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THE 'NEW JEW' OF ZIONIST HISTORIOGRAPHY: THE SOCIAL VISION AND HISTORICAL IMAGINATION OF YITZHAK BAER, GERSHOM SCHOLEM, AND YEHEZKEL KAUFMANN

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To Marget,

With Love.

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Preface

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the Zionist project of creating a "New Jew" (or "New Hebrew") from the perspective of three of the founding fathers of Israeli historiography, all associated with the so-called "Jerusalem School" of Jewish historiography: Yitzhak Baer (1888-1980), the historian of the Jewish Middle Ages, who late in life turned to the study of Second Commonwealth Judaism; Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), the founder of the academic study of Jewish mysticism; and Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889-1963), historian-sociologist, and one of the foremost biblical scholars of the twentieth century. My purpose is not only to explore how these individuals related to the idea of creating a new Jewish identity, but also – and primarily – to assess how they *participated* in the process, and how their historical writings contributed to the new identity formation. As such, this is also a study of the relationship between historiography and political ideas, as well as a broader reflection on the nature of historiography and its place in political life. In the Introduction, I provide the historical background to the emergence of the idea of the "New Jew", the history of the Jerusalem School, a review of current literature, and an overview of the aims and methods of this study. I then turn to the three protagonists of this study, Baer, Scholem, and Kaufmann, in individualized chapters. In my concluding remarks, I reflect on the enduring legacy of this first-generation of Jerusalem scholars, and suggest some ways by which their writings could continue to be relevant in the fields of history and political thought.

This study began as an attempt to write a "Jewish" version of Hayden White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (1973). I abandoned the attempt to write a "formal" or "literary" analysis soon thereafter, however, as I realized that there were some themes in these

historians' works which required elucidation in a more "straightforward" way. Even so, my debt to White, for having opened the field of historiography to deeper inquiry, may still be discerned in-between the lines. (I also discuss White briefly in the Introduction and Epilogue). What attracted me to White – apart from the obvious: his originality, the lucidity of his style, and the breadth of his knowledge – was the sense of freedom emanating from his work; White showed me that the writing of history need not necessarily be bound to the rules and regulations of the established clerisy, least of all to those who claim authority in the name of scientific "objectivity." Perhaps contrary to expectations, however, the conclusions I drew from this insight were not "progressive" or "revolutionary," but rather, what some may call "conservative" or "traditional." To me, at least, this freedom meant above all that historiography can still fulfill an existential role, and inquire into the Nature of Man, the Nature of the Good Life, and the Good Society. These are the questions I sought to learn about when I began my graduate studies, and these are still the questions I engage with today. In the writings of the older generation of Jewish historians, the generation of Baer, Scholem, and Kaufmann, I found historians that were also looking for these answers through historical research. It is for that reason that I was attracted to them, and for which I believe that they still have something to offer to Jews today, if not mankind more generally.

There are many individuals I would like to thank for their continued support over the years. A special thanks must go to my advisor, Paul Mendes-Flohr, who has always made himself available to answer my questions, read drafts, and provide advice – on the scholarly life, and in general. I also wish to thank my two other committee members, Na'ama Rokem and Shalom Ratzabi, for their support and advice. Professor Rokem was also my teacher before she became a member of my committee, and I relied continuously on her insights over the years, even when we disagreed.

During my years in graduate school, I have had the benefit of studying with some wonderful teachers, to whom I owe much. At the University of Chicago, I want to thank Nathan Tarcov, Ralph Lerner, James Robinson, Richard Rosengarten, Roseanna Warren, and Rocco Rubini. A seminar I took with Robert Pippin and David Wellbery also left a deep impression on me. At Harvard, I want to thank above all Ruth Wisse and Jon Levenson: for their scholarship, integrity, and if I may say so, friendship.

Ehud Luz taught me more than I can express in this short space. In many respects, it was he who opened my path to the academic study of Judaism. Over the years, I always imagined him looking over my shoulder, making sure that I write at my best.

I also want to thank some of my colleagues at the History of Judaism program and in the Jewish Studies Workshop: Stephen Durchslag, Michal Peles-Almagor, David Cohen, Matt Johnson, and others. They have all read early portions of this work and I thank them for their help and comments. David Barak-Gorodetsky and Daniel Herskowitz were also constant conversation partners as I was navigating the academic world.

My greatest debt, however, goes to my family. I wish to thank my parents, Raya and David Ofek, for all their support, emotional and otherwise, during my early forays into academia, and ever since. I wish to thank my sister, Lior, for her love and friendship. My aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, and grandmother, for their faith in me.

My wife, Marget, has been a partner in the writing of this dissertation from its inception, through its many iterations, and occasional abandonment. At all times, she was patient, wise, and supportive. I could not have done this without her. I dedicate this study to her.

To our son, Amitai Alon, who was born just two months before this project was completed: I hope that one day you will read this, with interest, and with pride.

Special thanks must also go to our dog Horatio, as many of the ideas that found their way into this dissertation were first conceived and formulated during our many shared walks.

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Introduction

Character Ideals and the Meaning of Culture

In his lecture "Three Types of Jewish Piety" (1969), Gershom Scholem, the founder of the academic study of Jewish mysticism, proposed to inquire about the highest principles and values of the culture of rabbinic Judaism, by focusing on three of its "ideal human types," in this case the *Talmid Hakham* (the Scholar), the *Tzadik* (the Just), and the *Hasid* (the Pious). He explained his reasoning for choosing this methodology as follows:

> You can talk about a religion and its specific world in many ways. You can describe or analyze its theology and dogma, that is to say its teaching about God and Creation and the place of man in such a scheme of things. You can also describe its ritual and way of life (*Lebensordnung*) […]. But this is not what I propose to do this time. I wish to talk here about the basic attitudes, about the ideal human types which the history of rabbinic Judaism has [produced] […]. Let me put it in another way: How did the Jews see themselves, what were the ideal Jewish types of piety which Judaism knew in its classical forms over the last two thousand years? Such human types represent embodiments of a scale of values or of more or less independent highest values which have been put as an example to imitate or to strive for by other people. Such ideals of highest values realized in human lives will allow us an insight into what living Judaism meant for its people.[1]

[1] Gershom Scholem, "Three Types of Jewish Piety," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* no. 38 (1969): *Sinn und Wandlungen des Menschenbildes*, pp. 331-48, pp. 331-2.

By focusing on ideal types as a means to gauge the values of a given culture, in this case rabbinic Judaism, Scholem was reminding his readers of a truth long known to social scientists, about the relationship, and even correspondence, between the character of the individual – especially of the *ideal* individual – and the nature of the culture or political regime in which they were formed. The origins of this method could be traced at least as far back as Plato's *Republic*, with its focus on the relationship between education and the nature of the city, as well as its analogy between the individual's soul and the city's regime. More recently, however, the relationship between character and culture was explored in depth by the sociologist Philip Rieff (1922-2006). According to Rieff, every culture promotes a particular "character ideal," a scheme by which to organize personality, and which gives expression to the culture's highest aims and values. Rieff himself believed that Western Civilization, over the course of its history, had produced three such character ideals: Political Man, associated with Plato and the Greeks; Religious Man, associated with Christianity; the transitional figure of Economic Man, which emerged with the Enlightenment; and in our time, Psychological Man – the type on which Rieff wrote extensively – associated with post-Freudian modernity.[2] Rieff's typology may have been somewhat reductive. Above all, he failed to note that a culture could hold on to several personality ideals at the same time (as suggested, for example, by Scholem). Thus, classical culture also brought forth the ideal of the Philosopher, as well as of the Warrior, and others. Judeo-Christian culture also produced the Prophet, the Priest, and so forth. But, like Scholem, he was certainly justified in placing the "character ideal" at the center of his inquiry into the meaning of culture.[3]

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[2] Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud,* 40th Anniversary Edition, (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), esp. Ch. 1, "Toward a Theory of Culture," pp. 1-28; and "Reflections on Psychological Man in America," in idem., *The Feeling Intellect: Selected Writings,* ed. Jonathan Imber, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 3-10; *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist,* 3rd edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), Ch. 10: "The Emergence of Psychological Man," pp. 329-357.

[3] In researching for this dissertation, I happened to stumble upon the following line, which puts the matter succinctly: "One can find no better key to the internal logic of society than its conception of man and his place in nature" (Raymond Augustine Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology*, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952], p. xix).

The creation of the "New Jew" (or "New Hebrew") was the highest task of the Zionist Movement as it developed historically; more than the establishment of a state, more than the revival of the Hebrew language, and more than providing Jews with a 'safe haven,' at least up until the 1930's, but possibly thereafter as well. These were all secondary or even subsidiary purposes, means rather than ends, in the great drama of reconstituting Jewish identity. For even the more 'traditionalist' wing of Zionism (e.g., Alkalai, Kalischer, Kook), as well as those who believed in Zionism as a 'salvaging' project (e.g., Herzl, Pinsker), recognized that something had fundamentally shifted in the world, and that Jewish identity could no longer survive as it once did. To inquire into meaning and the history of the idea of the "New Jew" is therefore to inquire into the very meaning of the Zionist project itself.

Aviva Halamish was undoubtedly correct when she argued that one would look in vain for a single, "positive" definition of the term "New Jew" in Zionist literature.[4] There seem to have been as many different versions of the "New Jew" as there have been individuals who had given the matter any thought. Nonetheless, the historians Anita Shapira and Yitzhak Conforti, separately, in two different essays, were able to compile a list of four or five archetypes or visions for the "New Jew".[5] Their findings could be summarized, and synthesized, as follows:

(a) "The Jewish gentleman," modelled after the *fin-de-siècle* bourgeois, liberal European, and associated with the current known as Political Zionism and its leaders, Herzl and Nordau;[6]

[4] Aviva Halamish, ""The New Jew': Where and When Was His Image Shaped, or Was He a Mere Allegory?" in *The Constant Pioneer: In Memory of Zeev Tzahor,* eds. Anita Shapira and Dvora Hacohen, (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2017), pp. 231-247, p. 231.

[5] Anita Shapira, "The Myth of the New Jew" (Hebrew) in idem., *New Jews, Old Jews,* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), pp. 155-174; Yitzhak Conforti, ""The New Jew' in the Zionist Movement: Ideology and Historiography," *Australian Journal for Jewish Studies*, Vol. 25 (2011), pp. 87–118. See also Shapira's "The Fashioning of the 'New Jew' in the Yishuv Society," in Yisrael Gutman (ed.), *Major Changes within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust*, (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), pp. 427-441.

[6] See in this context also Shmuel Feiner, "'Humani nil a me alienum puto': Theodor Herzl`s Vision of the Secular Jewish Society and Culture," in *Wege juedischen Erinnerns, Festschrift fuer Michael Brocke zum 65. Gebutstag,* eds. Brigit E. Klein & Christiane E. Mueller, (Berlin: Metropol, 2005), pp. 709-731; George L. Mosse, "Max Nordau, Liberalism and the New Jew," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Oct., 1992), pp. 565-581.

(b) The "Cultural Zionist" model, associated primarily with the founder of Cultural Zionism, Ahad Ha'am, and his followers, primarily in Germany. This was a Jew who saw himself as a person "of his age" – secular, "rational," and "modern" – but was nonetheless versed in the classics of Jewish thought and literature, and committed to speaking and writing in Hebrew. This model was especially popular among the Zionist German-Jewish *intelligentsia* in the interwar period, not least because of the German valorization of *Kultur* over *Staat*;[7]

(c) The "Vitalistic-Nietzschean" model – associated above all with Berdyczewski and his radical call for the "transvaluation of values" – of the Jew who must actively rebel against the perceived passivity of exile by embracing "earthly" – and to some extent "pagan" – values such as physical strength, prowess, and valor; and

(d) The Socialist model, inspired by the "New Soviet Man" and influential particularly in Labor Zionist groups like *HaShomer HaTza'ir,* of a Jew who views the aim of Zionism as the creation of a socialist society.[8]

Conforti also adds a fifth archetype, absent from Shapira's list:

(e) "The Religious Zionist," associated with religious figures such as rabbis Shmuel Mohaliver, Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, Yitzhak Ya'akov Reines, and later, the *HaPoel HaMizrachi* movement. These individuals saw perceived the settlement of the Land of Israel as a religious Zionism as a fulfillment of traditional, at times even "messianic" aspirations.

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[7] For more on this vision in particular, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Cultural Zionism's Image of the Educated Jew: Reflections on Creating a Secular Jewish Culture," *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1998), pp. 227-39.

[8] This model, especially as interpreted and practiced by *Hashomer HaTza'ir,* has been explored by Rina Peled, *"The New Man" of the Zionist Revolution: Hashomer Haza'ir and his European Roots* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2002). It should be noted, however, that her findings were considered somewhat controversial. See Yosef Gorny, "Between Constructivist Utopia and Totalitarian Utopia" (Hebrew), review of *"The New Man" of the Zionist Revolution* by Rita Peled, *Ha'aretz,* Nov. 10th, 2002, https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.838931.

In the popular imagination, as well as in Israeli historical consciousness, the image of the "New Jew" that has taken hold was something of a crossbreed between the third and fourth models on the list, the Vitalistic-Nietzschean and the Socialist. In many respects, it is the image of the "New Jew" that became popular through Hebrew literature, particularly that of the late 1940's and early '50's.[9] According to Yoav Gelber, this ideal developed in the days of the Second Aliyah (1904-14) but reached its classic formulation after the end of the First World War and during the Third Aliyah (1919-23). In those days, it was believed that to be part of the revolutionary vanguard of Zionism, the new pioneers had to be "young, healthy, strong, ready to undertake any type of arduous physical labor, live a spartan existence, have no conflicting commitments (such as family), know Hebrew, accept a communal way of life, and, most important, be highly motivated to encounter the difficulties of life in Eretz Israel".[10] This "New Jew," above all, was conceived as an antithesis to the perceived stereotype of the "old" Jew in the diaspora, "weak and flaccid, with his particular means of livelihood, and even his characteristic external features".[11] Anita Shapira, in another essay, adds that the renewed connection to the land of his forefathers was meant to create a Jew that was "secular, sensual, down to earth, close to nature, a colonizer".[12] Some of the characteristics of these New Jews included "the cap and the *Rubashka*, despite the Russian origin of these trappings," "the simplicity of manners, the directness in relations between one person and another, the contentment with little".[13] Their education emphasized the points in Jewish history which epitomized courage, valor, and strength. The Hebrew Bible, seen now as a book containing the history of an era when Jews dwelt in their land and were independent

[9] See Gershon Shaked, "From The Sea? — The Portrayal of the Hero in Hebrew Narrative from the 1940's to the Present Day" (Hebrew), *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature*, Vol. 8 (1986), pp. 7-22. The definitive account of this particular image probably remains Oz Almog's *The Sabra: The Creation of a New Jew,* tr. Haim Watzman, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2000 [1997]).

[10] Yoav Gelber, "The Shaping of the 'New Jew' in Eretz Israel," in *Major Changes within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust*, pp. 443–462, p. 445.

[11] Gelber, "The shaping of the 'New Jew'," p. 443.

[12] Anita Shapira, "The Fashioning of the 'New Jew' in the Yishuv Society," in *Major Changes within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust*, p. 428.

[13] Shapira, "The Fashioning of the 'New Jew'," p. 431.

of gentile rule, now became the cornerstone of their identity, as well as their guidebook to the geographical landscape of their old-new home.[14] Certain forms of living were also seen as characteristic of this new identity, namely "the agricultural settlements and, even more so, the cooperative agricultural settlements," as well as "the Hebrew language, insisted upon as obligatory at any public event."

Each of these models corresponds to a different vision of the future Jewish society, from Herzl's vision of 'Vienna on the Yarkon' to the young socialist pioneers' quasi-anarchistic federation of communes. Each of these models also corresponded to a different philosophy of history. All these visions contained elements that were backward-looking, seeking to build on the 'traditional' Jewish identity, and forward-looking, looking to contemporary trends in Western Europe or the Soviet Union. Arye Naor helpfully suggests looking at these elements through the prism of Scholem's famous discussion of the different types of messianism, as either "restorative" or "utopian".[15] The degree and nature of the synthesis between the restorative and utopian elements, however, depended on the specific vision. For example, while Herzl's vision, at least as described in *Altneuland* (1903), seems to contain much that was 'new' (European manners, clothes, and theater), there were still resonances of the 'old' (a play about Sabbatai Zevi at the theatre, and even a Third Temple). Ahad Ha'am was highly influenced by Darwin, Spencer, and Mill, but still revered the character ideals of Jochanan Ben Zakkai and Maimonides. The socialist Zionists dreamt of something akin to the Soviet 'Society of the Future' while praising the heroism of Nimrod and Bar Kochba. And so forth.

[14] Shapira, "The Fashioning of the 'New Jew'," p. 433.
[15] Arye Naor, "Jabotinsky's New Jew: Concept and Models," *Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2011), pp. 141-159, p. 141. Scholem's discussion occurs in "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in idem., *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays in Jewish Spirituality*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 1-37, p. 3, ff.

The "New Jew" and the Jewish Historical Imagination

The purpose of this study is to examine the Zionist project of the "New Jew" from the perspective of three figures not often considered in this context; three of the founding fathers of Israeli historical studies, all associated with the so-called 'Jerusalem School' of Jewish historiography: Yitzhak Baer (1888-1980), the historian of the Jewish Middle Ages, who late in life turned to the study of Second Commonwealth Judaism; the aforementioned Gershom Scholem (1897-1982); and Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889-1963), historian-sociologist, and one of the foremost biblical scholars of the twentieth century. My purpose is not only to explore how these individuals *related* to the idea of creating this new Jewish identity, but also – and primarily – to assess how they *participated* in the process, and how, through their historical writings, they sought to contribute to the new identity formation. As such, this study is also an inquiry into the relationship between historiography and political ideas in the context of the Zionist Movement, as well as a broader reflection on the nature of historiography and its place in political life in general.

The very existence of a Jerusalem School, also known as the Zionist or National School (*ha-askola ha-le'umit*) of Jewish historiography, has been a matter of debate at least since the 1960's.[16] The term is usually applied to the first- and second-generation of scholars who taught at the Hebrew University in the first few decades of its existence and to some degree coalesced around the quarterly journal *Zion*, which started appearing in 1935.[17] Some of the tenets seen as common to all these

[16] See David N. Myers' reflections in "Was there a 'Jerusalem School?': An Inquiry into the First Generation of Historical Researchers at the Hebrew University," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 10 (1994), pp. 66-92; "Is There Still a 'Jerusalem School'? Reflections on the State of Jewish Historical Scholarship in Israel," *Jewish History*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (2009), pp. 389-406. Myers offers a nuanced answer, suggesting that while there are indeed commonalities between the various individuals who are generally associated with this group, it would be inaccurate to view them as a monolith. Jacob Barnai dissents, suggesting that the commonalities outweigh the differences; Jacob Barnai, *Shmuel Ettinger: Historian, Teacher, and Public Figure,* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2011), p. 348 on.

[17] I address the literature on the Jerusalem School below. For more on the history and impact of the journal *Zion*, see the essays published in the colloquium celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary (*Zion*, Vol. 75, No. 4 [2010]). For older reflections, see Shmuel Ettinger's comments in the Jubilee Volume of the journal: "'Zion' and Contemporary Jewish Historical Research," *Zion*, Vol. 50 (1985), pp. ix-xv.

scholars include the continuity of Jewish existence, the uniqueness of the Jewish experience in history, the centrality of the Land of Israel to the Jewish constitution, and the emphasis on the Jews as a nation – and more specifically, as a "national-sacral organism" – rather than as a religious faith or sect.[18] Among the first-generation members are usually included the protagonists of this study, Scholem, Baer, and Kaufmann, as well as Ben Zion Dinur (Dinaburg; 1884-1973), Joseph Klausner (1874-1958), Victor (Avigdor) Tcherikover (1894-1958), and some others. Second-generation members include Shmuel Ettinger (1919–1988), Hayim Hillel Ben-Sasson (1914-1977), and some say Jacob Katz (1904-1998). Baer and Dinur were the founding editors of *Zion* and officially remained editors until their death, although as they aged, their students assumed more of the editorial responsibilities. Their joint statement of principles, "Our Orientation" (*mega'ma'tenu*), published in the inaugural issue of *Zion,* is often seen as the founding manifesto of their research agenda. On the first page, Baer and Dinur declared:

> *The underlying assumption in our image of the past*, which must serve as the starting point for the inquiry into the purpose of Jewish historiography, as well as for determining the subject of historical research, is, in our opinion, this simple, binding belief: *Jewish history is the history of the Israelite nation*, which never ceased, nor did its importance diminish in any period[.] Jewish history is united through a homogenous unity of all periods and all places, which all shed light on each other.[19]

The Jerusalem School could be considered the third major 'school,' or movement, in Jewish historiography since the beginning of the nineteenth century, often seen as the beginning of modern

[18] This succinct description of the Jerusalem School central beliefs is taken from, with some modifications, Jacob Barnai, *Shmuel Ettinger*, pp. 347-8. Barnai's analysis is based on Shmuel Almog, "On Shmuel Ettinger z"l," in idem., *Nationalism, Zionism, Antisemitism: Essays and Studies* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library and the Bialik Institute, 1992), pp. 13-24, p. 16.

[19] "Editorial Aim and Purpose" (*mega'ma'tenu*), *Zion,* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1935), pp. 1-5, p. 1 (my translation).

Jewish 'scientific' historiography. The first was the emancipatory-rationalistic-universalistic approach of the Jewish *Haskalah,* which lasted from roughly the 1780's to the 1880's[20]. The most important representatives of this approach were those associated with the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*, that is, the so-called *Wissenschaft des Judentums* group, notably Eduard Gans (1797-1839), Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), Zecharias Frankel (1801-1875), Moritz Steinschneider (1816-1907), and others. The second movement was the 'national,' not-necessarily-Zionist approach of Peretz Smolenskin (1842-1885), Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891), and Simon Dubnow (1860-1941). In many respects, the Jerusalem School members learned much from their predecessors, and saw themselves in some way as the inheritors of both 'schools.'[21] At the same time, they also expressed their profound disagreements with both, especially with the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. According to the Jerusalem scholars, the apologetic and rationalistic tendencies of the *Wissenschaft* group obfuscated important aspects in the life and thought of the Jewish nation, such as mysticism. Scholem in particular framed his entire (or almost his entire) life's work as a rejection of the *Wissenschaft* enterprise, as will be discussed later in the chapter devoted to his thought. But Baer and Dinur as well, in their statement of principles, reject the underlying premises and character of *Wissenschaft* scholarship, which "developed in large part out of the [struggles for] emancipation and political equality".[22] As a whole, they tended to be more sympathetic to the 'national' school of Jewish historiography, especially to Dubnow, whom they revered as a forerunner, and at least in the case of Dinur, also a direct teacher.[23]

In the last three (and even four) decades, a considerable amount of literature has been published on the first-generation of Jerusalem scholars and their relationship to Zionist ideology, as I

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[20] I follow here Shmuel Feiner's characterization of the nature and unity of *Maskilic* historiography from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century: Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*, (Oxford, UK and Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002), see esp. the Introduction.
[21] Myers touches on some of these lines of continuity in "Was there a 'Jerusalem School?'," p. 70.
[22] "Editorial Aim and Purpose," p. 1.
[23] Cf. Ben Zion Dinaburg, "Simon Dubnow—on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday" (Hebrew), *Zion*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1936), pp. 95-128.

explore more in depth below. An attempt to read the historiography of the Jerusalem School specifically within the context of the "New Jew" discourse, however, seems to have been essayed only once in the scholarly literature, in the essay mentioned above by Yitzhak Conforti.[24] Conforti argues that the identity suggested by Zionist historiography was of a Jew who was filled with historical consciousness, who was knowledgeable of all the different periods and geographies of Jewish existence, and saw himself as one more link in the long chain of Jewish history. In short, "of the new Jew who was aware of the history of his people, and acted on its behalf."[25] In contrast to the more radical trend of diaspora-negation in the Zionist Movement, Conforti further claims, the Jerusalem historians fostered an identity that was more inclusive and charitable to Jews of all times and all places.[26] As such, he concludes, they had something of a mitigating effect on the national discourse, especially in the years after the establishment of the state, when the country was filled with new immigrants and no longer fit the profile of the "new society" of the *Yishuv*.

There is much that I agree with in Conforti's essay. In fact, it was through engagement with this essay that the present study was conceived. I disagree with Conforti, however, on two accounts. The first is that he views the historians he discusses somewhat monolithically. Although he points to some disagreements between them, he ultimately suggests that their message was the same. Secondly, Conforti essentially sees the perspective of the 'Jerusalem School' historians as a subsidiary of Ahad Ha'am's vision for the "New Jew": "Among the historians, many identified with Ahad Ha'am's version of the new Jew which aspired to the creation of a new Jew, integrating the historical Jewish world in harmonious continuity with Jewish nationalism and the modernism that was part of it".[27] In this study, I therefore sought to challenge both assumptions. By dedicating individual chapters to Baer, Scholem,

[24] Conforti, "'The New Jew' in the Zionist Movement," esp. p. 104, onwards.
[25] Conforti, "'The New Jew' in the Zionist Movement," p. 110.
[26] Conforti, "'The New Jew' in the Zionist Movement," p. 89; p. 110; *im passim*.
[27] Conforti, "'The New Jew' in the Zionist Movement," p. 108.

and Kaufmann, I hoped to show that each of the authors had a different, original view of the kind of Jew he wished to see emerge as part of the Zionist project, as well as a different vision for society. As I argue, Baer wished for a revival of the society of Pietist Sages of the Second Commonwealth Period. Scholem sought a new Jew and Jewish society that would be the antithesis of the bourgeois Jewry he knew from his youth in early twentieth century Berlin. And Kaufmann objected in principle to the idea of the "New Jew"; Zionism, in his view, did not seek to change the Jewish essence, merely the external conditions of the people, as well as their disposition, into a laboring people, who can settle and securely hold onto their own land.

Further, I hoped to show that even though there are certain similarities between these individuals' views and those of Ahad Ha'am's (and in the case of Baer and Scholem, some early influence of the latter), all three came at some point to reject the teachings of this supposed master. Baer became a critic of Ahad Ha'am's Cultural Zionism in the 1930's, in light of the persecution of Jews in Germany, and later, the Holocaust. Scholem saw a much greater role for religion in modern Jewish life – in the deep, 'theological' and 'spiritual' sense, rather than just 'socially' or 'culturally' – than Ahad Ha'am was willing to accommodate for. And Kaufmann virtually based his entire career on the systematic critique of Ahad Ha'am, his analysis of the modern Jewish condition and his social vision. Moreover, I hoped to show that not one of these individuals subscribed to Ahad Ha'am's biological-organic view of historical development. Baer was perhaps the closest, espousing an organic view of history (a legacy of his training with the German historical school), but he believed history was guided above all by "forces and tendencies" (*Kräften und Tendenzen*) that are always present and at times manifest themselves in the life of the nation. Scholem was committed to the dialectical view of history. And Kaufmann emphasized the unique and exceptional, rejecting the idea that history followed a 'plan' or 'method.' The two foci of this study, social thought and historical imagination,

were chosen in order to show the independence of these individuals from Ahad Ha'am – or any other thinker, for that matter – and to assert their distinctiveness and originality as theorists of Jewish existence.

On Historiography and Political Ideals

The first generation of Jerusalem scholars were equally committed to two objectives: the highest standards of scientific research ("the *wissenschaftlich* ethos"), on the one hand, and the creation – or revival – of Hebrew-Jewish culture in the Land of Israel, on the other. They did not see a contradiction between the two, at least not at first; in fact, they believed that the "national" perspective allowed them at long last to examine historical phenomena "as they are," "without being sidetracked," to quote again from Baer and Dinur's programmatic essay from 1935.[28] In an essay from 1944, Gershom Scholem explained this perspective further in depth:

> We found firm ground upon which to stand, a new center from which completely different and new horizons could be seen. We no longer saw our problems from without: neither in terms of dismantling or partial destruction, nor in terms of cowardly and pietistic conservatism, nor in terms of the small-mindedness of an apologetic whose accounts with the past are not smooth. The new slogan was: to see from within, to go from the center to the periphery without looking over one's shoulder! To rebuild the entire structure of knowledge in terms of the historical experience of the Jew who lives among his own people and has no other accounts to make than the perception of the problems, the events and the thoughts

[28] "Editorial Aim and Purpose," p. 2.

