well regulated; and local farmers proved willing to sell produce to the western invaders for relatively attractive prices. This Galilee interlude was a relatively pleasant chapter of the French invasion of the Middle East, but it would be simplistic and misleading to chalk up Napoleon’s success in turning Galilee into an accommodating breadbasket for his stagnant army at Acre as a triumph for “western administration.” Historical accounts of the Middle East in modern times routinely cite Napoleon’s invasion as a modernization point of origin, implicitly or explicitly claiming that vital reforms in spheres such as engineering or agriculture were introduced from the outside, by the French.¹⁶³ This view is, on many levels, distorted; and Galilee during the French invasion is an instructive example. Essentially, Napoleon capitalized on agricultural plentitude and rationalization which had been brought to Galilee by Zahir al-Umar, and then perpetuated (in a rather more nasty vein) by al-Jazzar.¹⁶⁴ In many spheres, Napoleon merely accelerated or amplified existing mechanisms.

Militarily, Napoleon used smoke and mirrors to maintain an illusion of strength. On various border sites, he shuffled back and forth contingents from the small 2,000 man force he had at his disposal for the Galilee siege.¹⁶⁵ This was a ruse; and support from local militias, such as 200 man Shia force deployed in Tyre,¹⁶⁶ was far too scant. As augured by the Crusader example centuries before, this modern French army lacked the manpower to sustain rule over time in the Holy Land.

For better or worse, the Galilee occupation served as a training ground for the Napoleonic military phenomenon. Individual officers gained valuable experience in foreign operations and occupation. Foremost, in this respect, was Napoleon's future brother-in-law and the future King of Naples, Joachim Murat. A curious footnote to the Napoleonic wars in the first decade of the nineteenth century is that one of its premier officers had earlier served as military governor of Safed. Murat was unable to bring all his field artillery up the mountain to Safed; but after he gained control of the town, on April 1, local Jews compensated him for this indignity by plying him with wine (Abbas ibn Zahir al-Umar was not pleasingly intoxicated by this affront to his authority).¹⁶⁷ Where the sixteenth century Safed Kabbalists had walked into the fields on Friday night, their lips humming *Lekhah Dodi*, to meet the Sabbath Queen, now strolled Napoleon's right hand military man, Murat, who had protected the National Convention at Vendemiaire by firing a "whiff of grapeshot" to terrorize counter-revolutionist royalists.

All told, the French occupation of Galilee was a moderate-level military event studded with small battles. As mentioned, the most dramatic was fought on the region's southern cusp, at Mount Tabor. Other skirmishes included: the fight for Nazareth (April 8), in which a 500 man force commanded by Jean-Andoche Junot ousted a 2,000 man Mamluk deployment, and a skirmish at Kafr Kanna, won by a 1,500 man force headed by Baptiste-Kleber on April 11.¹⁶⁸

In cultural-religious spheres, the French invasion was a major public relations event. As happened with other groups, the invasion had Jewish heads spinning. After the startling victory on Mount Tabor, Napoleon apparently issued a proclamation to "all the Jews of Asia and Africa," identifying Jews as "the Rightful heirs of Palestine," promising the "restoration of civil rights," and the revival of the Jews' "political existence as a nation among the nations." Jewish historians have laboriously attempted to clarify the circumstances of this proclamation (including the bare fact of whether it was really ever issued),¹⁶⁹ but the episode warrants Tolstoyan skepticism about Napoleonic intent. The document identified itself as coming from "Grand Headquarters, Jerusalem"—this is an interesting provenance, since Napoleon never left the north for Jerusalem. Napoleon's own reminiscences are quite clear about how such proclamations were nothing more than wartime

disinformation (Bonaparte drafted them to “dazzle an ever too credulous public,” the memoir confesses, and their “ridiculous amplifications . . . excited the laughter of men of common sense”).¹⁷⁰

Rather than bestowing civil emancipation and encouraging proto-Zionist outlooks, Napoleon’s invasion precipitated dreadful loyalty anxieties among the country’s Jews, and subjected them to onerous and unfair recrimination sponsored by victorious Arab leaders. Jewish suffering during this Napoleonic interlude was documented by Joseph Schwarz, an empirically studious, Bavaria-born, Orthodox Jew who compiled a useful geography and history of Palestine during the 1830s period of Muhammad Ali’s accommodating rule. In his account of the Napoleonic invasion, Schwarz offered poignant testimony about how Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (Rabbi Yom Tov Algazi and Rabbi Mordecai Joseph Meyuhas) staved off Muslim allegations about how Jews in the city were pro-French spies and traitors. The rabbis arranged a prayer service at the Western Wall “in order to entreat God for protection and aid for the city against the French army.”¹⁷¹ When it became clear that Napoleon would never reach Jerusalem, “the joy was indescribable,” Schwarz reported. He added that the French army “greatly maltreated” Jews in Tiberias and Safed;¹⁷² and, in their own travel reports, foreign explorers in Palestine corroborated that Napoleon’s soldiers looted and pillaged Jewish establishments in these Galilee cities.¹⁷³

Galilee suffered after Napoleon left the region. Al-Jazzar fined Safed Jews 50,000 piasters on charges of abetting the French enemy, and his officials assaulted and punished Jewish leaders who were unable to cover this trumped-up debt.¹⁷⁴ In hyperbolic but nonetheless poignant accounts, Jewish residents of Safed reported that just as soon as the French left Galilee, furious Muslims “came with axes and began to break in the doors and windows, robbed and pillaged everything, money, outer garments, clothing.”¹⁷⁵

RABBI NAHMAN’S JOURNEY TO GALILEE

Precisely when Napoleon mulled his grandiose ambition of world conquest, starting in Acre, a Jewish mystic from the Ukraine arrived in Galilee, carrying comparably grandiose other-worldly aspirations. The rabbi’s idea was to use the journey to the Holy Land as a way to escape the limits of his own corporeality. One material, the other spiritual, both dreams verged toward madness. Napoleon believed that were he to topple Acre’s walls, he had the military means to spread his conquest over continents. His mystical foil, Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav believed that if he survived the arduous sea journey and set foot in the Holy Land in the right state of soulful composure, he would have the spiritual means to transcend physical realities in the observance of Jewish religious requirements, and to function as a worthy Hasidic tzadik

capable of succoring his communal devotees in realms beyond the prosaic everyday world.

These two dreamers were vastly different characters, needless to say. Yet, each in its own way, their Holy Land stories exemplify Galilee's resurgence, on the eve of nineteenth century secularism, as the world theater where campaigns for immortality were still staged. Neither Napoleon nor Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav was particularly troubled about not reaching Jerusalem. One dream of immortality as a result of military glory drew resonance from Galilee's Crusader history, whereas the other dream about the immortality of spiritual perfection rested on Galilee's Kabbalist past.

Rabbi Nahman¹⁷⁶ was the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov (the Besht), the founder of Hasidism, the aforementioned pietistic Jewish movement which spread deeply and rapidly throughout East European Jewish communities in the last decades of the eighteenth century, and thereafter. The Besht and his followers believed in an omnipresent God, and in emotive expressions of prayer and communion with God. As mentioned, Hasidim remained within the borders of normative Judaism; the specific points of contention they raised about Jewish law, relating (for instance) to fine points of kosher butchering (*shechita*), were hardly schismatic in scope or intent. Nonetheless, being based on emotive states rather than scholarly learning, Hasidic models of tzadik leadership posed a major challenge to the existing rabbinical structure. East European Judaism thus entered the nineteenth century embroiled in a major controversy between the Hasidim and their traditionalist opponents, the Mitnagdim. This dispute unfolded on a diverse array of communal, spiritual, educational, and even political levels.

That Hasidic ideas and practices were oriented toward internal matters of spirit can be inferred from the fact that the vast majority of Hasidim remained in Eastern Europe. Galilee settlement experiments cited in this chapter involved just a small fraction of Hasidic Jews. Though Holy Land imagery and references are by no means lacking in tales of tzadikim and their followers, there lingered in the movement a sense of the actual ancestral homeland being non-accessibly remote, given the fallen or difficult state of affairs in this world. The key precedent for this conception of Holy Land remoteness is found in the Besht's own career. At one stage, the Hasidic founder apparently set out for the Holy Land, but the Besht admitted in a 1750 letter that he turned around at Istanbul and never reached the country.¹⁷⁷

Rabbi Nahman was unusual in that he grew up in a Hasidic milieu where Holy Land settlement was normative. His paternal grandfather, Nahman of Horodenka, settled in Galilee in 1764.¹⁷⁸ In terms of family ancestry, Nahman (who was born in 1772, and twenty-six years old when he visited the Holy Land) had an even more weighty connection: his mother Feige was the granddaughter of the Besht. This imposing family lineage surely pressured

Nahman, who, in keeping with traditional Jewish custom, entered married life as a young teenager.

Compounding this pressure was a sense of decline, or at least of demoralizing normalization, in models of tzadik Hasidic communal leadership, a few generations after the Besht. While not much is known of Nahman's childhood years, and though he disavowed any sayings or writings attributed to him from the period preceding his Holy Land journey (which he considered the climactic turning point of his life), it is reasonable to assume that he came of age uninspired by the leadership of his religious world. Laden within criticisms in his later writings of tzadikim who are overly satisfied with worldly entitlements are suggestions that he grew up cognizant of erosion in the Hasidic charismatic leadership style, and he had older relatives who castigated "false tzadikim."¹⁷⁹

As he passed into adulthood, Nahman also seems to have been perturbed by the way his own carnal desires, and his fears of death, compromised his aspirations to attain forms of communion with God hallowed in Hasidic writings, lore, and practices. His overriding spiritual insight and contribution was to view these doubts and torments as spiritual tests, as *meni'ot*, to be overcome, and to project his own suffering as an example which might console and uplift members of his own Hasidic circle.

After his journey to the Holy Land, Nahman managed to develop this model of a suffering tzadik with such aplomb that his own Hasidic sub-community came to regard him as a uniquely inspiring figure of expiation-through-suffering (for decades, these Bratslav Jews were known as "dead Hasids" owing to their reluctance to recognize tzadikim successors to Nahman). Nahman's biographer Arthur Green comments on his subject's fundamental contribution:

In seeking to restore the old Kabbalistic traditions of *zaddiq ha-dor*, the notion of a single leader who stood at the center of his generation, and combine them with the model of the suffering *zaddiq* [tzadik], the one who could lead his followers beyond anxiety because he himself had already suffered all their woes, Nahman had found a way, through the use of traditional religious language, of portraying himself as a pivotal figure in a crucial age for the spiritual history of the Jewish people.¹⁸⁰

Nahman and his disciples cited a number of factors which motivated his 1798–1799 visit to the Holy Land. For one thing, Nahman wanted to visit his grandfather's tomb in Tiberias.¹⁸¹ Such a prosaic motivation, however, is not entirely consistent with the recorded details, and the spiritual tenor, of Nahman's journey. The moment he set foot in the Holy Land, Nahman behaved as though such a touch of its soil sufficed; and he proceeded to

ask a guide to arrange passage to Jerusalem, rather than Safed or Tiberias, where the country's Hasidic inhabitants resided.¹⁸² His visit then re-focused on Galilee; but his vacillation reflects inner struggle, rather than the practical agenda of a tourist who is content to stick to the itinerary.

From the start of his journey in the region, in Istanbul, Nahman behaved erratically, running barefoot in the street, and playing childish war games. His aim apparently was to preempt a haughty pilgrim's posture by which touring the Holy Land would be viewed as a privilege and vindication of exalted status. Instead, he preferred to enter the country in a state of spiritual humility and lowness, *katnut*, so as to emphasize the sacred land's greatness.¹⁸³ At the behest of such paradoxical, cognitively strained but emotionally earnest, Kabbalist thinking, he disguised his real intention of visiting Galilee.

Like Isaac Luria, Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav adulated Rashbi, the reputed author of the Zohar, the cornerstone of Kabbalah mysticism, whose tomb (it will be recalled) is in Meron, proximate to Safed. In later phases of his career, Nahman's identification with this Kabbalah patriarch reached a mystical acme: Bratslav disciples proclaimed that Nahman's soul is that of Shimon Bar Yochai, "reincarnate in a later generation"¹⁸⁴ (Lurianic Kabbalists, we have seen, made exactly the same claim about the Ari).

The extent to which this supernatural sense of identification with the Zohar's author pulled Nahman to Galilee is debatable,¹⁸⁵ but the anguished Hasidic master clearly toured the region for deep spiritual-mystical reasons. Explanations of the Galilee tour cited in the Bratslav devotional literature refer to Kabbalistic terms. For instance, Nahman declared before his journey to the Holy Land that he "wanted to go in order to attain *hokmah ila'ah*"—this last phrase refers to a sphere of spiritual wisdom located high, on the first or second tier, in the Kabbalists' hierarchical conceptualizations of knowledge and piety. Explanations referred also to other mystical concepts such as "garments," implying that the highest form of spiritual consciousness, accessible in special forums (on Shabbat, in Eretz Israel), is necessarily hidden in part, under garments. Nahman traveled to the Holy Land, in other words, to look for hidden glimpses of revelation. He hoped to lift temporarily the veil of secret truths, of hidden insights whose spiritual caliber must be higher than anything openly discussed and worshipped by Jews in their lands of exile. "The image of a veiled revelation emanating from a higher divine rung than an unveiled truth, so typical of the paradoxical dialectic of the Kabbalah, would have been precisely the sort of formula to have had greatest appeal to Nahman's ever-paradoxical turn of mind," Green explains.¹⁸⁶

For Rabbi Nahman, the 1798–1799 visit to Galilee was a voyage of spiritual cleansing and searching wrapped in highly charged formulations of Jewish mysticism about reaching higher levels (*hokhmah ila'ah*) and overcoming obstacles (*meni'ot*). Nahman's ultimate goal in Galilee was to attain

complete bodily transcendence, *hitpashtut hagashmiyut*.¹⁸⁷ To some extent, this was an exercise in religious rebellion (antinomianism), not entirely unlike the way Napoleon's worldly ambitions transgressed norms and precedents of diplomacy, politics, logistics, and geography.

While the Hasidic movement remained within the frame of traditional Judaism, its fringes sometimes flirted with extremist inversions of Jewish customs and holidays. Outside of the Hasidic movement, such heretical reversals of accepted rituals and beliefs were presumably undertaken in the name of personal liberty and salvation. Among East European Jews, the Frankist movement was the example of such antinomian heresy situated closest in space and time to the Hasidic movement;¹⁸⁸ and in 1798, before his Holy Land journey, Nahman visited Kamenets-Podolsk in the Ukraine, a site notorious to Jews as the arena of a famous event in the Frankist movement which had occurred four decades earlier.¹⁸⁹ Nahman was no heretic, but he was probably entertaining dangerously bold spiritual conceptions when he stayed in Galilee.

He hoped to reach an ethereal state of bodily transcendence at which he would earn a kind of exemption from requirements of physical prayer in Judaism. In this highest spiritual state, it would suffice for a tzadik of Nahman's stamp to will fulfillments of religious commandments, to carry out these obligations in a spiritual state of intentionality (*kavanah*) rather than performing them in an actual bodily state. As Nahman saw it, the Jewish patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "fulfilled the mizvot [religious commandments] in purely spiritual ways" and were thus "symbols of complete transcendence of the bodily self."¹⁹⁰

The physical travail, spiritual suffering, and sense of elated communion (at sites like Rashbi's putative cave) experienced by Nahman in Galilee constituted a kind of leadership initiation rite. Ever tormented, Nahman felt competent to serve as a spiritual leader among his Bratslav devotees only after this high-charged journey.

Relatively little is known about these real-life experiences in Israel's north.¹⁹¹ There is interesting, but inconclusive, evidence of an emotionally challenging, homoerotic, encounter with an Arab in Haifa. In Tiberias, Nahman was received with honor by the Hasidic community, which was headed by Abraham of Kalisk. Based in Tiberias, Nahman toured holy sites in Galilee in February–March 1799.

Precisely at this time he was apprised of convulsion in the region precipitated by Napoleon's invasion. On March 15, just a few days before Napoleon's troops launched their fateful siege on Acre, Rabbi Nahman and a friend and disciple, Simeon ben Baer, arrived in the port city, hoping to find a neutral ship on which they would sail away from the embattled country. Literally at the last possible moment, on March 17, they boarded a ship; but

it was a Turkish merchant vessel, not a neutral ship. Thereafter the tormented Hasidic tzadik endured a homeward voyage of tragicomic technicolor, a medley with some parts taken from a Marx Brothers stowaway movie, and others from the story of the *Lusitania*.

Worried that they would be thrown overboard by the ship's hostile Turkish crew, Nahman and Simeon hid in a small cabin. Apparently damaged by battle, the ship rocked in a storm, and the two Jews had to flee their swamped hiding place. Simeon was too frightened to pray; meantime, Nahman privately vowed that were he to be enslaved by captors who banned any ritualistic observance of Judaism, he would nonetheless fulfill Jewish mitzvot laws in spirit. After four weeks of this ordeal, the two stowaways were ransomed by Jewish leaders in Rhodes, where the boat temporarily docked. Rabbis in Rhodes correctly calculated that these two Jewish passengers had been the length of a pirate's moustache from being sold into slavery; and they were thrilled to provide sanctuary to the Besht's great-grandson. This was temporary relief, however. Subsequent legs of Nahman's return journey back to Bratslav also featured bribes, drownings, and stormy weather.

In their microscopic, mystical way, the mishaps on Rabbi Nahman's journey resemble the setbacks suffered by the French army in Acre; and the Bratslav Hasidic camp and the Napoleonic camp each twisted the meaning of this Galilee interlude to suit its own purposes. Just as Rabbi Nahman's disciples surely lavished exaggerated details in their report of the tzadik's miserable suffering on land and sea, so as to depict the experience as a *rite de passage*, so too did Napoleonic real-time war bulletins and subsequent reports soft-pedal the fiasco of the Acre siege, so as to embellish an image of incipient French colonialism as glorious military adventure, the advance of scientific knowledge (via findings such as the Rosetta Stone in Egypt), and the export of vaunted revolutionary ideas. In other words, on the eve of the secularizing nineteenth century, Galilee served as a launching pad for complementary myths, the myth of rational modernization, and the myth of mystic revivalism.

Puny as Rabbi Nahman's story might seem in comparison to the voluminous ego and achievement of the Napoleonic movement, it should not be ignored. Jews themselves, of all stripes (Hasidim, Mitnagdim, post-1948 Israelis, and contemporary web-surfers on Habad internet sites), have been keenly aware of parallels in the contemporaneous Nahman in Galilee, and Napoleon in Acre, stories; and they have concocted spectacularly imaginative stories about encounters between the two men, or between Napoleon and other revered Jewish leaders from the time. These fables, David Assaf, points out,¹⁹² reflect a wider Jewish folkloristic trend whereby an era's most empowered gentile figure is imaginatively positioned as a spiritual inferior in dialogue with a charismatic leader from a vulnerable Jewish community (in

volume 1, we witnessed an earlier version of this phenomenon, in the tales of Judah HaNasi's supposed meetings with a misnamed Roman emperor, Antonius-Antoninus¹⁹³). The Nahman narrative, juxtaposed in Galilee's temporary Napoleonic landscape, has more than folkloristic meanings and implications, however. It powerfully fuels Jewish nationalist streams.

From the Jewish standpoint, the ancestral homeland could never have been modernized by a national movement, Zionism, had not a sense of the land's special power been retained in narratives such as the curiously beguiling story of Rabbi Nahman's journey to Galilee.¹⁹⁴ Just as Zionism's strength in Israel's military, high tech, and other emblematic modernization spheres advanced through the twentieth century, so too did fervent appreciation of mystical Rabbi Nahman legends deepen among Orthodox and other spiritual-minded Jews in the country, and also in the diaspora. Among many other places, this mystical revivalism can be seen, up through the present day, in near-ubiquitous alliterative bumper stickers on Israeli motor vehicles (the decals feature a stuttering, reverential pun on Nahman's name). Throughout the autumnal Rosh Hashanah Jewish New Year holiday, the number of devout Jewish visitors to Rabbi Nahman's grave at Uman, Ukraine, might not fall far behind the amount of tourists who pay respects at Napoleon's tomb at Les Invalides in a particular season of the year.¹⁹⁵ And by far the most densely populated annual event in Israel, a country which invests heavily in public ceremonies, is the pilgrimage to the grave of Rabbi Nahman's (and the Ari's) presumed soul ancestor, Rashbi, at Meron, during the folkloristic late spring holiday, Lag B'Omer.

PERUSHIM IN GALILEE

Hasidic immigrant groups set a precedent, but the first large-scale Ashkenazi Jewish resettlement effort in Galilee was conducted by the Hasidic Jews' ideological rivals, the Mitnagdim, starting in 1808. In Ottoman Palestine, these followers of the Vilna Gaon became known as פרושים, transliterated in English as "Perushim." The name refers to "separation," though the origins of its use as a synonym, in Eretz Israel, for "Mitnagdim" are unclear—the name was designated to imply separation from the mundane profanities of the everyday world, or perhaps to imply separation from the Hasidim. The accepted English nomenclature, Perushim, is a little misleading, since the Hebrew term refers to the familiar Second Temple group (known as "Pharisees" in English), and it might have been chosen by this Mitnagdic group to underscore how its own members in Eretz Israel, rather than Hasidim, perpetuated sacred, ancient traditions.¹⁹⁶

In socioeconomic terms, the Mitnagdim leader, the Vilna Gaon, was realistic about Jewish immigration to the Holy Land and warned about the

country's "poor and scanty means of livelihood." On the other hand, he attributed metaphysical import to such immigration, believing that it could accelerate the messianic era of redemption.¹⁹⁷ In this respect, the Perushim were not so unlike their bitter Hasidic rivals. Holy Land immigrants from both groups broke away from a traditional Jewish wariness about Jewish "ascendancy" (*Aliyah*) on organized group immigration to Eretz Israel as a form of false messianism, as "pressing for the end of days" (*dehikat haketz*). Instead, both Hasidic and Mitnagdic leaders and immigrants believed that mortals who uphold Jewish mitzvot commandments (some of which have upgraded spiritual significance when upheld in Eretz Israel) can positively contribute to the advent of messianic time. These broad ideological congruities between Hasidim and Mitnagdim are evident. However, in practical terms, in the early nineteenth century, the Perushim became aggressive fund-raisers on behalf of their own Holy Land settlement; and they outstripped their Hasidic counterparts in this and other organizational senses, and also in terms of sheer numbers of settlers.¹⁹⁸

A Perushim scouting expedition, of sorts, reached Ottoman Palestine in 1808, led by Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Shklov (not to be confused with the Hasidic Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk). Like his Hasidic predecessors, this Rabbi Menahem Mendel was deterred by the lingering debt in Jerusalem bequeathed by the ill-fated 1720 episode; and though impressed by the economic circumstances and substantive number (1,000) of Jews in Tiberias, this Perushim leader was not prepared to settle with his followers in a Galilee town inhabited by 250 Hasidim. Since Jewish settlement in the fourth holy city in Eretz Israel, Hebron, was chronically hampered by indigence and security fears, Safed lured the Perushim as their most logical settlement option.

Safed at the time had a population of about 3,000, and, under the rule of Sidon-Acre governor Sulayman Pasha, its residents were not crippled by tax burdens or other onerous hardships. Sulayman's famed Jewish adviser in Acre, Haim Farhi, willingly extended his patronage to the Jews of Safed ("whatever you need, I will take care of it," Farhi reportedly told Perushim newcomers). Safed's relatively large Jewish community retained relations with 300 or so Jews in the three neighboring locales, Peki'in, Acre, and Shfaram; and this nexus could prove useful to Safed's Jews whenever the town was attacked by marauders or by natural disaster.¹⁹⁹

Rabbi Menahem's original 1808 vanguard of several dozen Perushim was reinforced in the next two years by the arrival of two more immigrant convoys, each bringing about seventy followers of the Vilna Gaon to Safed. Exactly as had happened some three decades earlier with the Hasidic immigrants, and exactly as would happen to Zionist newcomers (*olim*) in waves of immigration seventy years, and then a hundred years, later, the Perushim quickly realized in 1810 that their community had no hope of attaining a

substantive degree of socioeconomic self-sufficiency in Galilee. So they sent one of their notables, Rabbi Israel of Shklov, to Europe to find funds for worship and study facilities, and also for land purchase. Rabbi Israel had lived with his family in Safed for just half a year, and testified that the “Holy Land is dear and sweet to me . . . through trials and tribulations I had become attached to it just as a thirsty man is drawn to water.” However, acknowledging the “rise in the number of scholars of our community who have come to the Land of Israel and who are without food and a way to earn their bread” he set off on this shlichut errand.²⁰⁰ From Constantinople, Rabbi Israel reached Russia; his years-long emissary work then became entangled and complicated by Napoleon’s invasion in the tsarist empire.²⁰¹

As a result of Rabbi Israel’s overseas venture, the Perushim joined the developing halukah charity network. More than their Sephardic and Hasidic counterparts, they were insistent upon redressing perceived monopolies or imbalances in this system, and receiving what they regarded as a fair share of charity capital which diaspora Jews were willing to provide in the name of sustaining Jewish settlement in the historic homeland. With the aim of upgrading the Perushim community’s position in this charity network, Rabbi Israel signed halukah agreements in Warsaw and Vienna; one, with Hasidic counterparts, enjoined the splitting of collected funds on the basis of their communities’ respective sizes in Galilee.²⁰² These dealings marked the start of years of intramural halukah bickering between the Perushim and the other two, Sephardic and Hasidic, Jewish groups.

In 1809, virtually the time of Rabbi Israel’s initial fund-raising journey, Jews in Amsterdam formed an important halukah philanthropy organization, the Officials and Wardens of Amsterdam (known as PEKAM, in line with the Hebrew acronym). Not entirely a one-man show, PEKAM had various monitoring and managerial board mechanisms; nonetheless, it was dominated by an ambitious Amsterdam Jew, Zvi Hirsch Lehren, who hailed from a prominent banking family and was just twenty-five years old in 1809. An energetic and adroitly competent administrator, Lehren’s Orthodox outlook was tinged by fervent belief in how Holy Land settlement could catalyze messianic processes, much to his people’s, and his own, benefit.²⁰³

PEKAM, under Lehren’s leadership, became embroiled in bitter turf battles and money disputes about halukah allocation arrangements for the Yishuv’s Jewish sub-groups, and about the right of these groups to send their own emissaries on fund-raising missions overseas. As the nineteenth century progressed, and Yishuv society became increasingly differentiated, new sub-groups formed their own *kollelim* religious societies, such as the HOD (German and Dutch) kollel, essentially to bypass PEKAM, whose procedures they viewed as being overly bureaucratic and unfair. Sometimes unpredictably, Lehren’s activities and decisions ranged between obstinately headstrong

and pragmatically compromising poles. Peculiarities of his background and bearing—including the fact that he dedicated his Jewish labors to a country he never visited, in contrast to leading Jewish philanthropic rivals, particularly the Anglo-Jewish leader Moses Montefiore who paid seven visits to Ottoman Palestine—were sometimes liabilities. Criticism of the halukah network as a shameful stimulus to charity-addicted, non-productive, Yishuv residents mounted throughout the nineteenth century. Hence, by the early twentieth century, when the Zionist movement's settlers identified themselves as the self-sufficient antithesis to the halukah addicts of the "Old Yishuv," Lehen's life-work, PEKAM, was stigmatized as the symbol and cause of all the decay and rot Jewish nationalism was working to correct and eradicate.

In fact, much in this long roster of criticisms about PEKAM was anachronistic and unfair. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the embattled Lehen supervised probably the most intriguing and efficient network of relations between the Four Holy Cities of Judaism (Safed, Tiberias, Hebron, and Jerusalem) and the diaspora that Jews had ever devised. An industrious character, Lehen regularized annual contributions to the Yishuv, and he assuaged donor ego by furnishing both ornately lavish receipts and promises of prayers recited in Eretz Israel on behalf of diaspora philanthropists. He devised ingenious techniques to bypass highway robbery and secure cash transport from Europe to the Yishuv; and he arranged for correspondence to be duplicated and double-mailed, to ensure that at least one message would reach its intended recipient.²⁰⁴

In accounts of early nineteenth century Yishuv settlement, wrangling about halukah arrangements typically becomes the paramount subject.²⁰⁵ Sifting through relatively subtle psychological, economic, and sociological dynamics, researchers try to explain why Hasidic, Mitnagdic, and Sephardic residents expended so much acrimonious energy in this intramural scramble for funds and status.²⁰⁶ This focus can be distortive, however. Because capitulation agreements in nineteenth century Ottoman Palestine meant that many Ashkenazi settlers had access to tax exemptions, and to other benefits and protections, which eluded their Sephardic counterparts, philanthropy politics in the Yishuv had an objectively explosive structure (these Ashkenazi settlers often had status as Russian nationals or as nationals from some other country, and could thus claim protection from foreign consuls who enjoyed extra-territorial immunities and powers under the controversial "capitulation" agreements). Later, much as they tried to distance themselves from the image of "Old Yishuv" religious mendicants, Zionist pioneers in waves of Jewish immigration in Turkish and then British Palestine quickly became dependent upon the patronage of overseas philanthropy networks, starting with the Rothschild administration (this process is surveyed in a later chapter); and so it is hard to develop an argument holding that PEKAM was a

singularly addictive and debilitating mechanism. On the contrary: PEKAM halukah represented a natural, rather than an extraordinary or pathological (as Zionist ideology suggested), phase in the development of relations between the Yishuv and the diaspora. In tune with the ardent religious temperament of early nineteenth century immigrants such as the Perushim, Lehren's organization facilitated renewed commitment toward Jewish settlement in Galilee, Jerusalem, and Hebron.

PEKAM was particularly successful so long as there remained in Ottoman-controlled Palestine a Jewish figure of stature sufficiently august to encourage at least a minimal level of communal discipline between the oft-bickering Sephardic, Perushim, and Hasidic sub-groups. Until he was strangled and thrown into the sea by Acre's Pasha Abdullah, Haim Farhi played this role, cementing agreements about halukah disbursements. The Perushim appear to have backed down on various status or technical matters, deferring to continuing Sephardic leadership, because Farhi quietly promised these Ashkenazi settlers that they would not, in the end, be shortchanged, and also that he would protect them vis-à-vis Turkish officials. Farhi's 1820 death was thus a turning point. Accusing Farhi of having shielded tax evasion, Abdullah imposed heavy retroactive tax burdens on Safed's Jews.²⁰⁷ This tax crackdown had frightening, oppressive moments, including the temporary incarceration of communal leaders such as Rabbi Israel of Shklov.²⁰⁸ Meantime the Perushim were unbridled by Farhi's death and became more aggressive in the scramble for philanthropic funds.

By 1815, the Perushim population in Safed topped 450 residents. Some of these settlers were elderly people who came to finish their lives in the Holy Land and to be buried in its soil; but many were younger Jews who came with their families, and there were several budding religious scholars among the newcomers. Some Perushim worked in clothing or metal crafts; but this appears to have been a community of relatively affluent and well-established, albeit relocated, pious Jews. Reinforcing this point, one wealthy community member, Haim Katz, observed, "whoever can support himself on the income from his overseas investments can settle here in peace and quiet." Tellingly, Katz added that an immigrant Jew in Safed "should bring with him a female domestic servant because it is impossible to find a maid here."²⁰⁹

Safed's Jewish community lived in three tiers on the terraced western slope of a Galilee mountain. The Perushim occupied the bottom row, below the Hasidim and the Sephardim. Muslims lived relatively far from this three-row slope in Safed, and this conjured the impression, as one missionary put it, "that the Jews appear to be in a town which they might call their own."²¹⁰ This image of separation between religious-national groups applied particularly well to Safed's two Ashkenazi groups since the Perushim, like the Hasidim before them, never learned Arabic (Sephardic Jews, it will be recalled, knew

Arabic and were relatively engaged in the region's Arab culture). A phrase used by the Israeli historian Israel Bartal to describe Ottoman Palestine's Jewish community (what the Zionists retroactively called the "Old Yishuv") in this period, "Exiles in their Homeland,"²¹¹ aptly applies to Safed's Perushim community. Plucking this string of estrangement, Rabbi Israel of Shklov observed that Safed's Sephardic Jews "provide for themselves," partly as grocers selling products to Arab fellaheen customers, whereas the town's Ashkenazim "do not know the language, and we are all broken paupers."²¹²

It would be wrong to overstate the level of Perushim estrangement, however. By and large, Sephardim, led by Rabbi Isaac Abulafia, cordially welcomed the Perushim to their new homes (as Rabbi Israel acknowledged).²¹³ Perushim communicated with Sephardim in Hebrew. As had happened with the earlier group of Ashkenazi immigrants, the Hasidim, the Perushim spoke Hebrew with Yiddish inflection, but eventually managed to accommodate Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew.²¹⁴

THE ERA OF MUHAMMAD ALI: JEWISH DEMOGRAPHY AND THE FIRST PALESTINIAN UPRISING

Albanian-born Muhammad Ali ruled Egypt for forty-three years, starting in 1805.²¹⁵ He first arrived in the country as a Turkish army officer in 1798 and was impressed by the scientific, organizational, and military prowess Napoleon and his forces demonstrated in the region. As ruling pasha in Egypt, he implemented a vigorous modernization campaign extending into educational, military, and agricultural spheres. In 1831, forces led by his stepson Ibrahim Pasha conquered most of Palestine in a dramatic campaign which featured a six month siege on Acre.

Muhammad Ali was a complicated figure whose reign in Egypt featured dark moments such as an 1811 slaughter of unsuspecting Mamluk leaders at a banquet, and his tax and conscription policies sometimes fomented popular revolt, as in the important example of the 1834 fellaheen uprising in Palestine, discussed below. Yet his nine year tenure in Palestine is widely regarded as an enlightened milestone during which travelers and researchers from overseas enjoyed unprecedented access and protection as they observed or researched the land's historic past and natural wonders.²¹⁶ Representatives of foreign powers acted with newfound freedom, and the first western consul arrived in Jerusalem toward the end of Muhammad Ali's tenure in the country.²¹⁷

An interesting question is whether this brief period of Egyptian rule in Palestine wrought inverse effects, with regard to the country's majority Muslim population, and its Jewish minority in the Yishuv. On the Jewish side of the equation, Yishuv residents in this period tended to view Muhammad

Ali as a patron, of sorts. The warm touch of enlightenment was credited as the cause of the decade's surge in Jewish immigration. "We are in our land completely set at liberty" boasted one Jew in 1833.²¹⁸

The extent to which Muhammad Ali's policies were the attractive magnetic force responsible for the rise in the Yishuv's population, at least prior to the catastrophes in the later part of the decade, is debatable, however. Many other factors probably steered some small but significant portion of early nineteenth century Jewish global migratory movement toward Palestine, including the fact that steamships first set sail on the Mediterranean in the 1830s.²¹⁹ One historian of the Yishuv in this period, Arie Morgenstern, insists that a messianic calculus pinpointing 1840 as a year of great expectation generated a groundswell of Yishuv-related activity, including immigration, in this 1830's decade.²²⁰ In the Russian empire, a locale with a massively swelling Jewish population, Tsar Nicholas I's reactionary policies, most notoriously the forced conscription of Jews in military cantons (dating from 1827), may have set some Jews on a path toward Palestine.²²¹ Discussions of such factors are indefinite about their actual causal weights. At any event, Muhammad Ali's modernization policies fostered confidence and optimism among various groups in the country, and they must have played some role contributing toward the immigration influx in the Yishuv.

Between 1831 and 1840, a decade when the Ottomans lost control of the country, Palestine's population did not exceed a quarter million. Christians constituted about 20 percent of that total, and at the end of the decade (according to the Montefiore survey), there were some 6,550 Jews.²²²

As a result of Montefiore's second visit to Ottoman Palestine, his secretary Dr. Louis Loewe released a census, "The Children of Israel living in the Holy Land in the Year 1839." The compilation of this survey was complicated by a number of factors, including traditional Jewish objections to census-taking based on reported incidents during the reign of King David; and systematic work on data collected by the Montefiore effort was never really undertaken. Yet Montefiore managed to collect a wealth of information, mainly by rewarding Jewish respondents with the equivalent of one month's income;²²³ and some scholarly discussions of the census results elucidate important points regarding Galilee's development.²²⁴

The 1839 Montefiore survey cited a total Yishuv population figure of 6,547; 4,883 were Sephardic Jews, as opposed to 1,714 Ashkenazim. Safed had 1,338 Jews, about 20 percent of the Jews in the country. In Safed, 601 Jews were Ashkenazim. The Jewish population of Tiberias was 712, almost equally divided between Sephardim (317) and Ashkenazim (395). Jerusalem had the largest Jewish population, 3,007, 45 percent of the Yishuv total. Acre's Jewish population of 233 was entirely Sephardic. Three small Galilee agricultural villages, Shfaram, Peki'in, and Jermak, had 169 Jews. The

census usefully compared numbers of native-born Jews to immigrant Jews (those who had been born overseas). All told, a minority of Jews had been born in Eretz Israel—2,044 out of 6,547—the Yishuv, in other words, hosted an immigrant population, as about two-thirds of its residents had been born abroad. In Safed, just ninety-five Jews were native born, whereas Tiberias had a higher proportion of veteran residents (158 native-born and 554 immigrants). Out of 590 Ashkenazi Jews in Safed, just eleven were native born.²²⁵

Loewe's survey attested to modestly significant Jewish population growth during the first four decades of the nineteenth century, subsequent to the Napoleonic invasion. A figure approaching 5,000 Jews is cited as the Yishuv's population in 1800.²²⁶ More dramatically, the Montefiore census attested to the vicissitudes of Yishuv development under the enlightened administration of the Muhammad Ali regime. Thanks to this government's inviting policies, the Yishuv reached a demographic peak of close to 10,000 Jews up to 1837. Yet a series of discouraging incidents—the 1834 peasant (fellaheen) uprising, the 1837 Safed earthquake, and the 1838 Druze rebellion—eradicated this trend of Jewish population growth. Focusing on the earthquake, one researcher notes that “the rapid [Jewish] population growth of 2200 persons experienced by the Jewish community between 1830 and 1837 was erased by one vengeful blow of nature.”²²⁷ In Galilee, the trend of pre-disaster population growth is manifest: in Safed, an 1800 Jewish population of 600 rose to 2,200 in 1830 and 4,000 at the end of 1836, before the earthquake (which erupted on January 1, 1837).²²⁸

Missionary reports and other anecdotal data attest to a perception that the Yishuv's majority circa 1840 was comprised of newcomers who had arrived during the preceding decade.²²⁹ Contrary to stereotypes, this was not an elderly population—just some 20 percent of the Yishuv's residents were over fifty years old, and 10 percent of Yishuv inhabitants were older than sixty. The Yishuv was, however, significantly older than the Russian empire's massive Jewish population—according to 1817 Russian Jewish figures, 11.5 percent of the empire's Jews were over fifty, and 5.4 percent were over sixty.²³⁰

This all goes to show that the 1830s witnessed significant, but not mass-scale, growth in Jewish settlement in Galilee, and elsewhere in the country. What about the Palestinian side of the equation?

Events during the decade of Muhammad Ali's regime, particularly the fellaheen uprising of 1834, have been identified as the origins of Palestinian nationalism,²³¹ though this view has been cogently challenged by scholars who antedate or postdate this 1834 theory by roughly a century on either side. The scholar Ilan Pappé, who is skeptical about the classification of 1834 as a Palestinian national point of origin, nonetheless raises a compelling point about the sheer scope of the fellaheen uprising. Ibrahim Pasha, Muhammad Ali's nephew, called for reinforcements of 9,000 soldiers to quell the 1834

uprising, and by the end of July his uncle-stepfather actually discharged a contingent of 15,000 to restore order in the country. These numbers, Pappe observes, are not far from the number of soldiers deployed by the Jewish Yishuv at the start of the 1948 conflict, meaning that the 1834 disturbances were a noteworthy, convulsive, event in the history of the country.²³²

The fact that they were preceded by an anti-Ottoman revolt in the country in 1824, sometimes known as the “First Uprising,” provides some perspective.²³³ Not everything that occurred in Galilee in the 1830s can be attributed to popular, or unpopular, policies enacted by Muhammad Ali’s decade-long regime in Palestine. To some extent, ferment in the country was provoked by long-term processes, arguably all belonging to a rubric of modernization, which preceded 1834.

Nationalism, for instance, fanned new anxieties, opportunities, and power alignments in the Ottoman Empire. Here, the turning point was the eruption of the Greek Revolution in 1821. Ripple effects of the Greek situation can be traced to the successive 1824 and 1834 uprisings in Palestine (these include details in Muhammad Ali’s own career, since he attached claims and aspirations to Palestine and other areas after he felt that Ottomans reneged on promises made to him in exchange for his part in fighting the Greek insurgents²³⁴).

Palestinian national consciousness did not develop in a vacuum. Its growth was framed by modernization processes in the Ottoman Empire, starting with the rise of nationalist uprisings as in the 1821 Greek case and continuing through the Tanzimat reform measures adapted for several decades, starting in 1839. This fact tends to negate sharply formulated pronouncements about the “birth” of Palestinian nationalism at turnstile moments such as 1834. As Pappe points out, peasants and notables who rose up against Muhammad Ali not only brought local interests and extended family loyalties into the mix; ostensibly, they were fighting for the restoration of Ottoman power, rather than national sovereignty.²³⁵

Ibrahim Pasha’s reforms irked resentment among city-based Muslim notables. These *a’ayan* did not welcome the new regime’s formation of regional advisory councils comprised partly of Jews and Christians; nor did these elite Muslims appreciate the annulment of traditional rules banning Jews and Christians from riding on horses in cities, or from repairing and renovating places of worship.²³⁶ Also vexing were new measures allowing Christians to trade in grain and livestock.²³⁷

Then, and subsequently, critics suspected that such reforms reflected bribery or coercion exerted on Muhammad Ali’s regime from outside forces, including France, rather than from a truly enlightened sociopolitical outlook. A less cynical view holds that Ibrahim Pasha was looking for a way to distinguish his control in Palestine both from the imperial policies of the Sublime Porte and also from programmatic initiatives associated with his stepfather,

Muhammad Ali; and he reasoned that the provision of security on the roads, as well as modernization and development of commerce, agriculture, and industry and also a relatively secularized judicial system, would fortify his own authority.

At least on a public relations level, his reform agenda took solid effect. Glowing descriptions of some of these modernization provisions do not really attest to any substantive change Ibrahim might have been able to institute on the ground in a very short period prior to the 1834 revolt—instead, they reflect states of mind. Outside of Palestinian notables and peasants whose interests and traditions were challenged or damaged by these changes, the reforms generated considerable interest and enthusiasm. For instance, a venerated Safed-born Sephardic rabbi, Yaakov Shaul Elyashar (“Yisa Berakhah”), who was a teenager during the period of Muhammad Ali’s rule, recalled in his memoirs: “Muhammad Ali stiffly punished malevolent elements, and his forceful authority intimidated all of these [bad characters].” Citing the same standard which we have seen others apply to Zahir al-Umar’s regime, Yisa Berakhah continued: “a young maiden could have walked alone on a road, holding coins of gold in her hands, and nobody would have dared bother her.”²³⁸

The most controversial reforms applied to taxes and military conscription. A year before the revolt, Ibrahim announced the imposition of six taxes on sectors of the population.²³⁹ The conscription edict appears to have been yet more alienating. “The term of service was frequently for life, and given the sanitary conditions and military technology of the day, there was little chance parents would see their sons again,” contends one history of the Palestinians.²⁴⁰

On May 19, 1834,²⁴¹ notables representing families from Nablus, Jerusalem, and Hebron informed Ibrahim of their inability to meet the new conscription quotas. Muhammad Ali’s regime faced conscription revolts in other areas as well, including the Arabian Peninsula; and it decided to relent on this issue everywhere other than Palestine. This decision backfired. The Nablus area, comprising almost half the country’s population, turned into the revolt’s center; Ibrahim won support of one important Nablus family, the Abd al-Hadis, but this did not suffice to hold this key region. Meantime, fellaheen who had rioted in Hebron were streaming into Jerusalem; and they were joined on the road by members of the Abu Ghosh clan and other disaffected Muslims, in an “astoundingly powerful and broad coalition of local groups.”²⁴² Showing determination and ingenuity,²⁴³ the rebels gained control of most of Jerusalem; a few of Ibrahim’s soldiers managed to hide in the Citadel for some indeterminate period.²⁴⁴ At this time, peasant rebels in Jerusalem set a precedent of assault and pillage against Jewish and Christian targets, and also against Muslim notables who opposed the revolt. The Jewish encyclopedist,

Joseph Schwarz, left a gripping description of the harrowing terror experienced by Jerusalem's Jewish community, starting on the eve of the rebels' conquest of the holy city:

At midnight on [May] 22, the town was taken by the rebels by assault—the first one which I ever witnessed. . . . What a terrible night was this for us all! The echoing of the voices of thousands of warriors—of men, women and children, who all raised their wild Arab war-cry in the gloom of the night; the tumult of the retreating troops; the lamentations of the defenseless, abandoned, inhabitants. . . . It all presented a most mournful scene.²⁴⁵

While Ibrahim's forces reconnoitered and regrouped for an assault designed to regain Jerusalem, the Egyptian regime lost hold of Galilee. The fears Schwarz expressed, speaking for Jerusalem's Jewish population, were just a prelude. The spread of the rebellion into Tiberias and Safed spelled terror and disaster for Jews in Galilee, as detailed below.

In fact, in a broad sense, this lugubrious chronicle of Galilee in 1834 marks the start of the Arab-Jewish conflict. The gap between the investment of settled Jewish populations in western-style sociopolitical reforms enforced by an outside power (in this case, ironically, by Muhammad Ali's Egyptian-Muslim regime), and the resistance to such modernization by Palestinian masses and notables, who had their own interests, hopes, and traditions to protect, and also a natural proclivity to view such modernization as colonialism, is simply too hard to ignore. This gap recycled itself constantly, acting as the motor of what became known as the Arab-Jewish conflict.

Weeks into the fellaheen uprising, the "foreign" Egyptian regime's sphere of control in Palestine had a geography reminiscent of the way the Crusader kingdom truncated as a result of the Saladin-led Muslim resistance to it. Basically, Ibrahim controlled just four coastal towns, Gaza, Jaffa, Haifa, and Acre. This dire situation precipitated the aforementioned large remobilization authorized by Muhammad Ali. In fact, the Egyptian regime cleverly led the rebels to believe that it deployed an anti-revolutionary reinforcement force yet larger than its actual size of 15,000 men and forty canons. Muhammad Ali also managed to turn clans loosely allied in the rebellion against one another, largely by coopting or bribing some of them (including the Abu Ghosh family). In this, Muhammad Ali exploited indecisiveness about the revolt's wisdom and aims which was evident among some of the a'ayan, including Hebron's Qasam al-Ahmad.²⁴⁶

The rebellion's momentum was shattered on July 4, when Egyptian forces successfully smashed into the Nablus area. In August, the rebellion was cruelly extinguished in Hebron, where victorious Egyptian soldiers reportedly launched a spree of looting and rape. Muhammad Ali's regime retrenched throughout

Palestine, destroying entire Muslim areas (in Bethlehem, for instance), and conscripting or enslaving some 10,000 fellaheen. In symbolic terms, the most devastating reprisal was the disarming of Muslims around the country, since rifles were regarded as emblems of an evolving, manly, Palestinian identity.

In 1839–1840, four powers, Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, brought an end to Egypt's occupation in Syria. In retrospect, the decade of Muhammad Ali's control in Palestine is widely touted for its enlightened reforms conducive to the exploratory projects of remarkably precocious foreigners (such as the American Biblical researcher, Edward Robinson)²⁴⁷ and many other developments; but from the standpoint of numerous Muslim peasants and notables, this period, particularly after 1834, could only have been experienced as humiliating and loathsome military occupation.

MENAHM MENDEL'S REPORT ON GALILEE ORIGINS OF THE ARAB-JEWISH CONFLICT

Buoyed by new, alluring conditions in the country, a group of relatively affluent Perushim arrived in Safed in late 1833. They were led by Menahem Mendel of Kamenets,²⁴⁸ a Belarus native and the son of a Torah scholar who so ardently yearned to “breathe the pure spiritual air” of the Holy Land that he had deferred his engagement until his fiancée's family consented to the newlyweds' settling in the country.²⁴⁹

Menahem Mendel was a person of means. He journeyed with his family to Ottoman Palestine precisely when steamships started to ply the Mediterranean, catering to the affluent.²⁵⁰ He had the funds needed to purchase steamship tickets but opted in the end to sail due to calculations about cargo and route policies adopted by the steamboat lines.²⁵¹

Settling in Safed, rather than Jerusalem, out of deference to the dictates of Perushim leaders, his original impressions of the Galilee town were enthusiastic, albeit somewhat disoriented. Safed's Jewish population, Menahem Mendel estimated, was comprised of 2,000 homeowners, and it divided into four organized sub-communities, or kollelim, as Perushim, Hasidim, Sephardim, and also a group of Jews from central and western Europe.²⁵² Residentially, the groups were stacked as separate tiers on the side of a hill. These neighborhoods were perched across from the village of Jermak on Mount Meron, but Menahem Mendel believed this hilltop to be Mount Tabor. Reinforcing a common error, he called the Meron stream “Megiddo”; and he also falsely believed that remains of the old fortified Galilee town, Jotapata, where the historian Josephus made his final stand as a Jewish fighter, were in close vicinity.²⁵³

Menahem's first months were far from blissful. In fact, he lost his son due to a cholera plague that struck Jerusalem and Galilee—the intrepid spiritual

character of Menahem's informative memoir of his first months in Safed comes through when he gives thanks for the privilege of burying this little boy in the soil of the Holy Land.²⁵⁴ Beyond this family tragedy, Menahem encountered a placid Galilee. Jewish shopkeepers sold wares in shops located close to Arab stores; one day a week, Jewish and Arab consumers thumbed through produce, buying low-cost items in the town's open market.²⁵⁵ On the eve of the autumnal Sukkot holiday, Arabs brought by mule some of the required festive items, lulav fronds from date palm trees, and hadas boughs from myrtle trees. This holiday celebration, held in a Galilee setting of social harmony, bestowed upon Menahem "an indescribable feeling of fullness and serenity."²⁵⁶

This tranquility was ruptured cruelly by the 1834 fellaheen uprising. Menahem's grueling yet under-stated description of the Safed violence takes us to Ground Zero of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Though many symbols and characteristics of a "pogrom" were exhibited in the travail of Jewish victimization in this 1834 Safed spree of violence, armed representatives of the local ruling power, Muhammad Ali's regime, *protected* the Jews, and so the key component of a pogrom, that is, state support for local anti-Semitic ruffians, was lacking, by and large.²⁵⁷ Sheer economic disparity animated much of the violence—for a month and half a week, local Arabs plundered Jews in Safed, correctly suspecting that they did not belong to an impoverished community. Yet indigence and hunger for loot cannot explain levels of this Safed violence, particularly the Arabs' hatefully imaginative, and systematic, desecration of the Jews' sacred items. Certainly Arabs ran amok in Galilee and elsewhere because they opposed Muhammad Ali's mass conscription policy. It is also likely that their violent behavior targeted Jews owing to suspicion and confusion caused by the new regime's policy of sociopolitical tolerance: however inchoately, many of the Arab marauders must have suspected that the bestowal of rights to Jews would cause erosion in their own social status.

Meantime Jews were dealing with fundamentally similar issues on their own terms. Spiritually, many of the Perushim in Galilee and Jerusalem had a fundamentalist outlook fashioned after the bearing of Rabbi Moses Sofer (Schreiber) of Pressburg, who is considered one of the architects of Jewish Orthodoxy in modern times. Fearing that modernity would corrupt Jewish observance, they adamantly opposed religious reform; and these Orthodox Jews in the Perushim group had migrated in the hope that life on the country's sacred soil would provide special fortification and resources in this campaign to stave off innovation or decline in religious life.

So, to some extent, Arab aggressors and Jewish victims at Safed were religious fundamentalists frightened by the prospect of enlightened social policies and routines ruining their traditional, Jewish or Muslim, way of life.

Both Muslim attackers and Jewish victims dreaded the new, modern policy of mandatory military conscription, be it implemented by Muhammad Ali in the Middle East, or by Nicholas I in Russia's dreaded canton framework. Menahem Mendel's memoir has some traces of the author's awareness of how the situation was uncannily congruent: whether or not some Jewish residents in Safed were actual AWOL evaders of canton conscription, the Safed drama pitted Arabs who were rioting as a show of contempt for Muhammad Ali's attempt to conscript them against Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who were willing to take extreme steps to avoid service in Tsar Nicholas I's army.

In other words, the impetus of the Arab-Jewish conflict was not specific, mutually antagonistic claims about land rights or political sovereignty, but rather violent tension precipitated by the two communities' mid-nineteenth century encounter with key facets of the modernization process, such as military conscription or secularization.

The marauders entered Safed on June 15, 1834, some armed with muskets. The riot would last thirty-three days. Menahem Mendel understood that Muslims went on a rampage after Muhammad Ali's government tried to conscript them.²⁵⁸ Arabs ripped open pillows and tore sheets, and the town's Jewish neighborhoods were strewn with feathers, in eerie foreshadowing resemblance of the torn-up veneer of pogrom-stricken Jewish towns in imperial Russia decades later. At first, Menahem Mendel's group hid from musket-shooting marauders in the Perushim community's beit midrash study center: venerated Perushim leader Rabbi Israel of Shklov was hiding in this religious study facility when Menahem Mendel's group fled to it. After some hours, rioters pounded their way into the beit midrash, and took Rabbi Israel hostage (the Perushim leader bribed his captors to save his life).

This gruesome scene unraveled half a century before nationalist Jewish settlement ideology developed on the ground in Ottoman Palestine, in the Hibat Zion movement framework. It would therefore be anachronistic to describe Rabbi Israel of Shklov as a Jewish nationalist, but he nonetheless acted throughout these Safed atrocities, and generally over a quarter century in Ottoman Palestine, as a Holy Land settler ideologue. On his religious scale of Jewish priorities, he gave prerogative to settlement in the Yishuv: in his pre-Zionist, Orthodox, way of thinking, the imperative of Aliyah, or immigration ascent to Eretz Israel, took precedence relative to traditional Jewish practices, even including family commitments. "If a father and mother living in the diaspora protest against their son's settling in Eretz Israel, the son does not have to obey his parents," Rabbi Israel announced.²⁵⁹ As the Perushim community's leader, Rabbi Israel negotiated and renegotiated halukah allocation arrangements, forcefully upgrading the group's status in Galilee and Jerusalem. A strong-willed character, Rabbi Israel endured excruciating

hardships during his early years in Ottoman Palestine: after returning from his aforementioned shlichut work in Russia, the rabbi lost his first wife and a number of children due to disease outbreaks in Galilee and Jerusalem, and he was sometimes targeted by hostile Turkish officials, as in the tax crackdown episode following Haim Farhi's brutal execution.²⁶⁰ In the mid-1830s crisis period in Galilee, Rabbi Israel managed affairs with Hasidic groups in a noticeable, unusual spirit of constructive cooperation; personifying a *Klal Yisrael* ideal of Jewish solidarity, his amicable attitude toward Hasidim apparently derived partly from family ties, via his second wife.²⁶¹ With this resilient rabbi in the center, Safed Jewry responded to the 1834 emergency on the basis of an obviously perceptible ideological platform, as well as communal structure and tenacious commitment. The stalwart religious ideology of victims-heroes such as Rabbi Israel throws additional perspective on the 1834 Galilee riots. They are an early chapter in the Arab-Jewish conflict, one which features communal warfare in the Middle East's pre-national or proto-national era.

Throughout the Safed ordeal, the behavior of the terrified and traumatized Perushim evinced clear, hierarchical, sociopolitical logic. Their revered religious leader, Rabbi Israel, operated as a field commander, delivering instructions. His protection became the central Perushim objective.

Apparently after a day or two of fending off harassment in the beit midrash, Rabbi Israel led Perushim to a vineyard outside of town. On their own initiative, two kollel members, Rabbi Shmuel of Pinsk and Rabbi Reuven Cohen, scurried off to the Ein Zeitim hamlet, where they bribed some Arab notables, and implored them to furnish protection to Rabbi Israel so that he would not be harmed by the marauders. The Perushim leader then spent part of this month-long ordeal in a sanctuary arrangement at Ein Zeitim—the village where production processes in the sixteenth century wool trade had underpinned the rise of Kabbalist mysticism was now where Jews were taking cover in the embryonic stage of their emerging conflict with Palestinians. Some members of the Perushim group did not know about this ploy, and so spent hours “wailing and weeping like orphaned children” until they discovered that their revered leader, Rabbi Israel, was safe.²⁶²

Sub-groups in Galilee's Jewish community had been splitting at the seams before this month of peril, and the pressures of this Arab uprising irreparably tore some apart, particularly in the Hasidic community. One Hasidic rabbi, Gershon Margolit, who had earlier been accused of corruptly handling halukah funds,²⁶³ won infamy during this emergency for his self-interested, derelict behavior. His foil during this crisis, and for a few years thereafter, was Rabbi Abraham Dov of Ovruch (Owruetz), a newcomer who had arrived in Safed just months before.²⁶⁴

Dov, in his mid-sixties, was an exceptional character who for the next six years, until his death, would win admiration for his probity and fortitude while handling affairs for the Volhynia Kollel, the largest of these halukah administration groups in Eretz Israel. Though he was a distinguished, learned rabbi, Dov had not been able to climb beyond the second tier of the Hasidic leadership in the Ukraine; he immigrated to Safed partly because his ambitions were stifled due to the tight-knit family structure of the Hasidic Chernobyl dynasty (the sons of the *Chernobyler Maggid*, Rabbi Mordecai Twersky, were in line to replace their father). While it was propelled by intramural Hasidic politics and suchlike worldly circumstances (being childless, Rabbi Abraham was more at liberty to leave East Europe), Dov's immigration to Safed constituted an auspicious, uplifting event for Galilee Jewry. At the end of the eighteenth century, as we have seen, outstanding Hasidic rabbis from East Europe had settled in Safed and Tiberias; but in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, mediocrities such as the morally suspect Gershon Margolit had held the reins of Hasidic affairs in Galilee.²⁶⁵ Rabbi Abraham Dov's arrival promised higher caliber leadership. In fact, before the riots, this change in Hasidic Galilee had caught Menahem Mendel's eye.²⁶⁶

As the 1834 uprising crisis sweltered, Margolit's smaller Hasidic faction, comprised of his own family circle and immigrants from Galicia of Austrian nationality, took refuge in the court of a Safed *qadi* (Islamic law magistrate). Rabbi Gershon paid a hefty bribe and managed to ensconce his group safely in this court, until the violence subsided. Menahem Mendel's Perushim group, and Rabbi Dov's Hasidic faction (whose Jews were mostly Tsarist Russia nationals), found their way to this court, and enjoyed temporary shelter in it for five days. Menahem Mendel explained that these two groups located an Arab, identified as "Abbad," who had made a small fortune working as a retailer and also as a translator for Safed Jewish shopkeepers who traded with local Muslims. Abbad promised to take them to the qadi; but, terrifyingly, after less than a week, this Islamic judge cast the Perushim and Dov's Hasidic group back into the violent chaos outside, while Margolit and his confederates did nothing to succor their fellow Jews.²⁶⁷ Later, this Arab business associate double-crossed Menahem Mendel's group—Abbad joined forces with marauders on the road in a fleecing of the Jews. "We lingered on that road, distraught and perplexed," Menahem Mendel recalled.²⁶⁸ Dov, for his part, clashed with Margolit after the riot, particularly in disputes about compensation claims—after Margolit's death in summer 1838, Rabbi Abraham became fully aware of the level of malfeasance in his Hasidic counterpart's handling of riot compensation payments, and of halukah funds in general.²⁶⁹

Returning to the 1834 events: Menahem's group and other bands of frightened Jews moved back and forth between hiding places in town and

in outlying fields. A few individuals found luck among the wreck and ruin. For instance, Rabbi Moshe of Antalya ducked under the bima platform in a beit midrash, unseen by marauders who busily robbed and stabbed everyone else in the facility.²⁷⁰ Now and then Arab snipers on rooftops fired at Jews. Sometimes, hiding in fields, Jews were chilled by early morning summer dew; sometimes Jews disguised themselves in Arab dress when they returned to the town with the aim of carrying away wounded or infirm brethren; sometimes Jews tried to fight back, climbing up to rooftops and hurling rocks at Arab assailants (in one such incident, Rabbi Yaakov Hirsch of Mogilev was wounded by retaliatory gunfire, and an unidentified Sephardic rabbi was killed).²⁷¹ At one stage, Arabs declared a ceasefire; but when Menahem ventured into town, accompanied by a few Jewish tailors who knew some Arabic, and also with ransom money stuffed in his socks, he was mortified to discover that these peace pronouncements were a ruse.

Menahem witnessed bands of marauders hacking furiously at the foundations of abandoned Jewish houses, acting on the surmise that coins and valuables were buried under floorboards, underground. These scavengers delivered their loot to couriers, who ferried the stolen property to outlying Arab villages, sometimes using makeshift noisemakers to scare away anyone who might come near them.²⁷² Complementing this systematic pillaging, there were moments of petty cruelty, such as an incident where an Arab woman situated in the qadi's courtyard yanked jewelry from the neck of a young Jewish female counterpart. Meantime the aforementioned qadi allowed some food to be brought to the famished Jewish refugees—though harassed, Menahem was sufficiently bemused by the bread items to describe the circular baked dough at length to his memoir's East European Jewish readers, who had never seen this "bread the Muslims call pita."²⁷³

Yishuv innovators numbered among the victims. Israel Bak, a well-to-do Jew originally from Berdychev, was in his mid-thirties in 1834 and had immigrated to Safed a few years earlier. In Eastern Europe he had printed about twenty-five books; he had then set up a ground-breaking Hebrew printing press in Safed. When the riot erupted, he was operating two presses, and employed some thirty workers, in the production of a prayer *siddur*. Out on the street, Arab rioters burned books they confiscated from Bak's pioneering printing establishment, and they used metallic letter casings to make bullets.²⁷⁴ Menahem watched marauders hack Bak's legs until he collapsed on the ground, seemingly crippled.²⁷⁵

As it turned out, Israel Bak, a seminal figure in the emergence of Hebrew in the modernizing Yishuv, became the Safed riot's most persistently energetic Jewish victim. Months after the violence, in a sequence that anticipates biographical turns in the careers of later Zionist cultural icons such as Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the Safed printer wrested from Ibrahim Pasha a farm concession

for the Jermak village on Mount Meron.²⁷⁶ Once settled there, Bak cast his son as a prototypical figure for the Yishuv's development.²⁷⁷

A few nights into the ordeal, Menahem felt particularly disturbed by the fate of holy books and articles in the town's thirteen synagogues, and so he bribed the qadi and won access to survey the situation, together with some Arabic-speaking compatriots. They ripped their clothes in bereavement after witnessing how many of the town's 500 Torah scrolls had been vandalized. Holy parchment was used to make sandals or blacksmith aprons, Menahem claimed.²⁷⁸ This assault on Safed's sacred Jewish articles warrants consideration: it proves that the marauders' motivations were not solely economic.

After three weeks of terror, Menahem's Perushim group managed to make its way to Ein Zeitim, where it reunited with Rabbi Israel from Shklov. They prayed on the graves of Tanna sages, such as Rabbi Ilai the Elder, and they drank water from a nearby spring. Druze troops deployed by Ibrahim Pasha began to arrive on the scene more than four weeks after the start of the riot, finally bringing it to an end.²⁷⁹

After the 1834 riots in Safed, foreign consuls pressured the Egyptian regime to meet Jewish compensation demands. Jewish residents in Safed were forwarding compensation demands which reached an eye-popping total, 6 million qirsh. To set this large demand in perspective, it bears mention that revenues in all of Syria in 1835 were 44 million qirsh.²⁸⁰

Whether forwarding such a huge demand reflected the naivete of Safed Jews, or instead represented a plausible ante in a negotiation bid, is open to debate. The historian Mordechai Abir, whose ground-breaking research covered diverse, Jewish, Arab, and diplomatic aspects of the 1834 riots, believed that the 3,000 Jews in Safed were not bluffing, and probably suffered financial losses commensurate with their total compensation demand.²⁸¹ In any case, this claims episode has historical import because it revises stereotypes about Jews in the Yishuv, up through the final decades of the nineteenth century, whereby they are projected as indigent mendicants who prayed and waited to die in the Holy Land. In fact, this was a well-to-do Jewish community, one that was well-invested in Galilee's daily life.

Playing for time, Egyptian officials and others repeatedly asked Jewish compensation seekers to itemize their claims. For this reason, informative rosters of the community's wealth, or lost wealth, are extant. In 1837, the British Consul-General in Alexandria forwarded a final compensation break-down tally to English foreign secretary Lord Palmerston: Safed Jews of Russian nationality demanded the largest sum, over 2.5 million qirsh, followed by Jews from Austria (1.39 million).²⁸²

Not surprisingly, the Jewish campaign for compensations did not notch much success. On October 4, 1837, the British Consul-General, Patrick Campbell,²⁸³ informed Palmerston that Jews had retrieved just 864,500 qirsh

(piasters) of the 6,135,500 they had demanded. Compensation seekers were shortchanged, Campbell, asserted, as a result of the negligence of authorities in Syria, and their stereotype-filled, malicious attitude toward Jews. With other foreign consuls in Alexandria, Campbell delivered to Muhammad Ali a protest about malfeasance in the handling of the Jewish compensation claims. Muhammad Ali demonstratively instructed Ibrahim Pasha to bring this long-standing compensation dispute to a satisfactory conclusion, but his stepson did not do anything to rectify the imbalance.²⁸⁴

Jews in Safed kept track of the duplicity which waylaid the collection of their compensation claims. A collection of letters composed by Safed Jews to Montefiore on the occasion of his 1839 visit includes meticulous reports of ruses.²⁸⁵ For instance, one letter disclosed that when Arab marauders were ordered to display property pilfered from the Jewish claimants, they hid valuable gold and silver items in wells, and turned up for this inventory holding damaged and mostly worthless items.²⁸⁶ Officials designated to adjudicate claims complained about the Jews' ignorance of Arabic and their inability to identify suspected looters; meantime, outside parties pocketed funds earmarked for the aggrieved Jews. Plundered by the 1834 pogrom, slaughtered by the 1837 earthquake, and further terrorized in the 1838 Druze rebellion, Galilee Jews had little hope of winning effective restitution from outside gentile parties.

Compensation demands for the 1834 events turned into a free-for-all, with the outside parties lining their own pockets, and settling various scores against one another, all to the detriment of Jewish claimants. "The handling of property restitution for Safed Jews became a gratifying income windfall for Emir Effendi Shihab of Lebanon, for Hussein Abd al-Hadi [of the Nablus region], for officials of the [Egyptian] regime, and apparently also for some representatives of foreign states who intervened in the matter," concludes Abir.²⁸⁷

Divested of expectations of justice from gentile authorities, Galilee Jews appealed to Moses Montefiore. Their timing was apt. Exactly in this 1839–1840 period, the Anglo-Jewish notable turned into a roving troubleshooter in moments of Jewish emergency and dire need in many lands, acting as a philanthropic champion and as a self-appointed Jewish protector.²⁸⁸ Poignant records of desperate need and fading hope, these petitions to Montefiore are testimony to the stunningly unexpected, 1834–1837, decline of the second vibrant era of Jewish settlement in Safed, following the early modern Kabbalist period in the hilly Galilee town, some three centuries earlier.

Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Israel's second president and an avid student of Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel in Ottoman times and other eras, compiled and catalogued these Safed appeals to Montefiore. The letters are invaluable records

of rivetingly dramatic life stories, despite the bleak, sometimes unbearable, 1834–1837 circumstances they describe.

Some missives requested that the Anglo-Jewish leader, Montefiore, negotiate with Muhammad Ali to obtain a new, reduced tax schedule for Safed's Jews. The Egyptian administration's tax policy miscalculated income available to Jews from the overseas halukah network, these writers, representing the Sephardic kollel, claimed.²⁸⁹ Asking Montefiore for charity funds, supplicants related stories of personal travail endured during the 1834 riots, and the subsequent earthquake and Druze rebellion. For instance, Eliyahu Yaakov, the gabbai (beadle) of Safed's Isaac Abuhav synagogue, built 300 years earlier, described how this holy facility was wrecked in this period.²⁹⁰ Reporting about construction efforts to rebuild the town after the catastrophes, the gabbai cited five new residences, and also a new synagogue in the town center named after the third century, late Tannaitic period, sage, Rabbi Bana'ah. Funds for these revitalization projects had run out, and their sponsors owed money on loans; hence, Yaakov appealed to Montefiore.

Intramural ethnic or class tension in Safed's beleaguered Jewish community colored some of these appeals to Montefiore. One group of twelve well-to-do Jews from the town, including three widows, explained how it had loaned money to the Perushim. The group was unable to retrieve the debt owed to it because of changes in Perushim leadership—Rabbi Israel of Shklov, formerly the community's leader, kept referring the creditors to the new Perushim leadership in Safed, whereas Rabbi Israel's successors did the opposite.²⁹¹ Petitioners alleged that vast discrepancies plagued relief funds funneled through the halukah network, with some Safed residents receiving 500 qirsh and others just 45 qirsh. One letter insisted that all halukah money disbursed after the region's calamities should go to Safed's victimized poor residents, and not to any of its wealthy Jews. Some of these petitioners preferred to conceal their identity from Montefiore.²⁹²

"JERUSALEM FILLED AFTER THE RUIN IN SAFED": THE TUMULTUOUS 1830S IN GALILEE

During the Passover holiday in 1836, a thirty-year-old American visitor, John Lloyd Stephens, spent some days at Safed. A graduate of America's first law school, in Litchfield, CT, Stephens had a restless character, and made his mark not at the bar, but rather as a travel writer—his writing on the Near East influenced Herman Melville, and he later gained fame for his part in the proclaimed rediscovery of Mayan civilization. Not always a reliable reporter, Stephens was nonetheless a collegial, open-minded sort of person; and his travel book about Egypt and the Holy Land is punctuated with compelling disavowals of anti-Arab prejudice.²⁹³ Before Safed, he visited Tiberias, and felt

so at home at the home of a local rabbi that he tried to wrangle an invitation to stay the night.²⁹⁴ To be sure, Galilee entranced his Christian sensibilities—“I am not sure that in all my journeying in the East I had a more interesting moment than when I sat among the ruins of Capernaum, looking out” at the Sea of Galilee,²⁹⁵ he swooned during this tour of the region. Stephens seemed to take a special, philo-Semitic, interest in the Jews, mentioning during his record of the Safed visit that “my intercourse with the Jews in the Holy land had been so interesting that I determined to prolong it to the last.”²⁹⁶

Stephens provided a semi-idyllic, semi-realistic portrait of Jews in Safed celebrating the Passover holiday in Galilee, the last such religious observance staged before this early-nineteenth century wave of Jewish settlement in the region was devastated by the upcoming earthquake and subsequent Druze rebellion. One of the last records of the peak period of Jewish life in Galilee, before the Zionist revolution, provided by an alert, articulate, philo-Semitic American,²⁹⁷ Stephens’s description is worth quoting at length:

We descended to the Jews’ quarter [of Safed]. Their houses were on the side of the hill, overlooking a beautiful valley. It was the last day of eating unleavened bread, and the whole Jewish population, in their best attire, were sitting on the terraces and on the tops of their houses, in gay, striking and beautiful costumes, the women with their gold and silver ornaments on their heads and around their necks, enjoying the balmy mildness of a Syrian sunset. . . . There are about 200 families of Israelites in Safed; they come there only to lay their bones in the land of their fathers, have no occupation or means of livelihood, spend all their time in reading the Bible and Talmud, and live upon the charity of their European brethren.²⁹⁸

Apparently via conversations with an English consular agent, Stephens had been apprised of events that had transpired in this town just two years earlier. His travel report noted that Jews in Safed had suffered “robbery, murder and rapine,” and that many of its 3,000 residents had hidden, “without a mat to lie on, nor food to eat.”²⁹⁹ Yet his 1836 spring vignette about Passover in Safed evokes a resilient, rebounding Jewish community.

Tremors of the January 1, 1837, earthquake were felt around the country, but the natural disaster struck hardest in Galilee. In Safed and Tiberias, pious Jews recorded, “the earth heaved, like a horse tossing its mane. Domes of houses fell upon those inside, making their homes their graves.”³⁰⁰ The Jews were hit hardest in Safed because their houses were built in tiers on the western side of the mountain—one tier dropped on top of another during the quake, and “not a house remained standing” in the Jewish quarter. Jews had congregated for late afternoon *minha* prayers, and ended up buried under debris. Those who survived the landslide wondered whether the Day of

Judgment was on hand.³⁰¹ No earthquake had tolled such excruciating physical and cultural loss in Jewish Galilee since the natural disaster of the year 748, memorialized in the liturgical piyyut, *yoser ra'ash shevi'i*.³⁰²

Missionaries rushed to help the afflicted Jews, and it appears that Jews took funds from them in order to offset expenses of their own rescue efforts.³⁰³ The American missionary William M. Thomson described the gruesome scene: "It is not in the power of language to overstate such a ruin. Safed *was* but is not now [alive]." Thomson referred to a "hideous spectacle . . . a vast chaos of stone and earth, timber and boards."³⁰⁴

The earthquake, estimated at 6.75 on the Richter scale, killed roughly 2,000 Jews,³⁰⁵ about half of Safed's Jewish population (some casualty estimates are lower³⁰⁶). In Tiberias, in contrast, the casualty figures were marginally lower (some 400 out of the town's 1,200 Jews died in the earthquake) because the Jewish quarter was built on level ground.³⁰⁷ Only about a quarter of Safed's 800 Perushim survived, and over the following two years almost all of these Perushim survivors left the town. In contrast, most of the 750 surviving Sephardic Jews who mourned the dead from their own community stayed in Safed. About 300 of Safed's 900 Hasidim perished in the earthquake. Under the leadership of their leader, Rabbi Abraham Dov, some Hasidim remained in the area after the catastrophe. These include Israel Bak, who forgot about his battered printing presses in Safed and joined his son Nissan on the farm in Jermak. Rabbi Dov cajoled his Hasidic brethren, entreating "now is not the time to cry and mourn. Let us rush aid to the needy." Though it was later embellished by legends about how the Hasidic rabbi was the first responder to attend to the earthquake victims and about how he himself built a medical relief hut, Dov's relief work after the earthquake displayed strength and leadership, as Tel Aviv University historian David Assaf has detailed.³⁰⁸

Jews in Jerusalem and elsewhere mourned for the victims of this Galilee tragedy, but some communal leaders in the diaspora interpreted the earthquake as a sign of divine dissatisfaction about the investment of Jewish settlement efforts on the northern periphery of the Holy Land, rather than in Jerusalem. The most strident such voice belonged to the aforementioned Orthodox patriarch of Pressburg, Rabbi Moses Sofer. This rabbi, known as *Chasam Sofer*, spoke mercilessly to his congregation about how the event was retribution for the fact that over the past century, "all the [Jewish] settlers went only to Safed and [not to] Jerusalem. Jerusalem was completely forgotten." He then praised Rabbi Israel of Shklov, who had (as we have seen) courageously and shrewdly survived the 1834 riots, but gave up on Galilee after this 1837 earthquake. Though the Mitnagdic Rabbi Israel of Shklov and the Hasidic Rabbi Abraham Dov had set an exemplary standard of cooperation in Galilee between these two Jewish sub-groups, factions which often clashed bitterly in East Europe, they chose different routes after the earthquake—Dov

rejected the Perushim view which beheld the natural calamity as an ominous validation of Talmudic prophecy about impending ruin in Galilee.³⁰⁹ Chasam Sofer, perhaps the foremost early proponent of “Orthodoxy” as a Jewish response to challenge of modern life, praised Rabbi Israel, perhaps the foremost Jewish settler in the Holy Land in this pre-Zionist period, for relocating Perushim. By moving his Perushim followers from Galilee to the Jerusalem, Rabbi Israel was following a divine course, claimed Rabbi Sofer. “Rabbi Israel is righteous for he has gathered together the refugees of Safed and brought them to Jerusalem,” this Orthodox rabbi preached to his Slovak congregation.³¹⁰

In time, the rhetoric of righteous retribution in Rabbi Sofer’s pronouncement would be excised, and Jews in the Yishuv remembered it more simply as a truthful demographic and geographic statement. The transformation in Palestine’s Jewish geography wrought by the 1834 riots and 1837 earthquake reduced into a pithy, much-cited, adage: “Jerusalem filled after the ruin in Safed.”³¹¹ This evaluation is true, albeit somewhat over-stated, as we will see at the end of this chapter.

As a bizarrely cruel coda to this devastation of Galilee Jewry in the 1830s,³¹² Druze marauders sacked Safed in 1838. Eyewitness evidence of this final violent indignity is given by Montefiore’s secretary, Louis Loewe, a prodigiously learned and linguistically endowed Jewish native of Silesia. Loewe, who had a PhD from the University of Berlin, had become something of an intellectual celebrity in England in the 1830s thanks to the patronage of the famed admiral from the battle of Acre, Sir Sidney Smith. In 1838, Loewe was near the end of a three year tour of the Middle East when Safed’s Hasidic leader, Rabbi Abraham Dov, begged him to intercede with the local Muslim governor, amid reports of an impending Druze attack. This governor fled before Loewe could reach him. Meantime, many of Safed’s remaining Jews hid in Rabbi Dov’s courtyard. In return for a bribe of 75,000 piasters, Druze assailants and also some Muslim Arabs granted amnesty to these courtyard refugees; later, they greedily demanded another 50,000 piasters bribe, and ransacked the city when the Jews were unable to pay it. Rabbi Dov was beaten. Loewe hid in a site at nearby Ein Zeitim, not far from where Menahem Mendel of Kamenets and others had taken refuge during the 1834 misadventure. For Loewe and some fellow Jews, this was not a lucky spot—he reported “being beaten on the most tender parts of our body” until blood flowed. The Druze riots spread beyond Safed to locales other than Ein Zeitim. The Bak family at Jermak was also victimized by the violent pillaging. That the energetic and perceptive American Biblical geographer, Edward Robinson, and his Arabic-fluent, missionary companion and coauthor, Eli Smith, were compelled to re-route their visit to Galilee because of the Druze uprising³¹³ attests to the event’s impact.

Hasidim implored Dr. Loewe, hoping he could convince Rabbi Dov to assent to the community's relocation to Acre or Haifa, towns where Jews enjoyed the protection of foreign consuls. Safed's Hasidic rabbi, as noted earlier, was not forthcoming, opining that his followers should "maintain this old settlement in its place and save synagogues that would be destroyed were the Hasidim to leave the city [Safed]." ³¹⁴ Rabbi Dov's fortitude, his unflinching commitment to Jewish settlement in Galilee, appealed to 600 Hasidim who remained in Safed, along with 750 Sephardim. ³¹⁵ This meant that the calamity-stricken town retained some Jewish presence, when Montefiore, accompanied by Dr. Loewe as his all-purpose secretary, arrived on his second, eventful, journey to the Holy Land in 1839.

During his 1839 visit to Safed, Montefiore discovered that the town's hardy Jewish residents were not worried about the possible recurrence of natural disasters. Instead, what we call today the "Arab-Jewish conflict" is what remained worriedly on their minds. Montefiore inspected makeshift dwellings built after the 1837 earthquake, and he "regretted" that these "miserable hovels, built over the ruins of old ones, were [located] on the edge of the mountain, so that the slightest shock of earthquake would bury the inhabitants." ³¹⁶ Montefiore wondered whether then Jewish Safed survivors were worried about lightning striking twice, but these residents retorted that they had no fear of more earthquakes, and that any dread they had related to the area's Muslim and Druze inhabitants. ³¹⁷

Montefiore, as noted, was deluged by petitioners, and several of these appeals conveyed grievances about perceived inequities in the distribution of halukah funds. Upon investigation, the Anglo-Jewish philanthropist found cause to praise the probity of Rabbi Abraham Dov, and his management of the Hasidic community. Compared to the administration of other kollelim, the Hasidic Rabbi Dov, Loewe noted, "had better divided money, giving each according to the amount of loss sustained by each individual." ³¹⁸ Such Hasidic orderliness contrasted with halukah disbursement distortion among the Sephardim, Montefiore judged. After the earthquake, Montefiore's group believed, relief funds furnished from London had been allocated disproportionately among Safed's Sephardim, with the largest disbursements going to religious scholars. ³¹⁹ Specifically, Montefiore rebuked the Sephardic chief rabbi, Haim Mizrahi, and two other communal leaders (Samuel Aboo and Abraham Shoshana) for creative accounting, and faulty census roster submission, due to a self-interested agenda of obtaining special benefits. ³²⁰

Aboo and Shoshana, Loewe noted, "were land-owners in a neighboring village," and such proprietorship piqued Montefiore's curiosity. ³²¹ Generally, not just in Galilee, Montefiore developed a special interest during this 1839 visit in the possibility of Yishuv farming enterprises; and something of a non-dialogue dialogue developed between the Anglo-Jewish philanthropist

and the Yishuv's petitioners. Montefiore had no intention of challenging traditional Orthodoxy in the Yishuv, but he nonetheless envisioned the transformation of its residents as newly robust, agricultural and factory enterprise workers, in keeping with the age's evolving Victorian ethic. For their part, Jewish petitioners sometimes used agricultural rhetoric as camouflage to leverage bids for shares of Montefiore's philanthropic largesse. According to the historian Israel Bartal, Yishuv petitioners who brought farming plans to Montefiore typically thought of themselves as overseer managers of Arab laborers, and not exactly as *halutz* (i.e., frontier pioneer) farmworkers, a la subsequent ideological formulations in the Zionist movement.³²² Montefiore kept straining during this second visit to find evidence of authentic opportunities, and genuine Jewish settler interest, in the agricultural sphere. For instance, he held the printer cum farmer Israel Bak in high regard, and went out of his way to attend a bris circumcision ceremony held at Bak's homestead in Jermak.³²³ Loewe's travel diary repeatedly exudes confidence about the eagerness and ability of Galilee Jews to become self-sufficient farmers, or laborers of some other sort. But these entries also indicate a measure of realism about the intentions of some Jews to become overseers of Arab farmers. Typical in these respects is this passage:

Sir Moses found his brethren most anxious to be employed and to earn their own bread. They appeared to prefer the cultivation of land as the most likely means to raise them from their present destitute condition. There were a few Jews who had some interest with Mussulmans in cultivating some small farms about three or four hours from Safed, but their means were so limited that they could ill afford to keep a pair of oxen. There was no lack of spirit, and Sir Moses thought that some trifling assistance from the proper persons in Europe would speedily restore health and plenty.³²⁴

The most revealing diary entry reflects Montefiore's confidence in his ability to catalyze a full-fledged revival of Jewish life in Galilee, in harmony with his agrarian Victorianism, with his concerns about the retention of traditional Jewish piety, and with what can only be classified as a proto-Zionist vision whereby modern Jewish immigration would be directed mostly to Eretz Israel. Galilee in this elegiac description becomes a much preferred Jewish immigration substitute for "New South Wales, Canada, etc." After meeting with the two Sephardic communal leaders in the Safed area, Montefiore exclaimed:

The land in this neighborhood appears to be particularly favourable for agricultural speculation. There are groves of olive trees, more than 500 years old, vineyards, much pasture, plenty of wells and abundance of excellent water, also fig

walnuts, almonds, wheat barley and lentils. In fact, it is a land that would produce almost everything in abundance, with very little skill and labor. . . . I shall apply to Mohammed Ali for a grant of land for fifty years; some one or two hundred villages. . . . The grant obtained, I shall, please Heaven on my return to England, form a company for the cultivation of the land and the encouragement of our brethren in Europe to return to Palestine. Many Jews now emigrate to New South Wales, Canada, etc., but in the Holy Land they would find a greater certainty of success. . . . By degrees I hope to induce the return of thousands of our brethren to the Land of Israel. I am sure they would be happy in the employment and the observance of our holy religion, in a manner which is impossible in Europe.³²⁵

The passage exudes a characteristic Montefiore mix of quixotic unrealism and visionary programmatic prescience. On the one hand, Montefiore's confidence is misplaced. His dithyrambic prediction about mass Jewish return to Galilee and the region's rapid development (via negotiation with Muhammad Ali and Montefiore's own establishment of a royal charter company, *à la* the East India Company) to benefit "thousands" of Jewish immigrants in the near future is ill-timed. Montefiore thought in these programmatic terms exactly at the moment when Galilee's Jewish population fell into decline, much to the benefit of Jerusalem. On the other hand, on an ideological level, his rhapsodic prediction has uncanny validity. Just over four decades later, Galilee would become a focal point of a modern Jewish migration program sponsored by the Hibat Zion movement, basically the first settlement effort adopted by Zionism, as detailed later in this volume.

We can be more precise about the prescience, or lack thereof, of forecasts such as Montefiore's regarding Jewish revival in Galilee in decades after these challenging 1834–1838 events. Data regarding Galilee's Jewish demography in the 1840–1880 period simultaneously contradict and reinforce widely held perceptions.

For one thing, the adage about Jerusalem becoming filled by Jewish refugees from Galilee's 1834–1838 tumults has limited truth, but is also misleading. Jerusalem's Jewish population rose from 2,982 persons in 1839, to 4,708 in 1855; and whereas Safed's Ashkenazi population had constituted 36 percent of Jews in the country in 1839, in 1855 this percentage had dropped to 31 percent. This decline in Safed's Ashkenazi population stemmed from the decision reached by Rabbi Israel of Shklov and his Perushim followers to relocate in Jerusalem—but Safed hardly emptied of Jews, largely because Hasidic immigrants streamed into the town in the 1840s and thereafter. Contravening the widely held perception of Galilee Jewry's near annihilation during the calamitous 1834–1837 period, the data show that the share of the Jewish population in Eretz Israel claimed by Safed and Tiberias *rose* from 36 percent in 1839 to 40 percent in 1855.³²⁶

Without doubt, the population gap left in Safed by the Palestinian and Druze rebellions, and the 1837 earthquake, was filled by Hasidim. In the mid-nineteenth century, Hasidim constituted 70 percent of the country's Ashkenazi population, and most persons in this group lived in Galilee (83 percent of the country's Hasidim were in Galilee in 1839, and in 1855 this figure dropped slightly to 71 percent). Half of the country's Hasidim in the mid-nineteenth century lived in Safed; the percentage of Hasidim in Jerusalem did not climb over 30 percent until the 1880s. Hasid newcomers to Safed in this mid-nineteenth century period came from Galicia, Ukraine, and the Walachia and Moldavia principalities in Romania (Hasidim in the Habad sub-movement settled in Hebron).³²⁷

Hasidic newcomers transformed Safed's overall demography. In 1840, the 1,282 Jews in the town constituted 30 percent of its total population (i.e., Jews and non-Jews). Just over 40 percent of the Jews in Safed at this time were Hasidim. In 1880, the 5,560 Jews were a majority in Safed, constituting 58 percent of its total population. Some 70 percent of the Jews in the town in 1880 were Hasidim.³²⁸

Such data about the mid-nineteenth century overturn views about a Jewish exodus from Galilee. But they do not really contradict the image of this northern population as an "Old Yishuv," a perception which Zionist pioneers and publicity pundits later circulated and branded. Compared to other Jewish and non-Jewish immigrant groups, Hasidic newcomers in Safed tended to be older, and have smaller families; there were a higher percentage of widows and widowers among them, and an unusually high number of Safed's Hasidic couples were childless. This last, childless family, criterion warrants elaboration: during the 1855–1875 period, about 60 percent of married Safed adults were in this category, whereas figures cited for traditional societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are often just 10 percent. In 1855, 37 percent of Safed's Hasidim were older than forty-five, whereas in Tsarist Russia, this figure among Jews in 1897 was just 15 percent. Few Jewish immigrants who left Russia in 1897 were middle aged or older—just 15 percent were older than forty-five. Among Hasidic immigrants to Safed in 1875, well more than half (60 percent) of the newcomers were older than forty-five.³²⁹

In Galilee, and elsewhere in the Yishuv in this 1840–1880 period, Jews were not building an infrastructure for self-sufficiency and internal growth. Somewhat unfairly (as we have argued), they were chastised for dependence on *halukah* charity funds; but the critique about the lack of dynamism in this "Old Yishuv" could have objectively pointed to the small family size of Jewish residents in locales like Safed, their unusually old average age, and the demographic dependence on immigration. After the 1880s, the Zionists' determination to reverse these characteristics and trends was rooted in a reasonable evaluation of empirical realities.

NOTES

1. T. J. Gorton, *Renaissance Emir: A Druze Warlord at the Court of the Medici* (Northampton: Olive Branch Press, 2014), 157.

2. Ibid., 159.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 168.

5. Ibid., 171.

6. Robert Brenton Betts, *The Druze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 56.

7. For descriptions of this elite: Anis Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith in Tawhid* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 100–101; Philip Hitti, *The Origins of the Druze People and Religion* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 42.

8. Obeid's volume (see xix–xx) emerged out of this sort of anti-defamation organizational consolidation.

9. In the mid-1920s, a Lebanese American scholar at Princeton University, Philip Khuri Hitti, contended that Druze originally descended primarily from Persian and other non-Arab sources (see Hitti, *The Origins*), and this interpretation suits Israel's policy of distinguishing between Druze and Arab groups. Hitti's claim, however, has not prevailed among scholars—the first to disavow Hitti's Persian origins theory was Martin Sprengling, in a 1939 article. For this debate: Kais Firro, *A History of the Druzes* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 18–20.

10. Obeid's volume insists that Druze religious culture emanated largely out of Islam, but other studies (see, for instance, Betts, *The Druze*, 17–21) stress Druze rejection of fundamental Islamic tenets and practices.

11. Hitti, *The Origins*, 13.

12. Betts, *The Druze*, 16, 20.

13. Gorton, *Renaissance Emir*, 21.

14. Information here relies on Hitti, *The Origins*, 15.

15. Henry Light, *Travels in Egypt, Nubia, Holy Land, Mount Lebanon and Cyprus in the Year 1814* (London: Bodwell and Martin, 1917).

16. Gorton's biography stresses Fakhr al-Din's willful misrepresentation on such issues.

17. Gorton, *Renaissance Emir*, 55.

18. Hitti, *The Origins*, 15; Gorton, *Renaissance Emir*, 56–57 writes that the historical de Dreux was mortally wounded at the battle of Mansurah in 1249 and died on the voyage back to Europe.

19. All of the information in this paragraph relies on Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, 42–3; see also the map of Druze settlement in Palestine, 1600–1900 in his volume, 44.

20. Betts, *The Druze*, 62–63, 124–125. The two largest Druze settlements in Galilee were Beit Jann and Yarka, each with around 6,000 residents in 1983. Other large Galilee Druze villages were, and remain, Julis, Yanoah, Sajur, Kisra, Hurfash, Mughar, Abu-Sinan, al-Rama, Kfar Yasif, and Shfar'am.

21. This information draws from Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 70–74; Betts, *The Druze*, 5–8.
22. M. M. Silver, *History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 228.
23. Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 74.
24. Ibid., 80.
25. Betts, *The Druze*, 8–9.
26. Betts, *The Druze*, 9. In critical estimates, al-Hakim is perceived not just as a lunatic, but also as a cruel tyrant responsible for the deaths of 20,000 victims, most of them Christians.
27. Hitti, *The Origins*, 27.
28. Ibid.
29. Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 90.
30. Ibid., 93.
31. Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 84; Betts, *The Druze*, 10.
32. Betts, *The Druze*, 10.
33. Some prominent families appear to have amalgamated into Druze society after this 1043 turnstile; for instance, the Banu Ma'n, apparently originally of Kurdish origin and Sunni Islamic disposition, reportedly moved into the Shouf around 1120, a sequence that implies conversion to Druze religion after the end of the dawah period. See Gorton, *Renaissance Emir*, 4–8. Fakr al-Din descended from this family.
34. Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 92–93.
35. The books are also known as *Rasa'il al-hikma*. Apparently, for centuries these 111 epistles were hand-copied and transmitted between communal leaders; they were compiled in the six books by a Druze emir and theologian named Jamal al-Din Abdallah al-Tanukhi (Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 97). Obeid's volume features interesting discussion about his use of these texts, and their strengths and limitations as a window to Druze history and culture.
36. For Druze conceptions of God, see Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 103–29.
37. Hitti, *The Origins*, 30.
38. Gorton, *Renaissance Emir*, 20.
39. Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 146–52.
40. Betts, *The Druze*, 17.
41. Ibid.
42. Hitti, *The Origins*, 46.
43. Betts, *The Druze*, 13.
44. Ibid., 40.
45. The information here relies on Betts, *The Druze*, 18.
46. Obeid writes that in “the Druze concept of Tawhid, the rights of women are equal to the rights of men in marriage, divorce and inheritance” (182); but he concedes that these principles of equality are often not observed “in the male-dominated climate of the east.”
47. The term's conventional translation as “dissimulation” is a little inaccurate; the Arabic word refers to prudence. Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, 20.

48. Betts, *The Druze*, 20.
49. Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, 21.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., 20.
52. Information in this section relies on Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 100–2.
53. Obeid, *The Druze and Their Faith*, 102.
54. See the extensive discussion of this Golden Calf rumor, and correlate speculation about phallic idols, in Betts, *The Druze*, 28–32.
55. A prominent propagator of this idea is Hitti, *The Origins*, 16. He appears to follow a chapter, “The Relation of Druzes to Freemasonry” in a 1922 publication, B. H. Springett, *Secret Sects of Syria*.
56. Betts, *The Druze*, 26.
57. Despite, or perhaps (in some contexts) because of, such cultural stereotypes, the Druze-Maronite clash inspired important debates about religion, nationalism, and reform in Lebanon, and the Ottoman Empire in general. Ussama Makdisi, “Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 34, no. 4, 601–17.
58. Betts, *The Druze*, 13.
59. Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, 25–28, mentions some Druze chroniclers and texts that convey information about Druze in this Mamluk period. Druze had no protected status as *ahl al-kitab*, People of the Book, in this era, and apparently were subject to violent attacks initiated by the Mamluks, as in the case of a battle fought at Kesrouan in 1305.
60. Gorton, *Renaissance Emir*, 7–8.
61. Ibid., 15.
62. Ibid., 46.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., 48.
65. Ibid., 53.
66. Ibid., 56.
67. Ibid., 143–60.
68. Ibid., 151–154. We should be more precise of how Ottoman officials administered Palestine, and its northern region, largely perpetuating a governing geography that had been instituted by the Mamluks. Following their triumph over the Mamluks in 1516, at the Battle of Marj Dabiq, the Turks divided Palestine into five districts (*sanjaks*, though the original term for district was *liwa*): Gaza, Ajlun, Lajjun, and an amalgam of Safed, Nablus, and Jerusalem. All were attached to the Damascus province (*wilaya*). See Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 16–53.
69. Gorton, *Renaissance Emir*, passim.
70. Ibid., 156.
71. Information about Nazareth in this section relies on Mahmoud Yazbak, “Cotton and the Emergence of Nazareth in 18th Century Palestine,” *Oriente Moderno Anno*, vol. 93, no. 2 (2013), 531–46.

72. Ibid., 532–534.
73. Ibid., 534.
74. For background about the Turabays: Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 41–43.
75. Gorton, *Renaissance Emir*, 173.
76. Ahmad Hasan Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Thomas Philipp, *Acre: The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City, 1730–1831* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 29–48; Amnon Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century: Patterns of Government and Administration* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973), 30–53, 83–92; Uriel Heyd, *Zahir al-Umar, Shalit HaGalil* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1942).
77. A sympathetic fictionalized account is Ibrahim Nasrallah, *The Lanterns of the King of Galilee* (New York: The American University of Cairo Press, 2014). It would be interesting to compare Zahir's portraiture in this historical novel with the psychologically complex depiction of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar in Ala Hlehel's recent novel, published in Hebrew as *Lehitraot Akko* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2018), one of the most compelling works of fiction ever written about Galilee.
78. Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine*, 19; Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century*, 8.
79. Yazbak, "Cotton and the Emergence of Nazareth," 535.
80. Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine*, 21.
81. Philipp, *Acre*, 31.
82. Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine*, 23.
83. Ibid., 24.
84. Philipp, *Acre*, 34. See also Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, 95–132.
85. Philipp, *Acre*, 35.
86. Meir Benayahu, introduction to Yaakov Berab, *Zimrat Ha'aretz* (Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1946), v.
87. Berab, *Zimrat Ha'aretz* reprinted in Abraham Ya'ari (ed.), *Zikhranot eretz yisrael*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: HaHistradut HaTzionit, 1947), 74.
88. Ibid., 76–96.
89. Zahir judged it opportune to employ Eastern Christian advisers—later in his career, as noted later in this chapter, a Greek Catholic, Ibrahim Sabbaq, served as his wazir. Zahir's personal physician, Sulayman Suwwan, was Greek Orthodox. Yazbak, "Cotton and the Emergence of Nazareth," 545.
90. Philipp, *Acre*, 36.
91. Ibid., 22–25.
92. Ibid., 14.
93. Ibid., 13.
94. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, 95–132.
95. Philipp, *Acre*, 99.
96. Ibid., 102.
97. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, 95–132, characterizes Zahir's system as an "imperfect monopoly," and one of its evident loose ends was the windfall it provided to his own representatives. The measure of decentralization afforded by Zahir's network actually enhanced its efficiency; players in this triad, peasant farmers and the

foreign merchants, had some maneuvering room, and retained incentive. Al-Jazzar's effort to heighten the system's centralization by squeezing the French merchants decreased its efficiency, as Doumani shows.

98. Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine*, 130.

99. Al-Jazzar's death was celebrated as far away as Damascus; despite his leadership in Acre's heroic defense against Napoleon's forces, contemporary chroniclers roundly condemned al-Jazzar's rule and legacy. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, 95–132.

100. Philipp, *Acre*, 122–32.

101. Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine*, 132.

102. Philipp, *Acre*, 119.

103. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, 95–132.

104. Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century*, 28–29.

105. Ibid.

106. Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine*, 16.

107. The phrase “penetrated system” was coined by the historian Carl L. Brown. Philipp, *Acre*, 47.

108. Ibid., 41.

109. Heyd, *Zahir al-Umar*, 46–56.

110. Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century*, 86–87.

111. Yazbak, “Cotton and the Emergence of Nazareth,” 538.

112. Ibid., 542.

113. Ibid., 543.

114. Ibid., 542.

115. Mordechai Eliav, *Erets Yisrael ve-yishovah ba-meah ha-19, 1777–1917* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1978), 29.

116. Chaya Katz-Stiman, *Rayshitan shel aliyot Hasidim*, PhD thesis, Ramat Gan 1981, 38–41; Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk to Hasidim of Smila, Safed, 1777 in Yaakov Barnai (ed.) *Igrot Hasidim me-Erets Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1980), 67.

117. Several documents in the *Igrot Hasidim* (Hasidic Letters from Eretz Israel) collection underscore how the embittering rivalry with the Mitnagdim lingered in the minds of these Hasidic immigrants in Galilee and impacted on their activities. See, for instance, Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk to Rabbis and Leaders of Vilna, Safed, 1777; Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk, Safed, 1781, in *Igrot Hasidim*, 70, 93.

The reliability of these letters as straightforward historical documentation has been brought into question. Based on a Social History of Ideas methodology, Nahum Karlinsky's volume traces how the letters were collected and published in various versions, over decades. Starting with tensions stirred by the rise of the Habad sub-movement in Hasidism, issues of sociopolitical rivalry, and personal ambition, influenced the letters' publication, and quite possibly their contents; and a number of unresolved technical questions also becloud the letters' authenticity. Nahum Karlinsky, *Historyah sheke-neged: “Igrot ha-Hasidim me-Eretz Yisrael,” hatekst veva-kontekst* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1998).

118. Katz-Stiman; Sherman Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries: The Jews in Palestine, 1799–1840* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 37–39.
119. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 40.
120. Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk to Hasidim of Smila, Safed, 1777 in *Igrot Hasidim*, 68.
121. Rabbi Yehoshua Be'er David to Karaite Rabbi Hillel Ben Yitzhak, 1777; Rabbi Aharon Be'er Yitzhak-Izak and Rabbi Aharon Be'er Meir to Karaite Leaders, Crimea, 1777 *Igrot Hasidim*, 57–61.
122. Rabbi Israel Be'er Peretz of Polotsk to Leaders of Vitebsk, 1777, *Igrot Hasidim*, 74.
123. Eliav, *Erets Yisrael ve-yishovah*, 77.
124. Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk and Other Hasidic Rabbis to Jews Overseas, Tiberias, 1784, *Igrot Hasidim*, 116.
125. Rabbi Israel Be'er Peretz of Polotsk to Leaders of Vitebsk, *Igrot Hasidim*, 74.
126. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 43.
127. Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk to Hasidic Rabbis Overseas, Tiberias and Safed, 1780, *Igrot Hasidim*, 86.
128. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 44.
129. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk to Rabbis and Leaders of Vilna, Safed, 1777; Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk to Hasidim of Smila, Safed, 1777, *Igrot Hasidim*, 67, 73; Rabbi Israel quotation from Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 45.
130. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 46.
131. Ibid., 50.
132. Eliav, *Erets Yisrael ve-yishovah*, 79–80. See also Katz-Stiman, 141–50.
133. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 48.
134. For paradoxes and modern transformations of Holy Land *shlichut* models: M. M. Silver, *Bi-sheliḥut ha-Ma'arav: mabaṭ aḥer al ha-hiṣṭoryah ha-Yehudit ha-modernit* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2014), 49–59 and passim.
135. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 52–53.
136. Mordechai Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv: Lior Sharf, 2003), 121.
137. Ibid., 122.
138. Ibid., 122; Nathan Schur, *Masa Napoleon le-Erets-Yisrael* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1984), 52–53.
139. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_of_Flies
140. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 54.
141. Smith is a “brave officer,” Napoleon wrote in his memoirs. The English admiral cunningly “took advantage of the discontent which he found to prevail amongst the French troops at being so long away from France,” he noted. Smith’s success in impounding ardently coveted ordnance was “the chief cause of my failure at Acre,” Napoleon concluded. *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte, Complete* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891), 116.
142. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 54.
143. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 8.
144. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 55.

145. Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets*, 125; Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 57.
146. *Memoirs of Napoleon*, 117.
147. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 55; Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 10.
148. See, for instance, Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets*, 125–129.
149. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 60.
150. *Ibid.*, 59.
151. *Ibid.*, 60.
152. See footnote 77.
153. *Memoirs of Napoleon*, 118.
154. *Ibid.*, 119.
155. *Ibid.*
156. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 68.
157. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 61; Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets*, 152.
158. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 63; Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets*, 156.
159. Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets*, 155.
160. *Memoirs of Napoleon*, 120.
161. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 61.
162. Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets*, 154.
163. See, for instance, Shimon Shamir, *Toldot ha-Aravim ba-Mizrah ha-tikhon ba-et ha-ḥadashah* (Tel Aviv: Reshafim, 1987), 19–34.
164. Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets*, 154.
165. *Ibid.*, 157.
166. *Ibid.*, 156.
167. Schur, *Masa Napoleon*, 64.
168. For details and a map of the Galilee battles: Gichon, *Napoleon be-Erets*, 153.
169. See the discussion and bibliographical references in Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 10–11, 398.
170. *Memoirs of Napoleon*, 120.
171. Joseph Schwarz, *Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine*, translated by Isaac Leeser (New York: Hermon Press, 1850/1969), 373–4.
172. *Ibid.*, 374.
173. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 11, citing a description provided by the Swiss explorer Jean Louis Burckhardt
174. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 11–12.
175. *Ibid.*, 11.
176. This section on Rabbi Nahman relies on Green's path-breaking biography: Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: The Life and Spiritual Quest of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publications, 1992).
177. *Ibid.*, 64.
178. *Ibid.*
179. *Ibid.*, 25.
180. *Ibid.*, 19.
181. *Ibid.*, 64.
182. *Ibid.*, 70.
183. *Ibid.*, 69.

184. Ibid., 13.

185. According to Green, *Tormented Master*, 72, the extant account of Nahman's visit to the cave of Shimon Bar Yochai was "censored" by disciples to conceal concepts of mystical union, but the passage is nonetheless suggestive: "At night he [Nahman] went from chamber to chamber, encouraging them [other Jews] to keep reciting passages from the Zohar, etc. He himself said nothing, but went about singing to himself, in great happiness, until the light of dawn."

186. Ibid., 79.

187. Ibid., 85.

188. For background on Frankism: Gershom Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," in Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 78–141; Pawel Maciejko, *The Frankish Movement in Poland, the Czech Lands and Germany, 1755–1816* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

189. Green, *Tormented Master*, 66.

190. Ibid., 82.

191. For details of this trip, see Green, *Tormented Master*, 70–74.

192. David Assaf, "Did Napoleon Promise a Jewish State in Eretz Israel to Rabbi Nahman," [Heb.], *Ha'aretz*, culture and literature supplement, June 4, 2021.

193. Silver, *History of Galilee*, 118.

194. Probably the most engaging attempt to develop this point with some measure of philosophical rigor and bona fide intellectual history analysis is Eliezer Schweid, *Moledet ye-erets yeudah: Erets-Yisrael ba-hagut shel am Yisrael* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1979).

195. While I drafted parts of this chapter, the issue of whether Hasidic devotees would be allowed special entry to Uman, in defiance of Covid pandemic restrictions, during the autumn 2020 Jewish High Holy Days, featured as a lead item in Israel's media for several days.

196. Eliav, *Erets Yisrael ve-yishovah*, 85–86.

197. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 57.

198. Eliav, *Erets Yisrael ve-yishovah*, 92.

199. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 59.

200. Israel of Shklov, *Memoir* in Ya'ari, *Eretz Israel*, 112; Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 62.

201. Israel of Shklov, *Memoir*, 113–14.

202. Ibid., 113.

203. Lehren's background, activities, and spiritual motivations are assessed in Arie Morgenstern, "ha-Pekidim yeha-amarkalim be-Amsterdam yeha-yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Erets Yisrael ba-mahatsit ha-rishonah shel ha-meah ha-19," PhD thesis, Jerusalem 1981, 3–6 and passim.

204. Ibid.

205. In a series of compromises, the halukah share claimed by the Perushim tended to increase, to the detriment of the other two sub-groups. The arrangements are detailed in Morgenstern, 54–85.

206. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 390.

207. Ibid., 134.

208. Israel of Shklov, *Memoir*, 115.
209. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 71.
210. Ibid.
211. Israel Bartal, *Galut ba-arets: yishuv Erets-Yisrael be-terem tsiyonut*, (Jerusalem: Hasifriya Hatzionit, 1994).
212. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 79.
213. Ibid., 80.
214. Ibid.
215. Biographical works include Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
216. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983).
217. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 210.
218. Ibid., 220.
219. Ibid.
220. Arie Morgenstern, *Hastening Redemption: Messianism and the Resettlement of the Land of Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
221. The “canton” crisis has been examined from different standpoints, including a critical, cultural approach deployed in Olga Litvak, *Conscription and the Search for Modern Russian Jewry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).
222. Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6.
223. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 336.
224. See, for instance, Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 336–42; Joseph Meisel, “The Jewish Settlement in Eretz Israel in 1839” [Heb.] in Itzhak Ben-Zvi, Meir Benayahu (eds.), *Safed Volume: Studies and Texts on the History of the Jewish Community in Safed*, vol. 1 Jerusalem 1962, 425–74.
225. Figures from Meisel, 429.
226. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 33.
227. Ibid., 336.
228. Ibid., 219.
229. Ibid., 337.
230. Ibid.
231. Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 6–14. In an influential study, Rashid Khalidi argues that local and extended family loyalties obtrusive to national identity persisted up through the late Ottoman period, and a cohesive Palestinian identity only started to congeal in media and other spheres around the WWI period; Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). Ilan Pappé argues against the 1834 theory, and identifies proto-nationalist developments about a century before this turning point; Ilan Pappé, *Atsulat ha-arets, mishpaḥat Al-Ḥusayni: biyografiyah poliṭit* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2002), 69 and passim.
232. Pappé, *Atsulat ha-arets, mishpaḥat*, 71.

233. Ibid., 59–64.
234. David Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence* (New York: Overlook Press, 2011), 299–313.
235. Pappe, *Atsulat ha-arets, mishpaḥat*, 69.
236. Ibid., 65.
237. Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 7.
238. Cited in G. Kressel, “The Times and their Chroniclers,” introduction to Menahem Mendel of Kamenets, *Ḳorot ha-itim: be-tseruf nispāḥot: al meoraot ha-yishuv ha-Ivri ba-Galil bi-shenot 1834–38* (Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1946), 16.
239. Pappe, *Atsulat ha-arets, mishpaḥat*, 66.
240. Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 6.
241. Unless otherwise noted, this description of the 1834 Palestinian uprising relies on Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 6–11. Pappe’s chronology of the revolt is somewhat dissimilar—he refers, for instance, to riots breaking out in late April in Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Galilee, ahead of the aforementioned mid-May meeting of notables.
242. Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 9.
243. Some rebels surreptitiously entered the city via an abandoned underground water tunnel; Pappe, *Atsulat ha-arets, mishpaḥat*, 70.
244. Kimmerling and Migdal imply (9) that Ibrahim’s soldiers managed to cling to their toehold in the Citadel, and there are contemporary reports (e.g., Schwarz, *Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine*, 380–381) which corroborate this version. Pappe writes (70) that the 1,000 Egyptian soldiers in the Tower of David were captured in mid-May, though they escaped ill-treatment.
245. Schwarz, *Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine*, 380.
246. Pappe, *Atsulat ha-arets, mishpaḥat*, 71.
247. For an introduction to Robinson’s researches in this period, assisted by the American missionary Eli Smith: Ben-Arieh, 68–70. For the source: Edward Robinson, Eli Smith, *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arab Petrea in 1838*, 3 vols. (London: Crocker and Brewster, 1841)—the third volume (180–365) has extensive commentary on Galilee sites, starting with Mount Tabor (a topic of special interest to Robinson), and includes discussion of an unscheduled visit to Safed (Robinson found cause to append a funereal report about the 1837 earthquake in the town, composed by a missionary, William McLure Thomson, who arrived on the scene eighteen days after the disaster; 471–75).
- A new, carefully researched, study of Robinson’s *Biblical Researches* is Haim Goren, *The Loss of a Minute is Just so Much Loss of Life: Edward Robinson and Eli Smith in the Holy Land* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020). Goren notes (167–8) that Robinson’s review of source materials pertinent to the Galilee portion of his transformative, three months-plus, expedition in the country was singularly extensive (even by Robinson’s own industrious standards); and he usefully enumerates Robinson’s use of these sources (159–65).
248. Eliav, *Erets Yisrael ve-yishovah*, 90.

249. G. Kressel, "The Times and their Chroniclers," introduction to M. Mendel, *Korot*, 18.

250. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 220.

251. M. Mendel, *Korot*, 53.

252. *Ibid.*, 57.

253. *Ibid.*, 58.

254. *Ibid.*, 59.

255. *Ibid.*, 58.

256. *Ibid.*, 59.

257. This claim is not completely accurate because, at least on Menahem Mendel's account (34), some Safed officials egged on the rioters, urging them to attack Jews just as their compatriots had done in Nablus and Jerusalem. For discussion of key characteristics of a "pogrom," see David Engel, "What is a Pogrom," in Jonathan Dekel-Chen, (eds.), *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 19–40.

258. M. Mendel, *Korot*, 33.

259. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 350.

260. Israel of Shklov, *Memoir*, 112–20.

261. David Assaf, "From Volhynia to Safed: Portrait of Rabbi Abraham Dov of Ovruch as a Hasidic Leader During the First Half of the 19th Century," [Heb.] *Shalem*, vol. 6 (1992), 255.

262. M. Mendel, *Chronicles*, 36.

263. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 197; Assaf, "From Volhynia," 248.

264. Information here is drawn from Assaf, "From Volhynia," 233–73.

265. *Ibid.*, 237.

266. Assaf, "From Volhynia," 243.

267. *Ibid.*, 245.

268. M. Mendel, *Korot*, 36.

269. Assaf, "From Volhynia," 252.

270. M. Mendel, *Korot*, 38.

271. *Ibid.*, 37.

272. *Ibid.*, 44.

273. *Ibid.*, 41. The last section of Mendel's booklet is a kind of lexicon of relevant words and concepts, designed to help Jewish newcomers acclimate in Eretz Israel. The author wryly ignores how the terrifying descriptions in the publication's main sections work at cross purposes to its travel guide parts. In this connection, it bears mention that Mendel and family settled in Jerusalem in the 1840s (after a brief interlude overseas), and he is said to have opened the first hotel in the Yishuv.

274. Shoshana Halevy, *Sifre Yerushalayim ha-rishonim* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1975), 104–107.

275. Mendel, *Korot*, 38.

276. Writing in the *Ha-Vatzelet* journal two years before his 1874 death, Bak reported that the Jermak homestead functioned for a spell as a farm, with livestock. He claimed that unrest in the country at the end of Muhammad Ali's regime brought

this experiment to an end, and his move to Jerusalem. Moshe David Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Eretz Israel Press, 1936), 47–48.

277. Halevy, *Sifre Yerushalayim*, 107; Ya'akov Rozen, *Hazon Hahitnahlot b'galil* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1971), 13–74; M. M. Silver, *Zionism and the Melting Pot* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2020), 100.

278. Mendel, *Korot*, 43. The author and his comrades were particularly concerned about the fate of the Isaac Abuhave Torah scroll read on the Shavuot holiday, at the Ari synagogue, built in memory of Rabbi Isaac Luria.

279. *Ibid.*, 45.

280. Mordechai Abir, “Safed Jewry’s Compensation Claims after the 1834 Looting,” [Heb.] in *Sefunot: Annual Research Volume on Jewish Communities in the East*, Vol. 7 (Studies on the History of Safed Jewry, II), Jerusalem 1963, 272.

281. *Ibid.*

282. *Ibid.*

283. For Cambell’s work on Jewish-related issues, see Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 321–26.

284. Abir, “Safed Jewry’s Compensation,” 276.

285. Itzhak Ben-Zvi, “Events in Safed, from the 1834 Riots to the 1838 Druze Rebellion; Letters of Safed Jews Sent to Moses Montefiore,” [Heb.], *Sefunot: Annual Research Volume on Jewish Communities in the East*, vol. 7 (Studies on the History of Safed Jewry, II), Jerusalem 1963, 277–324.

286. Ben-Zvi, “Events in Safed,” First Letter, 288 (the letter’s several writers are identified on 290).

287. Abir, “Safed Jewry’s Compensation,” 272.

288. Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore* (Cambridge, MA: University of Harvard Press, 2010), 112–32.

289. Ben Zvi, “Events in Safed,” 282.

290. *Ibid.*, 283, 304–305.

291. *Ibid.*, 283, 306–307.

292. *Ibid.*, 284.

293. John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea and the Holy Land* (Norman Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 137.

294. *Ibid.*, 433.

295. *Ibid.*, 438.

296. *Ibid.*, 440.

297. Produced by a broadly reliable and pleasant, but not scholarly diligent, Holy Land travel reporter, Stephens well-selling book is a foil to Edward Robinson’s brilliantly researched and highly respected, but not best-selling, three volume *Biblical Researches* (the latter was aware of this contrast; Goren, *The Loss of a Minute*, 135). In these two cases (including Eli Smith), and others mentioned in the next chapter, Holy Land enthusiasm, and a tolerant attitude (if not outright philo-Semitism) toward the country’s Jews and Hebraic background, can be traced to educational and religious institutions, and Protestant sub-cultures, in Litchfield County, Connecticut, and its adjoining areas.

298. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt*, 441.

299. Ibid., 442.
300. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 254.
301. Ibid., 255.
302. Silver, *History of Galilee I*, 216.
303. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt*, 256.
304. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt*, 255; Robinson, vol. 3, 472. Another missionary, Erasmus Scott Calman, wrote yet a more detailed, eyewitness report of the earthquake's effects; Goren, *The Loss of a Minute*, 81.
305. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 255–256.
306. Rabbi Abraham Dov's estimate, referring to 1,000 Jewish fatalities, was lower; Assaf, "From Volhynia," 257, believes that Dov's tally could be more accurate.
307. Assaf, "From Volhynia," 259.
308. Ibid., 256–257.
309. Ibid., 241. The grim forecast is from Mishnah, Sota 9:15 ("Galilee will be destroyed").
310. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 260.
311. Eliav, *Erets Yisrael ve-yishovah*, 103. In the original Hebrew: מחורבנה של צפת נתמלאה ירושלים.
312. This information relies on Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 334–335.
313. For a map showing how the Druze rebellion altered Robinson's researches: Goren, *The Loss of a Minute*, 79.
314. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 335.
315. Ibid.
316. Dr. L. Loewe (ed.) *Diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore*, vol. 1, (Chicago: Belford-Clarke Co., 1890), 165.
317. Ibid., 165.
318. Ibid., 164. See also Assaf's moving account of the Montefiore group's high esteem for Dov Abraham: Assaf, "From Volhynia," 264–266.
319. Loewe, *Diaries*, 164–5.
320. Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries*, 345.
321. Loewe, *Diaries*, 348.
322. Israel Bartal, "Two Letters from Jews in the Galilee to Sir Moses Montefiore on Agricultural Matters," and also "Settlement Plans in the Days of Montefiore's Second Visit to Eretz Israel, 1939," [Heb.] in Bartal, *Galut*, 90–160.
323. Loewe, *Diaries*, 165.
324. Ibid., 177.
325. Ibid., 167.
326. Nahum Karlinsky, "The Jewish Population of Safed During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century as an Immigrant Society," [Heb.], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* (1999), 150, 153.
327. Ibid., 152–157.
328. Ibid., 158.
329. Ibid., 159–68.

Chapter 3

The Quest for the Historical Galilee

INTRODUCTION

The history of a place is the history of culture, and culture does not only exist in the lived present. This chapter of the book breaks the historical narrative of “real-time” events in Galilee, and instead considers how memories and invented pasts of the region served purposes in newly developing nation states in modern times. This part of the study appears here because many of the scholars and reflections surveyed in it belong to the mid-nineteenth century, where our last chapter ended; but a few of my claims and reflections about Galilee’s evolving meaning to Christians, particularly American Protestants, extend to the present day.

Moving into the nineteenth century from the Age of the Enlightenment, it might have been inevitable that images of Jesus in his Galilee home region became increasingly secular, up to the point where in recent decades it has become semi-acceptable, even for believing Christians, to talk about the “real Jesus” or the “historical Jesus.” The turn in the modern era toward a quest for the “historical Jesus” had multiple motivations, many of them not apposite in this study of Galilee. We focus here on one very important question: when scholars and commentators began to search for the historical Jesus, what might they possibly have said about the reasons for his, and his followers’, break with Judaism, and how were these explanations connected to Jesus’s home region? Stated precisely: why did monotheism multiply in Galilee?

The reasons why Galilee became crucial when people puzzled about the historical Jesus will become quite apprehensible here, and so there is no need to over-step here in a spoiler preview of them. In short, once it became clear that racial, Semitic, interpretations of the question, “why did Jesus’ mission become universal,” promoted hateful, even genocidal, public policies,

scholars who worked, and work, within liberal humanist monotheistic traditions realized that developing an entirely different explanatory rubric was imperative. As happened rather later in discussions of an array of other sensitive social or spiritual topics (e.g., white-black relations in the United States), research and commentary substituted “culture” for “race”; and because of the salience of Galilee in gospel narratives, culture in these Jesus context was, and remains, conceptualized as the near equivalent of locality. The quest for the historical Jesus became the quest for the historical Galilee.

This sequence is lucidly apparent, but it has never been critically reviewed, or even explicated in a clear, sustained survey.¹ One cannot look at any summary of New Testament research in past decades without being impressed by the salience of first century Galilee studies; but the scholars are noticeably diffident as to why they are talking about Galilee so much, sometimes seemingly in lieu of Jesus and the gospels.

For the most part, the quest for the historical Galilee can be thought of as a consecutive, global project. For the past 250 years or so, Jews and Christians, Americans and Europeans, have been asking similar questions on this quest, and key insights and assumptions are shared by all of them. Yet, as we will see here, there are also distinctive concerns which propel scholars of different religious or national backgrounds to the same places, Nazareth or the Sea of Galilee, and which cause them to engage with different visions of what must have happened in them 1,900 or 2,000 years ago. So we have here one big story segmented into several sub-parts. Accordingly, our discussion in this part of the volume relates to (a) nineteenth century European Christians and the quest for the historical Galilee; (b) nineteenth century Jews and this quest; (c) contemporary New Testament scholarship and the quest; and (d) American Protestants in Galilee in a defined, pre-Israel, half century period, 1877–1927 (this last subject is framed around current Christian American tourist interest in Galilee).

THE LIFE OF JESUS AND THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL GALILEE

Christian scholars profess today to be engaged in a “third” quest for the historical Jesus.² The notion of an ongoing research effort propelled by a series of breakthrough discoveries about Jesus’s life circumstances, and their reflection in the gospels, dates from the publication of Albert Schweitzer’s rigorous 1906 study, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.³

On Schweitzer’s timeline, the first quest started in 1774, when the enlightened German writer Gotthold Lessing published “fragments” of a theological opus written by a professor of Oriental Languages, Hermann Samuel

Reimarus. Schweitzer praised Reimarus's work, though he characterized it as a "polemic, not an objective study."⁴ Reimarus insisted that a clear distinction must be drawn between what is written in the gospels about Jesus's words and deeds, and what Jesus actually thought and taught; and he stressed Jesus's attachment both to Jewish law and to eschatological viewpoints current in Jewish culture at the time.

The scholarly quest surveyed energetically by Schweitzer essentially traces a full circle, beginning with Reimarus's unorthodox suggestion that key end-of-days ideas associated with Jesus, such as the Kingdom of God, belong to Jewish eschatological world views of the Second Temple period, views qualitatively dissimilar to the way Christians subsequently came to think about historical time and heaven. Over a century later, at the end of this quest phase, Johannes Weiss returned to this same idea, publishing a short booklet in defense of a similar portrayal of Jesus as an eschatological prophet whose demands and views regarding moral transformation and behavioral change were predicated on a Second Temple era Jewish eschatology about the imminence, or onset, of a Kingdom on Earth.⁵ Schweitzer credited Reimarus for having disclosed, at the start of this quest, the selfsame conclusions about Jesus that were drawn by Weiss at the quest's finish.⁶ Schweitzer himself fully accepted Reimarus's and Weiss's hypothesis about Jesus's eschatological outlook; in so doing, he stirred confusion in the pot, seemingly relegating the contemporary relevance of the "historical Jesus." The Reimarus-Weiss interpretation suggested that the real-life Jesus thought in extreme, apocalyptically charged, moral categories ill-fitted to moderate liberal precepts of steady progress and eventual universal enlightenment. Ironically, Reimarus's patron, Lessing, was deeply committed to these enlightened precepts—in fact, thinkers like Lessing bequeathed these enlightened concepts to nineteenth century Europe. At least as Schweitzer depicted it, scholarly knights on this quest carried a double-edged sword: by humanizing Jesus so that he became "real," enlighteners hoped to refashion Christianity as a rationalized religion, but there was always the risk that scholars would recast the historical Jesus in an eschatological frame unfit for the new liberal age, and therefore drive a wedge between enlightened science and religion.

As it turned out, however, the eschatological bookends, Reimarus and Weiss, were the exceptions rather than the rule, in Schweitzer's survey. His volume is famous for having exposed anachronistic attempts to refashion the "historical Jesus" as a liberal social reformer, or in other then-contemporary sociopolitical guises fancied by the nineteenth century theologians and historians who wrote about Jesus. Schweitzer analyzed these liberal-rational interpretations mostly with insight and clarity (his patience fades toward the end of the study), even though he believed that they bowdlerized the "real" Jesus by erasing his eschatological belief about the onset of the Kingdom, and

about the absolute rewards which the new era would proffer to the chosen worthy.

Schweitzer's survey brimmed with poignant examples of dubious efforts undertaken by theologians in the nineteenth century's increasingly skeptical and scientific environment to furnish rational explanations of miracles ascribed to Jesus in the gospels. It also provided extended discussions of scholars and thinkers such as David Friedrich Strauss and Bruno Bauer who, with varying degrees of commitment to Christian doctrine and Hegelian philosophy, contended that the scholarly search to resurrect the "real" Jesus was futile or misbegotten.

For all its interpretive tensions and loose ends, Schweitzer's volume made a landmark contribution. The volume brilliantly explored what happened to Jesus in the century preceding its publication, a period marked increasingly by colonial conquest and nervous discussion about the implications of Darwin's discovery of man's descent from the apes. Scholars and commentators presumably had a lot of subjects to think and talk about throughout this century, but Schweitzer's study suggested that the Jesus quest dwarfed almost everything else. A prominent moral-intellectual challenge taken up by thinkers and writers in this era was to probe the perceived gap between the real, historical Jesus, on the one hand, and the Christ of religious faith, on the other hand.

Schweitzer's survey focused primarily on German Protestant theologians and thinkers, but it was also conversant with investigations of the historical Jesus undertaken by non-Germans, including the wildly popular 1863 *Vie de Jesus* written by France's authority on Semitic culture, Ernest Renan,⁷ and it had a larger measure of reference to how Jesus's Jewish background engaged Jewish writers than was subsequently recognized.⁸

That this first quest for the historical Jesus involved a century-long discovery and rediscovery of his roots in Jewish messianic culture, and was initiated by a bold publication effort staged by Lessing, is highly suggestive. Lessing, the enlightened author of the 1779 drama *Nathan the Wise*, a plea for religious tolerance, is celebrated in Jewish history as a gentile collaborator and patron of the Jewish modernization movement, the *Haskalah*, and of the *Haskalah's* precocious, influential patriarch, Moses Mendelssohn, in particular.⁹ In years when Lessing was stage-managing the publication of Reimarus's iconoclastic presentation of Jesus as a real-life figure beholden to Jewish religious laws and Jewish conceptualizations of time and space, he also staged his famous drama, *Nathan*, capping years of lobbying with his showcase Jew, Mendelssohn, on behalf of the conferral of citizenship rights to Jews and their inclusion in modern society.

Lessing's activities symbolize how the quest for the historical Jesus was linked conceptually and morally to the enlightened quest for Jewish inclusion

in liberal, modern society. By clarifying Christianity's true Jewish paternity, by showing how the religion rose from an actual historical figure who was Jewish, enlightened writers re-validated the Jews' entry ticket to modernity. There was no tenable way to deny emancipation to Jews in nineteenth century Europe, since its modern Christian civilization was rooted ultimately in Jesus's Jewish life—or so it was suggested on this dual quest, the search for the historical Jesus, and the campaign for modern Jewish emancipation.

To a great extent, the century-long stretch of de-eschatology exposed in Schweitzer's study, by which Jesus's allegiance to Jewish law and his saturation in Jewish end-of-days conceptualizations was supplanted by a view of him as a de-Judaized liberal moralist, and as a worthy forerunner of a nineteenth century European gentleman, was instigated by an anti-Semitic desire to unhinge one quest from the other. Once, for whatever reason, it became important to people to wonder about what the "real" Jesus must have been like, it also became important not to cast him as being too Jewish, lest there be no logical ground to block contemporary efforts for Jewish emancipation. This thought was not only on the mind of anti-Semites. It must also have influenced masses of thinkers and readers, people who did not belong to the small circles of Lessing-like enlightened philo-Semites, and who harbored various emotional and psychological reservations about Jewish integration in their modern society.

To say that the flurry of interest in the historical Jesus surveyed by Schweitzer was motivated solely by this desire to dodge the emancipatory implications of modern Christian society being rooted in the Jewish mind-set of its foremost figure would be going too far. Surely a fair share of mid-nineteenth century European interest in the story of the historical Jesus drew inspiration from tensions and insights associated not with the issue of Jewish emancipation, but rather with the rise of nationalism in German-speaking lands and other countries. By dwelling on the way these national cultures descended from the universalist humanitarianism of Jesus's doctrine, which presumably evolved in rebellion and contrast to the rigidly doctrinaire particularism of the Jewish Pharisees depicted by Matthew and the other gospels, nineteenth century Jesus scholars were salving the consciences of readers, suggesting that the nationalist excesses of their contemporary world were somehow mitigated by their Christian culture's deep roots in universalism, not elitist Jewish particularism.

Often, however, it was not a general issue such as nationalism, but rather the specific problem of Jewish entry in nineteenth century Europe, which shaped the way the "real" Jesus was recast by these theologians as a moderate reformer, or as a harmlessly spiritual idealist, rather than as an enthused Jewish eschatologist. In fact, an evolving body of scholarship is attuned to ways in which the nineteenth century quest for the historical Jesus was

connected to anti-Semitic agitation to exclude Jewish emancipation in various European contexts.¹⁰ Such agitation subsequently provided inspiration to a resolute anti-Semitic/racist effort to de-Judaize and Aryanize Jesus which was spearheaded by Houston Stewart Chamberlain's 1899 *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, and which continued with work undertaken by theologians and thinkers under Nazi supervision.¹¹

Conversely, some scholars in the field of Modern Jewish History have in the past generation investigated how nineteenth century Jewish theologians and historians monitored this double quest for the historical Jesus, and for modern Jewish emancipation, vigilantly trying to keep the two tracks hinged together by underscoring Jesus's Jewishness and fashioning related arguments about Christianity's indebtedness to Second Temple period Judaism. These nineteenth century Jewish spokesmen and activists howled whenever prominent Christian commentators maneuvered to unhitch the two quests by ignoring special Jewish eschatological circumstances of Jesus's milieu and by privileging perceived negative Jewish influences (i.e., Pharisee hypocrisy and rigidity) against which the real-life Jesus might have rebelled, just as gospels-created representations of Jesus rebelled against them.

A prominent example of this sort of scholarship is Susannah Heschel's 1998 study, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*.¹² Geiger, a key figure in the nineteenth century emergence of Reform Judaism in German lands, sought to protect the dual quest by reversing various Christian stereotypes about Jewish culture in Jesus's era (essentially he cast the Pharisees as judicious liberal reformers, more or less as forerunners of Reform Jews in his own era). Heschel's study is somewhat distracted by special pleading about how Geiger's agenda was not "merely" aimed at promoting Jewish entry in gentile society (image reversals such as this Pharisee example constituted a "counter-history" aimed at subverting the way Christian Europeans thought about their own religious heritage, the author claims). As Heschel shows at length, the ability of a Jewish thinker such as Geiger to guard links between the two tracks, and exert substantive influence while disputing the way Christian thinkers de-Judaized their images of the "historical Jesus," was extremely limited.¹³

In fact, Geiger's case is a rather straightforward example of modern Jewish ideologies' investment in Jesus's Jewishness. Just as the strident Jewish nationalist Joseph Klausner imagined that he was strengthening Zionism's status by expounding at length on Jesus's Jewishness in a moderately influential 1922 study,¹⁴ so too did Geiger believe, decades earlier, that the cause of Jewish emancipation and inclusion in European society would be advanced by published reminders of the fact that Jesus was a Jew. Perhaps not in Orthodoxy, but in most other modern Jewish ideologies, accentuation of Jesus's Jewishness was imagined to be advantageous. Heschel lucidly

formulates how Geiger's Jewish emancipation calculations fit into this rubric. Geiger "wanted to counter the widespread anti-Judaism in contemporary German New Testament scholarship, as part of a larger effort to overcome religious and cultural objections to Jewish equality," she writes.¹⁵

We have wandered into this confusing, rocky topic of Europe's nineteenth century debate about the "Jewish Question" because it is the necessary counterpoint to our own story of Galilee. Once both Jewish and Christian scholars recognized that discussion of Jesus's Jewishness had potentially pathological dimensions, and invariably ran into dead ends, there was only one other place to go, in the search for the "historical Jesus." If, on a secularized or semi-secularized level, you are trying to figure out why one monumentally influential individual went in one spiritual, political, or socioeconomic direction, rather than another, there are only a few places to look—his or her personal identity, his or her immediate culture, or his or her general environment. In Jesus's case, much in the personal identity and culture parameters of the issue was subsumed by the issue of his Jewishness; and, after the Holocaust, nobody really wanted to talk about that topic anymore, since any "contra" position could be linked, fairly or not, to Nazism.

This created a situation which, to my knowledge, has never been forthrightly acknowledged: the abiding question in various phases of the "quest for the historical Jesus" is that of *Galilee*.

Subtle and sophisticated, or crude and inane, ways in which the state of Israel has related to this Galilee question are unknown, outside a very small circle of academics and policy-makers. And, though New Testament scholars have in past decades, during the most recent, third phase of this quest, displayed concentrated interest in the Galilean landscape¹⁶ (primarily because continued discussion of Jesus's cultural personality was precluded by lingering unease about the Holocaust), there is an appalling lack of cultural and public consciousness as to the motivational and ideological dimensions which shaped the way the question of Galilee was, and continues to be, handled in consecutive phases of the quest for the historical Jesus.

At the heart of the historical Jesus quest is a meta-mystery. Why did monotheism multiply?

Race-thinking breeds illegitimate social theory; but the pervasive appearance of race in the Jesus quest is, on some abstract level, comprehensible as a social construct, however pernicious myths of race became in practice. Judaism and Christianity, the race answer suggested, became different religions because its practitioners belonged, from the start, to different peoples.

In effect, much Galilee discussion in this "quests" context is a complementary side-step to this racial theory. Jesus and the early Christians broke away from Jews, this side-step posits, because Galilee was different. The region's distinctiveness, on this theory, stems primarily from the opposition between

how Judaism was practiced in Galilee as compared to Judea (i.e., Jerusalem); but the theory (as we will see) has many correlates which pivot on images of Galilee's physical landscape, its heterogeneous social composition, and more.

Throughout the first phase of the quest for the historical Jesus (1774–1906), the interplay between race and region was sometimes pronounced, as in the case of Renan's serenely mesmerizing, and deeply troubling, *The Life of Jesus*. But even when it was more of a subdued, lurking presence, the interplay was always there. *Something* had to be mythologized or essentialized, lest the mystery of monotheistic fragmentation dissolve in existentially disquieting arbitrariness, akin to the way children in a schoolyard become separated on teams simply because they are given differently colored jerseys.

The second quest period, from the 1950s to the 1970s, was characterized by an aching skepticism about the prospect of locating evidence about the life of the real Jesus. These doubts lingered under the shadow of the work of the German New Testament scholar, Rudolf Bultmann—this second quest period was launched largely by Bultmann's students, who were influenced by their teacher's insistence that Christian faith could not, or ought not, be predicated upon historical evidence about Jesus life.¹⁷ This quest phase was characterized by various innovations in the interpretation of gospel textual materials, including the "Q source" composite of passages in Luke and Matthew, and by the development of new standards for assessing the authenticity of presumed historical evidence relating to Jesus's life and times.

Whether a third phase in the quest for the historical Jesus has been under way since the 1980s is a matter of debate.¹⁸ Whether it coherently constitutes a quest or not, discussion of Jesus's life in recent decades has been characterized by institutional consolidation (exemplified by the formation of the "Jesus Seminar," a mix of academic scholars and informed laymen, in 1985), and by methodological refinement, including the use of archaeological data and also experiments with interdisciplinary approaches.¹⁹

One leading Jesus scholar, John Dominic Crossan, admits that the continuation of a self-proclaimed third quest "is becoming something of a scholarly bad joke. His complaint points to the "number of competent and even eminent scholars producing pictures of Jesus at wide variance with one another."²⁰ Jesus is seen as a rabbi, political zealot, ethereal mystic, and so on. Yet the one common denominator underlying this recent research—the one reason why it might conclusively be classified as a bona fide phase and quest—is a post-Holocaust consensus about the impropriety of tinkering with items of traditional Jewish concern, in this case the plain fact of Jesus's Jewishness. The sole "overwhelmingly common feature" of the third quest for the historical Jesus, write the editors of a recent volume on the topic, is a "commitment to taking seriously the Jewishness of Jesus."²¹ As one scholar, John Meir, puts it: "Even if the third quest has no other impact on contemporary Christology,

the emphatic reaffirmation of the Jewishness of Jesus will make the whole enterprise worthwhile.”²² In fact, there is one exception to this trend, the Jesus Seminar; but the Seminar’s methodology, and also grandstanding proclivities displayed by its progenitor, Robert Funk, provoked controversy; and as one commentator remarks, the Seminar’s tendency to “depict a Jesus largely aloof from Jewish culture, is the proverbial exception that proves the rule.”²³ In short, the idea of Jesus’s Jewishness became an axiom that glued together an array of scholarly approaches in recent “quest” scholarship.

Meir believes that “something lasting will be gained” as a result of this consensus about Jesus’s Jewishness. His point is well taken. No reasonable contemporary writer of any particular outlook or faith would proactively urge a recovery of de-Judaized biographical depictions of Jesus, or of completely uncritical, stereotype-steeped, readings of the polemic about hypocritical Pharisees and other features of first century CE Jewish life which is salient in portions of the gospels. Yet I also wonder whether “something lasting” will also be lost as a result of ways this particular consensus about Jesus’s Jewishness is internalized by scholars and commentators.

The over-arching strategy of most Jewish writing about Jesus is to show how his movement emerged in *continuity* with features of Jewish life and culture at the time, be it Hillel’s moral teaching, including the Golden Rule, Essene communal monastic idealism, and more. This approach is exemplified by the brute learned tenacity of Klausner’s 1922 volume, and, in the past generation, by the much more subtle and broad-minded scholarship of another Hebrew University of Jerusalem scholar, David Flusser. Yet a close reading of Flusser’s work shows a consistent unwillingness to afford a measure of originality to Jesus’s teaching. In volumes designed for popular audiences, Flusser opens chapters, such as one presumably devoted to Jesus’s ideas about fellowship and love, with pronouncements suggestive of the subject’s originality (“the germ of revolution in Jesus’ preaching does not emerge from his criticism of Jewish law, but from other premises altogether”),²⁴ but then proceeds to identify the roots of incidental or cardinal portions of the gospels, including the Sermon on the Mount, in rabbinical and other Jewish sources (much in Flusser’s 1997 volume cited here focuses on the congruity between Jesus’s preaching and Essene ideology and practices). Such writing explicitly denies elements of moral and intellectual originality in Jesus life, and implicitly suggests that there really can be no biography of the historical Jesus since, whatever he was, the gospels’ recording of life is really a hodgepodge “mix and match” of the Jews’ developing rabbinical culture in the Second Temple period, and of orientations current in the few sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes) identified by Josephus and other sources.

Millions of Christians and others around the world today are genuinely distressed by the course taken by Jewish-Christian relations in the twentieth

century, through the Holocaust, and are emotionally and intellectually conditioned to accept the premise of Jesus's Jewishness. Yet they are in no way willing to accept such minimalizing of Jesus's biography.

That is to say, while very little has changed in Jewish writing about Jesus over the centuries, and while there is no reason to imagine that such defensive Jewish writing about Christianity's inspiration could ever have much inter-faith impact, historical conditions have changed. The third quest's consensus about Jesus's Jewishness is an emotionally laudable response to the Holocaust, but it is intellectually vacuous and spiritually unsatisfying.

The fundamental questions remain, as ever. If Jewish-Christian inter-faith dialogue has merit (it often does not), it must promote intelligent, mutually respectful, discussion of essential differences between the two faiths, and not only engagement with feel-good, but metaphysically incongruent, precepts such as Jesus's Jewishness. As things stand, the most prominent Jewish scholars of Judaism in the first century CE period, such as the late Jacob Neusner, deflect the conversation from the problem of discontinuity between Jesus and Judaism by browbeating New Testament scholars, compelling them to acknowledge that there was some measure of inchoateness and diversity in the Jews' religious culture at the time (meaning that virtually anything attributed to Jesus in the gospels can be associated with various orientations, pro and con, adopted by Jews in the land toward the Temple cult, or toward religious laws in general).²⁵ The extent to which this first century Jewish religious diversity argument is used to intimidate distinguished New Testament scholars is quite unsettling²⁶ (its contemporary political equivalent can be found in the maneuvering of apologists for Israel's undemocratic policies in the conquered 1967 territories who insist that the Jewish state cannot be held accountable for ultra-nationalistic policy because Zionism is comprised of diverse ideological strands, many of them liberal, pluralistic, and pro-peace in orientation).

A reasonably coherent portrait of a normatively authoritative Judaism in the Second Temple period can be reconstructed, as Jewish scholars abundantly acknowledge when they engage discursive contexts other than discussions with Christian New Testament specialists who are wondering about the nature and character of Jesus's objections and rebellion. The Jesus movement arose and proceeded in criticism to this normative Judaism—and the most dialogically promising ways of dealing with this fact, or hypothesis, certainly do not involve being cagily evasive about the nature of this era's Judaism, or using "Jesus's Jewishness" as a kind of sloganeering gloss. Judaism in this period was authoritative partly because of the support the Roman empire had loaned to the Temple cult and associated rituals;²⁷ and Judaism became mired in crisis because Jews, rightly or wrongly, problematized their relationship with Roman imperialism, initiating a rebellion which culminated in

the almost incomprehensible calamity, a generation after Jesus's death, of the Temple's destruction. By and large, the textual gospel evidence we have regarding Jesus's life was written around the time of, and was profoundly influenced by, this disastrous outcome of the Jews' war with Rome. This is a context of rupture and criticism. To write about Jesus's life solely in a mode of continuity with diverse aspects of Jewish life and culture in the era (some of them fringe phenomena) is apt to miss the point.

Recent biographies of the historical Jesus often go well beyond the issue of Jesus's Jewishness, examining (among other things) the impact of Roman moral-political models on the rise of the Jesus movement. Nevertheless, they transpose the current climate of Jewish-Christian interaction in professional networks, and in marital and other intimate networks, in early twenty-first century America, in a way which reinforces the debatable image of Jesus as a liberal rabbi, rather than religious rebel. Indulging clever but ultimately reductive allusions to possible Old Testament influences, such as the scapegoat descriptions in Leviticus 16 (7–10 and 21–22),²⁸ even the finest contemporary Jesus's biographers routinely minimize the role of spiritual originality (not to mention the possibility of miracle) in the most transformative episodes of Jesus's life and martyrological death.

Ironically, the insufferable Holocaust calamity turned age-old Jewish apologetic writing about Jesus into canon, to the detriment of both religions. To spare Jewish sensitivities after the Holocaust, New Testament scholars exert themselves to show that nothing exceptional could ever have happened to Jesus that was not also rooted in ancient Jewish culture and religion. What this really means, of course, is that nothing exceptional could ever have happened to Jesus; but this premise's devastating implications, from the standpoint of Christian theology, seem to escape New Testament scholars. In the end, this non-discriminating myth of continuity dulls our appreciation of how interpretations of specific episodes in Jesus life (e.g., his trial) contributed to anti-Semitism, meaning that the myth dulls our understanding of the Holocaust's origins, rather than functioning as an appropriate moral response to it; and, of course, the continuity myth dulls comprehension of what religious difference might possibly be about. Christianity emerged in critique of an identifiable, authoritative Judaism perched on the edge of catastrophe; for better or worse, Jesus's biography has little meaning apart from this reality, one where discontinuity between Jesus and Judaism often outmuscled continuity.

GALILEE AND THE FIRST QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Landmark nineteenth century publications during the first quest for the historical Jesus detached analysis from the local Galilee landscape. The most

controversial volume in this context, David Friedrich Strauss's *The Life of Jesus* (*Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet*), published in 1835–1836,²⁹ overflows in prolix detail, but the author's agenda is to dispute the reliability of descriptions of Jesus's life, including his ministry in Galilee.

Strauss's method, as Schweitzer described it, is to "cross examine the [gospel] reports on every point," so as to issue pronouncements about "the alloy of myth" tainting them.³⁰ On his own attestation, Strauss adopted a newly critical attitude toward the gospels, yet had no intention of exposing them *in toto* as myth;³¹ and he claimed that Hegelian philosophy had liberated him "from certain religious and dogmatical presuppositions" which plagued theologians involved in this search for the historical Jesus.³² On Strauss's Hegelian-tinged interpretation, the spiritual meaning of Jesus's life is adduced from the way it represented abstract concepts, such as God-man, rather than from palpable demonstrations of supernatural power in any particular place. Strauss never exactly goes as far as saying explicitly that Jesus might have exercised his ministry anywhere; yet the most convincing evidence of the life of the "real Jesus" Strauss identifies in his long, 1,400 page, study relates to Jesus's eschatological consciousness,³³ rather than to Galilee or Jerusalem, or to any incident reported in either of these locales.

Strauss's erasure of Galilee as a real landscape in the life of the historical Jesus is manifest in Chapter III ("Locality and Chronology of the Public Life of Jesus") in the study's second part, which is titled a "History of the Public Life of Jesus."³⁴ His critique is levered by the evident discrepancy between the geography of Jesus's ministry in the synoptic Gospels, as compared to the Gospel of John. As described in the first three gospels, between Jesus's apparent baptism by John and his final journey to Jerusalem, his ministry is limited exclusively to northern Palestine, that is, to Galilee and countries west and east of the Sea of Galilee and the upper Jordan, without touching on Samaria to the south. According to the Gospel of John, in contrast, Jesus attends four feasts in Jerusalem prior to the final one, visits Bethany, and journeys through Samaria.³⁵

This geographic dissimilarity, Strauss explains, "was long overlooked in the church, and of late it has been thought feasible to deny its existence."³⁶ He reviews various theories advanced to account for the possible overrepresentation of Galilee in the synoptic Gospels, including the supposition that Matthew was a Galilean and therefore preferred to write about his home turf, particularly since his readers in Jerusalem might have been less versed in reports of what Jesus had wrought in Galilee. However, Strauss concludes, no such explanation provides a reasonable overall explanation for the selective geography of synoptic texts (Mark and Luke were not Galileans, nor did they write for Judeans); nor is there a reasonable account for the dissimilarity

between the synoptic geography and John's, meaning that readers who prefer to think of Jesus's ministry in Galilean terms, or in terms of John's more expansive geography, are foregoing belief in the New Testament as a wholly unified and believable document.