> *according to their true being*, in the framework of their historical function within the people (italics added).[29]

In 1959, he said, much to the same effect:

> The new valuations of Zionism brought a breath of fresh air into a house that seemed to have been all to carefully set in order by the nineteenth century. This ventilation was good for us. Within the framework of the rebuilding of Palestine it led to the foundation of centers like the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where Judaic studies, although central, *are pursued without any ideological coloring*. Everyone is free to say and to teach whatever corresponds to his scholarly opinion without being bound to any religious (or anti-religious) tendency (italics added).[30]

This dual or split loyalty, so to speak, between "objectivity" and "ideology," has in many ways dominated the scholarly research on the first generation of Jerusalem historians. As far back as 1986, Ephraim Shmueli wrote:

> Just as the Science of Judaism of the 19th century serviced the needs of the Emancipation, National-Israeli scholarship of the present draws its sustenance from both the new Israeli reality and its utopian dream of the future. It must not therefore surprise us to see how modern Israeli historiography harnessed itself with a sense of mission and zeal to the double task of studying past Jewish culture on the one hand and creating a new culture on the other hand.[31]

Shmueli's essay was in many ways the first attempt to write on the theoretical underpinnings of the Jerusalem School with some distance, a few years after the death of the last members of the original

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[29] Gershom Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," in idem., *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time & Other Essays*, ed. Avraham Shapira, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), pp. 51-71, p. 66.
[30] Gershom Scholem, "The Science of Judaism – Then and Now," in *The Messianic Idea,* pp. 304-313, p. 310.
[31] Efraim Shmueli, "The Jerusalem School of Jewish History (A Critical Evaluation)," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. 53 (1986), pp. 147-178, p. 149.

coterie, Baer (d. 1980) and Scholem (d. 1982). Nearly a decade later, David N. Myers published his book, based on his doctoral dissertation, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (1995), still considered the definitive scholarly account of this group. Myers' book contained a detailed institutional and intellectual history of the establishment and development of the Institute for Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University in its early years, where most of the researchers gathered, as well as individual chapters dedicated to the personal and intellectual biography of Baer, Dinur, and Scholem. Myers argued that the Jerusalem historians suffered from a "split personality" between their commitment to science and their commitment to the service of their nation. He suggested, however, that such would inevitably be the case given these historians' position as members of a "colonized" nation; drawing comparisons between the case of Israeli historiography and the historiography of other nations in Asia and Africa, Myers suggested that this tension would inevitably rise when "searching for a unique historiographical voice, while simultaneously absorbing the scholarly methods of the colonizer."[32]

The debate over "objectivity" and "ideology" became more pronounced in the mid-1990's, with the appearance of a more critical wave scholarship affiliated with so-called "post-Zionism." These studies emphasized the ideological aspects of the Jerusalem School, and strove to show the degree to which these historians subordinated their research to the aims of Zionism. The first of these studies were published in the same year in which Myers published his book, 1995. That year, the journal *History and Memory* published a special issue entitled "Israeli Historiography Revisited," which featured essays by Uri Ram and Baruch Kimmerling that essentially depicted the Jerusalem historians as the

[32] David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History,* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 21. His doctoral dissertation, somewhat different (and more exhaustive) from the finalized book, was entitled "'From Zion will go forth Torah': Jewish scholarship and the Zionist return to history" (Columbia University, 1991).

historiographical arm of the Zionist attempt to "invent" the Jewish nation.[33] Ram focused on Dinur in particular as a historian whose "historiographical paradigm […] reflects his political-ideological Zionist convictions."[34] Kimmerling saw the Jerusalem School as aiding Zionism in its efforts to "[build] a settler society."[35] A year later, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin finished writing his doctoral dissertation, which focused specifically on the Jerusalem historians' depiction of the Middle Ages.[36] Raz-Krakotzkin argued that the Jerusalem historians attributed to the Jews of the Middle Ages a national and political consciousness which they did not have. In his view, these historians were guided by the ideology of the "negation of exile," and thus sought to eviscerate or befog the organic, 'autochthonous,' so to speak, identity of the Jewish diasporic communities, particularly in Muslim Spain. These efforts, he maintained, found their corollary in the Zionist attempt to suppress the history of the Arabs in the Land of Israel, as well as to obfuscate the identity of Mizrahi-Sephardic Jews in the State of Israel after 1948.[37]

More recently, perhaps as a corrective to the overemphasis on ideology, the scholarship has tended to highlight the "objective" principles in the Jerusalem historians' work. Thus, in his book *Past Tense: Zionist Historiography and the Shaping of the National Memory* (2006), Yitzhak Conforti emphasized the Jerusalem historians' fidelity to questions of objectivity.[38] Conforti is interested primarily in the relationship between historiography and national memory, and as such, highlights the relationship

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[33] Uri Ram, "Zionist Historiography and the Invention of Modern Jewish Nationhood: The Case of Ben Zion Dinur," *History and Memory*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Israeli Historiography Revisited (Spring - Summer, 1995), pp. 91-124; Baruch Kimmerling, "Academic History Caught in the Cross-Fire: The Case of Israeli-Jewish Historiography," *History and Memory*, ibid., pp. 41-65.
[34] Ram, p. 106.
[35] Kimmerling, p. 41.
[36] Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "The National Narration of Exile: Zionist Historiography and the Jews of the Middle Ages" (Hebrew), PhD Dissertation, (Tel Aviv University, 1996). Considering that it remains unpublished, this dissertation had a surprisingly wide circulation among scholars. See also his "Exile, History, and the Nationalization of Jewish Memory: Some Reflections on the Zionist Notion of History and Return," *Journal of Levantine Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (Winter 2013), pp. 37-70.
[37] See, e.g., Raz-Krakotzkin, "The National Narration of Exile," p. xi; 120, ff.
[38] Yitzhak Conforti, *Past Tense: Zionist Historiography and the Shaping of the National Memory* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2006).

between the Jerusalem historians' work, Zionist education, and the construction of Israeli memory. He does not deny that these individuals were influenced in their work by Zionist ideology, but he maintains that this national perspective, like any historical prism, has certain benefits (alongside drawbacks), as it helps highlight certain aspects of Jewish existence which otherwise would not have come to light.[39] Similarly, Arielle Rein, in her scholarship on Ben Zion Dinur, did not deny that the latter was a "national historian." She merely sought to situate Dinur in a longer lineage of national historians alongside Guizot, Michelet, von Stein, Ranke, and others, and thus inquire into what a "national history" looks like in the context of Jewish-Israeli culture.[40] Michael Brenner, in what has been described as "A History of Jewish Metanarratives," wrote about the Jerusalem School as one historiographical development among many.[41] Strictly speaking, Brenner highlights in his study the ideological component in these historians' work. At the same time, however, by writing about the ideological affiliations of seemingly all Jewish historical schools since the nineteenth century, Brenner's work suggests that *all* historians are ideologically committed, and there is thus no point in calling attention to the Jerusalem School's commitments more than any other school of interpretation.

In some respects, the present study marks a return to the pole of "ideology," but in a manner qualitatively different from the earlier wave. The present study aims to situate Baer, Scholem, and Kaufmann primarily in the context of early twentieth century social thought. Apart from the guiding questions – How did these historians relate to the project of the "New Jew"? Did they have their own image of the ideal Jew? – this study also seeks to answer the highly-related question, What was their view of the ideal community? Another way of stating the aim of this study, then, would be that it seeks

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[39] Cf. Conforti, *Past Tense*, pp. 28-9.

[40] Arielle Rein, "Patterns of National Historiography in B. Dinur's Works" (Hebrew), *Zion*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (2003), pp. 425-466. This article is based on her unpublished dissertation, "*Historiyon bevin'uy umah: tzemih'ato shel Ben Zion Dinur u-mif'alo bayishuv* (1884–1948)," (The Hebrew University, 2000).

[41] Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 157-191. The expression "A History of Jewish Metanarratives" comes from Moshe Rosman's review, H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews (April, 2011), http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=31383 (last accessed on July 25, 2021).

to present these historians as something akin to political theorists. As such, I have sought to highlight primarily the normative-political implications of these figures' historical writings, as well as the relationship between these writings and their views on the purpose and meaning of Zionism.

Meaning in History

This study owes a considerable debt, although perhaps not an obvious one, to certain developments in historical constructivism, and in particular to the work of Hayden White (1928-2018). White's contributions to the theory of history in the second half of the twentieth century are numerous, but his most lasting achievement may perhaps be his focus on the literary and narrative qualities of historiography (historio-*graphy*). Thus, in his *magnum opus*, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (1973), White applied the tools of literary criticism to the writings of eight seminal historians of the nineteenth century, revealing in the process their narrative strategies and ideological commitments.[42] The present study does not attempt to read the Jerusalem historians' works "rhetorically" or "formally," as White did, but it does owe to White the insight that historiography is but one type of writing among many, and that like other forms of literature, historiography can be used as documentary evidence in mapping the distinct epistemology or consciousness of a given period, culture, and environment. In this study, frequent references are therefore made to persona from outside the narrow fields of history and of Zionism, in an effort to situate Baer, Scholem, and Kaufmann within a broader context of what may be called the history of consciousness or *l'histoire des mentalités*.

[42] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014 [1973]).

My approach inevitably involves a certain blurring of the distinction between what we may call professional and non-professional historians. Zionist ideologues such as Ahad Ha'am and Berdyczewski are given as much attention as historians such as Ranke and Burckhardt, and philosophers of history such as Hegel and Spengler. This approach thus calls into question the status of the historical discipline, and to a large extent, also of the 'role' or 'status' that the literature has thus far applied to these individuals as historians. This approach, however, can be justified not only on 'aesthetic' grounds, but also, seemingly, on 'historical' ones. For we must remember that in the formative years of Zionism, in the early twentieth century, professional 'occupations', so to speak, were interchangeable. In the small, tightknit community that existed during the pre-state *Yishuv* days, politicians occasionally became historians and historians occasionally became politicians, as in the cases of Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Zalman Shazar-Rubashow, and Dinur, to name but a few. There is even evidence to suggest that Scholem, in his first few years in Israel, was similarly inspired by this ideal of a Zionist 'renaissance man' (as will be explored further in depth in the chapter dedicated to him). Moreover, during those very years, the *discipline* of History did not yet attain the *monopoly* on history, as happened in later years. Ahad Ha'am, Berdyczewski, Brenner, Nordau – who were all technically non-historians, but who all had distinct philosophies of history – probably had as much influence on the shaping of the Jewish-Israeli national or historical consciousness as the Jerusalem historians, if not more. As such, I have tried to present all these figures, historians and non-historians, against one broad historical matrix, without distinction between disciplines and *métiers*.

The individuals selected for this study, Baer, Scholem, and Kaufmann, were originally chosen to some extent in response to Myers' selection of Baer, Scholem, Dinur for his 1995 study. Kaufmann replaced Dinur, however, as I felt that so little was written about the former in English, especially in terms of his social-political views. While working on this study, I realized that I was correct about

Kaufmann, but also discovered that Baer, as well, has not received the proper attention he deserves for his social and political views. I am happy then to begin making a small contribution towards making these two men's thoughts better known. As for Scholem, much has been written about him (and by him), but I believe that I was able to discover something new about the extent and the depth of his animosity towards the idea of the bourgeois. In the future, perhaps this study will be revised to include a chapter on Dinur as well.

In turning to these individuals' political thought, I sought to highlight some themes which I believed have been missing from contemporary research. While working on this study, however, it became apparent to me that in some respects the political ideas may have a contemporary importance that it did not in previous years. Following the exposition of the three protagonists in the individual chapters, I therefore try to examine in the Epilogue possible implications for their political ideas today.

Chapter I:

Yitzhak Baer: The Ideal of the Pietist-Sage

> The theological question is of secondary importance. What is important is the responsibility of man before God and the organization of his life in accordance with this responsibility. […]. This is the task that lies before us: the creation of a social order [*mishtar hayim*; lit.: life regimen] that is consistent with Hebrew justice. It is possible to *prepare* for the days of the Messiah. If we do not upbuild the Land [of Israel] with righteousness and justice, all is lost. This is the conclusion to be drawn from our history.
>
> Yitzhak Baer, 1939[1]

Introduction

Out of the three figures discussed in this study, Yitzhak (Fritz) Baer (1888-1980) had the most elaborate and detailed vision for the ideal Jewish personality type and society that he hoped would arise in the Land of Israel as a result of Zionist efforts. According to Baer's philosophy of history, an ideal Jewish society had already existed in the past, among the circles of what he called the "pietist-sages" (*hassidim hachamim*) of the Second Commonwealth Period.[2] According to Baer, these pietist-

[1] Remarks at a meeting of the "Yoke" Group on July 13th, 1939, reproduced and translated by Paul Mendes-Flohr in *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), p. 346 [translation modified]. Published originally in Gershom Scholem, *Od Davar* [*Explications and Implications: Writings on Jewish Heritage and Renaissance, Vol. II*] (Hebrew), Avraham Shapira (ed.), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986), p. 96. I discuss this group below.

[2] I use the designation "Second Commonwealth" rather than the more ubiquitous "Second Temple" since the former is more accepted in Hebrew (*t'kufat bayit sheni*). The word "*bayit,"* translated here as "Commonwealth" literally means "Home" or "House." "Second Commonwealth" is used by Hebrew scholars more frequently since it is generally believed that this period lasted longer than the physical structure of Second Temple in Jerusalem. At the same time, it is also important to note that this designation diminishes the importance of the "religious" Temple in favor of other aspects of "national" sovereignty. On the meaning of these various designations and terminology, see Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots:*

sages established the religious and political norms of Judaism for all times, and he evaluated each subsequent period of Jewish history by the degree to which it either adhered to or strayed from the ancient model. In turn, the society he hoped would come about in modern Zion would be one that sought to implement, and to a large extent emulate, the original paradigm.

Baer described the beliefs and ways of lives of the pietist-sages in several of his publications, including most memorably in the Introduction to his *magnum opus*, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (1945 [Hereafter: HJCS]).[3] But his most elaborate treatise on the pietist-sages was a short book, originally delivered as a series of lectures at the Hebrew University in the Winter Semester of 1953-54, and collected under the title *Israel Among the Nations: An Essay on the History of the Period of the Second Temple and the Mishna and on the Foundations of the Halacha and Jewish Religion* (1955 [Hereafter: IAN]).[4] In both these texts, Baer depicted pietist-sage society as an ascetic, religious, and agrarian culture, committed above all to the values of purity, divine worship, community, and what he described as martyrology (*torat kiddush ha-shem*), which to Baer meant not only the willingness to lose one's life For the Sake of Heaven (cf. Mishna Avot 2:12), but the complete surrender to His rule. As he writes, for example, in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, "In its earliest days […]," "Israelite society was founded upon the fundamental qualities of simplicity, brotherhood, and love. [The biblical verse] 'And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation' (Ex. 19:6) imposed a regime of pietism

Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 23, ff.

[3] Yitzhak Baer, *Toldot Ha-Yehud'im be-Sefarad Ha-Notz'rit* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1945). Translated as *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, tr. Louis Schoffman, (Jerusalem and Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992 [1961 and 1966]). All references in this chapter to this book are to the English edition as cited, unless noted otherwise.

[4] Yitzhak Baer, y*isra'el ba'amim: iyunim be-tol'dot yamei ha-bayit ha-sheni ve-t'kfat ha-mishna u-be'yesod'ot ha-halacha ve-ha-emmuna* (*Israel Among the Nations: An Essay on the History of the Period of the Second Temple and the Mishna and on the Foundations of the Halacha and Jewish Religion*), 2nd Edition, (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1969 [1955]). This book had never been translated, and all translations hereby are my own.

upon [the] entire nation" (HJCS, I, pp. 4-5).[5] In *Israel Among the Nations,* he emphasizes the degree to which this society was inspired by the ancient ideals of Greek and Roman political thought – particularly Plato's *Republic* – but always remained faithful to the internal Jewish constitution.

Baer's political thought could also be garnered from an earlier, long essay he published in 1938 on the "Sepher Hassidim" (The Book of Hasidim), a canonical text of the thirteenth century mystical movement known as Ashkenazi Pietism (*hassidei ashkenaz*).[6] In this essay, Baer argues that these Pietists were the firsts to recognize the centrality of martyrology to Jewish doctrine since the Second Commonwealth, which makes them, at least in his view, the Jewish community closest in spirit to the original pietist-sages since the beginning of the Jewish Exile.[7] It seems that in Baer's thought, however, something close to the opposite is true: his original research into Ashkenazi Pietism informed his later writings on the pietist-sages of late antiquity. As such, this essay ought to be considered as part of his reflections on the nature of the Jewish community along the two other texts mentioned above.

The atmosphere emanating from Baer's depiction of ancient Israelite society could be described as 'theocratic anarchism', associated perhaps more commonly with the thought of Martin Buber (1878-1965), especially the latter's biblical works.[8] One could even suggest that Baer's pietist-sages practiced what Buber defined as "theopolitics": "a special kind of politics […] which is concerned to establish a certain people in a certain historical situation under the divine sovereignty, so that this people is brought nearer to the fulfillment of its task, to become the beginning of the

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[5] Interestingly, Gershom Scholem also mentioned this biblical verse as what he understood "as the definition of Zionism." See "With Gershom Scholem – An Interview," in Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser, (New York: Schocken Books, (1976), p. 36.

[6] Baer, "The Religious-Social Tendency of 'Sepher Hassidim'," *Zion*, Vol. 3 (1938), pp. 1-50.

[7] "The Religious-Social Tendency of 'Sepher Hassidim'," p. 5, ff.

[8] Notably *The Kingdom of God* (*Königtum Gottes*; 1932) and *The Prophetic Faith* (*Der Glaube der Propheten*; 1950). For more on Buber's religious anarchism, see Samuel Hayim Brody, *Martin Buber's Theopolitics,* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018); and Shalom Ratzabi, *Anarchy in "Zion": Between Martin Buber and A. D. Gordon* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2011). See also Amnon Shapira, *Jewish Religious Anarchism (Does the Jewish Religion Sanctify State Rule?): Chapters in the History of an Idea, from Biblical and Rabbinic Times, Through Abravanel and up to the Modern Era* (Hebrew)*,* (Ariel: University of Ariel, 2015), Chapter 4, pp. 325-385.

kingdom of God".[9] This is especially evident in *Israel Among the Nations,* in which the anti-statist elements are highlighted to a much greater degree than in the other works.

The affinity between Baer's writings and Buber's, however, does not stem from the influence of the latter upon the former, but rather, suggests that both were inspired by the same currents of religious anarchism prevalent in Germany in the early twentieth century. (These sources also famously influenced Gershom Scholem [1897-1982], although, at least in comparison with Baer and Buber, Scholem was much more of an 'individualist' in his understanding of 'anarchy,' as we will see in the next chapter). Baer's sources of influence, however, extend much beyond religious anarchism. His work exhibits a unique mixture of German antimodernism, romantic anti-Capitalism, and other streams of what may be called anarcho-communalism associated with Labor Zionism[10]. His political thought is interesting, original, and sadly overshadowed by those of his less-introverted peers, namely Scholem and Ben-Zion Dinur (1884-1973). One of the purposes of this chapter is therefore to kindle renewed interest in – and appreciation of – Baer's abilities as political observer and social visionary.

The Life and Times of a Jewish Historian

Baer's depiction of the ideal Jewish polity may have been inspired by his childhood. He was born in Halberstadt, in the Harz district in Sachsen-Anhalt, a city which became renowned in the nineteenth century as a center of Orthodox Judaism, and which still maintained much of its traditional

[9] Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith,* with an Introduction by Jon D. Levenson, tr. Carlyle Witton-Davies, (Oxford and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 167-8. Cf. Warren Zev Harvey, "Kingdom of God," in Arthur Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (eds.), *20th Century Jewish Religious Thought,* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2009), pp. 521-26.

[10] On anarcho-communalist themes in Labor Zionism consider, *inter alia,* the literature on Yitzhak Tabenkin: Ya'akov Goren, "Yitzhak Tabenkin – Anarchistic Elements in his Life" (Hebrew), *Mifne: Bama le-inyan'ey hev'ra,* Vol. 50 (2006), pp. 58-60; and *The Socialism of Yitzhak Tabenkin: Responses to an Essay by Yehuda Harel* (Hebrew), Collected Papers from a Conference on September 28, 1972, (Efal: Yad Tabenkin, 1973). I discuss Baer's relationship to German antimodernism further below.

atmosphere into the early decades of the twentieth century, virtually untouched by the storms of Emancipation.[11] In his youth, he benefited tremendously from the somewhat uncharacteristic openness of Halberstadt Orthodoxy to the outside world as his father, Joseph Baer, ensured his son would receive the finest humanistic, European education, alongside intensive learning in traditional Jewish subjects. In 1945, Baer dedicated *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* "To the memory of my father and teacher, Joseph ben-Samuel Baer (may his memory be for a blessing), and of the Jewish community of Halberstadt which wicked hands destroyed along with the other communities of Germany and Poland, their teachers and pious men and women" (HJCS, I, n.p.).

He began his academic studies in 1908 at the University of Berlin, but shortly thereafter transferred to the University of Freiburg, from which he matriculated in 1913 with a dissertation entitled "Studies in the History of the Jews of the Kingdom of Aragonia in the 13th and 14th Centuries".[12] He also took courses at the universities of Strasbourg and Halle. During the First World War, he served in the German Artillery Corps, and according to his own testimony, did not personally experience any anti-Semitism.[13] In 1919, he was offered to join the prestigious Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, where he wrote on such subjects as the structures and

[11] Shmuel Ettinger, "Yitzhak Baer (1888–1980)" (Hebrew), *Zion,* Yitzhak F. Baer Memorial Volume, Vol. 44 (1979), p. ix-xx; Pinchas Rosneblüth, "Yitzhak Baer: A Reappraisal of Jewish History," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook,* Vol. 22 (1977), pp. 175-178, p. 176. In constructing this biographical sketch, I relied also on David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 109-128; Yosef Kaplan, "Between Yitzhak Baer and Claudio Sánchez Alboranoz: The Rift That Never Healed," in Richard I. Cohen, Natalie B. Dohrmann, Adam Shear, and Elchanan Reiner (eds.), *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of David B. Ruderman,* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 2014), pp. 356-368; and Assaf Seltzer, *The History of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Who's Who Prior to Statehood: Founders, Designers, Pioneers*, (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes press, 2015), "YITZHAK FRITZ BAER (1888-1980)," pp. 106-110.

[12] "Studien zur Geschichte der Juden in Koenigreich Aragonien waehrend des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts, Erstes und zweites Kapitel" [Diss. Freiburg i/Br.], Berlin 1913. For a bibliography of Baer's writings, see Haim Beinart, "The Writings of Prof. I. F. Baer (A bibliographical list)," *Zion,* Vol. 44 (1979), pp. 321-339.

[13] Ettinger, p. x.

ordinances of the medieval Jewish community in Spain, the origins of the Spanish Inquisition, Ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehuda,* and other topics in Jewish medieval cultural and intellectual life.[14]

In early 1929, Judah Magnes (1877-1948), the famous first chancellor of the recently-established Hebrew University, invited Baer to serve as the first (and at the time only) professor of Jewish history at the university's Institute for Jewish Studies. He left for Jerusalem later that year. In 1935, he co-founded, with Dinur, the scientific journal *Zion*, the flagship publication of the Israel Historical Society which he continued to edit until his death. In 1958, he was awarded the Israel Prize in the category of Jewish Thought, alongside Scholem, Dinur, and Kaufmann, as well as other luminaries such as Buber, the writer and Nobel laureate S. Y. Agnon (1887-1970), and the former Chief Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog (1888-1959).[15] In 1968, the City of Jerusalem, where he had lived since he first arrived in the country, honored him with the honorific of *Yakir Yerushalay'im* ("Honorable Resident of Jerusalem"). He was buried in "Har HaMenuchot" Cemetery.

In many ways, his academic career could be divided into two main periods. In the first part, from the beginning of his career in Germany to the early 1950's, Baer was primarily a historian of the Middle Ages, specializing in particular in Jewish life in medieval Spain. In the second part of his career, from the early 1950's to his death in 1980, he virtually ceased to write on the Middle Ages, and turned his attention almost exclusively to Late Antiquity, to the Second Commonwealth Period. *Israel Among*

[14] On the Akademie, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Wissenschaft des Judentums at the Fin-de-Siècle," in Paul Mendes-Flohr, Rachel Livneh-Freudenthal, Guy Miron (eds.), *Jewish Historiography Between Past and Future: 200 Years of Wissenschaft des Judentums,* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 163-180; as well as the older paper by David N. Myers, "The Fall and Rise of Jewish Historicism: The Evolution of the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (1919-1934)," *Hebrew Union College Annual,* Vol. 63 (1992), 107-144 (Baer's research projects during his time in the Akademie are discussed on pp. 124-5, ff).

[15] The list of Israel Prize laurates that year was announced in the daily paper *Davar* on April 25th, 1958, p. 8; found online at http://jpress.org.il/olive/apa/nli_heb/?href=DAV%2F1958%2F04%2F25&page=8&entityId=Ar00803#panel=document (accessed last on Jan. 16th, 2020, 11:15 CST).

the Nations was his longest work from this latter phase. It was dedicated to Gershom Scholem, "in loyal friendship" (IAN, n.p.).

History and the State

Baer's training as a historian took place in the years before the First World War, in the heyday of the "Prussian School" of German historiography, which considered Ranke to be its founder and, not without significant divergences, its "guiding star," in the words of Friederich Meinecke.[16] From a young age, he was also surrounded by figures associated with the Rankean school. His uncle, the historian of antiquity Herman Dessau, for example, served as research assistant to the great historian of Rome, Theodore Mommsen. Baer also wrote his dissertation under the supervision of Heinrich Finke, a historian of the medieval Church, whose collection of diplomatic correspondences during the reign of King Jaime II, *Acta Aragonensia* (1908; 1923), was to serve as a model for his own documentary history *The Jews of Christian Spain* (*Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, 1929; 1936). While at Freiburg, Baer also heard lectures from Meinecke. But the greatest influence on his development as a historian was, by his own admission, Eugen Täubler, a historian of Rome by training, who was among the founders of the Berlin Akademie, and whom Baer credited for opening his eyes to the objective-critical approach to Jewish history.[17] To the end of his life, Baer thus adhered to the principles associated with Ranke and his followers, namely the commitment to an objective, scientific presentation of the past "as it truly happened" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*); the primacy of archival, documentary research; the

[16] See the relevant chapters in Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present,* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968); as well as idem., "The Crisis of the Conventional Conception of 'Scientific' History," in idem., *New Directions in European Historiography,* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1984 [1975]), pp. 3-42. The quote from Meinecke is taken from the lecture "Ranke and Burckhardt," translated and reprinted in Hans Kohn (ed.), *German History: Some New German Views,* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1954), pp. 141-156, p. 143.

[17] See Baer's obituary: "Eugen Täubler" (Hebrew), *Zion,* Vol. XIX, Issue. 1-2 (1954), pp. 71-74.

organicist interpretation of historical developments; and the view of the world as an "inter-national" system.

Like all Jerusalem School historians, Baer believed that previous Jewish historians had tended to obfuscate the past, because they needed to reconstruct Jewish history in a way that would appeal to the often-hostile Gentile world in which they operated.[18] Baer contended, however, that the Rankean approach allowed the Jews for the first time to evaluate their past truthfully. Already in his Inaugural Address at the Hebrew University, "Principles in the Study of Jewish History: An Introduction to the Middle Ages" (1930), he quoted from Ranke approvingly, establishing himself as a loyal follower of the Prussian sage in methodology and view of the historical process. Lamenting what he considered the unfair neglect of the Middle Ages by Jewish historians heretofore, Baer thus notes: "It is against such [tendencies] that Ranke established a commandment [*halachah*] for all generations: 'every epoch is immediate to God, and its worth is not at all based on what derives from it but rests in its own existence, in its own self.' And we may add to Ranke's dictum: each and every historical epoch of each and every nation requires illumination in the furnace of the idea of historical development. And more: each epoch is bound with the preceding and succeeding epochs through historical development".[19] The Rankean method, he notes later in the lecture, had finally liberated the Jews from the bind of the religious dogmas of the premodern period, or the "enlightened" dogmas of the *Haskalah*. "We have been redeemed," he thus exclaims, "from […] the blade of *a priori* presuppositions that are the products of a superficial enlightenment (*haskalah*) and a religious and

[18] The most famous exhortation against this trend was of course Gershom Scholem's, e.g., "The Science of Judaism – Then and Now," in idem., *The Messianic idea in Judaism,* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 304-313.

[19] "Principles in the Study of Jewish History: An Introduction to the Middle Ages" (*ikkarim be-hakirat toledot yisra'el*), republished in idem., *Studies in the History of the Jewish People*, (Jerusalem: The Historical Society of Israel, 1985), Vol. II, pp. 11-12. [Hereafter: "Principles"]. (My translations). The quote from Ranke is taken from Leopold von Ranke, "On Progress in History" (from *Über die epochen der neueren Geschichte*), in idem., *The Theory and Practice of History,* edited by Georg G. Iggers, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 20-23, p. 21.

national bigotry".[20] In another lecture from the late '30s, he also complains that the great weakness of Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891), the great Jewish historian of the nineteenth century, was that he did not rely on the methodologies developed by Ranke and Niebuhr.[21]

The opening paragraph of *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* shows Baer's continued fidelity to the Rankean approach, especially the idea that historical organisms – in the case of Ranke, most notably the nation-state – developed along the lines of "spiritual forces and tendencies" (*geistige Kräften und Tendenzen*)[22]:

> Jewish History, from its earliest beginnings to our own day, constitutes an organic unit. Each successive stage in its development reveals more fully the nature of the unique force guiding it, a force whose initial vitality is universally recognized and whose future course arouses widespread interest. Let this observation be the key to our study (HJCS, I, p. 1).

Baer, however, diverged from the national-political conclusions drawn by Ranke and his heirs, who on the whole favored a strong yet enlightened bureaucratic state, and an inter-national European community, secured by the balance of power of the five legitimate monarchies.[23] From early on, however, Baer seems to have been ambivalent about whether the state, at least in the sense of the German *Staat*, was a desired political form for the Jews. At the beginning of his career, it seems that

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[20] "Principles," p. 16. Cf. Yitzhak Conforti, *Past Tense: Zionist Historiography and the Shaping of the National Memory* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2006), pp. 37, ff; Myers, *Re-Inventing,* p. 116. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin has also written about the historiographical aspects of Scholem and Baer in several publications, including "'Without regard for External Considerations' — the Question of Christianity in Scholem and Baer's Writings," *Jewish Studies*, Vol. 38 (1998), pp. 73-96; and "Exile, History and the Nationalization of Jewish Memory: Some Reflections on the Zionist notion of History and Return," *Journal of Levantine Studies*, Vol. 3, Is. 2 (Winter 2013), pp. 37-70.

[21] "An Inquiry into the State of Our Historical Studies" in *Studies in the History of the Jewish People*, Vol. I., p. 15.

[22] Ranke, "A Dialogue on Politics" (*Politisches Gespräch*), in idem., *The Theory and Practice of History,* p. 57.

[23] Ranke's political ideals, in the words of Georg Iggers, were "those of a moderate conservative of the Restoration period" (Iggers, *The German Conception of History,* p. 90). His immediate successors, in the main, leaned towards liberalism, favoring a constitutional state (a *Rechtstaat*), while his later successors, moved by the imperialist atmosphere of the late Wilhelmine Reich, believed rather in a strong state (a *Machtstaat*), and shifted their emphasis to *Weltpolitik* and the demands of foreign policy. See Iggers, *The German Conception of History,* p. 93; 130; ff. The classic exploration of the relationship between German historicism and political thought, however, is of course Friederich Meinecke's *Weltburgertum und Nationalstaat* [*Cosmopolitanism and the National State,* tr. Robert Kimber, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970 [1907]).

he agreed with the Prussian School that the nation state should be seen as the culmination of the historical process. As he noted in his Inaugural Address:

> [H]istory has a specific core and foundation, a center, around which all historical life revolves […]. In [world] history, […] it is the state. The state is the organization of national forces, the fulfillment of the nation's historical life-will [*ratzon ha-hayim*; *Lebenswille*], this mysterious power, which cannot be expressed in abstract words and its substance remains unknown even to its subjects. [The creation of a state] is a natural and teleological tendency [*neti'ya*] which operates whether one admits to it or not, […] an inclination [*neti'ya*] to address the secret of life through a political act.[24]

At the same time, in that very speech he denied that Jewish history operated along the same lines:

> [Our] nation began its history in the form of a political people [*am medini*] like all nations. But already at its moment of formation, a religious idea began to take possession, which destroyed the [conventional] form of the free state [*medina hofsh'it*] and replaced it with that of a religious community and polity [*kehila ve-medina dat'it*] surrounding a religious sanctuary [*heichal*], enslaved to foreign monarchs. […]. The Maccabean state was but a [fleeting] episode and does not represent the reigning zeitgeist [*etzem ha-t'kufa*].[25]

Baer only came to reluctantly endorse the nation state as political necessity was when he was preparing *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*. The first version of the text, written in German, was completed already as early as 1938. At the suggestion, however, of Berl Katznelson, one of the leaders of Labor Zionism and the *Yishuv*, and editor-in-chief of the publishing house 'Am Oved', Baer rewrote

[24] "Principles," pp. 13-14.
[25] "Principles," pp. 16-17.

the work in Hebrew, which was published only in 1945.[26] In the intervening years, the British issued the 'White Paper' of 1939, effectively outlawing further Jewish emigration to Israel; the Zionist Movement officially adopted the establishment of an independent Jewish state as its stated goal; and, perhaps most importantly, Jewish life in Europe was destroyed in the most brutal ways imaginable. Deeply affected by these developments, Baer seems to have begun considering whether the modern nation state was not after all a political necessity. In the section describing the aftermath of the Hasmonaean war of liberation, we can almost sense Baer debating with himself what is to be done:

> [W]hen it came to implementing [sic] the structure of national life, differences arose in the interpretation of the hallowed traditions and the means of realizing them in life. Was the nation to be organized as a semi-Hellenized state, pursuing a realistic political course, or was it to constitute a theocratic national center under the aegis of foreign powers? [The rule of priests and aristocrats or the imposition of some of the priestly prohibitions on the entire nation?[27]] Was it better to yield to the might of Rome or to wage a national war for the establishment of a 'kingdom of God'? Such are the main outlines […] of the great, tragic, inner conflict which marked that period in our history known as the Second Commonwealth, a period which has come to serve as a symbol and a parable (HJCS, I, pp. 5-6).