This, exactly, is the point of Strauss's micro analysis. Writing more in a mercilessly legalistic vein than as an abstract philosopher, Strauss's intention was to drive a reader of faith into submission, toward admission that passage after passage in the gospels is marred by myth.

Viewed from the standpoint of theological development, various comparative maneuvers undertaken by Strauss in this "Public Life of Jesus" section had identifiable beneficial effects upon scholars and commentators. In particular, elaborating upon trends of interpolation and distortion in the fourth gospel, Strauss reversed a long-standing tendency in New Testament scholarship whereby the synoptic gospels were demoted, compared to John.³⁷

Subsequent to the publication of this 1835–1836 manifesto, Strauss modified some of its various iconoclastic arguments and findings, before digging in his heels and reissuing his original pronouncements about myth in the New Testament story of the life of Jesus. His publication history and career course suggests that his deepest level of engagement applied not to exegetical and methodological issues such as the relative merits of the synoptic gospels and the fourth gospel, but rather to the shock value emanating from his courtroom type proofs about how major Bible passages are irreconcilable, and about how their presentation of Jesus's biography must therefore be alloyed by myth.

This conclusion, unmistakably branded in Strauss's summary (quoted below) of the evidence relating to the geography of Jesus's ministry, implied that the Galilee of the Bible is partly or mostly unreal. The following provocative contention could only irk backlash:

Thus it is impossible to explain why the synoptical writers, if they knew of the earlier visits of Jesus to Jerusalem, should not have mentioned them, and it must be concluded that if John be right, the first three Evangelists knew nothing of an essential part of the earlier ministry of Jesus; if, on the other hand, the latter be right, the author of the fourth gospel, or of the tradition by which he was guided, fabricated a large portion of what he has narrated concerning the ministry of Jesus, or at least assigned to it a false locality.³⁸

In Weiss's *Jesus Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (1892), the endpoint of this first phase of the quest for the historical Jesus, Galilee is eradicated in mundane terms, as an actual physical landscape. Weiss reconstructs moral

and spiritual circumstances of Jesus's ministry in a way that leaves the Galilee locale totally irrelevant.

Jesus, Weiss argued, believed in a kind of split-level universe, where the doings of men and devils in our pedestrian level are replayed and assessed by angels and supernatural beings on the higher level. The Kingdom of God, Jesus believed, is palpably imminent, though it probably was not already partially underway—insofar as it can be adduced from the texts, Weiss attested, Jesus believed that the Kingdom would come within a few decades, during the lifetimes of his followers. Judgment as to fitness for the Kingdom was, or would be, made prior to its unfolding. The Kingdom would be a spiritual event; Weiss eschewed assessments of New Testament ideology which suggested that Jesus had interest in revolutionary politics pertaining to everyday realities. Jesus viewed his role as furthering preparation for the Kingdom's advent; he was not, in the time of events recorded in the gospels, the son of Man, but he would become that. His message was moral repentance and the disavowal of this-worldly commitments which might impair an individual's eligibility for the Kingdom.

Weiss was brutally candid about how his eschatological interpretation presented Jesus's life as a morality play antipodal to the bourgeois assumptions harbored by contemporary readers who considered themselves good Christians. In light of the Kingdom's imminence, Jesus cryptically or explicitly urged his followers to shed themselves of family ties, money, and other practical or emotional desiderata of what became modern, moral life.

Hence, the quest for the historical Jesus has here culminated in a moral biography unfit for modernity. What did Jesus really mean when he preached that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God? "I believe that Christianity has, more or less without comment, laid this view of Jesus aside, and has sought to compromise the seriousness of the saying by means of all kinds of devious interpretations and erosions of its meaning," Weiss explained.³⁹

Weiss, and Schweitzer in his footsteps, found at the end of this first quest a "real" Jesus whose end-of-days morality was subsequently tamed and twisted out of all recognition. "The historical Jesus will be to our time a stranger and an enigma," Schweitzer resolutely declared at the conclusion of his study.⁴⁰ "If we really" dare to locate the real, moral Jesus, Weiss wrote, "it will turn out that our previous understandings of Jesus' sayings, together with the system of Christian ethics which we have developed out of them, has been based upon our indulging in certain qualifications, reinterpretations, and above all, upon our looking at matters from a fundamentally different point of view."⁴¹

Galilee is irrelevant to this biography. Wherever Jesus lived, it was in a realm of eschatological expectation foreign to wherever we live today.

THE LIFE OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS POPULARIZED: RENAN'S HEAVENLY GALILEE

Since its message was that the moral precepts of Jesus's life are estranged from the socioeconomic realities of contemporary life, the eschatological turn in the first quest for the historical Jesus could never be popularized. Schweitzer, who clearly understood this fact, disguised it by lavishly discussing various liberal-rational presentations of Jesus while concealing or soft-peddalling his own adamant rejection of their conclusions. His influential volume recasts the messianic secret narrative strategy of the Gospel of Mark, continually hinting about, but withholding, its hard-to-process proclamation of the foreignness of Jesus's messianic message.

Outside of the scholarly rigor of nineteenth century German theology, a parallel quest unfolded with an agenda of biographical restoration, of recasting elemental terms of place and personal identity in Jesus's life in an accessibly popular fashion. Painting Galilee in romantically pastoral hue, Ernest Renan emerged as the most accomplished popularizer, by far.

Renan's racial commentary about the ramifications of Jesus's Semitic identity was profoundly ambiguous, and thereby contributed to the volume's wildfire popularity since its racial conclusions could appeal to anti-Semites and philo-Semites alike. Splitting the middle in a European milieu increasingly agitated by conflicting opinions about the "Jewish question" proved to be a sound marketing strategy, but discussion of the volume's ingenuity ought not to be limited to the way it plays off ambiguities in mid-to-late nineteenth century European discourse about race.

As importantly, the book's blatantly idealized presentation of a bucolic Galilee exploited burgeoning tensions about industrialization in a nineteenth century period of rapid socioeconomic transformation.

Renan's adroit ability to tap nostalgic impulses by apotheosizing the Galilee landscape constitutes the book's most impressive rhetorical maneuver. For innumerable sobered, worried readers who perused a biography of Jesus published just a few years after Darwin released his *Origin of the Species*, Renan's semi-sanctified portrayal of Galilee compensated for the measure of divinity in the story of Jesus that might be lost forever.

Anyone taught by reputable Christian educators during the first half of the nineteenth century could only have been shocked by Renan's depiction of the dissimulation and inner sophistry by which Jesus oiled his ministry's popularity. Jesus, Renan contended, found ways to accommodate popular belief in miracles he knew were never really executed. Renan developed a complicated theory of how Jesus rented his own identity to his followers in a fashion that might not have done violence to his own notions of self and of personal integrity. Leveraging this historicized argument about personal morality upon

the fact that the topic of hypocrisy in mid-nineteenth century France was itself elasticized and complicated, Renan claimed that the way private realms and public realms were constructed in first century Palestine differed from their conceptualization in his readers' own time. "History is impossible if we do not fully admit that there are many standards of sincerity," he declared. This is the thesis statement of Renan's biography.⁴²

For some critics, this relativistic pleading in a biography of Jesus was unconvincing. They believed that the volume's gist was its revelation that the son of God was essentially a con man. Geiger, the Reform Jewish commentator on Jesus, had a point when he declared that Renan sugarcoated in "oratorical pathos" his own portrayal of Jesus exercising "very low morality" in several episodes.⁴³

Renan's secularized Jesus surely held appeal for one sector of atheistic or agnostic readers who sensed that such biographical treatment of Christianity's inspiration had become necessary in an age of science and remorseless empiricism. For innumerable readers of faith, however, Renan's disturbing portrait of a conflicted Jesus not fully in control of his followers' actions would never have been palatable, had not this biographer posited that Jesus attained exceptional spiritual insight owing to his grounding in the majestic Galilee. With Renan, an idealized Galilee became a rearguard defense against the demoralizing thrust of pure secularity.

In Renan's assessment, Jesus's Jewish-Semitic ancestry could not be determined with certitude, but his grounding in Galilee could. Jesus was born in Nazareth, he announces at the outset of his biography.⁴⁴ Galilee's population was diverse, including many gentiles (Phoenicians, Syrians, Arabs, and Greeks). The volume's early affirmation of the region as "Galilee of the Gentiles" foreclosed from the start any moral reckoning with the implications of Jesus's Jewishness. Far from being a writer who was overly scrupulous about analytic consistency, Renan exploited racial essentialism later in this biography, attributing mysterious or problematic aspects of the Jesus movement to its Semitic roots; but he opened the book with a disclaimer. Jesus was definitely a Galilean, which meant that he was not definitely a Jew. "Conversions to Judaism were not rare" in a mixed region like Galilee, and so it was "impossible" for any Jesus biographer to "raise any question of race," and "seek to ascertain what blood flowed in the veins of him who has contributed most to efface the distinctions of blood in humanity."⁴⁵

Renan conceived of the idea of this biography while touring Galilee with his sister Henriette. After her tragic, unexpected death, he drafted the volume while ensconced in a Maronite village north of the region. As a kind of belated eyewitness, he assured readers that the town of Nazareth had not changed much after the time of Jesus. Once "sordid and repulsive" influences imprinted by Islamism were removed, Jesus's native grounds could be

reconstructed. "No place in the world is so well adapted for dreams of perfect happiness," he proclaimed.⁴⁶ The absence of aesthetic sensibility Renan attributed to the Semitic components of Jesus's childhood home accounted for Nazareth's monotonous architecture of cube stone homes bereft of "exterior or interior elegance"; but the town's vines and fig-trees nonetheless ensured its "very agreeable appearance." The climate, including sharply cold winter days, was salubrious; the women, beautiful. "Such was the horizon of Jesus," Renan wrote. "This enchanted circle, cradle of the kingdom of God, was for years his world."⁴⁷

Renan apotheosized Nazareth. Should Europe wish to replace the "mean and apocryphal sanctuaries" built on its ground during the Dark Ages, it would be wise to "rebuild its temple" in Nazareth, the birthplace of Christianity, and "perhaps the only place in Palestine" where the mind feels fully relieved of the oppressive "desolation" bred by the barren desert landscapes of the Near East.⁴⁸

Galilee, where gentile culture flourished alongside a less doctrinaire brand of Judaism, contrasts sharply in Renan's narrative with Judea. Jerusalem, in Jesus's day, was the locus of the "strange scholasticism" which "became the Talmud," he declared (not letting the fact that the Mishnah and the "Jerusalem Talmud" were mostly written in Galilee disturb his analysis). Galilee created authentic Christianity, whereas Jerusalem fossilized Judaism: "The North alone has made Christianity; Jerusalem, on the contrary, is the true home of that obstinate Judaism, which, founded by the Pharisees, and fixed by the Talmud, has traversed the Middle Ages and come down to us."⁴⁹

Having received a simple education in Galilee from "the Jewish schoolmaster, a hazzan," Jesus was "happily ignorant" of this strange Judean mainstream Judaism. "If some Pharisees had already brought" scholasticism to Galilee, Jesus "did not associate with them"; later, when he encountered the "silly casuistry" of the Pharisee sect, "it only inspired him with disgust."⁵⁰

The histories of nations, Renan suggested, invariably swing between two ideological poles. With the Jews, the dynamic played out in the distance between the natural purity of religion in Galilee and the stifling dogmatism of the Temple cult in Jerusalem. The Jews' racial inheritance is indefinite. The Semitic race, admittedly, has "enormous defects"; Jews are disposed to being "hard, egotistical, scoffing, cruel, narrow and sophistical."⁵¹ These racial qualities were mostly imprinted on the Judean landscape, however. Despite their egoism, Jews were also the "first who sought a general theory of the progress of our species." This insight was not primarily intellectual, since the "Semitic religions are as little philosophical as possible." Instead, Jews in antiquity came up with breakthrough notions of universal progress as a result of a racial disposition for action. "Moses was a man of action," and "Jesus, in like manner, was not a theologian." The Jews' transformative

insights were wrought by unphilosophical activists whose purity of spirit was extracted from the soil on the rolling hills of Galilee. "With its solemn doctors, its insipid canonists, its hypocritical and atrabilious devotees, Jerusalem has not conquered humanity," declared Renan. In contrast, Galilee "has given to the world the simple Shunammite, the humble Canaanite, the impassioned Magdalene, the good foster-father Joseph and the Virgin Mary."⁵²

These polar oppositions between action and philosophy, altruism and egotism, spirituality and dogmatism, were suggestive of ways in which nineteenth century attitudes about gender identity became imprinted in the evolving discourse of race. Renan conceptualized the Semitic part of Jesus's identity as a compromise between these conflicting, materialistic and idealistic, masculine and feminine impulses; but this only constituted part of his racial theory, applying to the problematic of Jesus's Jewish Semitism.

As Edward Said pointed out,⁵³ Renan's writing also featured polemic about Islamic Semitism. Whereas the confused or conflicted consequences of Jesus's Jewish-Semitic identity are defused and positively transformed on the pristine Galilee terrain, the region's Islamic Semitism is faulted in absolute terms for the region's decline. Repeatedly, in *Life of Jesus*, Renan informs his reader that his idyllic, travel-report type descriptions of Galilee exclude ravages and waste left by the "demon of Islamism."⁵⁴ Anything insalubrious in Galilee is Islam's fault. For instance, whereas in Jesus's day, the Plain of Ginosar featured "dazzling light," "empyrean blue water," "pretty shells," and serene "aquatic birds," in Renan's day "the heat on the shore" had become "very oppressive," and reminiscent of the "torrid conditions of the Dead Sea." The contemporary climate in this Sea of Galilee region seems very strange, Renan wrote, since Josephus described the area as being "very temperate." "No doubt," Renan concluded, there was "a change of climate introduced by historical causes." Islamism, "especially the Mussulman reaction against the Crusades," destroyed "as with a blast of death the district preferred by Jesus."⁵⁵

Jesus's peasant innocence as a Galilean was invulnerable. Emblems of Roman luxury and administrative power were known to Jesus in Galilee and its environs, but they "displeased him." What Jesus "loved were his Galilean villages," the region's "confused mixture of huts, of nests and holes cut in the rocks, of wells, of tombs, of fig-trees and of olives." His exceptional character came from the Galilean earth. "He always clung close to nature."⁵⁶ Insofar as this biography accords divinity to Jesus, it comes from Galilee:

Our hesitations and our doubts never reached him. On this summit of the mountains of Nazareth. . . . Jesus sat often untroubled by a doubt. Free from selfishness—that source of our troubles which makes us seek with eagerness a reward for virtue beyond the tomb—he thought only of his work, of his race,

and of humanity. Those mountains, that sea, that azure sky, those high plains in the horizon, were for him . . . the certain symbol, the transparent shadow, of an invisible world and of a new heaven.⁵⁷

GALILEAN JEWS, GALICIAN JEWS, GEIGER AND GRAETZ

“You have probably read in a recent work a very glowing description of Galilee at that time” of Jesus, noted Geiger in his *Judaism and History*, referring to above-mentioned passages in Renan’s biography.⁵⁸ Writing in a mechanically apologetic, not particularly perspicacious, mode, Geiger accepted Renan’s premises, and simply molded them into a different conclusion. The image of Galilee of the Gentiles was inspirational to one writer and repulsive to the other writer. Locale (Galilee), rather than personal identity issues (Jesus’s Jewishness), became the standard of measure in a discussion of whether Christianity’s break away from Judaism was laudable or execrable.

“I am sorry to have to have to demolish this [Renan’s] charming idyll,” wrote Geiger. Galilee was, indeed, a “fruitful country,” yielding “plenty for the gratification” of its inhabitants’ “physical wants,” but the Galileans themselves were “ignorant indeed.” Their language was “mixed and corrupt, having lost its purity and character” by incorporating “foreign elements” not present in the tongue of the Judeans.

As the Land of the Nations (or “Galilee of the Gentiles”—the translation of גליל הגויים varies), Galilee was separated from Judea by Samaria, and was bordered by the Syrians and Phoenicians. “It contained quite a number of settlements of these populations,” Geiger wrote, inadvertently showing how apologetic discourse about Galilee, about locale, undermined his fixation on identity, on Jesus’s Jewishness. The important factor in the rise of Christianity was not Jesus’s Jewishness but rather the Jewish impurity, the ethnic diversity, of the place he came from, Galilee.

Geiger agreed with his rival Renan’s focus on the Judea/Galilee contrast, but he reversed its implications. “Whatever found expression and shape in and around Jerusalem, the center of the kingdom, found also not its echo, but even its peculiar intensified expression in the outermost limits of the country, in Galilee,” he contended.⁵⁹ This meant that the Galileans not only practiced a form of Judaism corrupted and diluted by their isolation and by exposure to gentile populations, but also that they were more susceptible to political radicalism. In the ethnically diverse Galilee, the character of Jewish residents “blended with a certain amount of savageness,” Geiger claimed.⁶⁰ “It was in Galilee where the most violent and extreme movements found the fullest applause,” he added. Impassioned and dull-witted, Galileans were drawn to revolutionary stirring, even though they were incapable of fathoming the

political agenda of rebellion against Rome, or the other-worldly eschatology of the Jesus movement.

In a telling analogy, Geiger compared first century Galilee to the cradle of the French Revolution, Marseilles, not intending this imputation of emotive radicalism as a compliment:

A spirit had spread in Galilee, such as generally lays hold of that portion of a people which only receives the general impetus of a movement without being able to account clearly for the reasons and causes. The Galileans were, if I may be permitted to coin the term, the Marseilleseans of the Jewish struggle.⁶¹

In the volatile context of incipient rebellion against Rome, the Pharisees were, on Geiger's interpretation, agents of rational commitment to necessary religious reform and to the upholding of national honor vis-à-vis the Romans (the Pharisees were thus a more popular sect than the Sadducees, who "were concerned with the populace only to guarantee their privileges of priesthood").⁶² Jesus and his followers transgressed the prudently moderate Pharisee agenda of political or religious reform because of their rooting in Galilee's overly exuberant, ethnically heterogeneous, environment.

For Renan, that Jesus was part Jewish Pharisee was very bad, whereas for Geiger this was the sole salutary part of his identity. For Renan, Galilee saved Jesus from Pharisee dogmatic hypocrisy, whereas for Geiger the region's gentile character trashed the measure of Pharisee reasonableness which might have been imprinted in his identity. Jesus was "a Jew, a Pharisean Jew with Galilean coloring," concluded Geiger. "He did not utter a new thought, nor did he break down the barriers of nationality."⁶³

Galilee, in the analysis of this nineteenth century Reform Jewish leader, was to be blamed for the mystery of monotheism's fracture.

"Inclined to rebellion," the ignorant Galileans were easily swayed by eschatological demagogues who announced that "this world was breaking down, and a new world, the future world, would soon appear." Galilee was "probably where John [the Baptist] went about exclaiming, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near at hand.'" In the overly enthused Galilee setting, "hearts were in full agitation, prepared for the most wonderful phenomenon," Geiger sarcastically noted. "It was then that a man appeared in Galilee who still more confidently gave shape to the commotion of the times."⁶⁴

Jesus's ministry appealed to Galilee's underclass, its rural lumpenproletariat. The region's "lower class of people," who were ignorantly susceptible to stage-propped, hocus pocus demonstrations of wonder and miracle, became Jesus's first followers, whereas the "educated and intelligent were not attracted to him."⁶⁵ The original, "small band" of Jesus followers was

comprised of the “low and vulgar,” including tax collectors and other types of mercenaries who had formerly sold their souls to the Romans, Geiger wrote.⁶⁶

In contradistinction to Heschel’s assertions, the rhetoric of Jewish assimilation in mid-nineteenth century Europe saturated Geiger’s publicist writing about Jesus and Galilee. The Jewish Reform architect, of course, regretted the conversion of Jesus’s Jewish followers to a new faith, just as he would not have advocated Jewish conversion to Christianity as a means to obtain sociopolitical emancipation in German-speaking and other nineteenth century lands. Instead, his predilection was to vouch for the right sort of Jew, one whose cultivation and empowerment could only be an asset in whatever civilization he happened to be found. In first century CE Palestine, this sort of Jew was the Pharisee, an educated, middle-class type whose language and cultural temperament were not corrupted by vulgar, foreign influences.

Readers of Geiger’s Jesus apologetic who have some knowledge of nineteenth century Westernized Jewish elites’ obsession with the problem of the *Ostjuden*,⁶⁷ the Jews of east Europe who relentlessly kept moving westward, will recognize that he is not really thinking of Galilee as Marseilles in 1792, that is, as a revolutionary hotbed located on the geographic perimeter. Instead, in his writing, Galilee in 30 CE becomes the Galician fringe in the mid-nineteenth century, that is, a geographic perimeter where (in Geiger’s day) masses of the wrong type of Jews, those who were not socialized by modern education and middle-class virtues, threateningly dwelled.

Pushing toward central and western European in successive stages of a prolonged, mass migration, these nineteenth century eastern Jews, the *Ostjuden*, provoked uncomfortably ambivalent responses among westernized Jewish elites. These eastern Jews were coreligionists and, in some tenuously extended sense, family; but they were also uneducated rustics whose entry to middle European urban centers where Jewish elites were nervously settled was liable to foment anti-Semitism, and disrupt the “normal” course of emancipation and measured integration in Christian society which these western Jews envisioned and coveted.⁶⁸ In the same way, when the uneducated Jewish “savages” (in Geiger’s locution) of Galilee pushed toward the Judean center, toward the Jerusalem Temple, they threatened disruption of the “normal” course of accommodation with Roman rule, and of national self-preservation, which had been carefully and rationally charted by the Pharisees.

Cues attesting to this transposed *Ostjuden* fixation in Geiger’s writing about Galilee are unmistakable. For instance, the allusion to the Galileans’ “mixed and corrupt” language echoes the disdain which elite Jews in Geiger’s mid-to-late nineteenth century European milieu harbored toward Yiddish, the language of the Jewish masses on the eastern side of the continent. Despite the changed geography and 1,800 year interval, Galilean Aramaic and Galician Yiddish were spoken by the same sort of Jews, ignorant masses

who were susceptible to quack theories and cheap demagoguery, and who could not be trusted to make reasonable choices as to what portion of their traditional Jewish identity was worth preserving.

Probably the most influential scholarly Jewish presentation of Galilean Jews as the first century CE equivalents of nineteenth century Ostjuden can be found in Heinrich Graetz's ground-breaking scholarship, which set standards for Jewish History research that lasted well into the twentieth century. Geiger belittled Graetz's powers and achievements as a historian,⁶⁹ and the rivalry between these two intellectually prominent Jewish figures centered on a substantive debate about the worthiness of Reform Judaism as a Jewish empowerment strategy in modernity. Graetz, who was skeptical on this point, had little patience for Geiger's attempt to present the Pharisees as forerunners of a vaunted, lasting Jewish effort to trim antiquated excesses from religious worship and find a salubriously rational mode of accommodation with surrounding gentile power. Complementing this reluctance to idealize the Pharisees, Graetz implied that the doctrinaire rigidity associated with this Jewish sect in the Gospels was, in fact, part of the Galilean landscape.

Provincial Galilee, Graetz wrote, "was far behind Judea in mental attainment and knowledge of the law." The local Jewish environment of the Nazareth-born Jesus lacked the "lively interchange of religious thought" which took place proximate to the Temple, in Jerusalem. After the destruction of the Temple, the north housed great rabbinical schools of Usha, Sepphoris, and Tiberias; but in Jesus's day, Galilee was "very poor" in terms of seats of learning. Proximate to the heathen Syrians, the Galileans had adopted innumerable superstitions; and, in their ignorance, they attributed illness to demons. The Galileans "could not speak Hebrew with purity," and their guttural, corrupted Aramaic "incurred ridicule of the Judeans." On the other hand, "morality was stricter in the Galilee" than in Judea—"what the Judeans permitted themselves the Galileans would by no means consent to."⁷⁰

From this negative, but slightly nuanced, general depiction of Galilee, Graetz deduced a number of conclusions about Jesus's character. It is widely assumed that Jewish writing about Jesus in the emancipation era forthrightly embraced his Jewishness, and mechanically explained that the Jesus movement broke with Jewish law due to innovations introduced by Paul, and due to the spread of Jesus's teachings to non-Palestine areas rife with pagan populations, or thoroughly Hellenized Jews—but this is not really true. Jewish writers such as Geiger and Graetz contended that Galilee was a problem from the start. More than that, such writers did not really embrace Jesus's Jewishness; they had doubts about his Jewishness because he hailed from Galilee of the Gentiles. They were ambivalent about Jesus just as they and their Reform or otherwise acculturated Jewish colleagues in central and western Europe were ambivalent in their thinking about the Ostjuden.

More than Geiger, Graetz wrote in a proto-nationalistic vein influenced by romantic European thinking, either in the Carlyle mode which underscored the influence of exceptional individuals, or in a volkish nationalist key attuned to the presumed purity of peasant groups who remained close to the soil. Much as westernized Jews condemned the rural Jews of the east for their lack of proper nineteenth century schooling, they were also prone to romanticize the Ostjuden for retaining natural virtues as a result of their location in simpler, non-urbanized, regions.⁷¹ His outlook immersed up to its knees in such romantic myth, Graetz ambivalently Ostuden-ized Jesus:

Owing to his Galilean origins, Jesus could not have stood high in knowledge of the law, which through schools of Shammai and Hillel had become prevalent in Judea. His small stock of learning and his corrupt half-Aramaic language pointed to his birthplace in Galilee. His deficiency in knowledge was fully compensated by his intensely sympathetic character.⁷²

After John the Baptist was imprisoned, Graetz explained, Jesus realized that his teaching could never be processed by the “educated middle classes.” Hence, “with right judgment,” Jesus dedicated his ministry to the ammei ha’aretz, “to ignorant, poor handicraftsmen and menials who were seldom able to visit the Judean capital, or listen to the Judean teachings, which they probably would not have understood.”⁷³

Graetz believed that “the most important facts of the life of Jesus,” relating to his trial and to his reception by the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, as well as to his own orientation toward Son of God representations, are depicted with such inconsistent or exaggerated diversity in the gospels “that it is impossible to separate the historical kernel from its legendary exaggerations and embellishments.”⁷⁴ This pioneering Jewish historian was, however, certain about the basic facts of Jesus ancestry: He was an ignorant Galilean but had “rich judgment” thanks to his roots in the region’s country soil. Arguably, Graetz’s thinking about Jesus drew, in the main, not from scholarly interpretation of texts, but rather from his personal experiences with the ordeal of the Jewish emancipation struggle in nineteenth century Europe. Jesus’s Galilean origins had to be covered up, Graetz concluded, because educated, elite Jews who became his followers would never have seriously engaged with the teachings of an ignorant am ha’aretz from the northern provinces. By the same token, assimilated Jews in cosmopolitan western Europe cities invented titles and birth-stories, to cover-up their origins in primitive shtetl reaches of imperial Russia. Graetz wrote:

Prejudice certainly existed against him [Jesus] in the capital. The educated classes could not imagine the Messiah’s saving work to be performed by an

unlearned Galilean; indeed, the idea that the Messiah, who was expected to come from Bethlehem, out of the branch of David, should belong to Galilee, overthrew the long-cherished conviction of centuries. It is probable from this time the proverb arose: Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?⁷⁵

The idea of Jesus's Jewishness could never have been a perfect comfort pill for Jewish thinkers and scholars who pondered the whys and wherefores of the rise of Christianity. The problem was that in the decades of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries just preceding the world wars, Jewishness was normatively segmented into good and bad types, or, more precisely, as sub-categories suffused with complicated layers of snobbery and ambivalence. From the vantage point of Jewish self-defense and apologetics, to say that Jesus was a "Galilee Jew" would likely have had a tepidly compromised ring, or simply would have been self-defeating. The moniker "Galilee Jew" seemed to associate Jesus with the wrong sort of Jew on the late nineteenth century European landscape. More than anything, the provincial Galilee part of Jesus's biography tapped into the volatile psychology of elite Jewish discourse about the Ostjuden.

FROM GALILEE OF THE GENTILES TO GALILEE OF THE ZEALOTS

The issue of the Ostjuden was a quintessential feature of the Jews' Emancipation struggle in pre-Holocaust Europe. Getting all the ducks in a row, and thereby proving to gentiles that there no longer remained an eastern type of traditional Jew unfit for modernity, became an imperative in campaigns to attain citizen-right rights and socioeconomic opportunity in European lands.

In this sense, the Galilean outback of Jesus's New Testament biography was a cautionary tale: given the wrong combination of sociopolitical events, a provincial, ignorantly superstitious, Jewry could cause great damage, just as Galilean Jews who took to Jesus ended up creating a rival religion. In any event, in the writing of figures like Geiger, the pros and cons of Jesus's Jewishness had weights proportional to the middle class, urbanized, pro-westernization sentiments of Jews who prized emancipation, that is, the attainment of sociopolitical rights and status in Europe or America, above anything else.

However, aforementioned nuanced variation in Graetz's writing about Jesus pointed to a different way of thinking about the topic, in a nationalist mode. Here, the hands on the Jewish normative compass switched positions, replacing an agenda of social integration in gentile countries in Europe with a demand for resistance to such accommodation and assimilation. On this model, the moral imperative for Jews became the upholding of national honor against the threatening encroachments of a major, foreign power.

In Jewish writing about Jesus, this model became important in early years of the twentieth century, after groups of Jews became disillusioned about the prospects of full Jewish integration in a European continent plagued, from west to east, by frightening realities and symbols of resurgent anti-Semitism, such as the Dreyfus Affair in France (1894–1904) and the Kishinev pogrom (1903) in tsarist Russia. Such Jews joined the Zionist movement, founded by Theodor Herzl and formally inaugurated by the First Zionist Congress in 1897.

At first glance, Zionist writers appear to have been drawn to the image of a Jewish Jesus for reasons not dissimilar to the calculations of pro-emancipation scholars such as Geiger. Theoretically, to prove that the inspiration of Christianity was an actual Jewish person, Jesus, turned anti-Semitism into a kind of super crime, parricide. Yet Zionists found much in the Jesus story which was ignored or repressed when pro-emancipation writers such as Geiger investigated it. For them, the Jesus movement was seen through the prism of Jewish nationalism, and Christianity's inspiration became connected at least contextually to the fight for Jewish honor against the Romans.

The emancipationist Geiger's Galilee of the Gentiles became a Zionist's Galilee of the Zealots. In fact, much as Galilee had served as a marker differentiating between the Jesus biography of a secularized, pro-Christian writer such as Renan, and the Jesus biographical writing of a modernized, pro-Jewish scholar such as the Reform Rabbi Geiger, Galilee now served as a marker differentiating between the Jesus writing of a pro-integration, pro-Emancipation agenda of a scholar like Geiger, and the Jesus biographical writing of Zionists who wanted to evacuate Jews from Europe, and separate them in the ancestral homeland, Eretz Israel (Ottoman Palestine, and then British Mandatory Palestine).

The Zionist quest for the historic Jesus reached its zenith in Joseph Klausner's 1922 volume, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching*. Klausner gave some credence to the notion of "Galilee of the Gentiles," saying that it had a "certain value."⁷⁶ As authority, he cited the German Protestant theologian Emil Schurer, who claimed that in the days of the Maccabees, "the Jews in Galilee and Gilead still formed a Diaspora among the gentiles."⁷⁷ In the Herodian period, characterized (on Klausner's view) by general devastation of the Jewish Palestine which the Maccabees had built, this significant gentile presence remained in Galilee.

In the Herodian period, Klausner explained, "brigand" Jewish bands emerged with special prominence in the Galilee, "which was far removed from the political and religious center." Much more than Judea, Galilee was suited for the "nurturing of unruly, unbalanced zealots." As Klausner saw it, since the northern region was a hothouse for "ignorance and disorder," and for the enthused behavior of political or religious zealots, it was natural that Jesus,

“who regarded himself as a Messiah of the usual type, should arise in Galilee rather than elsewhere.”⁷⁸ As Klausner showed (following Josephus), the region was a locale where “political zealots drowned Herod’s sympathizers in the Lake of Galilee.” This was a volatile, politically and religiously excited locale awash in expectation of a special leader. “Such were the Galileans near the time of Jesus, and the state of Galilee forty years before his birth! There could not have been better material for a messianic movement!”⁷⁹ By the end of Herod’s rule, Klausner observed, Palestine was filled from one end to the other with malcontents and rebels, “and this was especially the case in Galilee, the cradle of zealotry.” Galilee’s special sponsorship of zealotry, he insisted, “is a fact which should not go unobserved in the history of Jesus.”⁸⁰

On Klausner’s count, during the century of Jewish restiveness under the rule of Herod and his tetrarch procurator successors, up to the destruction of the Second Temple, some 200,000 Jewish men were killed, “an appalling number for such a small country.”⁸¹ This distressed and lugubrious state of affairs bred two types of responses. Due to the Roman repression, some Jews became “utterly fanatical seekers of freedom who turned into actual rebels”; other Jews became “utterly despairing visionaries, extreme moralists and mystics who waited for nothing less than the mercy of heaven, for a freedom which should come by miraculous means.” Zealots in Galilee and elsewhere could become anti-Roman, politicized freedom fighters, or they could become depoliticized spiritualists who sought messianic liberation in another world, the Kingdom of God. These responses were “two sides of the same coin.”⁸²

Flipping this coin in the north, it necessarily landed on the side of zealotry. Zealotry of the anti-Roman political kind, and zealotry of the religious eschatological variety which became the Jesus movement, originated, and fermented with extraordinary potency, in the Galilee region, Klausner insisted. The political Zealots were founded by two northerners, Judah the Galilean (son of Ezekias of Galilee) who came from Gamla, and Zadok the Pharisee, apparently a Galilee native. Tens of thousands of Galileans rose up in support of a figure like Judah; “right up to the Destruction of the Temple it was they who everywhere led the riots and revolts.”⁸³

Gentiles, Klausner concluded, were numerous in Galilee in the era of Jesus, and the region “had never been a center of the [Jewish] law.” Galilee was devoid of Pharisees learned in the law, just as the region hosted no members of sects such as the Sadducees, “who acquiesced in Roman domination.” This meant that two types of Jews remained in Galilee, political zealots and spiritual zealots who changed the course of history both by fostering rebellion against the Romans in a desperate struggle which brought about the Temple’s ruin, and by following Jesus in a messianic movement which gave rise to Christianity. In Klausner’s words:

There remained [in Galilee] only the two types: Zealots of the party founded by Judah the Galilean and Zadok the Pharisee, numerous in Galilee (though not as a sect) from the time of Hezekiah the Galilean; and the “meek upon earth” [ammei haaretz] and the many varieties of the mystic, visionary type, “quietist” Pharisees, Essenes and the like. All who had strength enough to take up the sword joined themselves with the Zealots; the rest were more or less akin in spirit to the “meek upon earth” who abandoned interest in temporal things to dream of a future life, a life based on the ethics of the Prophets and the messianic idea. The Zealots too as well as every type of Pharisee and Essenes, held most strongly to those same conceptions, but in the thoughts of the “meek” they assumed a more imaginative and mystic form. It was from these circles of the “meek” that Jesus and his new teaching sprang.⁸⁴

CONTEMPORARY NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP ON JESUS AND GALILEE

Sean Freyne’s 1988 publication, *Galilee Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations*,⁸⁵ reflects Galilee’s salience in the so-called third phase of the quest for the historical Jesus, as well the phase’s penchant for combining traditional New Testament scholarship with methods from other disciplines, in this case literary criticism.

The literary criticism approach enables this scholar to highlight variation in New Testament uses and images of Galilee, particularly in the synoptic gospels. Mark, for instance, depicts Jesus as moving easily across the Galilee landscape, which is liberally studded with synagogues, and also gliding freely into gentile surrounding areas, such as Tyre and Sidon. Galilee, as seen in the Gospel of Mark, is “thoroughly Jewish in character, [and] relatively unencumbered by the presence of restrictive religious affiliation, thus allowing for easy access to and from the gentile world”; such back-and-forth accessibility is blocked in the Jerusalem setting.⁸⁶

The literary approach usefully shows how the assessment and conceptualization of a particular landscape, Galilee, became linked to various moral-spiritual ideas. For example, in the Gospel of Mark, the geographic sensibility of open borders and easy crossings intertwines with moral precepts wherein conventional hierarchies and limits are creatively challenged and transgressed. In Mark, one such moral border crossing involves table fellowship (2:13–17) by which tax collectors and sinners commingle at Levi’s house with Jesus and his disciples,⁸⁷ in a mode of open commensality which Jesus’s biographies have identified as a significant moral innovation.⁸⁸

For readers of faith, this turn to literary criticism, and to its habit of relativizing and demoting perceptions of reality by using subjective-sounding categories such as “narrative,” must seem uninspiring. Still, in terms of our

understanding of place, such an eyebrow-raising post-modern turn to literary criticism in theological scholarship has a liberating moral effect. In Renan, an essentialized-idealized view of Galilee could produce nothing more than an aesthetic biography of the “real” Jesus. Whatever Renan and his readers viewed as being spiritually beautiful in Jesus’s messages and Christian religion was connected to the serene majesty of the Galilee landscape—this idea that the only Godly thing in the gospels is Galilee was not a promising theological contribution. Despite its aggressively relativistic character, recent post-modern scholarship in the quest for the historical Jesus seems better attuned to sources of possible moral originality in the biography, as demonstrated in this example of fluid geographic and moral borders in the Gospel of Mark.

Socioeconomic aspects of Galilee are unusually evident in the Gospel of Luke, where the landscape features sharp contrasts between the rich and poor, Freyne comments.⁸⁹ Luke also portrays a singularly intense network of interaction between Galilee and Judea. As shown in episode of the healing of the paralyzed man (Luke 5:17), this gospel assumes that Pharisees and teachers of the law could be found in “every village of the Galilee.” In Luke, Galilee’s religious-cultural state seems quite distant from *ammei erez* traits of ignorance and savagery that are sometimes ascribed to the region in writings about Jesus’s life. On Freyne’s reading of Luke, Jesus’s ministry in Galilee cannot be seen as a challenge to the authority of Temple-based Judaism in Judea: “For Luke, the Galilean ministry, far from being in opposition to that at Jerusalem, is part of one mission which is seen as God’s visitation of his people, centered in Jerusalem.”⁹⁰ The Galilee region is deemphasized, as exemplified by the fact that Luke refers to no reunion between the arisen Jesus and his disciples in Galilee, unlike the case of the other two synoptic gospels.

Hence, in one gospel (Mark), social and physical freedom of movement in Galilee encourages Jesus to contest conventional moral borders, whereas in the Gospel of Matthew, Galilee becomes a launching pad for volleying criticism of doctrinaire Pharisees and problematic religious practices associated with the Temple cult in Jerusalem, while in the final synoptic gospel Galilee fuses with Judea in a unified spiritual mission. These narratives of the region imply that instead of a “real” Galilee, the stalking grounds of Jesus’s mission are depicted diversely, in line with whatever moral message or biographical point a gospel writer wanted to underscore. This being the case, what, if anything, does such a literary criticism approach have to say about the “real” Galilee?

Freyne broaches interesting suggestions in response to this question, but the significant thing about the query is the urgency with which it has come to be posed in this most recent, third, phase of the quest. As the last generation

of scholars perceived, years after the Holocaust, re-engagement with the issue of what may or may not have been part of Jesus's "real" identity would have awakened old ghosts, possibly resuscitating race-thinking about Christianity and its origins. For this reason, the quest for the historical Galilee basically replaced the quest for the historical Jesus.

Freyne rejects the Zealotry interpretation of a Galilee saturated by enthused political rebelliousness in Jesus's time. Indicative of the lack of political subversion is the length of the rule of the tetrarch, Herod's son Antipas: forty-two years. On the whole, Antipas "succeeded in maintaining the proper balance" between the Jewish peasantry of his Galilee realm and Roman imperial power.⁹¹ There is no strong evidence, Freyne avers, suggesting that Jesus and his movement was perceived as a serious threat to the political situation in Galilee.⁹² Up to the 66 CE revolt, Galilee was *not* "seething with dissatisfaction and in a state of revolutionary turmoil," Freyne concludes.⁹³

Josephus records that Galilee was densely populated with 204 villages, but Freyne doubts the accuracy of this assessment, partly because archaeological work has furnished no support for such a large demographic estimate. This scholar is credulous about gospel descriptions suggesting how provisions could be brought from surrounding villages to feed crowds in the days of Jesus's ministry. Far from indigent, dispossessed peasants who had nothing to lose, Galilee's rural population consisted mostly of small land-holders who "lived their lives along fairly traditional lines in villages, and were moderately productive."⁹⁴ Life in a Galilean village was "sometimes brutal," but there remained sufficient overall ease and surplus to allow inhabitants to make religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem, a rite which undoubtedly played an important social-spiritual function in the lives of Galilean Jewish peasants.

All told, in his quest for the historical Galilee, Freyne does not appear to find "smoking gun" evidence upholding highly familiar theories about Galilee's sociocultural character and the rise of Jesus's movement.⁹⁵ There is, for instance, no knock-down data indicating that Galileans were alienated from the Temple-based brand of Judaism in the period—just judging by Josephus's writings, Freyne notes, "Galileans are portrayed as observing the Sabbath, faithful to the pilgrimage, concerned about the defilement of the temple, paying their tithes."⁹⁶

The third, current, quest for the historical Jesus is about context and Galilee. Freyne's implicit strategy is to reinforce faith in Jesus's exceptionalism by disputing familiar images of Galilee being in a state of revolutionary turbulence in the era of the tetrarch Antipas. Precisely because there is (on Freyne's reading) no strong evidence in Galilee of peasant dislocation, messianic stirring, or specially onerous Roman political repression in the period preceding Jesus's ministry, his followers might have been attracted to him because of the originality and inspiration of his teaching, and not because

the region's hard conditions propelled them toward any strong-talking, miracle-making, charismatic character who happened to turn up. The Jesus movement, on this analysis, was apparently comprised not so much by the socio-politically dispossessed, but rather by fisherman types from Capernaum or Bethsaida who might not have been well-off, but were nonetheless characters who had time on their hands and the luxury of proceeding with a measure of spiritual openness and curiosity.

In various phases of the Jesus quests, the imposition of tranquility in Galilee helped biographers overcome acute issues. For Renan, Galilee serenity solved the problem of not sounding too un-Christian in a biography produced in a rapidly secularizing age. After the Holocaust, the challenge of biographical writing about Jesus is to avoid uncomfortable wrestling with the anti-Pharisee polemic and other sorts of critique of Jewish practices that fill the gospels; and a placid Galilee landscape, a setting not overly immersed in anti-Roman stirring or intramural Jewish tension, is a useful bypass in this regard.

But in an era where Jesus's Jewishness has become axiomatic, a different interpretive strategy is to push this identity conclusion to its limit. This approach is exemplified by Reza Aslan's well-turned, but debatably one-sided, Jesus biography, *Zealot* (2013).⁹⁷ In such writing, where Jesus's Jewishness accounts for everything, readers buckle their seatbelts for an encounter with an extremely turbulent Galilee landscape.

Aslan's well-received biography shows what happens when the notion of Jesus's Jewishness becomes refashioned in an era of multi-culturalism. Formerly, in the "second phase," 1950–1980's quest era, when the idea of "Judeo-Christian" civilization was being invented by publicists and thinkers in the immediate post-Holocaust era,⁹⁸ images of Jesus's Jewishness could only be assessed in tune with the "melting pot" theory whereby social cohesion is imagined as the result of the dilution of ethno-national sub-identities. The American social theory most readily associated with this second quest era is Will Herberg's popular 1955 volume *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* which projected, in the words of one critic, a sense of "generic monotheism."⁹⁹ In the melting pot, the notion of Jesus's Jewishness had clear utility, implying that Christians amalgamated from Jews, and that Jews had molded some of themselves in Christians. In the new American nation, traces of one monotheistic group were layered up creatively with traces of another group. In contrast, the third quest belongs to the era of multi-culturalism, which generated out of the "culture wars" of the late twentieth century. In multicultural theory, social cohesion is perceived as the result of the preservation of ethno-national sub-identities.

Verging toward dogmatism, Aslan's analysis transposes multi-culturalism onto Jesus's biography and the Galilean landscape. His Jewish Jesus is *really* Jewish, in the way that many people think of ultra-nationalist Zionist

activists, such as Menachem Begin, the leader of the terroristic *Irgun* during Israel's 1948 struggle for sovereign independence struggle, as being really Jewish. By the same token, Roman officials in Aslan's account are *really* Roman, personifications of various familiar traits, from brute ruthlessness to uncanny engineering ingenuity.

Jesus in this biography becomes a political zealot, one of many agitated Jewish figures in this period who fought uncompromisingly to evict the foreign Roman presence from the Jews' Promised Land, and also to overturn an objectionable form of Temple Judaism which had been contaminated by the Jerusalem Jewish elites' moral obtuseness and dependence upon the despicable Romans. The motto in this book about Jesus as a political zealot is Matthew 10:34 ("I have not come to bring peace, but the sword"); and, in keeping with this theme of zealotry, Galilee becomes a hotbed of sociopolitical agitation.

Like Klausner, Aslan depicts a Galilee of the Zealots. Yet, a century ago, the Zionist writer differentiated between alienated spiritual rebels in the chaotic northern setting who might have been drawn to Jesus's other-worldly messages, and alienated political insurgents who campaigned against the Romans. Aslan's politicized analysis, in contrast, is undifferentiated.

The scholarly inspiration for his insistence that everything in Jesus's world can be connected to political struggle against Rome is a 1985 publication, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs* authored by Richard Horsley, a prolific New Testament scholar who spent his career at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.¹⁰⁰ By studying peasant upheaval in Galilee and elsewhere, from Herod's rule through the destruction of the Second Temple, Horsley adopted an agenda of broadening understanding about Zealotry, and possibly relating it to Jesus's story. The Zealotry phenomenon, Horsley noted, has long been thought of incorrectly as a foil to Jesus's biography and his movement: "As the supposed fanatical advocates of violent revolution against the Romans, the 'Zealots' served as a convenient foil over against which to portray Jesus of Nazareth as a sober prophet of pacifist love of one's enemies," he complained.¹⁰¹

Taking this as a cue, Aslan professes astonishment about how "centuries of biblical scholarship have miscast" Jesus's declaration "give back to Caesar the property that belongs to Caesar, and give back to God the property that belongs to God." The conventional misinterpretation of this saying "perfectly accommodates the perception of Jesus as a detached, celestial spirit wholly unconcerned with material matters." In actual fact, Jesus's meaning wholly adhered to Zealotry: Caesar deserves to be given back the denarius coin, because his picture is stamped on it, and it is his, whereas God should be given back his own Land of Israel, which the Romans have illegitimately seized. Any portrayal of Jesus as an aloof spiritualist opposed to zealotry is

“curious,” Aslan concludes, since Jesus “not only lived in one of the most politically charged periods in Israel’s history, but [also] claimed to be the promised messiah sent to liberate the Jews from Roman occupation.”¹⁰²

The problem is that no “Galilee of the Zealots” theory has ever furnished a definitive assessment about the range and roots of sociopolitical unrest among the northern underclass during the period of Jesus’s life. Horsley (with John Hanson) energetically mined Josephus and other sources, extracting a wealth of data about the proliferation of peasant banditry and correlate phenomena in Galilee, but he was commendably candid about the difficulty of making connections between political and spiritual realms (“we have little or no direct evidence for the Jewish bandits’ religious beliefs”).¹⁰³ His book is filled with backhanded admissions about how the thirty year or so period between Jesus’s birth and his ministry, and then the ensuing thirty years prior to the outbreak of rebellion against Rome, seem to have been characterized by relative socioeconomic quiet in Galilee (precisely the situation Freyne highlighted, in his book). “Because of the paucity of sources, it cannot be determined whether there were any messianic movements, except, perhaps for the followers of Jesus, during the seventy years” preceding the outbreak of the great revolt of 66–70, he conceded.¹⁰⁴

Horsley naturally analyzed peasant banditry activity in Galilee as a response to socioeconomic hardship, but his assessment of causes was inconsistent and not wholly persuasive. Essentially he appealed to a 40 percent rule, hypothesizing that double trouble taxation and repression crippled Galilean villagers. They were compelled to provide annual tithes to Jewish elites for the Temple’s maintenance and also pay tribute to the Romans; they ended up surrendering some 40 percent of their income. This intolerable burden plunged the region’s peasants into debt; and various techniques which putatively provided relief, such as the Jubilee Year erasure of obligations, proved ineffective. Uprooted by poverty, Galileans turned to banditry.¹⁰⁵ This generic, broad causal analysis could not account for a diverse range of social protest activities; and so Horsley shock-injected new sorts of micro-causal explanations at various junctures (for instance, banditry in Galilee increased some fifteen years after Jesus’s death because of a severe famine which occurred under the brief rule of procurator Tiberius Alexander, he wrote).¹⁰⁶

In contrast to Aslan, who conceptualizes “zeal” as a broad phenomenon percolating over decades and encompassing a range of critical orientations toward Rome and coopted Jewish elites, the Horsley and Hanson volume narrowly (and correctly) assessed Zealots as a coalition of brigand groups who entered Jerusalem in 67 CE and exercised moderate impact on the revolt.¹⁰⁷ Provocatively, Aslan opens his biography of Jesus with a prolonged description of an event that occurred decades after his subject’s death, a Sicarii assassination of the Temple high priest, Jonathan son of Ananus, in 56 CE—this murder perpetrated by a member of the Jewish fringe extremist

group of dagger-wielding assassins, Aslan implies, ought to be seen both as prelude to the Roman war and also as the moral-political result of everything Jesus's life was about. Horsley, in contrast, downplays the historical import of this Jewish assassin group, the Sicarii, in explicit, extended discussions.¹⁰⁸

In sum, the "Galilee of the Zealots" theory remains far from being definitively established. Significant questions linger regarding its chronology (including the pertinence of Zealotry to the specific period of Jesus's life in Galilee), its impetus, and its scope.

AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM AND THE QUEST FOR JESUS IN GALILEE

The popularity of Aslan's volume in multicultural, Obama-era, America raises issues about Galilee and American culture. How do circumstances of capitalism and commercialism, brazen secularity and resurgent evangelism, impact upon images of Jesus and Galilee produced by America's theologians, tourists, and popular writers? Of course, many such images overlap with perceptions we have reviewed in the writing of nineteenth century and early twentieth century theologians and popularizers who operated in Germany and other European settings. Much in Christian faith overcomes peculiar sensitivities or conceptualizations that flourish in the cultures of particular national settings. By the same token, modernization issues and anxieties that ebbed and flowed from the mid-nineteenth century through the world wars, and beyond them, were shared by writers in Europe and North America, and often encouraged them to entertain similar, supposed solutions, despite the disparate national cultures that enveloped them. For example, the way Renan projects images of bucolic innocence in early first century Galilee, thereby accommodating romantic era themes and ratifying the romantics' recoil from industrialization and urbanization, can be identified in salient motifs of American Protestant writing about Galilee and Jesus, from the era of that country's Civil War and through the 1920s.

On the other hand, American Protestant writing about late Ottoman Palestine, and about first century Galilee, has special interest because of its own internalized consciousness of divergence. These are writers who, at least in their own imagination, belonged to a New World because in the European Old World there had developed an out-worn, occasionally persecutory, version of Christianity. That Old World Christianity had become unappealing and obsolete was a *result* of the way its theologians and pilgrims had divested the story of Jesus, and its memorialization in Galilee and Jerusalem, of all heart-felt, authentic meaning. Or, possibly, the problem was the other way around: because Europe was full of religious sectarianism and pitiless theologians, its writers were bound to be erroneous, tedious, and unreliable

whenever they wrote about the Holy Land. Whichever way we point this arrow of causality, we observe American spiritual leaders, influential writers, and tourist pilgrims taking on the story of Jesus, and the fate of the Holy Land, as a special *American* project about a century before a special relationship evolved, on a diplomatic-political level, between the United States and Israel in the 1970s.

Of course, Protestant American theologians who wrote about Galilee, Jesus, and related subjects in the 1870s, before the early 1880s period when Zionist-related activity (i.e., the *Hibat Zion* pioneering effort, which is discussed in the next chapter) became noticeably rooted on the country's landscape, had agendas in mind that are unlike ones which motivate America's gentile, pro-Israel, sub-groups today. These earlier Protestant theologians envisioned a gradual Christianization of the Holy Land, largely as a result of missionary work which had originally been undertaken by Americans in the 1820s and which had achieved some consolidation via the founding of the Syrian Protestant College (later renamed the American University of Beirut) in 1866. Their outlook was not really like those of American evangelical supporters of Israel today who also anticipate the country's Christianization, but imagine that it will come at the behest of eschatological processes ("Rapture"), and not as the outcome of painstaking educational and missionary work. Also, in mainline churches and parachurch frameworks, and also among American Catholics, many gentile Americans hold an array of opinions today about Israel that are, in some ways, quite unlike the late nineteenth/early twentieth century views we will survey in this section, outlooks that were espoused by American Protestants in an era when Zionism's realization in the establishment of a Jewish state was not really expected.

Despite this obvious disparity of content and endgame expectations, there remains one over-arching link uniting the way gentile Americans have thought about the Holy Land in this 150 year period, from the postbellum era in the 1870s, through the present. Americans have had a manifest tendency to see the Holy Land, its past and its ongoing development, through their own American frames.¹⁰⁹ In a loose sense, this is symptomatic of a general, prevailing trend of exceptionalism imagery in American culture—no less in foreign policy than in domestic matters, Americans tend to believe that their engagements overseas have special or semi-divine aspects.¹¹⁰ Yet there is a wealth of evidence suggesting that American engagements in the Holy Land, *particularly in Galilee*, have proceeded in a sense that they are especially special.

We should be specific about what is not being claimed in this section, which relates to Protestant American engagements in Galilee from the 1870s through the 1920s, and their resonance today. In the missionary field, American Protestants clearly allowed European counterparts, particularly the

English, to take the lead.¹¹¹ There are, to be sure, some interesting parallels between American and English missionary work in Palestine—one example is the sponsorship of agricultural work initiatives for indigent Jews in the mid-nineteenth century Yishuv by the American Clorinda Minor and by the English Elizabeth Finn, both women with deep roots in eschatological expectation whose outlooks constituted an intriguing blend of missionary coercion and philo-Semitic empathy.¹¹² However, for one reason or another, the English projects yielded much greater influence in an array of contexts, including contemporary Israeli fiction.¹¹³ Similarly, in the area of Holy Land exploration, sometimes called Biblical Geography, a pursuit whose origins are to be found in the 1830s decade of socio-religious liberalization in Palestine under Muhammad Ali's regime, American Protestantism made one landmark contribution;¹¹⁴ but, generally, its efforts lagged behind European counterparts. This contrast is symbolized by the durability and impact of the British Palestine Exploration Fund, and the short-lived disappointment, the American Palestine Exploration Society.¹¹⁵ And in the diplomatic field no American-England comparison can be drawn at all. In the age of England's empire, philo-Semitism (its consolidation in our period exemplified by the publication of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* in 1876) helped propel that country toward the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and the assumption of a Mandate in Palestine after WWI. In contrast, American political involvement in late Ottoman affairs was circumscribed by that country's policy of isolationism, which prevailed, more or less, through the 1920s and 1930s. On lower and middle diplomatic levels, American officials often became significantly engrossed in late Ottoman Palestine realities, as is shown by Ruth Kark's study of American consular activity;¹¹⁶ but the absence of overall direction from Washington, the varying temperaments (messianic or pragmatic, cold toward Jews or philo-Semitic) of the officials who became American consuls in Jerusalem, and many other factors, hedged against this involvement's impact. America was never a player in "Great Game" diplomacy relating to the Ottoman Empire. Nothing laden within the American Protestant engagements in Galilee, 1870–1920, which are surveyed below, could possibly have changed that.

Why, then, study these American Protestant engagements in late Ottoman Palestine and early Mandatory Palestine? Two broad reasons can be mentioned here, but these permeate and sub-divide as many smaller, but significant, factors which will become evident in due course.

First, these engagements are arresting reflections of fundamental cultural divisions separating Europe and North America. If the reader doubts whether such a broad generalization really can be validated, he or she can be referred to the way Jesus's mission in Galilee is portrayed in Renan's 1863 bestseller, compared to the portraiture in Henry Ward Beecher's 1871 *The Life of Jesus*,

the Christ.¹¹⁷ Beecher's popular book, published just before sensational adultery accusations tarnished his status as (his biographer puts it) "the most famous man in America,"¹¹⁸ casts Jesus as a prophet of love, and as the possessor of an ethically uncompromised, sometimes feminized,¹¹⁹ personality. From the standpoint of Christian belief, this idealistic, Americanized depiction of Jesus as a loving companion is diametrically opposed to the realpolitik personality that was cast into Renan's biography by mid-nineteenth century European cynicism. In short, each continent, and each national culture, gets its own Galilee.

Second, as is being shown in a growing corpus of studies, the way Americans relate to the Holy Land, decade after decade, says quite a lot about how religious culture has developed in the United States.¹²⁰ These studies have shown how pre-1948 American engagements in Ottoman and British Mandatory Palestine expressed and shaped American perceptions of Jesus, how they reflected or accelerated controversies between Modernist and Fundamentalist flanks of American Protestantism, and how they laid foundations for subsequent American Christian attitudes toward Israel.¹²¹ By concentrating on late-nineteenth century/early twentieth century American Protestant involvements in Galilee, this section refines conclusions in this extant scholarship; and, I think, this Galilee focus also points to new insights in a realm which straddles between religious and political cultures, and which relates to issues such as liberalism versus conservatism, and philo-Semitism versus anti-Semitism.

We begin by having a look at how the contemporary scene of gentile American tourists in Israel can be seen as an outgrowth of efforts undertaken by these Protestant ministers and spokesman in the ground-breaking half century, 1877–1927.

THE AMERICAN PILGRIMAGE SCENE IN ISRAEL TODAY

Writing about Catholic and Protestant tourists from the United States in contemporary Israel, one scholar remarks: "on average, all American pilgrims like the Galilee region best." This writer, a Religious Studies scholar who did field work over a five year period, studying in depth the before/during/after experience of 131 American Christian tourists in Israel, adds that Galilee's "blue lake, rolling hills and lush greenery" appeal "to the North American tendency to view uninhabited places as more spiritual than urban ones, a notion derived from nineteenth century romantic naturalism that is now firmly entrenched."¹²² The sort of "nineteenth century romantic naturalism" whose outcome is Galilee's magnetic appeal to American Christians is the topic of this section, but first we should note the contemporary phenomenon's dimensions, at least in the tourist sphere.

Apart from lean periods when Israel's political situation, or a global pandemic, acts as a deterrent, about a quarter million US Christians visit Israel each year. To complement our focus on this phenomenon's nineteenth century historical roots, we should bear in mind that this impressive US Christian tourist turn-out in Israel can also be contextualized as belonging to a post-WWII boom trend in American overseas travel. During the first generation (1950–1970) of travel in a world restored after WWII, American international tourism rose 700 percent. In 1925, close to the endpoint of our survey in the remainder of this chapter, a trip to Mandatory Palestine cost about 70 percent of an average American salary (and lasted a minimum of five weeks), whereas since the mid-1960s, this cost has dropped to about 10 percent. The bulk of these Christian tourists arrive today in well-organized group tours that are packaged from above by efficient tour agencies. Typically, these agencies contract, and incentivize, Catholic and Protestant clerics to lead a given group. The tour group experience is crucial in this Israel context: whereas 36 percent of Americans who vacation overseas do so in groups, the figure for Israel is 83 percent!¹²³

The profile of these American religious tourists¹²⁴ diverges from popular perception. By and large, Israelis are not discerning about overseas Christians, but we nonetheless tend to believe that any non-Jewish American who visits here must be an evangelical (this is probably a logical assumption: world media coverage of Israel being so dire and bleak, we assume that any gentile who decides to visit here must be of an eschatological disposition, someone who wants to reserve front row seats for the end of the world). In actual fact, in the year of Kaell's research (2011), just 35 percent of US Christian visitors to Israel were evangelicals, not that many more than Catholics (25 percent of the total).

Kaell's research focus applied to middle-income, or lower-middle-class, Americans for whom a visit to Israel requires some financial planning and sacrifice and typically occurs toward the end of a career or in retirement. She implies that this middle/lower-middle income bracket, and also the "early old age" sort of age bracket, are representative of US Christian tourists who come in groups; and this accords with what most of us see in Jerusalem and Galilee. Interestingly, since the 1950s, women have comprised almost three-quarters of these religious tourist groups in Israel.¹²⁵

Some of these US Christian religious tour groups have a pro-Palestinian orientation, but most are simultaneously pro-Israeli and non-political. On the whole, the American tourists accept Israel's narrative of events, past and present, but show relatively little interest in details of its dispute with Palestinians, and prefer to concentrate on their own spiritual experiences in the country. It would be hard to find any visitor to Israel, American Christian or otherwise, who is not moved, in some way, by Jerusalem; but Kaell's study

is rife with anecdotal reportage about American Protestant visitors who show outright disdain for organized holy sites in Jerusalem, complaining (among many other things) about the “smells and bells” of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This recoil recapitulates the orientation of nineteenth century American Protestant clerics and writers who visited the Holy Land, and who evinced strong preference for “walking in Jesus’ footsteps” in Galilee, in lieu of spending much time in canonized sacred sites in Jerusalem.

Historically, this disdain for sites designated and lionized by Catholics and the eastern churches reached a pinnacle in the last years of the nineteenth century when an alternative to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden Tomb, was arranged and quickly venerated by Protestants. This site might be known to some readers as Gordon’s Calvary, the name honoring a British war hero who became enamored of this “Skull Hill” site while on a visit to Jerusalem. The Garden Tomb was not really adopted by late nineteenth century Protestant tourists because it offered superior evidence for designation as the locale of Jesus’s burial and resurrection. Instead, the Garden Tomb’s relatively subtle, serene landscaping offered these western visitors an experience better suited to their spiritual tastes.¹²⁶ One discerning American Protestant visitor to Jerusalem, Harry Emerson Fosdick, captured this mood in a 1927 memoir: “If we must have a site for the crucifixion, let us go to ‘Gordon’s Calvary’; at least it is decent and quiet.”¹²⁷

In general, Protestant reservations about Holy Land tourism based on recognized sites in Jerusalem can be explained in a number of ways. Laden within them, of course, are age-old rivalries with Catholicism; and, it bears mention that in the American post-Civil War context, when a “Holy Land mania” first consolidated, anti-Catholic feeling was running high, as Nativist response to the mass influx of immigrants from Ireland. It is also true that *both* Catholic and Protestant visitors from America have never identified with rites and traditions incorporated in Holy Land sites that are run by the Eastern Orthodox Church. For their part, American Protestant visitors have objected to the commercialization of sacred sites run by the Catholics and the Orthodox. In fact, over the decades they have sometimes imagined themselves as the true successors of Jesus in Jerusalem, objecting to the way vendors hawk souvenirs in the Old City as a reprise of his over-turning of the money-changers’ tables outside of the Temple.

As important as anything else, American Protestantism’s devotion to Galilee, and its general “outdoors” approach to Holy Land tourism, derive from dilemmas about “presence” and holy space. If, in the spirit of the Reformation, Jesus can be found anywhere by the deeply faithful individual, how exactly is a visit to the Holy Land to be privileged as “pilgrimage”? Lurking within an array of nuanced Protestant handlings of this issue is a general disinterest in precise designations of sacrality and sites in the Holy

Land. It suffices, as one American Protestant visitor phrased it in the title of his 1908 travel report, to be “Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land.”¹²⁸

In her study of the contemporary American Christian tourist culture in Israel, Kaell’s subjects “gravitate to ‘open sites,’ those with no Catholic or Orthodox structures that seem to hinder an unmediated connection with Jesus.” These American Christians are not seeking canonized space in Israel. Official holy sites do not fulfill them. Instead, they cherish open locales that offer “a sense of presence,” defined by this scholar as “the feeling that divine or invisible beings are manifest . . . and engage in intimate relationships with the living.”¹²⁹

In these senses, Christian America’s romance with Galilee is consummated by the region’s “sense of presence.” As we will see, the late nineteenth century American Protestant pilgrims in Ottoman Palestine were loose constructionists who were almost willfully hostile to officially designated holy space. Precisely what enthralled them about the lake, and towns like Capernaum, in Galilee, sites that are venerated in the life of Jesus, is that they were scarcely identifiable, or not even designated at all—this produced a less crowded, and much more imaginative, spiritual experience.

In terms of the modernist-fundamentalist controversy which roils American Protestantism to this day, this loose constructionism about holy space was, and remains, a decidedly *liberal* attitude. We will survey here late nineteenth century/early twentieth century Protestant American commentators who scoffed at literalism about holy space with vehemence comparable to the way they upbraided fundamentalism about written scripture.

To be sure, their position had roots in theological controversies about old and new forms of Biblical criticism which first flared in Europe, and which were then re-worked in mid-nineteenth century America by moderately liberal theologians such as Horace Bushnell¹³⁰ who had an array of palpable connections to the more decisively liberal, postbellum characters surveyed below (for one thing, a decade apart, Bushnell and Henry Ward Beecher were born within five miles of one another in Litchfield County Connecticut). But the objections to spatial and textual literalism had political motivations as well.

As far as our crew of Galilee outdoor tourists was concerned, fanaticism about sacred space at the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem had helped cause the Crimean War, just as, a few years later, the Civil War’s eruption had been necessitated by, among other things, the way slavery apologists exploited literal interpretations of the Bible to extenuate an abominable institution. Much more than has been realized in scholarship, if it has been realized at all,¹³¹ liberal American Protestantism evolved, in the modernism debate, by reformatting the meaning of Holy Land pilgrimage, and by centering it in “open spaces” of Galilee. In fact, some of these revisionist pilgrims are renowned (or notorious) in American culture for staking out the liberal modernist

position, in opposition to American fundamentalism. Harry Emerson Fosdick is a case in point: we will see how he approached the Holy Land in 1926–1927,¹³² barely a year after the Scopes Trial, and some five years after he became a modernist hero in Protestantism, thanks to his sermon, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?”¹³³

In the American case, religious liberalism has been drawn to the region of the Sermon on the Mount. In contrast, owing to its veneration of prophecy inscribed in Old Testament scripture, rather than the New Testament story of Jesus’s life, right-wing Christian fundamentalism climbs up Jerusalem’s Temple Mount.

Speaking here about American Protestantism’s modernist liberal flank, its New World roots are, I believe, twofold. The first source is a rationalized, largely secular, revolt against the Puritan and Calvinist origins of American religiosity that is symbolized and exemplified in the early years of the Republic by Thomas Jefferson’s streamlined Bible, which has been characterized as being Deist or even Unitarian in spirit.¹³⁴ For Jefferson, the Sermon on the Mount crystallized the essence of Christianity; it was, in his words, “the stamp of genuine Christianity.”¹³⁵ The second is a kind of in-house revolt within Calvinism. In the realm of theology and moral belief, this is a “generation gap” sort of phenomenon framed in family life. One such family was the Beechers in Litchfield CT, in which the young siblings, Henry Ward and Harriet, grew up with increasing distaste for this Protestant creed’s fatalistic predestination doctrines and were drawn toward a more liberally inclusive Christianity of fellowship and love, in formal rebellion against their father, Lyman, a Presbyterian minister (who, it seems, privately condoned his children’s un-Orthodoxy and who himself was sometimes publicly accused of infidelity to traditional Calvinist doctrines).¹³⁶ Very much in contrast to the position taken by a phalanx of pro-Israel scholars who write propagandistically about American Christianity’s “Hebraic roots” as a root source of the country’s abiding support for Israel,¹³⁷ such sources of American Protestant liberalism were in constant friction *against* the Old Testament fixations and enthusiasms of the Puritans. It is no accident that their late nineteenth century and early twentieth century successors gravitated toward the Holy Land region known to Americans from the New Testament, Galilee, rather than Old Testament locales, particularly Jerusalem (just as it is no accident that the mainline churches associated with political liberalism have, since the events of 1967, been increasingly critical of undemocratic Israeli policy on the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and sometimes drawn to anti-Zionism initiatives).¹³⁸

The wellsprings of right-wing American Christianity, especially its increasingly influential evangelical movement, are quite different. Premillennial/dispensationalist founders and promoters in the nineteenth century, such as John Nelson Darby and William Eugene Blackstone, relied heavily on what they

regarded as literal interpretations of Old Testament prophecy.¹³⁹ Jerusalem was (and remains) the bedrock of this strand of Christian belief: Jerusalem is the locale to which Jesus will return after the miraculous rapture, and it is the locale where the Third Temple will be built, to usher in the post-apocalyptic millennium of his rule. After the 1967 War, when Israel gained control of the “eastern” (i.e. mostly Palestinian) side of Jerusalem, and according to its ideology, unified the city, American evangelical support for the Jewish state exponentially accelerated. This American evangelical enthusiasm has been vigorously applied in support of Israel’s illiberal occupation and possible, impending illegal annexation of West Bank locales such as Hebron, which stir powerful, Old Testament, associations but which have been populated, in recent centuries, by Muslim and Christian Arabs, not Jews.

Premillennial bestsellers in America are manifestly based in Jerusalem. By far, most Christians in America do not avowedly share the eschatological views of the premillennial evangelicals. Nonetheless, these apocalyptic, rapture and Third Temple, books, such as Hal Lindsey’s 1970 *The Late Great Planet Earth* (which has sold some 35 million copies and topped the *New York Times* non-fiction list for the decade), and the *Left Behind* series of bestsellers, attain head-scratching levels of popularity. This American evangelical errand in Jerusalem politics is not limited to the printed word. Premillennial preachers like John Hagee (who himself has published apocalyptic forecasts pivoting on supernatural occurrences in Jerusalem¹⁴⁰) have attained prominence in key Jerusalem-related events in Israeli history. Hagee, for instance, proudly delivered the benediction in the 2018 ceremony marking the Trump administration’s decision to relocate the US Embassy in Jerusalem. The interaction between right-wing American evangelism and extremist, illiberal Israeli groups, which is expressed (among many other things) in semi-conspiratorial schemes to wrest control of the Temple Mount, is well documented in scholarly, and reliably popular, books.¹⁴¹

None of this goes to say that all American Christian evangelicals are illiberal about Israel and entranced by apocalyptic visions of Jerusalem. The reality is quite complex. Excellent studies of evangelical support for Israel illustrate how rapture-apocalypse imagery and visions are not really popular with many Christian visitors to Israel who identify as evangelicals.¹⁴² And evidence of American evangelical love for Galilee is, of course, not hard to find: evangelicals, and many other sorts of Christians, flock to a Galilee area baptism site on the Jordan River, called Yardenit (in 2000, a million visitors reached this site).¹⁴³ Nonetheless, in the American context, the equation between semi-secularized faith, liberalism, and Galilee, on the one hand, and fundamentalism, apocalyptic expectation, Jerusalem, and illiberalism, on the other hand, is the prevailing rule; and a variety of sub-trends that scramble these parameters are exceptions and irregularities in the matrix. Moreover,

Israel's post-1967 unification of Jerusalem, which is an administrative fiction and an ethical dubiety, and its undemocratic occupation of Judean and Samarian territories (the West Bank), has been enabled by proactive support of the right-wing part of this equation, that is, evangelical Christians (whose ultimate aim is the post-rapture conversion of 144,000 Jews in the Holy Land, in stark contradistinction to the Greater Israel expansionist goals of the Israeli Likud-based or "unity" governments they support). On the other side of the coin, Israel's evangelical-enabled illiberalism on the West Bank in recent decades has required massive investment in the illegal settlements, much to the detriment of peripheral areas that are located within the internationally recognized, pre-1967 Green Line, including Galilee.

Thus, at least indirectly, since the late twentieth century, American Christianity has been at war with itself in Israel, privileging "Old Testament" parts of the country which are embraced by its theological right-wing, and impoverishing the "New Testament" region, Galilee, which, historically, has been cherished by its liberal left-wing.

Folding-up the Galilee enthusiasm which its patrons, inspiring ministers such as Henry Ward Beecher and Harry Emerson Fosdick, expressed 100 or 150 years ago, and selling it in a yard sale, liberal American Protestants know exactly what has been happening in Israel since 1967. In this yard sale, liberal American Christianity is relinquishing and forgetting its roots in the Holy Land. It is as though the sarcasm of Mark Twain's famous report on the country in his 1869 send-up of American travelers, *Innocents Abroad*, is all that it has left on its landscape. Meantime, the professions of deep faith in the land, in revitalized Judaism, and in inter-faith comity, which pulsate between the chuckles and jibes of Twain's writing are left in a musty corner of the garage, and are not even put up for consideration in the yard sale.