The authentic and most natural form of organization for the Jews, as he would begin to argue in his essays from the 1930's, was seemingly the small, self-governing community, where there reigned the principles of natural equality, and no effective boundaries existed between the sphere of the political and that of the religious. In his important essay on the "*Sepher Hassidim*," he wrote that the Jewish communities of northern France and western German took as a model the national-religious

[26] Ettinger, p. xiii.
[27] This line appeared in the original Hebrew text but omitted from the English translation. The translation of this line was my own.

organizational form of the medieval Christian city. "[The Jewish community] participated in its own way in the political war of liberation of the *communia*, it acquired for itself the right to freely elect the community leader [*parnas*], [and] the right to impose taxes on community members. The political vocabulary of mutual responsibility, of [political] representation in community affairs, the subjugation of the individual to majority will, develop equally among Jews and Christians."[28] Years later, however, he came to change his mind, and now believed that the Jewish communal form, as it existed throughout the medieval period, preceded the establishment of Christianity. In another seminal essay, "The Origins of the Organization of the Jewish Community of the Middle Ages" (1950), he thus argued that the Jewish Community [the *kehila*] was "an immanent creation in the history of our people." It was not "born as a result of the Exile," but rather, developed already during the Second Temple Period out of interaction with Hellenistic culture. It was a form of organization that was "adaptable to any condition, in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora," and befitting of all social and economic types, "peasants, artisans, and even merchants," as long as it conformed to the special "social-religious tendencies" which gave rise to it and which the community "sought to realize."[29]

In his later works, and especially in *Israel Among the Nations,* Baer would embrace once again his anarchistic tendencies*,* most probably in reaction to the strong statism embraced by David Ben-Gurion in the years after the establishment of the State of Israel. Yet he did not reject statism in its entirety. Baer, it seems, always maintained a genuine, "uncomplicated" appreciation for the achievements of the Zionist Movement and later the State of Israel, to a degree that made him stand out from his colleagues. For even though he may not have always believed that the Jews should pursue a nation-state as a political form, Baer continued to identify with the Zionist cause to the end of his

[28] Baer, "The Religious-Social Tendency of 'Sepher Hassidim'," pp. 1-2.
[29] Yitzhak Baer, "The Origins of the Organisation [sic] of the Jewish Community of the Middle Ages" (Hebrew), *Zion*, Vol. 15 (1950), pp. 1-41, p. 3, ff. An elaborate summary in English can be found at the back of the issue, pp. i-v.

life. In 1979, a mere few months before his death at the venerable age of ninety-one, in the Preface to the Hebrew edition of his book *Galut* (originally published in Germany in 1936), he even expressed his "pride and utter joy [*simcha shle'ma*]" in the establishment of the State of Israel, and in his grandchildren's completion of their military service.[30] One would be hard-pressed to find such sentiments in the writings of Scholem or Buber.

The Meaning of Exile

In 1933, a few months after the Nazi accession to power – and then again in 1938 – Baer travelled back to Germany, to visit friends and family members who had stayed behind. These visits, by his own account as well as others', left a deep impression on his emotional constitution.[31] Several scholars have suggested that 1933 should be seen as a turning point in Baer's personal and professional trajectory[32]. And indeed, one cannot doubt the effects of 1933 on Baer the man and the scholar. To begin with, in his political orientation, he now advocated Zionism as the *only* plausible solution for the Jewish Problem, whereas earlier he still seemed to have believed that Zionism was only one among several solutions in the modern world. And in his scholarly work, he now began to highlight the martyrological aspects of Jewish history, taking an increasing interest in the experience of the Franco-German communities who perished in the First Crusade ("the Rhineland Massacres"), and in Ashkenazi Pietism (*hassidei ashkenaz*) – the ascetic, mystical movement that flourished among these communities, and which, unsurprisingly, emphasized the nobility of dying in sanctification of the name

[30] *Galut*, tr. Yisrael Eldad, (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1980), pp. vii-viii (n.p.).
[31] Myers, *Re-Inventing*, pp. 119-20; Ettinger, p. xii.
[32] See, e.g., David Nirenberg, "The Rhineland Massacres of Jews in the First Crusade: Memories Medieval and Modern," in *Imagination, Ritual, Memory, Historiography: Concepts of the Past*, Gerd Althoff et al. (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 279-310, p. 300, ff; Myers, *Re-Inventing,* p. 119, ff.

of God. At the same time, however, many of the ideas Baer held after 1933 already found some expression in his earlier writings, thus suggesting at most a change in *emphasis* rather than in orientation.

The results of his visits to Germany could be first gleaned in *Galut* (1936 [Hereafter: Galut]), a short, synoptic account, containing no footnotes, of perceptions and interpretations of Jewish exile from late antiquity to early modernity.[33] Published in German as part of the prestigious *Bücherei des Schocken Verlag* series, years later Baer would write that he wrote this book "out of the need to send […] a word of comfort and emotional encouragement to my brethren, who saw before their eyes a terrifying death."[34] In many ways, however, *Galut* reads at times more as a castigation of those who did not comprehend – or refused to acknowledge – the true meaning of Jewish exile. It seems that Baer, following his visits to Germany, was most perturbed by the refusal of some of his acquaintances – liberal, assimilated Jews like the wife of his uncle Hermann Dessau, Johanna – to leave Germany, out of some sense of misguided allegiance and an inability to recognize reality.[35] His exploration of the meaning of exile seems to be addressed above all to them.

Already in an earlier essay, Baer had defined the Galut in *earthly*, and only to some extent metaphysical terms: "Galut is primarily a transient condition of political enslavement and national dispersal as prophesized by the prophets, that came to [the nation of] Israel as a result of its sins, and

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[33] *Galut* was first published in German (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1936). English translation: tr. Robert Warshow, (New York: Schocken Books, 1947). All references are to the English edition, unless noted otherwise. For more on this book, see Alfred Bodenheimer, "The History of a Missing Land: Yitzhak Fritz Baer's Book *Galut*" (Hebrew from an English original), in Michael F. Mach and Yoram Jacobson (eds.), *Historiosophy and The Science of Judaism,* Te'uda: The Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies Research Series, Vol. XX, (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2005), pp. 25-36; as well as Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's Preface to the French edition: "Sur Baer et Galout," in Y. F. Baer, *Galout: L'imaginaire de l'exil dans le judaïsme,* tr. Marc Buhot de Launay and Éric Vigne (Paris: Calmann-Lévy , 2000), pp. 9-56. Yerushalmi's essay is especially helpful in exploring the circumstances of the book's publication.

[34] Quoted in Myers, *Re-Inventing,* p. 120.

[35] Ettinger, ibid. In the Preface to the Hebrew translation of Galut (see bibliography below), Baer mentions his "relations, to whom [he] bid farewell with great consternation during [his] last visit to Germany in August-September 1938, […], my wife's sisters, may their memory be a blessing, and my sister, and their husbands […]" (n.p.). I wonder if he could possibly have meant these individuals as well.

will be reversed in the imminent redemption."[36] In the book *Galut,* he came to reject theories that developed especially among German Jews since the Emancipation, that denied the expressly political nature of Jewish exile, and that saw in the Galut experience some fulfillment of a providential "mission" in the form of a universal humanity or some other abstractly-defined notion (Hermann Cohen [1842-1918], unmentioned in the book, who believed in the providential nature of Jewish exile, comes especially to mind). Baer dismissed such modern theories as "unhistorical; they confuse cause and effect; they project the patterns of the nineteenth century into the past" (Galut, p. 117).

To be sure, Baer believed that Jews indeed had a providential mission among the nations, but it was very different from what 19th and 20th century German Jews had come to believe. As he wrote on the very first page of the work,

> The picture begins to take shape at the time of the Second Temple. A national state still exists in Palestine, and the holy place embodying a power sufficient to redeem all humanity still stands. The goal is to bring the whole world under the leadership of the Jews and to the salvation of their religion; the Diaspora is not simply a consequence of political enslavement – it serves also to spread the knowledge of the true Teaching throughout the world. True, the political situation of the Jews does not permit the attainment of this ideal. Enslaved, contemned [sic] and rejected, all over the world the Jews pray that they may be political reunited on their own soil – only then will it be possible to fulfil the whole Law. For *politeia* (the order of law and doctrine), nation and soil belong together (Galut, p. 9).

Anti-Semitism, Baer holds further below, was thus not a result of mere reactionary prejudice, but rather, "the inevitable consequence of the Jews' exalted consciousness of religious superiority and of

[36] "Galut and the Land of Israel in the Eyes of the Generations of the Middle Ages" (Hebrew), *Ma'asef Tziyon,* Vol. 6, No. 1 (1934), pp. 149-171, p. 149.

their mission among the nations, a consciousness all the more infuriating because it exists in a nation totally without power" (Galut, pp. 9-10).

Baer criticized in particular those theories that removed nation and soil from their considerations of the meaning of Judaism. Judaism, according to Baer, was like a three-legged table; remove one, and the entire edifice collapses.[37] It is interesting to note, however, that Baer did not believe that the idea that Judaism could survive without one or more of its constitutive elements was an entirely modern innovation. Modernity, he writes, only "carried to its conclusion a long process of disintegration" (Galut, p. 114). This process, he avers, may have started as far back as the late Middle Ages. Baer notes that in the 12th century, Yehuda HaLevi, one of his heroes of Jewish history, still mourned in his poetry for the land of Zion, where in his youth, "the last traces of the ancient Jewish settlement in Palestine were destroyed" (Galut, p. 34).[38] Less than a century later, however, Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, a leader of Asheknazi Judaism, already mourns "the burnt Talmud, the burnt Torah." A radical shift had taken place. "The Torah now took the place of the blessed homeland" (Galut, p. 49).[39] From there, it was but a short road to the view of Judaism as a mere set of dogmas and principles.

The Critique of Cultural Zionism

Galut also reflected Baer's change of attitude towards Cultural Zionism. Like many of his Central European colleagues at the Hebrew University, in his youth Baer saw himself as a Cultural Zionist and follower of Ahad Ha'am[40] (although it should be noted that as early as 1930, Baer wrote

[37] Cf. Yerushalmi, p. 27.
[38] See also Baer's essay on Yehuda HaLevi: "The Political Situation of the Spanish Jews in the Age of Jehuda Halevi [sic]," *Zion*, Vol. 1, Is. 1 (1936), pp. 6-23.
[39] I drew this comparison between HaLevi and Rothenburg from Boddenheimer, p. 29.
[40] Ettinger, p. xii. Jehuda Reinharz has shown that Ahad Ha'am had virtually no impact on the first generation of German Zionists due to, firstly, the language barrier (most German Jews at the time could not read Hebrew) and secondly, the pervasive nationalist atmosphere of the *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth century. Ahad Ha'am's influence only rose gradually

that "Ahad Ha'am's teaching is marked by an insufferable rationalism [*ratziyonalismus*]").[41] In contrast to the Political Zionists, who, following Herzl and Nordau emphasized the acquisition of territorial rights, recognition of Jewish rights by other nations, the construction of sovereign institutions and so forth, Ahad Ha'am and his followers believed that the Zionist Movement should focus on "the Revival of the Hearts," as Ahad Ha'am wrote in one of his early essays, fostering Jewish national consciousness and values, and emphasizing cultural values such as the Hebrew language and literature.[42] Cultural Zionists also generally believed that the building of a national home in the Land of Israel need not replace the established Jewish centers in the Diaspora. The task of Zionism, Ahad Ha'am explained, should be, rather, the establishment of a "Spiritual Center" which will serve as a "heart" to the "scattered limbs of the national body."[43]

In *Galut,* Baer came to emphatically reject Ahad Ha'am's approach. Although he did not, strictly speaking, become a "Political Zionist," he now denied the possibility that the Jews could continue living in the Diaspora, and saw the benefits of turning to the foreign powers. In between the lines, he also seems to have come to regret fighting on behalf of Germany during the War:

> The attempt which has been considered from time to time, to return to an idea of the Galut as it existed in the days of the Second Temple – the grouping of the Diaspora around a strong

after his essays were translated into German and assimilated by intellectuals who believed more in the concept of *Kulturpolitik* [Jehuda Reinharz, "Ahad Ha-Am, Martin Buber, and German Zionism," in Jacques Kornberg (ed.), *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Ha-Am*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 142-155, pp. 142-3, ff]. Paul Mendes-Flohr, however, remarks that for Buber, perhaps the most influential of German Jews, the concept of *Kulturpolitik* meant something a little different than what Ahad Ha'am had in mind: "For Buber *Kulturpolitik* meant the transformation of the Jew's consciousness and the renewal of a distinctively Jewish worldview and spiritual sensibility"; ("Nationalism as a Spiritual Sensibility: The Philosophical Suppositions of Buber's Hebrew Humanism," reprinted in idem., *Divided Passions,* pp. 181-2).

[41] Yitzhak Baer, "Review: Yehezkel Kaufmann, *Golah v'Nekhar," Kiryat Sefer,* Vol. 8 (1930), pp. 309-315, pp. 310-1.

[42] The expression "Revival of the Hearts" [*tchiy'at ha-lev'av'ot*] appears in Ahad Ha'am's essay "The Wrong Way" [*lo ze ha-derech*] from 1889. The English translation unfortunately renders this expression as mere "revival" (omitting "the hearts") in Achad Ha'am [sic], *Ten Essays on Zionism and Judaism,* tr. Leon Simon, (London: Routledge & Sons, 1922), p. 40.

[43] Ahad Ha'am, "Spiritual Center" (1907), in Achad Ha'am, ibid., pp. 120-129, p. 151, ff. See also his essay "The Negation of the Diaspora" ([*sheli'lat ha-galut*] 1909), which seems not to have been translated into English.

> center in Palestine – is today out of the question. There was a short period when the Zionist could feel himself a citizen of two countries […]; for the Zionist was prepared to give up his life for the home in which he had his residence. Now that the Jews have been denied the right to feel at home in Europe, it is the duty of the European nations to redeem the injustice committed by their spiritual and physical ancestors by assisting the Jews in the task of reclaiming Palestine and by recognizing the right of the Jews to the land of their fathers (Galut, p. 118).

Cultural Zionists, he now came to see – as well as perhaps Reform Jews like Magnes and "Territorialists" and "Autonomists" like Yisrael Zangwill and Simon Dubnow – were all guilty of the same denial of the primacy of the physical Land of Israel in Jewish life and history that characterized post-Emancipation Jewry. In the chapter on Yehuda HaLevi in *Galut*, in a section that seems directly aimed at Cultural Zionism, Baer thus wrote:

> [Zion] was the center and heart of the Diaspora, and from north and south and east and west all those who languished in servitude looked to Zion. Palestine was the center and heart of the Diaspora even though the Temple was gone and hardly a Jew remained. It was no 'spiritual center'; nor was it for the Jew, as it was for the Christian and the Mohammedan, only the land of a past revelation, endowed in consequence with a miraculous power of redemption; nor was it merely the Holy Land of tradition and dogma – this desert was home and mother earth for the Jewish people (Galut, p. 35).

The idea that "until the redemption, every country is as good as Palestine," according to Baer, was no more than "Marrano theology in a modernized and more comfortable form" (Galut, p. 113).

Even further, Baer seemingly came to endorse positions associated with the Vitalistic-Nietzschean wing of Zionism represented above all by Berdyczewski. In contrast to Ahad Ha'am,

Berdyczewski claimed that the degradation in Jewish life during the long exile was not merely the result of the prolonged estrangement from the Land of Israel or from the sources of vitality that characterized ancient, pre-exilic Judaism, but rather, the *necessary outcome of the Jewish religion*, at least as it was developed by the rabbis.[44] Chastising the founder of Rabbinic Judaism Yochanan ben-Zakkai, who escaped Jerusalem during the siege by the Romans in a coffin in order to establish the academy in Yavneh, Berdyczewski averred that "Yavneh and Jerusalem are enemies […] those who fell upon their swords [i.e. the Zealots] were superior to those who escaped the walls hidden in coffins."[45] In contrast to the spirit of moderation and rationalism espoused by Ahad Ha'am, Berdyczewski advocated earthly vigor, physical prowess, and rebellion[46]; in contrast to the veneration of the rabbis, Berdyczewski held up fighting Jews such as the Maccabees and Bar Kochba as role models[47]; and in an attempt to find a new Jewish "counternarrative" to official rabbinic history, he also suggested the adoption of the Jerusalem – in lieu of the Babylonian – Talmud, a work reflecting the authentic, ancient spirit of the Land of Israel.[48]

After the publication of *Galut*, and especially in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, these changes in Baer's thought became more pronounced. In the Introduction to *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* – written just as the Zionist revolt against the British Mandate began to intensify – in a section describing the struggle between the Israeli center and the Roman Empire in the first two

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[44] Jacob Golomb, "On the 'Nietzschean' Dispute between Ahad Ha'am and Micha Yosef Berdichevsky" (Hebrew), in *Around the Dot: Studies on M. Y. Berdichevsky, Y. H. Brenner and A. D. Gordon*, eds. Avner Holtzman, Gideon Katz, Shalom Ratzaby, (Beer Sheva: The Ben-Gurion Research Institute, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2008), pp. 69-93, pp. 70-71. To some extent, Berdyczewski's critique could be compared to that of Machiavelli when he claimed that "our present religion" – supposedly Christianity – has led the world to a state of "weakness" (Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy,* tr. Harvey Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995], Book I, Preface, p. 6).

[45] Quoted in Ehud Luz, *Wrestling with an Angel: Power, Morality, and Jewish Identity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 55 [Translation modified]. For more on the "'Jerusalem' versus 'Yavneh'" dichotomy, see therein, pp. 52-56.

[46] See Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1985), Ch. VI, pp. 214-231, ff.

[47] See Luz, *Wrestling With an Angel,* p. 54.

[48]Avner Holtzman, "On the Watch: M. Y. Berdichevsky as a Political Commentator" (Hebrew), in *Around the Dot*, pp. 95-120, p. 109.

centuries of the Common Era, Baer again affirmed the primacy of the Land of Israel; but unlike in *Galut*, Baer now also seemingly took a stance in the name of political independence and the imperative to rebel against foreign rule. Manifestly rejecting the "spirit of 'Yavne'," he also maintained that the rabbinic dictums not to take up arms against foreign powers (BT Ketubbot 111a) and to accept "the law of the land" as law unto the Jews ([*dina de-malkhuta dina*] BT Bava Kama 113a; BT Nedarim 28a; elsewhere) were foreign to the authentic, fighting Jewish spirit:

> 'I prefer a small conclave in Eretz Yisrael to a large Sanhedrin abroad' [JT Sanhedrin I, 2]. 'It is better to dwell in the desert in Eretz Yisrael than in a palace abroad' [Genesis Rabbah, 39:8]. There could be no compromise between the Jewish nation and the foreign power in this struggle. In the teachings of the Palestinian scholars one does not find the formula, evolved in Babylonia, stating that 'the law of the government is law unto us,' nor does a prayer for the welfare of the government exist in their liturgy as in that of the western Diaspora (HJCS, I, p. 12).

Baer returned to the critique of Ahad Ha'am in the sections describing the decline of the centers in Israel and the ascendancy of the Babylonian academies, where we can also see him echoing not only Berdyczewski, but also other critics of Jewish life in the Diaspora, especially Brenner. One of Brenner's strongest criticisms was of Jewish education as it existed in the rabbinic system, especially the Talmudic method of "pilpul." This method, Brenner contended, may have developed the Jews' "wit," but it produced conclusions with no basis in real life.[49] Echoing both Brenner and Berdyczewski then, in his description of the development of Judaism after the defeat by the Romans, Baer suggested

[49] Here I am paraphrasing Eliezer Schweid, "The Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches," in *Essential Papers on Zionism,* eds. Anita Shapira and Jehuda Reinharz, (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 133-160, p. 139.

that there was something in the very fabric of the Jewish faith that produced Jewish weakness and general lack of realism:

> Their code represented a complete, detailed, and well-ordered world outlook. Their attitude was conceived in an atmosphere of mythological thinking where care was taken not to couch religious ideals in rational terms or to express their relation to the practical world in matter-of-fact language. Therein lay their strength and also their weakness (HJCS, I, p. 14).[50]

Baer, however, did not backtrack his lifelong opposition to rationalism in this text. Further down, he again implied that the methods associated with Babylonian legalism had essentially something 'un-Jewish' about them. "The Halakha in Babylonia had developed along pilpulistic lines, foreign even to contemporary Palestinian scholars. As he notes in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain,* even the Babylonian Talmud notes: "'He has made me dwell in dark places' (Lam. 3:6) – that is the Talmud of Babylonia" (BT Sanhedrin 24a)" [Baer's reference – Y.O.] (HJCS, I, p. 25). Iterating Berdyczewski's critique that the rabbis had essentially suffocated the vital spirit of ancient Judaism, he then writes that "the acceptance of the law of the Babylonian Talmud by the communities of the Diaspora was not due to apathy on their part or the failure of their own creative powers. *It came rather as a result of a planned campaign by the academies of Babylonia to impose the authority of the Babylonian Talmud upon the entire Diaspora*" (HJCS, I, p. 26 [italics added]).[51] The physical return of the Jews to the Land of Israel thus has the potential, according to Baer, to serve as the renewal not only of Jewish political life, but also of a more authentic form of Judaism.

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[50]Baer already stated similar things in his lecture "On the Educational Value of Israelite [Jewish] History" (*ha-erech ha-hinu'chi shel ha-historiya ha-yisra'elit*), in *Studies in the History of the Jewish People,* Vol. I, p. 22-3.

[51] This section also echoes the poet Shaul Tchernichovsky's famous line from the poem "Before the Statue of Apollo" (1899), in which he describes how the rabbis sought to quell the true, vital aspects of Judaism by "strapping Him [i.e. the Hebrew God, in His full, original glory – Y. O.] in phylacteries" (my translation). Regarding the influence of the Babylonian Talmud on medieval Jews, see Ivan G. Marcus' assessment in "Israeli Medieval Jewish Historiography: From Nationalist Positivism to New Cultural and Social Histories," *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2010), pp. 244-285, p. 248.

The Treason of the Intellectuals

In Baer's oeuvre, there seems to be hardly any "individuals." The protagonists of his works, rather, tend to be "collectives," that is, groups or communities such as the pietist-sages, the Tannaim, the Ashkenazi Pietists, or the People or Nation of Israel in its entirety. The only individuals Baer seems to have written about, whether extensively or in passing – like Rashi, Yehuda HaLevi, Abravanel, and a few others – tended to be those whom he considered to have embodied, whether in their biography or their writings, the innermost tendencies of Jewish history and the highest values of the Jewish tradition. As he noted in his Inaugural Lecture, "The historian sees […] constant change, […], not the rise and fall of the individual, but the life-movement of the many."[52] In this respect his work differs greatly from that of Scholem, for whom the figure of the "heretic hero" looms large.[53]

A recurring theme in Baer's oeuvre, however, is the differentiation between the Jewish people – or commoners – and the Jewish elite. The former, according to Baer, have always remained faithful adherents to the ancestral faith, while the latter have often strayed from the path of the righteous and tempted by the influence of destructive "rationalism." It should be noted that Baer had not always been antagonistic towards the elites. Before 1933 – probably still influenced by German theories about the leadership role of the academic *intelligentsia* – he seems to have in fact been highly appreciative of the elite's contribution to the development of the nation's cultural life.[54] Thus, in his aforementioned Inaugural Speech at the Hebrew University, Baer criticized "one of the associates" (his colleague

[52] "Principles," p. 9.
[53] The notion of the "heretic hero" in Scholem's thought was developed by Gabriel Piterberg in "'But Was I Really Primed?' Gershom Scholem's Zionist Project," in *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World*, H. Trüper, D. Chakrabarty, S. Subrahmanyam (eds.), (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), pp. 275-300. We shall discuss Scholem in depth in the next chapter of this dissertation.
[54] Consider in this regard Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

Dinur) for wanting to always focus on the "common Jew" (*ha-adam ha-bey'noni be-yisra'el*).[55] "On the contrary," Baer averred, "the historian must concentrate on the nation's clearer, deeper, and more exalted spiritual creations (*giluy'ey ha-ru'ach*)," meaning the philosophical and religious texts written by learned scholars.[56] After 1933, however, his views changed dramatically. Already in *Galut*, in a chapter devoted to the Late Middle Ages, Baer writes of the differences between the lower and upper classes:

> Wherever Jewish communities developed to any considerable extent, they fell sick with the diseases characteristic of the cities of the *ancien régime*. [They] split into classes and cliques; the upper classes exploited the lower classes; the city communities tyrannized over the village communities. […]. Rich families separated themselves from the community; in Spain and Italy especially, they gave their children a non-religious education and followed a worldly course of life (Galut, p. 47).

A few years later, in a review of the first volume of Salo Baron's *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (1938), he provided in succinct form his views on the social structure of the Jewish Middle Ages, tying together his views on class, economics, and the mystical, ascetic nature of Jewish faith and social doctrine:

> There is no doubt that the Jews of the Middle Ages were primarily of an urban disposition, but in most cases they were divided into two classes: an upper bourgeoisie and a lower bourgeoisie, and over time the latter group acquired the form of an urban proletariat (artisans, minor moneylenders, merchants, and religious scholars […]). The rationalists belonged mostly to the upper bourgeoisie, which were inclined towards apostasy and conversion, whereas the

[55] Dinur believed that the "common individual" was the carrier of the "shared experience of the entire nation throughout the diaspora," Ben-Zion Dinur, *Israel in Exile* (*yisra'el ba-go'la*), 2nd Edition, (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1926), Vol. I, Bk. I, Introduction, p. xxxv.
[56] "Principles," p. 15.

> mystical movements – while they did not always emerge from the lower classes, they were close to them by nature, and intermingled with them. The entire purpose [of these movements] was to *lead the people away from the embrace of secular culture, scientific enlightenment* [*ha-haskala ha-mada'it*] and external civilization [*ha-tzivilizats'ya ha-hitz'onit*], to leave the nation poor and humble and trusting in God and in Salvation[57] (italics added).

He developed his class analysis most extensively, however, in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*. In the Introduction, after writing extensively of the Pietist-Sages of the Second Commonwealth Period, he remarks that almost everywhere throughout the Diaspora, the majority of Jews remained faithful to the ancestral teachings, observing the lessons bequeathed to them by the original Jewish masters. Like in some of his other writings, here, too, he singles out in particular the Jews of Ashkenaz for their "social and religious patterns," which created "a new homeland for the social and religious ideals of our sages," and taught in their academies the highest ideal of the Jewish faith, "to die a martyr's death in time of trial" (HJCS, I, pp. 37-8; 97-8). In Spain, however, he goes on to explain, the situation was altogether different. Spanish society became divided into two classes, "the backward masses, primitive in their outlook and way of life," who continued adhering to tradition and "derived their livelihood from the cultivation of fields and orchards, from manufacture and handicraft," and "an aristocracy pampered by the elegance of wealth and Arabic culture." These aristocrats "enjoyed their life, tasted the pleasures of wine, women, palaces and gardens, and pursued the literary arts and the sciences" (ibid; *im passim*).

These aristocrats, Baer continues, increasingly came under the sway of Arabic rationalism and science, finding justification for their abhorrent behavior in the new philosophies of Averroes and

[57] Yitzhak Baer, "'A Social and Religious History of the Jews' (Comments on S. Baron's new book)," *Zion,* Vol. 3 (1938), pp. 277-299, p. 294.

Maimonides. In a section which clearly echoes some of Baer's criticisms of the Jewish liberal elite of his own day, he thus writes:

> The compromise that Maimonides effected between the popular religion and the demands of reason and science was accepted by the religious Jewish intellectuals of southern Europe as the only solution to their spiritual conflict. It was especially welcome to the learned of southern France […] and to the polished aristocrats of Spain who let their reason and natural instincts guide their lives. *There were many, it would seem, in Spain, who found in Maimonidean philosophy convenient support for their extreme liberalism*. These men accepted only a faith of reason and rejected the popular beliefs. They put rational understanding ahead of the observance of the commandments and denied the value of the Talmudic *aggadot* (HJCS, I, pp. 96-7; italics added).[58]

Eventually, the descendants of these "polished aristocrats" would actively betray their people during "the period of great trial" between 1391 and 1415, preferring to side with the Spanish courts and converting to Christianity. It was only through the steadfastness of the lower classes, Baer notes, alongside that of the Ashkenazi communities, that Judaism survived the great trauma of the Spanish expulsion, and the Middle Ages as a whole (ibid.; pp. 240-1; *im passim*).[59]

[58] It should be noted that the expression "extreme liberalism" was not chosen arbitrarily. In the 1945, Hebrew edition of the book, by contrast, the expression used was "radical conclusion[s]" (*maskanatam ha-kitson'it*); *Toldot Ha-Yehud'im be-Sefarad Ha-Notz'rit,* Vol. I, p. 68. In other words, Baer's critique seems to have *intensified* over the years rather than abetted.

[59] Baer's exploration of the figure of the "court Jew" also extends to an article he wrote on Isaac Abarbanel (discussed below). This theme is meticulously explored in Cedric Cohen Skalli, "Between Yitzhak Baer and Leo Strauss: The Rediscovery of Isaac Abravanel's Political Thought in the Late 1930s," *DAAT: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah*, Vol. 88 (2019), pp. 161-190, esp. 166 onwards.