Justifiably, of course, liberal ministers like Beecher and Fosdick will remain objects of veneration in American culture, owing to their heroic contributions to the campaigns against slavery, and against its Jim Crow reincarnation. But soon, if not already, nobody in non-evangelical America will want to commemorate, or remember, what these liberal Protestants had to say about Galilee and the Holy Land, because comparing their words to Israel's current illiberal realities makes any reasonable person wince. Where these trends will take America and Israel in decades to come is anyone's guess, but to deny that these trends are in swing is to deny the facts of history.¹⁴⁴

AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM'S "FIFTH GOSPEL" IN GALILEE

The sharp bump in American pilgrimage tourism in the Holy Land after the Civil War germinated from many causes, some technical, others spiritual.

The advent of steamship travel in the 1840s, the stabilization of affairs in Ottoman Palestine after the Crimean War (1853–1856), and postbellum economic reconsolidation in America all contributed to this spike in Holy Land tourism. “By the second half of the nineteenth century,” writes one expert on this subject, “middle-class lay people in increasing numbers, as well as wealthier public figures such as politicians, generals and authors, made pilgrimages to Palestine that would have previously been impossible.”¹⁴⁵ The high profile incidence of Civil War heroes who made their way to the Holy Land is suggestive, implying a desire to find some sort of spiritual ratification of the high cost of democracy’s victory in a horrible war. Viewers of Steven Spielberg’s film “Lincoln” will recall the scene in which the president refers to a deeply felt desire to tour the Holy Land—some scholars insist that Lincoln staged such a conversation just before his assassination on April 14, 1865.¹⁴⁶ Two of his Union comrades managed to make the trip. Ulysses S. Grant included the country on the itinerary of his post-presidency 1877–1879 world tour, and Lincoln’s secretary of state, William Seward, visited the Holy Land in 1871.¹⁴⁷

The high profile visits bred mixed results. The downside in reports filed by visiting writers such as Twain and Herman Melville related to the country’s socioeconomic stagnation, and to the gap between, on the one hand, idyllic Holy Land images inculcated in youthful Bible class instruction and, on the other hand, the unflattering realities which unfolded before these articulate visitors’ eyes. In this connection, Twain’s biting record of his dispiriting encounter with the Jordan River can suffice: “I always thought the river Jordan was four thousand miles long and thirty five miles wide, and so I have been miserably disappointed again,” lamented the humorist. “How is it that such a creek as this imposed itself upon me all my life as a mighty river?”¹⁴⁸ Such spiritual setbacks did not staunch the flow of postbellum American Christian enthusiasm for the Holy Land, however.

Visual representation technologies were advancing in this period, and Christians eagerly applied the latest gadgetry in order to enjoy what we would today call “virtual” tours of Ottoman Palestine. On the eve of WWI, for instance, a photograph imagery firm, Underwood and Underwood, hired two reputable experts, Charles Foster Kent, a Yale University professor in Biblical literature, and Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, a well-known Methodist preacher, to produce one such virtual Holy Land tour which featured the use of a high tech dual lens camera, called a “stereoscope.”¹⁴⁹ Earlier creative efforts to reproduce Holy Land landscapes for the spiritual enjoyment of Americans included the building of a huge replica, “Palestine Park,” 75 feet wide and 120 feet long, off the shoreline of Lake Chautauqua, in 1874.¹⁵⁰

In this sphere of Holy Land representation, by far the greatest investment of resources and energy was allocated in travel report books published by American Christian religious tourists in late Ottoman Palestine. For all the

talk of “Holy Land mania” in America in the period spanning between the Civil War and the 1920s, actually paying a visit to the country remained an elite activity, well out of the financial reach of the mass of Christian believers. For use in Bible class instruction and an array of related purposes, these travel report books were thus at a premium; and they flourished. One scholar estimates that 500 such pilgrimage narratives were published between the 1840s and the interwar period in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁵¹ On the whole, these are rather formulaic narratives, often lavishly illustrated; but revealing anecdotes and comments, particularly relating to population sub-groups, are easy to mine in many of them; and clusters of higher quality books can be classified as belonging to significant sub-genres, such as the “Outdoors in Palestine” category surveyed forthwith.¹⁵²

Philip Schaff, a Swiss-born and German educated Protestant scholar migrated to the United States in the mid-1840s, while he was in his twenties, and by the 1870s he was a well-published and respected theologian and church historian with a position at New York City’s Union Theological Seminary. Mourning the death of a daughter, Meta, he left New York in late 1876 for an eight month overseas tour, spending the late winter and spring months in Palestine and its neighboring lands. He published his report, *Through Bible Lands*, in 1878.¹⁵³

Schaff does not overtly articulate an “outdoors in Palestine” approach, but his report conveys all the assumptions and outlooks that constituted this ideology, when it was fully expressed by the next generation of American Protestant visitors to the country. He found the country’s present, built-up, circumstances loathsome. In contrast, its inspiring natural landscape encouraged him to reminisce about the Holy Land’s splendid past and to renew his faith in its prophetic future.

“The whole land is a venerable ruin,” Schaff declared. “In no country is the contrast between the glorious past and the miserable present so startling and sad.” Palestine, he concluded, “is hardly worth visiting except for its reminiscences.”¹⁵⁴ Jerusalem, Schaff reported, is “the most desecrated spot on earth.” He viewed its Catholic and Orthodox holy sites as Jesus beheld the Temple: “the native churches unfortunately have but the empty shell of the religion they profess, and present a spectacle not unlike the Jewish synagogue at the time of Christ.” Schaff regathered faith in the past and future of the presently “desecrated” Jerusalem by climbing up Mount of Olives—such a panorama view from above enabled this, and many other western visitors, to glance past unsettling present realities, and concentrate on Jerusalem’s “beautiful and imposing” past. Perched above the holy city, his words faithfully conveyed the open spaces view of Protestant pilgrimage in the Holy Land: “Fortunately God’s mountains and God’s nature cannot be destroyed by the vandalism of man.”¹⁵⁵

There was no room for philo-Semitism on Schaff's tour. He rarely reported on Jews in the country, saying little more than that they are "orthodox," "poor and dependent on the charity of their brethren in Europe," and mostly wait "to be buried on holy ground." If truth be told, one prominent group of modern Jews, the Zionists (who within a few years would start planting Hibat Zion colonies around the country) would soon speak the same way of the country's Jewish veterans, declaiming pejoratively that they belonged to the "Old Yishuv." Schiff, however, was really on a different level when he expressed disdain for Jews. He expressed his attitude by commenting that the "squalid and forbidding" Jewish quarter in Jerusalem "ought to be burned down and built anew," and also by the way his tour side-stepped Safed, the Jews' cherished mystical, Galilee mountain, enclave, because it "has no biblical interest." In one intemperate moment, Schaff exclaimed that Moses Montefiore and Baron Rothschild "have done much" for the country's Jews "by building houses and lodging houses. They ought to buy Palestine and administer it on principles of civil and religious liberty."¹⁵⁶

Seeped both in anti-Semitic stereotype about Jewish wealth, and also in Orientalist disregard of Tanzimat social and religious reform undertaken in this period by the Ottoman regime, Schaff's facetious comment reflects his trip's fundamental anxiety. Contemptuous as he was of the Holy Land present, Schiff attested repeatedly to his faith in the prophetic country's wondrous future. The problem was that in this pre-Zionist period, the Protestant visitor really could envision no real-life agency that might promote political and socioeconomic modernization in the country with an ethos and pace suited to his Americanized view of progress. He devoted a final chapter of his travel report to the "Regeneration of the East," and baldly delineated his thesis that this aim could only be accomplished via the "humiliation of the Turkish power," via its "complete" subjugation to the "mercy of Christian Europe," and via the dismantling of the "supremacy of the Koran." Schaff admired American missionary work in the region but tacitly acknowledged its impotence as an agent of "regeneration." "Heretofore no Mohammedan has been allowed to change his religion without incurring the death penalty," he conceded.¹⁵⁷

Redemption on this trip came outdoors, in Galilee. Like all his American Protestant successor pilgrims, Schaff climbed to the emotional peak of his trip in Nazareth. The town, in his view, was less derelict than other settlements in the country, boasting a healthy population of somewhere between 4,000 and 8,000 souls. The population was poor, but this was suitable as a rough socioeconomic approximation of the state of Jesus's neighbors in his time. Overall, the town, in Schiff's eyes, "had a pleasing appearance." It had what contemporary scholars call "a sense of presence," meaning that enough remained

from its gospels-era past, and also that there was just enough “pleasing” serenity in its imperfect present, to afford communion with the spirit of Jesus.

Such immersion could only really be done outdoors—and what more perfect place for that than a Nazareth hilltop? Only when he reached this Nazareth summit in Galilee’s open spaces could the visitor find Christianity in its fullness, with Old Testament icons fusing in the Gospels, and the essential facts of Jesus’s life now remembered, and understood. Hiking up the Nazareth peak, Schaff apprehended a spiritual crossroads—the Jezreel Valley in the south, “the lofty Hermon” in the north—just as Jesus viewed them. Together in spirit, they were gazing at “the future highway of the gospel of peace to all mankind.” The surroundings sang memories of “David and Jonathan, Elijah and Elisha, and many a battle of Israel.”

“Explain it as you will,” exclaimed Schaff, “the astounding fact” was to be found where he was standing, on a Galilee hilltop, almost born anew. “Jesus of Nazareth is the central miracle of history.”¹⁵⁸

A generation later, Schaff’s preliminary exposition of American Protestantism’s open spaces ideology was fully developed by Henry van Dyke, in his appropriately titled *Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land* (1908). Because of its explicitness, van Dyke’s volume can be considered this American pilgrimage movement’s bedrock publication.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1852, van Dyke was somewhat more of an Americanized, worldly character than his predecessor, Schaff. For roughly the first quarter of the twentieth century, he was a literature professor at Princeton. In years preceding his Holy Land visit, he chaired a committee that published a ground-breaking liturgy for the Presbyterians. And a few years after his Holy Land book’s publication, he received an ambassadorial appointment from Woodrow Wilson.¹⁵⁹

“To us, who are seeking our Holy Land out-of-doors, these shut-in shrines and altered memorials are less significant than what we find in the open, among the streets and on the surrounding hillsides,” wrote van Dyke.¹⁶⁰ Jerusalem, he confided, “was never Christ’s city.” A city of “confusion, shallow curiosity, self-interest and clashing prejudices,” Jerusalem had not changed since Jesus’s day. On this spiritual itinerary, the American Protestant left Jerusalem behind him and journeyed to Galilee:

It was not here [Jerusalem] that Jesus found the men and women who believed in Him and loved Him, but in the quiet villages, among the green fields, by the peaceful lake-shores. And it is not here that we shall find the clearest traces, the most intimate visions of Him, but away in the big out-of-doors, where the sky opens free above us, and the landscapes roll away to far horizons.¹⁶¹

Nazareth, van Dyke testified, “is distinctly the most attractive little city we have seen in Palestine.” Under Ottoman rule, the town was unique in its avoidance of crowded space, commercialization, and contrived religiosity. With their red-tiled roofs, houses in Nazareth were “spread out over a wider area than is usual in the East”; the town’s streets were “cleaner,” its bazaars “lighter and less malodorous.” Van Dyke continued: “I do not mean to say that Nazareth appears to us an earthly paradise; only that it shines by contrast with places like Hebron and Jericho and Nablus, even with Bethlehem, and that we find here far less of human squalor and misery to sadden us with thoughts of ‘What man has made of man.’”¹⁶²

Thirty years after Schaff, this American Protestant pilgrim found comparable inspiration in Galilee, but he did not view the region as a platform for a spiritually satisfying synthesis of the Old Testament and New Testament. As though symbolizing mainline Protestantism’s departure from its roots in heavily Hebraic Puritan culture, the cherished open spaces of Galilee in van Dyke’s journey belonged to the New Testament. “Going from Samaria into Galilee is like passing from the Old Testament to the New,” he proclaimed. For him, “walking in the footsteps of Jesus” in Galilee was done to the supersession beat of the Gospel of Matthew. The Hebrew Bible was associated in his mind with warfare, whereas the gospels annunciated peace; and the moral geography of his pilgrimage was cut and boxed by these coordinates. Before entering Galilee, he recorded, “we have been riding with fierce warriors and proud kings and fiery prophets of Israel . . . retracing the warpaths of the Twelve Tribes.” However, when entering Galilee, “the keynote of our thoughts is modulated into peace. Issachar and Zebulon and Asher and Naphtali have left no trace or message for us on the plains and hills where they once lived and fought.”¹⁶³ Without using the loaded phrase, he was effectively positioning himself in Galilee of the Gentiles.

Climbing up the same Nazareth summit that had thrilled Schaff, van Dyke articulated the same “sense of presence,” a sense of being born anew in Galilean open spaces. His view from the same spot is pointedly devoid of signs of Jesus’s Jewish surroundings. In the following quotation, the incidental reference to “slow files of Jewish pilgrims” from the Jezreel Valley drowns away amid allusions to other peoples. In a way, this passing reference reflects van Dyke’s dispositional inability to view the Jews as an agency of Holy Land regeneration and renewal (the year his book was published, Zionist planners and “Second Aliyah” pioneers were gathering in Jaffa, preparing to establish landmark communal settlements in Galilee). As van Dyke saw it, the panoramic view from the hilltop of Jesus’s youth was not a window to worldly realities, past or present. Instead, it was a horizon to a

“spirit world” where there is no weariness, sin, or death. Arguably, this open spaces approach to Holy Land pilgrimage aspired to a purely introspective theology. Van Dyke and the other American Protestant outdoorsman did not flee the inauthentic spirituality of Jerusalem in the expectation of finding a religious alternative in Galilee’s actual corporeal reaches. Instead the open spaces of Galilee inspired them to commune in the inner “spirit world” of Jesus’s experience. This was one solution to Protestantism’s abiding dilemma of presence: you went to Christian history’s most hallowed open space, in Galilee, in order to negate physical presence altogether, and find your way to Jesus’s inner spirit:

On this hilltop, I doubt not, the boy Jesus often filled His hands with flowers. Here He could watch the creeping caravans of Arabian merchants, and the glittering legions of Roman soldiers, and the slow files of Jewish pilgrims, coming up from the Valley of Jezreel and stretching out across the Plain of Esdraelon.



Figure 3.1 Open Spaces Illustration of Mary’s Well, Nazareth. Source: From Henry van Dyke, *Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land*, 232.

He saw far beyond the horizon into the spirit-world, where there is no night, nor weariness, nor sin, nor death.¹⁶⁴

Moving away from van Dyke's memoir and jumping ahead another generation into the future, to the year 1927, to the interwar period when possession of Palestine had passed from the Turks to the British, we find that the open spaces approach of liberal American Protestantism remained strongly intact.

To be sure, much in world religious-political culture had changed when Harry Emerson Fosdick, formally a Baptist pastor, visited Mandatory Palestine at the height of the Roaring Twenties. The contrast his situation affords with our first outdoors pilgrim Schaff, who emerged out of postbellum-Reconstruction culture, is striking. When Schaff climbed Galilee mountaintops upon which Jesus had reportedly blessed the peacemakers, he was touring the Holy Land in the aftermath of a ghastly war that had an unimpeachable moral purpose. In contrast, Fosdick, chastened by a WWI experience of service as a chaplain in France, and drawn in the 1920s toward pacifism, visited Palestine on the heels of yet more lugubrious war whose moral purpose, quite unlike the Civil War, was indefinite. An altered view of war, and of its place in the past of the Holy Land, is visibly inscribed on the pages of Fosdick's 1927 travel memoir, *A Pilgrimage to Palestine*.

Another difference derives from the history of Protestantism's interaction with American capitalism. Of the three travel reports we are surveying in this section, van Dyke's 1908 text most clearly enunciates an anti-materialist position, layering it upon the author's communion experience with Jesus on the Nazareth hilltop, not far from where he announced that the Kingdom of Heaven was open to the poor. In 1908, as Progressives in America berated the corrupt legacies of the much tarnished Gilded Age, a Protestant pilgrim headed for the Holy Land might well have left America with doubts and questions about materialism at the forefront of his mind. Van Dyke's yearning in Galilee for the non-corporeal realm of Jesus's spirit world can be seen in this connection. Before him, Schaff might have viewed capitalist recovery in the Reconstruction era in a different spirit, as a reward for the just triumph of the anti-slavery crusade. At any event, Schaff's 1878 open spaces approach seems more comfortably accommodated to natural realities in Galilee and to actual physical traces of Jesus's time. Similarly, Fosdick's 1927 reports, written at the height of the Roaring Twenties when America was peppered optimistically by post-war prosperity, mostly lack the anti-materialist twist which van Dyke put to the open spaces philosophy.

To some extent, Fosdick's attitude on the materiality of presence must have been shaped by his career biography. Toward the end of the 1920s, his professional situation was in transition, shadowed by the notoriety he accrued after delivering his blistering, pro-modernism, sermon, *Shall the Fundamentalists*

Win? Pre-empting the likely outcome of a Presbyterian investigatory witch-hunt, Fosdick resigned from the First Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. At the time of his 1927 pilgrimage, he was reformatting professionally under Baptist auspices, at the Park Avenue Baptist Church; and then, after his return from Mandatory Palestine, he became a Protestant figure of note at the interdenominational Riverside Church. An outspoken activist in the 1930s, celebrated for his denunciation of racism, Fosdick won a lasting liberal reputation (Martin Luther King called him the century's foremost preacher¹⁶⁵). During his pivotal late 1920's career transition, Fosdick's main patron was John D. Rockefeller, a circumstance which must have impacted how he related publicly to issues posed by American capitalism.

A final difference separating Fosdick's *Holy Land* memoir from its two predecessors is that Zionism, enjoying unprecedented diplomatic support after the issuance, a decade earlier, of the Balfour Declaration, had an unmistakable and unavoidable presence in Palestine when this American visited the country in 1927. Unlike his two predecessors, Fosdick was forced by this new circumstance to consider whether Jews, via Zionism, would be the agent of the Holy Land's regeneration. Whatever position he chose to adopt in this connection was bound to be controversial.

Despite these major changes in circumstances that unfolded over a half century, from 1877 to 1927, the open spaces approach remained fundamentally intact. Fosdick could not have more emphatically underscored its durability. "One impression stands out clearly about Palestine," he declared. "It is only the out-of-doors that matters much. Almost everything that men have put under a roof they have spoiled for the intelligent visitor."¹⁶⁶ British rule had immeasurably improved conditions in Palestine's domiciled space, this American visitor conceded ("The conditions as to sanitation are infinitely better under British rule than they have ever been before."¹⁶⁷ This did not, however, modify the imperative to stay outdoors: "Nothing in Palestine under a roof is much worth seeing and nothing in Palestine out of doors is not worth seeing."¹⁶⁸

Fosdick was saying that though the British were cleaning up closed spaces in the country, they were still not worth visiting. This implied that the open spaces approach was not, in the final instance, empirical. It was a modernist theological principle. The British could have mopped the floors of holy sites in Jerusalem and kicked some of the monks out of them, but it would not have made a whit of difference to this American Baptist pastor. The problem, for him, was that tourism based on anyone's authentication of some specific space as the site where, centuries earlier, something sacred had transpired, was too literalist, and an insult to the "intelligent visitor." Such supposed verification warped wondrous space in the Holy Land the same way the fundamentalists perverted the meaning of scripture by insisting that particular

words in it could only be read only one, authenticated and canonized, way. In short, the problem, for Fosdick, was still “presence”—but he was looking at the issue through a highly polemicized prism of modernism. And he was camping out in Galilee’s open spaces in declared warfare against the occlusive rooftops and closed-off spaces of fundamentalist homesteads, in Palestine and, no less importantly, America.

Other types of warfare were roundly objectionable to Fosdick. His travel memoir is forthrightly supersessionist in its pronouncement about how Old Testament morality has lost its grip in the Holy Land. Fosdick’s explication of this position combines pacifism and evolutionism. The ancient religion of the Israelites, he says repeatedly, is outdated and bellicose. Exorcizing the Old Testament from his contemporary Holy Land, Fosdick announced: “I do not see how anyone who on the ground thinks the matter through can be tempted to identify the God who was supposed to order, superintend, and bless all this with the God revealed in the greatest of the Hebrew prophets.” That Hebrew God belonged, morally, to another, uncivilized era: “The Hebrews, with their tribal god who stood for them against all others and backed them up in any assault and battery upon another folk, shared the current theology of all ancient nations.” In fact, the sword clutching supreme god of Egypt, Amon-Re, was akin to the God of the ancient Hebrews.¹⁶⁹ The proof of the primitive character of Israelite religion is to be found in the bloodthirsty way Joshua and his men “invaded” Palestine, wrote Fosdick. “In the tenth chapter of Joshua alone one reads seven times, repeated in varying form, the dire refrain: ‘He sacked the place and massacred all within it, leaving not a single soul alive.’” The only justification Fosdick could find for the belligerent morals of these Hebraic “tribesmen” was evolutionist. “They were true to the ethics of their time and race.”¹⁷⁰

The supersession strands in Fosdick’s outlook, and his post-WWI pacifism, cross-fertilized. Old Testament morality had no compelling presence in 1920’s Mandatory Palestine because the Israelites had savagely conquered Canaan and thereby forfeited any measure of ethical probity. Beyond its attachment to an exhausted and disenchanted 1920’s “lost generation” culture of pacifism, where, specifically, did Fosdick’s way of thinking about the Holy Land’s past and present come from?

One interesting, recently published, theory posits that an iconoclastic American Zionist, and former Reform rabbi, Judah Magnes, caught Fosdick’s ear on this 1927 visit. Magnes, on this hypothesis, persuaded Fosdick to disavow the conventional Zionist position favoring Jewish statehood in Palestine, and instead support a “binational” alternative of Jewish-Arab power-sharing in a state belonging to both of them.¹⁷¹ Judah Magnes was an arrestingly charismatic figure who had an uncanny knack of retaining support of American Jewish leaders, well-heeled bankers and lawyers who

detested his radical political positions. After his migration to Palestine in the early 1920s, Magnes climbed to the top spot of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a new and exciting institutional development in the Yishuv. Unlike Fosdick, Magnes had stood his ground in America as a pacifist during WWI and paid a steep price for this uncompromising and courageous moral stand.¹⁷² Hence, in the mind-set of religious figures in New York City who became radicalized in the WWI and interwar era, Magnes had a kind street credibility which might have beguiled Fosdick. Magnes did not become active politically in Mandatory Palestine until the eruption of Jewish-Arab conflict in 1929 riots (thereafter, in the 1930s, desperate to avoid Arab-Jewish warfare, Magnes maddened David Ben-Gurion and other leaders of the Jewish Agency, the Yishuv's paramount political entity, by forwarding proposals for compromise on key Zionist issues of immigration rights and land acquisition). In response to those 1929 riots, Magnes issued the most important statement of his unusual Zionist approach in a pamphlet called *Like All the Nations?*;¹⁷³ and this publication is filled with condemnatory accusations against mainstream Zionism, which, Magnes thought, was developing a "Joshua Method" of conquering Palestinians and achieving statehood through warfare, à la the Book of Joshua.¹⁷⁴ Two years before the publication of this booklet, it is quite likely that Magnes referred to this Joshua Method analogy in conversations with the American Protestant visitor, and strengthened Fosdick's pacifist approach to Palestine affairs, past, present, and future.

Fosdick's outlook regarding the present and future of Palestine affairs cannot be explained solely by this connection with a renegade American Zionist, however. In the last chapter of his travel memoir, entitled "Palestine Tomorrow," the liberal minister recalled two impactful discussions he staged in Jerusalem, one in a humble Muslim home during the Ramadan holiday, the other with "aristocratic Arabs of the ruling class," apparently including Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem. The conversations convinced Fosdick that the Palestine situation is "loaded with dynamite." His interlocutors swore that "they would fight before they would suffer the supersession of their culture." A push for sovereignty by the "enlisted Zionism of Palestine," they vowed, would cause "all Islam" in Syria, Arabia, and Egypt to take up arms in support of Palestinian Arabs.¹⁷⁵

Meantime, Fosdick's observations of Zionists at work in embryonic kibbutz settlements in the Jezreel Valley and Galilee left him ambivalent. Describing one such colony, he professed sincere admiration for its "communal nurseries and schools," its "trained nurses" and "scientific methods"; and he generalized in a positive vein, calling the settlers a "brave, industrious, venturesome group of pioneers who here have struck in their roots." On the other hand, Fosdick critiqued the fledgling kibbutz movement for its

communistic property-sharing and irreligious ways; he dropped light sarcastic remarks about how “a crude picture of Karl Marx” hanging in the settlement’s dining hall represented “the patron saint of these modern Jews from Russia.” How “strange a coincidence,” mused the American visitor, to find “Karl Marx looking down on the site of Naboth’s vineyard.”¹⁷⁶

All told, Fosdick was far from resolved about Zionism serving as an agency of Holy Land regeneration (in fact, he remained poignantly confused about the issue in the fateful, post-WWII years, lending his name to anti-Zionist organizations but insisting that he was not an anti-Zionist).¹⁷⁷ The reasons for this exceed his connections with any single American Jewish individual; they include his strong impression of Palestinian resistance to Zionism, and his skepticism about whether pioneering Zionism would advance the country in a manner suited to his American and Protestant temperament. However, more than anything, his doubts about Zionism’s “Joshua Method,” like his pacifism in general, furrowed back to the abiding issue in American Protestant pilgrimage in the Holy Land, namely, that of “presence.” Fosdick had been influenced by WWI in a troubling, embittering fashion that is hard to compare to other experiences that shaped his predecessors in this open spaces movement; nonetheless, these Protestant colleagues might have, loosely, agreed with Fosdick’s position. They all faced the same predicament of presence. If the spirit of Jesus could be found anywhere, how could it be justifiable to spill blood to gain possession of any specific place?

American Protestants were fond of calling the Holy Land the “fifth gospel.” This evocative term suggested that the country’s retention of sites connected to Jesus’s life was an additional, physical attestation of his divinity, supplementing the four written gospel documentations of it in the New Testament. Schaff, for example, averred that “Palestine has not inaptly been called the fifth Gospel,” and similar usage of this stirring phrase was made by operators of the Holy Land stereoscope display.¹⁷⁸ For the phrase to remain sensible, its user had to believe that meaningful, sacred spots in the country had remained intact throughout two millennia and were viably identifiable. If truth be told, much in the outlook of these American Protestants militated against these premises of sacred landscape durability and identifiability. Nonetheless the term aptly fits these American pilgrims and was adopted by them. The term is even applicable to the travel testimony delivered by Fosdick, who was probably the most secularized figure in this group, as well as the most bitingly outspoken detractor of any designated holy site in the country that was closed and under a roof.

In Galilee, Fosdick too thrilled over the opportunity to commune with Jesus in open spaces; but for him, more than his predecessors, it was critical that key parts of the region’s landscape and culture had not significantly changed since the time of Jesus’s mission. Fosdick in 1927 confronted a genuine

scenario whereby Palestine might develop relatively quickly in decades to come, whereas his predecessors were enthralled by the Orientalist premise holding that the country had been in the throes of stagnation for centuries and would likely remain that way over the next century. Precisely for this reason, Fosdick worried about the country's future, and wondered whether progress could come to it at the behest of a non-Christian agent of change. For Schaff, what soon came to be called Zionism was a laughing matter ("Montefiore and Rothschild ought to buy Palestine"), whereas for Fosdick, Zionism was anything but that. Anxious about the country's future, Fosdick was soothed to think about its present and past as a static, immutable entity, in fact, as the fifth gospel.

Fosdick participated in the same cult of Nazareth that had been observed in the visits and writings of his American Protestant forerunners. Unlike them, however, he did not have to climb above the town, so as to find a panorama vista conducive of communion with Jesus. This is because everywhere, in Nazareth, he was seeing what Jesus had seen. "So little have village houses changed that many a residence in Nazareth would remind him [Jesus] of the home he lived in," swooned Fosdick. But it was not just the mud-brick domiciles: "many a custom and conversation in the family would be familiar to the returning Jesus now." In Nazareth, Fosdick put the fifth gospel in a cultural frame, declaring: "The ideas of this singularly static land persist with little change across the centuries."¹⁷⁹

He proceeded to relay a telling anecdote about the chauffeur who drove him to Nazareth. Despite "the modernity of this locomotion, [the driver] told us a story of his mother than might have come from the Bible," he related. In precis, this Nazareth woman imagined that she had spoken with God and received annunciated confirmation of her ardent desire to have a son. For Fosdick, this story confirmed that he was touring in the same Galilee culture where the miracles of the Jesus story had occurred. "That Gabriel had told a woman like Mary that a man child was to come would not sound strange to a family in Nazareth today," the American concluded.¹⁸⁰

Arguably, the chauffeur's story pointed to a secularized interpretation wherein the events of Jesus's life were symptomatic of local culture and not the products of supernatural mystery. Fosdick, in other words, seemed to be demystifying Galilee while concurrently having a genuine spiritual experience in it, reaching out to Jesus. It sufficed that he loved Jesus and had found outdoor space, and even roofed dwellings, in Galilee comparable to what Jesus had known. Tempered in some way by the roaring materialism and mundanity of America in this decade, in 1920's Mandatory Palestine the fifth gospel was not so much attestation of divinity, as it was an affirmation of the right to seek, and perhaps find, presence.

THE OPEN SPACES IDEOLOGY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The American Protestant open spaces movement rubbed against the grain of history, in two broad contexts, one American, the other Jewish. In American cultural terms, the outdoors approach can be seen as a “frontier” ideology; and it developed in a period when this richly fraught term, frontier, had prominence in American self-understanding. In the Holy Land, the American Protestants essentially reversed the way which historian Frederick Jackson Turner famously evoked the concept. These Protestants went to Ottoman and British Palestine in search of an outdoors frontier which suspended time and stalled cultural transformation. Their frontier was a holy Galilee landscape where “nothing” (in Fosdick’s rather over-worked vision) had changed since Jesus’s time, or at least where something, fleetingly visible from a Nazareth hilltop, had been preserved from the ravages of historical change, and allowed a gateway for companionship with Jesus. Turner, of course, thought otherwise of the frontier, viewing it as a temporal and a transformative force which had obliterated the European backgrounds of the migrants who headed westward in nineteenth century America. For Turner, the frontier turned this Old World diversity of social exhaustion into a New World cultural union of moral, patriotic vigor. The American Protestants were therefore positioned iconoclastically in Galilee open spaces. They viewed them as a non-temporal frontier.

In the Jewish context as well, these open spaces Protestants also seemed to be swimming against the tide. Their faith in the Christianization of the Holy Land, which lasted through this half century (constituting one of the several factors which complicated Fosdick’s outlook on Zionism), was rankly quixotic. Nothing in the nineteenth century history of American (or European) missionary work in the Near East indicated that it had really gained traction. True, as one recent history concedes, the work of American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions in the Middle East yielded some “unanticipated consequences” in educational, political, and other spheres; but overall, it constituted an “American tragedy,” a “futile quest to graft a bold but uncompromising American puritanism on an implacably multi-religious world.”¹⁸¹ Likewise, nothing in the pre-WWI history of American foreign policy indicated that these Protestants were supported by a home government committed to regime change in the Near East—in fact, the United States maintained neutrality vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire through WWI. Thus, up to a decade before Fosdick’s 1927 report, these Americans had no reason for hope that Ottoman restrictions on conversion work would disappear; and then the imposition of Western-Christian rule in the country, via the British mandate, brought to the fore a non-Christian agent of change in the Holy Land, Zionism. This is all to say that the American Protestants were not thinking realistically about the “Regeneration

of the Holy Land” throughout this half century, even though they all wrote about the subject at length in their travel memoirs.

With such broad considerations in mind, we return, in conclusion, to our original question, in an attempt to identify how the impact of American Protestantism’s open spaces movement is significant in Jewish and American political-cultural contexts, despite this phenomenon’s evident idiosyncratic aspects.

Liberal American Protestantism’s engagement with pre-1948 Palestine was not footed in philo-Semitism. Nor did it necessarily have anything to do with anti-Semitism. The open spaces version of Holy Land pilgrimage evolved because a cadre of second and third generation Americans, articulate figures who grew up in antebellum culture and who were shaped formatively by the Civil War, felt cramped and closed-off in the Calvinist homes of their childhood. The founding Protestantism of America’s Republic, particularly its deterministic grounding in Calvinist ideas such as predestination, did not fit the expansive potential and realities of the country’s frontier geography and booming economy. For these optimistic liberals, the closed-off emotional space in the country’s Puritan founding culture untowardly constricted their sense of free will and opportunity, just as Calvinist determinism had doubtful utility when these men and women took up the cudgel in a laudable moral crusade against the abomination of slavery. These trends in notable New England families, which are brilliantly elucidated in Debby Applegate’s biography of Henry Ward Beecher, point to one inescapable conclusion: by the end of the antebellum era, the Hebraic strands of America’s founding, Puritan, culture, were wearing quite thin, especially in what would be called today the “progressive” circles of American Christianity. From a logistical standpoint, as luck would have it, this 1840s–1850s era is precisely when Holy Land pilgrimage became relatively feasible, at least for well-established elites in the country’s majority.

From such a weld of cultural and technical circumstances, many articulate, influential Protestants made their way to Ottoman Palestine after the Civil War, and they were disposed to look for Jesus in the New Testament frontier of the Holy Land, in Galilee. They ignored the land’s Old Testament sites, or, not infrequently, they were vocally vituperative about them. There is no long-term cultural association between Holy Land oriented Hebraism, or Christian Zionism, and liberal Protestantism in America.

Circulating in the high letters tradition of American cultural criticism, preceding the culture wars tumult of the late twentieth century, there was an assumption regarding the Hebraic, Old Testament enthusiasms of the democracy’s Puritan founders. It was assumed that these enthusiasms carried on among their sons and daughters in the nineteenth century, bequeathing a legacy of philo-Semitism which necessarily softened the way these children

related to issues of acute sensitivity for Christians and Jews. For example, Edmund Wilson, himself a philo-Semite and a critic who always wrote well, wrote well but misleadingly about the Beecher family, foisting upon it precisely this assumption.¹⁸²

It is not really true. Henry Ward Beecher's 1871 biography, *The Life Jesus, the Christ* is, in many ways, an appealing book, and its author's endearing charisma is well imprinted on its pages. However, the book takes a very "hard" view of important Jewish players in Jesus's story, depicting, in paraphrase, the Pharisees with the same prejudice that is displayed in the Book of Matthew—in both texts, the cruel formalism and rigidity of the Pharisees is seen as being emblematic of a spiritual obtuseness and narrow provincialism in Second Temple era Jewish culture from which a new religion had to liberate itself. If anything, in a case like Henry Ward Beecher, Protestant attitudes on sensitive issues involving Jews *hardened* in years leading up to the Civil War ("Beecher's Bibles," it will be recalled, referred to rifles used by slavery opponents in 1850s, in bleeding Kansas; and, I think, readers of his 1871 Jesus biography will sense a still simmering militancy in its author's attitude toward moral enemies, as in passages written about Jesus's Pharisee antagonists¹⁸³).

This, however, does not mean that this open spaces school of American Protestants indulged anti-Semitism. In the scholarly literature, just one figure who can be affiliated with this school, Selah Merrill, who served, with interruptions, as American Consul in Jerusalem between 1882 and 1907,¹⁸⁴ has been identified as an anti-Semite.¹⁸⁵ An interesting but controversy-ridden character, Merrill was an ordained Congregational minister. He was born in a northwest Connecticut quadrant that is studded with birthplaces of nineteenth century Yankee demiurges of Protestant modernization, Biblical Geography, and abolitionism.¹⁸⁶ In the last months of the Civil War, he served as chaplain of a black regiment (the 49th). A decade later, Merrill held a post as Hebrew instructor at Andover Theological Seminary, a position formerly held by, among other distinguished American Hebraists, Edward Robinson, the Biblical geographer whom Merrill emulated.

Merrill's true passion was Holy Land exploration, particularly pertaining to its Second Temple history, and the country's flora and fauna. Not gifted as an archaeologist, he nonetheless published widely in this archaeological sphere, and in related Holy Land areas. Merrill held together for a time the American Palestine Exploration Society, and he compiled impressive collections of history texts (including one devoted to Josephus), natural specimens, and archaeological artifacts of sufficient value to stimulate various posthumous archival turf wars.¹⁸⁷

In all likelihood, Merrill's disdainful attitude toward pious Orthodox Jews of the Old Yishuv was not qualitatively unlike those imprinted in

American Protestant travel memoirs we have surveyed. The difference is that Merrill held consular responsibilities toward Holy Land Jews he disrespected; and this antagonism was aggravated by diplomatic circumstances in this Ottoman context whereby unprotected local minorities had strong incentive to seek foreign diplomatic protection, despite their evident lack of roots in the national cultures of whose consulates to which they turned for help (Merrill, in other words, was called upon to proffer consulate aid to Jews whom he in no way considered to be Americans). It is hard to ascertain Merrill's level, or lack, of consular conscientiousness toward Jews, or toward other groups or issues (there are reports that he played loose with protocol by using the consulate's certificatory stamp in private business initiatives¹⁸⁸). What earns him opprobrium as an anti-Semite is the comparison to other American consuls in Jerusalem in this period who were helpful, rather than obstructive, toward Jews, particularly Henry Gillman, who won admiration in the Yishuv during his 1886–1891 term for opposing Ottoman expulsion orders against Jews.¹⁸⁹

Selah Merrill was a Galilee enthusiast. The 1885 booklet he wrote on the subject, *Galilee in the Time of Christ*,¹⁹⁰ is notable for its historical, rather than spiritual, character. In fact, it is worshipful of Josephus, not Jesus, and provocatively protective of the Roman-Jewish historian's work. The booklet's eye-popping section betrays a kind of secularized fundamentalism, insisting, improbably, that every word Josephus wrote about Galilee must be true. Knowing that he was in combat with common sense, Merrill contrived ingenious arguments in defense of Josephus's estimate of three million inhabitants in first century Galilee. The booklet's embattled literalism is exemplified by the chapter title of this section: "Josephus' Statement as to the Number of Towns and Inhabitants Probably Correct."¹⁹¹

As William Foxwell Albright, an important Near East archaeologist, suggested, Merrill's dogmatism about written reports was a factor hindering his success in Biblical Geography (his lack of training was another);¹⁹² and obstinacy in Merrill's temperament surely did not enhance his consulate work, toward Jews or others. But the literalism in his Galilee study warrants mention for another reason: as a Protestant minister, explorer, and diplomat in late Ottoman Palestine, Merrill personifies incipient stages of American Christianity's modernist-fundamentalist dilemma, and he presages its post-WWI eruption. True, he was skittish about literalism—Merrill was a strict constructionist about Josephus, but he detested evangelical-fundamentalist readings of scripture—but this inconsistency poignantly reflects the dilemma. As it turns out, his failing as a diplomat was not anti-Semitism, but rather his confused, extremist behavior on this fundamentalist-modernist axis.

Merrill's downfall in the consulate came as a result of his rank hatred for the messianic evangelism brought to Jerusalem's American Colony by Horatio and Anna Spafford from Chicago.¹⁹³ The Spaffords were premillennial evangelists whose extremism had, in America, compelled the Presbyterian Church to terminate their membership.¹⁹⁴ Essentially, these American Colony pioneers were precursors of apocalyptic evangelists like John Hagee whose Trump-era intervention in Jerusalem politics stirs considerable uneasiness in American liberal circles.¹⁹⁵ So, in theory, Merrill's standoff with the American Colony can be seen as an early round in an ongoing battle within American Protestantism about ways of approaching and apprehending the Holy Land, and the consul was taking a stand against evangelical, premillennial, extremism. But Merrill's behavior toward the American Colony was hard-hearted, nasty, and impolitic. However exaggerated their supernaturalism might have been, the Spaffords had endured much-publicized personal tragedies, and Horatio was the author of a beloved Christian hymn, "It is Well With My Soul." Merrill's anti-evangelical crusade had bad optics (at one point, the archaeology enthusiast exhumed and shoved aside the deceased Horatio's remains, and was caught, practically with shovel in hand). And from a literary standpoint, the odds were stacked against him. The daughter of the colony founders, Bertha Spafford, was a talented memoirist who disclosed Merrill's ugly acts;¹⁹⁶ and to make matters worse, a future Nobel Prize laureate, Selma Lagerlof, spent some time with the Swedish evangelicals who had taken residence in the Colony, and, in 1901–1902, she published a novel, *Jerusalem*, sympathetic to the Spaffords and their Swedish evangelical comrades. In 1907, the State Department shuttled the querulous Merrill off to the consulate in British Guiana, where he lasted just several months.

Hence the American Protestant in this late nineteenth century Holy Land context who is most vulnerable to charges of anti-Semitism was actually preoccupied by another issue altogether. Merrill was hell-bent in opposition to American evangelicals who believed in the imminence of heaven on earth, and he was an intemperate character; but what most engaged him, the basic issue of loose or rigid approaches to sacred space and sacred print, is what also dominated the visits and writings of better composed American Protestants who engaged with the Holy Land in this period. The cardinal problem for them was not Jews, past or present. Instead, it was the way America packaged modernity, as a non-bordered open space leading relentlessly to secularism.

Then and now, for Protestants of all stripes, liberal or evangelical, the Holy Land is a testing ground for possible solutions to the problem of modernity they face in America. Ottoman and British Mandatory Palestine, and Israel,

constitute background, but the real battlefield is always a Made-in-America match between fundamentalism and modernism.

Through the 1920s, Galilee and its open spaces became, for liberal American Protestants, an offshore accessory useful in this standoff with fundamentalism in America. These Protestant liberals walked in Jesus's footsteps in Galilee because they worried that taking the modernist stance too far would be to fall off the ledge, into secularism.

Galilee provided a middle ground in a vexing debate about presence. Over and over, Protestant visitors in Jerusalem were saying that the official designation of sacred sites in the holy city did not matter, which was another way of saying that Jesus could be found anywhere. This sounded fine as a theological precept; but, in the minds and hearts of Christians who yearned for Jesus, but had not quite found him, it was a tepid and distant principle. Naturally, if you wanted to find Jesus, the best bet was to walk in his footsteps, treading where he was from. Looked at this way, the fifth gospel ideology was fashioned out of American common sense pragmatism, along with genuine spiritual need.

Still, a pilgrim who was fastidious about where those footprints were to be found in Galilee ran the risk of recapitulating a cathedral-like idolatry of place reminiscent of Catholicism. Worse, from the standpoint of the Protestant liberal (particularly as anti-Catholic prejudice in America abated somewhat in the new twentieth century), such fastidiousness about sacred space sounded quite like fundamentalist rigidity about words of scripture. In an equation that only a twentieth century (or twenty-first century) American could fathom, the adoption of an overly reverential attitude about an existing shrine in Nazareth or Capernaum was tantamount to a concession to forces which did not want to teach evolution in public schools in America, which were pro-segregation, or which were conservatively resistant on women's rights issues.

Under the logic of this 1870's–1920's equation, the moderate-minded theology of open spaces in Galilee served broad purposes by strengthening the modernist's hand. An inspiring and successful pilgrimage in the Holy Land fortified a modernist who was embattled in sociopolitical crusades in America. In these ways, the creed and practice of open spaces in Galilee had an aim of protecting liberal diversity in America, along with the goal of attaining companionship with Jesus. With the gist of this logic extending into our own day, liberal Christians in America find it increasingly difficult to support the idolatry of space incorporated in Israel's settlement movement in Old Testament, post-1967, areas like Hebron. They also continue to report that Galilee, where Jews and Arabs live in an imperfect but nonetheless genuine democratic framework, is the place in the Holy Land where they have a sense of presence, and feel most at home.

NOTES

1. Some rather polemical surveys have been published regarding how Christian scholars might have produced subjective surveys of Second Temple period demography in Galilee, so as to suit particular theories of why Christianity broke from Judaism. Unlike our discussion here, these surveys do not amplify and explore relevant historical and cultural contexts. See Uriel Rappaport, *Yohanan mi-Gush ḥalav: me-hare ha-Galil el ḥomot Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2006), 125–42; Mark Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

2. Paul Rhodes Eddy and James K. Beilby, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus: An Introduction,” in Eddy and Beilby (eds.), *The Historical Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009).

3. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910).

4. *Ibid.*, 13–26.

5. Johannes Weiss, *Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1892/1971).

6. “In the light of the clear perception of the elements of the problem which Reimarus had attained, the whole movement of theology, down to Johannes Weiss, appears retrograde.” Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 23.

7. Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (London: Watts, 1935).

8. One interesting article analyzes how Schweitzer was reluctant to challenge explicitly Aryanized, anti-Semitic interpretations of the historical Jesus, despite his own liberal humanist outlook, his scholarly conclusions about Jesus’s own immersion in his Jewish context, and also his own personal circumstances (Schweitzer was married to a baptized Jew, and his father-in-law’s career had been inhibited by his Jewishness). See James Carleton Paget, “Albert Schweitzer and the Jews,” *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 107, no. 3 (2014), 363–98. This cogent analysis somewhat underplays the extent to which Schweitzer referred to Jewish thinkers, such as his parenthetical allusion to the French Jewish writer Joseph Salvador (Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 162), who advanced apologetic or creative theories about the historical Jesus. As in this Salvador example, Schweitzer sometimes partnered apologetic Jewish writers about Jesus with Christian theologians and writers who associated Jesus’s Jewishness with trickery (e.g., the “swoon thesis” about a staged resurrection, or various claims about Jesus, the Essenes and prestidigitation circulated by Karl Venturini). Schweitzer referred to Salvador and these gentile scholarly counterparts not due to genuine interest in the content of their claims, but rather because he thought that their work usefully compelled readers to think about the implications of Jesus’s Jewish life.

9. For the Lessing-Mendelssohn collaboration: Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973), 569–93; Shmuel Feiner, *Moses Mendelssohn* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 2006), 36–43.

10. Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews: From Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

11. Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

12. Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

13. *Ibid.*, 186–228.

14. Translated in English a few years later as Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1925).

15. Heschel, *Abraham*, 3–4.

16. Two representative studies in this connection: Richard Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1996); Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

17. Eddy and Beilby, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus,” 22.

18. *Ibid.*, 10.

19. *Ibid.*, 38–39. An oft turgid but nonetheless interesting effort to apply branches of culture studies, including communications theory, in discussion of Jesus’s life is Richard Horsley, *Jesus in Context: Power, People and Performance* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008). For archaeology: James Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006).

20. Eddy and Beilby, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus,” 47.

21. *Ibid.*, 48.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 263.

24. David Flusser (with R. Steven Notley), *The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus’ Genius* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 55–56.

25. For Neusner’s view about the proliferation of different sorts of Judaism in this period: M. M. Silver, *History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 24.

26. Witness how this scholar backtracks: “One of the stereotypes from studies about Galilee has been the claim that Galileans were not fully observant in regard to Torah. The real question, however, has to be, as Jacob Neusner pointed out in his review of my previous study, with whose version of what constituted *halakha* are they considered to be out of line.” Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus*, 198–199.

27. Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

28. John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), 146–147.

29. David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972).

30. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 85.

31. "It is not by any means meant that the whole history of Jesus is to be represented as mythical, but only that every part of it is to be subjected to a critical examination, to ascertain whether it have not some admixture of the mythical." Strauss, Preface to the First German Edition in *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, Li.

32. Ibid., Lii.

33. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 94, lauded Strauss for identifying the gospels' eschatological passages as their most authentic sections.

34. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 264–80.

35. Ibid., 265.

36. Ibid.

37. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 86–87.

38. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 267.

39. Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation*, 108.

40. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 397.

41. Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation*, 109.

42. Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, 136.

43. Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and its History in Two Parts* (New York: Block, 1911), 186.

44. Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, 36–37.

45. Ibid., 37.

46. Ibid., 38.

47. Ibid., 39.

48. Ibid., 38–39.

49. Ibid., 56.

50. Ibid., 43.

51. Ibid., 32.

52. Ibid., 42.

53. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 145–148, 231–234.

54. Renan (see, for instance, 88).

55. Ibid., 90.

56. Ibid., 45.

57. Ibid., 52.

58. Geiger, *Judaism and its History in Two Parts*, 129.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., 130.

61. Ibid.

62. This is Heschel's paraphrase of Geiger's position in an 1863 essay on the Sadducees and Pharisees. Heschel, *Abraham*, 100.

63. Geiger, *Judaism and its History in Two Parts*, 131.

64. Ibid., 130.

65. Ibid., 138.

66. Ibid., 134.

67. For overviews of the Ostjuden issue: Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Jack Wertheimer,

Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); M. M. Silver, *Bi-sheliḥut ha-Ma'arav: mabaṭ aḥer al ha-hiṣṭoryah ha-Yehudit ha-modernit* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2014).

68. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*; Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers*.

69. Heschel, *Abraham*, 79.

70. H. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. II (from the Reign of Hyrcanus to the completion of the Babylonian Talmud) (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1893), 148.

71. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 185–214.

72. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 149.

73. *Ibid.*, 152.

74. *Ibid.*, 161.

75. *Ibid.*

76. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 135.

77. Emil Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, 175 BC–AD135* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), vol. 1, 142. Schurer's judgment rested on a report in the Book of the Maccabees (I Mac 5:23) about how Jewish fighters needed to evacuate isolated Jewish populations from Galilee, despite the successful military campaigns in the region.

78. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 141–142.

79. *Ibid.*, 143.

80. *Ibid.*, 153.

81. *Ibid.*, 167.

82. *Ibid.*, 169.

83. *Ibid.*, 162.

84. *Ibid.*, 173.

85. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus*.

86. *Ibid.*, 54.

87. *Ibid.*, 54.

88. Crossan, *Jesus*, 66–70. The table fellowship and open commensality examples here reference Matthew and Luke, and the Gospel of Thomas, not Mark.

89. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus*, 96.

90. *Ibid.*, 109.

91. *Ibid.*, 142–143.

92. *Ibid.*, 143.

93. *Ibid.*, 161–162.

94. *Ibid.*, 159.

95. *Ibid.*, 190.

96. *Ibid.*, 208.

97. Reza Aslan, *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Random House, 2013).

98. Mark Silk, "Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America," *American Quarterly*, vol. 36 (Spring 1984), 65–85.

99. Prothero, *American Jesus*, 260; Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955).

100. Richard Horsley and John Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985).

101. Ibid., xiv.

102. Aslan, *Zealot*, 77.

103. Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs*, 76.

104. Ibid., 118.

105. Ibid., 57–63.

106. Ibid., 67.

107. Ibid., 216–41.

108. As in a section titled “The Brief and Limited Role of the Sicarii in the Jewish Revolt,” Ibid., 211–16.

109. A variation of this phenomenon can be found, historically, in the way American Jews related to pre-state Ottoman/British Palestine, and then to Israel, through 1967 at least. See Jonathan Sarna, “A Projection of America as It Ought to Be: Zion in the Mind’s Eye of American Jews,” in Allon Gal (ed.), *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews* (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 1991), 41–59.

110. Conrad Cherry (ed.), *God’s New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

111. Lester Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans in the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 96–123; A. L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800–1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966); A. L. Tibawi, *British Interests in Palestine, 1800–1901* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

112. Clorinda Minor, *Meshullam! Or, Tidings from Jerusalem* (New York: Arno Press, 1977/1851); Elizabeth Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn* (London: Morgan, Marshall and Scott, 1929).

113. Israeli author Amos Oz grew up near the site of Finn’s work project, Kerem Avraham, and wrote about it in his popular, fictionalized memoir, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*.

114. Edward Robinson and Eli Smith, *Biblical Researches in Palestine and in the Adjacent Regions: A Journal of Travels in the Year 1838* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1856). For a brief estimate of Robinson’s import: Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 190–4; a more detailed, recent evaluation is, Haim Goren, *The Loss of a Minute is Just so Much Loss of Life: Edward Robinson and Eli Smith in the Holy Land* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

115. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 199–203; Neil Asher Silberman, *Digging for God and Country: Exploration, Archeology and the Secret Struggle for the Holy Land, 1799–1917* (New York: Random House, 1982).

116. Ruth Kark, *American Consuls in the Holy Land, 1832–1914* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994).

117. Henry Ward Beecher, *The Life: Jesus, the Christ* (New York: J.B. Ford & Co, 1871).

118. Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

119. Prothero, *American Jesus*.

120. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*; Prothero, *American Jesus*; Stephanie Stidham Rogers, *Inventing the Holy Land: American Protestant Pilgrimage to Palestine, 1865–1941* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011); Hillary Kaell, *Walking Where Jesus Walked: American Christians and the Holy Land Pilgrimage* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).

121. Such studies include Prothero, *American Jesus*; Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*; Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion: Christians, Jews and the Idea of the Promised Land* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Yaakov Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel: American Fundamentalist Attitudes Towards Jews, Judaism and Zionism, 1865–1945* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1991); Caitlin Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals and Israel* (New York: NYU Press, 2012).

122. Kaell, *Walking Where Jesus Walked*, 138.

123. These figures are taken from Kaell, *Walking Where Jesus Walked*, 5–12.

124. Kaell calls these visitors “pilgrims,” relying on designations current in scholarship on tourism in religious areas (10–13); Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 6–10, who refers to an earlier period, classifies the phenomenon as “geopiety.” I prefer simpler nomenclature, partly because it coheres with the visitors’ own self-images (I have never heard anyone in Galilee call himself or herself a “pilgrim”).

125. All these figures are taken from Kaell, *Walking Where Jesus Walked*, 5–10.

126. Stidham Rodgers, *Inventing the Holy Land*, 41–2.

127. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Pilgrimage to Palestine* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), 245.

128. Henry Van Dyke, *Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908).

129. Kaell, *Walking Where Jesus Walked*, 77.

130. Horace Bushnell, *God in Christ: Three Discourses* (London: John Chapman, 1850).

131. Stidham Rodgers, *Inventing the Holy Land*, 136–40, alludes to suggestive examples, but seems not to connect the American Protestant “outdoors” approach to the modernism-fundamentalism debate.

132. Fosdick, *A Pilgrimage*.

133. Harry Emerson Fosdick, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” *Christian Work* 102 (June 10, 1922), 716–22.

134. Prothero, *American Jesus*, 28–32.

135. *Ibid.*, 30.

136. Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America*.

137. Peter Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America* (New York: Knopf, 1983); Shalom Goldman, *God’s Sacred Tongue: Hebrew and the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Michael Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007).

138. This process is well surveyed in Carenen, *Fervent Embrace*.

139. The rise of premillennial Evangelism in America is analyzed in Yaakov Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

140. John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World* (Lake Mary Florida: Front Line, 2006).

141. Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967–1977* (New York: Times Books, 2006); Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship*, 198–214.

142. Zev Chafets, *A Match Made in Heaven: American Jews, Christian Zionists and One Man's Exploration of the Weird and Wonderful Judeo-Evangelical Alliance* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007).

143. Kaell, *Walking Where Jesus Walked*, 129.

144. In recent decades, partly as a result of the disappointing failure of the Oslo Peace Process at the turn of the new millennium and the continuing, protracted character of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, there has been a minor explosion of scholarship which contests the idea that this shared US-Israel relationship originates out of shared religious culture. These volumes pivot on a plausible but debatable *political* premise holding that since the Middle East's most famous, ongoing dispute will remain insoluble, so long as Israel remains as a sovereign Jewish state, America's foreign policy is being insalubriously manipulated by an "Israel Lobby." See John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); Amy Kaplan, *Our American Israel: the Story of an Entangled Alliance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Shaul Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind: the Cultural Politics of US-Israel Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

I have written this section for readers who want to consider this issue from a *historical* standpoint, as opposed to a viewpoint framed mostly by contemporary (i.e., post-1967, or post-1948) politics. Without doubt, on this historical level, the "pro-Israel" camp is the dominant voice in scholarship, and has inculcated a widely held view that the US-Israel special relationship has deep roots in the Hebraic culture of America's founding by the Puritans, and is the result of an ongoing, rather monolithic, current of philo-Semitism in America. The few books [e.g., Regina Sharif, *Non-Jewish Zionism: Its Roots in Western History* (London: Zed Press, 1983)] that have wrestled critically with this prevailing view about the cultural "roots" of Israel's engagement with its precious few, long-standing, diplomatic friends, particularly America, tend toward shallow analysis of historical contexts, incorrectly conflate British and American philo-Semitism (phenomena that have substantive overlap, but, I think, nonetheless warrant separation as two distinct units), and are saturated by polemical anti-Zionism.

145. Stidham Rodgers, *Inventing the Holy Land*, 21–22.

146. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 41.

147. Kark, *American Consuls*, 28.

148. Quoted in Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 72.

149. Ibid., 10–13.
150. Ibid., 4–5.
151. Stidham Rodgers, *Inventing the Holy Land*, 7.
152. It bears mention that the figures surveyed here were chosen because of the identifiably theological character of their travel writing about Galilee, and the chronological arc they provide, each writing a generation after the other. Had the main criteria been a writer's impact in his own contemporary setting, other texts could have been used, for example, Thomas DeWitt Talmage's volume, *From Manger to Throne* (Philadelphia: Historical Publishing Company, 1889).
153. Philip Schaff, *Through Bible Lands* (London: Henderson, Bait and Fenton, 1878).
154. Ibid., 387.
155. Ibid., 231–234.
156. Ibid., 249–50, 355.
157. Ibid., 400–401.
158. Ibid., 320–321.
159. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_van_Dyke_Jr.
160. Van Dyke, *Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land*, 109.
161. Ibid., 35.
162. Ibid., 106–108.
163. Ibid., 104.
164. Ibid., 116.
165. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/fosdick-harry-emerson>
166. Fosdick, *A Pilgrimage*, 19–20.
167. Ibid., 99.
168. Ibid., 20.
169. Ibid., 80.
170. Ibid., 79.
171. Walker Robins, "Cultural Zionism and Binationalism Among Liberal American Protestants," *Israel Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2018), 142–67.
172. M.M. Silver, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America: A Biography* (Syracuse: University of Syracuse Press, 2014), 314–17.
173. Judah Magnes, *Like All the Nations?* (Jerusalem: Herod's Gate, 1930).
174. Ibid., 29.
175. Fosdick, *A Pilgrimage*, 283–285.
176. Ibid., 150–1.
177. Robins, "Cultural Zionism and Binationalism," 150.
178. Stidham Rodgers, *Inventing the Holy Land*, 12, 27, 72; Schaff, *Through Bible Lands*, 14–15.
179. Fosdick, *A Pilgrimage*, 176–178.
180. Ibid., 179.
181. Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 4.
182. Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 63–64.

183. Henry Ward Beecher, *The Life of Jesus The Christ* (New York: J.B. Ford and Company, 1871), 364–98.
184. Merrill's consular work is summarized in Kark, *American Consuls*, 323–6.
185. Shalom Goldman, "The Holy Land Appropriated: The Careers of Selah Merrill, Nineteenth Century Christian Hebraist, Palestine Explorer, and U.S. Consul in Jerusalem," *American Jewish History*, vol. 85, no. 2 (June 1997), 151–72.
186. These include Harriet Beecher Stowe and her brother Henry Ward Beecher, John Brown, Horace Bushnell, and Edward Robinson.
187. Goldman, "The Holy Land," 159–64.
188. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 183.
189. Kark, *American Consuls*, 327–328.
190. Selah Merrill, *Galilee in the Time of Christ* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1885).
191. *Ibid.*, 63.
192. Goldman, "The Holy Land," 161–2; Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 206.
193. This American Colony rivalry is described in Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 157–158; Goldman, "The Holy Land," 165–167.
194. Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship*, 104–108.
195. Michelle Goldberg, "A Grotesque Spectacle in Jerusalem," *The New York Times*, May 14, 2018.
196. B. Spafford Vester, *Our Jerusalem: An American Family in the Holy City, 1881–1949* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1950).

Chapter 4

Zionist Pioneering Galilee

THE FIRST ALIYAH

Zionist settlement in Galilee, and the country as a whole, preceded the formal organization of the Zionist movement by almost a generation. Theodor Herzl convened the First Zionist Congress in 1897, whereas Jewish pioneers from Rumania and Russia founded agricultural colonies in Galilee many years earlier, starting with Rosh Pina in 1882.

These pre-Herzliyan Zionists called themselves “Lovers of Zion” (*Hibat Zion* as the name of the movement, or *Hovevei Zion*, as its individual members). While elements of their vision and ideology can be traced at least to the mid-nineteenth century, and to thoughts and activities of several Ashkenazi Jews who were influenced by a European milieu saturated by 1848 era, Springtime of the Peoples, nationalism, these Jews founded their movement mainly in response to the wave of pogroms in southern reaches of Tsarist Russia which erupted after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881.¹

Religious Jews, as we have seen, had immigrated to Ottoman Palestine in small but significant clusters since the late eighteenth century; and schemes for organizing them in agricultural enterprises had floated around in the advocacy of Christian missionaries, western Jewish philanthropists, and various Jewish activists for decades before Rosh Pina, Yesud Hama’ala, Mishmar Hayarden, and Metula were established in the late nineteenth century in Upper Galilee. It would thus be misleading to present this Hibat Zion activity as a *sui generis* phenomenon. Nonetheless, in the history of Jewish attachments to Galilee, Hibat Zion’s post-1881 activity was transformative owing to its ethos of productive independence.

In Israeli historiography, the arrival of Hovevei Zion is known as the “First Aliyah” (“Aliyah” is a connotative Hebrew term describing ascent, either

specifically to the prayer rostrum in a synagogue to read the Torah, or in a general sense of spiritual elevation; in the Zionist context, this highly charged “Aliyah” term is used in reference to waves of Jewish nationalist immigration to Eretz Israel, starting in this 1880s period). This immigration wave involved largely Orthodox Jews whose mind-set and daily practices often bore a closer resemblance to pre-1881 Jewish settlers in the country than to secular Israelis in Tel Aviv or Haifa today. But the Hovevei Zion consciously distanced themselves from these pre-1880’s Jews in Galilee or other parts of the country in that their declared goal was to become established as agriculturally productive, non-dependent, pioneers.

They were not really thinking about laying the foundations of a Jewish state, but they were nonetheless a different group of immigrants. Specifically, these First Aliyah pioneers rebelled against what they regarded as the morally repugnant socioeconomic dependence of two key Jewish reference groups.

First, viewing anti-Semitism as an intractable and rapidly growing phenomenon, they distanced themselves from western Jews and semi-assimilated Russian Jews who had long waited for their host societies to “emancipate” them via the conferral of social and political rights. Such European Jews had pursued, or were pursuing, a futile and self-defeating agenda, these early Zionists argued. The cornerstone document of the Hibat Zion movement assumed that, in practical terms, Jewish emancipation on the European continent, west and east, was an illusion. This 1882 treatise written (in German) by a Russian-Jewish doctor, Leon Pinsker, was desperately pessimistic about the present and future of anti-Semitism; its title, *Auto-Emancipation*, aptly captured the spirit of Jewish self-liberation that animated the Hibat Zion movement (which Pinsker himself helped lead until his death in 1891).² As the 1880s progressed, Hibat Zion spokesmen supplemented this argument, claiming that even in western and central European milieus where Jews had received formal rights, they were rapidly losing their national and cultural identity as Jews. This perspective was incisively articulated in another aptly titled text, “Slavery in Freedom,” published in 1891 by Ahad Ha’am.³ This author, originally named Asher Ginsberg, notoriously published pungent criticisms of colonies planted on the ground by Hovevei Zion pioneers, but the spirit of his articles exerted enormous appeal among East European Jews who had formal or emotional associations with this embryonic Zionist movement.⁴ When Pinsker’s and Ahad Ha’am’s political and cultural approaches are combined, Hibat Zion’s program must be seen as having a prescient forecast of the dangers posed by modern anti-Semitism, and also as presenting a plausible and intriguing critique of Jewish assimilation in modern times. Hibat Zion, and the First Aliyah it sponsored, therefore constitute a significant turn in the course of

Modern Jewish History—unjustifiably, the Hovevei Zion are overlooked in most surveys of Zionism and Israel, whose incorrect starting point is Herzl's activity at the end of the nineteenth century.

Second, these new Jewish immigrants objected to the social system of Orthodox Jews who were already settled in Eretz Israel. They argued that this system boiled down to non-productive and insulting reliance upon charity funds, *halukah*, provided by overseas Jews. These Hovevei Zion, and their subsequent explicators, imagined that newly established colonies such as Rosh Pina or Metula belonged to an evolving "New Yishuv," a self-reliant and modernized Jewish community in Eretz Israel, rather than to the pre-1881 "Old Yishuv" whose members were sustained by the charitable pity of overseas Jews, and who lived non-productive lives of piety in anticipation of the coming of the messiah.

In recent decades, historians have adduced a number of cogent reasons to cast doubt on this normative opposition between presumably "non-productive" Jews of the pre-1881, Old Yishuv, as opposed to the state-building Zionists of the New Yishuv.⁵ Indeed, our analysis of Yishuv leadership and of the Galilean Jewish community's adaptive resilience in times of stress, such as the 1834 Palestinian uprising, reinforced important claims in this revision. Moreover (as we will see), oral history accounts of the founding of "New Yishuv" colonies in Upper Galilee such as Yesud Hama'ala confirm that the motivations of these First Aliyah settlers emanated from a traditional religious mentality which can be hard to separate from that of Orthodox Jews who had found their way to Galilee decades earlier. Also, careful analysis of capital recruitment processes and settlement techniques relevant to the First Aliyah colonies underscores how quickly they became dependent upon overseas philanthropic largesse, originally from the Rothschild family.⁶ Without becoming mired in pejorative and polemical connotations of the term "colonialism," the scholar Ran Aharonsohn has shown how this early Zionist settlement movement in the 1880s and 1890s shared key characteristics of other late nineteenth century initiatives in colonial settlement. His incisive analysis casts some doubt upon attributions of innovative originality which Zionist historiography has routinely affixed to the First Aliyah and to subsequent Aliyah immigration waves.⁷ Aharonsohn's research, and others' studies,⁸ raise important questions about how innovatively novel these Zionist pioneers on the early Aliyot might have been, compared to the Hasidic and Perushim settlers we have observed in the Yishuv in the century that elapsed between the 1770s and 1870s, and also compared to Jewish immigrants who settled in countries other than Ottoman Palestine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹ All this said, the First Aliyah nonetheless marked a turning point in Jewish history and in the modernization of Galilee.

PRODUCTIVITY OR PIETY?

Two anecdotes connected to the founding of the first two “New Yishuv” colonies in Upper Galilee illustrate how this Hibat Zion pioneering endeavor was conceptualized, both at the time and in retrospect, as the start of a new social system.

Rosh Pina’s establishment was brought about by Jews from the “Old Yishuv.” In May 1878, a group of Orthodox Jews from Safed attempted to set up their own agricultural colony, called Gei Oni, on the eastern slopes of Mount Kna’an, on 4,200 dunams of land they purchased for 550 liras from sellers representing the Arab village of al-Jauna. “All persons who are committed to the Yishuv’s welfare,” they proclaimed in the Hebrew journal *Ha-Tzfirah*, “know that attempts to heal its woes will be in vain, unless we ourselves awaken and labor in workplaces.” Using the Hebrew term, *halutz*, for frontier settler which would later become the standard reference for Zionist pioneering, the thirty Gei Oni homesteaders vowed “to appear before our brothers like halutzim, each one of us earnestly putting his shoulder to all labor tasks, in the fields and vines.”¹⁰ This ground-breaking experiment in Yishuv pioneering was spearheaded by Eliezer Rokach, the grandson of Israel Bak, the aforementioned, intrepid Hebrew printer who, four decades earlier, had set up a farm at Jermak, on Mount Meron, after nearly being crippled during the region’s turbulent 1830’s decade. Born in 1854 in Jerusalem, Rokach reversed his grandfather’s career trajectory, settling as a young man in Safed. Some commentators adamantly insist that the roots of Zionist pioneering in Eretz Israel are to be found in this Bak-Rokach, grandfather-grandson sequence, wherein the short-lived, Monteriore-funded, Jermak experiment was renewed and fulfilled decades later, at Gei Oni/Rosh Pina.¹¹

As early as 1872, Rokach issued a precedent-setting call for pioneering work, envisioning “cultivated fields” rising over the ashes of halukah, a degraded system he branded as a “broken reed.”¹² Through this 1870’s decade, Rokach promoted a series of pioneering-spirited ventures even before the Gei Oni group congealed. This activity drew a line in the sand, delineating the split between an “Old Yishuv” associated with halukah charity and a nascent pioneering movement associated with evolving Zionist concepts of self-sufficiency, productivity, and (as the Hebrew term naively phrased it) “conquest of the land.” A querulous, provocative character, Rokach’s remorseless publicity contributed to the way the Old Yishuv/New Yishuv contrast came to be seen exaggeratedly, as a near-absolute dichotomy. In the late 1870s he circulated blistering invective against Safed’s halukah network. In a pamphlet composed in this period, originally titled “The Mysteries of Safed,” Rokach unleashed allegations against corrupt abuses in this charity network and hysterically declared that Safed’s eminent rabbi, Rafael

Zilberman (Rafael HaDayan VeHamotz), was responsible for more atrocities than Tamerlane and Attila the Hun.¹³

Yet proto-Zionist concepts and developments were not consolidating at Rosh Pina at this juncture solely because of the contentious polemicizing of a particular individual. Quite logically, Safed became the focus of argumentative discussions between Orthodox and modern-minded Jews about Eretz Israel's sociopolitical future. As we have seen, due to the continuing influx of Hasidic newcomers, Safed's Jewish population never went into a precipitous downspin in the four decade stretch between Israel Bak and his grandson, Rokach. Elderly, frequently with no children to support them, and holding a clear preference for a lifestyle of religious piety rather than working productivity, these immigrants precipitated stress and fracture in the existing charity network. Rokach belonged to a small stratum of Yishuv Jews who had one foot in the Orthodox world, but were also tied to the Jewish "enlightenment" (*Haskalah*) modernizing movement which had its own critical modes of discourse,¹⁴ including a harsh style of condemning halukah (temporarily, at least, another such figure was a relative of Rokach's, Israel Dov Frumkin, whose Jerusalem-based journal, *Ha-Vatzelet* published early proclamations on behalf of Gei Oni¹⁵). Significantly, however, torrid attacks on Safed's halukah network were emanating at this time from the town's own Orthodox groups, and not just from modernizing publicists like Rokach who were influenced by pre-existing biases. Exactly in the 1878–1882 period of Rosh Pina's formation, the world of Hebrew letters was convulsed by sensational, serialized disclosures in the *Ha-Shahar* journal about Safed halukah corruption; this attack was authored, in large part, by a disaffected member of the town's own devout religious community, Menahem Mendel Eilboim.¹⁶ Collated and published posthumously as one full volume, *Eretz Hatzvi*,¹⁷ Eilboim's revelations indicated that the controversy about piety or productivity in Galilee's Safed area was not instigated by one particular ideological faction. Instead, it reflected a genuine cultural crisis whose features were acknowledged in many corners, by secularizing Jews and also Orthodox ones.

Poetic logic could be uncovered in the fact that this late nineteenth century clash between, on the one hand, visions of religious continuity, founded on halukah charity-supported religious study, and, on the other hand, national revival based on halutz pioneering productivity, took root in Safed, of all places in Galilee, and of all places in Eretz Israel in general. After all, the Talmud (Bavli, Berakhot 35b) records that the town's Jewish patron saint, Rashbi, had pointedly asked his fellow tannaim: should a man sow and plow and harvest in successive seasons of the agricultural year, "what will become of Torah?"¹⁸ The sentiment could be taken as a motto of what in the early 1880s was coming to be known as the "Old Yishuv." "When Israel performs God's work, its [daily] work is carried out by others,"

Rashbi pronounced—he was thinking about gentiles, but as the 1870s drew to a close, these “others,” Hibat Zion pioneering forerunners of the “New Yishuv,” had hoes in the ground at Gei Oni, just a few kilometers, as the crow flies, from Rashbi’s much-venerated tomb at Meron. As centuries passed by after Rashbi, the Safed area periodically played host to this vexing *productivity or piety* issue. Much as sixteenth century Safed was home to the ethereal, and time-consuming ritualistic devotions, of the mystical Kabbalists, it was also the locus of a relatively prosperous, and comparably time-consuming, wool trade. Scholars, we noted, have never been able to decide whether the premier Safed Kabbalist in this era, Isaac Luria, was a business trader of some acumen or a full-time mystic. This dilemma between retrenched Orthodoxy and high tech secularism continues today in the stark contrast between mystically Orthodox Safed and relentlessly secular parts of Rosh Pina.¹⁹

What remained from Rokach’s lobbying for Rosh Pina can be called a paradigm shift in Jewish consciousness. In the 1870s, counterpart modernizing Jewish figures in East Europe, such as Moshe Leib Lilienblum, had engaged bitter disputes with Orthodox groups, originally with a semi-conscious grasp of their implications, and then, after the early 1880s pogroms in tsarist Russia, with acutely understood commitment to a secularization project of breaking away from traditional Judaism and recasting Jewish identity in a national frame, which was eventually called “Zionism.”²⁰ Try as you might, in late Ottoman Palestine it is almost impossible to find anyone before Rokach, and his Galilee Gei Oni initiative, who stylistically enacted a deliberate break from Orthodox conventions such as halukah, and who personified a nationalistic reformulation of Jewish identity. In late 1879, fleeing from Safed’s outraged Orthodox leadership, Rokach headed for Odessa, via Beirut, with an agenda of fund-raising overseas for the ground-breaking Galilee colony. Writing in *Ha-Vatzelet* and other Hebrew journals, Rokach reported flamboyantly on Orthodox attempts to stifle him. One of his dispatches claimed that he was wounded in an assassination attempt. His Orthodox enemies, Rokach disclosed, had misrepresented his plans to tsarist officials; banned from Russia, he was forced to lobby and fund-raise in Rumania on behalf of what became a signature First Aliyah colony.²¹ As it turned out, the detour proved fortuitous. Rumania, newly detached and independent from Turkey, simmered with anti-Semitism; and a number of proto-Zionist groups in the country would find their way into the First Aliyah in the early 1880s.²²

One was led by Moshe David Shub. Born in Moinesti in 1854, Shub earned his stripes as an approved ritual slaughter under the training of Solomon Schechter’s father (in Focsani, Shub was a childhood friend of the future architect of Conservative Judaism, who wrote the aforementioned, ground-breaking essay about sixteenth century Safed).²³ In the 1870s, when Rokach floated his Galilee pioneering ideas in the Yishuv, Shub was on the lookout,

hoping to find a promising colonization opportunity in Eretz Israel. In summer 1874, he set out, with David Bucshester and one or two others,²⁴ on a pioneering scouting mission; but in Dobruja the local pasha persuaded these eager Rumanian Jews that Ottoman officials were far too mired in Balkan controversies to listen to Jewish settlement initiatives for Palestine.²⁵ Waiting eight years to realize their dream, Shub and Bucshester purchased land for the colony on a visit to Ottoman Palestine in summer 1882. As though to reinforce Galilee's pioneering agenda of Jewish national rebirth, they signed the deed the day before the Tisha B'Av fast day, which marks the destruction of the First and Second Jerusalem Temple.²⁶ Shub was a certified kosher butcher, not a seasoned farmer; nor was he versed in the country's cultures and landscape. (In fact, as decades passed, he never found suitable translated meanings for local Arabic place names, such as Mount Kna'an, even though the Rosh Pina colony's founding was the highlight of his public life.²⁷) Still, he and his fellow Rumanian Lovers of Zion had made a fortuitous decision, acquiring an inspiring patch of Galilee country. Calling their new colony Rosh Pina (cornerstone), they implicitly derogated the original, Gei Oni, initiative at the site, promoted by Rokach's group. The term Rosh Pina comes from Psalms 118:22: "the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone."²⁸

Since many of the immigrants were indigent, Shub persuaded the immigrant group to pool its funds for the founding year, and so the colony began on a semi-communal basis. This did not last long. Unlike the *Bilu* branch of the First Aliyah, which was comprised largely of Jews who had been university students in East Europe,²⁹ and also unlike the idealist-radicals of the later, Second Aliyah, these early 1880's Galilee pioneers were traditional Jews around whom socialism and other secular ideologies had scant orbit. Their orientation is reflected in the original Rosh Pina regulations, which enjoin each member to observe the religious mitzvot which have special meaning in Eretz Israel, unless an authoritative rabbi issues an exemption.³⁰ There remains moving testimony of how these Rosh Pina founders creatively mixed piety and productivity in their pioneering farm-work. One descendant, Amihud Schwartz, who was born on this Galilee colony in 1909 and whose grandfather had been one of the Gei Oni founders, recalled: "Our grandparents, and some of our parents, were extremely religious, and whenever they had to go out to plow at dawn, they would take their prayer shawls and phylacteries with them, so that they could recite *shacharit* [morning] prayers in the fields."³¹

Paradoxical as it may seem, the notion that Gei Oni/Rosh Pina had been founded in a Kulturkampf, semi-violent atmosphere, in outright opposition to Safed Orthodoxy, had comparably powerful resonance in Schwartz's memory. Rokach's activity, in his mind, was a metonym of the New Yishuv,

proof of how Zionist pioneering consolidated in a Zero-Sum game showdown against Orthodoxy. In an oral history interview, Schwartz elaborated upon the episode in which Orthodox halukah functionaries reportedly tried to hire an assassin to murder Rokach.³²

Generally speaking, the perception of “warfare” between secularism (or “science”) and religion snaked through many cultures in the 1870s—the American educator Andrew D. White imposed this “warfare” terminology in the title of a well-known lecture and publication.³³ In Jewish culture, this warfare rhetoric unfolded in pioneering frames, in the ancestral homeland, and in the Safed region of Galilee, where religious-based fracture and warfare had a long history.

A second example of how the Old Yishuv/New Yishuv dichotomy took root in Galilee soil is the poignant story of Yesud Hama’ala’s founding in 1883. Five years after the start of Gei Oni initiative, would-be pioneers in the north, and their antagonists, had internalized stereotypes and images associated with this dichotomy. Land-purchasing and farming were now self-conscious activities. Jews were taking risks, and planting roots, on the basis of prior expectations, and partly mythologized views of the people with whom they were dealing. Transactions were framed by the categories the relevant parties were supposed to represent, rather than being dictated solely by their actual personalities and genuine needs.

Situated in the Hula Valley of the Upper Galilee, the Yesud Hama’ala colony was built-up on malarial swampland at tremendous human cost.³⁴ Settlers were horrendously afflicted by complications of malaria. The main culprit was Blackwater Fever, a condition first diagnosed in world medicine roughly at the time of the colony’s establishment. In the Hula, the ailment apparently resulted from an unlucky mix of *Anopheles* mosquito induced malaria and quinine treatment; it was not properly diagnosed and treated until 1945. Among the colony’s original founding families, the fever wiped out sibling after sibling.³⁵ Survivors naturally wondered why their parents or grandparents had chosen such an insalubrious, remote, site for First Aliyah pioneering work.

The original purchasers represented a Jewish group from Mezhirichi, a Ukrainian village. They were joined by Rabbi Ephraim Fishel Salomon, from Brest, who became the spiritual leader of the Yesud Hama’ala colony. This purchasing group was lured to the Hula Valley site by agents of the sellers, two Sephardic Jewish brothers from Safed’s Abu (Aboo) family whose father, Rabbi Shmuel Abu, held a prestigious post as French Consul in Galilee.

A number of calculations and manipulations enticed the enthusiasts in the purchasing group. Rabbi Salomon became spiritually attached to the Hula Valley site, and his semi-messianic enthusiasm was contagious. The buyers accorded greater credibility to Jewish sellers. They believed that the Abu

family would help them circumvent red tape obstruction in the Ottoman bureaucracy (this hope proved illusory, and the lack of permits to build houses by the Hula lake forced the rugged Jewish colonists to live in swamp-reed huts during their first two or three years at Yesud Hama'ala). The purchasers were shown the site in the springtime, and, of course, the sellers said nothing about the harsh winter cold and scorching summer heat in the swamp area. The sellers' agents recruited Bedouin laborers to treat the prospective buyers to a feast of newly caught fish and plucky black coffee.

By such means, the Yesud Hama'ala pioneers were lured into a real estate trap. Assorted spiritual trimmings, such as the sudden appearance of a stone inscribed with a welcoming Aramaic message, "all settlers here will be blessed and remembered," which was touted as a relic from an ancient synagogue on the site, seemed to clinch the deal. Still, reports about the infectious dangers of life in the swampland were rife. In fact, two of the buyers, the enthused Rabbi Salomon and a delegate from Mezhirichi, Leib Rubin, had been warned about the site's malarial character by a number of Orthodox Jews from Safed.

Fatefully, however, the two buyers dismissed these warnings, believing them to be motivated by halukah-dependent antagonists of Jewish colonization and farm-work. As Salomon and Rubin understood it, these grim warnings about the Hula swampland were a ruse perpetrated by Safed traditionalists who fretted obsessively about how a new farm colony in the area would divert from them some portion of their precious halukah funds.³⁶ This fateful miscalculation bears witness to how new First Aliyah colonization efforts stirred tension among Ottoman Palestine's Jews who were acutely conscious of the piety or productivity fissure that was developing between two sub-cultures. Idealistic newcomers believed themselves to be so mistrusted by their Orthodox peers that they were unwilling to listen to common sense advice.

THE FIRST ALIYAH IN GALILEE: CHALLENGES AND COMPROMISES

The First Aliyah became a fascinating medley of Zionist innovation and Orthodox religious continuity. In Galilee, the standard-setter for piety versus productivity dynamics, and other issues, was Rosh Pina. As noted, the colony's founders were Orthodox, but they implanted educational and social structures which altered and modernized their children. At Rosh Pina's school,³⁷ admired throughout the Yishuv as the "University of Galilee," children were taught in Hebrew, a step associated with a nationalistic viewpoint, and a departure from an Old World curriculum steeped in Yiddish (less innovative in this respect, Yesud Hama'ala's founders kept their children for years in a Yiddish-based traditional school).³⁸ From 1903 through the end of

the Ottoman period, the Rosh Pina school was headed by Simcha Wilkomitz, a native of White Russia who became a venerated Hebrew educator in the Yishuv. Pupils studied for four or five hours in the morning and then, after an hour recess, returned to receive agricultural training. The schooling featured field trips designed to inculcate attachment to the country, as well as various idiosyncratic elements which became Rosh Pina trademarks (the colony's children were taught to speak with an unusually inflected B or "beth" sound, and their colony became known for this pronunciation). For boys on Rosh Pina, the educational regime ended early, since they were expected to begin helping with agricultural work following their Bar Mitzvah ceremonies in their thirteenth year. At this age, girls generally stayed with their mothers to help with numerous household tasks, though those who had excelled in their studies were sometimes sent by Rosh Pina's overseers for continuing educational training for future work, as pre-school caretakers and teachers.³⁹ (These overseers belonged to the Rothschild administration, and then, after 1900, to the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), as explained later.)

Rosh Pina's relations with neighboring Arabs were uneasy but tolerable. Their tense but not irresolvable character is symbolized by one of the colony's dramatic early episodes. The incident occurred on the day designated as the colony's founding date, in December 1882, when newly styled agriculturalists first set out to work the fields. A wedding, between Malkha Blum and Fishel Rubinstein, had been arranged for the occasion. That day, a newly arrived member of the colony, Nahum Kaliskar, a Russian Jew from Safed, misfired a pistol, apparently while joking cordially with an Arab laborer. The worker died as a result of the miscue. Enraged Arabs from the Safed area descended on the celebration, threatening to massacre the Jewish colonists. According to their own stylized recollection, the First Aliyah pioneers were saved by al-Jauna's mukhtar, Haj ali Jerbut, who theatrically told members of the angry mob that they might ravage his own two daughters, but they would never be allowed to lay a hand on the Jewish newcomers.⁴⁰ The actual sequence seems to have been rather more protracted, and featured a jail stint for Kaliskar, bribe-giving to the aggrieved Arab family, and a series of stone-throwing and gunfire shots against the Jewish colonists (who escaped harm). Shub and his fellow Rumanian purchasers had decided to build the first colonists' domiciles (small, two room, facilities, next to cowsheds) right across from two or three Arab homes which remained at Gei Oni. Shub enumerated the considerations underlying this decision: the site of the colony's first houses was relatively proximate to the area's three wellsprings, Ottoman tax and land-purchase rules would have made a site farther from Gei Oni prohibitively expensive, and Orthodox confidants from Safed informed the Rumanian newcomers that being close to the mini-Arab village would actually enhance their security. Shub came to regard this last,

security tip, as being misbegotten; and for months after the wedding day shooting mishap, Jews in the colony were harassed and frightened by their own neighbors.⁴¹

Arab-Jewish relations in this setting of Rosh Pina's founding were characterized by mutual ridicule, moderate tension, and random, mostly uncalculated, violence. When they were not thinking of Arabs as neighbors, Jews viewed them as thuggish braggarts who were inwardly craven. For their part, Arabs, who would not easily have distinguished between the self-styled Orthodox farmers in the new colony and the pious scholars of Safed, contemptuously derided the First Aliyah newcomers as *Walad al-mitti*, as members of a stillborn people. Shub's memoir paints this contrast when it describes the three or four day trek from Beirut to Safed made by the several dozen Jewish immigrant families en route to their new colony in summer 1882. Arab escorts openly cursed and taunted their Jewish clients; and after a 12-hour stretch in the scorching sun, these guides took food and drink from the immigrants. Some of the younger Jews retaliated, "paying their respects to the Arabs with their fists," Shub recorded. The Arabs were "stunned" to meet Jews who could fight, he added. The Rosh Pina founder's self-serving documentation of low-grade frontier scuffling with Arabs seems characteristic of the state of affairs early in the First Aliyah. Israel Belkind, a leader of the Bilu group (a secularized offshoot of Hibat Zion) who was involved in this period in the founding of the Rishon LeZion colony in the center of the country, left a similar record of taunts and scuffles in relations with Arabs.⁴²

The original expectation of the Rosh Pina founders was that any ill-will generated by contacts with Arabs could be contained, and so the colony need not be on constant alert. This optimism is shown by the colony's original regulations, which include a clause stipulating that "no member will roam with a firearm—'revolver,' as it is known, or 'bix' in our language [Yiddish]—that is loaded with lethal ammunition; only at night may a member be armed, for guard duty, and the firearm is to be used [just] to make a [detering] noise."⁴³ A few years after the colony's founding, reports circulated about its stable relations with its immediate neighbors. In 1886, the philo-Semitic English visionary, Laurence Oliphant, was willfully bullish, but probably not altogether duplicitous, when he reported that Rosh Pina's residents dwelled in "perfect amity" with their Arab neighbors from al-Jauna.⁴⁴ Still, outside its immediate perimeter, the new Galilee colony was perched in a heartland of the evolving Arab-Jewish conflict. A nearby village, Pir'am, kept antagonistic relations with Rosh Pina, starting with the colony's founding period (when village residents regretted having sold portions of their lands to Baron Rothschild), and then continuing through the 1929 and 1936–1939 uprisings during the British Mandate, and culminating with its inhabitants' exodus in the Palestinian nakba during the 1948 war.⁴⁵

The Upper Galilee colony where relations with non-Jews caused lasting damage from the start was Metula.⁴⁶ Situated on a hill in the shadows of Mount Hermon, Metula was established in 1896 after one of Rothschild's agents, Joshua Ossovietzki, purchased 3,150 acres from a Lebanon-based Christian Arab seller, Jabur Bey. The seller had formerly leased the land to several hundred Druze farmers; owing partly to the disruption of the 1895 Druze rebellion, these tenants had defaulted in the payment of required *qisam* taxes, equivalent to one-fifth of their fields' yields. Ossovietzki, who had been sent to Galilee after becoming embroiled in a bitter dispute with Jewish residents of the Rishon LeZion colony,⁴⁷ opted not to bribe these Druze tenants into leaving the site. Instead, he devised an original plan to turn the northern colony into a model of Jewish-Druze coexistence. He recruited some Jews who had been living in the Druze hamlet of Hasbaya, east of the new colony site, as well as some Jewish families from the Galilee village of Peki'in and also from Safed.

This noble plan faltered from the start. The problem seems not to have been precipitated by non-Jews who remained on the colony itself. Instead, several Druze who had left the area after its purchase by Ossovietzki, but subsequently regretted their decision, decided to derail the new colony. They returned to harass its settlers via gunshots, livestock theft, and vandalism. The colonists' repeated appeals to various Ottoman officials were unanswered because the recalcitrant Druze were too intimidating. Fending off disaffected Druze, the Jewish settlers were left on their own; and these embittering skirmishes lasted a full decade. One colonist, Eliezer Reznick, recalled:

For ten years this war raged day and night, in the fields and within our settlement, and we gave everything we had in this fight. I remember one colonist, Emanuel Bachor-Mushon, who was savagely murdered when he was on guard duty, around a threshing floor. Every night, as darkness started to fall, and before [Druze] would fire shots in the direction of the colony's homes, to frighten us, we would sequester all the women and children in a safe dwelling in the middle of the settlement; we did this because there was constant anxiety about the possibility of Druze storming into houses in the colony and killing their inhabitants. So every night our men would guard in shifts, often while facing a barrage of gunfire. We did these guard stints after long days of work in the fields.⁴⁸

The harassment and terror generated by the colony's failed relations with the Druze set a cool tone at Metula. The colony's very name reflects its residents' demoralized spirits in its early years. In the style of early Zionist settlements, the colony was slated for a lofty Hebraic, two word, name, as in the case of Rosh Pina. Hebrew lexicographer Eliezer Ben-Yehuda proposed "Am Segula" (treasured people), and there were other high-flown

possibilities. However, according to the oral history accounts, the residents were in no mood to adopt an illustrious Hebraic phrase for the name of their colony—they were too entangled in frightening, exhausting scuffles with the Druze for that. The settlement simply called itself Metula, adapting the local Arabic name (which refers either to mountain dew or to the land's furrows).

The establishment of First Aliyah colonies in Galilee and elsewhere set in motion three overlapping sets of dynamics or problems; and in each case it is hard to separate myth and reality, and to separate our posterior knowledge of Zionism's development from judgment of these First Aliyah initiatives. Allowing these pioneers and their descendants to keep possession of their own stories, I am mostly relying here on oral history documentation of this immigration and its colonies; but, needless to say, their recollections are colored by retrospective emotions and judgments engendered by the protracted Arab-Jewish conflict, the continuing challenge of secular-religious relations in Israel, and other issues. At any event, we have discussed the first two dynamics: the extent to which the First Aliyah Galilee initiatives drove a wedge between the "Old Yishuv" and the "New Yishuv," and the initiatives' impact on the evolving Arab-Jewish conflict (whose origins, we have argued, can be traced to a period half a century before this Hibat Zion, early Zionist, period). The third dynamic/problem is this: to what extent did the new colonies validate the fundamental logic of Zionism, proving that a self-supporting, socio-politically autonomous, community of "new Jews" could be created in Ottoman Palestine, in the historic homeland known to Jews as Eretz Israel? Here, again, Rosh Pina is the main case study.

Just as had happened to its predecessor, Gei Oni, Rosh Pina struggled economically from the start. Its desperate condition can be inferred from the rather draconian terms by which Baron Edmond de Rothschild and his administrators assumed patronage of the colony (along with the coastal colony, south of Haifa, Zichron Yaakov, originally known as Zamarin, which was also founded by Rumanian Jews, some of whom had journeyed to Palestine from the Danube on the same boat, the *SS Thetis*,⁴⁹ with Rosh Pina's first pioneers).

The struggling Rosh Pina pioneers agreed to place in the Baron's hands the whole colony, lock, stock, and barrel. Under this trusteeship agreement, signed in November 1883, Rothschild and his administrators took control of the colony's 530 acres, along with its nineteen houses, two cowsheds, two horses, five cows, twelve bulls, a donkey, and a wagon. In exchange, each colonist was guaranteed a home, livestock, and farm equipment. Rothschild took responsibility for building a synagogue, school, and other facilities on the colony; also, agents of the well-connected banker expedited registration of the colony's land deeds. This stewardship agreement, which became known in Jewish circles via its publication in tribunals such as the Hebrew

HaMelitz and *HaMagid*, was quite explicit about the transfer of managerial authority to the Baron's administrators, who were to operate in accord with supervisory norms then known in French imperial colonies. ("All of the colonists, each according to his ability, will heed the directives of the administrator and managerial committee.")⁵⁰ In addition, Rothschild and his agent, Elie Scheid, tried to "impart a French character to Jewish colonization" in Galilee and elsewhere, obligating the Rosh Pina colonists to adopt French citizenship, among other things.⁵¹

Dictated by necessity, this agreement was inherently problematic. These Rumanian Jewish pioneers imagined themselves to be in rebellion against the charity sycophancy of the Old Yishuv's pious residents, and now they were making their colony dependent upon the Rothschild family's philanthropy. Edmund de Rothschild supported an agenda of farming self-sufficiency; and so his charity was used for purposes unlike the religious program of study and prayer enabled by the Old Yishuv's halukah system. Still, by coming to contractual terms with the Rothschild administration, the Rosh Pina pioneers substituted one form of overseas diaspora patronage for another; and so instances such as this late 1883 agreement were destined to remain controversial in Zionist pioneering history. Rothschild was celebrated as a generous patron (as his Hebrew appellation, "Nadiv," suggested); but his administrators also became notorious for temporarily throttling the "auto-emancipation" dream of pioneering independence shared by these First Aliyah immigrants.⁵²

At Rosh Pina, the pioneers' descendants accounted for this abdication of control to Rothschild in somewhat bitter, self-serving, stories whose gist is that their parents or grandparents entered into a Faustian deal because it was their only available route for staying in Ottoman Palestine. On one account,⁵³ the sequence leading to the arrangement was triggered by the visit of an agent of another renowned diaspora Jewish philanthropist, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, a famous banker and railroad investor who in the early 1890s would spark debate among East European Jews by sponsoring, via his new JCA, a relatively large-scale program for the re-settlement of pogrom-persecuted Russian Jews in Argentina.⁵⁴ This emissary, Emmanuel Veneziani, had an intention of arranging the evacuation of Rumanian Jews from Rosh Pina and Zamarin. The Jews, on this plan, would eventually be redirected to South America. However, upon Veneziani's return to France, his reports on the hardship he witnessed on visits to Zamarin and Rosh Pina were interpreted by well-connected Jews as arguments for immediate, on-the-ground, relief for the Eretz Israel pioneers, rather than grounds for a prolonged program of evacuation and recolonization. In particular, the Parisian rabbi Zadoc Kahan, a Hibat Zion enthusiast (and future chief rabbi of France), lobbied with Edmond de Rothschild, and set the stage for the November 1883 stewardship agreement.

This recollected sequence is truncated—for instance, the historian Simon Schama, who wrote a history of the Rothschild administration of farming colonies in the Yishuv, stressed the impact of a meeting between Baron Edmund and the Bialystok-based leader of the Orthodox faction of Hibat Zion, Shmuel Mohilever.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, these descendants' recollections accurately underscore the precarious character of these First Aliyah colony ventures in Galilee. The pioneers lived with the fear that failure might even mean being directed to an unknown continent, one remote from their Jewish sensibilities and from their origins in Russian or Rumanian lands.

The injection of Rothschild capital rapidly stabilized conditions in Rosh Pina. Laurence Oliphant, the eccentric but large-hearted English philo-Semite (who himself purchased some 50 acres of farmland for the colonists),⁵⁶ reported optimistically about an 1886 visit to the Upper Galilee colony. Oliphant counted twenty-three Rumanian Jewish families and four Russian Jewish families—all told, 140 residents who dwelled in sixteen “neat little” houses. Praising the “thrift and industry” of the Rosh Pina pioneers, Oliphant declared “this is the most hopeful attempt at a colony I have seen in Palestine.”⁵⁷

Yehuda Bernstein (born in Rosh Pina in 1901) recalled that such impressive early growth was viewed by his parents' generation as the “coming of the Messiah.” However, he added, such achievement “came with a heavy price.” Not only did the colony's founders and children lose control of their own community, but their endeavors were routinely misrepresented by the Baron's administrators. When the colony failed to meet annual goals, Rothschild's representatives had incentive to pass blame along to the hard-working farmers. They would also justify their own heavy-handed behavior by depicting the colony's residents as incompetents. The Baron routinely received reports casting the Rosh Pina residents as “irritable, lazy farmers who lack motivation and who are unable to stand on their own feet and manage their own affairs,” Bernstein recollected, in a 1976 interview.⁵⁸ Bernstein wondered whether Rosh Pina's circumstances, just months after its founding, were really sufficiently dire as to warrant surrender of control of the colony. Rothschild's director, Scheid, wrote that after a year, the colony stood in total ruin, and that its residents were ready to pawn their entire community to a wealthy Safed Jew for a loan of 5,000 francs; but Bernstein regarded this testimony as being “considerably exaggerated.”⁵⁹

The Rothschild infusion of resources undoubtedly boosted Rosh Pina's early growth, but some colony veterans believed that this overseas administration stifled their community's development over the long term, putting it at a disadvantage compared to settlement initiatives undertaken by subsequent Zionist immigration waves. Starting a decade before WWI, the next generation of Palestine pioneers, secular, socialist-leaning, *halutzim* who came on the

Second Aliyah (which lasted from 1904 to 1914, and is discussed later in this chapter), developed innovative communal forms, such as what eventually came to be known as *kibbutzim*, as well as modernized agricultural and industrial techniques; and they honed impressive mechanisms of health care and mutual support. Compared to the rapid growth of Labor Zionist colonies established by the Second Aliyah, earlier Hibat Zion colonies in Galilee seemed to “stand in place” during the thirty years of the British Mandate, recalled Rosh Pina veteran Menahem Ben-Arieh. He believed that lingering habits of subordination inculcated during the years of the Rothschild administration (1883–1900), and the subsequent JCA management (1900–1914), discouraged innovation and adaptability on Rosh Pina, and on other Hibat Zion-established colonies in Galilee, during the British Mandate years (1920–1948).⁶⁰

Ben-Arieh, along with all other Rosh Pina veterans who offered oral history testimony about the founding and early growth of their colony, distinguished qualitatively between these two terms of overseas administration, the Rothschild period, and then the fourteen years of supervision provided by Baron de Hirsch’s JCA, up to WWI (the war constituted an interval of considerable turbulence in these Upper Galilee colonies). Essentially, the JCA extended a more cooperative attitude toward the colony’s residents, granting them a greater range of farming autonomy. Rosh Pina residents recalled that JCA intervention in their parents’ work lives was “minimal.” The advent of JCA management at Rosh Pina marked a real “transformation” and significantly improved morale on the colony by honoring the settlers’ autonomy in a number of spheres. “Most importantly, [the JCA] transferred farmland to the agriculturalist’s own control; the farmer was now free to manage his homestead as he saw fit.” Nominally, the colony farmers were lease-holders, not owners; but the JCA allowed them to pay back their debts over a prolonged period, thereby liberating them from long-standing feelings of enthrallment to overseas stewards.⁶¹

The transition from a paternalistic to a cooperative style of colony management is exemplified by the story of Mishmar Hayarden’s early years, and the activity of Haim Margalit Kalvarisky, one of the most admired figures in this era of early Zionist pioneering endeavor in Galilee.

Located west of the Bnot Yaakov Bridge (Daughters of Jacob Bridge), on a route charted for journeys between Safed and Damascus, Mishmar Hayarden was the most star-crossed settlement in this cluster of First Aliyah Upper Galilee colonies. It was permanently abandoned as a result of heavy fighting between Israel and Syria during the 1948 war (decades later, former residents still fumed about what they regarded as Israel’s failure to honor their legitimate claims to their native home).⁶²

Roughly following the Gei Oni-Rosh Pina model, this colony emerged out of the rubble of a prior, failed Jewish settlement project. A settlement



Figure 4.1 First Aliyah View of Rosh Pina. *Source:* Courtesy of Abraham Bloom Historical Archives of Rosh Pina.

enthusiast, Mordecai Lubowsky, who acquired capital from family work in the diamond trade in Boston, attempted in the 1880s to run a private farm, called Shoshanat Hayarden, on the site. When that failed, a purchasing group, supported by the aforementioned David Shub, moved in 1890 to revamp the effort as a settlement colony, Mishmar Hayarden. Shub worked energetically on this, his second, Upper Galilee colonization project.⁶³ He recruited some fifteen Jewish immigrants almost the moment they touched shore in Jaffa and brought them north. However, various financial, health, and housing entanglements impaired the colony's development and badly discouraged its new residents. After several months of struggle, some hope was kindled at Mishmar Hayarden when Rabbi Judah Leib Binstock, head of Hibat Zion's Jaffa office, took interest in the colony, publicizing information about its plight in the *Ha-Tzifra* journal and raising some funds for its benefit.⁶⁴ But the popular Binstock's short term in Jaffa ended with his death in 1894, and Mishmar Hayarden remained imperiled.

The agronomist-administrator, Haim Kalvarisky, enters the colony's history at this stage. Born in Lithuania in 1868, Kalvarisky studied agronomy in France and became associated with Zionism via Ahad Ha'am's Bnei Moshe order. He immigrated to Ottoman Palestine in 1895,⁶⁵ precisely at the moment when Mishmar Hayarden's life-line to Hibat Zion was cut-off. Kalvarisky started out as a teacher at the Mikve Israel agricultural school; but the character and professional status of the agronomist, who had an agricultural degree

from a French university under his belt, soon caught the eye of Baron de Hirsch's administration. A few years before it formally assumed responsibility for the entirety of the Baron Rothschild colonies, JCA was tentatively taking charge of a few isolated settlements, Mishmar Hayarden included. So in 1897 it sent the energetic, twenty-nine-year-old settlement activist to the Upper Galilee colony. Kalvarisky immediately untangled knots in the ownership of Mishmar Hayarden's extant 642 acres (Shub was derelict in payments, and so Lubowsky had withheld transfer of a portion of the land). In his three year tenure at the colony, Kalvarisky more than doubled the colony's acreage and also found funds for the construction of a school, synagogue, and medical station at the site.

The colonists worked mostly in dryland farming and never really prospered. Half a century later, at the time of its evacuation, the Mishmar Hayarden colony had never hosted more than twenty-five farms. In the early years, the farmers' work, undertaken in tantalizing proximity to the Jordan River, was hampered by the absence of motorized water pumps—well-pumping via the centuries-old, animal-driven, "Persian Wheels" (antiliias) method was cumbersome.⁶⁶ Despite such constraints, Kalvarisky revolutionized relations with the colonists, abandoning the micromanagement techniques utilized by Baron Rothschild's administrators on other colonies. At Mishmar Hayarden, Kalvarisky helped devise the JCA's counter-method of allotting agriculturalists a base budget and also considerable leeway in the management of their farms. He set an inspiring leadership example by living on-site at Mishmar Hayarden, with his wife and young daughters, despite the colony's malarial-afflicted circumstances.

A Zionist pioneering aura began to cloak Kalvarisky at this ill-fated colony, and his reputation in Galilee subsequently strengthened. From 1900 to 1905, Kalvarisky settled in Nazareth and administered Jewish settlement efforts around Tiberias. Known for his close relations with the Zionist settlers, including leaders of the newly organized Hashomer paramilitary group,⁶⁷ Kalvarisky stood alone among JCA administrators, many of whom lived in Beirut or Jaffa, far from the new Jewish colonies. Then, having irked suspicions within JCA networks during his stint at the Sejera farm colony (located southwest of Tiberias), which was used as a base for the Hashomer partisans,⁶⁸ Kalvarisky was transferred to Upper Galilee, where he worked through the end of WWI. In summer 1917, he urged his Hashomer contacts to seize a window of opportunity that opened when JCA cohorts were cut-off from Palestine by the war. As the Ottoman Era rattled to a close, Kalvarisky went rogue, urging Hashomer zealots like Israel Giladi to promote Galilee settlement initiatives that would have been stalled, under ordinary circumstances, by the cautious JCA management (later, in the Mandate era, Kalvarisky worked with singular ardor on behalf of Arab-Jewish reconciliation, serving

intermittently, between 1923 and 1931, as an adviser on Arab affairs to the Palestine Zionist Executive).⁶⁹

THE SECOND ALIYAH IN GALILEE: CHALLENGES AND COMPROMISES

In his teenage years, Yitzhak Epstein's family moved to Odessa, the alluring city by the Black Sea which hosted a flourishing of cultural and political activity among late nineteenth century Jews.⁷⁰ In the early 1880s, his intentions of studying agriculture were partially stifled by anti-Semitic restrictions. Lilienblum, who emerged in this period as a surprisingly effective administrator and leader of the Hibat Zion movement, took Epstein under his wing, for a spell. At the age of twenty-four, in 1886, the young man migrated to Eretz Israel; Epstein worked in the fields at the Zichron Ya'akov colony, before gaining employment as an agricultural instructor at Rosh Pina.

This Galilee stint transformed him. Epstein's trainees at Rosh Pina included Orthodox Jews of Mizrahi (Sephardic) ancestry, and Epstein learned from them Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew. This pronunciation became the norm in the Yishuv; and, some years later, working as an educator, Epstein played a role in this standardization of how Hebrew is spoken, along with earning a reputation for pedagogic innovation in the development of the "learning Hebrew in Hebrew" method of teaching the language.⁷¹ Also, as a farm instructor at Rosh Pina, Epstein learned Arabic. Stemming from this initial acquaintance with the land's Arab population, he resolved to cast a spotlight on an issue that had been kept in the shadows in Zionist settings, that is, Arab-Jewish affairs.⁷²

In 1906, twenty years after his entry to the country, Epstein published a noteworthy article in the *Ha-Shiloah* journal, called "A Hidden Question." Somewhat misleadingly, the piece is often regarded as Zionism's first explicit recognition of what subsequently became known as the Arab-Jewish conflict⁷³—but the "who said it first" sort of issue is not really resolvable or germane. Instead, what makes Epstein's piece remarkable is its moral ardor and also its cultural context at the start of the "Second Aliyah" (1904–1914). From a moral standpoint, Jewish settlement in Galilee in modern times has never produced truer words.

The realization of our national dreams, declared Epstein, depends upon how we Zionists resolve the Arab question.⁷⁴ Though the Arabs' presence as the country's majority population was manifest, this issue had become "hidden" in the movement's discourse. The fact that the issue remained concealed after a quarter century of Zionist pioneering attested to something "light-headed" in the Jewish national movement. Zionists had spent this period talking about every conceivable issue under the sun, other than the reality that there dwelled

“in the land of our yearning an entire people, one which had held to the land for many centuries, without giving any thought to leaving it.” Epstein estimated that there were half a million Arabs in the country, compared to some 80,000 Jews in the Yishuv; and about 80 percent of these Arabs were farmers, rooted on their own lands. Whereas continued dismissal of the Arab issue spelled doom for the Zionists, warned Epstein, the Jews would strengthen their national movement were they to relate to this Arab majority via “ethical deeds and an earnest spirit.” He implored his pioneering colleagues to monitor their land purchasing efforts, limiting acquisition strictly to unsettled areas. (He believed that such uncultivated hills and valleys still constituted the bulk of the land’s real estate.) As Epstein saw it, Zionists had moral license to purchase cultivated land at a fair price, so long as these pioneers took steps to modernize the farm-work of Arab tenants, and improve their lives. “At first,” Epstein explained, these Arab tenant farmers “will look upon us suspiciously, and be wary of agricultural innovation.” In time, however, “they will become convinced of the sincerity and justice of our intentions . . . and they will no longer rue the day when Jews came to settle.”

Epstein wrote rather grandiosely about how a newly internalized Zionist social contract, under whose terms the Second Aliyah pioneers would relate in a genuinely cooperative spirit with Arabs, would redound to the benefit of humanity as a whole. Beneath this rhetoric he viewed each segment of the Yishuv’s population with a discerning, critical eye. In addition to his admonishment against land seizure detrimental to the rural fellaheen on the Yishuv’s rural frontier, he addressed Jews who lived in the country’s town settings, urging them to open present or future schools, hospitals, and cultural facilities to Arabs. Jewish children in the New Yishuv schools must learn Arabic, Epstein insisted. The time had come, he declared, for Zionists to grasp the political implications of the policies they were implementing in their embryonic educational system; and were children not to be taught to seek fair relations with Arabs, and to understand their culture, the long-term repercussions would be disastrous. Chiding Zionists in Herzl’s tradition for imagining that diplomatic recognition for Jewish settlement in Ottoman Palestine would solve all the movement’s problems, Epstein stood Herzl’s magic word for such recognition (“charter”) on its head: as far as he was concerned, Zionist politics meant moral education, not realpolitik diplomacy. “Each and every decent, just educational institution we establish constitutes a small, but important, statement, a new ‘charter’ that is worth more than thousands of gold coins of bribery,” he contended. Urging his fellow Zionists not to try to teach Arabs “to be Jews,” Epstein finished his clarion call for Jewish-Arab accommodation by confessing that not a single resident in the Yishuv had made an effort to understand Arabs on their own cultural terms. Reviewed in retrospect, his censure of Yishuv pioneers in 1906 echoes poignantly, applying to their descendants for decades to come:

It behooves us to become seriously acquainted with the Arab people, with their traits, tendencies, aspirations, language, literature. More than anything, we must learn about the Arab's life, rituals, suffering and pain. Disgraceful as it is to say, nothing has been done in this connection. Not a single Jew has taken up this challenge. We are completely ignorant about all things relevant to Arabs; the entirety of our knowledge boils down to the markets, to the facts and rules of trade. The time has come to educate!⁷⁵

While their practical impact was, and remains, questionable, Epstein's words resonated with some force because they circulated at a time when young Jews from East Europe on this Second Aliyah immigration wave were experimenting with new ideas and institutional frameworks. To some extent, these pioneers were disposed to listen to warnings about possible occlusion in their utopian visions. Epstein circulated his article just two years after the publication of what is considered the programmatic inauguration of the Second Aliyah. This was a public appeal, entitled "Young People Whose Hearts Are with Their People and Zion,"⁷⁶ calling on idealistic Jews to take part in a new pioneering effort in the country. Its author, Yosef Vitkin, was at the time a twenty-seven-year-old school principal from the Lower Galilee colony Mascha,⁷⁷ then being re-named Kfar Tabor (the settlement is at the foot of the mountain renowned by Christians as the site of the transfiguration of Jesus; and some years later, in 1918, Yigal Allon, the military commander who is most indelibly linked with Israel's conquest of Galilee in the 1948 war, and who is discussed in the next chapter, was born on this colony). Vitkin realized that First Aliyah pioneering had exhausted itself, but he believed that the idealistic spirit of its secularized vanguard, the Biluim, could be renewed. "Heroes of Israel, make haste, renew the days of the Biluim with still greater vigor, lest otherwise we will all be lost," declared Vitkin.⁷⁸ His manifesto set the frame for Epstein's stirring article about the Arab issue. Young secularized Jewish immigrants, self-styled Zionist pioneers who had burned bridges to their past in traditional homes in the Pale of Settlement, were at this moment trying to set the terms of a new settlement movement. Epstein insisted that a new, moral, set of relations with Arab neighbors ought to be one such term.

Over the past scholarly generation, researchers have published provocative critiques of the Second Aliyah, some of them claiming that its sheer nationalistic lust overwhelmed its professed commitment to social justice and socialist development.⁷⁹ Others have argued that the social character of these Jewish immigrants bore a close resemblance to the small trade, traditional religious, profile of Jewish newcomers in early twentieth settings, like New York City, and was rather unlike the revolutionary *halutz* pioneering profile which Zionist rhetoricians attributed to them.⁸⁰ This revisionist scholarship

can be taken too far, however. In the Second Aliyah period (1904–1914), late Ottoman Palestine became pocketed with dozens of energetic, articulate young immigrants from East Europe who were immersed in socialist and other left-radical ideologies,⁸¹ who were eager to re-invent themselves as a new cast of strongly independent Jews and as forerunners of a socially just, national rebirth in Eretz Israel, and who were talented innovators in a number of spheres, including settlement arrangement, farming, military defense, and gender relations.

Some of them idealistic, some of them realpolitik concessions to reality, innovations and adaptations promoted by these Second Aliyah pioneers did not really consolidate until after WWI, when the new, British, mandatory regime was relatively supportive of Zionist activity, in accord with the pledge of commitment to a Jewish “National Home” that had been delivered in the 1917 Balfour Declaration. By the second half of the Mandate period, reins of power in the Yishuv were held by political activists, such as David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, who were themselves veterans of the Second Aliyah. To some extent, when such figures became leaders in Israel after its establishment in 1948, they implemented policies beholden to egalitarian, pioneering values that emanated from Second Aliyah culture—to be sure, with regard to this substantive policy level, the Second Aliyah’s contribution to Israel’s history has become a hotly debated topic, one in which commentators are typically unable to divorce their “historical” judgment from their present-day views of what Israel has become. But, indisputably, the stylistic ethos of this 1904–1914 immigration wave, what became known as “Labor Zionism,” set the tone in Israel’s political culture for three decades, after 1948. As an inspirational founding narrative, part myth, part reality, the Second Aliyah has Plymouth Rock, pilgrim status in Jewish national history.⁸²

By and large, the Second Aliyah was a Galilee event. Israel’s founding narrative is grounded in Galilee. The region which played a signature role in the birth of Christianity and rabbinical Judaism, in the dramatic Crusader intervention, and in the imaginative burst of Kabbalist mysticism, played host to the Second Aliyah’s flawed but ground-breaking realization of modern Jewish nationalist dreams.

In Israel’s pioneering narrative, “up to Galilee” has commanding sloganeering authority comparable to “go West” invocations in America’s founding story. Typically, this call “to Galilee” rang in the ears of Jewish immigrants who had been shot into Ottoman Palestine by chaotic experiences of savage pogrom renewal and revolutionary ferment in Tsarist Russia. Time and again, memoirs published by these Second Aliyah pioneers refer to discouraging experiences on First Aliyah colonies in the center of the country: having drifted from the Jaffa port to places such as Rishon LeZion or Petah Tikva during their first months in the country, they were mostly unemployed,

manifestly less productive than Arab labor competitors whenever they found work, malarial, and routinely abused by haughty farm managers from the colonies (i.e., Jewish veterans of the First Aliyah who looked as though they had not themselves worked in the fields for years). In turn, these newcomers derisively condemned these First Aliyah work managers as hypocrites who relied on cheap Arab labor, and thus subverted Zionism's agenda of revitalizing Jews as ruggedly productive workers. To make matters worse, these newcomers charged, these First Aliyah farm managers were not truly committed to Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel, as proven by their support of the 1903 proposal for Jewish settlement in East Africa ("Uganda") brought to the Sixth Zionist Congress by the movement's founder, Theodor Herzl.⁸³

Joseph Baratz, one of the more moderate, less ideological, figures in the Second Aliyah whose 1954 memoir popularized, outside of Israel, the Galilee origins of the kibbutz movement, immigrated to the country in late 1906, and spent his first days at Rishon LeZion. He recalled hearing a piano playing at a relatively posh domicile in the middle of a work day. "Who works there," he asked, and was told that its residents were "Biluim" from the First Aliyah. "Who is out there working in the fields," he pressed. "Arabs," he was told. "I was shocked," Baratz recalled. "Was this the way we were going to build up our country?"⁸⁴

Another immigrant, Shmuel Dayan, a more ideologically assertive and militant personality, had a similarly disillusioning experience at Petah Tikva. His 1935 memoir dramatically describes how the Zionist idealism of these self-styled halutzim (pioneers) was rejuvenated by the thought of moving on to Galilee:

We had the feeling that we were just now truly immigrating to Eretz Israel. What had happened up to now [at colonies in the center of the country] was not really life in our homeland. On to Galilee! Our dreams were preoccupied by this idea, of going up north by foot, in our small group, armed, on a journey that would take a few days. There [in Galilee] we would plough, sleep in stables, carry arms, fight against Bedouin, harvest and transport our produce. How our hearts trembled, and how they opened up to this prospect! We would conquer the land, and we would conquer labor [i.e. prove that Jews could work the land]. Galilee lands were not yet fully in our hands, the colonies there were young, and their few residents were frequently attacked by many.⁸⁵

Both these memoirists were founders of Degania, a communal settlement located at a junction of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee's south shore⁸⁶ which became the prototype of Labor Zionism's kibbutz movement. After its 1910 founding, Baratz and Miriam Ostrovsky became the first pioneers on Degania to get married. Solemnly representing the commune's ideological

flank which regarded such betrothal as reprobate bourgeois betrayal, Dayan proposed that no wedding should be held at Degania for five years; then, in a wink, he married Devorah Ztolovsky on the colony.⁸⁷ Though Degania was originally known as a “kvutza” (literally, group), these couples’ first-borns, Gideon Baratz and Moshe Dayan, were really the first children in the kibbutz movement. Instantly recognizable for the patch on his eye, the latter became famous as an Israeli war hero and defense secretary.

A few years before the eruption of WWI, Galilee pioneers such as Baratz, Dayan, and also Yosef Busel became fully committed to the Second Aliyah ideology of “Hebrew [only] Labor.” On the new northern colonies, “only” Jews would work. They would initiate a process whereby the physically degraded, morally compromised “ghetto” Jew of the *galut* (cursed exile) would turn into a new Jewish type, a fully independent, productive, nationally conscious “Hebrew.” This personal identity transition would, in turn, transform the “Old Yishuv,” a charity-dependent, sickly community whose members spent their days praying and waiting to be buried in holy soil, into a productive New Yishuv, a Jewish state-in-the-making.

Since the period of Josephus and Jesus, “Hebrew Labor” was the third meta-ideology of Jewish rebirth to become rooted in Galilee, following the relocation of religious authority in the early Talmudic “Mishnah,” in lieu of the Second Temple, in the second century Tannaitic era, and the Tikun Olam, mystical theories of cosmic and personal salvation in sixteenth century Safed. Tannaitic Judaism and Mishnah, sixteenth century Safed and Kabbalistic faith in soulful transmigration, and Second Aliyah Hebrew Labor pioneering; these are the theories of meaning, and personal and communal agendas, which Galilee has delivered to the Jews.

While its contribution to Jewish national self-confidence was enormous, this last theory, “*avodah evrit*” (Hebrew Labor), can also be seen as a predetermined trap. In the years up to WWI, there was really no other way for idealistic young Jewish immigrants in Ottoman Palestine to imagine their own refashioning. In general, where in the world has pioneering spirit not been associated with do-it-yourself hard labor, on the soil? In addition, these young Second Aliyah Jews had their own specific reasons for becoming affixed to this Hebrew Labor ideology. We will mention four.

First, as a self-proclaimed pioneering vanguard, these Second Aliyah immigrants needed, existentially, to separate themselves from the Yishuv’s prior, First Aliyah, wave of immigrants. Also, as we have mentioned, the newcomers had real-life experiences on colonies in the country’s center wherein the First Aliyah, veteran immigrants seemed to be ideologically irresolute, or simply exploitative, managers of Arab laborers. This critique of the First Aliyah’s lack of dynamism and ideals was natural, and sometimes even accepted, in part, by the earlier, 1880s, generation of pioneers, as we

have seen in the case of Rosh Pina. However, it was also quite exaggerated. The put-downs of the First Aliyah reflected rough edges in the character of these young, early twentieth century pioneers—they exhibited tendencies and traits such as judgmental excess, histrionic temperament and, at least in a few notable cases, psychological instability,⁸⁸ to which the Second Aliyah newcomers were prone. Many of the First Aliyah settlers were remarkable individuals who had acquired valuable experience when dealing with Ottoman Palestine realities, including its farm economy and Arab society; their experiences might have been usefully shared with the Second Aliyah immigrants. One example, of many, is Moshe Smilansky,⁸⁹ who immigrated in the early 1890s, became settled in Rehovot, and emerged as a prolific writer and contemporary historian who had an acutely sensitive understanding of Arab-Jewish relations, and who, later in the British Mandate period, brought his experience to bear in peace and coexistence initiatives. Second Aliyah pioneers met this impressive person on Rehovot (Baratz was actually employed by Smilansky for a stint⁹⁰), but moved on, without ever really engaging a constructive dialogue. Instead, they developed a narrative that left the First Aliyah awash in stereotype. In a yet more corrosive and unfair manner, they also dismissed the earlier nineteenth century Old Yishuv, lavishing its notables, Orthodox communal leaders such as Hasidic Rabbi Abraham Dov and the Mitnagdic Rabbi Israel of Shklov, in demeaning caricature.

Second, the Hebrew Labor ideology expressed frustrations felt naturally by immigrant pioneers whose colonies became dependent upon outside philanthropists, and the management of agents who represented these diaspora benefactors. We have seen how First Aliyah settlers at Rosh Pina seethed with resentment after being compelled to consent to management arrangements dictated by the Rothschild family and then, somewhat less onerously, by the JCA. Ostensibly, the Second Aliyah's "Hebrew Labor" ideology addressed this patronage issue by conveying criticism of the fact that Rothschild and JCA field agents sometimes hired cheap Arab workers, in contravention of the New Yishuv's self-emancipation ethos. Yet, as much as it was a direct, specific attack on specific policies of Arab laborer employment on the colonies, the "Hebrew Labor" idea was also a broad, self-referential, statement. It expressed the intention of these Second Aliyah settlers to train themselves, so that they would become highly efficient workers who would eventually be able to liberate themselves, once and for all, from overseas patronage.

Socialist ideology, which became embedded in two political parties on the Second Aliyah (Poale Zion, and, more loosely, Hapoel Hatzair),⁹¹ constituted another part of this statement. As socialists, these Labor Zionists were saying that they had no intention of remaining within the purview of overseas philanthropy in the long run, since benefactors like Baron Rothschild and Baron de Hirsch were emblematic paragons of the capitalist system. Such

calculations possessed considerable analytic elegance and finesse, but they were partly mythic. Second Aliyah Galilee area colonies, starting with Degania, quickly became dependent upon philanthropic offshoots of the World Zionist Organization, be it the Palestine Office, the Palestine Land Development Company (Hachsharat Hayishuv), and the Jewish National Fund (JNF).⁹² Later, through the British Mandate period, Second Aliyah veterans and their halutz descendants from subsequent immigration waves vented high-spirited opposition to arrangements by which the charity of overseas benefactors gained formal footing in the Jewish Agency;⁹³ but this was ineffectual noise which did nothing to forestall a large measure of reliance on overseas assistance from capitalist sources, which continued into the post-1948 Israel period. This is all to say that Second Aliyah halutz pioneers spoke so dogmatically about freeing themselves as Hebrew laborers precisely because the realities of global Jewish economics were so complicated and compromising.

Third, the Hebrew Labor ideology was responsive to age-old anti-Semitic rhetoric about Jewish incapacity for hard physical work and about the over-proportionality of Jews in money-related trades. How Jews sublimated this fundamentally anti-Semitic notion that they were not really “productive” workers because they worked in finance, and not on the soil or in factories, is, of course, a complicated story.⁹⁴ Here, it suffices to mention that this idea of Jews needing to establish their civic credentials via agricultural pioneering work has roots in early modern ideologies such as physiocracy, and in numerous global settings,⁹⁵ whose geographic and normative dimensions go well beyond the specific dilemmas faced by Second Aliyah pioneers in late Ottoman Palestine. By at least a century, these contexts precede the advent of modern anti-Semitism in the 1870s. That being said, it is nonetheless true that the Jewish state-in-the-making in late Ottoman and British Mandatory times would never have been crafted in a halutz (pioneering) frame had its makers not been compelled to respond to the innuendo and violence of modern anti-Semitism. Morally, we Jews in Israel today, and outside of it, must assume responsibility for the way Zionist founding ideologies such as “Hebrew Labor” aggravated relations with Palestinians. Yet, on a broad historical level, Christianity faces complicity for the contemporary Israel/Palestine dispute between Jews and Muslims, heirs to two religious cultures which did not have a long-standing, intense, tradition of mutual animosity before the twentieth century. European anti-Semitism excluded Jews from work economies in early modern times, forcing Jews to imagine that the way to liberate themselves from the “Shylock” stigma of parasitism would be to create their own exclusionary autarky in Eretz Israel by means of a Hebrew Labor policy—this policy, in turn, could only have alienated neighboring Arabs from the start, on the Second Aliyah. Christianity’s socioeconomic

exclusion of Jews in Europe bred Zionist autarkic pioneering, to the detrimental exclusion of Palestinians.

Fourth, the local, Ottoman, roots of the Second Aliyah's Hebrew Labor ideology are often overlooked. On many levels, Zionist rhetoric about the sickly dependent Old Yishuv interacted with European colonialist rhetoric about the "sick man of Europe," Turkey. The Second Aliyah reached its pinnacle in 1908, when the World Zionist Organization opened its Palestine Office in Jaffa, symbolizing a new commitment to support on-the-ground pioneering work in the country.⁹⁶ The new policy was a departure from a view holding that such pioneering work, undertaken in the absence of "charter" sanction from the Sublime Porte, was semi-illicit "infiltration" (Herzl, who died in 1904, championed this view). In the same year, 1908, the Young Turks revolutionized regional realities, acting out of their determination to liberate the empire from the "sick man" stigma. Second Aliyah stalwarts like the young David Ben-Gurion did not entirely emulate the Young Turks; but the constitutional ferment in the Ottoman Empire clearly energized them, substantially changed their political calculations and planning, and encouraged them to believe, well into the WWI period, that their Jewish national movement would fulfill itself under Turkish auspices.⁹⁷ Hebrew Labor ideology detached the Second Aliyah pioneers from the supposed halukah depravity of the Old Yishuv, just as the Young Turk revolution aimed to detach the region from stigmas regarding the depravity of the sultan's autocracy. In this regional sense, the Hebrew Labor view took root in the right place, at the right time.

All this said, "Hebrew Labor" was an ideology fraught with catastrophic implications. Wherever moral insight on the Arab issue arose on the Second Aliyah, it invariably generated out of on-the-ground encounters in the workplace, as in the example of Yitzhak Epstein's agricultural stint in Safed. To this day in Israel, the appalling scarcity of genuine workplace interaction between Arabs and Jews makes it far easier for members of these groups to demonize one another. (The only place where interaction between the groups is routine is the medical sphere, in HMO clinics and hospitals.)⁹⁸

On the Second Aliyah, the immigrant pioneers sometimes evinced a formulaic, mechanical commitment to the "Hebrew Labor" agenda, confusing moral ends and technical means. The purpose of Hebrew Labor was to actualize a vision of social equity and not to score points fastidiously on some imagined nationalist ledger. In 1910–1911, the period of the Degania commune's founding, Labor Zionist groups sent an emissary, Shmuel Yavnieli, to Yemen, to recruit local Jewish immigrants for the New Yishuv. The expectation was that these Yemenite Jewish laborers would work harder, for much lower wages, than their Ashkenazi Jewish peers; thus, their infusion in the Yishuv could be exploited to muscle Arab workers away from the new

pioneering colonies. In this way, the import of Yemenite Jews would redeem the “Hebrew Labor [Only]” policy. The Yavnieli emissary mission in the Yemen was not, I think, as colonially oppressive to local Jews as some Israeli commentators have argued. (Yavnieli himself fought conscientiously against abusive treatment of these Yemenite workers after they immigrated to the Yishuv.)⁹⁹ Still, even in view of the four exculpatory points made above, it is hard to grasp how the Second Aliyah, Ashkenazi Jewish, pioneers thought that it was much better to exploit economically their own Mizrahi Jewish compatriots, in lieu of indigenous Muslim Arabs. In fact, some relentless, searing historical studies have exposed how small groups of Yemenite workers on the most venerated Second Aliyah colonies, including the Kinneret farm discussed below, were domiciled in ragtag, sometimes subhuman, quarters, and were otherwise shamefully ignored or patronized.¹⁰⁰ In this way, formulaic allegiance to the Hebrew Labor ideology fostered intramural prejudice between sub-ethnic Jewish groups, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim.

Jews could never have refashioned themselves in a national cast without indulging the sort of pioneering ethnocentrism that it is implanted in an idea like Hebrew Labor Only. But this does not mean that such an idea’s complicated origins, and problematic implications, should be ignored; and so we have here examined the roots, and hinted about the results, of this staple belief of the Second Aliyah. We return now to the story of how this extraordinary immigration wave unfolded in Galilee.

THE FIRST LABOR ZIONIST COMMUNES

The Zionist Organization’s newly established Palestine Office set its gaze toward Galilee, specifically toward the Kinneret training farm, which had been established on lands of Dleika-Um Juni that had been purchased by the JNF in 1908. The JNF acquired several sites in this period, including Galilee’s Kfar Hittim (located on the north side of the double hill where the climactic 1187 Hattin battle culminated in Saladin’s triumph). Yet the Kinneret farm had strategic precedence, being located close to the Tzemach railway station, the Sea of Galilee, Tiberias, and a few First Aliyah colonies which were under JCA administration.¹⁰¹ After 1908, several dozen halutzim were training at the Kinneret farm; but the establishment’s mounting debts, and signs of incipient conflict between the Palestine Land Development Company (PLDC) agronomist-manager, Moshe Berman,¹⁰² and the young pioneers, had the new Palestine Office director, Arthur Ruppin, anxiously scratching his head.

Born in 1876 in a Posen town, Rawitsch, Ruppin had grown-up in an attitude of ambivalence about his Jewish identity, and he had been traumatized by the collapse of his father’s business when he was an eleven-year-old boy.

A student who drifted between universities in Berlin and Halle, Ruppin was a late bloomer in academia; in 1903, he wrote an essay on the use of Darwinism in social engineering which won a prestigious scholarly prize. Two years later, he became formally affiliated with the Zionist movement. At this stage, Ruppin's outlook was inflected by ultra-nationalist *volk* theories, and eugenicist fads, that circulated in German academic circles. As in the case of many other Zionists, his thinking about putatively degraded "ghetto Jews" of Europe had points of tangency with anti-Semitic stereotypes.¹⁰³

However he reached his conclusions, when Ruppin took hold of the reins of the Palestine Office in April 1908, his agenda was manifestly compatible with the outlook of the Second Aliyah pioneers. "We hold the opinion that the promotion of farm work must be the foundation of our work in Eretz Israel," Ruppin declared at this time. "If we fail to persuade the people to work in agriculture, we will merely bring about a new ghetto" in the country.¹⁰⁴ Ruppin's immense contribution to Israel's history is his seamless patronage of the new communal settlements which were taking root at this point in Galilee¹⁰⁵—he worked out arrangements by which a true measure of on-the-ground autonomy redounded to the Second Aliyah pioneers themselves, even though work communes like Degania remained under the auspices of the Zionist movement's Palestine Office, and auxiliary mechanisms like the PLDC and the JNF. Ruppin's character had an empirical, no-nonsense side (as a sociologist, he published studies of Jewish affairs), but the Galilee *halutzim* greatly appreciated Ruppin as a creative problem solver who worked hard to accommodate their own needs and sensitivities.¹⁰⁶ Ruppin, who died in 1943, gained a moniker as the "Father of Zionist Settlement." In tribute to his contribution to Jewish settlement in Galilee, he was buried at Degania.¹⁰⁷

Applying his talents to the Kinneret farm situation, Ruppin decided to separate a portion of the Um Juni tracts from lands that would remain under the agronomist Berman's supervision. He was banking on the example of another Galilee colony, Sejera. If truth be told, Sejera had a different organizational past, and its communal present was not identical to the situation at the Kinneret training farm. Sejera had been established in 1900–1902 by the JCA on lands previously purchased by Rothschild. At the moment of the Um Juni initiative, Sejera functioned no less as a paramilitary training base for the emerging Bar Giora and Hashomer defense groups than as an agricultural work commune (excluded in 1908 from the self-styled military elite at Sejera, David Ben-Gurion spent his days sulking at this commune, but this did not stop him, as he rose to prominence in later years, from making fanciful suggestions about his level of engagement as a *halutz* worker in Galilee).¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, as an example of latitude displayed on-the-ground toward *halutz* self-striving, the Sejera example inspired Ruppin to seek a creative solution at Kinneret. Assenting to proposals forwarded by *halutzim* at this Galilee

farm, Ruppín's office leased to them the 2,300 dunams at Um Juni for a work year (December 1909–September 1910); on these lands, the young Zionist pioneers were not to be under the tutelage of outside experts or administrators, and Ruppín put a modest work budget at their disposal.¹⁰⁹ Happily, the commune turned a corner, showing a small profit after the year's work.¹¹⁰ Its enthused founders called their communal farm "Degania," the name referring to types of local grain.¹¹¹

Some of them came to believe that the success of this kibbutz prototype bore witness to Second Aliyah pragmatism. The halutzim, on this view, arrived in Ottoman Palestine with just a few broad, programmatic pioneering ideas. For the most part, they adapted their settlement strategies and patterns to circumstances they confronted on the ground. More or less, their message was "we made it up on our own, as we went along." Baratz first struck this chord in a 1920 article;¹¹² later, in the original, English language, version of his memoir, he declared that Degania was not founded "on the sort of language we could get from books." He explained: "What we had learned had been taught us by the conditions of the country, and only further experience could teach us more."¹¹³

This conception of pioneering pragmatism is not fully borne out in the lives and writings of other Degania halutzim, however. The preeminent Degania founder, Yosef Busel, was an ideologically resolved character who spent his days at Degania trying to tame the wanderlust instincts of his youthful pioneering comrades, and to consolidate the commune's status so that it would become a model for a string of permanent communal settlements situated in Galilee, and elsewhere on the Eretz Israel frontier. When Ruppín started to build proper housing at Degania, many of its pioneering purists objected, viewing themselves as a vanguard which would leapfrog between frontier sites in Galilee and elsewhere, without settling in bourgeois comfort on any one of them. Recognizing that imperfect but stably rooted communes were preferable to the unfettered chaos of idealism to which some of his Degania mates seemed disposed, Busel steered the commune toward a realistic solution on this housing issue. He acted in a similar fashion on a number of other matters, ranging from how children would be raised on the commune, to how daily matters would be administered (by a managerial board, rather than referring each small item to the raucous debates of communal assembly).¹¹⁴ The ideological vision laden within Busel's lobbying imagined the Jewish state flowing from a string of stably rooted communes on Eretz Israel's frontiers. Busel was the ideological patriarch of the kibbutz movement. From spring 1917, he worked selflessly in Galilee, trying to find temporary housing for Jews who had been expelled from Jaffa by the Turks, ahead of the British invasion. A little over two years after he took up this burden, Busel was malarial and exhausted. He

drowned to death at the age of twenty-eight, in a boating accident during a storm on the Sea of Galilee.¹¹⁵

The contrast between, on the one hand, Busel's penchant for forward-looking planning and his distrust of momentary impulses, and, on the other hand, the ad-hoc adaptability and anti-ideological ethos projected by Baratz, evokes a broad question that has intrigued Israeli commentators for some time. Did the Second Aliyah develop a communal form of pioneering in accord with socialist-tempered ideals? Or, instead, did the Degania paradigm arise as a survival strategy adopted by ill-experienced yet pragmatic settler immigrants as the best (or only) manner of coping with difficult circumstances?¹¹⁶ Opinion on this issue has been divided.¹¹⁷

Less disputable is the kibbutz model's outsized contribution, both on a practical settlement level during the British Mandate period, and as a symbolic emblem of Zionism's humanitarian side, of its dedication to social justice. The kibbutzim never hosted a significant portion of the Yishuv's (or Israel's) population; but they nevertheless had a significant demographic impact in the immediate post-Ottoman period, jump-starting the Jewish state-in-the-making in the 1918–1923 period known in Zionist historiography as the Third Aliyah. In this period, rural dwellers dropped from 21 percent to 16 percent of the Yishuv's total population, but seventy-seven new communal villages popped up on its map. The size of the kibbutz movement during the Third Aliyah rose 312 percent. "The rate of growth of the kibbutz population was almost five times as great as that of the Jewish population at large," estimates Henry Near, a leading authority on kibbutz history.¹¹⁸ All told, during the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods, Galilee's part in this kibbutz growth story was ample. On Near's roster of seventy-seven total kibbutz settlements in 1939, close to thirty of them are to be found in Galilee.¹¹⁹

When we move from this context of practical achievement to the realm of symbolic iconography, the impact of Degania's founding story, and of the kibbutzim that generated out of it, almost defies estimation. No text ever showcased Israel's self-perceptions more flatteringly or influentially than Leon Uris's 1958 potboiler, *Exodus*.¹²⁰ Of all the Zionist emblems Uris chose to embellish, he out-did himself in his description of Degania's establishment, branding it "the most important single step taken by the Jews since the exodus from Egypt." Interestingly, at the time of the colony's founding, roughly half a century before Uris's rhapsody, neither the Degania settlers, nor their benevolent patron, professed to any intention of setting a lasting example. "The express wish of the laborers, as well as our own wish, is that this experiment not be widely publicized," wrote Ruppin. "We do not want our modest trial to be interpreted as an event auguring a new era."¹²¹

The new Galilee era inaugurated by the Palestine Office-Degania initiative was bruised by Arab-Jewish tensions from the start. The Arab-Jewish

conflict was seventy years old at the start of the Second Aliyah. Naturally, its renewal, in the year 1908, precisely the moment Ruppin's Palestine Office opened and the Ottoman Empire was convulsed by the Young Turks, first unfolded in decades-old, Orientalist, frames. Jews on Kinneret viewed local Bedouin as thuggish but also childish neighbors. The halutzim imagined that they could forestall Arab land claims by outwitting anyone who threatened them. If the "Old Yishuv" had devised a strategy for coping with the evolving conflict, it was such application of trickery and Jewish shrewdness to offset brute violence, a tactic rooted in traditional Jewish sources such as the story of Queen Esther in the Purim Megillah. Because of the diffuse character of Jewish political affairs in the mid-nineteenth century, no Jewish "strategic" idea could have possibly consolidated at this time; but an indication of the semi-ideological status of what we can call the "Queen Esther Method" of defense is that fact that well-placed Jews, who understood Yishuv realities, chose to circulate its gist globally. For instance, an appendix affixed to the English translation of Joseph Schwarz's aforementioned, important Holy Land encyclopedia, which was published in 1850, detailed how clever but militarily unequipped Jews survived in the Yishuv by out-smarting strong but obtuse Arabs. (American Judaism's most authoritative figure in this period, Isaac Leeser, lent his authority to this Esther Method by translating Schwarz's book.)¹²²

Kibbutz Kinneret veterans recalled that in the settlement's experimental farm stage, in 1908, its Second Aliyah residents were harassed by Bedouin who were led by Sheikh Isa, a ruffian who had fallen into debt and grudgingly sold lands then used by the nascent Jewish commune. Isa's men essentially demanded protection payments, offering their services as guards at the Kinneret farm; and the sheikh made ominous social calls which the Jews interpreted as threats. Berman refused to put the colony's guard duty in Bedouin hands. Worried, Ruppin urged Kinneret not to tempt fate, advising them to forego the purchase of cattle and sheep for the time being. When the farm's threshing floor was set ablaze, Jewish settlers retaliated by confiscating the Bedouin group's herd. Kinneret called in reinforcements from another Galilee colony, Yavne'el. Bedouin nonetheless infiltrated Kinneret's compound, and, amid war hooting, freed their animals. Thereafter, Sheikh Isa and his men continued to harass the Jewish colony; but Berman and the colony's maintenance man, Moishe Avramsohn, devised a ruse, telling the Bedouin attackers ghost stories. They embellished these tales with props and illusions, such as an episode where they ignited hay and created smoke fires to create an effect of spirits rising from the dead. Kinneret veterans claimed that the sheikh was never seen after this ploy.¹²³

The factual precision of their recollection can be questioned, of course. Yet, even though Zionists thoroughly modernized their defense strategies in

the late Ottoman and Mandate periods, this Orientalist framing of the Arab-Jewish conflict's roots spawned tributaries; in fact, Degania's military history became trimmed by folklore. According to the biographer Shabtai Tevet, Moshe Dayan, Degania's second-born child, concluded after the May 20, 1948, battle at the site (where Degania was now divided as two kibbutzim) that making loud noises could effectively intimidate Arab attackers.¹²⁴ Also, recent, ingenious literary treatments of a legendary tank deployed in this 1948 Galilee battle bear some stylized traces of the way the traditional Queen Esther Method relied on Jewish wit to deflect dread or violence.¹²⁵

The character of the Zionist turn to arms in the late Ottoman and Mandate period has become a disputed topic. Some scholars argue that the "external pressure" of Palestinian aggression forced the Jewish settlers to resort to defensive military mobilization, whereas others emphasize intra-generational dynamics in the Yishuv and argue that Israeli militarism was largely self-generated.¹²⁶ The truth surely lies somewhere between these two interpretive poles, but both pander to their respective audiences' pre-existing biases about Jewish or Arab culpability for the conflict. It is more constructive to avoid explicit or implicit blame-throwing for the origins and essence of the conflict, and to conceptualize the dispute dispassionately and broadly, as stemming from asymmetry in the modernization of the two peoples. From the Jewish standpoint, in the latter, 1908–1914, stage of the Second Aliyah, the evolving dispute transformed rapidly in Galilee for two reasons, namely, the emotional baggage which the pioneers carried with them from pogrom-stricken tsarist Russia, and the culture of innovation which was taking root in colonies like Kinneret and Sejera.

To an observable extent, when the Jewish pioneer activists organized new paramilitary groups in Galilee and elsewhere, they were fighting the ghosts of their traumatized pasts in Russia. Their points of reference were not always local.¹²⁷ An alternative to Vitkin's proclamation is sometimes cited as the starting line of the Second Aliyah: the arrival, during the Hanukkah holiday of late 1903, of twelve to fourteen battle-trained immigrants who had, months earlier, been involved in Jewish self-defense efforts during the Gomel pogrom.¹²⁸ This Belarus event in summer 1903 was considered a turning point in Jewish politics, a heroic and appropriate response to the display of cringing Jewish cowardice which influential cultural spokesman, particularly the poet Hayim Nahman Bialik, imputed to the victims of the horrific April pogrom in Kishinev.¹²⁹ The Gomel group immigration to the Yishuv thus symbolizes how some Second Aliyah pioneers approached Arab issues with a militant predisposition, one which consolidated under despotic Russian, not despotic Ottoman, circumstances.

Some scholars have argued that Jewish partisans in the paramilitary Bar Giora and Hashomer outfits responded to low-level Arab provocation with

indiscriminate forcefulness, displaying a transported orientation suited to “red terror” politics in Russia, rather than the farm poaching and semi-random frontier marauding characteristic of frontier life in Ottoman Palestine.¹³⁰ When they outfitted themselves in military dress, these Jewish settler guards evinced vicarious identification with the machismo of the Jews’ mortal enemies in the Pale of Settlement, the Cossacks, no less than they displayed sublimated appreciation of the masculine battle valor of their emerging, Palestinian, enemies in their new country.¹³¹

On an individual level, the larger-than-life, heroic figures of the Second Aliyah typically came to Palestine with complicatedly embattled Russian pasts. Quite possibly, they engaged with Arab issues partly out of an existential need to tie up loose ends that remained from their overseas, pre-immigration experience, hoping to fortify both their own self-perceptions, and also the way their Jewish peers related to them. One colorful example is the career of Manya Wilbushewitch Shochat, who arrived in Palestine in early 1904 and later married Israel Shochat, a founder of the Bar Giora/Hashomer paramilitary groups.¹³² Manya won renown during the Mandate years for (among other things) her courageous work procuring arms for defense work on frontier settlements, and for bringing illegal Jewish immigrants (*ma’apalim*) into the country via its northern border and Kibbutz Kfar Giladi in Upper Galilee. Fairly or not, during her earlier, Russian, days, Shochat’s radical activity in worker organization had been mired in accusation due to her alleged collaboration with tsarist officials, particularly S. V. Zubatov, a cunning character who created police unions to coopt labor militants.¹³³ To some extent, Second Aliyah figures like Manya Shochat acted with extreme idealism and valor in Palestine, and pursued utopian visions of sovereign Jewish rebirth, because they wanted to rub away memories of how their political idealism had been compromised by tsarist Russia’s incriminatingly terrible realities.

The other reason why military orientations in the Yishuv revamped so dramatically, almost instantaneously jettisoning the age-old, Esther Method, reliance on guile, and adopting paramilitary options which became precursors of today’s Israel Defense Forces (IDF), is that the Galilee colonies fostered a culture of innovation. Lost in an ancient land, these East European Jewish immigrants fought their fears by becoming modern as fast as they possibly could. In years before WWI, security circumstances at places like Kinneret and Sejera became inextricably tied to experimentation in modern farming, gender equality, and other reform-related issues.

In 1908, the Kinneret farm was a backwater. For instance, in inverse proportion to the high incidence of malaria and other ailments, medical care was hard to find. When a settler became too incapacitated to work, he was sent to Dr. Torrance’s care at Tiberias’ Scottish Hospital, but the halutzim knew that treatment there included missionary evangelization.¹³⁴ For a brief

spell, a Zionist physician, Jacob Bernstein-Kogan, came from Yavne'el, almost as a symbolic reminder of the pioneers' tortured Old World pasts (Bernstein-Kogan had been a middle-level Zionist official in Kishinev before the 1903 pogrom, and his activity inadvertently incited the paranoia of local anti-Semites¹³⁵). The training farm's circumstances rapidly modernized. New techniques were brought to it from overseas.

One modernization source was the Woodbine agricultural school in New Jersey, which was administered in a rather anti-Zionist vein under the auspices of Baron de Hirsch. The conduit between the Woodbine and Kinneret training stations was a Zionist farm pioneering group, called Haikar Hatzair (the Young Farmer), whose guiding force in 1908 was a talented, Bessarabia-born twenty-six-year old named Eliezer Joffe. Joffe had arrived in the United States in 1904, and established some Zionist groups, with the help of Judah Magnes, the charismatic Reform rabbi. He enrolled in Woodbine in 1908 and immigrated two years later to Palestine.