Myth and Reason

Baer's "sociology" was part of a greater system of binaries and dichotomies that he employed in many of his writings, which included not only the division between "lower" and "upper classes," "commoners" and "aristocrats," but also between Judaism and the West (at times Christianity, at times Hellenism), "mysticism" and "legalism," "religion" and "philosophy," the "country" and the "city," and above all, "myth" and "reason." In assuming this dualistic view, Baer could be seen as a product of the reigning zeitgeist of his youth. Like Scholem, Baer began his studies in Germany at a time of growing interest in mysticism, the occult, folk traditions and the Orient, which were all seen as remedies to the afflictions of the modern, bourgeois West: widespread "disenchantment," positivism, materialism, and the soulless industrial economy.[60] These patterns of thought seem to have affected Baer quite strongly, and throughout his career he tended to attribute to Judaism – that is, what he saw as authentic, unadulterated Judaism – the qualities of a mythical, folk-religion, and castigating most expressions of philosophical rationalism as alien, corrosive influences.[61]

In his rejection of "rationalism," Baer also positioned himself as a twentieth century representative of the anti-rational, or at least anti-philosophical tradition in Judaism, alongside Scholem, Buber, and others such as Julius Guttmann (1880-1950) and Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929).[62] In his writings, one can discern clear echoes of the anti-philosophic sentiments found in such sources as the Talmud ("cursed be the man who teaches his son Greek wisdom"; BT Bava Kamma

[60] See Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Fin-de-siècle Orientalism, the *Ostjuden*, and the Aesthetics of Jewish Self-Affirmation," in idem., *Divided Passions*, pp. 77-132, esp. the beginning. For more on this period, see the old but still highly illuminating H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958); and George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[61] This dualism has been discussed extensively in Isaiah Sonne, "On Baer and His Philosophy of Jewish History," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan., 1947), pp. 61-80; and Jacob J. Schacter, "Echoes of the Spanish Expulsion in Eighteenth Century Germany: The Baer Thesis Revisited," *Judaism*, Vol. 41, Is. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 180-189.

[62] Cf. Sonne, p. 68.

82b), the poetry of Yehuda HaLevi ("Do not be taken with Greek Wisdom / Which bears no fruit but only blossoms"),[63] and the writings of some of the most important religious authorities in Europe in the centuries following the expulsion from Spain. In one important essay, Jacob Schacter even notes the degree to which Baer's "Spanish thesis" seems to be inspired by traditional accounts of the reasons for the expulsion from Spain – most prominently Ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehuda* – as well as by the writings of Rabbi Jacob Emden ("Ya'avetz"), who in eighteenth century Germany himself "updated" traditional accounts of the Spanish episode in order to condemn contemporary developments in the post-Enlightenment era.[64]

As noted by Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, Baer's thesis also signaled a departure from German-Jewish historiography as it has been practiced in the preceding hundred years. Since the late eighteenth century, Jewish *Maskilim* who sought to integrate into German high culture portrayed the Jewish experience in Spain as something of a "Golden Age," in which Jews and non-Jews profited from a tolerant atmosphere and open exchange of ideas, and some of the nation's most cherished intellectual heroes, most notably Maimonides, lived and thrived. "Rejecting their actual historical origins in the German Ashkenazi community," Yerushalmi writes, "which to them represented everything they wanted to escape from – the ghetto, the social degradation, cultural isolation and obscurantism – these German Jews believed they had found in medieval Spanish Judaism the exact opposite." Baer, however, inversed this relationship. In his account, members of the Jewish intellectual elite were actually traitors to their nation, while the Jews of Ashkenaz were now the keepers of a hallowed tradition.[65]

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[63] "Your Word is Steeped in Myrrh" (*dva'reicha be'mor over*) [My translation].
[64] Schacter, ibid.
[65] Yerushalmi, ibid., p. 22-24. In his analysis, Yerushalmi relies on the important essay by Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, Vol. 34 (1989), pp. 47-66.

Baer's worldview in this respect is worth contrasting with that of his contemporary, the political philosopher Leo Strauss (1899-1973).[66] The two were actually colleagues in the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin in the 1920's.[67] Later in their lives, in 1962, in a lecture entitled "Why We Remain Jews," Strauss also called Baer "the greatest living Jewish historian".[68] The two men also share some biographical similarities, having both come from more traditional, "provincial" backgrounds, in contrast with urban Berlin Jews such as Scholem.

Like Baer, Strauss also resorted often to the use of binaries, namely "Ancients" and "Moderns," "Revelation" and "Reason," and "Jerusalem" and "Athens." Like Baer, Strauss also adhered to a kind of binary view of Jewish thought, which placed religion, mysticism and "myth" on one side, and philosophy and rationalism on the other. And like Baer, Strauss was also aware of the potential harm that philosophy poses to political society.[69] Here, however, the two men seem to part ways, at least to a certain extent. For Baer sided unequivocally with "Jerusalem," and against the rationalism of "Athens." He always expressed great skepticism towards "philosophical" Jews such as Maimonides, and as we saw, believed that rationalism had an overall corrosive effect on Jewish society. Baer was also much more of an "antinomian," seeing the strength of Judaism not in its legal system, but rather, in what may be called its "mythopoesis." Strauss, on the other hand, seemed to hold *both* "Jerusalem" and "Athens" in high esteem. He did not exactly believe in the possibility of synthesis,

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[66] Earlier attempts at comparison of these two men's thought can be found in Skalli, "Between Yitzhak Baer and Leo Strauss," ibid.; and Thomas Meyer, "Yitzhak Fritz Baer und Leo Strauss Über Galut," *Exil – Literatur – Judentum*, Doerte Bischoff (ed.), (München: Edition Text + Kritik, 2016), pp. 64-85.

[67] See, e.g., Eugene Sheppard, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile: The Making of a Political Philosopher*, (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2006), p. 33.

[68] Leo Strauss, "Why We Remain Jews: Can Jewish Faith and History Still Speak to Us?," in idem. *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 311-358, p. 322.

[69] Strauss made this argument in many places, but for our purposes, see especially Strauss's essay on Yehuda Halevi's *Kuzari,* in particular the last few pages. One may make the argument that Halevi's views as represented by Strauss are remarkably similar to Baer's. Leo Strauss, "The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*," in idem., *Persecution and the Art of Writing,* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988 [1952]), pp. 95-141. Compare with Baer's own chapter on Yehuda Halevi in *Galut,* 1947, pp. 27-35, and his remarks on Halevi in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*.

but rather – at least exoterically – seemed to advocate something of a fruitful tension, especially for the modern Jew, for whom there may have been no other way to live one's life. Strauss's model, to a large extent, was Maimonides – whose fidelity to Judaism, Strauss believed, did not prevent him from living a life of inquiry and wisdom.[70] Strauss, in addition, was also much more of a "legalist," seeing the core of Judaism as "revealed law."[71] Despite of these myriad differences, however, there is much that unites the thought of these Jewish titans.[72]

Jews and Germans

Despite his undeniable debt to Jewish thinkers that preceded him, I surmise that the most likely influence on the construction of Baer's worldview – in form as well as essence – should be sought, rather, in the symbolic trove of German romanticism and early twentieth century antimodernism, particularly in the ubiquitous dichotomy between the "rooted," rural peasantry, who represented "true community" (*Gemeinschaft*) and maintained their loyalty to ancestral traditions, and the deracinated, intellectual, urban elites who represented the vices of modernity and alienating mass-society (*Gesellschaft*).[73] The origins of this dichotomy could be found in Rousseau, the early Romantics, and the sociology of Ferdinand Tönnies. In the late nineteenth-century, one could also find it in the works of conservative critics such as Julius Langheben.[74] In Baer's own day, however, this dichotomy

[70] See, *inter alia,* Simon W. Taylor, "Between Philosophy and Judaism: Leo Strauss's Skeptical Engagement with Zionism," *Journal of the History of Ideas,* Vol. 78, No. 1, (January 2017), pp. 95-116, p. 113, ff.
[71] See, perhaps most famously, Strauss's early *Philosophy and Law* (*Philosophie und Gesetz*), tr. Eve Adler, (New York: SUNY Press, 1995 [1935]).
[72] It is the intention of the author to write in future a more thorough study comparing and contrasting some of Baer's and Strauss's views.
[73] The bibliography on this topic is of course voluminous. See, *inter alia*, Klemens von Klemperer, "The Lure and Limits of *Gemeinschaft*," in idem., *German Incertitudes, 1914-1945: The Stones and the Cathedral*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), pp. 77-86; Adrian Wilding, "Why We Don't Remain in the Provinces," *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, Vol. 31, no. 1 (January 2005), pp. 109–29.
[74] Fritz Stern, in his important – although highly prejudicial – study of the "Germanic Ideology," *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (New York: Anchor Books, 1965 [1961]), notes how a feature common to many conservative critics of modernity

found its most articulate theorist in Oswald Spengler. In *The Decline of the West* (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*; 1918-22), Spengler distinguished between the urban, rootless, cosmopolitan bourgeoisie, who appear towards the end of a culture's lifespan and are a sign – and cause – of its decline, and the anonymous mass of "eternal" peasants, who have adhered to the same lifestyle and values since time immemorial. In Europe, Spengler posited, the peasants survived the Fall of Rome and laid the foundations for everything that was noble in contemporary European life. They were the progenitors of a healthy "culture" (*Kultur*), as opposed to the urban, capitalist bourgeoisie, who were harbingers of decline and decadent "civilization" (*Zivilisation*). Importantly, Spengler also contended that among the modern bourgeoisie, religion had lost its place because it was severed from its natural soil (literally and metaphorically), continuing to exist as mere "art."[75]

This element of German conservative thought seems to have already entered Zionist discourse in the generation before Baer. In his influential study *The Jews of Today* (*Die Juden der Gegenwart*), published in 1904, Arthur Ruppin, who later became an important Zionist activist as well as the founder of the Department of Sociology at the Hebrew University, called attention to a letter from the famous etcher Daniel Chodowiecki to Countess von Solms-Laubach dated December 12th, 1783, where "we read that the Jews of Berlin are no longer concerned with any kind of ritual, they buy and sell on Saturdays, eat all the forbidden foods, keep no fast days, etc.; only the lower classes (that is, those still untouched by German culture) are still orthodox."[76] Expanding his insights to a general

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in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was their hostility to large cities and their bourgeois population on the one hand, and their valorization of "earlier rural communities," on the other (p. 10, ff). In his chapter on Langheben, Stern notes that for such men, "the best, the truly authentic German was the peasant. [The peasant] was the *Volk* incarnate; his virtues, his virility, had once constituted the strength of the people. […]. The peasant stood for all that remained unpolluted in society, for all that remained fixed and rooted […]" (p. 189).

[75] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West,* tr. Charles Francis Atkinson, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), esp. Vol II, "Cities and People: (A) The Soul of the City," pp. 85-110, and "The State: (B) The State and History," pp. 359-436. Allen Tate, one of the leading voices of the so-called Southern Agrarians, was especially sensitive to these themes in his review of Spengler's later tract, *The Hour of Decision*: see Tate, "Spengler's Tract Against Liberalism," *The American Review,* Vol. 3 (1934), pp. 41-47.

[76] Arthur Ruppin, *The Jews of To-Day,* tr. Margery Bentwich, (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913), p. 9.

sociological observation, Ruppin writes that such a "breaking-up of Judaism" as we are witnessing today is "by no means without precedent." The very same thing happened on the two other occasions where Jews had come under the sway of foreign, philosophical cultures, namely "in the Greek period two centuries before and one century after Christ; and in the Arabic period, from the eighth to the twelfth century."[77]

Baer, however, may have been the most important representative of German antimodernism in Zionist thought, if not of twentieth century Jewish thought as a whole (perhaps, debatably, with the exception of Strauss). In a passage in his review of Baron's book – which to some extent mirrors Scholem's famous critique of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* circle (that the latter deliberately excluded mystical movements from their research because they wanted to make Judaism "rational" and "respectable" to Enlightened Europeans) – Baer shows the extent of his debt to this intellectual current:

> The war against the Enlightenment [*ha-haskala*] which begins in Spain with Yehuda Halevi and gains strength through the influence of Kabbalah, as well as with the movements of Ashkenazi Pietism, [was] an *anti-rationalist, anti-secular, and anti-Capitalist movement, as were the teachings of the Prophets, the Pharisees, and the Tannaim*. It molds the people into a religious proletariat. The latest results of this direction became manifest in the year of Sabbatai Zevi's [appearance]. This development may not be to the liking of the European intellectual [*ha-maskil ha'Eropi*], but it is consistent with the immanentist doctrines of Israelite history. It therefore becomes clear that the religious tendency of the Jews in the Middle Ages was ascetic, in spite of the numerous secular forces that sought to break through the fence[78] (italics added).

[77] Ruppin, p. 16, 17, 19, ff.
[78] "Comments on S. Baron's book," p. 294.

Economics and Society

Baer's insistence on the primacy of the lower, agricultural classes over the *luftgeschäfte* elites should also be seen in the context of early twentieth century debates about the Jews' "historical vocation," or to be more specific, about whether the Jews were "naturally" inclined towards Capitalism and the "parasitic" professions of commerce, trade, and so forth, or whether they could be considered a nation of farmers and artisans who had been forced to relinquish their crafts due to the oppressive nature of exile.[79] In Germany, these debates became particularly heated with the publication in 1911 of Werner Sombart's *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (*Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben*).[80] But among Jews, and especially among Zionists and other Hebrew revivalists in the Pale of Settlement and later in the Land of Israel, these debates began much earlier, and became necessarily embroiled with another set of questions, about the possibility of the Jews becoming a rooted, agrarian, "productive" people.[81]

Thus, A. D. Gordon (1856-1922), one of the principal ideologues of Labor Zionism, for example, claimed that as long as Jews were living in exile, their existence was "parasitic," economically as well as spiritually. The Jews, he argued, have been without land for so long that "urban life" had become for them the norm – "a second nature." According to Gordon, this "second nature" must

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[79] This debate, of course, was not limited to Jewish circles. The anarchist Proudhon, for example, noted in one of his tracts, "The Jew has remained Jew, a parasitical race, the enemy of labor, given to all the practices of anarchic and lying barter, of speculation and of usurious banking." Quoted in David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 204.

[80] For an interesting analysis and critique of Sombart's thesis from a Jewish perspective, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Werner Sombart's *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*: An Analysis of its Ideological Premises," *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, Volume 21, Issue 1 (January 1976), pp. 87–107.

[81] This was the question of the "productization" of the Jews (*produktovizatsya*), taking Jews away from the commercial professions and making them into "productive" people. This was originally a question taken up by several European states, especially the Russian Empire, beginning in the late eighteenth century. It was later taken on, however, by Jewish renewal movements, the *Haskalah*, and later, Zionism. See the entry for "produktovizatsya" in *From the Foundations: An Illustrated Lexicon of Concepts in Judaism and Zionism* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Ministry of Defense, 1987), pp. 203-4. Yehezkel Kaufmann summarized this debate – and made his own contribution to its development – in *Golah v'Nekhar,* Vol. I, pp. 176-190, ff; and in the article "Our Deliverance and Self-Esteem [*ge'ulat'enu ve-ha'arach'at atzme'nu*], *Moznaim,* Vol. 2, 1939 (5699), pp. 129-154.

therefore be overcome, through the return "to the soil, to nature, to natural life."[82] The aforementioned Brenner, who was similarly influential in Labor Zionist circles, concluded that whenever outside cultures offered Jews equality in rights and professional occupations, Jews tended to assimilate and stop adhering to Jewish laws. Echoing Ruppin – whose book he had translated into Hebrew in 1914 – Brenner thus argued that in both Hellenistic Alexandria and Medieval Spain, the Jews also became assimilated once given the option.[83]

Baer sided strongly with those who saw in the Jews originally a nation of farmers. In *Galut*, he thus wrote,

> At the end of the period of Imperial Rome, the Jews were in no way essentially distinguishable in the general economic and social structure. But from the sixth century on, the systematic harrying of the Jews from place to place, together with the general European shift to the economic and social forms of feudalism, uprooted the Jew from the soil and forced them into an unnatural position as traders and middlemen (Galut, p. 17; cf. p. 41; 65; 84; 99).

Much like Gordon, Baer believed the Jews must return to the Land of Israel in order to overcome the chasm in their historical development. In line with his sociological theories, however, he increasingly viewed any manifestation of the "parasitic professions" among Jews as essentially a betrayal of the Jewish spirit, not a mere concession to the demands of exile.

In his review of Baron's book, he accused the author of reviving Werner Sombart's "notorious thesis," asserting that in the community ordinances [*takan'ot ha-kahal*] of the Jewish communities of the late Middle Ages and Early Modernity there reigned "that same conservative, class spirit which

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[82] Aharon David Gordon, *Collected Writings* (Hebrew), edited by S. H. Bergmann and Eliezer Shochat, (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency, 1952 [1925-9]), Vol. I (*ha-Umma ve-ha'Avoda*), "Am-Adam," p. 260; "Shuta'fut tiv'it," p. 441.
[83] See Menachem Brinker, *Narrative Art and Social Thought in Y. H. Brenner's Work* [*'Ad HaSimta Ha-T'veryanit*], (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1990), pp. 177-9, ff.

economic historians have identified as the enemy of modern capitalism." The "Rabbis of Poland" in particular "were isolated in the four cubits of Halacha and Aggadah" which were "utterly inhospitable" to the rationalism from which modern capitalism emerged.[84] In the essay on *Sefer Hasidim*, he virtually made the same argument, stressing the essentially otherworldly nature of the Jewish religion. "The Hasidic belief system [*torat ha'hasid*] forecloses for the Jews the most important lines of capitalistic enrichment." In fact,

> no Hebrew book, religious or moral, could have taught the Jews the theoretical foundations of the capitalistic and exploitative tendency that the anti-Semites ascribe to our people and that they look for in our religious writings without even knowing the titles of the relevant texts.

This book, according to Baer, was characterized by "an ascetic disposition." It was not influential enough to "overcome the decrees of fate" – that is, to prevent Jews from becoming part of the worldly economic system – but its intention was "to rescue the Jew and distance him as much as possible from any contact with the [outside] world."[85] And then, in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, he wrote that "the Talmud, pursuing its own lines of reasoning, did not – as some modern scholars would it – arrive at legal conclusions designed to prepare the people, living in the Diaspora, for a capitalistic order of society" (HJCS, I, p. 26).

[84] "Comments on S. Baron's book," p. 295.

[85] Yitzhak Baer, "Sepher Hassidim," p. 41. Cf. Galut, 41: "In economic and social matters there was only one recognized religious doctrine: that which enjoined the greatest possible renunciation of the things of this world." See also his much-later essay "The Theory of the Natural Equality of Early Man according to Ashkenazi Hasidim," *Zion,* Vol. 32 (1967), pp. 129-136.

The Logic of Martyrdom and the Integral Society

As David Nirenberg correctly points out, Baer began emphasizing the view of martyrdom as the Jew's noblest and most exalted ideal in the late 1930's, in view of the rise of Nazism and later the Holocaust.[86] Unsurprisingly, he would dwell on this theme in particular in the context of his studies from the late 1930's of Ashkenazi Pietism and the Franco-German communities who perished during the First Crusades. At the same time, however, it is important to note that Baer had already formed his opinion on the centrality of martyrdom to the Jewish belief system much earlier. Thus already in his Inaugural Speech at the Hebrew University, we find Baer remarking on "the martyrology [*martiriyon*] of the Hasmonaean period and the generation of destruction [*dor ha-sh'mad*][87] – not to mention that of the first Christians," which had found no purer expression as in the records of the "communities in Germany, which were pillaged and destroyed during the Crusades."[88]

It seems then that Baer's view of martyrdom may have emerged in the context of what Richard Wolin has called the "metaphysics of death" of the Weimar period, and that emerged in direct response to the carnage of the First World War.[89] Instances of this trend can be seen, for example, in Heidegger's notion of Being-towards-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*), Ernst Jünger's view of war as a kind of mystical experience that reveals the nature of existence, Freud's introduction of the "death drive," and Franz Rosenzweig's view of the perception of death as the basis for the recognition of the totality of life ("All cognition of the All originates in death, in the fear of death"[90]). In contrast to these other thinkers, however – perhaps with the exception of Jünger – Baer's emphasis on martyrdom did not

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[86] Nirenberg, ibid., p. 300, ff.
[87] The generation that lived at the time of Hadrian's reprisals after the Bar Kochba Rebellion was vanquished [Y.O.]
[88] Yitzhak Baer, "Principles," p. 17.
[89] Richard Wolin, "Carl Schmitt, Political Existentialism, and the Total State," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Aug., 1990), p. 395.
[90] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, tr. William Hallo, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 3. Cf. Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy*, (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 166, ff.

stem from a desire to foster a more nuanced or deeper understanding of reality or human motivation, but rather, seems to have emanated from his belief in the interrelatedness of the physical and metaphysical, the practical and the theoretical, and the political and the theological in the Jewish mindset, or what may be called for our purposes "politico-theological integralism." In this regard, his ideas could be compared perhaps to those found in works on political theology by the likes of Schmitt and Kantorowicz.

The appeal of integralism could be attributed, again, to the influence of early twentieth century German thought. In various episodes of German history, many thinkers sought to advance an "integralist" view of society, modelled in many cases on the ancient Greek *polis*.[91] In the early twentieth century, as well as during the interwar period, "integralism" was revived among German thinkers, particularly – though not exclusively – on the right, in response to the ascendancy of liberalism and positivism in both political life as well as the social sciences.[92] Baer was likely influenced by these currents as well, and in his depiction of the Jewish community throughout various episodes of history, often highlighted the interrelatedness of the various aspects of Jewish social life. Thus, in *Galut*, as we have already seen, Baer first called attention to the interrelatedness of law, nation, and land, politics and religion. Later, in a lecture delivered in 1938 on "The Educational Value of Jewish History," he makes the startling claim that "in immanent Jewish thinking, *there is no such thing as purely secular politics*"

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[91] The veneration of the Greek *polis* was perhaps most prevalent among philosophers and poets of the *Goethezeit*. During the course of the nineteenth century, this sentiment waned, and for some, Rome, rather than Greece, became the classic model of inspiration. Some thinkers, most notably Nietzsche and Burckhardt, wrote important critiques of the classical *polis*, without necessarily becoming overly attracted to the Roman example. For more on the attraction of German thinkers to Greece, see Hans Joachim Hahn, *German Thought and Culture: From the Holy Roman Empire to the Present Day*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 56-78; and the classic by Eliza Marian Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011 [1935]). I was alerted to some of these trends by Paul Gottfried, "Oswald Spengler and the Inspiration of the Classical Age," *Modern Age,* Vol. 26, Is. 1 (Winter 1982), pp. 68-75, p. 74 and p. 75n30. A useful overview of the interpretations of the meaning of the *polis* from antiquity to modernity can be found in Chapter 1 of Kōstas Vlassopoulos, *Unthinking the Greek Polis: Ancient Greek History Beyond Eurocentrism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 13-67.

[92] See, *inter alia,* the relevant chapters of Chris Thornhill, *German Political Philosophy: The Metaphysics of Law,* (London: Routledge, 2007).

(my emphasis).[93] And in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain,* he remarks that the "regimen of pietism" bequeathed to the Jews by their biblical heritage imposed a "purely religious orientation" in which the various "elements – historical, legal, ethical, and theological – fused into one mold, which impressed itself upon succeeding generations and compelled them to create a new society, unique in form and structure" (HJCS, I, p. 5); "Talmudic jurisprudence never distinguished, as Roman Law did, between the civil and criminal law (*ius*) and the ritual law (*fas*)" (p. 10).

The most illustrative example of this aspect of Baer's thought, however, would be in his depiction of the Israelite State of the Second Commonwealth Period, particularly in *Israel Among the Nations*, but also before, for example, in one of the rare essays that Baer wrote for the daily Israeli press, "The Construction of a Commonwealth [*bayit*] and Judgement Day," published in the daily *Davar,* associated with the ruling party *Mapai*, on October 3rd, 1948, a few months after the declaration of statehood and at the height of the War of Independence.[94] In this essay – which as far as I had been able to gauge, has been ignored in the secondary literature – Baer suggests that in these times, as Jews are fighting to reconstitute their state, it would be advisable to take heed of the lessons taught by Greek political thought, especially in three dialogues by Plato: *Gorgias, Phaedo,* and *The Republic*. What Baer finds especially useful in these three dialogues is, perhaps surprisingly, an explanation of the relationship between politics and "the judgements on the soul" (*diney ne'shama*), that is, the afterlife. Baer vacillates in this essay between interpretations of the Platonic dialogues and interpretations of rabbinic texts; throughout the text, however, his intention is clear: the reconstitution of the laws regarding the transmigration of the soul is of the utmost urgency for the creation of a moral Jewish

[93] Yitzhak Baer, *"erkha ha-hinuchi shel ha-historiya ha-yi'sra'elit*," reprinted in idem., *Studies in the History of the Jewish People*, Vol. I, p. 21.

[94] Yitzhak Baer, "*Bin'yan ha-bay'it u-yom ha-din," Davar,* Oct. 3, 1949, p. 3; 15; found online at http://jpress.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI_heb/sharedpages/SharedView.Page.aspx?sk=9C0E298C&href=DAV%2F1948%2F10%2F03&page=3 (accessed last on Jan. 14th, 2020, 20:25 CST).

society. Baer seems to hope that by reading Plato, modern Jews would become inspired to look again to their own sources and re-adopt parts of the metaphysical worldview developed by the sages of yore. This would be a message that he also hoped to convey in *Israel Among the Nations*.

The Turn to the Second Commonwealth Period

As could be expected, Baer's change of scholarly focus had come about partially as a result of broader geopolitical changes. Baer had originally turned to the study of medieval Europe at a time when the majority of Jews lived in Europe under conditions of exile. In the aftermath of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, as the center of Jewish life moved from the European Diaspora to the Land of Israel, it was perhaps only fitting that he would also turn his attention to a period of national autonomy in the Jews' ancient homeland.[95]

His reorientation in many ways was also consistent with more established trends in Zionist ideology and historiography. Since the early days of the national revival movement in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, Zionists and other Jewish modernizers saw Antiquity as the nation's Golden Age; an era in which the Hebrew nation was firmly rooted in its own land, cultivating its own soil, speaking its own language, and filled with a proud, healthy, national spirit and devotion to freedom – in short, an exact counterimage to the general impression of contemporary, "Exilic" Judaism: servile, weak, and subjugated to others.[96] To many, the spirit of Antiquity was perhaps best encapsulated in the books and stories of the Hebrew Bible – the First Commonwealth Period – in the conquests of Joshua, Saul, and David, and in the tragic heroism of the Judges and even some of the Prophets.[97] To a great

[95] David Myers makes a similar claim in *Re-Inventing,* p. 125.
[96] Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots,* pp. 22-3, ff.
[97] For succinct and nonetheless comprehensive views on the Bible's role in shaping Israeli identity – and in English – see the articles by Anita Shapira, "The Bible and Israeli Identity," *AJS Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Apr., 2004), pp. 11-41; and "Ben-

many others, however – and without necessarily denying the Bible its hallowed place – the Jews' true Golden Age had been the Second Commonwealth Period, especially during episodes of emphatic "nationalism" such as the Maccabean war against the Seleucid Greeks, the period of sovereignty under the Hasmonaean dynasty, the valiant but ultimately calamitous stand against the Romans by the zealots of Masada, and the Bar-Kochba Rebellion.[98] The heroes of these episodes became role models for the early Zionist pioneers, and a source of inspiration for poets and national leaders. In 1912, for example, Ya'akov Zerubavel, one of the leaders of the Second Aliyah and Labor Zionism, wrote that "the Zealots and the weapon-bearers of Bar-Kochba were the last active fighters for national independence and […] free labor in the Land of Israel. Their grandchildren, the Hebrew workers, are the foremost fighters for Jewish independence, a life of labor and creativity in the Land of Israel, the restoration of a national melody."[99]

Baer's reorientation, however, also coincided with something of a revival of interest in the Second Commonwealth Period in the Israeli public sphere following the establishment of the state in 1948. Between 1949 and 1952, the historian Joseph Klausner, Baer's colleague at the Institute for Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University, who had long been preoccupied with this period, published the five-volume study *History of the Second Commonwealth*.[100] Klausner at the time was an esteemed public intellectual, and was even nominated to the ceremonial position of President of the State by the Herut party in 1949. In 1954, he published yet another collection of writings on the period, *In the Days of the*

Gurion and the Bible: The Forging of an Historical Narrative?," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Oct., 1997), pp. 645-674. See also the relevant chapters in Yaacov Shavit and Mordechai Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn: from Holy Scripture to the Book of Books: a History of Biblical Culture and the Battles over the Bible in Modern Judaism*, tr. Chaya Naor, (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

[98] See, *inter alia,* Yael Zerubavel, ibid., p. 23, ff; Ehud Luz, *Wrestling with an Angel*, p. 106, ff.

[99] Quoted in Yosef Gorny, "The Romantic Element in the Second Aliyya" (Hebrew), *Asupot* 10 (1996), pp. 55–74, p. 59.

[100] Usually translated as: Joseph Klausner, *History of the Second Temple* (*Historiyah shel ha-Bayit ha-Sheni*), 5 Vols., (Jerusalem: Ahiasaf, 1949-51).

Second Commonwealth.[101] That same year, the novelist Moshe Shamir, at the time one of Israel's most preeminent writers, published his epic historical novel *King of Flesh and Blood* (*melech basar ve-dam*), which focused on the controversial Hasmonaean king Alexander Jannaeus.[102] Shamir's book arguably marked the beginning of a new, more critical attitude in the Israeli mind towards the Hasmonean monarchy – and by extension, the period as a whole – yet it is undeniable that by making Jannaeus the protagonist of a contemporary work of fiction, Shamir made this period "come alive" for a new generation of readers. Baer's work stood out from that of other authors, historical and contemporary, however, in at least one important aspect: others tended to focus on the role of institutions and individuals such as the monarchy, the Temple, the Maccabees, and so forth. By focusing on the pietist-sages, however, Baer's work had a more "democratic" character, consistent with his social views.[103]

The Foundations of True Community

In many ways, in *Israel Among the Nations* Baer would return and develop many of the themes he first raised in his other works. At the same time, there were also some significant differences in the opinions he expressed in this late work regarding certain aspects of Jewish society. Most notably, over the years he seems to have changed his mind regarding what we may call the insularity of pietist-sage society. In his earlier works, it was important to Baer to proclaim the essentially anti-Western character

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[101] Ibid., *In the Days of the Second Commonwealth* (*Bi-yemey Bayit Sheni*), (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1954). For a helpful summary of Klausner's views on this period and their relation to Zionism, see David Berger, "Maccabees, Zealots and Josephus: The Impact of Zionism on Joseph Klausner's History of the Second Temple," in idem., *Cultures in Collision and Conversation: Essays in the Intellectual History of the Jews*, (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011), pp. 312-25.

[102] The novel was published in English translation as Moshe Shamir, *King of Flesh and Blood,* tr. David Patterson, (New York: Vanguard Press, 1958). For more on the academic view of the Second Commonwealth Period in modern Israel, see Rabbi Samuel Schafler, "The Hasmonaeans in Jewish Historiography" (PhD Dissertation, Jewish Theological Seminary, 1973), pp. 162-229 (incl. endnotes). Schafler writes on Baer on pp. 170-173.

[103] It should be noted that Klausner also gave same attention to the Jewish *hassidim* and their lifestyle (see Berger, ibid., p. 320, for relevant references). The difference, however, lies in the general emphasis and direction of the work. (Myers also points to differences between Baer and Klausner, but does not develop this point; *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, p. 126).

of pietist-sage beliefs. Thus, in the Introduction to *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, he notes that the teachings of the pietist-sages bore the character of "a mythic, monotheistic folk religion," consisting of "national folk concepts, remote from Western ways of thinking" (HJCS, I, p. 7). In later works, from the late 1940's and early '50's onwards, he became more conciliatory, depicting the pietist-sages as a product of the encounter between the Jewish prophetic tradition and Hellenistic culture. The pietist-sage, he thus maintains in *Israel Among the Nations*, was heir on the one hand to the Suffering Servant who "hath poured out his soul unto death" for the sake of God's glory (Isaiah 53:12), and to Socrates, Plato, Diogenes the Cynic, and Pythagoras, on the other (IAN, p. 37). Baer even finds close resemblances between the pietist-sages and the Stoic masters of the time, positing that there may have been some cross-influences, since both groups (as well as the Cynics) adhered to principles of living "according to the laws of nature," giving up the "pleasures of external culture," and propagating these moral values in society. Both groups also emphasized the need for constant self-education, "striving for moral progress on a daily basis" (IAN, p. 37-8). The pietist-sages were also greatly influenced by Platonic political philosophy, especially at the time of the establishment of the Hasmonean state. They were fascinated with "the ideals of [founding] an exemplary state and society, of equality and liberty, as these were perceived to have existed, in the minds of those generations, in the Spartan *polis*," and sought to adapt these to their own special circumstances (IAN, p. 39; 48).

Over the years, Baer also seems to have changed his mind about the *origins* of the pietist-sages' way of life. In *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, Baer suggests that the original pietist-sages developed from the Pharisees (HJCS, I, p. 7). By the time he wrote *Israel Among the Nations,* however, he claimed that the earliest example of the pietist-sage lifestyle was to be found, rather, among the Essenes. Relying heavily on Josephus' description of their practices, Baer writes that the Essenes lived outside the cities – and often far away from them – because they wanted to get away from moral

corruption. They abstained from commerce, refrained from setting out to sea, and lived primarily as artisans and tillers of the soil (IAN, p. 43). Most of them, like some of Pythagoras' students, completely avoided wine, and some of them even practiced sexual abstinence and physical seclusion (IAN, p. 45). Every morning, the Essenes would pray before going to work in the fields. They would also eat together in silence, perhaps as a form of protest against the lavish Greek banquets and *symposia,* in a dining hall which they considered holy (IAN, p. 46). They were also the ones, Baer adds, to begin the practice of communal prayer in the synagogues, listening to the reading of the Torah together, in accordance with the statutes set up by Ezra the Scribe (IAN, p. 52).

Despite the "evolution" of his thought, however, in *Israel Among the Nations* Baer continued to maintain that an unbridgeable gulf existed between Jewish faith and what he casted as Western "rationalism." Although he came to highly respect certain aspects of Greek and Roman thought, he did not cease to believe that rationalism may potentially lead to the vices of individualism, epicureanism, and apostasy, which were not only opposed in spirit and in practice to the pietist-sages' doctrines of community and holiness, but also harmful to the very makeup of Jewish society. As such, throughout the text he went to great lengths to show the differences between the pietist-sages and philosophic rationalists of Greece and Rome. According to Baer, the pietist-sages were individuals of the *pneuma* – of the spirit – living and acting out of divine inspiration rather than reason (IAN, p. 39). Their models were the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – who were considered the archetypes for the pietist-sage way of life. The Patriarchs' true dwelling place, according to pietist beliefs, was in the heavens, in the-world-above (*olam shel mala*), but they were sent to the-world-below (*olam shel mata*) by God to instruct in His true ways (IAN, p. 92). Similarly, the Nation of Israel was sent to serve as divine emissaries from the-world-above "to establish a true community [*hevrat emet*]" (IAN, p. 110).

Agrarianism, according to Baer, was not considered something external to the life of pietism, but an integral part of it. It was through agrarian work that the pietists believed that they were living a life in accordance with God's will. Their agrarianism also attested to their devotion to the land, and during the time of the Maccabean Rebellion and the establishment of the Hasmonaean Kingdom, would serve a critical part in reclaiming Jewish independence and sovereignty. At the time of the Rebellion, he writes, "the agrarian population appeared on the historical stage as an active element [*gorem pa'il*], defending the nation's freedom and its spiritual values in its war against external enemies." In the face of foreign occupation, they were the ones to renew the "ancestral tradition" through their teachings about "the ascent of the soul, and the laws of purity and holiness" (IAN, p. 56).

Baer returned in *Israel Among the Nations* to the dichotomy between the lower and upper classes he employed already in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, asserting that these "pietist farmers" were the ones to lay the foundations to one of this period's crowning achievements: the codification of Jewish law in the Mishna, and not, as commonly believed, "scribes," "aristocrats who sit in their houses of study far away from the fields" (IAN, p. 56). According to Baer, the pietist-sages did not even conceive of codifying the various oral laws until they felt that "their creative powers were dwindling" and political circumstances left them no choice (IAN, p. 24). This was especially the case after 63 BCE, the year of Pompey's march into Jerusalem, when "political freedom increasingly narrowed" (IAN, p. 99). The pietists then felt that their way of life was under threat and began writing down their laws for posterity's sake. The Mishna, therefore, should in Baer's view be seen as a "collection of sacral principles [*halachot*] from past generations" rather than a "code of positive laws," and as a source of learning about this period's social and religious ideals (IAN, p. 109).[104] Despite his

[104] Baer also makes this argument in his English-language article "Social Ideals of the Second Jewish Commonwealth: the Mishnah as an historical record of social and religious life during the Second Commonwealth*," Journal of World History*, Vol. 11, Is. 1/2 (1968), pp. 69-91. This article is highly recommended as an abridged version of some of the ideas discussed in *Israel Among the Nations*.

deep admiration for the Mishna, however, I do not believe that Baer ever intended for the Mishna to serve as the basis for modern Israeli law.[105] Baer was always more attracted to the 'mystical', 'spontaneous' side of Judaism rather than its 'legalism'; and although he believed that both "the mythological and the rational elements of the tradition [molded] the character of the people" (HJCS, I, p. 25), he generally seems to have believe that codes of law should *reflect* social realities rather than constitute them. As such, it seems likely that he believed that the pietist-sages should inspire modern Israelis through example, not through legislation.

In one respect, Baer seems to have presaged what the French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, in books such as *The Peasants of Languedoc* (1966) and others, called '*l'histoire immobile*': that as long as the basic socio-political-economic structure had remained the same, it could be contended that very little had 'happened' on the plain of history.[106] According to Baer, as long as the general practices and ways of life of the pietist-sages remained the same, the Second Commonwealth Period should be considered as one unified whole. As such, he placed the historical boundaries of this period – at least in *Israel Among the Nations* – between the very distant conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th Century BCE on the one hand, and the Arab conquest of the Land of Israel in the 7th Century CE on the other (IAN, p. 19) – a timeframe of roughly one thousand years. The Arabs, according to Baer, destroyed the way of life that had survived previous assaults by the Greeks and the Romans, and fundamentally transformed Jewish existence in terms of politics, economics, and religion; the central, worldwide Jewish authority, which until then rested undisputedly with the communities of the Land of Israel, was then transferred to the hands of the sages of Baghdad, the *ge'onim* (ibid).

[105] Already in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, Baer wrote that "the Mishna was meant to serve only as an interim code whose laws were to be given authoritative interpretation only in the Messianic Age" (HJCS, I, 10).
[106] See, *inter alia*, his survey in Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, "L'histoire immobile," *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (1974), pp. 673-692.

This periodization presented in *Israel Among the Nations* was somewhat of a departure from Baer's previous schematization of Jewish history. Throughout his career, Baer divided Jewish history into four periods, more or less according to the model proposed by Graetz: the biblical and post-biblical period; the Second Temple period; the Middle Ages; and Modernity.[107] In his various publications, however, Baer was somewhat inconsistent as to the exact beginning- and endpoints of each era. Thus, in the 1947 Epilogue to the English translation of *Galut*, for example, Baer maintained that "the second age of our history," meaning the Second Commonwealth Period, "lasted from the days of the Maccabees to the completion of the Mishnah [2nd Century BCE – ~3rd Century CE]" (Galut, p. 121). And in *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain,* the Second Commonwealth Period began with Ezra's Restoration (HJCS, I, p. 5), and seems to have ended with the separation of Judaism and Christianity into two separate religions (HJCS, I, p. 14, ff).

In an essay on Baer's periodization, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin claims that Baer was not inconsistent, but rather, held a "complex historical approach," whereby in different texts he would choose different sets of dates in order to examine the Jewish past through different "prisms"[108]. Perhaps. Be that as it may, however, it is important to note that when we compare Baer's periodization in the English Epilogue to *Galut* with his periodization in *Israel Among the Nations*, we note that in the earlier account, written before the establishment of the State of Israel, he chose to emphasize "active" events like the Maccabean rebellion and the composition of the Mishnah, whereas in the latter, written several years after the declaration of independence, he emphasized the "passivity" of the Jews, being conquered first by Alexander and then by the Arabs. This difference, perhaps counterintuitive, seems to me to be no small matter, and may suggest the adoption of a somewhat more critical attitude

[107] See, e.g., his programmatic essay "The Structure of Jewish History," in idem., *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, ed. Ismar Schorsch, (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1975), pp. 63-124.
[108] Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Between Exile and the Middle Ages," *Da'at: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah*, Vol. 86 (2018), pp. 47-64, p. 57.

towards Zionism, or at least in his understanding of the Jewish condition post-independence. And while I do not suspect that Baer was "disappointed" with Zionism – in the way, for example, that Scholem was – he may have nonetheless thought that the historical pendulum had swung too radically from the side of "faith in a higher power" to "faith in ourselves alone," and sought perhaps to try sway it back in the other direction, if ever so slightly and modestly.

Israel Among the Nations and Israel in the Nineteen-Fifties

When *Israel Among the Nations* was published, it enjoyed some degree of success among broader audiences. In 1956, for example, the City of Jerusalem bestowed upon him the David Yellin Prize for this book, a year or so before he was awarded the Israel Prize.[109] In addition, the historian and Zionist activist Pinchas Rosenblüth also published a generally favorable assessment of the work in *Moznaim*, the important literary journal of the Israeli Hebrew Writers Association.[110] Overall, however, *Israel Among the Nations* – as well as most of Baer's writings on the Second Commonwealth Period – were severely criticized by the academic community. Jacob Fleischmann, to begin with, challenged Baer on historiosophical grounds, objecting to Baer's attempt to find an "essence" to Judaism as well as the latter's frequent use of terms which, Fleischmann contended – and not without reason – were borrowed directly from German romantics such as Schelling and Fichte, notably "trajectories" (*megamot*), "mythical experience" (*havaya mit'it*), and "the soul of the nation" (*nefesh ha'umah*).[111]

[109] *Davar,* Feb. 24, 1956. Available online at: http://jpress.org.il/olive/apa/nli_heb/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=DAV/1956/02/24&id=Ar01006 (Accessed: May 5, 2020).
[110] Pinchas Rosenblüth, "A New Approach to Jewish History: Following Yitzhak Baer's Book 'Israel Among the Nations'," *Moznaim,* Vol. 25, Issue 146 (March 1956), pp. 369-374. Rosenblüth somewhat mitigated his enthusiasm in the later article, cited above, "Yitzhak Baer: A Reappraisal of Jewish History."
[111] Jacob Fleischman, "On the Problem of Objectivity in Jewish Historiography" (Hebrew), *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly,* Vol. 9 (1958), pp. 102-110.

Meanwhile, Baer's former student, the scholar of rabbinic Judaism Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, challenged him on historical grounds, suggesting that Baer excluded evidence that did not fit with his conclusions.[112] And Ephraim Shmueli, an essayist and translator, accused Baer of lacking true historical perspective.[113]

From the standpoint of pure, "objective" history, these critics may arguably have been correct in their assessments. Nonetheless, they all seem to have failed to appreciate the value of *Israel Among the Nations* as a work of social commentary, especially when considered against the context of its times. Thus, in reading *Israel Among the Nations*, one cannot help but notice that many of the tendencies and ways of life that Baer attributes to the pietist-sages were ones that were commonly practiced – or at least venerated – by Labor Zionism, especially in the Kibbutzim; for example, asceticism, which in the kibbutz movement carried great ethical and spiritual value.[114] Further, upon closer scrutiny we continue to see that Baer's portrayal of the social structure of the pietist-sages bears an uncanny resemblance to life in the pre-independence *Yishuv*, when a network of agrarian communities like the *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* established themselves throughout the land.[115] These *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* were largely self-governing, enjoying a high degree of autonomy, while at the same time saw themselves as a kind of vanguard, leading the way for the rest of the nation. In these communities, a new world of spiritual values and practices was also created, integrating traditional Jewish beliefs with contemporary notions of socialism, ascetic living, and rootedness in the soil. Religious holidays such

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[112] Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, "Ascesis and Suffering in Talmudic and Midrashic Sources," in *Yitzhak F. Baer Jubilee Volume*, ed. by Shmuel Ettinger, Salo Baron, and Ben Zion Dinur, (Jerusalem: the Israel Historical Society, 1960), pp. 48-68; and idem., "The Second Temple and Mishnaic Period According to Yitzhak Baer," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1984), pp. 59-82.

[113] Ephraim Shmueli, "Policy-Culture in Israel and Historical Perspectivism" (Hebrew), *Moznaim,* Vol. 47, No. 2 (July 1978), pp. 83-93.

[114] See, e.g., Eliezer Don- Yehiya and Charles S. Liebman, "The Symbol System of Zionist-Socialism: An Aspect of Israeli Civil Religion," *Modern Judaism,* Vol. 1, No. 2 (September 1981), pp. 121-148, p. 124.

[115] It should also be noted that Baer's views here are reminiscent of those of Otto von Gierke, who saw in the state "a complex organism of autonomous corporate bodies (*Genossenschaften*)." See Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, pp. 132-3. Cf. Sobei Mogi, *Otto von Gierke: His Political Teaching and Jurisprudence,* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1932).

as Passover or Shavuot, for example, traditionally commemorating God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and the giving of the Torah at Sinai, respectively, were reorganized to celebrate the Jews' reclaiming mastery over their own fate, and their bond with the Land of Israel.[116]

Baer even seems to direct our attention from the past to the present when, in the section on the pietist-sages' agrarian lifestyle, he states that that the agrarian population had risen during the Rebellion for the first time as an "active element" on the stage of history. The idea of being "active" in history, as opposed to the perceived "passivity" of the Jews in the Diaspora, was a key component of Zionist thought, and particularly among Labor Zionists. In addition, the idea of "returning to history," resuming the "historical life" of the nation, was also a key element of Zionist thought. These two common phrases were so widespread that it seems unlikely that Baer used them thoughtlessly. At this point then we have to pause, and consider what Baer hoped to achieve with this book in terms of its immediate context. Was *Israel Among the Nations* a mere paean to the form of life that had existed until but a few years earlier, or was there another purpose in his writing?

Some possible answers may begin to emerge if we look more carefully at the "anarchistic" character of the work. Now, as we discussed, Baer had already explored themes of religious anarchism in some of his previous works. To that we may add that in the late '30's, he also penned an important essay on Abrabanel – perhaps the original Jewish anarchist 'theocrat'![117] That he would return to these themes in the aftermath of the declaration of the state, however, seems to have something to do with the development of Labor Zionism after the declaration of the state. On the surface, not much has changed since the pre-state days. The *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* still existed, they still practiced many of

[116] For more on the "religious" world of Labor Zionism, see Anita Shapira, "The Religious Motifs of the Labor Movement," in Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (eds.), *Zionism and Religion*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), pp. 301-327. See also the other papers in this collection.
[117] Baer, "Don Isaac Abravanel and his Relation to Problems of History and Politics," *Tarbiz*, Vol. 8 (1937), pp. 241-59. See also the aforementioned essays on Ashkenazi Pietism.

their special rituals, and were still considered by the majority of the population to be the vanguard of the nation. Moreover, the largest party associated with Labor Zionism, *Mapai*, dominated the political arena under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion. At the same time, however, Labor Zionism began shifting its ideological emphasis, from the voluntarism of the pre-independence era to what Ben-Gurion referred to as *mamlachtiy'ut* (literally: statehood-ness), the transference of authority from the local community level to the organs of the state and the central government, as well as the attribution of certain virtuous qualities to the state itself.[118]

Seen in this light therefore, *Israel Among the Nations* seems to emerge also as a most remarkable case of cultural criticism against a movement which in some ways *has betrayed its original ideals*. Here then, as in his other works, Baer intervenes in some of the most important debates of the Zionist Movement, attempting to show, as always, that history could serve as a model for the present. At the same time, by reiterating themes which he had also written about in his previous works, he tried to show that the dynamics of Jewish existence have ultimately remained the same for two millennia.

[118] The word *mamlachtiy'ut* itself seems to have been a translation into Hebrew of the Russian word *gosudarstvo* (государство), which means "state" or "kingdom," or "of the state" and "of the kingdom." The literature on this concept as it was used in Ben-Gurion's Israel in the 1950s is vast, but see, *inter alia*, Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Political Religion in a New State: Ben-Gurion's *Mamlachtiyut*," in *Israel: The First Decade of Independence*, edited by Ilan Troen and Noah Lucas, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 171-192; and Nir Kedar's important study, *Mamlakhtiyut: David Ben-Gurion's Civic Thought* (Hebrew), (Sede Boqer and Jerusalem: Ben-Gurion University Press and Yad Ben-Zvi, 2009).

Chapter II:

Gershom Scholem: The Jew as Anti-Bourgeois

Introduction

In many respects, Gershom Scholem (1897-1982) grappled his entire life to fashion a 'New Jew': himself. Rebelling against the bourgeois norms and lifestyle of his parents and their milieu in late Wilhelmine Berlin, Scholem adopted already at an early age a contrarian position which led him first to the recovery of his own Jewish identity through the immersion in ancient texts and languages, then to Zionism, the decision to dedicate himself to the study of Jewish mysticism, leave Germany, settle in the Land of Israel, and eventually become one of the most famous scholars of the twentieth century, not only in Jewish Studies, but in general. As such, his most important ideological writing on the meaning and nature of Zionism may therefore be his memoir, *From Berlin to Jerusalem* (1977/82 [hereafter: FBTJ]), which depicts his family history, the early seeds of his rebellion, his journey of intellectual discovery, and finally, the story of his arrival and settlement in the Land of Israel, where in 1925 he secured the position of the first ever Professor of Jewish Mysticism at the recently-established Hebrew University.[1] The plotline of the memoir could even be said to follow an anti-bourgeois trajectory, *away* from the world of his parents and *towards* the fulfillment of his own personal destiny. The Hebrew version of the memoir in particular takes on some of the characteristics of an anti-

[1] The German original was published in 1977: *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem: Jugenderinnerungen,* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977). A revised Hebrew edition was published in 1982: *mi-berlin le-yerushalayim: zikhronot ne'urim*, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1982). All references to this text in this chapter will be to the English edition, based on the German: *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth,* (New York: Schocken Books, 1980), with emendations from the Hebrew, as necessary.

bourgeois *Bildungsroman*, as when he writes, for example, in the conclusion, after he: "And thus began the days of my adult life [*yamei bagruti*]" (FBTJ, p. 174 [translation amended]).[2]

Scholem's diaries and *Nachlass,* published in the decades since his death, reveal the extent of his alienation from the bourgeois environment of his parents. At times, we even find evidence that his bourgeois upbringing and mannerisms were something of a source of personal embarrassment. "*I'm such a fraud in this place that it puts me to shame*. And I'm too smug and bourgeois to spit in these people's faces and leave" (italics in original), he wrote in a diary entry dated May 19, 1917.[3] "I'm no psychopath, I'm just bourgeois," he wrote a few months later.[4] Scholem's primary critique of bourgeois society seems to have been above all its essential inauthenticity. In a diary entry from July 23, 1916, he wrote, "What I've always experienced as particularly monstrous about these people is their universal hypocrisy towards one another."[5] A key theme that guided his early forays into the worlds of both Judaism and Zionism was that of *honesty*. On his early fascination with ancient Jewish texts, for example, he writes in his memoir: "[There] were [several] things that particularly impressed me [in the Talmud]. One was the honesty with which traditions are preserved there that later editors might have censored, an honesty that occasionally staggers the reader. The utter naturalness with which all aspects of life were dealt with fascinated me" (FBTJ, p. 49). On his decision to become a Zionist, he remarked in one of his late interviews: "The [Zionist] revolt in instances like mine was against self-deceit. A person living in a liberal-Jewish, German-assimilationist environment had the feeling that those people were devoting their entire lives to self-delusion. […] the Zionist choice was a moral decision, an emotional one, an honesty-seeking response. […]. [On the surface,] Jewish reality seemed alive,

[2] In the English, it reads "Thus began my academic career."
[3]Gershom Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth: The Diaries of Gershom Scholem, 1913-1919*, ed. Anthony David, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 171.
[4] *Lamentations of Youth,* p. 180 (entry from September 2, 1917).
[5] *Lamentations of Youth,* p. 120.

flourishing, but those who went over to Zionism saw that reality as rotten" ("With Gershom Scholem,"[6] 1974 [hereafter: WGS], p. 2; cf. FBTJ, pp. 150-1).

Scholem was part of a generation of young Germans which in many ways was defined by its rebellion against the bourgeois legacy of the nineteenth century. For this generation, consisting primarily of the men who came of age and fought in the First World War, there was something essentially unreal about the very idea of a rational, ordered universe. Like in the novels of Dostoyevsky, Scholem and his generation felt that underneath the veneer of bourgeois respectability, there lurked another, truer, primordial reality, to whose call they must heed. Unlike their parents, for whom bourgeois success seemed synonymous with the good life, these young Germans came to associate the bourgeois world with decadence, decline, *anomie*, and alienation. The revolt against, and even the destruction of the bourgeois world increasingly came to be seen as the first and most essential step on the path towards the spiritual regeneration of the nation, if not the West as a whole[7]. This was one of the reasons why so many young men, especially those with artistic and intellectual inclinations, saw the coming of the First World War as an opportunity to tear asunder the falsities of bourgeois existence. The right-wing writer Ernst Jünger (1895-1998) – a classmate of Scholem's older brother, Werner (1895-1940; cf. FBTJ, p. 40) – who attained national fame through his memoir of the Western Front, *The Storm of Steel* (*In Stahlgewittern*; 1920), expressed the anti-bourgeois sentiment with his characteristic poignancy in the socio-political tract *The Worker* (1932):

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[6] "With Gershom Scholem," in Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays,* ed. Werner J. Dannhauser, (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), pp. 1-48.

[7] See Fritz Ringer's classic study *The Decline of the German Mandarins. The German Academic Community*, 1890–1933 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969). The following essay also helped me greatly to elucidate my thinking on this subject: Matthew Feldman, "Between *Geist* and *Zeitgeist*: Martin Heidegger as Ideologue of 'Metapolitical Fascism'," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions,* Vol. 6, No. 2 (September 2005), pp. 175-198. On the theme of decadence and decline and its relation to the influence of Nietzsche in Germany, see the relevant chapters in Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890 – 1990*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

> No, the German was not a good bourgeois, least of all where he was at his strongest. Wherever thought was deepest and boldest, wherever feeling was most alive, wherever the fight was most relentless, the revolt against the values emblazoned on its shield by reason's great declaration of independence is unmistakable. […]; and the mistrust of a world that was the cradle of the bourgeois ethos was all the more justified because time and again a more primal language sought to make itself heard, whose dangerous and distinctive meaning lay beyond doubt.[8]

Scholem seems to have been motivated by similar feelings, pouring his anti-bourgeois ire into his Zionism. Adapting the German discourse of regeneration (*Erneuerung*: renewal, recreation) to the realities of Jewish national revival, he wrote, for example, in a diary entry from January 20, 1915: "Our guiding principle is revolution! Revolution everywhere! We don't want reform or reeducation but revolution or renewal. We desire to absorb revolution into our innermost souls. There are external and internal revolutions, the former mainly aimed at family and home. […]. We should be revolutionaries and always and everywhere say who we are, what we are, and what we want. […]. Above all, we want to revolutionize Judaism. We want to revolutionize Zionism and to preach anarchism and freedom from all authority. […]. We wish to rip away the formalistic façade from Zionism."[9]

After making *aliyah* in 1923, anti-bourgeois sentiments continued to inform his politics. Scholem arrived in Israel as part of the Third Aliyah (1919-23), known for its revolutionary, anti-

[8] Ernst Jünger, *The Worker: Dominion and Form,* tr. Bodgdan Costea and Laurence Paul Hemming, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017), pp. 5-6. This line of argument runs through many of Jünger's important works from the 1920's and '30's. For a good review of this theme in Jünger's corpus, see David Ohana, "Nietzsche and the Fascist Dimension: The Case of Ernst Jünger," in *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy*, ed. Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 263-290.
[9] *Lamentations of Youth,* pp. 47-8.

bourgeois temperament.[10] In this, he was somewhat unique among his colleagues at the Hebrew University, who mostly arrived later, during the Fourth and Fifth Aliyot (1924-28 and 1929-39), which consisted primarily of middle-class Jews from Germany, Poland, and other parts of Central Europe, fleeing anti-Semitism and economic hardship. Throughout his life, Scholem seemed to harbor deep feelings of resentment for those later immigrants, who from his perspective, changed the nature of the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel and turned the Zionist Movement in a markedly pro-bourgeois direction. Already in a letter from 1925 to his friend and later colleague Ernst Simon (1900-1988), who at the time was still living in Germany, Scholem bemoaned the arrival of large numbers of lower middle-class Jews from Poland, fearing their effect on the Zionist enterprise: "I consider it God's just punishment for the misuse of the *halutz* that the most conniving sharks and the seven streams of hell now pour in upon us from Lodz."[11] In one of his late interviews, he seemingly takes aim again at those later immigrants: "For me, immigrating to this country was a question of both personal and general resolution. That is why I immigrated to Palestine back in the twenties, before Hitler and prior to the economic problem. I immigrated not because I was unable to cope in Germany but because I had decided that my place is here […]."[12] Those who arrived after 1933, he said elsewhere, "did not have the same idealistic convictions as those who had come before and they came because they had no choice. These were a different type of people; they did not come to create a new

[10] For more on the characteristics of the Third Aliyah, see Anita Shapira, "Uri Zvi Greenberg – Apocalypse Now" (Hebrew), in idem., New Jews, Old Jews, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), pp. 192-216; Yael Weiler, "The Fascinating World of 'Hashomer Hatzair'" (Hebrew), *Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv*, no. 88 (1998), pp. 73–94; Hizky Shoham, "From the Third Aliya to the Second, and Back: On the Creation of the Periodization of the Numbered Immigrations (Aliyot)" (Hebrew), *Zion,* Vol. 67, No. 2 (2012), pp. 189-222.

[11] Gershom Scholem, *A Life in Letters, 1914-1982*, tr. Anthony David Skinner, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 145-6. This letter is also quoted by Amir Engel in *Gershom Scholem: An Intellectual Biography,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), p. 112. It should be noted, however, that Engel mistakenly saw Lodz as "something of a derogatory term referring to Jews of Eastern European Origin or *Ostjuden*" (p. 112n42). But anyone familiar with pre-WWII geography would know that Lodz was known in the first half of the twentieth century as an industrial center. Further, Poland was part of Central, not Eastern Europe as it was following the beginning of the Cold War. It is thus clear that Scholem's remark refers to the middle-class nature of the immigrants.

[12] "Zionism – Dialectic of Continuity and Rebellion," in Ehud Ben Ezer, *Unease in Zion*, (New York: Quadrangle, 1974 [hereafter: "Conversation with Ben Ezer"], pp. 263-96, p. 266.

Jewish society, but just to live in Israel because there was no other place for them to go."[13] Upon his death, Scholem even had the following inscribed on his tombstone: "Man of the Third Aliyah / Creator of the Study of Kabbalah," most probably to avoid being mistaken for the wrong demographic.