Within a year, Joffe joined the PLDC training station at Kinneret, not coming to Galilee by accident. As the historian Israel Kollat wrote, Joffe was "among those who viewed Galilee not just as a geographical site, but rather as a corrective to their extremely averse attitude toward [the colonies in] Judea. They believed in the potential of a new form of settlement in Galilee."¹³⁶ In May 1912, Ruppin signed with Joffe's Haikar Hatzair group a one year work agreement at Kinneret, its terms differing from the early Degania contract in that members of Joffe's cadre agreed to a lease arrangement for their plots, at a cost equivalent to 1 percent of the farm's total value, and were to receive the profits of their labor. Joffe's four man group then proceeded to introduce modern "farm methods and equipment which were then unknown in the country"; in particular, it gained renown for promoting the transition to a mixed, crop and livestock, farm.¹³⁷ Throughout the year, however, Joffe's innovative farm was plagued by theft and security tensions, instigated by local Bedouin and also Circassians. In one incident, one of the Haikar Hatzair farmers, Dov Klay, who had learned to box in the United States, knocked down two Circassian marauders at Kinneret. (Several months later, after Joffe's group disbanded, Klay was murdered by Arabs on the Milhamia colony.)¹³⁸ While Joffe's stay at Kinneret was not long-lasting, it became indelibly connected not just to specific items of farming modernization, but also, more broadly, to innovation in Zionism's settlement movement. At the end of WWI, Joffe published an influential blueprint for a Zionist farm colony that would provide greater leeway to private homesteading, a "Moshav Ovdim";¹³⁹ and, with Degania co-founder Shmuel Dayan (among others) by his side, Joffe was instrumental in the establishment of the first such moshav colony, Nahalal, in the Jezreel Valley.

The Kinneret farm was the receiving station of a global transmission of Jewish capital and know-how. In the gender sphere, the initial push for an agricultural training farm for women came from Berlin, where a forward-looking twenty-seven-year-old native of Grodno, White Russia, Hannah Maisel, met in November 1910 with Otto Warburg, a botanist who was soon to become president of the World Zionist Organization. Impressed with Maisel's well-explicated proposal, Warburg wrote to Ruppin, setting wheels in motion for support for the innovative project¹⁴⁰—in 1911, it was a Germany-based Zionist women's organization, the *Verband jüdischer Frauen für Kulturarbeit in Palästina* (the Jewish Women's League for Cultural Work in Palestine, founded in 1907) that provided funding for Maisel's project at Kinneret.¹⁴¹ Earlier, Maisel had labored as an immigrant in Palestine for a year before she found her way to Warburg's office. In Galilee in 1909, she drew inspiration from a ground-breaking farm cooperative project at Sejera, whose architect was Manya Shochat. (Three years later, Manya and Hanna became sisters-in-law, when the latter married Eliezer Shochat.) By the time she met with Warburg, Maisel was convinced that women pioneers could work in cowsheds and chicken coops, as well as crop cultivation; but, she judged, they needed training. "Women will not find employment in agricultural branches by dint of their physical strength or independent character alone," she wrote. "Instead they will be sent to do housework. But once a woman is able to do [farm work] with professional skill, once she gains self-confidence, a sense of responsibility and also initiative, she will be able to find a place in the agricultural sector and win status as an equal to [the colony's] male members."¹⁴²

In April 1911, Maisel's *Havat Ha-Alamot* (Young Women's Farm) was up and running at Kinneret, with four trainees under Hanna's supervision. The number of students in an annual class peaked at twenty; and Second Aliyah cultural notables, including the poetess Rachel (Rachel Bluwstein) and her sister Shoshana Bluwstein, numbered among the training farm's students. During *Havat Ha-Alamot*'s seven years of operation, some seventy young women studied agriculture at Kinneret. Putting Maisel's achievement in perspective, historian Margalit Shilo observes that as the Second Aliyah drew to a close in 1914, the number of women laborers in the country who had identifiable association with this immigration wave was just 200.¹⁴³ In other words, Maisel's Galilee training farm constituted the most impactful women's empowerment initiative undertaken during the most vaunted pioneering period in modern Jewish history. To be sure, it fell far short of ensuring gender equality on the communal settlements. The *Degania* memoirs are filled with confessional or apologetic sections relating to the fact that kitchen, laundry, and other housework-type work roles on the commune were filled disproportionately by women.¹⁴⁴ This was not always the case, however—for decades, Baratz's wife Miriam was

a stalwart worker in Kibbutz Degania Aleph's cowshed. And, in the main, issues of women's work, child-rearing, and family structure did not remain unresolved because of gender stereotypes on the kibbutzim. Instead, they were innately complicated problems which had no certain solution. (The pros and cons of these communes' most daring innovation in domestic matters, by which children slept together, apart from their families, continue to be debated, many years after this practice was abandoned, by and large, on kibbutzim.)

For our purposes, it suffices to point out that images of Woodbine-trained farmers planting American-style technique in the Kinneret soil, while young women eagerly studied agriculture in Maisel's school, imparted to Second Aliyah Galilee settlement an ethos of rapid modernization. When these colonies confronted Arab poaching or violence, the pioneers could no longer be disposed to use traditional Jewish modes of self-defense. For the Old Yishuv, bribe-giving, guile, and other relatively non-belligose tactics might have appeared as efficient ways of distracting hostile Arab neighbors, but the young idealists of the Second Aliyah associated these methods with the debased *galut* life of Jewish exile. Ironically, the alternative defense tactics developed by these young pioneers also bore the imprint of Old World realities: the difference was that the Second Aliyah modeled itself, in part, after the attitudes and techniques of the Jews' overseas oppressors, rather than the victimized passivity of their own parents and grandparents in the Russian Pale.

The Bar Giora paramilitary group was established in late September 1907, at a meeting held in the apartment of the future second president of Israel, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi.¹⁴⁵ David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister and easily Zionism's most authoritative figure over the fifteen years that preceded 1948, and over the fifteen years that elapsed after Israel's establishment, was not invited to the meeting. This snub stung his core—and historians have observed how, decades later, long after he left Galilee and long after the Second Aliyah, Ben-Gurion's decisions, orientations, and recollections clearly attest to how badly he had wanted, at Sejera, to attach himself to the colony's hybrid identity formula, and become a pioneer farmer and paramilitary fighter.¹⁴⁶ The historian Jonathan Frankel, an authoritative expert on socialist Zionism in this period, professed astonishment about how Poale Zion activists like Ben-Zvi and Ben-Gurion, who were committed to a socialist vision of universal brotherhood, became so enthusiastically gung-ho about joining a conspiratorial military group whose agenda was not class struggle, but rather intimidating deterrence of Arabs on the pioneering frontier.¹⁴⁷ Looking at this matter from above, in terms of ideologies that had grafted onto ambitious Labor Zionist activists, it appears that he missed the point. When Galilee origins of Zionism's turn to arms are viewed from the bottom

up, in terms of what was happening on the ground at colonies like Kinneret and Sejera, the mystery beclouding this subject evaporates.

Bar Giora's core group, constituted of men like Israel Shochat, Israel Giladi, Yehezkel Hankin, and Alexander Zaid, was short on political intellectualism,¹⁴⁸ but long on embittered experience and redemptive activity connected to anti-Semitism in tsarist Russia. Hankin was a hero of the Gomel pogrom resistance, and Shochat organized this paramilitary outfit on a Yishuv youth village where children orphaned in the shocking 1903 Kishinev pogrom were in full view of Bar Giora recruits.¹⁴⁹ Whether or not the "Russian" background of this pioneering figures should count as the leading, or as an important, determinant of Zionism's turn to arms depends upon how one analyzes the Second Aliyah's broad sociopolitical context. Up to WWI, this early Zionist military activity was not always conspiratorial: under late Ottoman policies, Bar Giora was an underground organization, but its successor, Hashomer, could openly conduct some of its activities. The obvious assumption about the historical meaning of this early Zionist military mobilization is that it was the precedent-setting forerunner of today's IDF—persons uneasy with Israeli realities today would thus evaluate the Bar Giora group as the trigger in a process by which unduly vulnerable Jews transmogrified and became overly powerful. Most scholars have adopted this view of Bar Giora and Hashomer as the germinating kernel of the IDF; but others, who point out that conditions in Palestine changed fundamentally after WWI, thanks largely to Britain's assumption of power in the country, emphasize other, later, precursors of Israel's army;¹⁵⁰ and, as mentioned, there is ongoing scholarly debate as to whether Israel's oft-dire security situation can be attributed fundamentally to Arab aggression, or whether internal militarization trends in Zionism must also be cited as a causal factor in the tragic Jewish-Arab dispute. To some extent or another, all of these points have merit. But they can also all be awarded demerits for under-estimating the logic of modernization, a near omnipotent force that combines ongoing technological innovation with the status-seeking motivations of emerging, secularized, elites.

After their flight from the "Old World" of persecuted Jewish traditionalism, the young men and women on the Second Aliyah were utterly lost. They were desperately determined to create a new political world in which, first of all, they themselves would be empowered. In the Zionist phraseology of the day, this world became known as the "New Yishuv." Formulated after the departure from the worn-out pioneering of the Judean colonies, the motto of "on to Galilee" meant that *everything* must change. So on Sejera and Kinneret, the halutzim were changing everything. Farm work would change the economic-public profile of the Jew; and this farm work itself needed to be fully modernized, as Joffe's Haikar Hatzair group promised to do. Gender relations would be transformed for innumerable reasons. The one with deepest roots was the

fact that the soul-stifling, and prosaically debilitating, character of *shiduch* early marriages and other facets of traditional Jewish family life had enraged Haskalah-influenced writers like Moshe Leib Lilienblum forty years earlier, before anyone had an idea of what a Bedouin (or a Zionist Congress) really looked like; responsive, more than anything else, to social issues like *shiduch* (arranged) marriages, enlightened Jews like Lilienblum set out on the Jewish nationalist path.¹⁵¹ So, at Kinneret, Maisel's Havat Ha-Alamot attested to this agenda of radical change in Jewish gender realities and social circumstances. No less than anything else, the cringingly defenseless profile of the traditional Jew had to be changed—and this item on the Second Aliyah's agenda of revolutionary transformation gained upgraded urgency because pioneers on Galilee colonies happened to face mounting Arab pressure and violence. It bears mention that items on this Jewish change roster were not segmented, discrete phenomena which cohere together because of historians' advantage of hindsight. In their Galilee setting, at this transformative 1908 moment, Second Aliyah figures like Sejera's Manya Shochat personified this trifecta of transformation—modern farming, gender role change, and military mobilization. Excluded from Bar Giora, pouting but still very alert on the other side of the Sejera colony, Ben-Gurion was watching these pioneer innovator soldiers very closely. He was learning from them.

Kinneret was frequently attacked during these turning point years. In May 1911, just weeks after Maisal's school opened, a popular Kinneret settler, Menahem Shmulevich (known as "Mamashi") was found dead near the colony, his mouth filled with dirt. An Arab physician claimed Mamashi died of a stroke, but Kinneret comrades surmised that he had been murdered by Bedouin.¹⁵² He was the first pioneer to be buried at the Kinneret cemetery, which later became filled with the graves of Second Aliyah luminaries such as Rachel and Berl Katznelson. Also, the year during which plots were leased to the Haikar Hatzair group was marred by menacing Bedouin encroachment. Joffe's brother was involved in a harrowing incident wherein a few Kinneret farmers and forty Bedouin infiltrators cocked rifles, threatening one another.¹⁵³ Nor were the women students of Havat Ha-Alamot spared scenes of grisly terror. The most notorious incident occurred in late November 1913, just three weeks after the founding group of Kvutza Kinneret (Kibbutz Kinneret) took root on the ground: one of its members, Yosef Zaltzman, was shot dead by four Arab attackers. Two of Maisel's students, who had worked into the evening hours watering a vegetable garden, were in the vicinity. Wounded, Zaltzman lingered in the Kinneret compound for hours, as Havat Ha-Alamot students ripped bedsheets for use as primitive bandages. The only thing to do was to wait for Dr. Torrance, who reached Kinneret later in the night, having traveled across the Sea of Galilee in a motorboat. The Christian physician sadly told the Jewish pioneers to pray for their comrade's soul. The

halutzim decided to bury Zaltzman at the site of the killing.¹⁵⁴ This tragedy had been preceded two days before by another terror attack, at Degania. This murder victim, Moshe Barsky, belonged to the Degania kvutzah, and became remembered as the first Kibbutz member to be killed by an Arab. Barsky had traveled to Milhamia on an errand and was ambushed by attackers on his return journey—the Degania halutzim knew that something was amiss when Barsky’s mule returned to the commune without its rider. One person in the search party that went out to find their slain eighteen-year-old comrade was a one-armed veteran of the Russian army, the holder of unheard-of decorations for a Jewish soldier, including the Cross of St. George, named Joseph Trumpeldor.¹⁵⁵ The killing temporarily unnerved Degania’s members. One, Shmuel Dayan, was especially pained. Barsky had traveled to Milhamia for medicine to staunch a bloody infection that was bothering his friend, Shmuel. Eighteen months later, Dayan named his newborn son “Moshe,” after Barsky.¹⁵⁶

NOTES

1. For a detailed overview of the 1881–1882 pogroms as a turning point in modern Jewish politics: Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews 1862–1917* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For origins and developments in the First Aliyah: M. M. Silver, *Zionism and the Melting Pot* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2020), 54–128.

2. For varying views of Pinsker: Dmitry Shumsky, “Leon Pinsker and Autoemancipation: A Reevaluation,” *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society*, vol. 18, no. 1 (Fall 2011), 33–62; Yosef Goldstein, *Anu hayinu ha-rishonim: Toldot Hibbat Tsiyon 1881–1918* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2016), 82–97; Silver, *Zionism*, 54–56.

3. Ahad Ha’am, “Avdut be-tokh herut,” [Heb.] in Ahad Ha’am, *Al parashat derakhim* vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1978), 10; Silver, *Zionism*, 190–92.

4. For Ahad Ha’am: Steven Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha’am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Yosef Goldstein, *Ahad Ha’am: Biyographyah* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Keter, 1992).

5. Israel Bartal, “Old Yishuv and New Yishuv: Image and Reality,” *Jerusalem Cathedra* (1981), 215–31.

6. This dependence is sympathetically delineated, mostly from the standpoint of the Rothschild patrons, in Simon Schama, *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1978).

7. Ran Aharonsohn, *Rothschild and Early Jewish Colonization* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

8. The research pendulum, it bears mention, is still in swing, and some recent studies have underscored emotive-idealistic factors in early Zionist pioneering, at least implicitly reinforcing long-standing ideas about the unique connection between

Jews and Eretz Israel: Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

9. Gur Alroey, *An Unpromising Land: Jewish Migration to Palestine in the Early Twentieth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

10. Silver, *Zionism*, 104–105.

11. Ya'akov Harozen, *Hazon Hahitnahlot b'galil* (Jerusalem: Rabbi Kook Institute, 1971), 13–74.

12. Silver, *Zionism*, 102.

13. *Ibid.*, 104.

14. Overviews of the Haskalah include Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Mordecai Levin, *Erkhe hevrah ve-khalkalah ba-ideologyah shel tekufat ha-Haskalah* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1975); Mordecai Zalkin, *Ba'a lot Ha-Shahar: Ha-Haskalah he-Yehudit ba-Imperyah ha-Rusit ba-me'ah ha-tesha esreh* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000).

15. Silver, *Zionism*, 101–104.

16. First installments in this serialized attack on Safed halukah were published anonymously in *Ha-Shahar*, whose editor, Peretz Smolenskin, himself frequently polemicized against alleged Orthodox malfeasance, both in fiction and nonfiction genres. Smolenskin apparently added supplemental information, and interpolated his own views, in these installments; eventually he revealed that their author was Eilboim, a sadly estranged figure who had been part of Safed's Orthodox society; and there is no reason to disbelieve that Eilboim composed the basis of this influential attack. See Nurit Arnon, introduction to: Menahem Mendel Eilboim, *Eretz Hatzvi* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Ben Tzvi Institute, 1883/1982).

17. Eilboim, *Eretz Hatzvi*.

18. See the discussion in the “Mishnaic Galilee” chapter, in M. M. Silver, *History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 128–9.

19. I have written the bulk of this two volume study on the second floor of my apartment in a neighborhood wedged between these two locales. Overlooking the Sea of Galilee, no place in Israel affords more insight about how Jewish secularity and Orthodoxy interact, and also about how Judaism developed historically in dialogue with the other two monotheistic religions.

20. Moshe Leib Lilienblum, “Ways of the Talmud,” “Additions to Ways of the Talmud,” *Kol Kitvei Lilienblum* [Heb.] (Cracow: Yosef Fischer Press, 1912), 7–52; Silver, *Zionism*, 34–37.

21. Silver, *Zionism*, 108.

22. Israel Klausner, *Hibat Tsiyon be-Romanyah* (Jerusalem: Hasifriya hatziyonit, 1958).

23. Moshe David Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Eretz Israel Press, 1936), 50–52.

24. <http://www.dnathan.com/bucshester/familystory/>

25. Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david*, 55–56.

26. *Ibid.*, 76.

27. *Ibid.*, 75–76.

28. In his memoir, written over a century later, Shub had not a single positive word to say about the pioneering precedent Rokach's group set at Gei Oni. Rokach's quarrelsome personality was partly at fault (at the time of Rosh Pina's founding, he petulantly raised questions about the purchasing deed's legality, thereby infuriating Shub; Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david*, 99). The snubbing of Rokach's group belongs, however, to a broader dynamic by which immigrant Zionist newcomers tended to begrudge their pioneering predecessors. This phenomenon is quite common in the way "Second Aliyah" pioneers before WWI disparaged the First Aliyah. Silver, *Zionism*, 259.

29. First Aliyah settler-pioneers are thought of as operating collectively under Hibat Zion auspices, but the Bilu sub-movement or vanguard operated semi-independently. The term Bilu is taken from the Hebrew acronym Beit Yaakov Lekhu Venelkha (House of Jacob, Let us go, Isaiah 2:5).

30. Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david*, 85 (clause 44).

31. Shaul Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-alijon anachnu shomrim* (Haifa: n.p., 2015), 25; Silver, *Zionism*, 122.

32. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-alijon*, 14.

33. White's two volume history—Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Religion in Christendom* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1896)—stemmed from an 1874 lecture and publication.

34. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-alijon*, 54–63.

35. In Degan's oral history memoir, veteran Yesud Ha'ma'ala residents recall families in which several siblings died of malarial-related illness. They insist that adults, particularly pioneering women, were less afflicted by malaria—the main victims in this ill-fated swamp colony were children. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-alijon*, 55.

36. *Ibid.*, 61.

37. *Ibid.*, 40–45.

38. To date, the prevailing scholarly view is to view the consolidated use of Hebrew in the "New Yishuv" in late Ottoman times as a concerted, successful, exercise in social engineering, rather than as a relatively natural, non-programmatic, outgrowth of the language's usages in religious and other settings prior to the early Zionist Aliyot (immigration waves): Ariel Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew: The Creation of a Jewish National Culture in Ottoman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

39. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-alijon*, 42.

40. *Ibid.*, 14–15.

41. Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david*, 96–99.

42. Silver, *Zionism*, 121.

43. Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david*, 87.

44. Laurence Oliphant, *Haifa, or Life in Modern Palestine* (London: William Blackwood and sons, 1887), 71.

45. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-alijon*, 21.

46. *Ibid.*, 139–87.

47. Silver, *Zionism*, 127.

48. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-alijon*, 143.

49. Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david*, 75 recorded that the ship's name was, as far as its Jewish passengers were concerned, "Titus," after the Roman emperor notorious for the destruction of the Second Temple. Due their self-image as a vanguard in the resettlement of Eretz Israel, they found this name to be poetically ironic.

50. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-aliyon*, 34–35.

51. Aharonsohn, *Rothschild and Early Jewish Colonization*, 69–70.

52. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-aliyon*, 36.

53. Ibid.

54. Silver, *Zionism*, 71.

55. Schama, *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel*, 54–57. For Mohilever: Silver, *Zionism*, 54–56. Aharonsohn, *Rothschild and Early Jewish Colonization*, 155, mentions another intermediary, Michael Erlanger, a wealthy merchant from Alsace who was active with French Jewish organizations.

56. Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david*, 106. Oliphant settled four families on this land, two from Safed, two from East Europe.

57. Oliphant, *Haifa, or Life in Modern Palestine*, 71; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosh_Pinna#cite_note-7

58. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-aliyon*, 32.

59. Ibid., 38.

60. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-aliyon*, 49.

61. Ibid., 50.

62. Ibid., 125–38.

63. Shub, *Zikhronot l'beit david*, 154–62.

64. Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-aliyon*, 106–7.

65. For Kalvarisky's endeavors at Mishmar Hayarden, Degan, *Et gvul galil ha-aliyon*, 111–13. For an overview of his activity in Galilee as a whole: Irit Amit, "Haim Margolit-Kalvarisky and Settlement in the Galilee," in Mordecai Naor (ed.), *Etsba ha-Galil, 1900–1967: meqorot, sikumim, parashiyot nivharim ye-homer ezer* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1991), 30–42.

66. Shmuel Avitsur, "Wind Power," in David Kushner (ed.), *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1986), 239.

67. For Hashomer and its origins: Yaakov Goldstein, "Ha-hitgonenut, ha-shmira ve-irguni bar-giura ve-hashomer be-aliah ha-sheniyah," in Israel Bartal (ed.), *Haliyah he-sheniyah* vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982), 443–47.

68. Silver, *Zionism*, 266–68.

69. Though there were well-publicized but ineffectual study groups such as "Brit Shalom," which attracted several prominent members, very few Zionist activists in the Mandate period worked as energetically on the ground as Kalvarisky on Arab Jewish coexistence initiatives (the aforementioned, American-born, former Reform Rabbi, Judah Leib Magnes might be the sole comparison). Some critics charged that Kalvarisky's work was tainted by bribe-giving to Arab notables: Neil Caplan, *Palestine Jewry and the Arab Question 1917–1925* (London: Frank Cass, 1978), 127–32. An oddly distorted view of Kalvarisky's character and career was provided in a 2008 historical Hebrew novel by Alon Hilu, *Ahuzat Dajani* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Sefarim, 2008).

70. Steven Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

71. Epstein published his “Hebrew in Hebrew” pedagogic manifesto in 1901.

Early twentieth century methodologies in Hebrew learning and Jewish education tended to have roots in Safed. Samson Benderly, who is considered the patriarch of modern Jewish education in the United States in this period, was born in Safed. Jonathan Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and Modern Jewish Education* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 2.

72. Shalom Levin, “Yitzhak Epstein,” in Zeev Tzahor (ed.), *Haliyah ha-sheniyah* vol. 2, (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1997), 24.

73. Alan Dowty, “‘A Question that Outweighs All Others’: Yitzhak Epstein and Zionist Recognition of the Arab Issue,” *Israel Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Spring 2001), 34–54.

74. Yitzhak Epstein, “A Hidden Question,” reprinted in Yehoshua Kaniel (ed.) *Haliyah ha-sheniyah*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1997), 350–54.

75. Ibid., 354.

76. Yosef Vitkin, “Kol kore el tze’irei Yisrael asher libbam le-amam ule-Zion,” in Kaniel, *Haliyah ha-sheniyah*, 13.

77. Shulamit Laskov, “Yosef Haim Vitkin,” in Tzahor, *Haliyah ha-sheniyah*, 159–64.

78. Silver, *Zionism*, 259.

79. Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

80. Alroey, *An Unpromising Land*.

81. Ben Halpern and Jehuda Reinharz, “Tarbut politit ve-metziyut,” in Israel Bartal (ed.), *Haliyah ha-sheniyah*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1997), 11–38.

82. Silver, *Zionism*, 257–81.

83. Ze’ev Tzahor, “Ha-imut bein ha’aliyah ha-rishonah ve ha’aliyah ha-sheniyah,” in Avigdor Shinar (ed.), *Hagirah ve-hityashvut be-Yisra’el uva-amim* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Institute, 1982); Silver, *Zionism*, 259–61.

84. Joseph Baratz, *Kfar al gadot hayarden* (Tel Aviv: Sepharim Ot, 1959), 15. The original version of the memoir was released years earlier, in English: Joseph Baratz, *A Village by the Jordan: The Story of Degania* (London: Harvill Press, 1954).

85. Shmuel Dayan, *Hetzi yuval shanim shel deganyah* (Tel Aviv: Shteibel, 1935), 16–17.

86. Degania is technically located in the Jordan Valley, but considerations of its immediate physical proximity to Galilee, and its folkloristic prominence in this Second Aliyah Galilee pioneering phase, warrant its inclusion in a history of Galilee. When Second Aliyah spokesman such as Berl Katznelson referred to a “Republic of Hebrew Laborers in Galilee,” they had Degania in mind, first and foremost (Silver, *Zionism*, 267).

87. Moki Tzur, “Yosef Busel,” in Tzahor, *Aliyah he-sheniyah*, 43; Baratz, *Kfar*, 61–62.

88. In one way or another, the iconic Hebrew authors in this Second Aliyah period can be connected to phenomena of mental illness. One biographer of Yosef

Haim Brenner wonders openly about his apparent struggles with neurosis; and Nobel laureate S. Y. Agnon's classic portrait of Second Aliyah culture has at its center a naïve and gentle-spirited protagonist who loses grips with reality. S. Y. Agnon, *Only Yesterday* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Anita Shapira, *Yosef Haim Brenner: A Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

89. Dan Gilad, "Moshe Smilansky," in Tzahor, *Haliyah he-sheniyah*, 267–71.

90. Baratz, *Kfar*, 16.

91. Tzvi Tzahor, "Tzmihat hazramim hapolitim v'irgunei hapoalim," in Bartal, *Haliyah he-sheniyah*, 215–35.

92. The PLDC was established in 1907 for the purpose of preparing land acquired by the JNF for settlement. Bracha Habas (ed.), *He-Hhatser yeha-givah: sipurah shel Kevutsat Kineret* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), 18.

93. Yigal Elam, *ha-Sokhnut ha-Yehudit: shanim rishonot, 1919–1931* (Jerusalem: Hasifriya Hatziyonit, 1990), 178–93.

94. Interesting discussions of this subject include Shmuel Almog, "Productivizatziyah, Proletariatziyah v'avodah evrit," in Almog (ed.), *Le'umiyut, Tsiyonut, Antishemiyut* (Jerusalem: Hasifriya Hatziyonit, 1992), 139–68; Derek Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jerry Muller, *Capitalism and the Jews* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

95. Silver, *Zionism*, 91–97.

96. *Ibid.*, 262.

97. Silver, *Zionism*, 272; Tom Segev, *Medinah be-khol mehir: sipur hayav shel David Ben-Guryon* (Ben Shemen: Keter Books, 2018), 112–17; Anita Shapira, *Ben-Gurion: Father of Modern Israel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 34–40.

98. By mutual interaction, I am referring to work spheres in which there is not a structuralized hierarchy between Jewish management and blue-collar Arab service providers (there are innumerable examples of such hierarchical work environments).

99. M. M. Silver, *Bi-shelihut ha-Ma'arav: mabaṭ aḥer al ha-hiṣṭoryah ha-Yehudit ha-modernit* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2014), 97–109.

100. Nitza Druyan, *Be'en 'marvad kesamim: ole temen b'eretẓ yisrael, 1881–1914* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1981).

101. Silver, *Zionism*, 266.

102. Habas, *He-Hhatser yeha-givah*, 28. For Berman: Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 169–70, and Habas, *He-Hhatser yeha-givah*, 19–20.

103. Ruppin's connection to extreme nationalist, and race-based, fads in German academia and intellectual circles is emphasized in Etan Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

104. Silver, *Zionism*, 265.

105. In *Arthur Ruppin*, Bloom puts a negative spin on this characterization of Ruppin's work as "seamless patronage": he believes that Degania settlers and other halutzim were relatively passive "reproducers" of terms and agendas Ruppin dictated to them.

106. Baratz, *Kfar*, 79–80.
107. Ibid.
108. Silver, *Zionism*, 266, 276.
109. Dayan, *Hetzi yuval shanim shel deganyah*, 37.
110. Silver, *Zionism*, 266.
111. Dayan, *Hetzi yuval shanim shel deganyah*, 46.
112. Henry Near, “Yosef Baratz,” in Tzahor, *Haliyah he-sheniyah*, 119.
113. Baratz, *A Village*, 46. The subsequent, Hebrew, memoir stresses the connection between Degania pioneering and the Eretz Israel landscape: “Our commune was not founded as a sort of immutable doctrine that could never be subject subsequently to reflection and revision. . . . The model didn’t come to us from other countries, nor did we read about it in books. It came into shape as it grew from the life of the country. The kvutzah is an original, Eretz Israel, creation.” Baratz, *Kfar*, 47.
114. Tzur, “Busel,” 40–48.
115. Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 44–45.
116. Silver, *Zionism*, 266.
117. Henry Near, “Likrat hahityashvut haovedet: Hitarganiyot shitufiyot be-tnuat ha-poalim,” in Bartal, *Haliyah he-sheniyah*, 235n.1.
118. Near, *The Kibbutz Movement*, 79.
119. Ibid., 400–402.
120. M. M. Silver, *Our Exodus: Leon Uris and the Americanization of Israel’s Founding Story* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010).
121. Silver, *Zionism*, 267.
122. Joseph Schwarz, *A Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine* (Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1850), 412–48. In these Orientalist stories, Arab leaders and rebels are portrayed as violently remorseless extortionists—their Jewish victims use their wits to stave off a measure of the abuse but are nonetheless victims of depredation. See, for instance, the “Perjury and Treason” story of the “Pakhid” (head of the Jewish community in Jerusalem) during the local rebellion against the Pasha of Damascus in 1826 (428–30).
123. Habas, *He-Hhatser yeha-givah*, 22–23.
124. Shabtai Teveth, *Moshe Dayan: The Soldier, the Man, the Legend* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), 142–43.
125. Assaf Inbari, *The Tank* [Heb.] (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Aharonoth Books, 2018). This book, which semi-humorously casts doubt on who really did what on the tank, has a postmodern sort of mood. It closes a circle that opened with the early 1908 folkloristic approach to terrifying events around Degania. Both the Orientalist Queen Esther method, and Jewishly self-critical, postmodernistic relativism about battle reports, detract from the solemnity and dread of the subject.
126. Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
127. Silver, *Zionism*, 268–81.
128. Goldstein, “Ha-hitgonenut,” 443.

129. Steven Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018), 90.

130. Gur Alroey, "The Russian Terror in Palestine: the Bar Giora and Hashomer Associations, 1907–1920," in Brian Horowitz, Shai Ginsberg (eds.), *Bounded Mind and Soul: Russia and Israel, 1880–1920* (Bloomington: Slavica, 2013), 34–7.

131. Israel Bartal, "Kozak ve-beduyee: Olam ha-demuyim ha-leumi ha-hadash," in Bartal, *Ha'aliyah ha-sheniyah*, 482–93.

132. Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, *Before Golda: Manya Shochat, a Biography* (New York: Biblio Press, 1989); Yaakov Goldstein, *Manya Vilbushevitz Shohat* (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1991); Deborah Hertz, "Manya Shochat and Her Traveling Guns: Jewish Radical Women from Pogrom Self-Defense to the First Kibbutzim," in Jack Jacobs (ed.), *Jews and Leftist Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 200–16.

133. Jeremiah Schneiderman, *Sergei Zubatov and Revolutionary Marxism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 49–68; Yaakov Goldstein, "Heroine or Traitor? The Controversy over Manya Vilbushevich Shohat and Her Links with Zubatov," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 6 (1990), 284–305.

134. Habas, *He-Hhatser yeha-givah*, 24. For Torrance: W. P. Livingstone, *A Galilee Doctor: Being a Sketch of the Career of Dr. D.W. Torrance of Tiberias* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925).

135. Zipperstein, *Pogrom*, 178.

136. Israel Kollat, "Eliezer Joffe," in Tzohar, *Haliyah he-sheniyah*, 210.

137. Ibid.

138. Habas, *He-Hhatser yeha-givah*, 49.

139. Eliezer Joffe, *Yesod Moshvei Ovdim* (n.p: Ha'vaad Hamerkazi shel mifleget hapoel hatzair, 1919).

140. Margalit Shilo, "Hannah Maisel-Shohat," in Tzohar, *Haliyah he-sheniyah*, 255.

141. Esther Carmel-Hakim, "Hannah Maisel-Shohat," *Jewish Women's Archive*, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/maisel-shohat-hannah>

142. Shilo, "Hannah Maisel-Shohat," 256.

143. Ibid., 257.

144. Dayan, *Hetzi yuval shanim shel deganyah*, 74–6, 112–19; Baratz, *Kfar*, 61–70.

145. Silver, *Zionism*, 275.

146. Silver, *Zionism*, 277; Shapira, *Ben-Gurion*, 29; Segev, *Medinah be-khol mehir*, 100.

147. Jonathan Frankel, "The Yizkor Book of 1911: A Note on National Myths in the Second Aliyah," in Frankel (ed.), *Crisis, Revolution and Russian Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 197–98.

148. Yaakov Goldstein, *From Fighters to Soldiers* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 47.

149. Silver, *Zionism*, 275.

150. Silver, *Zionism*, 269; Goldstein, *From Fighters*, 2–3.

151. Silver, *Zionism*, 34–42.

152. Habas, *He-Hhatser yeha-givah*, 36.

153. *Ibid.*, 47.

154. *Ibid.*, 57.

155. *Ibid.*, 58.

156. Mordechai Bar-On, *Moshe Dayan: A Biography, 1915–1981* [Heb.] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2016), 15. Trumpeldor became the foremost victim of a confusing, grisly 1920 attack at an Upper Galilee frontier pioneering station. To mark the centennial of this lugubrious but legendary occurrence, Tel Hai College historian Amir Goldstein, together with Yael Zerubavel, edited a volume about the event, and its echoes in Zionist culture. Its essays feature reevaluations of Trumpeldor's Russian past, Arab political circumstances in post-WWI in the region, the politicization of commemorative events at Tel Hai, and more: Amir Goldstein, Yael Zerubavel (eds.), *Tel Hai: 1920–2020* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 2020).

Chapter 5

The Fight for Galilee, 1948

TWO MILITARY LEADERS, TWO ROADS TO 1948 WARFARE IN GALILEE

Fawzi al-Qawuqji was born in 1890 in Tripoli to a lower-middle class family that belonged to the city's Sunni Muslim community.¹ Following his military father's footsteps, he enrolled in Istanbul's War College in the early 1900s. This institution was divided between ethnically Turkish cadets from Istanbul and Anatolia, and Sunni students like Qawuqji who hailed from the empire's Arab regions and who resented privileges enjoyed by their Turkish peers.

The cardinal issue of whether the empire was to be conceptualized in Turkish or heterogeneous terms escalated when Qawuqji entered his eighteenth year, and the Young Turk revolution convulsed Ottoman affairs. Qawuqji came of age politically in this setting, where secret Arab organizations recruited cadets at the War College. "It was as if this moment of truth, which was released into the skies above the War College, had put an end to the bond that had tied us to the Ottoman state," Qawuqji wrote some six decades later, reflecting on this 1908 turning point. "From that moment we began to feel that we had an independent Arab nation and that behind it were a community and a history and time-honored glory."²

Yigal Allon was born in 1918, to a Galilee family based at Mascha, a Zionist farm community whose name became Kfar Tabor.³ His father, Reuven Paicovich, a harsh, driven man, had roots in Grodno, White Russia (the town where Hannah Maisel was born); as an immigrant in the early 1890s, Reuven first settled at Rosh Pina. There, Allon's father met his mother, Chaya Ethel Schwartz, whose family apparently had lived in Safed for centuries. At the end of the 1890s, the couple made an ill-fated attempt to settle on a new

Galilee colony, Mahanayim. Discouraged and poor, Reuven then left his family for a miserable three year stint in New York City.

When he returned, younger immigrants from East Europe on the Second Aliyah were changing the terms of Zionist pioneering in late Ottoman Palestine, but Allon's father re-settled under the familiar terms of First Aliyah homesteading. This meant that in 1908 Paicovich received farm tracts and a family residence at Mascha under the auspices of Baron de Hirsch's JCA. This JCA arrangement was not a great success at Mascha; and, in years before WWI, Mascha was a Zionist backwater, scarred by dilapidating homes, water shortages, and lack of technological innovation.

Mascha settlers identified as Zionist pioneers, but they were far from fastidious about the Hebrew Labor ideology that was then evolving on Second Aliyah colonies in Galilee and elsewhere. Farmers like Paicovich on Mascha often relied on *harats*, jack-of-all trades Arab peasant laborers.

Allon was born late, when his parents were in their mid-forties, and his first name, Yigal, "redeemer" in Hebrew, reflects hard-won confidence—his older siblings had less elevated first names. He grew up in a hard environment marked by periodic livestock theft and disputes with Arab neighbors, a father locked in embittering squabbles with JCA patrons, and his mother's early death.

For Allon, the turning point came in his mid-teens, when he enrolled at the newly formed Kadoorie Agricultural School, located right by Mascha. Not entirely unlike Qawuqji's situation years earlier, Allon was politicized in a highly regimented school framework, one in which a portion of the students rebelled against the institution's colonial-tempered overlords. At Kadoorie, Allon affiliated with a middle-of-the road youth movement (Maccabi Ha-Tzair), but he was a ringleader in a small-scale student insurrection waged against the school's Anglophile principal (Allon took these student grievances all the way to the Jewish Agency head, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's future prime minister).

During Allon's four year high school period, the large-scale Palestinian insurrection, known euphemistically by the Zionists as the 1936–1939 "Events," erupted, and acts of vandalism at Kfar Tabor accelerated. At one stage, Allon and some Kadoorie comrades were incarcerated at Tiberias for firing shots in a violent altercation with a-Zbekh Bedouin who were accused of trespassing at Mascha. After graduation, in summer 1937, Allon dreaded becoming trapped at Kfar Tabor with his miserable father, consigned to a life of farm drudgery. So when Reuven was briefly hospitalized, Allon impetuously sold the family farm, and set off for a new communal life with idealistic Yishuv peers at Kibbutz Ginosar, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, the area about which Ernest Renan had made Orientalist claims, alleging that Islamic misuse had dimmed and tarnished what had been "dazzling light" and "empyrean blue water" in Jesus's day.

Qawuqji fought three times in Palestine in his career. The first instance occurred during WWI, when he was stationed as an Ottoman officer in the Negev's Bir Sab'a (Be'er Sheva) region; the Germans awarded him an Iron Cross for his raids and reconnaissance work. A quick learner, Qawuqji impressed German officers, including General Otto Liman von Sanders; and from this WWI period onward, pro-German inclinations sometimes deviated from his anti-colonialist, pan-Arab outlook (Qawuqji's longest lasting marriage was to a German woman, Anneliese Muller). Though his pro-German bearing stirred distrust among Turkish strongmen, Qawuqji remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire until its collapse, declining participation in the pro-British Arab revolt instigated by T. E. Lawrence.

Qawuqji was drawn to indigenous Arab revolts against the French and British, who had carved up areas in Syria under the secret wartime Sykes-Picot agreement. After the war, this pan-Arab liberation position naturally propelled Qawuqji toward Emir Faysal (Faysal I Bin Hussein), the most dynamic son of Hussein Bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca; between autumn 1918 and summer 1920, Faysal tried to unite Syria and ward off French occupation (he ruled Syria as King for a few months in 1920). Qawuqji served in the Arab Army which supported Faysal's bid for Syrian independence; in late 1919, stationed at al-Mu'allaqa in the Biqa valley, he led a crackdown against local Arabs suspected of collaboration with the French.

After Faysal's ouster, Qawuqji opportunistically served as a cavalry officer for the French occupation in Syria—"it is likely that he simply needed a job," his biographer laconically writes.⁴ This ideological backslide lasted some five years. Privately, the coopted Qawuqji spent this period collecting examples of Middle East resistance against western colonialism. He was especially inspired by a resistance movement in Morocco led by Abd al-Karim al-Khat-tabi, whose Berber partisan troops pushed back the Spanish and the French until 1926.

As a French cavalry captain stationed in Hama in 1925, Qawuqji immersed himself deeply in Muslim religious observances and began to recruit locals for an anti-French revolt. Meantime, hundreds of miles to the south, on Druze Mountain (Jabal al-Druze), Sultan al-Atrash, head of a prominent Druze family, rallied resistance to the French; Qawuqji and confederates launched an effort to coordinate a full-scale rebellion with these Druze fighters.

The Hama uprising, Qawuqji's contribution to the 1925 Syrian revolt, lasted a few days in early October. Arab rebels in Hama (located 130 miles north of Damascus), armed with rifles and hand grenades, were no match for French field artillery and aircraft. Deploying outdated field tactics he had been taught at the War College before WWI, Qawuqji positioned vulnerable soldiers on main roads and did little to offset France's firepower advantage.

After the Hama setback, Qawuqji became a wandering, anti-colonial fighter, never firmly rooted in a specific nationalist cause, his campaigning fueled by a normatively compelling but practically tenuous vision of Muslim Arab unification in Syria. Before he left Syria as an outlaw renegade in 1927, Qawuqji's tactics had become rough and ugly. He extorted funds and resources from notables in Hama; sometimes brutally, his followers executed local operatives who collaborated with the French regime.

Expelled from Syria, Qawuqji regrouped for a few years in Jeddah, in the Hijaz region of western Saudi Arabia. For a time he became a ranking military adviser to Ibn Saud (Abd al-Aziz Al Sa'ud)—despite this accomplishment, the period constituted an aberration from Qawuqji's Great Syria vision of Arab unity. However high he climbed in Saudi Arabia, he remained vulnerable, since his association in Syria with Faysal, the son of Ibn Saud's great rival, Sharif Hussein, was a fateful liability.

Arrested due to loyalty suspicions, Qawuqji was held for a short time in Mecca in summer 1932, and then left the Hijaz for Iraq, where Faysal had recreated himself, under British tutelage, as monarch. Qawuqji was maneuvering to elevate himself from an obscure role as cavalry instructor in Baghdad's military academy when Faysal died unexpectedly in autumn 1933. Thereafter, he never made headway in Iraq; and his most noticeable activities in this period are a series of visits he made to Palestine ahead of the 1936–1939 uprising, during which he became acquainted with the Palestinian leader, Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem.

This was never a happy, successful relationship. Coming from a well-established Jerusalem family, Hussein's socioeconomic background was unlike Qawuqji's. The mufti was a Palestinian nationalist whereas Qawuqji never really distinguished between national (Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese) sub-groups in his struggle for Arab unity. Hussein would be expelled from Palestine as a result of his leadership of the 1936–1939 revolt; but, earlier, his elevated position as Mufti was a direct result of British patronage, whereas Qawuqji's ascent in regional military affairs descended from his training under the Ottoman Empire. The two men temporarily overcame these differences in summer 1936, when Hussein approached Qawuqji in Baghdad, and persuaded him to recruit some local soldiers, and fight the British and Zionists under the supervision of Jerusalem's newly formed Arab Higher Committee.

Qawuqji and a small band of men slipped out of Iraq and passed on to the western edge of the Jordan River in Palestine, in August 1936. An iconic photograph of the anti-colonial rebel dates from this period—shirtless and seated, fair complexioned, and wearing a pleasant smile and a confident demeanor as he does his own laundry, Qawuqji comes across as a man resolute about his purpose. Subsequently, in western discourse, as in the example of Leon Uris's venomously jaundiced description in his best-selling potboiler,

Exodus,⁵ Qawuqji was associated with Fascist ruffians in this mid-1930's period, but his real-life persona differs from this stereotype.

Within weeks, Qawuqji organized four units, Iraqi, Syrian, Druze, and Palestinian (the last led by Fahkri Abd al-Hadi), and he issued broadsides (*bayanat*) calling for resistance until Jewish immigration to Palestine was halted, and the British were ejected from the country. Reflecting its author's pan-Arab outlook, the first such circular insisted that the "Arab nation is one nation," and that Palestine "is an indivisible part of that nation"; tellingly, Qawuqji signed the document as "commander in chief of the Arab revolt in Southern Syria." He also set up a military court framework for prosecuting suspected British collaborators, and apparently also to provide recourse for Palestinian villagers who had grievances but were loath to bring them to the Mandate's courtrooms. For a dramatic, albeit brief, period of several weeks, Qawuqji's force fought well against British forces. Three battles were waged in the Bal'a, Jab'a, and Bayt Amrayn villages. At Bal'a, in the northern West Bank, these rebels ambushed enemy forces and shot down two British planes.

In Galilee, at Ginosar, Allon quickly emerged as a kibbutz leader. Handsome and even-tempered, he won trust. His congenial temperament concealed a goal-oriented refusal to be squeamish about the occasional use of tricky ruses or even dubious measures; and his kibbutz comrades appreciated this brand



Figure 5.1 Fawzi al-Qawuqji Outside Tent, 1937. *Source:* Courtesy of ©eltaher.org.

of assertiveness, one that came to be associated with native-born, “sabara,” Israelis. In the mid-to-late 1930s, Ginosar was involved in land-grabs wherein the kibbutz vied against the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA), a revamped version of the JCA, Reuven Paicovich’s old antagonist. Allon, his biographer observes, “could not have been oblivious” to the role reversal, in which he and his young comrades had pushed PICA into a corner in these land disputes, whereas the settlement organization had always had the upper hand against his father.⁶

As the 1930s careened to a disastrous end, the kibbutz also engaged violent altercations with Arabs from the Abu Shusha village, regarding the use of water from the Rabadiyeh spring. Allon was appointed by the kibbutz to negotiate with residents from Ju’ar and other villages, since he had grown up in Galilee among Arabs, and maintained good relations with many of them; this did not forestall violent acts, including a nighttime retaliatory raid led by Allon which left two Arab casualties, Sheikh abu-Fais Hamis, Abu-Shusha’s mukhtar, and an affluent landowner. Ten kibbutz members were sent to prison by the British, though Allon escaped punishment. At the end of the 1936–1939 disturbances, he actively managed affairs at the short-handed kibbutz. Temperamentally he was not built to remain a manager and laborer on the kibbutz’s farmlands, however.

The Palestinian uprising had set him on course as a military leader destined for a pivotal role in the 1948 war. Throughout the 1936–1939 disturbances, the Jewish Agency guided a quasi-official Yishuv policy of self-restraint, called *havlagah*; but this was supplemented by the emergence of rough-tempered paramilitary initiatives, sponsored independently by the eccentric philo-Semitic British army officer, Orde Wingate, and by a Jewish veteran of the Red Army during Russia’s Civil War, Yitzhak Sadeh. The latter developed a close relationship with Allon, half-seriously calling him a brother, despite the fact that the Kfar Tabor native was almost twenty years younger than him. Organized in new mobile paramilitary squads, Yishuv youth were trained to improvise, move fast and strike at night, and implement other unconventional tactics Sadeh imported from the Red Army.

As 1937 passed into 1938, the Haganah (the Yishuv’s emerging army and direct predecessor of the IDF) sponsored a special training course for young leading lights in these new paramilitary squads. Allon acquitted himself well, but he was not at this stage the preeminent military up-and-comer in the Yishuv. One outstanding trainee, the son of Degania co-founder Shmuel Dayan, had been raised by a distinguished pioneering family on the Nahalal moshav—moodily unpredictable and stand-offish, Moshe Dayan would become a long-time military and political rival of Allon’s. Not long after this influential course, some of its prominent graduates participated in a daring settlement effort at an isolated Western Galilee enclave, Hanita. Two

Haganah men were killed on the effort's first night, but the young soldiers and settlers reorganized; in subsequent days, they fought off Arab attackers and turned Hanita into a symbol of Yishuv pioneering resistance and fortitude at the peak of the Palestinian uprising. An iconic photograph from Hanita in 1938, a decade before the Independence War, shows a bespectacled, smiling, stocky Sadeh, awkwardly attired in short pants, his arms around his prized young Yishuv fighters, Dayan on one side, Allon on the other, both holding rifles, both handsomely content about being recruited for the fight for Jewish national renewal.

Events on the ground at this late stage of the disturbances were not happy, however. In early October 1938, Arab fighters massacred nineteen Jews, eleven of them children, at Tiberias. In a reprisal, Allon led a squad at Karnei Hittin, the site where Saladin demolished entrapped Crusaders centuries earlier, in an attack on a retreating band of Arab guerillas.

The Palmah (the word derives from the Hebrew acronym for "strike forces"), the Haganah's celebrated field operation branch, was organized early in 1941, in a period when a panicky Yishuv confronted the prospect of a possible advance of Nazi troops into Palestine. Until the Allied victory at El Alamein, Egypt, in 1942, frightened Yishuv military and political leaders drew up plans for a mass Jewish evacuation to Mount Carmel. Such far-fetched emergency plans never needed to be attempted; but this



Figure 5.2 Yigal Allon, with Yitzhak Sadeh (in Shorts) and Moshe Dayan to his Right. Establishment of Kibbutz Hanita, 1938. *Source:* Courtesy of IDF Archive.

nervous period produced one lasting innovation, the Palmah, a unique Labor Zionist initiative which combined military activity and idealistic communal settlement values and activities. In 1943, Allon operated under Sadeh as the Palmah's second-in-command; in tribute to the unit's anti-hierarchical, youthfully egalitarian, ethos, no formal order of promotion was given, and Allon rose to prominence in the Palmah out of informal consensus.

Still, during his five years in the Palmah prior to the 1948 war, Allon never fully came into his own. As this period drew to a close, he kept insisting in private communications to his wife Ruth that he would soon quit the army. Allon and Ruth, who immigrated to the Yishuv from Germany in the mid-1930s, had a daughter on the developmental spectrum, and they constantly struggled to find funds for special overseas treatments for her. A different sort of frustration was posed by the British, who were in this period fighting against the Nazis but also implementing the 1939 White Paper, which severely restricted Aliyah's immigration rights to the Yishuv, and effectively nullified Britain's pro-Zionist commitments under the 1917 Balfour Declaration. Some Yishuv youths opted to fight in the British army; but others, including Allon, calculated that Jewish interests were best served via involvement with the Haganah in Palestine. Ben-Gurion coined a catchy slogan about fighting with the British army as though there were no White Paper, and fighting the White Paper as though there were no global war; but such clever semantics could not solve specific dilemmas faced by young idealists like Allon. In truth, Ben-Gurion's aphorism was somewhat disingenuous. Carrying, at this point, a thirty year grudge stemming from the snub of his candidacy for the Bar Giora group, Ben-Gurion never warmed to the Palmah.⁷ Future events would prove that Ben-Gurion preferred Yishuv veterans of the well-organized British army, and slighted fighters who remained within the anti-authoritarian Palmah; this was to the detriment of Allon, who became Palmah's foremost hero. In October 1944, Palmah idealists were deployed in a crackdown against right-wing Zionists in the Irgun (also called Etzel or IZL), whose terroristic attacks on British officials were deemed a political-diplomatic liability by the Jewish Agency. The logic of the round-up of Irgun militants, called the open season (*saison*), was discernible to Allon, but he balked when the Yishuv's secret security service, the Shai, proposed handing over captured Irgun men to the British. The murky moral choices facing fighters in a nationalist movement which depended upon a colonial superpower they also loathed were faced by Allon and Qawuqji alike.

An assertive nationalist in these youthful years, Allon was not enamored by the idea of partitioning Palestine. At his Galilee kibbutz, he became associated with socialist-tinged Labor Zionism, and he steered the kibbutz into a formal association with the left-wing Hakibbutz Hameuhad movement. In turn, a Hakibbutz Hameuhad faction sponsored a political party, Le-Ahdut

Ha-Avodah which broke ranks with Ben-Gurion's more moderately pragmatic Mapai party. Ben-Gurion favored the English-sponsored 1937 "Peel" partition plan, judiciously concluding that even a small, imperfect Jewish state would constitute a crucial change, partially offsetting the emergency posed by Nazism's ascent in Europe; even a pathetically miniscule Jewish state would have rights to absorb refugees and other Jewish immigrants, Ben-Gurion reasoned.⁸ In contrast, in the 1940s, up to the November 1947 UN partition resolution, Allon's Le-Ahdut Ha-Avodah party opposed partition, since it would eradicate the Zionist dream of sovereign control over the largest-possible swath of land which could be associated with Biblical borders—this dream envisioned an irredentist-inflected entity that came to be called Greater Israel. Instead of partition, Allon's party favored international trusteeship over Palestine until the Yishuv had established a firm majority in the country. Assumptions informing this position, including the idea that an international trustee would condone large-scale Jewish Aliyah immigration and stifle vehement Palestinian objections to it, were "misguided," admits Allon's admiring biographer, Anita Shapira.⁹ In sum, as the Palestine crisis veered in 1947 toward a calamitous war, Allon had yet to find his place in the Palmah, and he retained unrealistic ideas about Zionist fulfillment in the country.

Apparently due to pressure exerted by the Mufti's camp, Qawuqji left Palestine in autumn 1936. Receptive at this stage to ceasefire proposals, the Arab Higher Committee convinced the British to allow Qawuqji and his band egress from the country. Qawuqji subsequently viewed the Mufti's decisions as a strategic error—looking back on this 1936 episode, as well as crucial decisions he himself reached in the 1948 war, he came to believe that ceasefires merely played into the hands of the outmanned Yishuv, allowing the Zionists to refuel, recover, and regroup.

As far as he was concerned, when Qawuqji left Palestine for Transjordan at the end of October 1936, he had battled against the imperialist British. In his estimate, the Zionists were more of a nuisance than a formidable enemy; and his words in 1936 display how anti-Semitism toyed with his thinking, prior to his flight to Nazi Germany during WWII. In one of the last circulars he issued from the field during the 1936 disturbances, Qawuqji instructed his rebel followers that "there should be no retaliations against the Jews." The Yishuv's Jews, he explained, "attack not out of bravery or chivalry—two traits that are missing from their nature—but [rather] with the intention of causing intrigue and bad relations between the army of the revolution and the British army."¹⁰

Entering this mid-to-late phase of his military career, Qawuqji distanced himself from intrigues on the Arab Higher Committee by repeatedly pleading that he was an army man, not a politician. Nonetheless, his efforts were

propelled by a consistent, political brand of pan-Arab populism in which the rural masses are imaginatively depicted as the nation's essence; and the constituency served by revolutionary fighting is defined in border-crossing, transnational Islamic terms as the *ummah*. Just as it would be euphemistic under-statement to say that his outlook had blind spots, it would be ahistorical to imply that other variations of populist nationalism in Europe and elsewhere did not share this blend of idealism and cruelty whereby the rights of one large national mass are regarded as sacrosanct, and any injury caused to other peoples by the promotion of those rights is willfully overlooked.

Qawuqji had a disarming habit of taking lightly the mass suffering or genocide of peoples located outside of the imagined, sweeping borders of the Islamic *ummah*. An admirer of the Turkish nationalists, he met Kemal Atatürk at the end of WWI; and his favorable impression was not really troubled by what Turkish nationalism was doing to Armenians at this time. Years later, digging in his heels as an outlaw rebel in French-controlled Syria in the mid-1920s, he warned Muslim peasants that his militia would treat them as the Turks had dealt with the Armenians, should they collaborate with the imperialists.¹¹ A decade later in Palestine, when Qawuqji hectored Jews as cowards and feckless trouble-makers, he was constitutionally unable to identify any common denominator between the antagonists in the quickly developing Arab-Jewish conflict. He could never have viewed Zionism as a Jewish response to the misbehavior of European powers comparable, at least in some ways, to the Arab resistance movement he fought for in Syria. In 1936, months after Hitler's Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews in Nazi domains of citizenship rights, and branded them as genetic undesirables, Qawuqji was not squeamish about baiting Jews as spineless cowards and opportunists.

Though his sense of his own Arab identity was more expansive than Haj Amin's narrow Palestinian nationalism, both these Arab rebel leaders of the 1936 events were single-minded and uncompromising about the uprising's purposes. Qawuqji was already out of the country when, in summer 1937, the British Peel Commission recommended partitioning the country; the Mufti-led Palestinian leadership vehemently rejected this plan to surrender part of Palestine to Zionist sovereignty. So in September 1937, the Palestinian uprising reignited. In Galilee, rebels murdered the British district commissioner, Lewis Yelland Andrews, viewing him as a Zionist puppet. The Australian-born official was a diligent colonial officer, having learned Arabic and Hebrew out of a desire to be helpful to both sides in the country; but he actively assisted Zionist land purchase efforts for Yishuv communities in the Hula Valley, Beit Sha'an, and elsewhere, and he also appeared before the Peel Commission, testifying in favor of Yishuv positions. For these reasons, a group of Izz ad-Din al-Qassam's students gunned Andrews down in Nazareth on a Sunday in September 1937, when he was on his way to services

at the Anglican Christ Church¹² (these Palestinian militants were inspired by the martyrdom example of the Muslim preacher, Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, who in late 1935 had been trapped in a West Bank cave and gunned down by the British).

By this time, Qawuqji was out of Palestine, chafing about how the guileful Mufti had talked him into leaving the country. He had amassed a far-flung reputation of sorts. A few small circulation newspapers in America and Canada described Qawuqji as a “new Saladin” waging a crusade for the Holy Land—such coverage, his biographer notes, was “closer to Rudolph Valentino and the Hollywood movies of the 1930s than to the realities of the Middle East.”¹³

In Baghdad at the end of 1936, Qawuqji conferred with Germany’s ambassador, Fritz Grobba, and discussed ways the Nazi regime might assist his ongoing resistance campaigns against British and French colonialism in the Middle East (three and a half years later, after France’s conquest by the Germans, Grobba became formally responsible for recruiting Arab nationalists). In April 1941, in Baghdad, Qawuqji played a role in the anti-British coup which temporarily installed a pro-Axis lawyer, Rashid Ali al-Kaylani, as prime minister. For Iraqi Jews, this coup precipitated disaster, an anti-Semitic pogrom in Baghdad, known as the *farhud*, which occurred just as the British were reestablishing control in the country, and possibly constituted the most frightening experience in their Babylonian community’s illustrious 3,000 year residence in the land. For Qawuqji, the coup spelled personal controversy—he retreated from a fort, Rutba, located east of the Transjordan border, leaving it fully intact and easy picking for the British. A few years later, in Berlin, the Mufti cited this episode as evidence of his contention that Qawuqji was actually a British spy. This was, for Qawuqji, an insufferable and scurrilous accusation. In other words, the two most prominent figures in the Arab-Palestinian fight in 1948 became inveterate enemies at least five years before the war.

Between 1941 and 1947, Qawuqji dwelled in Berlin. He was not an active propagandist for the Nazis, and his rather sporadic and negligible efforts in this period appear to have been oriented toward rallying German support for ridding the Middle East of the British and the French. For the first time in his adult life, he had in this period no military post; and his connections to Nazi ideology and genocidal practices were more tenuous than those displayed by the Mufti, as Haj Amin al-Husseini was photographed meeting with Himmler and Hitler, visited a concentration camp, and became involved in the formation of the Waffen Mountain Division, an SS unit of Bosnian Muslims.¹⁴

In these years, heading up to the 1948 showdown over Palestine, Zionist officials seem to have viewed Qawuqji as a preferred rival. “In the eyes of Jews leaders who tried to assess closely Qawuqji’s character, he was seen

as a pragmatic person with whom some sort of accommodation might be reached,” writes one Israeli military historian.¹⁵

ALLON AND OPERATION YIFTAH

Israel's Independence War erupted promptly on the heels of the UN's November 1947 partition decision. For several months, the Haganah's strategy was defensive, centered on objectives such as keeping the way clear on roads which connected the Yishuv's communities; and local incidents between Arabs and Jews in this period are characterized, a little misleadingly, as the "Civil War" phase of the 1948 struggle. Toward March–April 1948, the Yishuv was rattled, north and south, by a series of brutal Palestinian attacks on supply convoys; and the Zionists' diplomatic position was eroding, largely as a result of indications that America's Truman administration was reevaluating the wisdom of the UN partition recommendation. To shift momentum, Ben-Gurion and associates ordered a change in Haganah operations, the Plan D war policy, which mandated a more offensive strategy. Then, after Israel's mid-May statehood declaration, the Yishuv faced what seemed an impossibly daunting challenge posed by the immediate invasion of armies from Arab states.

As this struggle began, Allon, now a Palmah commander, had a desk job, supervising conscription at the unit's headquarters at the Ritz Hotel next to a Tel Aviv beach. In February 1948, toward the end of the "Civil War" phase, the Palmah had doubled in size, deploying about 4,000 young men and women. According to plans, Allon should have been liberated from his desk work in early April, when the Haganah's new offensive strategy was implemented in a campaign, called Operation Nachshon, to end the siege on Jerusalem. Allon was supposed to have commanded Nachshon; but his airplane got stuck on muddy ground, and so this operation in the center of the country was waged by the Givati Brigade, under Shimon Avidan. Ironically, this airplane mishap directed Allon to his home turf, Galilee, where he acquired fame as a Palmah commander during Operation Yiftah.

The background to Yiftah is Britain's calculation holding that the Yishuv would never be able to maintain control over parts of Eastern Galilee, an area allotted to it under the UN partition plan, once Arab armies invaded. In mid-April, the British began their exit from Upper Galilee, leaving the Nabi Yusha police station, a strategic point necessary for control of roads between Malkiah, Ramot Naftali, and Misgav Am, to the Arabs. Similarly, the British delivered to Arabs strategic points around Safed. Before Yiftah, the Palmah's third battalion initiated raids here and there in Upper Galilee, including disastrous efforts to take Nabi Yusha (twenty-eight Palmah fighters died in one of these attacks).¹⁶ Allon inspected Galilee in this period, flying in a plane

because the roads were so unsafe. In one written report he attested to being “pessimistic-optimistic” about the Yishuv’s chances for holding the region; the Zionists had no chance in Galilee, he clarified, should the Haganah’s current defensive posture remained intact. He wanted to go on the attack. So did Ben-Gurion, who incorporated Operation Yiftah within Plan D at a meeting he convened with Allon, along with Yigal Yadin, the head of Haganah operations, and its Chief of Staff, Yisrael Galili.

For Allon, commanding Yiftah, represented “the return of the native.” Allon, writes Anita Shapira, “was a son of the Galilee. He knew not only the geography and topography inside out, but also the people, the moods, the local culture, the colors and scents, the Jews and Arabs.” His plans for Operation Yiftah were drafted “from this intimate knowledge.”¹⁷

On the eve of the operation, the thirty year old Palmah commander convened a meeting at Kibbutz Ayelet Ha-Shahar. Delegates came from Yishuv communities, old and new, in Galilee. Old-timers from Rosh Pina and Metula made the trek, to see what the son of Reuven Paicovich, from Mascha, had up his sleeve. They were determined not to let the Palmah’s undisciplined and irregular youngsters mess up their schemes to defend their own settlements against marauding Arab armies. Explaining that the only way to repulse enemy forces was to consolidate weapons and energies for one concentrated knockout punch, Allon disabused these veteran Zionist pioneers of the wisdom of this “each colony for itself” approach. These rugged Galilee farmers were “surprised but captivated” by his message, Allon later recounted. In fact, his power of persuasion had brought about the unthinkable: these Zionist old-timers in Galilee opened up secret caches (*slikim*) on their settlements, and contributed valuable weapons to the Palmah, for Operation Yiftah.¹⁸

Launched in late April, the first major conflagration in Operation Yiftah occurred in an Arab village just north of Safed, Ein al Zeitun. The area, also at the time populated by a kibbutz, Ein Zeitim, had a long history of Jewish-Arab conflict. During the 1834 disturbances, it will be recalled, Orthodox Jewish Perushim, followers of Rabbi Israel of Shklov, fled from Safed and hid from Palestinian marauders in this area (thereby finding temporary sanctuary in a hamlet where, three centuries before, seventeen weaving houses supported the wool boom of Kabbalistic Safed). Then, during the 1929 disturbances, some kibbutz members were killed by neighbors from Ein al Zeitun; and Palestinians from this village, and also from Biriyya, had been active during the 1936–1939 uprising. During Yiftah, the Palmah fighters regarded Ein al Zeitun as “a village of murderers,” and roughly detained several dozen prisoners from it. Meantime, Jews in Safed watched this operation from afar, viewing events at Ein al Zeitun as just vengeance for terror the village had perpetrated in 1929, and in 1936–1939. From the Palestinian vantage point, this start of Yiftah constituted a new chapter in the developing

Nakba. Soldiers from the Palmah's Third Battalion, taking orders from Moshe Kelman, executed several dozen Arab prisoners in a gully between Ein al Zeitun and Safed.¹⁹

As May 1948 opened, warfare in Galilee was no less fierce than in any of its previous historical periods. Concurrent to the Ein al Zeitun killings, Qawuqji's ALA forces, led by Adib Shishaqli, bore down hard on Upper Galilee's Ramot Naftali. Settlers on the moshav signaled to Allon that they were on the verge of evacuation, but the Palmah commander refused to divert forces to save them.²⁰ Allon was concentrating resources for a siege on Safed, a thrust he believed might stop Galilee's swirl into sociopolitical chaos, ahead of the expected Arab armies invasion. As a stopgap, he sent an Auster aircraft (nicknamed Primus, after a popular, noisy kerosene type of stove) to bomb ALA fighters around Ramot Naftali; this relieved pressure on the moshav.

Meantime, the first Palmah attack on Safed was ineffective but auspicious. Allon took some men on a foot march from Rosh Pina to the Kabbalah capital, and observed that the ALA had moved artillery from Ramot Naftali to Meron, outside of Safed. This meant that his deployments in Galilee during Yiftah were keeping the Arab enemy guessing and on the run. He sensed victory. "I thought to myself, this is the beginning of the end . . . if we continue to act as we should."²¹

He used psychological warfare in the campaign, deploying regional Jewish leaders to warn Arab notables ominously about repercussions should their communities remain in their villages. Such intimidation tactics instigated Arab flight in the Hula Valley. Allon was pressing hard for Safed, collecting intelligence and conferring with the Third Battalion's Kelman, encouraging the town's Jewish population to ignore any British suggestion about the wisdom of its evacuation. On May 9–10, a few days before Israel's statehood declaration and the consequent invasion of Arab forces, Safed became a torn, fateful battleground, as the Palmah used "Davidka" mortars to shell the Arab quarter, and Arab forces bombarded sites in the historic city's Jewish quarter. Palmah soldiers fought in houses, one room after another; Kelman's soldiers stormed the town's police station, sustaining losses, and the Palmah's First Battalion took a nearby Palestinian village, Akbara. With these strikes, Allon's forces captured Safed. The town's Arab population emptied out, streaming on the Wadi Ammud road left open to them by the Palmah's victorious commander.

Some 1948 war reports counterpoise Allon's triumph in Yiftah and the defeat of the Mufti's dream of becoming the head of a Palestine-based caliphate. Palmah Third Battalion officer Mula Cohen told the following story: during Israel's first Lebanon War, in 1982, one of Safed's long-standing Jewish residents ran across a Palestinian refugee from the town who had relocated in Lebanon. The Arab related that during their exodus northward, Safed

refugees ran into the Mufti and presumptive members of his provisional Arab government. Husseini was in Safsufa, confidently waiting for Safed to fall, this refugee recalled.²² On the Jewish side, Safed residents summed up this 1948 turn of events with colorful dash. "Safed was saved by an act and a miracle," they quipped. "The deed was that yeshiva boys recited psalms day and night. The miracle was that the Palmah arrived."²³

For Jews in Galilee, the fortitude of Safed's pious population in weeks preceding the Palmah's "miraculous" arrival was a source of genuine inspiration. In the aftermath of WWII, Jews in Safed were a small, cloistered minority, perhaps 2,000 in number, compared to the town's majority of 13,000 Arabs.²⁴ Young Jews grew up in the absence of modern-spirited Jewish institutions that might have fostered skills useful in a military showdown. As though to exemplify this dearth of Jewish modernization infrastructure, Safed native Meir Mevar-Maiberg, who became the town's Haganah commander and, years after the 1948 war, its mayor, learned English and attended high school at a missionary institution, the so-called Scottish College (Beit Bussel).

Less than twenty years before the 1948 drama, the town's Jews had endured a massacre during the 1929 Arab revolt (on August 29). Mevar-Maiberg recalled how Jews who survived the 1948 ordeal were bitterly traumatized by the way their putative protectors, British security men, herded them into a dubious safe spot, the Saraya,²⁵ a white stone building originally built as a home for Zahir al-Umar and his family (today the Isaac and Edith Wolfson Community Center). In view of this 1929 tragedy, when they organized for the spring 1948 battle, Mevar-Maiberg and his Haganah comrades little needed to remind the town's Jews of what the collapse of the Jewish quarter might bring.

Still, they struggled with tactical liabilities. One such ominous problem was the proximity of civilian, Orthodox Jewish enclaves to battle-posts which were manned by Arab fighters immediately after the surprisingly early British evacuation in mid-April (a key flash point was a south-central area in town, where, on the fringe of the Jewish quarter, the Scottish church and the Central [Merkaz] Hotel were just a stone's throw from the Arab-controlled police station²⁶). On the other hand, the Jewish defenders in Safed enjoyed a few advantages not always available to Jewish soldiers in other locales of the country. In a town where, centuries before, Lurianic Kabbalists and other Jewish mystics and wool manufacturers had dwelled in accord, Jewish defense networks from the WWII period were not really roiled by in-fighting between Labor Zionist Palmah-Haganah fighters, and partisans from the right-wing Irgun-Lehi groups. Whatever internecine bickering existed among militant Jewish young men in Safed, it never reached the debilitating intensity which sometimes frustrated Jewish defense efforts in other parts of the country (as we have seen in the *saison* example). Still, ahead of mid-April

1948, the extent to which such Jewish solidarity considerations carried real strategic weight in Safed could be questioned. A messianic-tinged mood of apocalyptic defiance swept through Safed's small Jewish quarter. This spirit seeps through the pages of a war-time newspaper bulletin, *Kol Tsfat* (the Voice of Safed) published by Haganah operatives, to boost locale morale and convey daily instructions.²⁷

In retrospect, such morale maintenance and battle preparation work seems to have paid dividends for Safed Jewry, particularly helping it to withstand frightening bombardment episodes for hours on the "Longest Friday" in the illustrious town's history, April 16, 1948, immediately following the British withdrawal and preceding the arrival of Palmah contingents from Mount Kna'an.²⁸ Arguably, accounts of this Shabbat Eve fight show how traditional Jewish survival tactics of cunning and piety—what we have called the Esther Method—and the modern, sometimes merciless, warfare techniques developed by Palmah and other proto-Israeli forces condensed in a matter of minutes in Safed. This blending can be seen, for instance, at the police station-Scottish Mission skirmish, where Mevar-Maiberg and his comrades cleverly simulated an attack so that Arab enemies would be provoked into blowing up a side of the church that had obstructed the Jews' self-defense efforts (the maneuver also shifted responsibility for destroying a sacred Christian area to the Arabs).²⁹ At any event, without Palmah reinforcement after this pivotal Longest Friday stretch, the besieged Jewish quarter would almost certainly have collapsed. The aforementioned reflection about the Palmah "miracle" is not just a witty epigram (Mevar-Maiberg's Safed 1948 war memoir, which self-interestedly invests dozens of pages in description of the author's own work preparing the town for the consequences of the British pull-out, exudes palpable relief when Mevar-Maiberg relinquishes command of the Safed area after April 16 to a newly arrived Palmah officer, Elad Peleg³⁰).

For Allon, Operation Yiftah's low-point ironically transpired exactly in hours when Ben-Gurion declared Israeli statehood. In Western Galilee, as will be described, an Arab siege on Yehiam and other settlements was broken at this dramatic juncture, thereby ensuring that the part of the region which had not been awarded to the Jewish state by the UN would be delivered to Israel by war. Temporarily, things seemed different in the Galilee Panhandle. The Palmah's First Battalion sustained heavy losses in brutal exchanges at Malkiah and Kadesh; and so, on the first day of Israeli statehood, Allon was forced to relent to this force's retreat from Malkiah.

This setback was offset when the Third Battalion finally grabbed the Nabi Yusha station, meaning that a key artery, between Kibbutz Manara and Ramot Naftali, was controlled by the Yishuv, thereby blocking entry to Galilee for any Arab force which might try to come down from Lebanon. Beyond that, Operation Yiftah ended with the Yishuv decisively holding a continuous strip

in Galilee, from Metula to Tiberias. Allon's two-week operation constituted an impressive, though not entirely decisive, Israeli victory.

On May 19–20, Palmah officers in Galilee, such as Kibbutz Degania's Mula Cohen, literally fought in defense of their own homesteads against Syrian attackers. Allon numbered among them, since Kibbutz Ginosar was located in the thick of the battle zone. This post-Yiftah phase of the 1948 war in Galilee ended quickly, as Arab forces were ill-organized and exhausted. Allon capped the Palmah victory by taking Malkiah via a clever ruse. Arab forces in the area expected an Israeli attack from Nabi Yusha. Instead, Allon loaded up Kibbutz Manara with makeshift armored vehicles, one of them carrying a cannon, and then took steps to deflect attention away from the Palmah's presence on this mountaintop kibbutz. Allon confused enemy recon men in the area by sending an ordinary truck back down the mountain several minutes after each one of these armored cars pulled into Manara; the enemy viewed this maneuvering as ordinary movement of Arab supply convoy vehicles. When the Palmah's "armored column" cruised toward Malkiah, local Arab villagers cheered, mistakenly thinking that it was deployed by Lebanese forces.