Politically, Scholem maintained a lifelong antipathy towards the idea of the nation state, which in early twentieth century Germany many associated with middle-class philistinism. In his Zionism, this manifested primarily in his rejection of the Political Zionism of Herzl and Nordau, as well as all forms of Zionism that saw in the creation of a nation state the purpose and ultimate goal of the Jewish revival movement. In his diary, he wrote: "We reject [Herzl]. He's to *blame* for today's Zionism – a movement that instead of going forward looks backwards, an organization of shopkeepers that grovels in the dust before the powerful! […]. It has taken up the Jewish problem merely as a form instead of in its inner essence. Its only thought has been the Jewish *state*. We preachers of anarchism reject this. We don't want a state. We want a free society, and Herzl's *Old-New Land* [Herzl's imaginative depiction of his envisioned Jewish state] hasn't a thing to do with this!" [italics in original].[14] Converted at an early age to the Cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'am, almost as soon as he arrived in Israel, Scholem allied himself with the more revolutionary wings of "Practical" and Labor Zionism, against middle-class and urban interests. As he himself recounted in another of the extended interviews he held late in life: "My inclinations were toward the *halutzim* [pioneers] and the innovators and those striving for regeneration. Bourgeois matters did not concern me, as far as I can remember" (WGS, pp. 24-5 [translation amended]). To a certain extent, his anti-bourgeois views also played a role in his early and lasting disdain for Revisionist Zionism, which in the '20s and '30s actively sought to position itself as the

[13] David Biale and Gershom Scholem, "The Threat of Messianism: An Interview with Gershom Scholem," *New York Review of Books,* Vol. 27 (August 14, 1980), p. 22.
[14] *Lamentations of Youth,* pp. 47-8.

party of the Zionist bourgeoisie.[15] For example, he often referred to the historian, and later colleague Joseph Klausner (1874-1958), who was associated with the Revisionist Party although he was never officially a member – and, to be sure, with whom Scholem had numerous other disagreements – as having a "petty bourgeois attitude" (*Kleinbürgerlichkeit*).[16]

Throughout his career, Scholem also frequently used the word "bourgeois" as a metonymy for anything he considered inauthentic, undesirable, and generally un-Jewish. Already in one of his very first scholarly articles, "Lyrik der Kabbalah?" (1921), Scholem declared Jewish history to be an "un-bourgeois, explosive thing of malice, vice and wholesomeness" ("ein unbürgerliches, sprengendes Ding aus Bosheit, Lastern und Vollendung").[17] In an essay on the 1930 edition of Franz Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* (1920), he writes that "the theory of catastrophes contained in Messianic apocalypticism" is the point of contention between the only two "modes of life" which he mentions in this context: "theocratic and bourgeois."[18] In his famous critique of the nineteenth century founders of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, "The Science of Judaism – Then and Now" (1959/60), he contrasts the "un-bourgeois [unbürgerlich]" and "amazingly full of life" spirit of ancient Hebrew poetry with the peculiar "sentimentalism" of the translations produced by the latter-day German scholars.[19] And in a speech in Hebrew on "Our Historical Debt to Russian Jewry" (1971), he described approvingly the Mussar Movement as "radical," "acting under strong ethical inspiration and equally strong anti-

[15] See, e.g., Daniel Kupfert-Heller, *Jabotinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism,* (Oxford and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 60-1.

[16] See, e.g., a letter from the end of 1924, quoted in Daniel Weidner, *Gershom Scholem: politisches, esoterisches und historiographisches Schreiben,* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003), pp. 105-6, ff; appears also in English translation in Engel, *Gershom Scholem,* p. 111, 119.

[17] "Lyrik der Kabbala?," *Der Jude*, Vol. VI (1921-1922), Issue 1, pp. 55-69, p. 55 [my translation]. Online: http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/cm/periodical/titleinfo/3106368 (accessed: June 3, 2020).

[18] "On the 1930 Edition of Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 320-324, p. 323.

[19] "The Science of Judaism – Then and Now," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism,* pp. 304-313, pp. 308-9.

bourgeois tendencies (*megamot anti-bürganiyot hazakot*)."[20] In several places, Scholem also admits that the rejection of bourgeois ideals formed a central part of his critique of the *Wissenschaft* practitioners. In one of the aforementioned interviews, Scholem notes that their "petit bourgeois [view] of Judaism consisted in its ignoring the paradoxes contained in the living realities of Judaism, of the Jews in the world, of the Jewish reality in history, of the ideas themselves, and in reducing it all to an abstraction" (WGS, p. 37). And in his memoir *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (1975), he notes how in the post-war years (1920-23), as part of his reflections on the *Wissenschaft* ideology, he came to see the "problematical character of these bourgeois efforts for *so unbourgeois a phenomenon as Judaism*" (italics added).[21] It is clear that in his political activities, Scholem was attempting to create the space for this anti-bourgeois Judaism to flourish. In this way, as well as others, we can see the strong symbiosis between his political and scholarly thought.

L'homme revolté

The details of Scholem's life have already been made famous numerous times, primarily through his autobiographical writings. Scholem was the fourth generation born in Berlin, to a family that originated in Silesia and moved to the city in the early nineteenth century (WGS, p. 1; FBTJ, pp. 1, ff).[22] In his recollections, he described his family as "post-assimilatory" (WGS, p. 1), "a typical liberal middle-class family in which assimilation to things German, as people put it at the time, had progressed quite far" (FBTJ, p. 9). "The transition in our family," he also noted, "from Orthodoxy at the

[20] "Our Historical Debt to Russian Jewry," in *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time and Other Essays,* ed. Avraham Shapira, (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), pp. 40-4, p. 42.
[21] Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship,* tr. Harry Zohn, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981 [1975]), p. 109.
[22] Biographical accounts of Scholem's life are abundant. Among the more recent ones, see, *inter alia*, Amir Engel, *Gershom Scholem*; and Noam Zadoff, *Gershom Scholem: From Berlin to Jerusalem and Back: An Intellectual Biography,* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018).

beginning of the nineteenth century to almost total assimilation at the beginning of the twentieth was a matter of three generations – from my grandfather, through my father, to my own generation; in the third generation, assimilation was complete – or so it seemed" (WGS, pp. 1-2). The Scholem family consisted of four sons, each of whom followed a different political trajectory. The eldest, Reinhold (1891-1985), became a nationalist and joined the conservative *Deutsche Volkspartei*. The second brother, Erich (1893-1965), was a liberal democrat that "merely wanted everything to be alright; he had no special ideals." Werner (1895-1940/2) became a Social Democrat, and was later elected as deputy to the Reichstag on behalf of the German Communist Party (KPD). He was eventually imprisoned and murdered by the Nazis in Buchenwald (WGS, p. 3; FBTJ, pp. 42-3, ff). And as for Gershom, he of course became a Zionist (WGS, p. 3; FBTJ, pp. 42-3, ff).[23]

Among the brothers, Scholem felt the greatest kinship with Werner, to whose memory he dedicated *From Berlin to Jerusalem*. Despite their close relationship, however, Scholem believed that his brother was deeply – and as it turned out, fatally – mistaken in choosing "Humanity" and "the Revolution" over his Judaism and the Zionist option. Although he did not foresee the rise of Hitler, the young Gerhard already realized that the Jews – as Jews – had no future in Germany and that his brother would never be accepted as an equal. "What logic is there in the fact that my brother […] set out to represent Communist workers that laughed at him?," Scholem asked rhetorically years later, in a conversation with Ehud Ben Ezer. "'What is that great, worldwide cause that you believe in and speak of? Why, no Gentile speaks that way. Only you. There is no over-all humanity. It exists only in your imaginations.'"[24]

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[23] For more on the four brothers, see Jay Howard Geller, *The Scholems: A Story of the German-Jewish Bourgeoisie from Emancipation to Destruction*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019). See also the various references in FBTJ and Scholem's interviews. For more on Werner Scholem specifically, see Mirjam Zadoff, *Werner Scholem: A German Life,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

[24] Conversation with Ben Ezer, p. 265. In FBTJ, Scholem recounts the following episode, when he visited his brother in Berlin in 1922: "'Don't fool yourself,' I told him, 'they'll applaud your speech and probably they'll elect you a deputy at the

Both Gerhard and Werner vehemently opposed the First World War ("my brother for Socialist reasons, and I for Zionist reasons"). In 1915, Scholem even wrote several anti-war letters to the local Zionist papers, as well as published his own Zionist, anti-war paper, *Die Blau-Weiße Brille* ("The Blue-White Spectacles"). These activities, as well as others, led to his expulsion from school, as well as, in 1917, from his father's house ("[My father] said, 'It's all the same – Socialism, Zionism – it's all antipatriotic"; WGS, pp. 13-4, ff; FBTJ, Chs. IV-V). This forced Scholem to move into a kosher boardinghouse (the famous "Pension Struck"), where he came into contact with many *Ostjuden*, some of whom later played prominent roles in the Zionist Movement. The most famous of these was Zalman Rubashow-Shazar (1889-1974), a journalist, scholar of Sabbateanism, political activist, and later the Third President of the State of Israel (WGS, pp. 15-6).[25]

In 1915, following his expulsion from school – and while still living at home – Scholem enrolled at the Frederick William University in Berlin (today: Humboldt University), where he studied mathematics, philosophy, and Hebrew. In June 1917 he was called to serve in the military, but was discharged a few months later after feigning mental illness (FBTJ, p. 95, ff). Thereafter, he continued his studies at the universities of Jena, Bern, and eventually Munich, where he also wrote his dissertation, a translation and interpretation of the foundational twelfth-century Kabbalistic text *Sefer Ha-Bahir* ("The Book of Splendour").[26] He spent the next few years in Berlin and Munich, polishing

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next election […], but behind your back nothing will change'. I heard one of the workers say to his colleagues: 'The Jew (not 'our comrade') makes a nice speech'" (p. 144; see ff for details on Werner's life in Germany in the '20's and '30's after Scholem's *aliyah*). Cf. "To whom, then, did the Jews speak in that much-talked-about German-Jewish dialogue? They spoke to themselves, not to say that they outshouted themselves" ("Against the Myth of German-Jewish Dialogue," in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, p. 63). See also WGS, pp. 3-4.

[25] On Scholem's relationship with Shazar, see also his recollections in "Youthful Memories with Zalman Rubashow" (Hebrew), in *D'varim B'go* [*Explications and Implications: Writings on Jewish Heritage and Renaissance*, Vol. I.], (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1982), pp. 55-58.

[26] Joseph Dan provides the following bibliographic information: "Gershom Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir* (Leipzig: W. Drugulin, 1923). The book was printed, without the notes, in Berlin, 1923. A reprint of the 1923 Leipzig edition was published in 1933 (Berlin: Schocken) and again in 1970 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft)" [Joseph Dan, *Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of Jewish History,* (New York: NYU Press, 1987), p. 143n1].

his mathematical skills (he at first believed he could work in the Land of Israel as a teacher of mathematics), and lecturing and writing on Jewish mysticism.

Although active in Zionist circles from a young age, Scholem only immigrated to the Land of Israel in his mid-twenties, in 1923. Turning down an offer to serve as a high school mathematics teacher, he at first found employment as a Judaica librarian in the recently-established National Library of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, beginning his long association with that institution. In 1925, he was appointed the first professor of Jewish mysticism at the Hebrew University, a position he held until his retirement forty years later, in 1965. Between his appointment and his death at the age of eighty-four, he authored hundreds of articles and dozens of books, in Hebrew, German, and English. He became one of Israel's most celebrated public intellectuals and won worldwide fame and renown. He received the Israel Prize in 1958 (alongside Baer and Kaufmann, among others), the Rothschild Prize in 1961, the Bialik Prize in the Category of Jewish Thought in 1977, and many other accolades in both Israel and the world. He also served as first Vice President – and then President – of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities between 1968–74.[27] He was buried in the old cemetery of Sanhedria, where another protagonist of this study, Yehezkel Kaufmann, was also buried upon his death in 1963.

It is not clear that Scholem ever intended to become a scholar, *per se*. In recent years, it has become known that in his youth, Scholem entertained some messianic fantasies, which he would later abandon[28]. Nonetheless, it seems that he always saw himself in the role of leadership, a new kind of leader, it seems, which would arise out of the new politics of the new Jewish form of life. In his early years in the Land of Israel, Scholem was thus very active in politics, especially in the "radical circle"

[27] For a fuller list of Scholem's many honors, see Zadoff, *From Berlin to Jerusalem and Back,* pp. 222-3, ff.
[28] Cf. Michael Brenner, "From Self-Declared Messiah to Scholar of Messianism: The Recently Published Diaries Present Young Gerhard Scholem in a New Light," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1996), pp. 177–182.

of Brit Shalom, the group of intellectuals who called for the establishment of a bi-national, Jewish-Arab state. In the years after the establishment of the state, he continued to express his views on all manners of political and cultural affairs, but he abandoned the participatory aspect of politics, and dedicated himself entirely to his scholarship. Unsurprisingly, he was disappointed with the direction Zionism took in the years after 1948. Nonetheless, unlike other intellectuals such as Hannah Arendt (at times his close friend, at times his bitter opponent), or Leon Roth, Scholem did not abandon Zionism or leave the State of Israel. In fact, he defended Zionism until his death. Still, he maintained something of a bitter attitude in his later years, which is reflected in his interviews and personal writings.

The Bourgeois Mind and the Dynamics of Jewish History

Nowhere in his writings did Scholem clearly explain what he meant by the term "bourgeois." But from reading his writings, it becomes evident that Scholem associated bourgeois ideology primarily with two central tenets: Reason and Progress. In the world of late Wilhelmine Jewry, at least in Scholem's depiction, these two ideals were of course highly intertwined, and provided the ideological underpinnings for its 'philosophy of history', so to speak: its widespread assimilationist tendencies, and superficial religiosity. The effects of this ideology on Judaism, according to Scholem, could be clearly discerned in a short anecdote which he relays about his father: "once or twice a year my father used to make a speech at the dinner table in praise of the mission of the Jews. According to him, that mission was to proclaim to the world pure monotheism and a purely rational morality" (FBTJ, p. 11).

The ideas expressed by Scholem's father recall to a great extent those of another, more famous individual, whom to Scholem came to symbolize everything he detested about the Judaism of his

parents' milieu: Hermann Cohen (1842-1918). In *From Berlin to Jerusalem,* which was written late in his life, Scholem writes about Cohen with some ambivalence, moving between respect, antagonism, and at times even pity. Throughout his career, however, Scholem maintained a rather critical attitude towards Cohen on both 'philosophical' as well as 'social' grounds; for his naïve rationalism as well as his facile views on Jewish history and Jewish assimilation. In his writings, Scholem would even often invoke Cohen's name as a stand-in for liberal, rational Judaism in general, and for Wilhelmine, bourgeois Judaism in particular. Scholem's central critique of Cohen was that the latter was devoted primarily to the religion of reason and progress, not to Judaism *an sich*. This perspective led Cohen – as well as Jewish rationalists and progressives in general – to ignore central aspects of Jewish doctrine and practice. In his famous essay "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism" (1959), for example, Scholem notes how the religion of reason led Cohen to ignore a central aspect of Jewish messianism, in this case its restorative elements:

> For precisely to the extent that the rationalism of the Jewish and European Enlightenment subjected the Messianic idea to an ever advancing secularization, it freed itself of the restorative element. […]. Hermann Cohen, surely a distinguished a representative of the liberal and rationalistic reinterpretation of the Messianic idea in Judaism as one could find, was driven by his religion of reason into becoming a genuine and unhampered utopian who would have liked to liquidate the restorative factor entirely.[29]

Scholem's critique of Cohen, however, was only one part of a greater repudiation of rationalist theology in Judaism. In Scholem's analysis, the appearance of rationalism in Jewish history always

[29] "Towards and Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pp. 1-36, p. 26. For more on Cohen's ideas in the context of Wilhelmine-era Jewry, see Steven S. Schwarzchild, "'Germanism and Judaism' – Hermann Cohen's Normative Paradigm of the German-Jewish Symbiosis," in *Jews and Germans from 1860 to 1933: The Problematic Symbiosis,* ed. David Bronsen, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979), pp. 129-172.

coincided with period of crisis and decline. He associated such periods above all with three figures: Sa'adia Gaon (d. 942), Maimonides (1138-1204), and Cohen. He seems to have first mentioned this triumvirate in a letter he wrote to the publisher Zalman Schocken (1877-1959) on the "True Motive Behind His Kabbalistic Studies" in 1937, as three figures by whom he was "particularly incensed," and which in his opinion represent a crisis of Jewish faith and spirit.[30] Shortly afterwards, in his first great expository work *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941 [hereafter: MTJM]),[31] he again mentioned Gaon, Maimonides, and Cohen as the foremost representatives of rational Jewish theology, who have generally affected a negative turn in the course of Jewish history (MTJM, p. 38).

For Scholem, however, the foremost representatives of the rationalist, progressive outlook in Judaism were of course the founders and practitioners of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the early nineteenth century. In Scholem's view, for the *Wissenschaft* scholars, just as with Cohen and the other rationalists, reason and progress took precedence over the truths of Jewish existence. In his famous critique of the *Wissenschaft* legacy, he repeatedly notes that almost the entire output of these scholars took place under the auspices of, and geared towards fighting, the "political and apologetic battles" for emancipation and equal rights. These battles, praiseworthy as they may have been at the time, nonetheless led these scholars to ignore the reality of Judaism "as a living organism," and to reduce it to "a purely spiritual, ideal phenomenon." In addition, out of their desire to appeal to rationally-inclined non-Jews, these scholars were led to obscure all Jewish phenomena and ideas that did not conform with their worldview, namely mysticism. "From the point of view of the Enlightenment-minded, purified, rational Judaism of the nineteenth century [these phenomena] seemed not properly usable and hence were thrown out as un-Jewish or, at the least, half pagan. […]. The inability to deal

[30] David Biale first translated this letter into English in *Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 2nd Edition, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 31-2.
[31] Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism,* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974 [1941]).

with material things or to present spiritual phenomena outside the realm of a refined theology capable of also pleasing rationally inclined Gentiles – all this led to keeping such areas beyond reach"[32]. As has been noted numerous times, in many ways Scholem took it upon himself as his life's mission to present a different kind of Judaism, diametrically opposed to *Wissenschaft* conceptions.

In his critique of the *Wissenschaft* school we can also detect the influence of the reigning *Lebensphilosophie*, and particularly of Nietzsche, on Scholem's mind. The question of Nietzsche's influence on Scholem is something of a minor controversy in the scholarship, since Scholem himself denied in his later years to have even read – let alone be influenced – by Nietzsche. The publication of his diaries and his early correspondences, however, show beyond doubt that Scholem was acquainted with, and greatly influenced by, Nietzsche's writings.[33] As such, he could be considered as one among the many Jews across Europe, in both East and West, who at the beginning of the twentieth century were inspired by Nietzsche in the creation of a new, vibrant kind of Judaism, emphasizing 'life' and vitality. The literary critic Baruch Kurzweil (1907-72), who in the 1950's was also one of Scholem's sharpest critics, chronicled the influence of *Lebensphilosophie* on the writings of important Hebrew revival writers such as Brenner, Bialik, Feierberg, and others. Among the elements he noted was that these writers associated some of the traditional symbols of Jewish culture – the synagogue, the Yeshiva, and the admiration of the intellect and for learning – with 'death' and the graveyard.[34] In his critique of the *Wisseschaft* scholars, Scholem applied the same motifs to the work of his bourgeois elders:

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[32] "The Science of Judaism – Then and Now," pp. 306-9. Sentence order modified.

[33] See, *inter alia*, the chapter dedicated to Scholem in David Ohana, *Nietzsche and Jewish Political Theology*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 156-217. See also Galili Shahar, "On Gershom Scholem's Early Forays into Judaism" (Hebrew), in *Lamentations: Poetry and Thought in Gershom Scholem*, ed. Galili Shahar and Illit Ferber, (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2016), pp. 9-45.

[34] Baruch Kurzweil, "The Influence of *Lebensphilosophie* on Hebrew Literature in the Early 20th Century" (Hebrew), in idem., *Our Literature: Continuity or Revolt?,* (Tel Aviv: Schocken Books, 1959), pp. 225-269, p. 244, ff.

> Pointing towards his bookcases with an inimitable gesture [Moritz Steinschneider (1816-1907), one of the leading members of the *Wissenschaft* circle] said, 'We have only one task left: to give the remains of Judaism a decent burial'. […] a breath of the funeral did in fact cling to the atmosphere of this discipline for a century; occasionally there is something ghostlike about this literature.[35]

Scholem's opposition to the ideals of Progress could also be discerned in his rejection of all forms of historical linearity or teleology. From a young age, Scholem believed that the very idea of 'historical laws' was nonsensical; an unnecessary obfuscation of real life, which conformed to no laws or other predetermined patterns. In an early diary entry from 1914, he derided Jewish thinkers who sought to encapsulate Judaism in a philosophy of history. "What is the philosophy of history? It is the attempt to capture the flow of life in an iron box. […]. We can do without a modern Steinheim or Krochmal. Here's to life! […] Phooey on the historical mode of observation!"[36] Many years later, in comments he gave at a colloquium at the Hebrew University in 1974, Scholem conceded that some choices have to be made in the selection of historical materials, and that this choices could theoretically amount to a 'philosophy of history.' Yet he adamantly rejected the idea that one could discover 'laws of history' in the same way that one could discern the 'laws of nature': "So there may be ideologically determined presuppositions. Most historians have such presuppositions. […]. [I] made, for instance, a choice that there is meaning in Jewish history as a living process, not defined by given dogmatic formulas. And therefore I saw the [eminent] importance of factors which did not get any attention in traditional Jewish history and historiography, because they had a certain idea from which to evaluate and to choose events in what they call Jewish history, and choose them together in a certain picture. Therefore certain events fell out, or were suppressed, or put aside as non-relevant. […]. [But] I […]

[35] "The Science of Judaism – Then and Now," p. 307.
[36] *Lamentations of Youth*, p. 32 (entry for November 15, 1914).

would not be prepared to make a general statement which would be pertinent to all the different ways of describing the historical process in so called scientific terms."[37]

In this respect, it should also be noted that when he began his academic studies, Scholem also chose to focus on Philology (*Philologie*) rather than straightforward History (*Geschichte*), which at the time was considered to be more attentive to the specific details of each period without attempting to force these into a greater, teleological scheme, be it Hegel's or Ranke's.[38] Scholem believed that the details of history must inform one's understanding of the general historical picture rather than the other way around: "by genuine scholarly immersion into facts and circumstances we may be able to reorganize and reconstruct the whole from its smallest parts."[39] In method and approach, one could then find certain similarities between Scholem and his contemporary and fellow Berliner, the great Romance philologist Erich Auerbach (1892-1957).[40] Much like Scholem, Auerbach believed that it was only through the careful study of texts that we can illuminate "the wealth of events in human life, which […] constitutes a totality, a coherent development or meaningful whole, in which each individual event is embedded in a variety of ways and through which it can be interpreted"[41]. For Auerbach, this idea of wallowing in details, so to speak, was associated with what he called "the earthly" or "earthliness" (*irdisch*), as in the title of his first book, *Dante: Poet of the Secular [Earthly] World*

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[37] Published as "On History and the Philosophy of History," *Naharaim*, Vol. 5, No. 1-2 (2011), pp. 1-7.

[38] On the differences between philology and history at the inception of Jewish historiography, see Leon Wieseltier, "Etwas Über Die Judische Historik: Leopold Zunz and the Inception of Modern Jewish Historiography," *History and Theory*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (May, 1981), pp. 135-149, pp. 137-8, ff. For more on Scholem as a philologist see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Introductory Essay: The Spiritual Quest of the Philologist," in idem. (ed.), *Gershom Scholem: The Man and His Work* (New York: SUNY Press and Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994), pp. 1-28; Engel, *Gershom Scholem*, pp. 15-6; Biale, *Kabbalah and Counter-History,* p. 65.

[39] "The Science of Judaism – Then and Now," p. 313.

[40] Although I found no evidence in support of this thesis, I surmise that Scholem and Auerbach were personally acquainted, either through their mutual friendship with Walter Benjamin or from the environs of Berlin. A partial comparison between the two could be found in Kitty Millet, "Our Sabbatian Future," in *Scholar and Kabbalist: The Life and Work of Gershom Scholem,* ed. Noam Zadoff and Mirjam Zadoff, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), pp. 134-152.

[41] Erich Auerbach, "Vico and Herder" (1932), in *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach,* ed. James Porter, tr. Jane O. Newman, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 11-23, p. 11. A useful essay on this subject is James I. Porter, "Erich Auerbach's Earthly (Counter-)Philology," *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 2013), pp. 243-265.

(*Dante als dichter der irdischen Welt*, 1929).[42] The same terms could very much be used to describe Scholem's methodology as well.

The Dialectic as Method and Ideology

Scholem, however, did adopt a 'model' of history through which he most consistently opposed the idea of progressive linearity: the *dialectic*. Like Marx and Freud before him, Scholem believed that the dialectical approach allowed one to take better account of the various forces operating in history, physical and metaphysical, conscious and subconscious. According to Györgi Lukàcs, the dialectic gained popularity in European philosophy and the social sciences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as part of a more general revolt against the ascendancy of the liberal bourgeoisie – and their idea of progress – to dominance over all aspects of life. Before 1848, he explains, "the most notable writers and thinkers" advanced "a concept of the contradictory character of human progress, even if it was only relatively correct and never complete." After 1848, however, a new understanding of progress rose to the fore, whereby "the contradictions of progress" were declared "bound to disappear":

> Classical economics, which in its day had boldly admitted certain contradictions in capitalist economy, changes into the smooth and mendacious harmony of vulgar economics. The fall of Hegelian philosophy in Germany means the disappearance of the idea of the contradictory character of progress. So far as an ideology of progress continues to prevail […] every element of contradiction is extinguished from it, history is conceived as a smooth straightforward evolution.

[42] Erich Auerbach, *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*, tr. Ralph Mannheim, (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001).

It was in those circumstances that the dialectic arose as a method of historical explanation, alongside competing methodologies such as organicism (Ranke) or the "denial of history" (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche).[43]

In his memoirs, Scholem suggests that the dialectical approach appealed to him from a young age as the only way to make sense of the confused reality of bourgeois Jewry in late Wilhelmine Germany, with its interplay of "religion," "secularism," emancipation, anti-Semitism, and other competing forces (cf. FBTJ, pp. 25-6). After he became a Zionist, the dialectic helped him make sense of the relationship between Jewish "tradition" and "renewal." Importantly, it was also one of the factors that drew him to Ahad Ha'am:

> One's attitude toward religious tradition also played a part here, and had a clear dialectical function. For from the outset the struggle between a striving for continuation and revivification of the traditional form of Judaism and a conscious rebellion against this very tradition, though within the Jewish people and not through alienation from it and abandonment of it, created an ineluctable dialectics that was central to Zionism. […]. At that time [Ahad Ha'am's] essays were being translated into German, and their very title, *Am Scheidewege* [*Al Parashat D'rakhim*; "At the Crossroads"], alluded to the dialectics mentioned above (FBTJ, pp. 54-5).

Later in the text, Scholem calls this specific relationship between Zionism and the Jewish religious tradition "the dialectics of continuity and revolt." Scholem encountered this attitude among the young Zionist pioneers he met upon arrival in the Land of Israel, and to the end of his life, it continued to inform his vision (FBTJ, p. 166).

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[43] Györgi Lukàcs, *The Historical Novel,* tr. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), pp. 174-6, ff.

More importantly, the dialectic also played a central role in his scholarship, most notably in his scholarship on how ostensibly antinomian and nihilistic movements such as Sabbatianism and Frankism could spawn such Jewish 'revival' movements such as the Haskalah, Reform, and eventually, Zionism.[44] As he explained most memorably in his first major publication in Hebrew, the essay "Redemption Through Sin" (*mitzvah ha-ba'a be-avey'ra*, 1937), these movements, so shocking in their nature, led to an "explosion" of the Jewish tradition from within, thereby augmenting the meaning of Judaism beyond the narrow confines of the rabbinic halacha. To Scholem, this was suggestive of the dialectic of modern Jewish history in its entirety; that while certain phenomena may appear negative and destructive at the outset, they may at the end reveal hidden, positive tendencies: "beneath the surface of lawlessness, antinomianism, and catastrophic negation, powerful constructive impulses were at work."[45]

Anti-Bourgeois Zionism

In 1915-16, Scholem became acquainted with the two strains of political thought which would define his political development in the coming decades, and in many ways, for the rest of his life: Anarchism and Ahad Ha'am's Cultural Zionism. In *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, he recounts that he came to both at around the same time, during a period of intense spiritual and intellectual fermentation following the beginning of the First World War (FBTJ, pp. 52-5, ff). From Scholem's perspective, the two ideologies were of course in many ways compatible, not because of their content, but in a sense,

[44] For more on Scholem's dialectical approach to Jewish history, see Pawel Maciejko, "Gershom Scholem's Dialectic of Jewish History: The Case of Sabbatianism," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies,* Vol. 3, No. 2 (July 2004), pp. 207-220. A critique of Maciejko and a more nuanced approach to Scholem's dialectics can be found in Kenneth Hart Green, "What S. Y. Agnon taught Gershom Scholem about Jewish history," in *Encountering the Medieval in Modern Jewish Thought*, eds. James A. Diamond and Aaron W. Hughes, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 153-176, p. 158n7.

[45] "Redemption Through Sin," tr. Hillel Halkin, in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism,* pp. 78-141, p. 84. Originally published in Hebrew as "*mitzvah ha-ba'ah be-avei'ra*," *Knesset: Divrei Sofrim le-Zekher H. N. Bialik,* Vol. II, (1937) pp. 347-392.

because of the lack thereof. In Scholem's view, both Anarchism and Cultural Zionism emphasized the abolishment of outdated limitations and rules: in the case of Anarchism, it was the limitations imposed by the state; in the case of Cultural Zionism, it was the boundaries imposed by traditional Jewish Law. Without these strictures, Scholem believed, new, spontaneous forms of community can begin to arise organically, without guidance or rules imposed from above.

From early on, however, Scholem diverged from some of the main currents of both Anarchism as well as Cultural Zionism in his religious orientation. In his Anarchism, Scholem read widely in the works of the important theorists of his day, but was closer in spirit to more religious figures like Tolstoy, Gustav Landauer, A. D. Gordon – and, importantly, Martin Buber (1878-1965) – than to secular materialists such as Joseph Proudhon or Mikhail Bakunin. "My sympathy for anarchism […] was a moral one. I believed in anarchism as Utopia. I wasn't an atheistic anarchist. I thought that the organization of society under absolute liberty is a divine mandate" (WGS, pp. 35-6; cf. FBTJ, p. 52, 55).[46] Similarly, in his Cultural Zionism, Scholem was apprehensive from the beginning about the secular, "agnostic" elements of Ahad Ha'am's thought, "which he had derived from Herbert Spencer" (FBTJ, pp. 54-5). In one of his late interviews, he noted: "I am an Ahad Ha-Amist and religious, but more religious than Ahad Ha-Am. I don't believe in a world of total secularism in which the religious factor will not manifest itself with redoubled strength" (WGS, p. 34).

Scholem saw the relationship between Political and Cultural Zionism in terms of a relationship between society's external 'framework' and inner 'core'. As he noted in both a late personal interview as well as in *From Berlin to Jerusalem*: "Herzl assigned primary importance to the framework [*misger'et*]. He wished to achieve the establishment of the State by means of widescale political activity. Practical Zionism, according to Echad Ha'am's [sic] outlook, was conceived of primarily as a Jewish resurgence

[46] See also his *Walter Benjamin,* p. 6.

from within, based on a Jewish society built up in Palestine"[47]; "Those aspects of Zionism that dealt with politics and international law were not of prime importance to many of those who joined the movement. Of great influence, however, were tendencies that promoted the rediscovery by the Jews of their own selves and their history as well as a possible spiritual, cultural, and, above all, social rebirth" (FBTJ, pp. 54-5).

Scholem siding with 'culture' over 'politics' was consistent in many ways with a long-running tendency among German intellectuals to devalue mundane political proceedings in the name of supra- or metapolitical frameworks associated with the realm of *Geist*.[48] Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1793) and Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808) may provide us with early examples of this line of thinking. In the early twentieth century, Thomas Mann, in his in his early, autobiographical polemic *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (1918), wrote movingly of this antagonism:

> [Politics] is participation in the state, zeal and passion for the state – and people like me have anything but a Hegelian attitude. […]. I think that the most important aspects of the human spirit – religion, philosophy, art, poetry, science – exist beside, above, and beyond the state, and often enough against it.[49]

Scholem's elevation of the 'cultural' over the 'political' was also characteristic more generally of the German-Jewish milieu that gathered in and around the Hebrew University in the '20's and '30's, and that came to be known as the "Mandarins of Jerusalem."[50] These intellectuals believed that by serving as 'custodians of culture' they could ultimately affect the development of Jewish society more effectively and deeply than if they had gone into party politics. An interesting contrast in this regard

[47] Conversation with Ben Ezer, p. 264.
[48] Cf. Feldman, ibid., p. 180, ff.
[49] Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (*Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen),* tr. Walter D. Morris and others, (New York: NYRB, 2021), p. 123.
[50] See Paul Mendes-Flohr, "The Mandarins of Jerusalem," *Naharaim*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2010), pp. 175-182.

could be drawn between Scholem and his friend Zalman Rubashow-Shazar. In *From Berlin to Jerusalem* as well as some other of his writings, it is evident that as a young man, Scholem truly admired Shazar, who was not only a talented political orator but also an important early scholar of the Sabbatian Movement. It seems at times, however, that Scholem also believed that by turning to politics, Shazar also missed out on his calling. In a short article Scholem wrote for the occasion of Shazar's election to the office of President (1963), he wrote: "[Shazar] tried several times to return to the world of [historical] research, in which he could have done great things if it were not for the demands of the party and the public […]. But we may find some comfort nonetheless: if he had been able to fulfill his dreams, and had became a great historian and had written down all he thought about Sabbatai Zevi (for he had indeed great visions on this affair), it is doubtful we would be congratulating him today on his election as President of the State of Israel."[51]

In many respects, it seems that Scholem's ideal Jewish community was to be found in the society that developed in the Land of Israel among the socialist Kibbutzim in the years after the First World War, and in particular in the first few years of the 1920's – at any rate before 1929, when Arab violence forced Zionist leadership to rely more heavily on arms in self-defense, thus changing, at least from Scholem's perspective, the idyllic nature of the Zionist enterprise. He was attracted not only to the Kibbutzim's communal aspects, but also their deep anarchism. As he notes in *From Berlin to Jerusalem*: "My sympathies lay with the radical circles which represented the social ideal of the incipient kibbutz movement. […]. […] the anarchistic element in some groups in Israel, and by no means unimportant ones, came very close to my own position of that time." He saw the Kibbutzim as a movement of cultural, rather than political renewal. He saw the Kibbutzim as "a new beginning which, whether it was motivated by religious or secularistic considerations, had more to do with social ethics

[51] "Youthful Memories with Zalman Rubashow", p. 58 (my translation).

than with politics, strange though that may seem today" (FBTJ, pp. 150-1). In the Hebrew edition of the text, he adds that he differed from many of those who saw in the Kibbutzim, and in Zionism in general, a purely secular movement. He states that he believed that Zionism would usher in "a new religious revival and custom, and perhaps even a new revelation [*giluy shekhina hadash*]."[52] Towards the end of the book, he describes the society that existed in the Land of Israel shortly after his arrival in the country in the early 1920's in the spirit of a lost Golden Age. In many respects, the disappearance of this society would affect his outlook on the fate of Zionism for the rest of his life. For nowhere in his voluminous oeuvre, it seems, did he ever write about Israel, or Zionism in general, with such affection and nostalgia:

> The time when I came to Eretz Yisrael, the beginning of the twenties, was a high point in the Zionist movement. An impassioned generation had come to Eretz Yisrael expecting great things from work in Palestine, and was making intense efforts to found a Jewish society that would have a productive life of its own. Those were important and wonderful years, despite the shadows that were beginning to appear. People lived in rather small circles, for there were not yet very many people in the country. […]. There was strong communication between the various places. There also was enormous hospitality […]. Wherever you went, you found a place to sleep. Everyone visited everyone. There was a time when there was hardly a closed door in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, even in the literal sense of the word. When you went out, you left the house open; hardly anyone locked his door. It did not occur to us that there might be a theft. There was, in fact, no stealing, but when we returned, someone was often lying in our bed — the friend of a friend, who had been given our address and wanted to spend the night (FBTJ, pp. 166-7).

[52] *Mi-Berlin*, pp. 178-9.

The Politics of Authenticity

In his classic study *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (1941), Scholem's contemporary, the philosopher Karl Löwith (1897-1973), wrote that the central characteristic of bourgeois society was that of the 'divided self':

> [The problem of bourgeois society] consists in the fact that man, in bourgeois society, is not a unified whole. On the one hand, he is a private individual, and on the other, a citizen of the state […]. The modern bourgeois is neither a citizen in the sense of the ancient *polis*, nor a whole man. He is two things in one person; on the one hand, he belongs to himself, and on the other, to the *ordre civil*. […]. Ever since Rousseau, the incongruity between them has been a fundamental problem of all modern theories of the state and society.[53]

After Rousseau, this idea firmly established itself in German thought through the writings of the Idealists, namely Kant and Humboldt, for whom there lay an eternal contradiction between the inner essence of the object and its external properties.[54] In the early decades of the twentieth century, the contradiction between 'inner' and 'outer' took on also an existential meaning in the context of a discourse of authenticity, spearheaded above all perhaps by Freud and Heidegger. At around the same time, however, the discourse of 'inner' and 'outer' experience also found its way into the world of German Zionism, through the teachings of Martin Buber (1878-1965). In his early writings, especially the "Prague Speeches," Buber gave the most eloquent expression to the contemporary Jew's situation as divided between his inner, spiritual existence, and his outer, physical loyalties:

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[53] Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, tr. David E. Green, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 235.

[54] See the works of Frederick Beiser, notably *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

> [The] natural objective situation is not present in the Jew's, especially the Western Jew's, relationship to his people. All the elements that might constitute a nation for him, that might make this nation a reality for him, are missing; all of them: land, language, way of life. […]. Where no such situation exists, individual man becomes divided.[55]

Jews, Buber believed, should strive to overcome this division; he believed they should achieve unity between their spiritual roots and society's institutions, a unity that could only take place in Zion.

Following Buber's lead, the idea of Zionism as solution to the problem of the 'divided self' became common among the German-Jewish youths. As Zohar Maor has shown, the discourse of 'inner' and 'outer,' 'spirit' and 'body,' characterized the early thought not only of Scholem, but also that of his friends and later partners in the so-called "radical circle" of *Brit Shalom* – the coterie of intellectuals and activists advocating for Jewish-Arab reconciliation and bi-nationalism in the 1920's and '30's – Hans Kohn (1891–1971) and Shmuel Hugo Bergmann (1883–1975).[56] Like Buber, these youths believed that Zionism should offer the Jews above all a place where they could be fully 'integrated'; where their inner self did not conflict with the outer environment; where their Judaism did not conflict with their 'humanity.' Many years later, Scholem described those like himself, who arrived in Israel between 1923-33 as those who "wanted to live among Jews and not in a ghetto."[57] This was a rather simplistic choice of words to depict Scholem's original intentions, but it captures the sentiment well.

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[55] Martin Buber, *On Judaism,* ed. Nahum N. Glatzer. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), pp. 16-17, 18. Discussed in Gregory Baum, *Nationalism, Religion, and Ethics,* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), pp. 22-3. See also Shalom Ratzabi, *Anarchy in "Zion": Between Martin Buber and A. D. Gordon* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2011), p. 72, ff.
[56] Zohar Maor, "Moderation from Right to Left: The Hidden Roots of Brit Shalom," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Winter 2013), pp. 79-108, see esp. from p. 83 onwards. For more on the radical circle of Brit Shalom, see Shalom Ratzabi, *Between Zionism and Judaism: The Radical Circle in Brith Shalom* [sic] *1925–1933*, (Brill: Leiden, 2002).
[57] Biale and Scholem, "The Threat of Messianism," ibid.

The interplay of 'inner' and 'outer' which figured so prominently in Scholem's sentiments about the nature of bourgeois existence also resonated in his scholarship later in life. Scholem employed the discourse of 'inner' and 'outer' to explain the rise of the modern Jew. In "Redemption Through Sin," Scholem writes that at the beginning of the Sabbatian episode, there reigned a feeling of inner 'unity' in the hearts of Zevi's adherents, as their 'inner' expectations seemed to match completely the 'outward' course of history. "Prior to Sabbatai Zevi's apostasy, great masses of people were able to believe in perfect simplicity that the new age of history had already begun and that they themselves had already begun to inhabit a new and redeemed world. […] their innermost feelings, which assured them of the presence of a Messianic reality, seemed entirely in harmony with the outward course of events, those climatic developments in a historico-political realm that Sabbatai Zevi was soon to overthrow by means of his miraculous journey to the Turkish sultan, whom he would depose from his throne and strip of all his powers." Following his apostasy, however, a rift was created between expectations and reality. Judaism no longer seemed like the harmonious whole that it once was. In these circumstances, a new ideology was needed, one that could "bridge over the abyss that had suddenly opened between the objective order of things and that inward certainty which it could no longer serve to symbolize."[58] This ideology, according to Scholem, was that of the modern Jew, for whom the old, traditional law now seemed void of meaning, and instead was beholden to the "laws and practices" of the "'restored world'" that was now "coming into being."[59] It would also play a pivotal role in Scholem's theory of culture.

[58] "Redemption Through Sin," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism,* pp. 86-88 [translation amended].
[59] "Redemption Through Sin," p. 91.

Toch and *K'lipa*: Scholem's Theory of Culture and Modernity

The interplay between 'framework' and 'core,' which Scholem had used in his analysis of the relationship between Political and Cultural Zionism, could also be found in his interpretation of Jewish culture as a whole, namely, in his depiction of symbiosis between 'law' and 'mysticism.' Already in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Scholem suggested that the latter served as something of an *élan vital* which kept the former from ossifying, and thus often led to the creation of new forms of practice and Jewish existence: "Mysticism postulates self-knowledge, to use a Platonic term, as the surest way to God who reveals Himself in the depths of the self. Mystical tendencies, in spite of their strictly personal character, have therefore frequently led to the formation of new social groupings and communities, a fact which is true also of Jewish mysticism" (MTJM, p. 18). In one of his late interviews, he was even more explicit: "to me the question was whether the *halakhah* as a closed system had the power to sustain itself without a special mystical vitality that prevented it from becoming totally fossilized; […]. This question of the *halakhah* has often been in the background of my thoughts on *kabbalah*" (WGS, p. 46). Scholem, however, also highlighted the fact that 'mystics' and 'legalists' often came into conflict. In "Religious Authority and Mysticism" (1960), one of Scholem's most concise treatments of the subject, he thus wrote that

> Since Talmudic times we find a decided disinclination to let mystics organize communities of their own. Time and time again the rabbis insisted that mystical experience, the 'love of God', must be confirmed by activity in the human community, that it was not enough for an individual to pour out his soul to God. […]. Suffice it to say that it has been highly effective in 'taming' mystics and holding them within the limits imposed by traditional authority.[60]

[60] "Religious Authority and Mysticism," in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, tr. Ralph Manheim, (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 5-31, p. 27.

Perhaps contrary to expectations, in his writings on Jewish history, Scholem did not side wholeheartedly with the 'core' over the 'framework,' or rather, with the 'mystics' over the 'legalists.' Although he often wrote of antinomian movements and tendencies within Judaism, he clearly believed that both 'mysticism' and 'legalism' were necessary to cultural life, especially in Judaism. From Scholem's perspective, a Jewish community needed both in order to remain dynamic. His views on these inner workings of culture was most probably inspired by the seminal essay "Halacha and Aggadah" (1916/7) written by H. N. Bialik, which Scholem translated into German for Buber's journal *Der Jude* (FBTJ, p. 146).[61] In this essay, Bialik contended that Jewish culture, in both its "practical" as well as its "literary" manifestations, is one complex edifice, in which the elements of praxis, law, culture, politics, and so forth, all interrelate and complement one another. "Halacha wears a frown, Aggadah a smile. The one is pedantic, severe, unbending – as justice commands; the other is accommodating, lenient, pliable – as mercy requires. The one commands […]. The other advises […]. The one is the shell, the body, the action; the other is the kernel, the soul, the intention."[62] Part of the problem of Jewish modernity, Bialik contended, was that Jewish law – the Halacha – has lost its authoritative, normative meaning, in favor of mere Aggadah. Given the close symbiotic relationship between the two realms, however, Bialik averred that such a Judaism could not last. "A Judaism composed only of Aggadah is like iron that has been heated but not cooled."[63] The task Bialik put before the contemporary generation of Jews, therefore – and especially before the young Zionist pioneers – was the constitution of a new Halacha, different from the religious Halacha of yore, and

[61] Bialik's essay was translated and republished in published in Haim Nahman Bialik, *Revealment and Concealment: Five Essays,* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2000), pp. 45-88. Scholem's translation appeared in *Der Jude,* Vol. IV (1919-1920), Heft 1-2, pp. 61-77. The essay in Scholem's translation can be retrieved from the Goethe Universität archive, at: http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/cm/periodical/titleinfo/3104179 (accessed on June 2, 2020). An interesting exposition of Scholem's relationship to Bialik can be found in Galili Shahar's "The Sacred and the Unfamiliar: Gershom Scholem and the Anxieties of the New Hebrew," *Germanic Review,* Volume 83, No. 4 (2008), pp. 299-320.
[62] "Halachah and Aggadah," p. 45. Translation modified.
[63] Ibid., p. 86.

befitting the new times.[64] Only such a path forward, according to Bialik, would recreate the 'holism' that contemporary Jewish culture was so lacking.

The breakdown of the symbiosis between 'mysticism' and 'legalism,' in Scholem's understanding, also constituted at least part – if not the very essence – of the crisis of Jewish modernity. In *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Scholem famously depicts the development of religion in a culture as taken place in three distinct stages. The first stage – which closely echoes the 'totality of life' depicted in such pieces as Schiller's poem "The Gods of Greece" ("Die Götter Griechenlandes," 1788) – "represents the world as being full of gods whom man encounters at every step and whose presence can be experienced without recourse to ecstatic mediation." During this "mythical epoch," Man and God were deemed to be in "essential unity," in a "truly monistic universe." The second stage is that of the institutionalization of religion – the "classical form" of religion – in which "a vast abyss" is created between the Creator and His Creature. In this stage, "Man becomes aware of a fundamental duality, of a vast gulf which can be crossed by noting but the *voice* [italics in original]; the voice of God, directing and law-giving in His revelation, and the voice of man in prayer." And lastly, only after religion has received "its classical expression in a certain communal way of living and believing, only [then] do we witness the phenomenon called mysticism; its rise coincides with what may be called the romantic period of religion." Mysticism does not seek to deny the institutions or the law; indeed, as Scholem often noted, mysticism can only genuinely exist *within the confines* of a given tradition. Mysticism, rather, only intends "to piece together the fragments broken by the

[64] Ibid., p. 81, ff. On Bialik's relationship with Labor Zionism, see the relevant essays in *Hebrew Literature and the Labor Movement,* ed. Pinhas Ginossar, (Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion University Press, 1989); as well as Shmuel Avineri's essay on Bialik and Labor Zionism, *Haaretz* (July 4, 2010), available at http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/1.1210167 (accessed on June 2, 2020). For more on Bialik's essay, see Zipora Kagan, *Halacha and Aggada as a Code of Literature* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1989).

religious cataclysm, to bring back the old unity which religion has destroyed, but on a new plane, where the world of mythology and that of revelation meet in the soul of man" (MTJM, pp. 7-8).

Modernity, to Scholem, was the age of the complete "dissolution of all traditional ties"[65]; it was an age where neither law nor mysticism really existed, and by consequence, neither could any religion (or culture) in a true sense.[66] What characterized modernity, according to Scholem, was the development of a new, unprecedented kind of faith, an abstract mysticism "which has no particular relation to other religious phenomena," "an abstract mystical religion" with its roots in pantheism (MTJM, p. 6). Yet without the grounding of this mysticism in a particular tradition and legal structure, Scholem knew, it could bear no fruit, and this was partially why he had no faith in the prospects of a 'modern Judaism.' Scholem believed that Zionism would become a new 'structure' which would rescues Judaism from the contemporary state of affairs, and help return Judaism to its true form, with its 'mystical-legal' symbiosis. Nonetheless, late in his life, he did not think that this goal had been achieved. "Now things have changed again. There are the beginnings of what you call technological assimilation, universalist assimilation. […]. It is possible that we are condemning too hastily, because we don't see the seeds beneath the surface. We only see the swing of the pendulum that is turning our life here into a grotesquerie" (WGS, pp. 41-42).

We may wonder, therefore, why it was that Scholem rejected the existence of a Jewish *state* so vehemently. Would a state not merely be the 'framework' to allow the development of an inner 'core'? This may be something of a contradiction in Scholem's thought. At the same time, there is some evidence to suggest that late in life, he did begin to view the existence of a state positively, allowing

[65] "Religious Authority and Mysticism," p. 6.
[66] David Biale writes in similar spirit in "Gershom Scholem on nihilism and anarchism," *Rethinking History*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2015), pp. 61-71, p. 64.

for great inner developments. Consider, in this regard, his statements on one of the many debates he had with Buber about the future of Zionism:

> It is impossible to know in what form things will appear. I had a debate about this with Buber. Years ago he wrote negatively about the State of Israel, from the standpoint of the attitude of the state towards the continuity of the Jewish religion. And I replied to him: How do you know that the State of Israel has no religious significance? It may be that it has not. I too think that political frameworks have no religious significance. But how do we know what is taking place within the framework, in the living society, in the body that bears the state? Perhaps our concepts are being utterly changed, and not everything which we today consider to be 'established' religion is the genuine religious act? We do not know in what form things may appear in the new reincarnation. And that is the price of Zionism, which is being paid for the dialectic it contains from birth, in the clash between two contradictory trends. On the one hand, it debilitates, on the other, it strengthens. That is the dialectic of the development, and we have not yet arrived at any synthesis.[67]

Anti-Bourgeois Ontology

The idea that there existed another, truer reality underneath the bourgeois façade seems to have also been replicated in Scholem's views on the very structures of existence. A central aspect of his ontology is the division between the realm of visible, physical, "historical" phenomena, and the realm of the invisible, transcendent, metaphysical and "metahistorical." As early as his 1937 letter to Zalman Schocken, for example, Scholem distinguished between the "history" of the Kabbalah on the

[67] Conversation with Ben Ezer, p. 280.

one hand, discernible through the tools of modern science, commentary and philology, and its metaphysical import, on the other. His original intention, he admits therein, was to write "not the history but the metaphysics of the Kabbalah," but eventually settled on the former because he could not access the latter:

> [H]istory may seem to be fundamentally an illusion, but an illusion without which in temporal reality no insight into the essence of things is possible. For today's man, that mystical totality of 'truth' (*des Systems*), […] can only become visible in the purest way [through] commentary and in the singular mirror of philological criticism.[68]

In the conclusion to "General Characteristics of Jewish Mysticism," the introductory chapter to *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, he again affirms the existence of the two realms, this time suggesting that both the actions of the mystic as well as that of the historian could potentially unlock the true nature of things, hidden under the realm of visible phenomena:

> The particular forms of symbolical thought in which the fundamental attitude of the Kabbalah found its expression, may mean little or nothing to us […]. But the attempt to discover the hidden life beneath the external shapes of reality and to make visible that abyss in which the symbolic nature of all that exists reveals itself: this attempt is as important for us today as it was for those ancient mystics. For as long as nature and man are conceived in His image […] the quest for the hidden life of the transcendent element in such creation will always form one of the most important preoccupations of the human mind (MTJM, pp. 38-9).

In some of his later writings, Scholem equates the metaphysical and metahistorical realm with the idea of "the Messianic." In the conclusion to his lecture "Toward an Understanding of the

[68] Biale, *Kabbalah and Counter-History,* pp. 31-2. The parentheses appear in Biale's translation.

Messianic Idea in Judaism" (1959), for example, he notes that Zionism belongs – or at least *should* belong, in his interpretation – to the realm of "history," not to the realm of "metahistory":

> Born out of the horror and destruction that was Jewish history in our generation, [Zionism] is bound to history itself and not to meta-history (*der Geschichte selber und nicht einer Metageschichte verschworen*); it has not given itself up totally to Messianism. Whether or not Jewish history will be able to endure this commitment [*Einsatz*; also: entrance, intrusion] without perishing in the crisis of the Messianic claim which has virtually been conjured up – that is the question which out of his great and dangerous past the Jew of this age poses to his present and to his future.[69]

Similarly, in his famous critique of Buber's interpretation of Hasidism (1961), he suggests that the mystic, through his extraordinary powers, could gain access to the realm of the "Messianic," which is in a sense 'truer' than visible, observable reality:

> [It] is not the *concrete* reality of things that appears as the ideal result of the mystic's action, but something of the *Messianic* reality in which all things have been restored to their proper place in the scheme of creation […] (italics in original).[70]

This dualism of Scholem's ontology informs his vision of the world in several important respects. To begin with, as has been noted by several commentators, his ontology underlies his approach to the question of Jewish continuity.[71] As a scientist, Scholem believed that each episode of Jewish history was unique and distinct its social, religious, political, and linguistic context (or contexts).

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[69] "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pp. 1-36, p. 36. (Translation modified).

[70] "Martin Buber's Interpretation of Hasidism," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism,* pp. 228-250, p. 243.

[71] Ronny Miron, "The Secret of Jewish Existence: A Metaphysical Analysis of Gershom Scholem's Idea of Jewish Historical Continuity," *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism,* Vol. 17 (2014), pp. 170-206. See also Miron's *The Angel of Jewish History: The Image of the Jewish Past in the Twentieth Century* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2013), pp. 67-93, ff; Rose Stair, "Gershom Scholem's Critical Appropriation of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the Necessary Fiction of Historical Objectivity," *PaRDeS: Zeitschrift der Vereinigung für Jüdische Studien*, H. 24 (2018), pp. 217-238.

The attempt to draw out an all-inclusive meaning or lesson from these various episodes – or alternatively, to draw analogies between them – may be beneficial for heuristic, pedagogical, and even demagogical purposes, but most often results in the loss of perspective and the obfuscation of the original paradigm.[72] As Scholem himself put it in a personal interview from the last decade of his life: "There is no uniform content [to Judaism]. What has the Judaism that existed at the time of Abraham or of Moses got to do with the Baal-Shem-Tov?"[73] At the same time, however, as an individual and a Zionist, Scholem believed that all Jewish episodes and phenomena were connected across space and time, as if through invisible, metaphysical links. As he himself conceded in a lecture in 1971:

> The issue has not been finally resolved to this day, whether all Jewish history is subject to the same determinant dynamics or is merely a collection of different fragments of episodes, each explicable by specific circumstances of general history. From our understanding and our living experience, we are rather inclined to the holistic view.[74]

It seems, however, that this ontology also informs in certain respects his political understanding. In his writings, we can thus distinguish between the procedural, visible realm of politics, and a subterranean, 'mythological,' metapolitical realm. On the political level, we can count his objection to the First World War, his membership in the pro-peace group *Brit Shalom*, his vocal opposition to certain aspects of Ben-Gurion's premiership, the Zionist Right, and later, towards the end of his life, also of the settlement enterprise led by *Gush Emunim*. On the metapolitical level, we

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[72] A case in point is his rejection of earlier interpretations of Hasidism (by Ish-Horowitz, Berdyczewski, Ahad Ha'am, and Buber): according to Scholem, previous authors were so concerned with extracting a *message* from Hasidism for the present that at some point they became insensitive to proper historical contexts. Rivka Shatz's essay argues this point effectively: "Gershom Scholem's Interpretation of Hasidism as an Expression of his Idealism," in *Gershom Scholem: The Man and His Work*, pp. 87-103.

[73] Conversation with Ben Ezer, p. 276.

[74] Gershom Scholem, "The Science of Judaism, its Achievements and Prospects" (1971), in *Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History,* ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, 2nd Edition, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 245-8, p. 246. Translation amended from Gershom Scholem, *Od Davar* [*Explications and Implications: Writings on Jewish Heritage and Renaissance, Vol. II*], ed. Avraham Shapira, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1989), pp. 143-5, p. 145.

can count his views on the meaning of culture, on human nature, and so forth. We can also understand better his attraction to Cultural Zionism and Anarchism as the metapolitical matrix upon which new developments may arise.

This distinction between politics and metapolitics in Scholem's thought helps us somewhat in making sense of a certain riddle regarding his political legacy. Towards the end of his life, Scholem became close to a group known as the "Shdemot" Circle, comprised primarily of second-generation members of the Kibbutz Movement who, largely in defiance of their obstinately-secular fathers, sought to renew interest in Jewish texts and sources. Members of this group saw in Scholem a spiritual father who could help them renew their relationship with Judaism and contribute to a Jewish 'renaissance' beyond the extremes of militant religiosity or militant secularism.[75] At the same time, as several commentators have noted, some of Scholem's most famous students, including Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer, Joseph ben Shlomo, and Yehuda Liebes, became prominent activists in the Settlement Movement.[76] One could see the relationship between these two groups, however, if one conceives them as two offshoots of Scholem's *metapolitics* rather than his politics, which elude convenient categorization as left or right. Both groups, in other words, saw Scholem's ideas as something of a blank canvas upon which they could paint their own visions of Zionism.

[75] For more on this group, see Gad Ofaz, *Second and Third Generation Kibbutz Members in Search of Identity* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, the MOFET Institute, 2016).
[76] Moshe Idel, "Messianic Scholars: On Early Israeli Scholarship, Politics and Messianism," *Modern Judaism,* Vol. 32, No. 1 (Feb. 2012), pp. 22-53, p. 45; David Ohana, "Scholem's Children" (Hebrew), in idem., *A Land of Stones,* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2017), pp. 69-102.

Chapter III:

Yehezkel Kaufmann: Against the "New Jew"

Introduction

In contrast to Baer and Scholem – as well as the vast majority of Zionist thinkers and ideologues in the first decades of the twentieth century – the biblical scholar and historian-sociologist Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889-1963) objected in very principle to the project of the "New Jew," at least insofar as this entailed an "ideological" transformation. Kaufmann believed that since their constitution as a nation, the Jews have adhered to but a single principle: the reality of God, the Creator and Ruler of all, who has revealed Himself to the People of Israel in history and has sent His prophets to proclaim His message. As he argued in his first major publication, "The 'Judaism' of Ahad Ha'am" (1914), the Jewish "permanent essence" (*ik'ar ka'vu'a*) consisted of but this single claim: "the acknowledgment of the existence of God, Who revealed Himself to the People of Israel in history."[1] All forms and iterations of Judaism throughout history, he explained, from the Prophets to the Talmudic Sages, from Maimonides to Isaac Luria and beyond, developed from this one idea, and any deviation or "transvaluation in values" (*shin'uy arachin*) on the ideational level would ultimately be a deviation from Judaism itself. In his view, while all these various 'Judaisms' may have differ from each other on the symbolic and formal levels, they all nonetheless added up to one, dynamic yet consistent tradition, unified by one connecting thread.[2] (Kaufmann would thus never ask, like Scholem, "What

[1] Yehezkel Kaufmann, "The 'Judaism' of Ahad Ha'am" ("*ya'hadu'to" shel Achad Ha-am*), *HaShiloah,* Vol. 30 (1914), pp. 249-271, p. 250. A helpful overview of Kaufmann's arguments in this essay is contained in Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology,* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1995), "The Ultimate Critique: Yehezkel Kaufmann," pp. 326-332.
[2] Kaufmann, "The 'Judaism' of Ahad Ha'am," pp. 250-1.

has the Judaism that existed at the time of Abraham or of Moses got to do with the Baal-Shem-Tov?").[3] Consequently, Kaufmann argued, whatever form Judaism took in the future must naturally flow from the same fountainhead, adhering to the same basic ideology. Otherwise, it could not be considered a legitimate successor to the Judaism of yore.

Kaufmann also believed that the discourse of the "New Jew," at least as it developed historically, was tainted with Jewish self-hatred, not to say anti-Semitism. In the essay "*hurban ha-nefesh*" (1934), "The Devastation of the Soul," one of the deepest reflections ever written on the hatred of Jews, he showed that the Zionist "criticism of the diaspora" and depiction of Old Jewry – especially in the writings of the more radical critics such as Brenner and Berdyczewski – were filled with anti-Semitic tropes.[4] The central argument of these critics against diasporic life, Kaufmann writes, was that it was somehow "immoral": to these critics, "life on a foreign soil, outside the national homeland, and among foreign peoples, […] is servitude, [it is] contemptible, demeaning, befitting only of dogs"[5]; it forced Jews to become "parasites," working in "despicable professions," "storekeeping, pimping," and so forth.[6] Kaufmann points out that while many nations have been forced throughout history to wander into exile for economic or political reasons and to work in various professions, these critics seem to believe that only the Jews have become immoral as a result. As such, he argued, these critics demonstrate that they have clearly internalized the classic accusations of European anti-Semitism. Kaufmann made similar observations in another polemical essay, this time focusing on the thought of one of the central ideologues of Labor Zionism, A. D. Gordon.[7] At the beginning of the essay,

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[3] "Zionism – Dialectic of Continuity and Rebellion," in Ehud Ben Ezer, *Unease in Zion*, (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), pp. 263-96, p. 276.
[4] "*Hurban Ha-Nefesh*" (Hebrew), originally published in *Moznaim,* Vol. 1, Is. 4 (1934), pp. 6-18. Reprinted in idem., *be-hev'lei ha-z'man*, (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1936), pp. 257-274. All references are to the reprint.
[5] "*Hurban Ha-Nefesh*," p. 263.
[6] "*Hurban Ha-Nefesh*," p. 265.
[7] "The Critique of A. D. Gordon" (*bikkoret tora'to shel A D Gordon*), Part I: *Moznaim,* Vol. 17, Is. 3 (1944), pp, 123-129; Part II: ibid., Is. 4 (1944), pp. 191-200. A long reply to Kaufmann in defense of Gordon was written by Shlomo Tzemach, a

Kaufmann admits that Gordon – in marked contrast to Brenner and Berdyczewski – did not seem to hate his people; on the contrary, Gordon was "an enthusiastic admirer of Israel and the Spirit of Israel."[8] At the same time, however, Gordon also depicted Jewish life in the diaspora as essentially "parasitic," making this belief a cornerstone of his teaching. Consequently, in Kaufmann's view, Gordon is similarly complicit in introducing anti-Semitic ideas into the heart of Zionism, even if to a lesser extent.