QAWUQJI AND THE 1948 WAR IN GALILEE

In March 1947, Qawuqji returned to his home in Tripoli, after a seven year absence from the Middle East. The Lebanese city, which was at the time upset by a feud staged by prominent local families, bestowed a boisterous hero's welcome for Qawuqji, a fighter famed for the anti-French revolt in Syria in 1925, and for the anti-British revolt in Palestine in 1936 and then in Iraq in 1941. As anti-colonialist fever heated up in the Middle East, Qawuqji's legend had grown over the period of his exile in Germany. Qawuqji, a military man, had street credibility on a scale which the region's politicians could not ignore. For politicians like the Mufti, his popularity was useful, but also potentially dangerous. "A pattern began to emerge whereby politicians would support [Qawuqji] in public, but withhold real resources from him in private," writes his biographer. "This tension was the driving factor in the unfolding tragedy of the 1948 War."³¹

In mid-1947, Qawuqji resided with Anneliese at the Orient Palace Hotel in Damascus. He still simmered from two meetings he had had with the Mufti in Cairo, shortly after his return to the region. Husseini, he told one American diplomat, posed "a danger to everyone and [is] universally disliked." His interlocutor reported that "Qawuqji is completely at odds with the Mufti," and he forecasted that "two independent and mutually antagonistic Arab guerilla gangs" would arise "in Palestine when the situation deteriorates."³² Once it is shorn of its pejorative tone, and judged in retrospect, the prediction is hard to dispute.

Late in 1947, the Arab League's special military committee staged debates about an appointment for the commander of the army organized for the fight in Palestine. The Mufti bitterly opposed Qawuqji's nomination (unrealistically, Husseini believed he himself should receive the appointment). But Qawuqji, a popular anti-colonial fighter, had important backers, including an Iraqi officer, Isma'il Safwat; and, belatedly, the appointment as head of the Arab Liberation Army (ALA, *Jaysh al-Inqadh*) went to him, a week after the UN's partition decision. This was like being named manager of a corporation whose board was newly constituted, internally divided, and not guided by traditions of intra-company cooperation. The Arab League was just two years old, and its member states were themselves new entities or otherwise socio-politically unstable. The League's relationship with the Palestinian national movement was ill-defined—fearing that forces from neighboring states would pursue their own interests in the country, the Mufti and his confederates were not very enthusiastic about a coordinated invasion of Arab states in Palestine. Under such circumstances, Qawuqji's mandate for military action was written on tattered cloth.

In early 1948, Qawuqji recruited and trained forces for the ALA at two locales, in Damascus and a nearby town, Qatana. He made a few recruiting excursions, including a trip to Druze Mountain, where locals were unenthusiastic. Overall, the recruiting outcome was not prodigal—about 4,000 men (a number comparable to the recruitment total of Allon's Palmah months before the war) mustered into the ALA, mostly from Syria and Iraq, though there are reports of fighters coming from as far as Morocco. Numerous recruits quit the Qatana camp, dissatisfied with supply conditions and lack of pay. ALA battalions were staffed with just a few officers and were fairly autonomous from the start. Most notably, Adib Shishaqli, future president of Syria, commanded a battalion which entered Galilee in early 1948, operating independently.

The first major ALA incursion in Palestine was undertaken by a battalion commanded by Muhammad Safa, an Iraqi officer. The battalion was responsible for areas stretching from the northern West Bank to the Beit Sha'an Valley; and on February 16 it launched an unsuccessful attack, featuring machine guns and mortar shells, against Tirat Zvi, a religious kibbutz proximate to the Jordan River. In early March, Qawuqji himself took position in the northern West Bank, originally at Tubas (where his activity had ended in 1936), and then in Jaba, some 8 kilometers from Jenin. After a few weeks, on April 4, toward the end of the phase when the Yishuv's diplomatic fortunes sagged and the Haganah tilted in favor of the new, Plan D, offensive strategy, Qawuqji launched his most fateful campaign in the 1948 war, in the Jezreel Valley.

His attack targeted Mishmar Haemek, a well-established kibbutz affiliated with the left-wing socialist Hashomer Hatzair movement. ALA artillery

bombarded the kibbutz for two hours in the evening, killing three persons and destroying some buildings. This show of artillery power had not been expected and temporarily rattled the kibbutz (at one stage during the days-long siege, Mishmar Haemek evacuated children). Rain was pouring down, and a few hours after Qawuqji ordered ALA ground troops to storm the kibbutz, he withdrew them.

Debatably, this was the worst tactical decision reached by an Arab force during the 1948 struggle, since conquering Mishmar Haemek could have opened for the ALA a lane to the center of the country. Some accounts speculate that Qawuqji mistakenly judged that the kibbutz's truce proposal overtures meant that it was defeated—but this hypothesis is not really borne out in a recent volume published by Amiram Ezov, a meticulous and talented military historian who is himself a born and bred member of Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek. Qawuqji, Ezov shows, mostly redirected the blame for the failed, initial attack on the cowardice of field officers, such as a certain first lieutenant (Aziz) who reached a kibbutz border fence but failed to utilize wire-cutters and infiltrate Mishmar Haemek with his men.³³ Ezov faults Qawuqji and the ALA for its inability to continue battle after nightfall, and this defect echoes in Qawuqji's own explication of why he did not aggressively prosecute the attack after the early artillery fire unnerved Mishmar Haemek ("I stopped the attack after darkness fell. I feared that my inexperienced fighters would suffer many casualties.").³⁴ Indisputably, throughout the days-long siege on Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek, Qawuqji was distracted for pleas for help from Arab forces deployed in a dramatic struggle on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road; he hesitated, but his decision to divert some forces to the fight around the Kastel fortress on this road was fateful. Qawuqji's willingness to divide his limited forces is a counterpoint to Allon's more focused tactics during Operation Yiftah, as in the instance when the Palmah commander declined pleas for assistance sent by embattled Ramot Naftali residents. From the Jewish operational standpoint, the key tactical decision of the Mishmar Haemek battle was reached on April 7, when the deputy commander of the first Palmah battalion, Haim Avinoam, defied orders from superiors, and shrewdly positioned fighters around the kibbutz perimeter, in lieu of sending them, as reinforcements, within the settlement compound, where they might have become sitting ducks.³⁵ On April 10, the Haganah launched counter-attacks, turning the tide in this battle for Mishmar Haemek. Within several days, ALA forces were driven from this Jezreel Valley area; and, as Ezov shows in some detail, aggressive Palmah military operations in villages around the kibbutz essentially emptied this Jezreel Valley area of its Arab inhabitants.

Subsequently, this defeat tarnished Qawuqji's reputation as an Arab nationalist fighter. At the time, he was immersed in unnerving evidence about

how the failure of his ALA force to stand its ground at Mishmar Haemek translated as the dreadful swelling of the Nakba in this historic, fertile area of central-north Palestine, the region also known as Marg b. Amir whose strategic value had (as we have seen) been manifest to military-political commanders of the past, Mamluk, Druze, Palestinian and French, Qutuz, Fakhr al-Din, Zahir al-Umar, and Napoleon. Representatives of three villages near Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek sent Qawuqji a real-time account of what happened to them on April 9–10. Haganah forces, they reported, seized Abu Shusha al-Arabiyya, and “burned and destroyed everything in the village, while our dead and wounded were still in the field of battle. They did the same in the neighboring village of Abu Zurayq, and they blew up a number of houses in the villages of al-Naghnaghiyya and al-Ghubayya and al-Mansi.”³⁶

The Nakba refugee tragedy accelerated over the next month, as important towns, including Jaffa, fell to Jewish forces. Hoping to turn the tide, on May 9 Syria’s foreign ministry negotiated a formal collaboration agreement between the Mufti and Qawuqji. The ALA commander complied, but inwardly he must have had doubts. From his standpoint, this cooperation offer came from an opportunist—it was made by Husseini, who was situated far from the fighting, in Cairo. How enthusiastic could he have been to ally with the Mufti, who had defamed him over the years, branding him a British spy? Qawuqji, who didn’t really expect help in the field from the Mufti’s supporters, summed up the collaboration agreement with a proverb, “Halima returns to her old habits,” the Arabic equivalent of the saying about a leopard not changing its spots.³⁷ Symbolizing Arab military disunity in the 1948 war, this nominal, expedient collaboration arrangement between the Mufti and Qawuqji was forged just five days before Israel’s statehood announcement.

After Israel’s statehood declaration, Qawuqji formally entered his Galilee phase of the 1948 struggle, serving as ALA field commander of the northern front. In actual fact, for weeks, he was an absentee from Galilee, devoting most of his time to Arab League consultations in Cairo in which he tried to procure arms and supplies for the ALA. Twice Qawuqji submitted letters of resignation to the ALA, but in each case he was persuaded to remain in command of the northern front. No more than 2,000 ALA men remained under his authority in Galilee, but they distinguished themselves by fighting hard in three instances, at Malkiah in late May, in the Nazareth area in July, and again in the Galilee Panhandle in October.

Qawuqji’s attack in Galilee on June 5–6 casts him as a direct antagonist to Allon in the 1948 war. The capture of Malkiah on the heels of Operation Yiftah had been a feather in the cap for the Palmah commander; but now the ALA was operating to overturn this result, and regain other areas lost in Galilee by Shishaqli’s battalion in March, April, and May. During these June 5–6 maneuvers, Qawuqji’s ALA forces cooperated with Syria’s and

Lebanon's armies. Qawuqji re-took Malkiah, sharing credit with Lt. Col Shawkat Shuqayr, a Lebanese army officer.

Together with Lebanon's Minister of Defense, Majid Arslan, and Lebanon army commander Fu'ad Shahab, Qawuqji carefully monitored this installment of the ongoing struggle for Malkiah. Reversing an estimate of Jewish cowardice he had articulated in 1936, he commended the valor of the Jewish soldiers, some of whom fought while wearing bandages—the ALA leader attributed this bravery to the Russian background of many of the Haganah soldiers. Later, Qawuqji was awarded the Medal of the Cedar by the Lebanese government for the ALA's contribution to this victory at Malkiah.

In September 1948, ALA men held areas above the Hula valley; these included the town of Marus, occupied by the ALA's Alawite battalion, commanded by Ghassan Jadid. The IDF pressed hard to chase the ALA out of the Hula. Qawuqji approached Husni Za'im, commander of Syria's army, for help in the effort to hold Marus; and these two officers traveled to Damascus to obtain mortar shells and other weapons. Mostly, these procurement ventures were rebuffed. Dejected, Qawuqji commanded a threadbare band of ALA men who were spread along hills in the Galilee Panhandle and southern Lebanon. Winter was around the corner, and the men lacked shoes and coats; dysentery and other diseases sidelined many of them. Battle setbacks were usually irreversible, but on October 22, Qawuqji made one last thrust. His men conquered an IDF post next to Kibbutz Manara. Israel's army pushed back, but failed to retake the position, and thirty-three IDF soldiers died in this fighting. For Israel, the debacle at Manara was intolerable. Ben-Gurion's army was set to launch Operation Hiram.

ALLON AND THE NAKBA

Yigal Allon was not involved in Operation Hiram. He fought later phases of the war as the IDF's Central and Southern Commander, owing to Ben-Gurion's shuffling of the army's command structure.

Ben-Gurion, as mentioned, never really trusted the Palmah. He recoiled from its communalist anti-authoritarianism, believing such an ethos to be oxymoronic in an armed force. As a politician who headed Israel's prominent Mapai party, Ben-Gurion was wary about how the Palmah's leading lights affiliated with a rival party, a more rigidly socialist Labor Zionist faction called Mapam. As Israel's first prime minister saw it, the IDF was a non-partisan (or *mamlachti*, a hard-to-translate Hebrew term connoting civic-national responsibility³⁸), national army, and so no Zionist ideological faction had the right to operate its own private militia (after the 1948 war, Ben-Gurion dismantled the Palmah, just as during it he ordered Allon and his deputy, Yitzhak Rabin, to sink an arms-loaded ship, the Altalena, so as

to ensure that the right-wing zealots of the Irgun, led by Menachem Begin, could not operate autonomously, as a full-fledged, alternative Zionist army). Complementing his overall hostility to the Palmah, Ben-Gurion instituted a command routine by which IDF officers were continually reassigned to new theaters. Whether or not Israel's first prime minister intended it, this routine had the effect of stopping a charismatic, popular figure from ever getting too comfortable in one place. These are the tendencies and calculations out of which Allon was pulled from his native turf in Galilee.

Ben-Gurion's somewhat suspicious treatment of Allon and the Palmah is far from an exact counterpart to the outright animosity which divided the Mufti and Qawuqji, and which hobbled the Palestinians' military effort. But it is nonetheless a factor that imposed an outer limit on Allon's ascent during the 1948 war.

Since Allon's most tangible connection to the Nakba is to be found outside of Galilee, we will cite it in brief. The most problematic moment of his Palmah career occurred at Ramle and Lydda (Lod), during Operation Dani, which was conducted for ten days in mid-July. Allon was appointed commander of the operation just 48 hours before its implementation. Dani's aim was to ease pressure on besieged Jerusalem, and to protect Tel Aviv from possible dangers posed by the Arab Legion (the Jordanian army), which had units in Lydda and Ramle, towns populated by 50,000–70,000 Arabs, about a third of them refugees from the Jaffa area.

"From the start," writes Benny Morris, "the operations against Lydda and Ramle were designed to induce civilian panic and flight."³⁹ Air-bombing and artillery shelling were supplemented on July 11, when a battalion commanded by Moshe Dayan sent an armored car, jeeps, and half-tracks on an intimidating blitz through Lydda, up to a police station outside of Ramle. That night, hundreds of "dazed, frightened, and hungry" residents huddled in a mosque.⁴⁰ Their respite was ruptured the following morning, when two or three Arab Legion armored cars burst into Lydda: these vehicles might have become disoriented on reconnaissance duty, or perhaps they had taken a cue from Dayan's stunt the day before. Hell broke loose in the town, where some 300–400 Israeli troops opened fire, killing about 250 Palestinians ("neither the troops nor Allon ever took pride" in this firing spree, writes Anita Shapira, "even if they thought it was a necessary evil").⁴¹

Lydda and Ramle were now lost to the Palestinian cause, but the fate of the towns' residents remained to be settled. In a sprawling but delineable sequence, Israel's political-military leadership settled on an expulsion plan for them. Guidelines for the IDF worked out between Ben-Gurion and his highest associates, including Moshe Sharett (Shertok), broached the expulsion issue, albeit vaguely—the political echelon's guidelines stipulated that "it should be publicly announced in the two towns that whoever wants

to leave, will be allowed to do so.”⁴² Allon and his deputy, Rabin, sought more definite instructions. In a much-reported incident,⁴³ they approached Ben-Gurion after a break in a meeting held on July 12 at night, at Operation Dani’s headquarters at Yazur. As Rabin escorted the prime minister to his car, Ben-Gurion gestured with his hand, using body language to reply to questions about the fate of the towns’ residents. The prime minister’s unstated message was “remove them.”⁴⁴

The next day, Ramle’s residents were packed into busses and transported along the Jerusalem road, toward al-Qubab, whereas the Lydda exiles set out on foot, toward Barfiliya, where some Arab Legion men were stationed. “A multitude of inhabitants walked one after another. Women walked burdened with packages and sacks on their heads. Mothers dragged children after them,” noted an IDF intelligence officer, Shmarya Guttman, who was an archaeologist in his civilian life. For Guttman, the scene brought back memories of Israelites sent into exile 2,000 years earlier. Lydda, he added, looked like the scene of a “pogrom.”⁴⁵ Just several dozen Palestinians remained in Ramle and Lydda after Operation Dani.

Two years after this operation, Allon lectured in a civilian framework, at a gathering sponsored by the Hakibbutz Hameuhad movement. He justified the Palestinian exodus primarily by appealing to military calculations, but he also alluded to how the mass departure bequeathed long-term political and demographic advantages to the Jewish state. His words were unsettlingly unapologetic:

I think that the process of Arab flight was a positive process. Furthermore, I think that our activity to empty large, militarily valuable areas of a hostile Arab population, this too was a justified case of no-choice, not only momentarily, in the heat of battle, but justified over time.⁴⁶

BIOGRAPHY, GALILEE, AND 1948

As we will see, Operation Hiram was more systematic and regionally sweeping than Operation Dani. IDF activities resulted in a mass Palestinian exodus from Galilee, and the ferocity of a campaign like Hiram leaves lingering questions about whether Israel deliberately instituted an expulsion plan during the 1948 war. There probably will never be a decisive way of resolving this acute debate about Hiram and about the general nature of the 1948 experience; but our comparative biographical survey of what exactly drove military leaders to bloodshed, in a life-or-death struggle over the fate of Galilee, sheds light upon cultural aspects of this expulsion issue.

When seen within the logic of Allon’s young career, the fight for Galilee was waged in the defense of a pioneering home, and even the roughest

measures taken by the Haganah/IDF had warrant as wartime acts taken in the name of survival. Generally a composed, congenial character, Allon never winced about the Palestinian exodus. He saw no reason to begrudge Israel as though it were morally culpable for it. To large extent, Allon's life experiences—his ascent from a pioneering farm managed by a grouchy, secularized immigrant father, his Zionist socialization at the Kadoorie school, his communalist idealism at Kibbutz Ginosar, and, more than anything, his leadership of the Palmah, one of Labor Zionism's most courageously appealing innovations—became wedded inseparably to Israel's self-understanding. The young Jewish state thought of its 1948 Independence War the way Allon personally experienced it. That is to say, for decades, Israel imagined that the IDF adhered to a strictly defensive posture, waging war only when the country had “no choice” but to protect itself from Arab aggression, firing weapons at the behest of a normatively scrupulous code called *tohar haneshek*, “purity of arms.”

The problem is that portraying Israel's Independence War within the frame of Allon's experience, exactly as Leon Uris did when the best-selling American Jewish author modeled the hero of his monumentally influential novel, *Exodus*, the superhuman sabra, Ari Ben Canaan, after the Palmah commander,⁴⁷ begets an inspiring, but highly subjective, narrative. At Hiram, and in other theaters and operations of the 1948 war, Israel's army sometimes deployed force in a manner that might have cohered, by and large, with military necessity; but the IDF's callous brutality in such instances cannot be characterized as “purity” by any measure outside of the cultural imagination of the war's victorious side. In fact, once the Zionist narrative is set aside, it would be truculent farce to put the words “purity of arms,” and “Operation Hiram,” in the same sentence. By the same token, Uris's presentation of Fawzi al-Qawuqji in *Exodus* as a degenerate fascist is also farcical bigotry (or rank Orientalism, to use Edward Said's nomenclature). Qawuqji and his career were not lacking in complicated characteristics; but Uris caricatured them by thinking of the ALA leader in monochromatic derogation, precisely as he imagined Allon and his comrades thought of him.

Galilee, introduced into proper, “scientific,” history by Josephus, a figure whose own cultural and political orientations and loyalties were protean, and are, for us, elusive, presents a unique challenge to biography, to our deep desire to capture the essence of a remarkable human life in a limited number of written words. As we have seen, both in this volume and in its predecessor, *History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE: From Josephus and Jesus to the Crusades*, Galilee has hosted a continuing sequence of mystics, devotees, soldiers, and idealists who imagined themselves to be in possession of divine right, supernatural insight, or absolute political truth, only to have their own spiritual or social system superseded by another one, either centuries later,

or sometimes within their own lifetimes. Galilee is therefore not the place to view anyone's biography from the inside out, as though the person's character and outlook convey some unimpeachable truth that can be separated from competing perspectives in outlying cultures. Some new truth will always come after Galilee's latest hero.

Monotheism multiplied in Galilee. Jews came back to it after the Jerusalem Temple *hurban*, and they were followed by Christians and Muslims and Druze—by Tannaim and Kabbalists and the First and Second Aliyah, by Byzantines and Crusaders, by Mamluks and the Druze Crusader Fakhr al-Din, by Zahir al-Umar and Muhammad Ali. Heraclius's men fought for their absolute truth at Yarmuk, as did Khalid Ibn al Walid's. Saladin had his absolute truth at the Horns of Hattin, as did Raymond III. Who knows what Napoleon was thinking at Acre, other than that it was grand or grandiose, just as his adversary, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazza, had his own ferocious version of the truth. And last (for the time being) we have Yigal Allon and Fawzi al-Qawuqji, each with his twenty-first century legion of tens of thousands of social network partisans, tweeting and instagramming and emojiing about the absolute truth of the career of their respective, Zionist or Arab, military icons.

The same thing can be said about any place in the world: of course, in any region it is laudable to view its heroes partly from the outside, from some presumed perch of objectivity, in the hope of understanding how and why a particular individual imagined his or her own truth to be incontrovertible. Galilee's history is longer and more complicated than that of most other regions, but this is not necessarily the reason why it provides us with a special mandate to search for moral truth by means of historical study. The case study which opens the door to history, which anoints historical study with special urgency, belongs to the one individual whose life would presumably be impervious to such secularized analysis.

The search for the historical Jesus descends from such a perch of objectivity. To my own mind, this Jesus search is an altogether admirable project undertaken by scholars and commentators whose own identities depend existentially upon faith in the inner truth of the life of Galilee's must celebrated individual. For the past 250 years, the pilgrims in this conceptual quest—scholars mentioned in this volume's chapter three discussion of the subject, as well as cultural and political icons from rather disparate settings, for example, Thomas Jefferson and Leo Tolstoy—have delivered a message which is relevant to *all* biographical and historical writing. The message is that we will never conduct an intelligible and productive discussion about our human civilization unless *any* life can be examined from a vantage point of critical openness. These researchers' ability to put aside the issue of Jesus's divinity (at least for the sake of discussion with people who have differently constructed souls and faiths), and their attempt to look at Jesus's life from the

outside, so as to understand how it, or at least the gospels' rendering of it, was shaped by forces beyond it, is what turned history into a morally meaningful activity in modern times.

These ruminations about Galilee, Josephus, and Jesus throw some perspective upon the region's recent past. To say that one man's liberation can be another man's Nakba is not merely a reasonable measure of Galilee's last historical phase, to date. Whenever we think about Galilee, we reach back to the most dramatic life experiences in the region, to Josephus's turbulent career of military defeat and creatively triumphant, if not cynical, personal reinvention as a Jewish apologist within a Roman veneer, to the Jesus narrative of infinite personal torment on the Cross tasked with an agenda of eternal salvation for mankind. In the end, biography is the quest to understand how one person's life can stand for humanity; and this analytic pilgrimage can only be promoted by looking from inside out, and outside in, via ever shifting frames of understanding. And, greater than biography, history is an impulse to process opposites, to unify them in an "objective" perspective, to understand how one side can lose everything when the other side wins everything, while life goes on for both. History is the search to understand how one group's liberation and another group's tragedy, *à la* the case of the 1948 experience as Israel's Independence War and the Palestinian Nakba, can intermingle, and must intermingle, in one collective biography.

"THERE WILL BE NO MASADA IN GALILEE": THE FIGHT FOR WESTERN GALILEE

On the eve of the November 1947 UN Partition decision, Galilee had 241,000 residents. Muslim Arabs constituted the vast majority, with a population of 169,500 persons, and there were also 29,000 Christian Arabs, basically meaning that over 80 percent of the population was Palestinian Arab. There were several thousand Druze residents. This Arabic speaking Druze minority, possessors (it will be recalled) of a distinctive religion and indefinite political loyalties to outside groups, had in the Mandate period been actively recruited by Zionist activities and officials such as Abba Hushi and Yitzhak Ben Zvi,⁴⁸ but its disposition prior to the 1948 war remained somewhat unclear. The Druze, together with minorities such as Circassians, totaled 10,700 persons. Galilee's Jewish population was 31,790.⁴⁹

Under the terms of the November 1947 UN Partition Plan, Western Galilee was excluded from lands allotted to the Jewish state. All told, thirty-six Jewish settlements in Mandatory Palestine were directed to the Arab state projected by this partition resolution; of these, eight belonged to Western Galilee. Three were formally designated at the time as *kibbutzim*—Eilon, Evron, and located around an old Crusader fortress, Yehiam. The other five

were classified as collective settlements (*kvutzah* or *moshav shitufi*) or small towns—Regba, Matzuva, Hanita, Shavei Tzion, and Nahariya.⁵⁰

The story of the tenaciously courageous residents of these isolated communities is not well known. From the Jewish standpoint, the campaign for Western Galilee—a campaign in which the Carmeli Brigade and other units in the Haganah/IDF, along with the besieged, small civilian communities, were sometimes replenished with young, culture-shocked, new immigrants removed straight from Displaced Persons camps and Europe—is an integral chapter in a heroic renewal narrative, after the Holocaust. This Western Galilee region became formally included in the state of Israel under the Israel-Lebanon Armistice Agreement (March 23, 1949) following the IDF victory in the 1948 war. As a whole, Galilee became indelibly associated in Israeli consciousness as a key frontier region in the new, sovereign Jewish state; and the exclusion of its central-western parts under the original 1947 partition plan became a curious historical oddity, or was just forgotten.

Still, objectively, the battle for Western Galilee is a pioneer conquest story wherein a relatively small cadre protected newly set-up homesteads, while the large majority of indigenous residents was, by and large, displaced, sometimes by the use of brutal force. Other national movements, including many which established flourishing democracies, accomplished their goals via such truculent frontier justice; but Zionism's triumph was, in historical terms, a latecomer, occurring precisely in the post-WWII period of global decolonization. Because the numerical disparity between winners and losers in this battle was so disproportionately glaring—at the time of the November 1947 partition resolution, less than 4,000 Jewish residents dwelled in the eight Western Galilee communities, whereas the region was home to from 80,000 to 100,000 Palestinians⁵¹—this Central-Western Galilee region became the primary locus of a violently dysfunctional conceptual asymmetry. We are talking about the foundation of the Israeli-Arab conflict, about the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the Israeli-Jewish perception of 1948 as a monumentally victorious War of Independence, and the Palestinian Muslim, and Palestinian Christian, view of the 1948 war as an insufferable catastrophe, as Nakba. Hence, in its last military iteration, to date, Galilee serves as Ground Zero for the Arab-Israeli dispute, the most intractable imbroglio in the post-WWII world, one which has out-lasting the Cold War and also other notorious instances of nationalist-religious-racial dementia that ended decades after WWII, be it the Troubles in Northern Ireland or Apartheid in South Africa.

A few weeks after the UN's 1947 partition resolution, the isolated eight Jewish communities established a "Western Galilee Committee" to discuss security matters, and to facilitate contacts with the Yishuv's internal, pre-state, government, called the National Council (*Va'ad Leumi*). Residents in the region were elated by the UN resolution, but also confused by the fact that

it assigned them to the Palestinian Arab state. Leopold Marx, from Shavei Tzion, wrote in his diary: "November 29, 1947, the Yishuv celebrates . . . the goal has been attained, the people of Israel have won a state. But a cloud hangs over our joy here; we were not included in the plan for the [Jewish] state. They have allotted Western Galilee to the Palestinian Arab state. Nonetheless, we too celebrate here, and wave our flags."⁵²

Members of the new committee conferred with delegates from the National Council, demanding that it take steps to ensure that Western Galilee be incorporated in the Jewish state, despite the UN resolution. Should this prove impossible, the committee decided, it would proactively set up an independent Jewish republic in Western Galilee. In fact, the committee hired lawyers to draft a constitution for such an eight settlement republic. Writing in German and Hebrew, Dr. Rudolph Cohen submitted on February 24, 1948, a constitutional memorandum outlining how Mandatory judicial institutions would be converted into local magistrate courts, under this Jewish mini-republic's jurisdiction. The memo also addressed ways property deeds recorded under the British Mandate might be re-registered by this new Western Galilee Jewish government.⁵³

Fear seeped into the region's largest Jewish community, Nahariya. Dozens of its residents reportedly migrated toward areas slated for inclusion in the Jewish state. These included the head of the town's council, Arnold Cohen, who relocated in Holon. After this mini-wave of desertion, Nahariya's population stood at just 1,600.⁵⁴

In the first weeks of 1948, a few hundred Haganah soldiers and police personnel (called *notrim*) were deployed for security in this isolated part of Galilee. The soldiers belonged mostly to two battalions (the 21st and 22nd) of the Carmeli Brigade; and there were also some eighty soldiers from an elite Palmah force positioned on two of the region's settlements, Yehiam and Hanita.⁵⁵ Arms were in short supply (seventy-two rifles were counted in Nahariya, fifty-one at Matzuva, etc.); less than half of these were legally reported to the British. Wireless communication equipment operated in the communities, though mostly in secret; and community leaders and even army officers were often kept in the dark about the availability of communications devices at a particular locale.

Meantime Qawuqji's Arab Liberation Army took shape in December 1947, and on January 8, its Second Yarmuk Battalion, comprised of some 300 soldiers and commanded by Adib Shishaqli, crossed into the country from Syria, heading for a camp around Tarshiha. The first Jewish casualty in the battle for Western Galilee, a butcher named Yosef Fogel, was killed by Arabs near a Muslim cemetery in Acre, mid-afternoon, January 6, 1948.⁵⁶

The most vulnerable Jewish community was Kibbutz Yehiam, established in late 1946 by Yishuv youth and also immigrant groups from Czechoslovakia and

Hungary, and located on the grounds of an old Crusader fortress, eight miles east of the Nahariya coast. In early 1948, about one hundred trained defenders were positioned on the kibbutz, possessing fifty-seven rifles and twenty-three machine guns, and 10,000 rounds of ammunition.⁵⁷ Yehiam was attacked on the morning of January 20; one Jewish casualty, an immigrant from Bulgaria named Moshe Gershon, was shot in the chest and killed in full view of his girlfriend, the kibbutz's wireless operator.⁵⁸ Early afternoon, a plane hovered over Yehiam, dropping a note saying that it was withholding its supply drop because British soldiers had arrived at the kibbutz—the plane later dropped some half-broken hand grenades and splattered rifle-cleaning oil at Matzuva.⁵⁹

Two months later, Yehiam and the other Western Galilee Jewish communities were cut off from the rest of the Yishuv when Arab forces enforced a siege, in response to a lethal Haganah ambush of an Arab convoy at Kiryat Motzkin. The convoy carried tons of arms and explosives; Mohammed bin Hammad Al Huneiti, the head of Haifa's Arab militia, and fourteen other Arabs, were killed in this ambush.

The Western Galilee outposts bypassed the siege by sea. Starting on the eve of the Purim holiday, March 22, 1948, Yishuv partisans operated a primitive barge and motorboat service, running between the "Rutenberg Harbor," a dock on the Kishon River in the Haifa area, and a Nahariya beach (travelers finished the last 100 meters of the journey to Nahariya in drenched dinghies). Also in late March, the Yishuv established an emergency mail service by which letters were conveyed to the Western Galilee settlements by this same sea route; special sea mail stamps were prepared and printed for circulation concurrent to Israel's expected statehood declaration in mid-May, but they never really went into use (thus adding to their value for collectors).⁶⁰

Mid-afternoon, March 27, a Haganah convoy set off for Yehiam, taking advantage of an agreement which had been forged a few days earlier with Arabs, and which ostensibly guaranteed free access on roads around Nahariya. Prior to the convoy's departure, British police officers and Haganah operatives gathered intelligence about Arab partisans gathering near Tarshiha for an ambush; but the convoy, commanded by Carmeli Brigade regiment head Ben-Ami Pachter, and comprised of four food-laden vehicles, three armored cars, and a bus, proceeded despite these warnings. Due to miscommunication, the convoy was weighed down needlessly with a portable bridge; earlier that Shabbat morning, Yehiam residents had patted down a muddy lane across the Ga'aton River, eliminating the need for this bulky, makeshift bridge. Soon after Arab attackers opened fire, Ben-Ami's armored car flipped over, blocking other vehicles—one armored car managed to race off to Yehiam, and, another vehicle at the convoy's tail-end turned around and managed to return to Nahariya. Other members of the convoy were doomed; forty-seven perished. One survivor, Amikam Caspi, provided a grisly account of how he

was trapped within one of the vehicles for seven or eight hours, tossing back hand grenades after they landed next to him, choking on smoke and sustaining bullet wounds; in the dark night, when he managed to drag his body out of the hell-on-earth car, and crawl up to one of Yehiam's fences, he could barely call out to the kibbutz guards, for rescue.⁶¹

Shots, explosions, and death cries from the convoy were heard by residents on other Western Galilee settlements, Matzuva and Hanita. The disaster demoralized the few thousand Jews who remained in the area. Resources were stretched, and nerves frayed. Special credit arrangements, supervised by settlement patrons, such as the JNF's Yosef Weitz, helped some of the communities endure the siege—the Yishuv proffered special assistance in a few instances, such as a coccidiosis outbreak at Hanita's chicken pen which was alleviated by a medicine air-drop. Mostly, however, Jewish residents in Western Galilee were frightened and hungry. Chicken farms on several of the communities were dismantled because residents had no choice but to eat the poultry. Throughout April, members on the communities debated the pros and cons of evacuating their children to Haifa; some communities voted in favor of this measure, but dragged their feet about carrying it out. In the first days of May, just ahead of Ben-Gurion's expected statehood announcement, the British withdrawal from Palestine, and the anticipated invasion of armies from neighboring Arab states, this issue of the fate of Jewish children in Western Galilee became insufferably urgent.

A few days before the British finally left the beleaguered country, the ranking Haganah officer in the Western Galilee district, Meir Ben-Dor, found cause to clarify exactly what, in juridical terms, was under his control. He decided that the best place to start would be conferral with Abba Hushi, Haifa's future mayor who was at this time secretary of the city's workers council and was also convalescing in a hospital after an operation. Outside of the hospital room, Hushi's secretary asked him to identify himself, and Ben Dor said that he was "district head." The woman queried, "whose district?" Ben Dor replied, "precisely"—he was dodging bullets and traveling across the country with the hope of getting an answer to that exact question.⁶² A few days later, Ben Dor met in Tel Aviv with Felix Rosenbluth, later Pinchas Rosen (Israel's first justice minister), and did not get an answer to his question, though he was intrigued by printed invitations on his host's desk for an event to be held the following day, May 14, at 4:00 PM at the city museum. When Ben-Gurion issued Israel's statehood declaration at this event, nobody really knew where, politically, Western Galilee would end up or what might happen to its few thousand residents.

Naturally, these residents wanted answers. A few days before the April 23 Passover Seder, when the Western Galilee committee's representatives convened, one distraught delegate exclaimed: "They are fighting in Jerusalem,

and convoys reach that city, and children were evacuated from [Jewish] settlements in the Negev and residents there get support, but nobody is talking about us.” The delegate recommended that the committee send an ultimatum to the Haganah high command, demanding that if Jewish children were not evacuated from Western Galilee, and if food supplies were not sent to its communities, the settlements’ residents would withdraw on their own volition. Speaking for Hanita, Itamar Ben-Barak declared that his community would never affix its signature to such a demand, and no such ultimatum was ever sent from Western Galilee.⁶³ But the communities kept sending cables to Yishuv decision-makers, imploring that the Haganah evacuate their children.

Eventually, on May 5, delegates from the Western Galilee committee, headed by its secretary, Ephraim Wizinski from Kibbutz Evron, tracked down Ben-Gurion for a meeting. They related the grisly facts of the Yehiam convoy catastrophe, weeks earlier. Getting to the point, they asked the Yishuv’s leader why their children had not been evacuated, whether they should wave the flag of the soon-to-be declared state on their communities, and whether they should stay and fight for them, down to the last dead man, after the Arab armies’ invasion. In an utterance characteristic of his style at high tension moments in the 1948 crisis, Ben-Gurion’s reply was inscrutable: “There will be no Masada” in Galilee, declaimed the soon-to-be prime minister.⁶⁴

This ambiguous statement draped Galilee Jewry in emotional chaos. The obvious precedent of such existential uncertainty in the history of Jewish life in Galilee is to be found some 1,900 years before, when the army general cum historian, Josephus, far from resolute about the wisdom of the Jewish revolt against Rome, conferred ambiguously with socio-politically conflicted residents of Tiberias and Tarichaeae. Some participants in this meeting believed that Ben-Gurion pledged implacable support for Galilee. Kibbutz Eilon’s delegate told his comrades that “they’ve promised to do something. They’ll drop down some food from planes and evacuate our children.” But other meeting participants inferred from Ben-Gurion’s reply that the Yishuv leadership was not prepared to fight for Galilee with the tenacity it was displaying in other regions, because Western Galilee had been excluded from the partition plan.⁶⁵

Ben-Gurion and the embryonic state’s military elite withheld from the worried Western Galilee Jews information about a military operation planned in the region. Originally called Ehud, the operation was re-named Ben-Ami, after the slain commander of the ill-fated Yehiam convoy. Carried out on the eve of Israel’s statehood declaration, Operation Ben-Ami implemented the Jewish army’s “Plan D” offensive strategy that had been hatched out several weeks earlier, when various military mishaps (such as the Yehiam and Mount Scopus convoy disasters) and diplomatic twists created anxiety in the Yishuv’s leadership about lost traction in the statehood drive. In general, historians have debated fiercely whether this new “D” plan, with its

semi-elliptical references to clearing out Arab villages, ought to be viewed as a war-time measure, or as a bona-fide blueprint for the transfer of Palestinian civilians;⁶⁶ in Western Galilee, the plan quite clearly envisioned forced evacuation of Arab communities. Ben-Ami Operation objectives referred to conquests of several villages, al Bassa, al Zib, and al Sumeiriya; according to historian Benny Morris, “in all likelihood,” operation commander Moshe Carmel “desired a complete evacuation” of these localities.⁶⁷ Arab forces in the area included some 600 fighters near Acre, 60 Syrian soldiers at al Bassa, and another 30 men at the Bassa Two police station (a site that hosted Arab assaults and Jewish counter-assaults prior to Ben Ami).

Operation Ben-Ami started before dawn on May 14, when Haganah troops captured Napoleon’s Hill, on Acre’s rim. The attack on al Sumeiriya proceeded after seasick Haganah soldiers, in a company headed by Yossi Has, disembarked from soaked dinghies at Shavei Tzion, after journeying on the Mediterranean from Haifa’s Shemen Beach. Jewish fighters from Regba fired from its watchtower, joining the brief battle, in which Has was wounded; the moshav shitufi’s residents fled toward Kfar Yasif. Also, early in the morning on May 14, two Haganah companies headed by Haim Ben-David and Yaakov Pundak set off from Nahariya to conquer al Bassa, whose Arab villagers put up stiff resistance until 11:00 AM, incurring many casualties; village survivors fled to Lebanon. The first phase of the military campaign was deemed victorious at 2:00 PM, when, just hours before Ben-Gurion’s statehood declaration, Carmel wired Haganah headquarters and cited the capture of the three villages. Three Jewish soldiers, he reported, had been killed, along with dozens of enemy Arabs.⁶⁸

Operation Ben-Ami carried out two civilian-related assignments, one being the conveyance of supplies to the besieged eight communities, partly through a convoy organized at Kibbutz Ein Hamifratz which reached Hanita and Matzuva, and the second involving evacuation of children from Western Galilee Jewish enclaves. In one phase of the evacuation, youngsters from Hanita and Matzuva were on a barge, tugged by a motorboat, exactly as Ben-Gurion read Israel’s statehood declaration. Children from Western Galilee settlements were temporarily relocated in the Haifa area; some families were not reunited in Galilee until the conclusion of Operation Hiram, in late October. This evacuation was not unique to Western Galilee—some 10,000 Jewish residents were removed from communal settlements around the country during the 1948 war.⁶⁹

Ben-Ami’s first phase failed to end the siege on Yehiam, and so the Carmeli Brigade launched a second phase between May 21 and 22, destroying three Arab villages east of Nahariya—Kabri, Umm al Faraj, and Naar. Residents of an additional village, al Ghabisiya, surrendered, banking on good relations they had maintained with the Haganah during the first months of the war; but

Carmeli Brigade troops, Morris writes, assaulted this locale and selected and executed six residents, ostensibly in reprisal for the Yehiam convoy outrage.⁷⁰ The destruction or capture of these villages ended the Arab siege on Yehiam. Though this outcome effectively ended the crushing isolation faced by Jews in Western Galilee, residents in the region suffered intermittently in weeks and months after the Ben-Ami operation. In Nahariya, for instance, five residents were killed on May 26, in bombings perpetrated by Iraqi aircraft.⁷¹

THE PANHANDLE: OPERATION HIRAM

The 1948 war unfolded differently in the Galilee Panhandle, for two main reasons. In Upper Galilee, two enemy forces, Syrian soldiers and the ALA, camped in defined areas (the first in the Mishmar Hayarden enclave in a southern part of the region, and Quwaqji's soldiers around Malkiah, in the northern Panhandle) throughout ceasefire periods. The enemy's lingering presence in the Panhandle compelled Israel's young army to pool resources and exercise a relatively high level of coordination. First, in Upper Galilee, two, the Panhandle, unlike Western Galilee, was slated for the Jewish state under the 1947 Partition Plan,⁷² and a failure to defend the large Jewish settlement concentration (compared to Western Galilee) in Eastern Galilee and the Panhandle would have been a devastating blow both to the Yishuv's morale and to the Zionist movement's claims about the viability of a Jewish state.

Fighting in the Panhandle was protracted, lasting twenty-one months, from a few days before the UN vote on the Partition Plan, until a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Syria was forged in negotiations staged in a tent near Mishmar Hayarden, on July 20, 1949.

Stipulating that enemy forces must not be allowed to cross through it and reach the Yishuv's central settlement "base" in Haifa and the Jezreel Valley, the Haganah's general staff defined the Panhandle in September 1947 as an essential buffer zone.⁷³ Much Israeli military planning and effort in the war was devoted to the issue of Safed, a town with vast historical resonance for the Jews which was, after adjustment, designated for their new state in the UN resolution,⁷⁴ but (as mentioned) had an Arab majority population. In early phases of the fighting in the Panhandle, in skirmishes around Kibbutz Kfar Szold and elsewhere, the British proffered assistance to the Haganah's effort to ward off Arab attackers; in formal terms, such support cohered with the UN decision to allot the area to a future Jewish state. In practical terms, however, the British doubted that the Jews could withstand an invasion of Arab armies in the Panhandle. Fearing nightmarish bloodshed in Galilee, the British pulled out of the Panhandle on April 16.⁷⁵ Not long before this date, British troops left other areas in the country, including Gush Dan and also Judea and Samaria.

This British pull-out occurred about halfway in this protracted fight for the Galilee Panhandle. Fighting in the area first erupted weeks before the November 1947 Partition resolution, when Syrian forces attacked Tel Dan.⁷⁶ This early thrust prompted the Haganah to concentrate a relatively large contingent, the Palmah's third battalion, in the Panhandle, in Operation Tel Hai. On December 18, this Palmah contingent attacked the Palestinian village al-Khisas, causing harm to women and children (ten fatalities were cited in the raid). Then, the advent of ALA operations in Galilee in January 1948 worried the Haganah. It ordered Palmah Third Battalion operations in villages in the region, including an action on March 12–13 near the Jewish settlement Yesud Hama'ala which precipitated the first evacuation of Arab villages in Galilee in the 1948 war.⁷⁷ In this February–March period, the Haganah reorganized for fighting in Galilee, working out an arrangement under which the Carmeli brigade operated in the west, whereas the Panhandle was defended by the Golani brigade.⁷⁸ In mid-April, as Haganah strategy generally shifted into more of an attack-offensive mode, the Yishuv's army devised plans for a region-wide conquest of Galilee. It dispatched Palmah commander Yigal Allon to head Operation Yiftah in late April–early May. In the run-up to Israel's statehood declaration in mid-May, Allon's forces (it will be recalled) had gained control of Safed and the southern part of the Panhandle; but the invasion of Arab armies, on the heels of Ben-Gurion's proclamation, left northern Panhandle areas, the Naftali Mountains and lands below the Golan Heights, up for grabs.

As Lebanese forces dug in for a fight around Malkiah, Allon's men from the Palmah's Third Battalion took control of the Nabi Yusha police fort on May 16–17. This Palmah maneuver blocked the Lebanese forces, stopping them from progressing southward and conquering the Panhandle.⁷⁹ In early June, Jewish locales in the Panhandle were attacked on two sides, as the ALA operated in the Naftali Mountains, and Syrian forces (whose invasion south of the Sea of Galilee on May 20 had failed) moved south in the region. Though this was not a well-coordinated pincer movement, the Arab soldiers made some progress. Syrian forces crossed the Jordan at the Bnot Yaakov Bridge, but were repulsed in an initial raid on the Mishmar Hayarden colony, before grabbing it a few days later, on June 10. Meantime, Quwaqji's men took control of Malkiah and Ramat Kadesh. These Arab forces could not progress beyond these points, meaning that Israel's enemies never cut-off the Metula-Rosh Pina road.⁸⁰

For Israel, the presence of two enemy forces in the Panhandle was untenable. During the 1948 war's first ceasefire (which began on June 11), the IDF planned a two-pronged attack in Galilee, Operations Palm Tree and Cypress

(Dekel and Brush, in Hebrew). Featuring the Carmeli Brigade, Operation Cypress was commanded by Mordechai Maklef, who had been orphaned during the 1929 riots in Palestine and later became the IDF's third Chief of Staff. On July 9–10 Maklef launched various diversionary tactics, hoping to isolate the main Syrian force; but when UN mediator Folke Bernadotte brokered the 1948 war's second ceasefire on July 18, the Syrians had not been dislodged from Mishmar Hayarden (they would remain at this lower Panhandle stronghold until the July 1949 agreement).⁸¹ The Syrians, who had fought hard against Maklef's thrusts, mostly observed the second ceasefire, and therefore did not provide any pretext for an IDF offensive. In contrast, during the second ceasefire period, ALA partisans carried out small-scale raids in the Naftali Mountains-Malkiah area. Qawuqji, who had come to distrust ceasefire arrangements, claimed that his army did not represent a sovereign state and therefore did not have to heed the temporary truce. His pleading and calculations misfired. The ALA played right into the IDF's hands.

Israel's army carried out its 60-hour Operation Hiram during the brief window which opened after the end of the three month second ceasefire. On the Operation's east flank, the IDF repulsed the ALA and took control of the Malkiah ridge. Then, anticipating future territorial negotiations with Lebanon, and looking for bargaining leverage, Operation Hiram soldiers crossed the presumptive northern border, and continued up to the Litani basin. All told, in Hiram, the IDF captured fourteen villages in Lebanon.⁸²

After Operation Hiram drew to a close, Lebanon's government was substantively prepared to sign an agreement recognizing Israel's control of the Panhandle, contingent upon withdrawal of IDF troops from these fourteen locales. Formally, however, the papers were not signed until March 1949. This was because Lebanon's leadership did not want to be the first Arab government to come to terms with the Jewish state (Israel and Egypt signed its first ceasefire agreement on February 24). Diplomacy over Galilee's fate then turned to Syria. Besides Iraq, which removed its troops from Israel but never signed an agreement with it, Syria was the last fully belligerent Arab state of the 1948 war, withholding consent to any accord for many long months. The turning point was a military coup in Syria in March 1949—the country's new leadership seemed open to an agreement. Its calculation is discernible. Once the other Arab states ceased hostilities with Israel, Syrian military elites worried about a scenario wherein the IDF would devote all its forces in an attack on their enclave in the Panhandle.⁸³ Brokered by Ralph Bunche, the July Syria-Israel agreement finalized Israeli control in the Panhandle, though a few demilitarized border areas between the two countries were to host small-scale confrontations for years.

HIRAM AS A GALILEE EXPULSION POLICY

Results of Operation Hiram were premeditated in Ben-Gurion's mind.⁸⁴ On September 26, 1948, a month before the campaign, the prime minister indicated at a meeting that should fighting resume in the north, Galilee must become "clean" and "empty" of Arabs. Ben-Gurion's militant attitude was challenged, particularly by Sharett, who was generally uneasy about Galilee. The premier diplomatic figure of the struggling, new Jewish state (in the mid-1950s, he had a short, relatively dovish, term as Israel's second prime minister), Sharett evinced reservations about Count Bernadotte's proposal to award Galilee to Israel. Sharett advocated caution in the north. Israel, he suggested, might be wise not to conquer Galilee, since the region was "full" of Arabs, including refugees intent on returning to their homes in western and eastern parts of the region. Aware that its implementation could mean the flight of tens of thousands of Palestinians, the cabinet voted seven to five against Ben-Gurion's proposal to resume warfare for the conquest of Galilee. This vote deferred but did not preempt Galilee's Nakba tragedy.⁸⁵

Ben-Gurion kept pressing to clear-out Galilee by war. At a consultation with the Shai secret service's ranking Arabist, Ezra Danin, held on October 21, just a week before Operation Hiram, the prime minister responded testily to various schemes proposed by government officials for Palestinian autonomy in specified regions. Ben-Gurion had no patience for any such "new adventures." He added: "the Arabs of Eretz Israel have only one function left—to run away."⁸⁶

Operation Hiram, launched late into the night on October 28, lasted sixty hours. The operational order was to "destroy the enemy in the central Galilee pocket, to occupy the whole of Galilee, and to establish the defense line on the country's northern border."⁸⁷ Toward the end of the operation, the northern front issued an expulsion order, though its reference to "assist[ing]" inhabitants "to leave" was somewhat ambiguous, and left field commanders some latitude, allowing them to reach their own conclusions.⁸⁸ Despite its ambiguity, Moshe Carmel's instruction is significant because it points to dimensions of planning and intentionality in Operation Hiram that were opaque to the historian Benny Morris, when he published his ground-breaking *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* at the end of the 1980s. Carmel, Morris claims, dissembled in an interview conducted in preparation for this volume; and there is evidence indicating that in real time, three weeks after the operation's conclusion, Carmel willfully tried to shift responsibility for events of Hiram by issuing a moralistic daily bulletin, condemning acts of looting, and "loathsome criminal acts against the Arab population after its surrender," and by belatedly ordering that the plunder and executions cease.⁸⁹ Whether this bulletin was a

cover-up designed to confuse future commentators is not entirely clear, and it might also have reflected genuine contrition, partly connected to widespread looting of Arab villages (a newly researched topic of interest to historians⁹⁰); its exculpatory power, at any event, is limited. Between the October 31 softly formulated expulsion order, and this late November cease and desist bulletin, Carmel issued on November 10 another expulsion writ mandating population removal along a 5-kilometer band in the Panhandle area bordering Lebanon;⁹¹ and this directive has clear causal connections to Nakba events (discussed below) which were set in motion by Operation Hiram.

Once facts of the Carmeli Brigade commander's directives became apparent to Morris, he authored a follow-up article about Operation Hiram.⁹² In fact, Morris, the premier Israeli authority on 1948 refugee issues, accorded great import to this revision about IDF intentions and expulsion dynamics in the 1948 fight in Galilee—his altered, darkened, interpretation of Carmel's agenda in Galilee is the main referent in the title ("Correcting a Mistake") of his volume of essays on Israel/Palestine 1936–1956 that came out after Morris's landmark *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* study.⁹³ This turn in 1948-era scholarship illustrates how war-time events in Galilee (with Hiram at the center of the storm), and our evolving understanding of how major players (including high-ranking Israeli army officers) were causally or conceptually related to them, constitute the bedrock core of the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli dispute.

This is poignantly fitting. For some 2,000 years, the psychological and cultural facts of warfare in the Holy Land became manifest in Galilee. If you want to understand the military politics of the Jews' rebellion against Rome, and how their Second Temple in Jerusalem met its ruin, you need to consult Josephus's description of his own term as a Jewish military commander in Galilee. If you want to understand the military politics of the Crusades, and how the Franks lost Jerusalem to Saladin's Arab forces and had to relocate to Acre, you need to study the battle on the Horns of Hattin, in Galilee. And if you want to understand the protracted Arab-Jewish conflict, and the character of the way Palestinians effectively lost al-Quds (Jerusalem) and their dreams of full, country-wide, sovereignty in 1948, you need to learn about Operation Hiram, in Galilee.

On this military level, the beguiling question at the heart of our inquiry, starting with our previous volume—why did monotheism multiply in Galilee—finds one palpable solution. Monotheism multiplied because its three formal expressions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, lacked long-term sustainability as an exclusive power in the Holy Land, each experiencing crushing military defeat in Galilee, one millennium after another.

OPERATION HIRAM IN ACTION

Operation Hiram began with aerial bombardment, on the night of October 28–29. Some of these strikes were lethal (twenty-four Tarshiha residents died and dozens of others had to be extracted from the rubble), and they incited panic and Arab flight in the region.⁹⁴

Operation Hiram's effects were particularly devastating in Eastern Galilee. In the Safed area, just three villages remained on the ground, and their survival reflects how Hiram especially targeted Muslim Palestinians—the three were Jish (misleadingly called “Gush Halav” today in everyday Hebrew), where most residents were Maronite Christians, Rehaniya, one of Galilee's two Circassian villages, and the al Heib Bedouin tribe's Tuba az-Zangariyye.⁹⁵

Adel Manna, a historian from Majd al-Kurum whose family fled from this Western Galilee village during Hiram and returned to it many months later after a harrowing exodus, relates that IDF soldiers during the operation followed a discernible, expulsion-producing, pattern. In his own native Beit Hakerem Valley region, and in other parts of Galilee, soldiers would enter a village, capture dozens of POWs, and order all other residents to leave their homes, and set off on exile—preceding this directive, “several young men would be executed, to make palpable the price of not cooperating with the expulsion orders.”⁹⁶ On his analysis, at this stage Galilee's Palestinians constituted a demoralized, weary population, one utterly unable to mount any sort of serious resistance during Operation Hiram; for villagers, the sole feasible recourse was to find a way to survive. Conversely, IDF soldiers who killed Palestinian civilians who posed no mortal threat to them were guilty of war crime, as Manna sees it.⁹⁷ His model of Hiram reality is shaped out of events in his own village, Majd al-Kurum. The sequence he attributes to the Operation as a whole had some particularly poignant twists in Majd al-Kurum, culminating in a massacre perpetrated a few days after Hiram's conclusion.

Before Hiram, Majd al-Kurum had a population of about 2,000 residents,⁹⁸ plus another few hundred refugees who streamed into the village from other nearby areas conquered by IDF men over the summer. During the second truce, ALA soldiers were deployed in the village, under the command of an Iraqi officer named Ghassam; these ALA men maintained good relations with the villagers, who gave succor, such as help with the soldiers' laundry. On Friday night October 29, with Hiram in full swing, officer Ghassam convened a meeting with residents at the village fountain square; he announced that his ALA force would withdraw immediately to Lebanon, and urged residents to remain in their homes at all costs, even if it means surrendering formally to the IDF.

From the Palestinian standpoint, maintaining some presence in Western Galilee's inland pocket had become imperative. After the fall of Acre in May, virtually all Arab settlements on the Galilee coast collapsed and disappeared (just a handful, such as Sheikh Danun, Kfar Yasif, Abu-Sinan, remained). A few young men from Majd al-Kurum were hiding in nearby caves, and a few others alighted with the ALA force as it moved to Lebanon; but almost all of the 2,000 residents remained in their homes as the ALA abandoned the village to fate. These stalwarts turned to a prominent Druze family, the Mu'addis, from a nearby Druze village, Yarka, knowing that this clan had sound relations with the IDF and had brokered surrender arrangements elsewhere in Galilee.⁹⁹ By the end of October, Majd al-Kurum forged a formal surrender at a meeting arranged by the IDF's intelligence officer for Western Galilee, Haim Auerbach; one afternoon, soon thereafter, some IDF soldiers entered the village, as though to validate its docility. Days went by without violence in the village, but IDF intelligence men in Haifa surmised that ALA operatives had simply "changed into civilian dress" and remained on standby at Majd al-Kurum;¹⁰⁰ and orders came down dictating a search for weapons and subversives in the village. On November 5, a week after the surrender agreement, IDF men entered Majd al-Kurum anew, and peremptorily ordered its mukhtar, Haj Abbad Manna, to arrange for the immediate confiscation of any remaining arms. Meantime, a six-man IDF firing squad executed five blindfolded youths, all of them refugees from neighboring villages such as Sha'ab and al-Birwah; the killing started with Muhammad al-Haj, who had earlier witnessed the demolition of his family home. The number of fatalities would have risen had not the cool-headed intelligence officer, Auerbach, accompanied by a Palestinian collaborator, arrived at the village square to put an end to the killings. Majd al-Kurum remained a standing village after the Nakba;¹⁰¹ but many youths fled after this Operation Hiram massacre, and hid in nearby hills and crossed over into Lebanon. Classified as absentees devoid of rights to their native grounds, some of these refugees filed futile Right of Return petitions in Israel's High Court years after the Nakba catastrophe.¹⁰²

The killings at Majd al-Kurum were preceded by similar atrocities at three neighboring West Galilee villages, Deir al-Assad, Bi'ina, and Nahaf.¹⁰³ The first two are contiguous locales, then connected by a small pool which became the execution waiting area. On October 31, IDF soldiers ordered residents to gather by the water, and singled out a number of young men—four of these, two from Deir al-Assad and two from Bi'ina, were executed in a nearby olive grove, in full view of the towns' residents. Some 270 persons were hauled away to a refugee camp. Residents were given half an hour to prepare for expulsion and were then chased from the two villages as Jewish soldiers fired in the air to frighten them; meantime the villages were "thoroughly looted," according to Benny Morris.¹⁰⁴ The outcasts reached the outskirts of Nahaf,

where they heard that a few young men from this village had also been shot in cold blood, in a similarly grisly sequence. Proceeding toward the Druze village Sajur, these refugees from Deir al-Assad and Bi'ina noticed that their IDF escorts had disappeared. Several decided to turn back; and, after an ordeal of a few days, they made it back to their homes in these Western Galilee villages. Many of their former neighbors continued northward and crossed into Southern Lebanon, where they joined tens of thousands newly arrived Palestinian refugees. The same sequence occurred after the Nahaf executions; most of the residents of this village managed to return to their homes because IDF men followed them on their trek for just a few hours, following the initial expulsion.

Despite the brutality, the Western Galilee area did not empty of Palestinian villages on a scale comparable to Eastern Galilee. This tenacity of Palestinian communities in one Galilee area relative to another poses complicated, important questions centering on the issue of whether some variant of “ethnic cleansing” applied to specially targeted areas of the country. The late twentieth century controversies generated by Morris and fellow “new historians” (as he called this research group, some of whose members also identified themselves as “post-Zionists”),¹⁰⁵ and the fact that some researchers endorsed this explosive term, ethnic cleansing, as the correct conceptual rubric for analyses of 1948 events,¹⁰⁶ radically shifted interpretive frames. Finding terms like “ethnic cleansing” to be intolerably objectionable, many Israelis today snuggle comfortably in the illusion that the New Historians’ findings can simply be ignored. During the generation that has passed since the failure of the 1990’s Oslo Peace Process, this obscurantism has found support in legislative initiatives promoted by Israel’s right-wing governments, either to ban public references to the Palestinian Nakba, or to withhold government funding from artistic attempts to document the Nakba events, or to reflect upon their meaning.

In turn, this Orwellian maneuvering in Israel’s democracy has been enabled by a fundamental change in the cultural composition of America’s “special relationship” with Israel. Through the 1967 Six Day War and up to Israel’s 1980s misadventure in Lebanon, this relationship was buttressed by liberal-minded Protestants from mainline denominations who were sensitive to Palestinian suffering, but judged that anti-Semitism’s genocidal cruelty toward Jews warranted a latitudinarian attitude toward the Jewish state. But for the past forty years fundamentalist evangelicals have become the key component in the American part of the Middle East equation, and they have helped Israel’s campaign to erase the Nakba from historical consciousness.

The conceptual standoff for the past twenty years, since the end of the Oslo Process in autumn 2000, has featured two irreconcilable, mendacious, claims. By indiscriminately advocating arrangements like a “Palestinian

right of return,” partisans in the pro-Palestinian BDS (Boycotts, Divestment, Sanctions) movement champion the destruction of the Jewish state, which is a morally reprehensible position, whereas pro-Israel lobbyists over-reach by seeking to cast the reality of the Nakba into oblivion, this being a reprehensible position, from the standpoint of historical truth and reality. The outrageous arrogance of the Nakba erasure crew is to be judged not only in light of its insensitivity of Palestinian victimization in occurrences like Operation Hiram—its empirical invalidity has millennial proportions, since readers of *History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE* will recall how many Palestinian villages that were obliterated or scarred in 1948 had roots stretching across a 1,000 year timeline in the country.¹⁰⁷ A surefire indication of Jewish over-reach over the past generation has been that the pro-Israel crowd has deftly traced U-turns to make capital out of *both* the morally incorrect BDS rejection of Jewish sovereign rights, and also the historically incorrect posture of Nakba denial adopted by Israel’s right-wing governments. Particularly objectionable has been the manipulation of legalistic rhetoric and power to square this circle. In the United States and Europe, the pro-Israel lobby has operated aggressively to out-law BDS initiatives—this is the plausible, but debatable, branch of contemporary pro-Israel work. But, making the reckless U-turn, the same crowd has gone down the lane on the other side of the road, condoning or actively supporting Israel’s explicit and implicit efforts to out-law and erase Nakba commemoration.

Parents, or distant relatives, can be forgiven for being vigilant in opposition to anything they regard as a genuine threat to their family, but they act unforgivably when they try to block off information which the family really needs to hear. The line between these two situations might seem faint, but identifying it and respecting it is the burden of liberalism.

Through the first years of Israeli statehood, discussion about Operation Hiram events was largely conducted behind the scenes and was irredentist in character. Well-placed Israeli commentators or officials regretfully wondered why ethnic cleansing was not carried out in central-Western Galilee during Hiram. The best-known example is Yitzhak Moda’i, who, before his emergence as a right-wing politician and cabinet minister, served as an IDF Major in the second half of the 1950s. Relying largely on classified documentation of eyewitness and participant reports, Moda’i composed a detailed report on Operation Hiram for the army’s history division.¹⁰⁸ The problem he wanted to solve is why Palestinian villages in the Galilee pocket remained on the ground. His vexatious, belabored prose could not quite disguise how Hiram’s shortcoming was not, in the IDF’s view, its indiscriminating cruelty:

One might have surmised that the Arab population in Galilee simply was not compelled—unlike the way inhabitants of other regions of the country were

compelled—to flee for their lives, away from the fury of the oppressor [From Isaiah 51:13]. However, judging from testimonies given by officers and others, and from official reports . . . it becomes apparent that our forces in Galilee ‘did not refrain’ [from acts that would have compelled Arab flight], and that their treatment of [civilian] inhabitants can in no way be considered a factor responsible for their remaining in their villages.¹⁰⁹

IDF head of Operations Yigal Yadin’s August 18 pronouncement—“we have no desire for Arab inhabitants [to remain in the state], and the return of [refugees to their homes] must be prevented at all costs”—was known to all commanders and soldiers in the field, Moda’i noted. Soldiers knew that they were tasked to remove Palestinians, but many residents nonetheless remained in their villages. Curiously, Moda’i wrote, resilient Palestinians in Galilee overcame brute force and even criminal acts (“So it turns out that the Arab population in Galilee mostly remained in its villages, notwithstanding the fact that our forces endeavored to expel it, and frequently used methods that were neither gentle nor legal”).¹¹⁰ Stretching the limits of morality and law, IDF soldiers did their utmost to remove Palestinians from Galilee. This being the case, Moda’i queried, why did many of their villages remain on the ground? First, he explained, Qawuqji’s ALA soldiers took steps to prevent a full Galilee exodus. Among other things, ALA soldiers in Lebanon issued directives barring Palestinian refugees from crossing into the country from Galilee. Second, referring to topography and geography, Moda’i opined that in rolling Galilee many Palestinians were deterred by nature—many reasoned that climbing the hills in flight, with their possessions on their backs, would be, in practical terms, a step too far. In some cases, isolated Galilee villagers might not have heard about Nakba atrocities elsewhere and were thus insulated from panic chain reaction phenomena which precipitated flight elsewhere. Third, Moda’i noted that some Western Galilee villagers were protected by “sympathetic” neighboring populations, groups with which the IDF had agreed to maintain non-belligose relations during the conflict (his reference was mainly to the Druze). Finally, alluding to a phenomenon we have witnessed in the cases of several villages, Moda’i cited the lack of persistence and “ingenuity” on the part of IDF soldiers who allowed village residents to return to their homes after having been expelled from them during phases of Operation Hiram.¹¹¹

Manna’s analysis of this same question regarding the resilience of many Western Galilee villages, particularly in contrast to the near-emptying of Palestinian village life around Safed and the Eastern Galilee region, overlaps with Moda’i’s report to some extent but is more notable for its points of contrast. Whereas Palestinian resilience in 1948 Galilee was viewed as a problem to mainstream Israeli commentators seventy years ago, just as it is

today, it can be also seen as a forerunner of the post-1967 praxis of “sumud” (perseverance) on the West Bank and Gaza Strip which is honored on the Palestinian narrative. The comparison between Moda’i’s report and Manna’s more comprehensive scholarship elucidates how Galilee’s 1948 experience, especially during Operation Hiram, constitutes the recent tipping point in the region’s history, the latest juncture from which narratives of great monotheistic cultures head into alternative spaces of contestation.

Manna tries to distance himself from the 1948 war descriptions conveyed by Morris and others. He contends that researchers who are tied, consciously or not, to Israel’s mainstream narrative have a tendency to localize Nakba atrocities, and normatively mitigate their implications by casting them as vengeful and deterrence-calculated actions responsive to specific Palestinian provocations or armed resistance (as in the case of the Eilabun massacre, described below, where Morris lends credence to the IDF’s framing of the incident as being retaliation for an earlier outrage, an act of decapitation perpetrated against two of its own soldiers).¹¹² Manna views Operation Hiram from back to front, starting with its results whereby Muslim villagers in Galilee were expelled in vastly greater volume than their Christian Arab counterparts, while Druze villagers were not punished at all by expulsion (even in the case of a locale like Yanoah, where Druze inhabitants sided with ALA men in serious battle against the IDF¹¹³). Such results offer at least a powerful circumstantial suggestion of ethno-national-religious targeting. Moreover, the pattern of Operation Hiram atrocities, whereby IDF soldiers entered a village, selected a large group of young men, and proceeded to execute several of them, indicates an internalized agenda of expulsion—when you look at what field commanders were doing on the ground, the ambiguity of cagey directives issued by military higher-ups like Carmel, and of sentiments attributed to the civilian leadership, starting with Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, becomes moot. The soldiers took their cues. The patterned repetition of execution atrocity, followed by intimidating removal of inhabitants from village to village, can only be understood as a kind of policy—historians who localize events, and view them as purely responsive to a specific condition (e.g., collaboration with the ALA) in a particular village, are disingenuous, Manna suggests.

Manna’s argument may not be as far as he thinks from the new scholarly frame created in the 1990s by Morris’ research, and other post-Zionist scholarship. Morris has been far from hermetically consistent over the years in his interpretive summations; but his significant writings decipher this pattern of execution massacres and expulsion tactics in Hiram (and other military operations), and do not really differentiate it from policy design.¹¹⁴ Of course, contrasting turns of phrase (“ethnic cleansing,” as opposed to less explosive terms), which toss and turn from left and right in the new scholarly frames,

agitate emotions, and are sometimes tied to substantive disagreement about the nature of Zionism and Israeli experience; nonetheless, much in these debates is semantics. Any honest empirical reading of the evidence concerning Operation Hiram shatters mythic denials of collective Israeli intentionality regarding the Palestinians' tragic fate.

Manna's main contribution, it seems to me, is not the exposure of such mythic denials of Israeli culpability for the Palestinian exodus. His writing combines impressive command of the evidentiary sources and movingly rendered personal experience; but the truth is Morris and others had deflated these myths before Manna delivered his "Palestinian narrative" under the auspices of a rather haughtily mainstream Israeli research center, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute (the Institute's location, next to the residence of Israel's president, symbolizes how, after the Oslo process and Israel's recognition of the PLO, Manna's "Palestinian narrative" came quite close to becoming inextricably connected to Israel's official viewpoint—it is precisely this proximity which explains why the country's right-wing politicians have gone amok about Nakba in the past twenty years, outdoing themselves in efforts to deny its reality).

Manna's main contribution stands in opposition to historiographic and cultural tendencies by which Palestinians who endured in Galilee villages, and who pursued life in the new Jewish state, are viewed as a defeated, docile, and coopted population. Not just Zionists but Arab commentators viewed Galilee's Palestinian population in the 1950s, and after, through this patronizing prism. Arabs who did so joined a long-standing tradition of internecine condescension regarding Galilee's minorities (in our previous volume, we witnessed this sort of sectarian squabbling in the way some contemporary Christian groups or commentators insist on under-valuing the experience of early Christians who must have kept a toehold in Jesus's home territory for the first centuries of the Common Era, until Constantine's conversion and the rise of Byzantine power turned Christian sites in Galilee into thriving pilgrimage centers¹¹⁵). Manna views Palestinians Israelis as survivors who proactively and courageously struggled to create existentially viable identities for themselves under new conditions of Israeli sovereignty.

When Moda'i referred to the hilly topography of Galilee, his point was that Palestinians were too isolated, parochial, and passive to have contemplated the recourse coerced by Operation Hiram, that is, flight beyond Israel's borders. Viewing this geographical parameter from another angle, Manna's account casts Palestinians as creative, active agents who were themselves responsible for the preservation of their own identities, and (in some cases) their own homes:

Another factor, which is insufficiently emphasized in the research literature, is geography. Inhabitants were extremely familiar with the hills and valleys,

crevices and caves . . . and they exploited this knowledge to their own advantage. Whenever the army expelled residents, but did not take the trouble to escort the expellees all the way to the border, the refugees found hiding places and knew about side roads which enabled them to remain in the region. Many of them remained close [to their villages] and returned to their homes before the army had a chance to demolish them.¹¹⁶

Galilee geography and demography were important in other senses, Manna observes.¹¹⁷ Villages in the east and the Panhandle were located close to borders, thus making it relatively easy for residents in this part of Galilee to leave Israel. Also, these Arab locales in Eastern Galilee were proximate to a relatively large number of Jewish residents, and lingering animosity between these communities regarding sociopolitical realities, land claims and other issues helped accelerate a total Palestinian exodus. In Western and central Galilee, from Majd al Krum in the west to Eilabun in the east, including locales north of the Beit Netofa valley, the IDF captured some fifty Arab villages during the 60-hour Operation Hiram. But this area which, it will be recalled, had been designated by the UN decision for an Arab state, had relatively few Jewish residents; this factor (Manna argues) was also responsible for the higher resiliency of Arab villages in Western Galilee, compared to Eastern Galilee. Another contributing factor was the presence of Druze villages like Yarka in Western Galilee, from which (as we have seen) well-connected notables sometimes extended a helping hand to Muslim neighbors who faced expulsion, or were, at least, expected to do so.

Looking at the issue not from the standpoint of internal Galilee circumstances, but from a country-wide vantage point, Manna mentions other important considerations. Most refugees from the center and south of the country made their way to Gaza, or to the Jordan's West Bank, that is, to Palestinian lands. In contrast, refugees from the north were pushed toward Syria and Lebanon. Stories circulated in Galilee about travail experienced by cohorts in Lebanon, and this could have been a deterring factor, encouraging many to think twice about leaving their homes.¹¹⁸

All told, ethno-religious circumstances in Galilee, and political loyalty orientations in the region, helped produce Hiram's particular character and its results. The vast majority of refugees from the Galilee pocket were Muslims; most Christians in this area stayed where they were, as did Galilee's Druze and Circassian inhabitants.¹¹⁹ In general, writes Morris, "Muslim villages tended to put up a fight or support units of Qawuqji's army that fought"; but there were also (as we have seen) Muslim villages which surrendered without a fight. "In mixed villages where the IDF encountered resistance, such as Tarshiha and Jish, the Christians by and large stayed put while the Muslims fled or were forced to leave."¹²⁰ Morris relays information from a list

compiled by Israel's Minority Affairs Ministry which details Galilee villages which surrendered or resisted during Operation Hiram. Villages cited as "surrendering" are Bi'ina, Kaukab, Kafr Manda, Sakhnin, Arraba, Deir Hanna, and Alma, all of these being Muslim locales, and also Maghar (Druze), Jish (Muslim-Christian), and Rehaniya (Circassian). Apart from Alma, which was uprooted, all such villages which surrendered remained on the ground with some portion of their pre-1948 populations (many of their inhabitants fled northward). Galilee villages which resisted during Hiram were Eilabun (Christian), Farradiya (Muslim), Meirun (Muslim), Sammu'i (Muslim), and al Malikiya (Muslim). Other than Eilabun, none of these villages remained after the Nakba.¹²¹

Eilabun's experience was exceptional, and its ordeal became a well-remembered and much-discussed topic among Arabs in Galilee up to the present day.¹²² It was the only Christian village victimized by an execution atrocity, just as it was the only such village from which expelled residents were sent toward the northern border. A mid-sized village located on the eastern edge of the central Galilee pocket, Eilabun's population was comprised of Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christians. In the main, these residents worked in agriculture and had just a few years of schooling; many of them were descendants of migrants from neighboring villages like Arraba, Sakhnin, and Shfaram. As the second truce drew to a close, villagers were nervous about the presence of ALA soldiers in the midst. Then, as happened almost concurrently at Majd al-Kurum, these ALA men unceremoniously pulled away from Eilabun on the night of October 29. Some young partisans from Eilabun, men who had been engaged in the fight against Israel, fled toward Lebanon with these ALA men; but most Eilabun residents took refuge in local churches. White flags of surrender flew from these places of worship and other prominent village buildings. IDF soldiers from the Golani infantry entered Eilabun at dawn, on Saturday October 30. They forcibly removed residents from the churches and brought them to the town square; one resident, A'azar Salam Muslam, was left dead. A few details of the ensuing atrocity have been divergently documented;¹²³ on all accounts, the end result was the cold blooded execution of twelve men. Manna cannot find any plausible rationale for this massacre,¹²⁴ whereas Morris mentions that the IDF men were angered by reports of a grisly incident in Eilabun a month earlier, in which two slain IDF men were decapitated.¹²⁵

As happened in aforementioned cases of West Galilee Muslim locales, the ensuing expulsion of Eilabun's Christian residents was temporary, but this village's trauma appears especially horrific. In one incident, in the area of Ein al-Assad, IDF soldiers harassed the Eilabun refugees and fired shots, wounding a girl and an elderly woman; exhausted and distressed beyond reason, two nursing mothers reportedly left their infants, one four weeks old, the other six

weeks old, under a tree.¹²⁶ After a week, Eilabun outcasts reached a refugee camp near Sidon, Lebanon. Meantime Israeli and Lebanese clergymen had raised an uproar about the Eilabun massacre, and their pleading sparked Israel's Minister of Police and Minority Affairs, Bechor-Shalom Sheetrit, into action. Pressured by priests and other notables, Israeli officials debated the fate of the Eilabun refugees for weeks. The balance tipped when General Moshe Carmel lent support to Sheetrit's advocacy of citizenship conferral for these refugees. Yehoshua Palmon, head of the Foreign Ministry's Arab section, hatched a deal with Haifa's Catholic Archbishop, George Hakim, under which thousands of Galilee Christians were granted return rights to their homes, in exchange for Hakim's future cooperation with the Jewish state. Several hundred Eilabun refugees returned to their homes.¹²⁷

In other Christian or mixed villages, "haphazardness" governed the fate of residents.¹²⁸ Al-Rama, just northeast of Nahaf, met a harsh fate. On October 30, Golani soldiers captured the village without facing resistance; but the next day soldiers from another IDF unit entered it and expelled al-Rama's 1,000 Christians and Muslims at gunpoint, while allowing Druze residents to stay. The IDF men remained in al-Rama for a week. Christians who had camped out in nearby caves and wadis returned to their houses once the IDF soldiers left—this relatively amenable resolution owed much to the intervention of Seventh Brigade Commander Ben Dunkelman, who had earlier cabled to Carmel his opposition to the eviction of the village's Christians.¹²⁹ In contrast, the Melkite Christians at Mi'ilya, another Western Galilee village, had put up active resistance against the IDF, but seemed to pay no price for it. Village residents had fought with the ALA against the IDF's Oded Brigade; when this fight ended in failure, on October 31, most village residents fled, some reaching Lebanon. Yet in subsequent days, IDF commanders allowed Mi'ilya's Greek Catholics to return to their homes, capping an unusual sequence in the 1948 war.¹³⁰

Virtually all Galilee Druze residents remained after the war. This Druze population of 11,000 now constituted 8 percent of Israel's Arab-speaking citizens, whereas in 1947 it had counted for just 1 percent of the Mandate's ethnic Arab population. By the same token, the Christian Arab share of the country's Palestinian population rose as a result of the Nakba. Up to 1947, these Christians constituted just 10 percent of the entire population, but after the war this figure more than doubled; and in the north, their relative presence was even higher, since there were 30,000 Christian Arabs in Galilee and Haifa, close to a third of the total number of Palestinians in the region.

Capitalizing on Zionist overtures, Galilee Druze bypassed the Nakba. In fact, the tide turned for the Druze exactly as Qawuqji's fortunes sagged irreversibly, at the Battle of Mishmar Haemek. Qawuqji, it will be recalled, had forged an alliance, of sorts, with the Jabal Druze during the mid-1920's

Syria Rebellion; and over twenty years later he returned to this Syrian Druze area, in a tepidly received recruiting campaign for his ALA effort in the 1948 war. By April 1948, his gambit had produced one result, the formation of one ALA Druze battalion, commanded by Shakib Wahab, a veteran of the Druze anti-French revolt who had served as a captain in the Druze Brigade of the British army during WWII. Upon his ALA enlistment, Shakib received mixed blessings from Sultan al-Atrash—the Jabal Druze leader condoned the mobilization of members of the community in Qawuqji's army, but he demanded that these volunteer recruits make it clear that they were not fighting for the Druze cause. The ALA unit thus ended up with the name "the Battalion of the Jabal Arab," not the Jabal Druze.¹³¹ In deference to Sultan al-Atrash's instructions, Shakib perorated to his troops about how "we have no Druze aims [in the 1948 war]. We are merely professionals who receive salaries."¹³²

Whatever the motivations of its commander and his troops, the Jabal Battalion fought hard in one instance, heeding a distress call from Qawuqji. Pinned down on April 6, the third day of the Mishmar Haemek battle, Qawuqji begged the Druze for help; Shakib moved with his men out of their base in Shfaram and took position in two Palestinian villages, Husha and Kasayr, outside of Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, east of Haifa. The idea was to divert pressure faced by Qawuqji by forcing the Haganah to split its forces. The Druze battalion fought hard for five days. On April 14, it took the upper hand in fierce, hand-to-hand, combat against soldiers from the Carmeli Brigade's Battalion 21; twelve Jewish soldiers were killed, and their unit pulled back toward Kiryat Ata. "For the first time," Carmeli Brigade commander Moshe Carmel recorded retrospectively, "the brigade hit upon an enemy whose ability was superior to the Arab fighter," and this shock "undermined its faith in its own ability." The Carmeli Brigade quickly recovered, however, and soon penetrated the two Palestinian villages without facing real resistance. Carmel reckoned that Shakib had not been able to quarter his men in these villages, and so allowed them to return to Shfaram at nightfall, leaving only small guard detachments in Husha and Kasayr. This explanation sounds debatable. Scratching his head, Arif al-Arif, the prominent Palestinian historian wrote in his *al-Nakba* that "nobody knows why the Druze had withdrawn from the two villages prior to this Haganah attack."¹³³

After Qawuqji's defeat at Mishmar Haemek, members of Shakib's battalion met secretly with Haganah representatives at Kiryat Amal. An agreement was brokered by a Druze notable from Isfiya, Labib Abu Rukn, who had maintained ties with the Yishuv's Shai secret service for years—the accord was a harbinger of the Druze community's sociopolitical adjustment in Israel. Dramatically, Moshe Dayan, whose brother had been slain at the Battle of Ramat Yohanan, took part in the Kiryat Amal conference. Druze delegates initially feared that the meeting was a trap; and after they hatched

an agreement with Dayan, they asked for some Hebrew-labeled chocolate bars, to prove to their Druze mates in the battalion that they had really met with Jewish officials. The Druze delegates agreed that their force would not engage hostile acts against the Haganah, and at one point in the meeting they even suggested that their renegade ALA force be absorbed into the Carmeli Brigade (Dayan balked, opining that such a move would be premature).¹³⁴

The ALA's Druze Battalion disintegrated over May, as many of its discontented, under-paid soldiers deserted and returned to Jabal Druze, while those who remained in Shfaram had miserable relations with inhabitants of this Galilee town. Shfaram turned into the stage platform for the switch in Druze orientations toward Israel. Weeks later, in mid-July, the IDF's Seventh Battalion, commanded by Dunkelman, attacked the town, following conciliatory contacts with Druze delegates. The staging of these contacts stirred controversy in Israel's political-military establishment; Auerbach, the intelligence officer who in Western Galilee villages was acquiring in this period a reputation as an atrocity-curtailing savior, opposed reaching an agreement with the Druze prior to the fight for Shfaram, and Dunkelman originally leaned toward his view. But a Shai intelligence, Mordechai Shakhevitch, who affiliated with the Seventh Brigade before this battle, pushed hard for the talks. Shakhevitch, whose experience dealing with Arabs and Druze drew from his pre-war work as a sales rep for chemical companies,¹³⁵ stood out in this period as the most persistent advocate of the Druze community's pro-Israel transformation. A few days before the Shfaram battle, Israel's delegates secretly met at night with Druze notables, apparently in an Arab-held part of the town. Dunkelman entered a large room, lit by a single kerosene lamp, feeling (in his words) "apprehensive about the outcome of this perilous adventure."¹³⁶ Shakhevitch's audacious plan, by which IDF artillery fire against Druze soldiers would be "directed to the heavens" as make-believe theater, was accepted—during the battle at Shfaram, the IDF shelled the town's Muslim section, while its artillerymen "and Druze defenders fired harmlessly over each other's heads,"¹³⁷ in a vignette which encapsulates the ethno-national selectivity of the IDF's war in Galilee in 1948.

Following the Ramat Yohanan battle in mid-April, and Dayan's subsequent meeting with Druze notables, the IDF took steps to form a Druze unit comprised of two platoons, one manned by renegade veterans of the ALA unit, and the other featuring some thirty volunteers from Haifa-area Druze villages, Daliyat al-Karmal and Isfiya. Nonetheless, ambiguity surrounding norms, expectations, and limits of Druze involvement in Israeli life lingered for some time. In late October, Qawuqji launched attacks on Yanoah, a Druze village located alongside a strategically important Galilee town, Tarshiha; Druze fighters fought and died on both, IDF and ALA, sides of this conflict at Yanoah. Generally, it is believed that Druze integration in Israeli society

proceeded in a linearly consecutive fashion after the 1948 war, with the end-point of this process being patriotic IDF service undertaken by Druze men (apart from a religiously exempt class, Druze males serve obligatory IDF terms, many in Border Guard units which mix police work and combat roles). However, as shown by the scholar Hillel Cohen, the institution of Druze conscription policies in the 1950s stirred opposition in the community's Galilee villages;¹³⁸ and this resistance was just one symbol of lingering ambivalence on both sides about normative and practical dimensions of the involvement of this Arab-speaking minority in the Jewish state.

Overall, the results of Operation Hiram and associated IDF actions can be surveyed with precision.

Israel's conquest of Galilee during Operation Hiram and subsequent military actions dramatically altered the country's sociodemographic realities. As Israel moved into a civilian mode, at the time of the first Knesset elections in 1949, the country's Arab population had dwindled to 125,000 persons. The vast majority, 100,000 Arabs, were located in Haifa and Galilee. Galilee's post-war Arab population was less than half the size recorded in 1947. That said, it was also the only region in the country where close to half the Palestinian residents endured.¹³⁹

During Operation Hiram and its weeks-long aftermath,¹⁴⁰ some thirty Palestinian villages were destroyed in Galilee's center. In the Beit Netofa valley, three villages remained after the Nakba, Deir Hanna, Sakhnin, and Arraba. In Beit Hakerem, six villages remained, Al Rama, Sajur, Nahaf, Deir al-Assad, Bi'ina, and Majd al-Krum. The Nakba took a harsher toll north of these West Galilee localities. Villages located close to the Lebanon border, or to the Mediterranean Sea, had lower chances of survival in the Nakba. All told, of the sixty villages captured by the IDF during Operation Hiram, half survived; and half of these remaining villages were Druze communities or mixed (Druze, Christian, and Muslim) locales.

NAKBA GALILEE: A PANORAMIC VIEW

Several of the abandoned Galilee villages had been loci of holy land settlement for centuries. For instance, as we noted in the previous volume, Hunin in Upper Galilee had hosted a Crusader castle, called Chastel Neuf.¹⁴¹ Hunin was occupied during the Haganah's "Yiftah" operation—to some non-measurable extent, the village's 1,600 residents left as a result of an intimidating tactics sponsored by Yiftah commander, Yigal Allon.¹⁴² After the war, Allon recalled how he gathered various Jewish local leaders in Galilee, telling them to "whisper in the ears of several Arabs that huge Jewish reinforcements had reached Galilee and were about to clean out the villages of the Hula";¹⁴³ Allon boasted that this intimidation tactic "fully achieved its objective," but

an IDF intelligence estimate in late June concluded that less than 20 percent of the Panhandle's residents who fled did so as a result of this whispering tactic.¹⁴⁴ Kibbutz Misgav Am, later the site of a 1980 terror infiltration, was established on the northern part of this deserted village.

Other abandoned villages had still deeper roots in history. Khan al-Duwayr, a small hamlet with a few dozen houses made out of black basalt and mud, may have been the Old Testament's walled town of Laish, which was conquered by the tribe of Dan in the twelfth century BCE.¹⁴⁵ Kadas, a Shiite village located 17 kilometers north of Safed on a mountain slope, was a significant town in Roman and Byzantine times (a Roman temple, dating to the first or second century CE, has been excavated in the village area); as we have seen, at the end of the tenth century, the Arab geographer Muqaddasi was charmed by this village, and its three springs.¹⁴⁶ Between May and October 1948, control over Kadas switched hands between the Haganah and the ALA. Yiftah soldiers in this period deployed the ruse of disguising themselves as Lebanese fighters.¹⁴⁷ After the village's fall, Israel established Kibbutz Yiftah on lands that had been on the northeast side of Kadas.

According to local Islamic traditions, villagers in al-Malikiyya had possession of a wooden platter that once belonged to the prophet Muhammad. Between May and October, control of this village also volleyed back and forth between antagonistic sides, before the last of its approximately 400 residents left (Kibbutz Malkiah took root on the southeast side of the abandoned village).¹⁴⁸

Iqrit, located 25 kilometers northwest of Acre on the Lebanon border, dated back to the era of the Canaanites, who built a statue on the locale for the god Melqart of Tyre. The Crusaders occupied the site and named it Acref. Like several other villages abandoned during the Nakba, Iqrit was listed in the 1596 Ottoman census; it paid taxes on goats, beehives, and a printing press. With a few other border villages, Iqrit became part of the Palestine Mandate in 1923 after the British and French reached territorial agreements; and it grew from its base of 100 residents in the late nineteenth century to a population of 500 at the time of the 1948 war, the majority of whom were Christian (Greek Catholics ran an elementary school in the village).¹⁴⁹

Iqrit fell in late October 1948, as the IDF consolidated its control over Galilee in Operation Hiram. Residents remained in the defeated village through mid-November, but in this period, as Benny Morris relates, the IDF was pushing hard for "Arab-less" frontier regions, and its soldiers enforced an eviction of Iqrit's residents.¹⁵⁰ As happened in the case of two other predominately Christian villages in Galilee, Al Mansura and Kafr Bir'im, Iqrit's residents won assurances that the eviction would be temporary, but these promises were never fulfilled (later, pressure leveled by refugees from Iqrit and Kafr Bir'im periodically compelled Israeli officials and its court system

to address the status of promises that had been delivered to the villages during the war, but this did nothing for the ex-villagers; some of them who re-settled elsewhere in Galilee, such as in the Jish village, eventually became prominent Galilee figures in Greek Catholic and other frameworks¹⁵¹). Morris concludes that the cases of these three villages “illustrate how deeply rooted was the IDF’s determination from November 1948 onwards to create a northern border strip clear of Arabs.”¹⁵²

West of Iqrit, facing the Mediterranean coast, the large village of al-Bassa had a population close to 3,000 residents in years before the Nakba, with Christians and Muslims roughly equal in number. This village also had a long history, its name perhaps deriving from the Canaanite word for swamp (*bissah*). Excavations conducted under the British Mandate’s auspices identified a Christian burial place; the site had coins and glass dating to the fourth century CE. Referred to by Saladin’s chronicler, Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, al-Bassa had a population of 572 residents in 1596. By 1948, the village had over 700 houses; the older ones, dating to Ottoman times, had one large room and a courtyard utilized for laundry, and also to house livestock; newer, concrete, homes constructed after WWII had two floors. Before the Nakba, the village operated elementary schools for boys and girls, and a private secondary school, along with some athletic clubs; there were a number of shrines, and two churches and two mosques; twenty stores sold goods, and there was also an open market (*hisba*) on Sundays.¹⁵³

The Haganah occupied al-Bassa around the time of the mid-May statehood declaration, as part of Operation Ben-Ami’s thrust up Western Galilee to the Lebanon border. Haganah men reached the coastal village in boats, in an inaugural naval operation for Israel; Jewish sources state that al-Bassa’s residents fled at the appearance of Haganah forces. Morris’s authoritative history does not allude to a massacre in this village, but the Palestinian historian Nafez Nazzal interviewed former villagers who insist that Haganah men shot young al-Bassa residents outside of a church, and forced survivors to bury them. The Israeli moshav Betzet, populated with Jewish immigrants from Rumania and Yugoslavia, was established on the village site in 1949.¹⁵⁴

In some villages, the tragic events of 1948 unfolded as the latest in an ongoing sequence of military resistance and migration. In 1948, Dayshum, located twelve kilometers due north of Safed, was a village of 600 residents, several of whom were descendants of Algerian immigrants who had fought against French colonialism in North Africa in the 1840s—they apparently set on course for Galilee in 1847, when their leader, Qadir al-Jazairi, was sent into exile. Since these ex-Algerians were skilled horsemen, their descendants in Dayshum were known for raising horses.

Some Galilee villages were targeted by the Haganah for discernible military reasons. One was al-Nabi Yusha, the site of a burial shrine for the prophet

Yusha and an annual Muslim festival. The village became a military objective after the British evacuated their police station in it—as will be recalled, after Qawuqji's ALA men occupied the compound, over twenty Palmah fighters died in failed raids designed to wrest control of this village for the Haganah. Just as Israeli statehood was declared, Israeli planes strafed the police station, and the village's Arab soldiers and residents apparently fled. For the next five months, the area just outside of al-Nabi Yusha constituted a theater of conflict between the IDF and Arab forces; as a result of Operation Hiram, Israel gained control of lands extending from the abandoned village to the Lebanese border.¹⁵⁵

Some villages, such as al-Zib, on the coast north of Acre, were identified by the Haganah as long-standing hotbeds of hostile activity. On the eve of the Nakba, al-Zib was relatively large, with close to 2,000 residents living in mud and stone houses placed in a square-shaped configuration; they worked in citrus and bananas, and also as fisherman (whose hauls from the sea averaged 16 metric tons annually).¹⁵⁶ Morris writes that the "Haganah had a long account" with al-Zib; during Operation Ben-Ami in mid-May, a combination of Israeli mortar barrage, and panic among residents, led to flight from al-Zib.¹⁵⁷ The village was leveled, but Israeli officials subsequently wondered about the prudence of this move, some opining that revenge might have been sweeter "had we settled Jews in the village houses"¹⁵⁸ (as it happened, Kibbutz Gesher HaZiv, comprised largely of Labor Zionist Hahonim immigrants from English-speaking countries, was established on al-Zib's ruins).

Some villages became military objectives owing to their size and location, though revenge impulses and intimidation calculations sometimes intermingled with these practical considerations. Al-Kabri, several kilometers east of the Mediterranean coast in the Western Galilee, sprawled over 9,200 acres, and had a large population of over 5,300 persons (including Tarshiha). Known for its springs, the village served as a fresh water source. Al-Kabri was occupied on May 20–21 by Israeli fighters during the second stage of Operation Ben-Ami. According to Palestinian accounts, this occupation was the last in a series of violent episodes connected to the village, starting in early February when a small Zionist band blew up a house in al-Kabri which housed a local leader affiliated with the Mufti, Hajj Amin al-Husseini. Al-Kabri's situation altered in late March, following the lethal Arab ambush on the Haganah convoy at nearby Yehiam: ex-villagers claimed that the flight from al-Kabri in late May resulted, in part, from fear of acts of Israeli retribution following the convoy ambush, and they added that several of their neighbors were captured or shot in this period.¹⁵⁹ Areas once belonging to the village (or possibly Tarshiha) became important sites of Israeli development in Galilee, starting with Kibbutz Kabri in 1949, and culminating with

Kfar Vradim, built in 1984, an affluent Jewish suburb adjacent to the Tefen Industrial Park.

In the case of some villages decimated by Operation Hiram, atrocity overshadows calculations of military rationale that motivated IDF activity. Safsaf, located close to the Safed-Tarshiha highway, had been used early in the war as headquarters of the ALA's Second Yarmuk Battalion, led by the aforementioned Adib Shishaqli (the future president of Syria). Safsaf was the first Galilee village taken during Hiram. Yisrael Galili, who served as Haganah Chief of Staff before Israeli statehood, attested that during Hiram, "52 men [in Safsaf] were tied with a rope and dropped into a well and shot. Ten were killed. Woman pleaded for mercy. [There were] three cases of rape."¹⁶⁰

Galili also attested to a massacre during Operation Hiram at the village of Saliha, in Upper Galilee. He said that the IDF's Seventh Brigade killed ninety-four villagers by blowing up a house.¹⁶¹

Sa'sa, a strategic asset due to its proximity to an Upper Galilee road network, endured two brutal attacks. In mid-February 1948, the Palmah's third battalion targeted the village since it was used as a base for Arab fighters. The battalion's commander, Moshe Kelman, ordered his men to "blow up twenty houses and kill the largest [possible] number of [enemy] fighters," and the official Haganah history refers to dozens of people killed in this action. Then, when Sa'sa was occupied in late October, some unspecified atrocity transpired—Galili attested to cases of "mass murder [even though] a thousand [residents] lifted white flags" and offered gifts to the Israeli army. He added that "the whole village was expelled."¹⁶²

Fates of Galilee cities during the Nakba were mixed and were determined by a number of factors, many of them incisively identified by Tel Hai College researcher Mustafa Abbasi.

Under the November 1947 UN partition plan, two Galilee cities with mixed, Arab-Jewish populations, Tiberias and Safed, were allotted to the Jewish state (along with the Sea of Galilee region, the Eastern Galilee, and the Upper Galilee Panhandle). With regard to the first city, Tiberias, this plan might have seemed tenable, because its Arab residents had lived peaceably with their Jewish neighbors, even at prior times of tension. During the 1929 Arab-Jewish riots in Palestine, an event seen by some researchers as the Ground Zero moment in the protracted dispute between Israel and the Arab world,¹⁶³ Tiberias' Arab leader, Said Tabari, reportedly promised Jewish notables that "as long as I live, not a hair will fall from the heads of Jews of Tiberias."¹⁶⁴

Ahead of the 1948 war, Tiberias was divided almost equally between some 6,000 Jews and 5,300 Arabs. During early phases of the 1948 struggle, through March, Arab notables in Tiberias made repeated peace overtures to the Jewish side; and their non-belligerent attitude was well-known to Haganah

intelligence. On March 9, communal leaders from the two sides agreed to a formal ceasefire in Tiberias.¹⁶⁵ This accord had little effect, however. Shortly after a battle in the city in mid-April, Tiberias' Arab residents fled, primarily to locales across the Transjordanian border, and Tiberias became an entirely Jewish city. Despite the city's prior history of Arab-Jewish coexistence, Tiberias became the first city in the country which witnessed an Arab exodus during the 1948 war.¹⁶⁶

Accounting for the twists in this sequence, Abbasi points to a number of inter-related factors, including the Arab community's over-dependence upon the Tabari family, the local Arab leadership's one-dimensional policy of seeking accommodation with the Jewish side at all costs, the "virtual abdication" of British authorities as they pulled troops from the city in the final weeks of the Mandate, and the launching of the Haganah's Plan D.¹⁶⁷ Citing, among other sources, memoirs written by Haganah officers, Abbasi argues that local Jewish leaders did not perceive the March 9 ceasefire as a long-term peace accord, and the Haganah higher command also viewed the ceasefire as "a temporary and tactical step." The army of the embryonic Jewish state



Figure 5.3 Bus convoy Carrying Out Exodus of Tiberias' Arab Residents, 1948. *Source:* Courtesy of IDF and Defense Establishment Archives.

was “waiting for the right moment to take control over the Arab sector of the city,” in accord with Plan D, Abbasi claims.¹⁶⁸ In April, the Haganah rejected follow-up peace overtures from Tiberias’ Arab notables, fearing that Arab control of strategic sites in the city could become a liability after the end of the Mandate in mid-May, when Jordanian and Syrian forces were expected to invade the new Jewish state.

On this interpretation, while the city’s Arab population was encouraged by its leadership to avoid war, the Haganah and local Jewish officials prepared industriously to fight for full control of Tiberias. “The Jewish side exerted very strong pressure to evacuate the Arabs from Tiberias, and was not satisfied with their mere surrender,” Abbasi concludes.¹⁶⁹ On several key points, Abbasi’s version of Tiberias events clashes with accounts provided by the city’s Haganah fighters. Implicitly or overtly, these “Zionist” accounts contest Abbasi’s contention about the depth of Tiberias’ coexistence culture before 1948 (they stress that Jews in town were massacred during the 1936–1939 Palestinian uprising, in events, it will be recalled, which embroiled Yigal Allon), and they point out that peace overtures sponsored by the Tabari family were consistently undermined by provocations undertaken by rival Palestinian groups and individuals, particularly Subhi Shaheen, who operated in concert with the Mufti, to some extent.¹⁷⁰

Differing interpretations of Arab abandonment of Safed during the 1948 war also reflect conceptual gaps and factual disagreement between the Israeli Independence War narrative and the Palestinian Nakba narrative. Jewish accounts have long depicted the 1948 conflict in Safed as a story of an outnumbered Jewish population overcoming an Arab siege, and, via the heroic use of arms, gaining control of a town renowned for its illustrious history of Jewish mysticism and rebirth after the late medieval expulsion from Spain. Palestinian researchers, however, challenge major premises of this account. Suggesting that Safed’s Jewish population was never entirely isolated by an Arab siege in 1948, they vastly re-evaluate the balance of forces in the city, and reject a perception of Israel’s triumph as a story of a small Jewish “David” battling away a huge Arab “Goliath.” As the battle for Safed reached its climactic moment, Abbasi argues, 600 Jewish fighters squared off against less than 200 Arab counterparts¹⁷¹—such figures are quite unlike ones cited in the most authoritative Jewish memoir of 1948 Safed, Mevar-Maiberg’s aforementioned 1989 volume, though there are points of tangency between his Zionist-spirited account and Abbasi’s revision.¹⁷²

Less disputable is the loop of panic created by the assertion of Jewish military power in the Safed region. Because the Haganah engaged harsh warfare tactics, as in the aforementioned Sa’sa episode in February, and also in the failed attack by the Palmah’s Third Battalion at Nabi Yusha in late April, Arab residents of Safed feared for their lives; they were disposed to

flee when fierce fighting broke out in their town. The Palmah took control of Safed owing to a series of attacks capped by a successful night-time thrust on May 9. This period witnessed the flight of residents of villages around Safed; the villagers were frightened by the prospect of Jewish fighters soon reaching their homes.

A key link in this sequence of panic and flight occurred a week and a half before the Haganah's triumph in Safed, on May 1, in the nearby villages of Biriyya and Ein al Zeitun.¹⁷³ The latter village had served as a base for Arab irregulars, who harassed Jewish travelers and residents of the nearby kibbutz, Ein Zeitim. The Haganah attack began before dawn, with the firing of a Davidka, a primitive, locally produced, weapon useful primarily for its terrifying noise.¹⁷⁴ Palmah fighters expelled most village residents, but also detained several dozen persons—these were apparently among the seventy prisoners shot and killed on May 3 or 4, in the gully between Ein al Zeitun, in accord with commanding officer Moshe Kelman's orders.¹⁷⁵ Palmah fighters on the scene recalled how our "men began blowing up the village"; and they justified these actions around Ein al Zeitun both as acts of vengeance for the massacre of Jewish residents in the area during the 1929 riots, and as an intimidation tactic oriented toward Safed's Arab community, as preparation for the final fight for control of this key Galilee city.¹⁷⁶ Viewed more broadly, the Palmah's brutal behavior around Ein Zeitim, and its military successes in this period, close a historical circle in modern times. We have argued that the Arab-Jewish conflict's origins can be identified at Ein Zeitim, where terrified Orthodox Jewish refugees from Safed huddled during the riotous 1834 Fellaheen uprising. Now, in the same place, the dynamics, and identities of victims and aggressors, had reversed.

Before the Nakba, Acre was an Arab city, with its population of 13,000 residents over 70 percent Muslim, and much of the remainder Christians. The city was included in the Arab state under the 1947 Partition Plan, and (following Jaffa) it became the second Arab city outside of territory allotted to the Jewish state to be taken by the Haganah. The coastal city flooded with refugees following the fall of Haifa to the Haganah on April 22. Acre's population temporarily leapt to 40,000 owing to this refugee influx; and it became a demoralized, stratified community in which, according to the testimony of one notable (Sheikh Salih Khnefis), the newcomer refugees and native townsmen loathed one another.¹⁷⁷

The Haganah's conquest of Acre, in the mid-May period of Israel's statehood declaration, came in the direct aftermath of Operation Ben Ami actions in Western Galilee, including the aforementioned seizure of the al-Zib and al-Bassa villages. Unlike the cases of Tiberias and Safed, some Arabs remained in Acre after the Israeli military triumph; but these 3,000 residents constituted a small fraction of the pre-Nakba community, and they lacked a leadership

structure. During the first two decades of Israeli statehood, a period when military rule extended to the country's Arab population, Acre's Arabs constituted an exhausted, vulnerable population.¹⁷⁸

Of Galilee's four cities, only Nazareth withstood traumatic Nakba experiences of loss, dislocation, and departure. Researchers attribute this singular case to the prudent actions taken under emergency conditions by the city's mayor, Yusuf al-Fahum, as well as to orders delivered by Prime Minister (and Defense Minister) David Ben-Gurion, demanding that IDF soldiers refrain from expelling city residents, and avoid "any possibility of plunder or desecration of monasteries and churches."¹⁷⁹

GALILEE AFTER 1948

In autumn 2000, just less than two millennia after Jesus's followers heeded his call after the Crucifixion and returned to Galilee in a process that bestowed to history a new monotheistic ethic and spiritual vision, the post-Cold War utopian idea of a placidly blissful "end to history," espoused by writers such as Francis Fukayama,¹⁸⁰ exploded in Galilee. The breakdown of the 1990's Oslo Peace Process, violently catapulted in autumn 2000 by start of the years-long Palestinian uprising known as the Second Intifada, had an early, hope-destroying, moment in areas that overlapped the 1948 battle for Western Galilee.

In autumn 2000, after more than a half a century under Israeli sovereignty, Arab citizens of the Jewish state rose up. Enraged by the failure of the peace process to improve their own lives and also, no less importantly, those of their national brethren in post-1967 West Bank and Gaza Strip regions under Israel's occupation, these Galilee Palestinians staged protests of extraordinary existential import. Quantitatively, the total of thirteen Israeli Arabs/Palestinians killed in this Galilee, autumn 2000, violence was offset in the Second Intifada by the far graver toll of Palestinians killed in the occupied territories, and also Jews murdered in a gruesome string of barbaric terror attacks. Israel responded responsibly to this autumn 2000 unrest in Galilee, forming a government commission whose 2003 findings (the "Or Report")¹⁸¹ promoted a small measure of reform in police activity and other spheres; and the attitudes of Galilee Arabs, a population which has democratic rights and representation in Israel, and whose vast majority would not voluntarily move to a West Bank-Gaza sovereign Palestinian state, should one be arranged in the future, are complex. By no means were they fully expressed in this moment of national existential rage in Galilee, in fall 2000.

Still, more than a passing occurrence, these autumn 2000 events symbolized how Galilee is a part of the Holy Land where history digs as deeply

as anywhere else, though public attention remains riveted in Judea and Jerusalem.

The rhetoric of the Oslo Peace Process, and the terrorized passions of the Second Intifada, conjured the sense that the Israeli-Arab conflict frames around territories occupied by Israel after the 1967 Six Day War, and that its resolution is largely predicated upon control rearrangements in Jerusalem consistent with a two-state solution. In actual fact, the Israeli-Arab conflict is about 1948, not 1967. Whereas contrasting Palestinian and Zionist narratives impart vast *symbolic* import to Jerusalem, the actual living ground where contrasting communal and individual experiences bred the fateful asymmetry between Palestinian Nakba catastrophe and Jewish Independence War sovereign glory is Galilee. Folded within this narrative asymmetry are a number of sub-contrasts, including dramatic “before and after” regional demographic facts in the interval spanning between the November 1947 partition resolution and the results of the 1948 war, as well as cultural differences separating ways Jewish and Arab communities in Galilee prepared for, and coped with, the war.

Historically, Galilee has been a cradle of polyphonic narratives. Repeatedly, the Jews reengaged with history by re-settling in the region, but their narrative of triumphant return invariably had a dark flip side. For instance, at the start of this volume we saw how Jews used the medium of Kabbalist mysticism to reaffirm their civilization’s continuity, and its ties to the Holy Land, by congregating in Safed; in so doing, they overcame the trauma of persecution and expulsion from late fifteenth century Spain. The duality of 1948 experiences in Galilee seems no less acute than these previous, epochal, instances of expulsion and settlement. Many Jews who populated the aforementioned eight Western Galilee communities had immigrated to Mandatory Palestine on Aliyah waves responsive to the rise of anti-Semitism in early twentieth century Europe, culminating in Nazism and the Holocaust. Following the Palestinian exodus, many immigrant Israelis who were settled throughout Galilee in *maaborot* transit camps in the 1950s, under semi-coercive immigration absorption and population dispersal policies enforced by Israel’s regnant Labor Zionist (“Mapai” party) government, were Sephardic-Mizrahi Jews who had been cast away, more or less as refugees, from countries in the Middle East and North Africa where anti-Semitism erupted in angry response to the establishment of the Jewish state. As a result of 1948, Galilee served as a theater of refugee restitution for Jews, many of whose experiences quintessentially symbolized the exhaustion of history elsewhere, in Holocaust Europe.

For Palestinian Arabs, in complete contrast, Galilee in 1948 served as a theater of refugee destitution. If Jewish triumph in Galilee represents renewal in a world forged out of the rubble of WWII, Palestinian catastrophe in

Galilee foretells our new, post-Cold War era of global politics increasingly dominated by immigration dislocation and immigration-related controversy.

Jewish *ma'apilim*, that is, illegal immigrants before May 1948 who ducked and bypassed restrictive British policies to settle in Galilee, where they fought successfully against a Palestinian national movement headed by Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, a proactive Hitler supporter during WWII, personify survival, endurance, and renewal in a world nearly destroyed by the ideological fanaticism of the 1920s and 1930s. By the same token, Palestinian refugees who descend from families which lost their homes in villages destroyed in 1948 are today archetypal figures in a twenty-first century whose normative, if not practical, capacity to survive rapidly developing refugee and immigration crises is questionable. Galilee persists, presiding over the end of one era, presaging dramatic transformation in the next.

In truth, the perception of the 1948 war as a come-and-go refugee sequence, with once persecuted Jews supplanting newly persecuted Palestinians, is familiar. In Hebrew literature, for instance, it resonates in a precocious short story, “Hirbet Hizah,” authored by a patriotic Israeli author, S. Yizhar in 1949, which ends with a Jewish narrator’s self-flagellating exclamation about how his army troop devastated a Palestinian village for the benefit of future Jewish immigrants, and to the detriment of its former residents, newly expelled Arab refugees (“We came, we shot, we burned, we blew up, we repulsed and shoved off, we drove into exile”).¹⁸²

Yet there are lesser known contrasts and tensions laden within the fundamental duality of Galilee experience in 1948. These have, or will have, inestimably powerful repercussions, both with regard to Israel’s sociopolitical viability in decades to come, and also inter-faith, global comprehension of the complexities and promises of the country popularly known as the Holy Land. One crucial contrast is the uncanny way the 1948 experience was reversibly mirrored in Galilee and Judea-Jerusalem.

In mid-May 1948, exactly as Zionist frontier pioneering triumphed in Galilee, it was ravaged and destroyed in Judea. At that time, when Ben-Gurion boldly declared Israeli statehood following Britain’s departure from the country, residents of the eight Western Galilee communities were nervously evacuating their children, worried that invading Arab countries, in conjunction with Fawzi al-Qawuqji’s Arab Liberation Army, would destroy their homes. That, as we have seen, did not happen. But exactly at this moment, in the Judean mountain Gush Etzion bloc, south of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, where some 450 Jewish pioneers lived, Jewish existence was, temporarily, obliterated—on May 13, 1948, a day before the statehood declaration, about 130 Haganah soldiers and kibbutz residents from this area were killed in the Kfar Etzion massacre, putting an end to Jewish settlement in this region up to the aftermath of the 1967 war.

Since the 1967 Six Day War, much of what has driven controversies about the “disputed territories” in the West Bank and Gaza is a refusal among right-wing Israelis, religious and secular, to accommodate this result of the 1948 war, one which was arbitrary when viewed purely in terms of that period’s diplomatic realities (since the Western Galilee settlements were not slated for the Jewish state under the 1947 partition plan).

Conversely, if a feasible two state solution someday culminates with a sovereign Palestine state based in Gaza and the West Bank, inveterate opponents of Israel will exploit this diplomatic arbitrariness of the 1948 results and point in the opposite direction. That is, the moment Israel finishes divesting itself of most of the territories it gained in the 1967 War, anti-Zionist extremists will immediately start pressuring it to relinquish lands within the pre-1967 borders, within what is called the “Green Line,” which, from their perspective, Israel annexed “illegally” after its victory in the 1948 war. These areas include the Western Galilee region where I raised my own children, as a proud and patriotic Israeli.

Neither religious Zionist extremism, nor anti-Zionism extremism, has persuasive historical and moral warrant, however. One view denies that Palestinians have legitimate rights just as the other view denies that Israelis have legitimate rights. And both put a false messianic gloss on distinctive dimensions of the 1948 experience.

Trying to exact revenge in response to the Second Temple destruction tragedy, religious Zionists want to reverse dynamics that transpired just less than 2,000 years ago, when Jewish scholars fled to Galilee and revitalized their religion because Jerusalem and Judea were lost to them. In 1948, Jews regained Galilee but were unable to unify Jerusalem, and lost Judea. According to the post-1967 rhetoric of religious Zionism, the Six Day War enabled Israel to “unify” Jerusalem and resettle Judea—this view is objectively wrong and morally dubious, since it mandates the political disenfranchisement and socioeconomic misery of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians on the West Bank, and imagines “unification” of a city, Jerusalem, in whose eastern half tens of thousands of Palestinians have no volitional investment in the current municipality, and suffer from iniquitous resource distribution.

Though they are sometimes unclear about, or perhaps even unaware of, their innermost motivations, anti-Zionists are, in the opposite way, trying to exact revenge on the results of the era of Jesus and the Second Temple destruction. At that time, Jews lost the physical vestiges of national existence, but managed to survive as a collective via spiritual fortitude and religious reconstruction. By denying Israel the right to exist on the basis of any defensible, and internationally recognized, borders, the anti-Zionists are trying retroactively to accomplish what the Romans, and some of Jesus’s

followers, could not quite manage to pull off 2,000 years ago, that is, the obliteration of the Jews' national existence in a land cherished by them.

On both extremist views, Galilee is exploited imaginatively in counter-factual assessments of what happened, or should have happened, in it, compared to what happened, or should have happened, in Jerusalem and Judea, in 1948, and in the first century of the Common Era.

The power of Galilee's place in history is also its problem. Its strengths and vulnerabilities are invariably perceptible in relation to Jerusalem—Galilee has always been linked to Jerusalem in complicated spiritual, political, and conceptual ways. For instance, Saladin's astonishingly resounding victory at Hattin, in Galilee, should have stood on its own as incomparable proof of Arab strength in the Middle Ages, relative to the west. Instead, it became remembered largely as the occurrence that shattered Europe's hold on Jerusalem as the capital of the Crusades.

Judea's hold over Galilee after 1948 is a fatefully significant example of this age-old dynamic. After Israel's 1948 triumph in the region translated in international recognition of Galilee as part of the sovereign Jewish state, the Mapai-Labor party, which controlled Israeli politics until 1977, established a number of immigration camps, towns, farm colonies, and communal settlements in this northern region, whose history we must refer to some other, future, study. In a schematically plausible way, we can say that the Galilee region never became a development priority for Israel (it remains known, to this day, as a "peripheral" area, a classification that has cultural, political, and resource allocation implications). In significant measure, Galilee's growth as an inclusively democratic, civilian, area was negated by the imposition of military government control of its Arab towns and villages for some twenty years, until shortly before the 1967 Six Day War.

The retention of this military government in Galilee and some other parts of Israel had tenuously plausible rationale, since before 1967, Israel's political-military establishment had no surefire proof of the IDF's prowess in the Middle East context, and it was thus ever apprehensive about an impending "second round" of Arab armies invading the country to avenge the 1948 war. Galilee Arabs were regarded as a potential fifth column poised to contribute to enemy attacks in this anticipated second round. However justifiable under such strategic conceptualization, the military government bred a long roster of abuses—the manipulation of vulnerable voters by political parties, the granting or withholding of family reunification privileges to obtain information or coerce political behavior, the aggressive handling of morally and socially compromised Arab collaborators and informers, and so on—which were critically scrutinized at the time by perceptive Palestinian observers and which have been intelligently exposed in retrospect by Israeli historians.¹⁸³

The military government effectively nullified Galilee's democratic potential up to 1967.

Then, following the occupation of the West Bank and other areas in the aftermath of the Six Day War, Israel's Likud-led governments, originally under the aggressively nationalist direction of Menachem Begin, forged subtle and explicit links between the development of settlements in these disputed Judea and Samaria (West Bank) areas, and expansion in Galilee. The Likud-led governments have routinely given resource allocation and political policy precedence to the internationally disputed West Bank settlements; but Begin's several years in power after 1977 also spurred a mini-explosion of Jewish growth in Galilee, featuring the establishment of small settlement colonies (called *mitzpim* in Hebrew, in semantic contradistinction to the West Bank and Gaza Jewish settlements, which are called *hitnachliyyot*). Jewish settlement in Galilee after 1977 expanded at a rate unknown in the preceding thirty years of Israel's existence. Himself a product of a Jewish middle class, urban lifestyle in pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe, Begin was inveterately antagonistic to the socialist-tempered frontier pioneering ethos of Labor Zionism (which we surveyed in the preceding chapter); but the *mitzpim* colonies which his governments established in Galilee were nonetheless a throwback to the militaristic, ideologically driven, "us or them" settlement policies instituted by the Jewish Agency in Galilee and elsewhere in the pre-1948, Jewish state-in-the-making, period.

Much more than middle-of-the-road or leftist Israelis like to admit today, this resurgence of Jewish pioneering in Galilee spearheaded by the Begin governments in the late 1970s and early 1980s was tailored from the same cloth as the West Bank settlements. The *mitzpim* were sprinkled around Galilee with an explicit aim of choking the growth of its relatively large Arab towns, such as Sakhnin. Local governance arrangements were gerrymandered so that disproportionate resource and emphasis would go to these new Jewish *mitzpim*, to the detriment both of the Arab towns and villages, and also of the few relatively large municipalities in Galilee, such as Karmiel or Ma'alot, whose Jewish populations have a less pronounced ideological character, being comprised largely of unassuming immigrant groups (most recently, from the ex-Soviet Union).¹⁸⁴ Though they are often left-leaning, residents of these Galilee *mitzpim* regard themselves as a Zionist vanguard, quite like Jewish settler counterparts on the West Bank; these Galilee *mitzpe* settlers belittle and deride Russian-speaking immigrants and Mizrahi Jewish residents of Maalot, Kiryat Shmona, and Karmiel as a kind of Zionist lumpenproletariat (on a given school day, buses from these Jewish *mitzpim* traverse absurdly long, circuitous routes, so that their children avoid learning in schools with Jewish children from these

towns). Arabs are denied admission to these mitzpim by community councils euphemistically called “absorption committees.” Conceptualizations utilized through the mid-1980s by government officials and policy planners in explication of the rationale and ultimate goals of these Galilee mitzpim (“Judaization of Galilee,” Palestinian “population dispersal,” etc.) are not just politically incorrect by contemporary standards. Strikingly, they also bear witness to Galilee’s associative link to West Bank settlement-building in Israel’s policy mind-set.¹⁸⁵

The results of the 1948 war were problematic for both sides. After 1977, by resuscitating a paramilitary pioneering settlement model in a Galilee region whose borders have, after 1948, enjoyed large-scale (albeit not universal) international recognition, and where “normal” civilian development was forestalled for decades by military governance, but nonetheless always remained a viable possibility, Israel’s Likud governments demonstrated how deeply they were stuck in the muddy killing fields of the 1948 experience. While Palestinians dwelled idly in refugee camps, dreaming of homes in destroyed Galilee villages to which they would never return, Israel’s policy-makers promoted their own quixotic vision of renewing bygone Zionist frontier pioneering traditions in mitzpe outposts in Western Galilee’s Misgav regional council which were erected where these lost Palestinian communities once stood.

This is all to say that the 1948 siege mentality lingers in Galilee.

In addition to cultivating its special relationship with the United States, Israel’s strategic imperative in the twenty-first century is to normalize the outcome of the 1948 trauma. The way Galilee is linked to Judea in Jewish consciousness stops it from doing that. In Galilee society and politics, arrested development and sheer inertia have overcome Zionism’s historically pragmatic character. There is a clear qualitative difference in the Jewish state’s encounter with its own Palestinian citizens in Galilee, compared to its encounter with disenfranchised Palestinian residents of West Bank locales occupied after the 1967 Six Day War. Palestinians in Galilee typically resent Israel’s assertion of control over their lives and have grueling Nakba stories of injuries incurred by their own families. However, they are also invested, often irretrievably, in Israeli educational, employment, and even cultural spheres; and in decades after the removal of the military government, they have exercised their political rights by sending to Israel’s parliament, the Knesset, a healthily heterogeneous, and increasingly assertive, group of representatives, religious and secular, male and female. Arguments in favor of engaging with Galilee’s non-Jewish minorities, Christian and Muslim Palestinians, and also Druze, in twenty-first century terms of democratic dialogue and empowerment, via affirmative action for opportunity in higher education, high tech employment, and residential building, are absolutely compelling. Yet Israel’s right-wing, Likud-led, governments view Galilee as

though it is occupied Judea and Samaria, that is, as though it is an area whose Arab population is a strategic threat.

Clownishly, these governments pretend to develop civilian space on the occupied West Bank, an area where Israeli control is anathema to the international community, by nominally upgrading as a “university” a rogue institution of higher learning at the illegal Ariel settlement. Meantime there is no university in Galilee, an area where Israeli sovereignty has enjoyed international support since the end of the 1948 war, and whose spiritual landscape inspires commitment among hundreds of millions of Christians, and others, worldwide. In areas where the 1948 battle for Western Galilee—a story we just surveyed—was waged, Israel’s signature institutional effort is not civilian in character. Instead it is military: the presence of Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, an enterprise responsible for anti-missile innovation and other cutting edge technologies crucial in Israel’s defense against Hezbollah threats on its northern edge, and Hamas assaults in the south, symbolizes how Galilee struggles to shake out of the 1948 siege. In an area where zealotry has, over millennia, rocked ambiguously back and forth between military crusades and spiritual idealism, Galilean life in the Jewish state today unfolds as though Qawuqji’s Arab Liberation Army remains on the horizon.

How that horizon really ought to be imagined, and how it will meet the actual, lived, future, will depend not only on the machinations of Hezbollah, an Iran-backed, radical Shi’ite group which consolidated in Southern Lebanon in the early 1980s and acquired a grisly terroristic record of anti-Israel operations. It will also depend upon how future generations of Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Druze choose to interpret lessons in the history of the region where monotheism multiplied. Shaped and strengthened by what I have lived through and studied on this majestic region’s rocky slopes, by what I have felt and seen in Galilee classrooms where I have taught and where my children learned in Arabic and Hebrew, I have my own idea about the choices these future generations will make—about the choices which the better, shared side of their heritages will inspire them to make. Out of that faith I have written this volume and its predecessor.

NOTES

1. Information about Qawuqji draws from: Laila Parsons, *The Commander: Fawzi al-Qawuqji and the Fight for Arab Independence, 1914–1948* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2016).

2. Ibid., 10.

3. Information about Allon draws from Anita Shapira, *Yigal Allon: Native Son, a Biography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

4. Parsons, *The Commander*, 54.

5. “An Iraqi army officer named Kawukji saw the Palestine ‘revolt’ as his long awaited chance to seize power and make a fortune as the Mufti’s military arm. Kawukji was obsessed with himself, his egomania knew no bounds. . . . He got together a band of thieves, dope runners, white slaves and the like with the lure of the many Jewish women they could rape, and the Hebrew ‘gold’ they could loot. They were as vicious, degenerate and brutal a gang as had ever been assembled.” Leon Uris, *Exodus* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1958), 286.

6. Shapira, *Yigal*, 56.

7. The final expression of Ben-Gurion’s attitude is described in Anita Shapira, *Mi-piture ha-Rama ad peruk ha-Palmah* [Heb.] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Meyuhad, 1985).

8. Tom Segev, *Medinah be-khol mehir: sipur hayav shel David Ben-Guryon* (Ben Shemen: Keter Books, 2018), 254–63.

9. Shapira, *Yigal*, 177.

10. Parsons, *The Commander*, 134.

11. *Ibid.*, 83.

12. Nadav Shargai, “The Man who Offered Simple Yet Vital Assistance to the Yishuv is No Longer Remembered,” *Israel hayom*, July 23, 2017.

13. Parsons, *The Commander*, 146.

14. *Ibid.*, 168–77. For the Mufti in Nazi Germany: David Dalin, John Rothman, *Evil Icon: Hitler’s Mufti* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

15. Amiram Ezov, *Mishmar Haemek lo t’ipol* (Or Yehuda: Kinneretz, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, 2013), 47.

16. Yudkeh Helman (ed.), *Yiftah aḥuzat ha-sufah: sipurah shel haṭivat yiftah-palmah* (Tel Aviv: Palmah, 1970), 43.

17. Shapira, *Yigal*, 192.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 222.

20. *Yiftah aḥuzat*, 43.

21. Shapira, *Yigal*, 194.

22. *Ibid.*, 197.

23. *Ibid.*, 196; Meir Mevar-Maiberg, *Be-tsel ha-metsudah: sipuro shel mefaḳed ha-Haganah bi-Tsefat* (Tel Aviv: Milo, 1989), 273–77.

24. Mevar-Maiberg, *Be-tsel ha-metsudah*, 24–25.

25. *Ibid.*, 30–31.

26. *Ibid.*, 255–61.

27. *Ibid.*, 135–41. See also Yehiel Limor, Yair Safran, “The Voice Behind the Shells and Shots: the *Voice of Safed*, a Newspaper that Appeared in Safed During the Independence War,” [Heb.], *Katedra*, vol. 168 (2018), 101–18.

28. Palmah Third Battalion soldiers endured a grueling, food-deprived, stretch prior to this descent from Mount Kna’an and the battle for Safed. *Yiftah aḥuzat*, 43.

29. Mevar-Maiberg, *Be-tsel ha-metsudah*, 255–61.

30. *Ibid.*, 274.

31. Parsons, *The Commander*, 192.

32. Ibid.
33. Ezov, *Mishmar Haemek lo t'ipol*, 98–99.
34. Ibid., 104.
35. Ibid., 151–55.
36. Parsons, *The Commander*, 231.
37. Ibid., 239.
38. Interpretations of the meanings, and applications, of this ethos of nonpartisan Israeli patriotism after 1948 vary widely, as demonstrated in one recent, critical, study: Adam Raz, *The Iron-First Regime* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2019), 32–147.
39. Morris, *Birth*, 425.
40. Shapira, *Yigal*, 226. This account dates the night as July 12.
41. Ibid., 227.
42. Morris, *Birth*, 430.
43. For an interesting account of how this report about the Ramle-Lod expulsion directive came to circulate: Adam Raz, *Looting of Arab Property During Israel's War of Independence* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2020), 277.
44. Shapira, *Yigal*, 229.
45. Morris, *Birth*, 433.
46. Shapira, *Yigal*, 231.
47. M.M. Silver, *Our Exodus: Leon Uris and the Americanization of Israel's Founding Story* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 137–39.
48. Laila Parsons, *The Druze between Palestine and Israel 1947–1949* (Oxford: Macmillan Press, 2000), 17–55.
49. Figures from Adel Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut: Sipuram shel ha-palastinim she'netru be-haifa ve-hagalil, 1948–1956* [Heb.] (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute Press/Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2017), 86.
50. David Coren, *ha-Galil ha-maaravi be-Milhemet ha-atmaut* (Tel Aviv: Yad Tabenkin-Yisrael Galili Institute, 1988), 14.
51. Ibid., 25.
52. Ibid., 28.
53. Ibid., 35.
54. Ibid., 36.
55. Ibid., 37.
56. Ibid., 41.
57. Ibid., 44.
58. Ibid., 45.
59. Ibid., 46 By late 1947, the Yishuv established a primitive air force for supply drops to isolated settlements in the Negev and Gush Etzion, and Galilee. Volunteer pilots from South Africa and the United States joined a few Yishuv natives, and flew Austers, Piper Cubs, and a Dragon Rapide.
60. Ibid., 72–75.
61. Ibid., 82–86.
62. Ibid., 102–103.
63. Ibid., 107.
64. Ibid., 112.

65. Ibid (for the summary of Kibbutz Eilon delegate Moshe Metoswitz, 159–60).
66. Morris, *Birth*; Ilan Pappe, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947–1951* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 87–89; Walid Khalidi, “Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 Special Issue, Palestine 1948 (1988), 4–33.
67. Morris, *Birth*, 252.
68. Coren, *ha-Galil ha-maaravi*, 120.
69. Ibid., 121.
70. Morris, *Birth*, 254.
71. Coren, *ha-Galil ha-maaravi*, 127.
72. The Panhandle’s status preceding this 1947 partition decision requires explanation: As a result of discussions concerning the borders of Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, the Galilee Panhandle was created out of agreements reached by Britain and France in the early 1920s. Under the 1916 Sykes-Picot treaty, France was to have taken control of this area; but Britain demanded that this arrangement be revised, owing to its successful military operations in the country against Turkey, during the last months of WWI. Zionist delegates at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 seconded the British claim, arguing that the Panhandle’s borders should include Mount Hermon and the Litani River basin. When discussions about the dispensation of the Upper Galilee began in late 1919, the French withheld assent to British control north of the Hula swamp, pointing out that the few Jewish settlements in the Panhandle need not be included under the Jewish National Home provision of the Balfour Declaration, since they had been developed by a Frenchman, Baron Rothschild. Exactly as British diplomats were trudging out various military and historical arguments to counter this French claim, Jewish pioneers, including Joseph Trumpeldor, fought and died in defense of Tel Hai (this dramatic event became canonized in Zionist lore, but its impact upon superpower diplomacy was marginal). When the San Remo conference (April 1920) formally designated the Palestine Mandate to Britain, diplomats continued to squabble about the real-life coordinates of the Biblical designation of Galilee’s northern border at Dan, and the precise determinants of the Panhandle were not delineated. This means that Palestine passed into its modern era of western (British) control without definitive designation of the Galilee. Soon after Remo, French diplomats chipped away at British demands, proposing that the Litani basin remain under their own country’s control in Lebanon, and that the Panhandle’s northern tip be pushed down in a plan which kept Metula, the Banias waters, and the Jordan River basin within Palestine. With a few slight revisions, this autumn 1920 French proposal set the Panhandle’s borders. Yet this border arrangement was not finalized formally until March 1923. Hence, residents of the Yishuv’s frontier settlements in the Upper Galilee were not counted in the British Mandate’s 1922 census; Metula’s settlers voted in Lebanon’s parliamentary elections held prior to spring 1923. Gideon Biger, “The Galilee Panhandle: Geographic-Political Designations,” [Heb.] in Mordecai Naor (ed.), *Etsba ha-Galil, 1900–1967: meqorot, sikumim, parashtiyot nivharim ye-homer ezer* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1991), 3–10.
73. Moti Golani, “The Longest War—The Galilee Panhandle during the Independence War,” [Heb.] in Naor, *Etsba*, 154.

74. In the original 1947 partition map, Safed was not included in the Jewish state, but the chairman of the town's Jewish council, Moshe Pedatzur, led a successful lobbying campaign for an adjustment in the map. Mevar-Maiberg, *Be-tsel ha-metsudah*, 19.

75. Golani, "The Longest War," 157.

76. Ibid., 153–54.

77. Ibid., 156.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid., 158.

80. Ibid., 159.

81. Ibid., 161–63.

82. Ibid., 162–63.

83. Ibid., 164.

84. The following account of Ben-Gurion's position relies on Morris, *Birth*, 463, and Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 86.

85. Tom Segev, "The Refugee Tragedy was Temporarily Deferred" [Heb.], *Haaretz* March 15, 2003, cited by Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 86.

86. Segev, "Refugee Tragedy."

87. Morris, *Birth*, 473.

88. Ibid., 474 (Morris explains that General Carmel's order avoided the Hebrew verb "to expel," *legaresh*).

89. Benny Morris, *Tikun ʔa'ut: yehudim ve-'aravim be-Erets Yisra'el 1936–1956* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2000), 147.

90. Raz, *Looting*.

91. This November 10 order affirmed that IDF "should assist inhabitants as they leave areas that have been conquered." Morris, *Tikun*, 143.

92. Benny Morris, "Operation Hiram's Expellees: Correcting a Mistake," in Morris, *Tikun*, 141–48.

93. Morris, *Tikun*.

94. Morris, *Birth*, 473; Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 87.

95. Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 88.

96. Ibid., 89.

97. Ibid.

98. This description is taken from Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 89–93, 113–19.

99. The nature of Yarka's Sheikh Jabr Mu'addi's relations with the IDF is not entirely clear, but his collaborative attitude during the war is analyzed in Parsons, *The Druze*, 113–14; and the continuing cooperation of this Yarka notable, who became a Knesset member, with Israel after 1948 is discussed in Hillel Cohen, *Aravim ʔovim: ha-modiin ha-Yisre'eli yeha-Arvim be-Yisra'el: sokhnim u-maflim, mashtafim u-mordim, maʔarot ye-shiʔot* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2006), 101, 188–89.

100. Manna (114, N 107) attests that there was no empirical foundation for this surmise about the lingering threat of an undercover ALA presence in the village.

101. Today, it is split on both sides of Route 85, the Acre-Safed road. I drafted the first chapters in this Galilee History project while living in a Jewish neighborhood located within shouting distance of Majd al-Kurum.

102. Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 117.
103. Ibid., 93–94.
104. Morris, *Birth*, 477
105. Benny Morris, “The New Historiography: Israel Confronts its Past,” in Morris (ed.), *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 1–48.
106. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).
107. M. M. Silver, *History of Galilee 47 BCE to 1260 CE* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 229–36.
108. Morris, *Tikun*, 143–45.
109. Ibid., 144.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid., 144–45.
112. Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 124–30.
113. For these developments in Yanoah: Parsons, *The Druze*, 110–20.
114. See, for instance, Morris’s discussion in *Tikun*, 145–48.
115. Silver, *History of Galilee*, 172–85.
116. Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 128.
117. Ibid., 88–89.
118. Ibid., 127.
119. Morris, *Birth*, 474.
120. Ibid., 475.
121. Ibid.
122. Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 105.
123. Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 101; Morris, *Birth*, 479.
124. Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 105.
125. Morris, *Birth*, 479.
126. Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 103. The author claims that this incident of infant desertion after the Eilabun massacre had several parallels elsewhere in the Nakba.
127. Details from Morris, *Birth*, 480.
128. Ibid., 479.
129. Ibid., 477. Dunkelman was born and raised in Toronto, lived in the Yishuv during the early 1930s, became a decorated soldier with Canadian forces in Europe during WWII, and returned to Israel for the 1948 war. He similarly opposed expulsion orders in Nazareth. See Derek Penslar, *Jews and the Military: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 227–36; and, for Dunkelman and consideration of reasons for non-expulsion from Nazareth: Raz, *Looting*, 269–79.
130. Morris, *Birth*, 479.
131. Parsons, *The Druze*, 62–63.
132. Ibid., 65.
133. Ibid., 67.
134. Ibid., 70.
135. Ibid., 62.
136. Ibid., 81.
137. Ibid., 83.

138. Cohen, *Aravim*, 187–224.
139. Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 124.
140. These figures are from Manna, *Naqba ve'hisradut*, 110–11.
141. Silver, *History of Galilee*, 254.
142. Walid Khalidi, *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1992), 454–5.
143. Allon's recollection is from *Sefer Hapalmah* and is quoted in Morris, *Birth*, 122.
144. *Ibid.*, 123.
145. Khalidi, *All that Remains*, 464.
146. Silver, *History of Galilee*, 233.
147. Khalidi, *All that Remains*, 484–85.
148. *Ibid.*, 471.
149. *Ibid.*, 16.
150. Morris, *Birth*, 237.
151. One was Elias Chacour, who became a Melkite Archbishop and the driving force behind the widely respected Mar Elias schools in Ibilin, Galilee. See Elias Chacour, *Blood Brothers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983/2013).
152. Morris, *Birth*, 239.
153. Khalidi, *All that Remains*, 6–8.
154. *Ibid.*, 8.
155. *Ibid.*, 481.
156. *Ibid.*, 36.
157. Morris, *Birth*, 124.
158. *Ibid.*, 169.
159. Khalidi, *All that Remains*, 20.
160. Morris, *Birth*, 230. For another account of the atrocity, see Nafez Nazzal, cited in Khalidi, *All that Remains*, 490.
161. Morris, *Birth*, 230.
162. *Ibid.*
163. Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1929* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2015).
164. Mustafa Abbasi, *The Cities of Galilee During the 1948 War* (Erfurt: Lambert, 2014), 20. Abbasi's work on the Tabari family conveys hints about the socioeconomic roots of its political moderation (among other things, it was invested heavily in land holdings in the Tiberias area) and points to shades and shifts in some members' relationship to Haj Amin al-Husseini's leadership, from the 1936 uprising onward: Mustafa Abbasi, "The Tabari Family and Leadership of the Arab Community of Tiberias During the Late Ottoman and British Mandate Periods," [Heb.], *Katedra* 120 (June 2006), 183–200.
165. Abbasi, *Cities*, 27–28.
166. It also became the locus of the first systematic episode of looting of former Palestinian locales (Raz, *Looting*, 30–37).
167. Abbasi, *Cities*, 14–15.

168. Ibid., 29.

169. Ibid., 45.

170. Nahum Av, *The Struggle for Tiberias* [Heb.] (Tel Aviv: Defense Ministry, 1991).

171. Abbasi, *Cities*, 107.

172. In fact, Mevar-Maiberg's short but revealing explanation of "Why the Arabs Fled" Safed (343–46) is not diametrically opposed to Abbasi's explication. Its key section (344) conveys the kernel of Abbasi's analysis. Mevar-Maiberg writes, for instance, that reprisal actions in Sa'sa and elsewhere badly "rattled nerves" among Arabs in the Safed area. "In particular," he adds, "the purging of Ein Zeitun and Biriyya stirred, at this early point, the start of the flight of the Arab population."

173. Morris (*Birth*, 130) emphasizes the psychological impact of the attack and atrocities in these villages upon Safed's Arab residents, and compares it to a similar sequence in other city areas, including the fall of villages in the Western Galilee and the fall of Acre.

174. Mevar-Maiberg, *Be-tsel ha-metsudah*, 344–45, evinces skepticism about the possible impact of Davidka shelling upon Palestinian flight from the Safed area.

175. Morris, *Birth*, 102.

176. Abbasi, *Cities*, 94.

177. Ibid., 118.

178. Ibid., 130.

179. Ibid., 144, 146. As mentioned, a recent discussion of the Nazareth non-expulsion raises some questions about these explanations (Raz, *Looting*, 269–79).

180. Francis Fukayama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

181. Though public hearings staged by this commission, headed by an Israel Supreme Court justice, Theodore Or, were marred by displays of alienation shown by aggrieved Arab families from Galilee, the panel produced a relatively sensitive report which viewed processes in this diverse region through a civilian prism. This was a departure from a militarized view of Galilee's Palestinian population as a "demographic threat" which both preceded the Oslo years, and which subsequently reconstituted itself in Israeli government policy and public discourse after the end of the Second Intifada and the withdrawal of Jewish settlements and IDF troops from the Gaza Strip. However stretched it might sound, the Or Report attests to how less than a decade of peace negotiations and the Oslo process softened and challenged the familiar military-security tropes in discussions of Palestinian-Israeli affairs. An English summary of the report can be found online, at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-official-summation-of-the-or-commission-report-september-2003>. See also Sarah Ozacky-Lazar, As'ad Ghanem, *The Or Commission Testimonies* [Heb.] (Givat Haviva: Keter, 2003).

182. Anita Shapira, "Hirbet Hizah: Between Remembrance and Forgetting," *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2000), 1–62. The story's author was the son of the aforementioned Moshe Smilansky.

183. Sabril Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976); Hillel Cohen, *Aravim*.

184. The rationale of this gerrymandering is evident in the original proposals forwarded for local government arrangements for these Galilee mitzpim. See Baruch Kipnis, *Proposal for Municipal Organization in the New Galilee Settlement Regions* (Haifa: Jewish Agency Settlement Department, 1982).

185. See, for instance, the language and concepts used in a 1988 survey of the mitzpe settlements sponsored by the Jewish Agency's settlement department: Arnon Sofer, Rachel Pinkal, *The Mitzpim in the Galilee: Goals, Achievements, Lessons Learned* (Rehovot, 1988).

Appendix A

GLOSSARY

Aliyah: “Ascent,” as in the “rise” of a synagogue worshipper to read from the Torah; the term for Jewish immigration “upward” to Eretz Israel in various historical periods.

amei ha’arezt: Originally, Jews who did not pay Temple-supporting tithes, the term broadly refers to provincial Jewish commoners.

Arab Higher Committee: Main administrative-governmental organ for Palestinians during the Mandatory period.

Ashkenazim: Jews of European descent.

Bar Giora: Zionist military organization; early Zionist initiative in defense of pioneering communities.

beit midrash: Traditional study center for Jewish religious scholars.

bilu (pl., biluim): Jewish pioneering immigrants, mostly former students in East Europe, who settled in late Ottoman Palestine under the aegis of the First Aliyah, but in a semi-independent fashion. The term derives from the Hebrew acronym Beit Yaakov Lekhu Venelkha (House of Jacob, Let us go, Isaiah 2:5).

capitulations: Economic, legal, and political concessions granted by the Ottoman Empire to foreign powers.

Converso: Jewish converts to Catholicism in the Inquisition context.

Crypto-Jews: Persons who secretly adhered to Judaism, while formally adhering to converted identities in the Inquisition-era, and after.

dibbuk (dybbuk): A hostile, possessing spirit; in Jewish legends, it is exorcised from a host body, sometimes after having accomplished its purposes.

emancipation (Jewish): Nineteenth century campaign in European states for the conferral of sociopolitical rights to Jews, as they left juridical, or metaphorical, “ghettos.”

eyn-sof: Kabbalistic term for God before its spiritual manifestation; often associated with light.

fellah (pl., fellaheen, or fellahin): Agricultural laborer in Middle East, settings.

Frankism: Heretical Jewish movement which spread in Eastern Europe, based on the pseudo-messianic claims of Jacob Frank (1726–1791).

gabbai: Synagogue beadle.

galut: Pejorative term referring broadly to the curse of the Jews’ exilic dispersion from Eretz Israel.

gilgul: Soul transmigration belief in Kabbalah.

Haganah: Jewish army in Mandatory Palestine, up to Israel’s establishment in mid-May 1948.

halacha: Jewish religious law.

halukah: Organized charity distribution system for Jews in the Ottoman-era Yishuv, based on funds collected in the diaspora.

halutz (pl., halutzim): Pioneer workers on Zionist frontier communes.

hashomer: “The guard,” an early military self-defense group organized by halutz settlers on the Second Aliyah.

Hasidism: A Jewish spiritual revival movement which arose in eighteenth century Ukraine and then spread widely in Eastern Europe. Its descendants and exponents are today located mainly in Israel and the United States.

Haskalah: Jewish enlightenment movement, dating from the late eighteenth century in Central Europe, designed to balance Jewish tradition and Jewish integration in European states.

Hibat Zion: Early, Zionist-oriented, Jewish group which sponsored modern settlement projects in late Ottoman Palestine. Formed in the early 1880s in Eastern Europe, at a time of anti-Semitic pogroms.

hurban: “Destruction,” in Hebrew, referring to the catastrophic decimation of the Jerusalem Temples.

Idra Rabba, Idra Zuta: Greater and lesser Jewish mystical assembly meetings in Galilee.

Jewish Agency: Originally established under the British Mandate as a consultative and administrative entity, it became the Yishuv’s paramount, quasi-governmental, organization, as symbol and promoter of the aspirations of the Jewish state-in-the-making.

kehillah: Literally, “congregation,” the term refers (among other things) to a legally recognized Jewish community in medieval or early modern times.

kollel: Religious-communal association of Jews.

Kutab al-Hikma: Books of Wisdom in Druze faith.

- Lag B'Omer: A Jewish national-religious holiday, celebrated in the spring, in conjunction with Rashbi's life and gravesite in Meron, Galilee.
- maggid: In Jewish mysticism, a celestial voice that conveys magical secrets (the term also refers generally to Jewish preachers).
- mamlachtiyut: An ethos of non-partisan Israeli patriotism cultivated by Ben-Gurion and other Mapai leaders, particularly during the first years of Israeli statehood.
- mihna: Period of persecution in early Druze history.
- Mishnah: The first compilation of Jewish oral law, redacted in Galilee in the third century CE.
- Mitnagdim (Misnagdim): East European Jewish movement which consolidated in resistance to Hasidim.
- Multazim: Ottoman tax farmer.
- Mustarabim: Locally rooted Jews of North African or Middle Eastern descent.
- Nakba: Palestinian catastrophe in 1948.
- Ostjuden: Traditional Jews of East Europe whose movement to western countries raised anxieties among Jews who were already settled in them.
- Palmah: "Strike forces," a paramilitary unit formed under Haganah auspices, though it operated with a measure of independence; known for its egalitarian ethos.
- Panhandle: The northernmost part of Upper Galilee, sometimes also called "etzba haGalil" (Galilee finger).
- qadi: Islamic law magistrate.
- Reform Judaism: Today, a modernized denomination of Judaism, based in the United States; Reform's roots are in mid-nineteenth century Central Europe.
- Sabbateans: Followers of a mid-seventeenth century rabbi, Sabbatai Zevi (Shabbetai Zvi), who was proclaimed to be the messiah by a disciple, Nathan of Gaza.
- Sabra: Native-born Israeli (or Jew born in the pre-1948 Yishuv); the term implies that Israelis, rooted by birth in their ancestral soil, are temperamentally like the fruit, prickly on the outside but sweet on the inside.
- sanjak: Term for an administrative district in the Ottoman Empire.
- sefirot: Ten divine emanations of the infinite, in Kabbalah.
- semikhah (semichah): Rabbinical ordination.
- Sephardim: Jews who descend from communities on the Iberian Peninsula. The appellation has become dated and increasingly replaced by other terms (e.g., "Mizrahim") for non-European Jews.
- Shai: Security-intelligence unit of the Haganah.
- sharia: Islamic religious law.
- shechita: Jewish (kosher) procedure for slaughtering animals.

Shekhinah: Godly presence, associated in Kabbalah, and elsewhere, with divine wandering, and God's female attributes.

Shema: Iteration of the monotheistic basis of Judaism, recited in daily prayers.

shlichut: Emissary work undertaken on behalf of the Jewish Yishuv.

shulkhan arukh: Compiled by Joseph Karo, the most authoritative Jewish law code.

siddur: Jewish prayer book.

Sukkot: Feast of Tabernacles; autumnal Jewish holiday.

tallit (pl. tallitot), Jewish prayer shawl.

Tannaim (singular, Tanna): Literally "teachers," Tannaim were religious sages in the Mishnaic period.

taqiya: Conscious dissimulation, associated with the Druze; interpretations of the practice's intents and application differ.

tefillin: Jewish prayer phylacteries.

tikun: "Repair," the term refers in Kabbalah to cosmic mending; in past decades, groups of Jews have fashioned the term "tikun olam" (mending the world, often written as tikkun olam) as reference to charitable, idealistic activities.

tsimtsum: In Kabbalah, reduction or withdrawal of divine light wrought by God.

tzadik: Righteous, learned or mystically charismatic communal Jewish leader.

uqqal: Druze elite.

yihud: Kabbalistic communion between the soul of a devotee and that of a deceased holy figure (tzadik) of yore.

Yishuv: Term for Jewish communities in Palestine before Israel's 1948 establishment, including the Ottoman and British Mandate periods.

Zionism: Jewish nationalist movement, formally organized by Herzl at an 1897 Congress, but foreshadowed a quarter century before by modern settlement initiatives sponsored by groups of East European Jews.

Zohar: Cornerstone text of Kabbalah, written in thirteenth century Spain, but traditionally attributed to Rashbi.

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