What the Jews required, in Kaufmann's view, was a *practical*, not a 'spiritual' or 'cultural' transformation. Kaufmann believed that the Jewish problem now was fundamentally the same as it had been for the last two millennia: the problem of *galut*, or as he stated in one of his essays from the 1930's, the problem of "a people without *territory* [*eretz*; land], a people *estranged* everywhere [*am nokhr'i be-kol ma'kom*]" (emphases in original).[9] Accordingly, he argued that the task of contemporary Zionism must therefore be first and foremost to acquire the Jews a national domain [*eretz le'umit*], where they could be the majority population, where they could speak their own language, and give full expression to their own culture. Kaufmann agreed that the Jews needed to change their "social orientation" to become a nation of "laborers" – but for the purpose of acquiring a land of their own, not because there was any 'spiritual deficiency,' so to speak, in the Jewish character. "Not just *any* work, but the *type* of work – that is what matters. […]. [What we require is] work that could help us *attain* land [*le'han'chil*]. Our social-national deficiency is our *urban* nature, not our 'laziness' or our 'parasitic nature,' et cetera" (emphasis in original).[10] The great tragedy of the contemporary revival movement, Kaufmann believed, was that it had been taken over by what he called "Spiritual Zionism" (*ha-tzi'yon'ut*

Labor Zionist activist and close friend of David Ben Gurion, *Unfounded Conclusions* (*hasagot she-lo hi'sign*), (Tel Aviv: The Youth Center of Hever HaKvutzot, 1945).

[8] "The Critique of A. D. Gordon," Part I, p. 124.

[9] Yehezkel Kaufmann, "Class Warfare in Israel" (Hebrew), in *be-hev'lei ha-z'man,* pp. 118-63, p. 151.

[10] "Class Warfare in Israel," pp. 142-3, ff.

ha-ruch'anit), by which he meant not only Ahad Ha'am's Cultural Zionism, but all streams and ideologies that sought to recreate or to alter the Jewish 'essence'; instead of focusing on the 'the predicament of the Jews' (*tza'rat ha-yehud'im*), he argued, contemporary Zionism became fixated instead on 'the predicament of *Judaism*' (*tza'rat ha-ya'hadut*), analyzing *ad nauseum* the different ways by which Judaism must be reformed.[11] In his scholarship and in his popular writings, Kaufmann thus sought to return the Zionist Movement to what he believed was its true goals.

Kaufmann is distinguished primarily by virtue of his two *magna opera*, the multi-volume *Golah ve-Nekhar* (*Exile and Estrangement: A Historical-Sociological Analysis of the Destiny of the People of Israel from Ancient Times to The Present* [hereafter: GvN], 1928-32),[12] and the eight-volume work of biblical interpretation, *The History of Israelite Faith: From Antiquity to the End of the Second Commonwealth Period* (1937-57),[13] which established him as one of the foremost biblical scholars of the twentieth century. These two monumental works were conceived simultaneously and share an organic relationship to each other. The guiding theme behind both was the internal relationship between the Jewish religion – or, to use Kaufmann's terms, Israelite *faith* (*e'munah*) – and the course of Jewish history. In certain respects, this was the question that preoccupied Kaufmann throughout his career. As he would note in a late interview: "From the day I grasped the special nature of Israelite faith, I also realized the special nature of Israelite fate. I found that in the life of the Nation of Israel, a unique religious force

[11] Cf. Eliezer Schweid, "The Teaching of Yehezkel Kaufmann" (Hebrew), in idem., *A History of Modern Jewish Religious Philosophy*, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006), Vol. IV, pp. 138-169, p. 139.

[12] All references will be to the two-volume, 3rd edition, (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1962). In this edition, Vol. I consists of volumes i and ii of previous editions, while Vol. II consists of volumes iii and iv. I only used the notations of "Vol. I" and "Vol. II" for the sake of brevity.

[13] *Tol'edot ha-emun'a ha-y'isra'elit*, often translated as *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile,* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1937-57), Volumes I-VIII. Some of the books have been translated into English by Moshe Greenberg, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

gave shape to its being [*hava'ya*; Erlebnis] and worldview [*hava'yat o'lam*] and imposed upon its adherents a unique [historical] path."[14]

Unlike other nations, Kaufmann argued, who had similarly been exiled from their original homeland, and subsequently assimilated or perished in other ways, the Jews maintained their national distinction due to their religious peculiarity. For even after the Jews wandered to foreign lands, began speaking foreign tongues, and adopted local customs and dress, their religious differences could not be eviscerated. The only way by which a Jew could become completely integrated into his foreign environment remained that of *sh'mad*: conversion to another religion, whether to paganism in ancient times, or to Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages and modernity. Likewise, the only way by which a gentile could become a member of the Jewish nation was through the acceptance of the tenets of Israelite faith. Kaufmann notes that the ideas of the *Haskalah*, foreign and Jewish, have led to a certain religious laxity among Jews. Yet this 'secularism,' by definition, could not ingratiate these Jews with the members of other faiths. The only path of 'escape' for the individual Jew remained that of 'obliterating' his Judaism (GvN, I, 453-4; 436-7, 490, ff).[15] *La condition juive* thus remained as it was.

In both style and content, Kaufmann's writings – his scholarly as well as his Zionist-ideological essays – are characterized by a strong, if nuanced, anti-metaphysical stance.[16] In contrast to Baer and

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[14] Quoted in Avinoam Barshai's Introduction to *Yehezkel Kaufmann: Selected Writings on Jewish Nationality and Zionism,* ed. Avinoam Barshai, (Jerusalem: Hassifriya Ha-Tziyonit, 1995), pp. 13-120, p. 13. Cf. GvN, I, p. v.

[15] Kaufmann maintained this idea throughout his life. In one of his late essays in English, "The Biblical Age" (1956), he wrote the following, apropos a discussion of Ezekiel and the aftermath of the destruction of the First Temple: "Once the religious barrier was removed, assimilation soon became total. But no degree of cultural assimilation was sufficient to inspire in the Jews a belief in the pagan gods. As a result they remained religiously and hence nationally distinct. Thus the factor which operates decisively in the later history of Jewry is already at work in this period: the Jews are unable to adopt the religion of their environment by belief, when they do adopt it, it is by force. Such conversion is faithless and takes place because of material considerations. This is the iron law of the Exile." Yehezkel Kaufmann, "The Biblical Age," in *Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People,* ed. Leo W. Schwarz, (New York: The Modern Library, 1956), pp. 1-93, p. 78. Translated later as "Israelite Faith from Its Beginnings to the End of the Second Temple," in *Me-Kiv'shona shel Ha-Yetzi'ra Ha-Mikra'it*, (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1966), pp. 48-138. The Hebrew equivalent of these passages can be found on p. 124.

[16] Cf. Laurence J. Silberstein, "Historical Sociology and Ideology: A Prolegomenon to Yehezkel Kaufmann's *Golah v'Nekhar*," in *Essays in Modern Jewish History: A Tribute to Ben Halpern*, eds. Frances Malino and Phyllis Cohen Albert, (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1982), pp. 173-95, p. 173.

Scholem, there was no mysticism or romanticism guiding his views. Kaufmann acknowledged the role that Ideas (*ide'ot*; ideas in the Platonic sense) played in history, but he denied that these played a role in shaping the fate of the nation or the destiny of men *in themselves*. For this reason, he rejected such 'providential' explanations of history such as Hegel's *Weltgeist,* Spengler's law of universal rise and decline, and even the idea of 'Progress' (GvN, I, 24; 36).[17] He also rejected the metaphysical presuppositions of Jewish thinkers such as Nachman Krochmal (RNK; 1785-1840) or Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891), who were influenced by Hegelian notions that metaphysical ideas shape the course of history.[18] Ideas and values, he argued, only affected reality through their expression in human culture, and only then became historical factors influencing the course of events.[19] In the case of the Jews, Kaufmann thus denied that there were any divine or other extra-temporal factors affecting their special destiny. The laws governing Jewish history, he argued, were no different than those governing the history of other nations. What was unique about the Jews, in his view, was the Jewish "religious Idea," which resembled no other. This Idea molded all aspects of Jewish life, including the political order, family life, laws, morality, property rights, and so forth (cf. GvN, I, p. 159).[20] It was also the sole reason for their anomalous existence:

> The *first*, single, unique reason for Jewish peculiarity in exile was religion *alone*. […]. It was under the auspices of [this Idea] that […] the people struggled with the nature of reality. [This Idea] created 'Israel' […]. […] [It] gave purpose and meaning to [its] struggle for distinction […] (GvN, I, p. 206; emphases in original).

[17] Kaufmann attempted to refute Hegel and Spengler on several occasions. See also, e.g., "From the Mystery of National Creativity" (Hebrew: *be-kiv'shona shel ha-yetzi'ra ha-le'umit*), in *Me-Kiv'shona shel Ha-Yetzi'ra Ha-Mikra'it,* pp. 11-33, pp. 16-18; "The Decline of the West" (Review, Hebrew), in *Rimon*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1922), pp. XXXVIII-XLV.

[18] A comparison between Kaufmann's ideas and those of RNK and Graetz was made by Ehud Luz in "Jewish Nationalism in the Thought of Yehezkel Kaufmann," Binah: Studies in Jewish Thought, Vol. 2, ed. Joseph Dan, (New York: Praeger, 1989), pp. 177-190, pp. 177-8.

[19] Luz, "Jewish Nationalism in the Thought of Yehezkel Kaufmann," pp. 177-190, p. 179, ff.

[20] See also "From the Mystery of National Creativity," p. 21, ff.

For Kaufmann, Zionism was similarly to be guided by pragmatic, rather than 'theoretical' considerations.[21] At the end of *Golah ve-Nekhar*, as well as in the various polemical essays he wrote following his *aliyah* in the late 1920's and early '30's – many of which were collected in the volume *Be-Hev'lay Ha-Z'man* (*In the Twixt of Time*; 1936) – he thus set the Jews mainly practical goals, which included above all: the transformation of the Jews into a laboring people, who can settle and hold onto their own land (*hit'am'oot* – 'entrenchment'), through the establishment of continuous, ethnically homogenous Jewish settlements. These actions alone, he believed, would guarantee that the Jews establish and cement their national territorial rights. This position made him a natural ally of the pioneers and of Labor Zionism, which he saw as the vanguard of the entire national movement. "The Labor Movement," he wrote in one of his essays, "recognized correctly that great truth, that the creation of a large [contingent of] working masses, which seizes the land with its labor [*kovesh eretz be-avod'ato*], is at this point an issue of Life and Death. […]. It would be true to say that the fate of our national endeavor depends on the fate of the Labor Movement."[22] At the same time, however, he chastened the leaders of Labor Zionism for subduing the interests of the Jewish national movement to those of international Marxism, as well as for their concerns with ideological purity. For analogous reasons, he also criticized the Revisionists (and others), who believed that the first task of Zionism should be the establishment of a Jewish state. A nation-state, Kaufmann believed, would be an efficacious vehicle for the implementation of the goals as outlined above, but it must not be seen as a substitute. "The fundamental purpose of the national redemption movement," he underscored, should be "to acquire a *national domain* for the People of Israel; not a Jewish *state*, but a Jewish *land* [*eretz ha-*

[21] Ironically, in Shlomo Tzemach's response to Kaufmann in defense of Gordon, he accuses the former as being too "bookish" and presents the latter as a paragon of "embodied experience" (Tzemach, pp. 5-8, ff).
[22] "Class Warfare in Israel," p. 154, 162.

ye'hudim]."[23] As in his scholarship, in his ideological writings he thus rejected the subjugation of concrete, historical 'details' to 'metaphysical' postulates.

From Odessa to Jerusalem

Another difference of overarching significance between Baer and Scholem and Kaufmann is that Kaufmann was not a product of German education and culture.[24] Although he received his doctorate in Bern, and lived for a few years in Berlin, his outlook and concerns ultimately remained throughout his life those of the post-traditional Jew raised in the Pale of Settlement in the culture of the "Hebrew Revival Period" (*t'kufat ha-t'chiya*). His principal interlocutors, therefore, were not so much Ranke, Burckhardt, Hegel, and Buber – although he did engage with them all – but rather, Smolenskin, Ahad Ha'am, Brenner, Bialik, and so forth. Moreover, unlike Baer and Scholem, Kaufmann was also somewhat of an outsider to the Jerusalem School, having been appointed to the faculty of the Hebrew University only in 1949, some two and a half decades after the establishment of the university and its Institute of Jewish Studies.[25] Nonetheless, Kaufmann embodied in his works some of the positions most closely associated with the school's members, including the "national"

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[23] Yehezkel Kaufmann, "Hebrew Labor (*avoda iv'rit*)," in *be-hev'lei ha-z'man*, pp. 164-94, pp. 172-3, ff.

[24] Kaufmann's biography has been explored in Emanuel Green, "Universalism and Nationalism as Reflected in the Writings of Yehezkel Kaufmann With Special Emphasis on the Biblical Period," PhD Dissertation (New York University, 1968), pp. 1-26; Job Y. Jindo, "Recontextualizing Kaufmann: His Empirical Conception of the Bible and Its Significance in Jewish Intellectual History," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, Vol. 19, Is. 2 (2011), pp. 95–129, p. 102-10, ff; and in the biographical essays appearing at the beginning of the volume *Yehezkel Kaufmann and the Reinvention of Jewish Biblical Scholarship*, eds. Job Y. Jindo, Benjamin D. Sommer, and Thomas Staubli, (Fribourg: Academic Press, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017): Thomas M. Krapf, "Yehezkel Koifman: An Outline of his Life and Work," pp. 3-44; Thomas Staubli (tr. J. Riemer), "Yehezkel Kaufmann: The Bern Years of a Genius," pp. 45-59; Moshe Greenberg (tr. L. Levin), "Personal Views of Yehezkel Kaufmann," pp. 60-69.

[25] Accordingly, he is discussed only briefly (and only in the endnotes) in David N. Myers' history of the Jerusalem School, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). It should be noted, however, that Myers did address Kaufmann's contribution in his original doctoral dissertation, "'From Zion will go forth Torah': Jewish scholarship and the Zionist return to history" (Columbia, 1991), pp. 198-210. He also discusses him briefly in his essay "Was there a 'Jerusalem School?': An Inquiry into the First Generation of Historical Researchers at the Hebrew University," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 10 (1994), pp. 66-92, pp. 74-5.

view of Judaism, the belief in the uninterrupted continuity of Jewish existence through all periods and iterations, and the need to end the Jews' diasporic existence. As such, he should justifiably be considered among the First Generation and Founders of the Jerusalem School, alongside the others.

Kaufmann was born in the city of Dunajewzi (Dunaivtsi), in the historical province of Podolia, in southwestern Ukraine (today in the Khmelnytskyi Oblast). In 1890, the city held eleven synagogues, a Jewish hospital, an almshouse, a Talmud Torah and a number of *cheders*, and became known as a regional center of Hebrew and Zionist literary and educational activity.[26] In 1908, he moved to Odessa to attend the modern *yeshiva* established by Chaim Tchernowitz (popularly known as *Rav Tzair*). Tchernowitz, a true visionary, sought to combine traditional Jewish study with modern research in order to rejuvenate Jewish learning.[27] Some of the luminaries Tchernowitz attracted to teach at the *yeshiva* were the poet H. N. Bialik, the rabbinic scholar and later Israeli Supreme Court judge Simcha Assaf (1889-1953), and the historian Joseph Klausner (1874-1958), later Kaufmann's colleague at the Hebrew University. Both Bialik and Klausner played a seminal role in the development of their student's inner and professional life. Among Kaufmann's fellow students were some who subsequently achieved renown as scholars or as Hebrew writers, including Yehoshua Guttmann (1890-1963), an eminent educator and scholar of Hellenistic Judaism; Zevi Woyslawski (1889–1957), a writer and critic; and Yaakov Helmann (1880-1950), Zionist leader and writer.[28] In 1910, Kaufmann moved to St. Petersburg to attend the Academy for Jewish and Oriental Studies of Baron David Günzburg (1856–1910). There, he attended lectures by Simon Dubnow (1860–1941) in Jewish history, and by Yehudah Leib Katzenelson (Buki ben Yogli; 1846–1917) in Jewish law. In St. Petersburg, he also

[26] "Dunaevtsy," from the History of Jewish Communities in Ukraine website, http://jewua.org/dunayevtsy/ (accessed on Apr. 13th, 2021).
[27] "Chaim Tchernowitz," Jewish Virtual Library, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/tchernowitz-chaim (accessed on Apr. 13th, 2021).
[28] Emanuel Green, "Universalism and Nationalism," p. 3.

befriended Zalman Shazar (1889–1974), before the latter moved to Berlin and also befriended Scholem.

Shortly before he died, in a tribute volume for Zevi Woyslawski – who became his lifelong friend – Kaufmann wrote movingly of the deep crisis faced by intellectual Jewry in the Pale of Settlement in the early twentieth century. Writing of Woyslawski's spiritual development, Kaufmann also revealed something of his own journey, highlighting the importance of Tchernowitz's endeavors to young men like himself, who were deeply troubled by the question of the Jewish future, and found themselves, because of this reason, drawn to the "national," that is, Zionist movement:

> Tchernowitz's *yeshiva* opened in the midst of the First Russian Revolution (1905-1906), during a time of great crisis for Judaism. The waves of revolution also flooded the Jewish streets. Thousands of Jewish youths were drawn to the revolution. The national (Hebrew-Zionist) movement was pushed aside and dwindled in influence. The future of Judaism was uncertain. There was a feeling of crisis and catastrophe. At that very hour, Rabbi Chaim Tchernowitz (and his circle) had the idea to establish a fortress for the cultivation of traditional Judaism in the spirit of national thought [*ha-mach'shava ha-le'umit*]. Amidst the [general] alienation and assimilation, he sought to build a small refuge for Jewish teachings [*torat y'isra'el*] in the spirit of our national heritage and on the basis of contemporary science. Rabbi Yochanan ben-Zakkai's 'Yavne' was his inspiration – a haven for Torah at the hour of collapse. The Western European seminaries [*bat'ei mid'rash*] were his models. But those were all tied to the [Western European] ideals of assimilation, while the *yeshiva* was rooted in the yearnings for national revival.[29]

[29] Yehezkel Kaufmann, "On the Thought of Zevi Woyslawski" (Hebrew), *'Ateret Tsevi: 'al Dr. Tsevi Voislavski, ha-ish ve-haguto,* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1962), pp. 1-9, p. 1. My translation.

Kaufmann undertook his doctoral studies at the University of Bern beginning in 1913, where he focused on philosophy, Semitic languages, and biblical studies. At the time, Jews were not allowed to receive academic certificates from institutions of higher learning anywhere in Russia, prompting Kaufmann to go to Bern because of their flexible admission policies.[30] Kaufmann wrote his dissertation on the topic of "The Principle of Sufficient Reason," under the supervision of Richard Herbertz (a professor of philosophy who, as it happened, also supervised the doctoral dissertation of Walter Benjamin).[31] Following his studies, he moved to Berlin, where he was employed part-time by his former teacher Chaim Tchernowitz.[32] Simultaneously, he completed writing *Exile and Estrangement*, and seemingly also the first volume of *The History of Israelite Faith*.

In a letter to his former teacher Joseph Klausner from 1926, he explained that the only reason he remained in Berlin for the time being – rather than make *aliyah* – was because he required the use of the city's libraries.[33] Eventually, however, he moved to the Land of Israel in 1929, and settled in Haifa, where he was appointed a teacher of Hebrew literature, Bible, Talmud, and classical thought at the Re'ali Gymnasium (*beth ha-sefer ha-re'ali*), at the time known as the best secondary school in the country. He formed a close relationship with the school's founder and first headmaster, Arthur Biram (1878-1967), who allowed Kaufmann to devote time to his scholarship, as well as published some of Kaufmann's minor works by the school press.[34] After long delays due to lack of funds, *Exile and Estrangement* was published by Dvir Publishing House in Tel Aviv. The central figure in the press was

[30] Jindo, "Recontextualizing Kaufmann," p. 105n30.
[31] Jindo, "Recontextualizing Kaufmann," p. 106n31. Kaufmann published portions of the dissertation in 1920: Jesekiel Kaufmann, *Eine Abhandlung über den zureichenden Grund, Teil 1: Der logische Grund* (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1920).
[32] Green, "Universalism and Nationalism," p. 8.
[33] Green, "Universalism and Nationalism," p. 11.
[34] Including *Bein Netivot*, as well as the *Anthology of the Writings of R' Nachman Krochmal* ([*Likkut'ey Ranak*] Haifa: Reali Hebrew School, 1949/50).

Kaufmann's former teacher Bialik, who held his former student in the highest esteem.[35] In 1930, Bialik expressed these sentiments in a letter to the Chancellor of the Hebrew University, Dr. Y. L. Magnes:

> I am still under the deep influence of the book *Golah Ve-Nechar*. The second part has just left the press, and I have just read it a second time. It is my considered opinion that this is a very great book, such as has not appeared in Israel for a very- long time. Two other parts remain yet to be published. The four parts, when completed, will contain a comprehensive survey of all the fundamental problems confronting the Jewish people from their Exodus from Egypt to this very day. The author also endeavors to peer into the future and to blaze new trails; all this done with an understanding of the Jewish situation and destiny among the hostile nations to which present day literature is totally unaccustomed. I call your earnest, concentrated attention to this most remarkable work. […]. Please retain in your memory the name of the author of this outstanding book – Yehezkel Kaufmann. My heart tells me that Hebrew philosophic thought has found its redeemer.[36]

In the early 1930's, Kaufmann's publicistic articles earned him a prominent place among the *Yishuv*'s public intellectuals, and he even became an important influence on the "Zionist Youth" movement (*ha-no'ar ha-tzi'yoni*) in Poland.[37] After the establishment of the state, however, he gradually stopped writing about contemporary and historical-sociological questions and turned his complete attention to biblical scholarship. At the time, Jewish biblical studies were still in their infancy. Most of the critical studies of the Bible were conducted by Protestants.[38] In this, as well as other respects,

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[35] Some of Kaufmann's letters to Bialik were published in the journal *Molad,* Vol. 21 (Jan. 1964), pp. 532-536 (ed. with preface by M. Ungerfeld). In these letters, Kaufmann shows great reverence to Bialik, although it is clear that he was also quite impatient with the slow publication of his book.

[36] Letter to Y. L. Magnes, March 9th, 1930, in *The Letters of H. N. Bialik* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1938-9), Vol. V, pp. 44-45. Transl. found in Green, "Universalism and Nationalism," pp. 10-11.

[37] Barshai, Introduction, in idem., *Yehezkel Kaufmann,* p. 20. See also footnotes 33 and 34 on pp. 46-7.

[38] Cf. Ran Hacohen, *Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible: The German-Jewish Reception of Biblical Criticism*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010).

Kaufmann's *History of Israelite Faith* should be considered a truly revolutionary project.[39] In 1949, his studies finally secured for him an appointment at the Hebrew University as Professor of Biblical Studies. He was nearly sixty at the time. As such, he could not enjoy his new status for long, as he arrived at mandatory retirement age in 1957, at the age of 67. Nonetheless, in his time at the University he trained a new generation of biblical scholars which continued to influence the field for many years. In his final years, Kaufmann was also immensely productive, writing detailed essays and books on various biblical themes. He died on October 9, 1963, and buried in the old cemetery of Sanhedria (where Gershom Scholem would also be buried two decades later). His tombstone read: "Scholar of the History of Israel's Faith. He Taught Knowledge. He Deliberated, And Sought Out, and Set in Order."[40]

Kaufmann was awarded several prestigious prizes during his life: The Israel Prize (1958), the Bialik Prize (1933 and 1956), and the Solomon Bublick Prize (1961). After his death, he was eulogized by some of the most eminent thinkers and dignitaries of the Jewish state, among others, his colleagues Ben-Zion Dinur, Ernst Simon, and the Third President of Israel, Zalman Shazar. Despite his renown and esteem, however, Kaufmann was known throughout his life as a loner and recluse. In his letters, for example, he hardly ever revealed any personal details, and would only speak of his studies and professional achievements. Already in the 1920's, when he was in Berlin, his family members and friends complained that he hardly ever spoke of his inner life, preferring instead to focus only on the 'dry facts.'[41] He also never married. He considered his true legacy to be his studies and ideas, which continue to resonate among a younger generation of scholars.[42]

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[39] Green, "Universalism and Nationalism," pp. 14-15, ff.
[40] Green, "Universalism and Nationalism," p. 1 (translation modified).
[41] Green, "Universalism and Nationalism," p. 9, ff.
[42] Apart from the collection mentioned above, *Yehezkel Kaufmann and the Reinvention of Jewish Biblical Scholarship*, consider also Asael Abelman's *Dust and Heaven: A History of the Jewish People* (Hevel Modi'in: Dvir, 2019), a popular history of the Jews profoundly influenced by Kaufmann (an English translation is in preparation).

Against Ahad Ha'am: Kaufmann and the Nature of Jewish History

In many respects, Kaufmann's entire corpus could be considered a systematic response to – and refutation of – the ideas of Ahad Ha'am. This had been acknowledged already during Kaufmann's lifetime, particularly by his close friend Zevi Woyslawski in 1956.[43] Kaufmann encountered the ideas of Ahad Ha'am already as a young student at the *yeshiva*, where the latter's ideas exercised tremendous influence. As Kaufmann himself would note in the tribute essay he wrote for Woyslawski, at the time the ideas of Ahad Ha'am exercised tremendous influence over the youths:

> Even the generation […] that left the [religious institutions of the] *heder,* the *yeshiva*, and the seminaries, for European culture [*Haskalah*] and the national movement, was perplexed. The transition consisted of a deep change in values, in adopting a new stance towards religious Judaism. It was 'A Time of Chaos / A Time of Mixed Boundaries' [Bialik, "For Ahad Ha'am" – Y. O.]. Yet that generation followed the light of Ahad Ha'am. Ahad Ha'am's teaching viewed Israel's history positively. It sought to fortify the heritage of the past. It protected [this heritage] from the negative, rationalistic critique of the intellectuals [*dor ha-haskalah*]. It assumed that there is wisdom [*t'vuna*] and purpose [*tachlit*] to the historical process. No people labor and create out of intellectual errors. The deeds of a people are guided by an existential sense [*'hush shel ki'yum*] which operates by consciously and unconsciously. According to [Ahad Ha'am's] teaching, it was not only the ancient creations of the people of Israel that was natural and full of life, but also their exilic products which served a vital function in the annals of Judaism. These products, too, were filled with the national spirit of survival [*'hush ha-ki'yum ha-le'umi*]. The national movement must [therefore] treasure the heritage of the past in its entirety. All

[43] Zevi Woyslawski, "Yehezkel Kaufmann," in idem., *Yeḥidim bi-reshut ha-rabim: masot 'al ishim*, (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1956), pp. 265-88. For another overview of the themes discussed in this section, see also Yehoshua Meir Grintz, "Yehezkel Kaufmann – an Antithesis to Ahad Ha'am" (Hebrew), *Ha-Umma,* Vol. II, Is. 7 (December, 1963), pp. 368-374.

> [historical eras] imbue the spirit of the nation. All its values fulfilled a role in the nation's fight for survival. Such was also the ideological atmosphere of the Odessan '*yeshiva*'. The founder of the *yeshiva* lived and travelled in Ahad Ha'am's intellectual circle. He sought to base a religious Judaism on a national foundation. Ahad Ha'am's students also included Bialik and Klausner, who were among the teachers at the *yeshiva* and influenced their pupils greatly.[44]

Influenced by developments in the social sciences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ahad Ha'am interpreted Judaism through the lens of modern biology. In his writings he depicted the Nation of Israel as an organism, endowed with a natural will to survive (*hefetz ha-ki'yum ha-le'umi*). This will, according to Ahad Ha'am, explains not only the Jews' steadfastness and perseverance in the face of innumerable hardships since the loss of their homeland, but also the development of their religion from that of an 'earthly' cult to an 'unearthly' faith. After the repeated defeats of the Israelites by mightier empires, Ahad Ha'am writes, "the national hopes […] became etherealized, supernatural, outside time. On the foundation of these hopes the will-to-live built a castle in the air, which reached as high as the heavens. As the actual position of the nation sunk lower and lower, so its spirit soared heavenwards, leaving the concrete, present life of will and action for a visionary life in the bosom of a boundless future."[45] To Ahad Ha'am, the contemporary movement of return to Zion was similarly an instance of this will-to-survive; for now that the influence of religion was waning among the Jews, he argued, they must resort to the 'national' elements of their existence. And just as the natural survival instinct led the Jews to abandon their earthly elements in the past, it now will lead them to take them up anew with renewed vigor. "The revolutions of life's wheel have carried the spirit of our people from point to point on the circle, until now it begins to approach once

[44] Kaufmann, "On Zevi Woyslawski," pp. 1-2.
[45] Ahad Ha'am, "Many Inventions" (*hesh'bon ha-nefesh,* 1890), *Selected Essays,* tr. Leon Simon, (Philadelphia: The Jewish publication society of America, 1912), pp. 159-170, pp. 167-8, ff.

more the healthy and natural condition of two thousand years ago. This ancient spirit, roused once more to life, has breathed life into the ancient ideal, has found in that ideal its fitting external form, and become to it as soul to body."[46]

Ahad Ha'am also interpreted the history of the Israelite religion through the lens of biology and late nineteenth century views of evolution. Drawing heavily on contemporary biblical criticism, especially that of the German Protestant scholar Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), Ahad Ha'am claimed that in its earliest history, the Israelite nation was polytheistic, like all surrounding nations[47]. The early Prophets, who preached the doctrine of "the Unity of God," had no popular following, and monotheism remained the purview of a "select few."[48] It was only with the destruction of the Temple, he argued, "when the spirit of the exiled people had changed sufficiently to admit of a belief in the Unity," that the Prophets became successful in making the monotheistic faith a truly national one. "[God's] words were in accord with the wishes of the people and its national hope; and so they sank into the heart of the people, and wiped out every trace of the earlier outlook and manner of life. This national hope, as embodied in the idea of the return to Palestine, affords, in a much later age, an instance of a 'survival.'"[49] The Prophets, however, in Ahad Ha'am's narrative, were more than the principal carriers of the monotheistic faith. In more than one sense, he believed they were the ones to articulate its meaning. "Prophecy," according to Ahad Ha'am, "is, as it were, the hall-mark of the Hebrew national spirit."[50] Prophecy, in his view, was essentially the relentless pursuit of one "fundamental idea": "the universal dominion of absolute justice."[51] It was this ideal that the Prophets disseminated among the People of Israel, in the hope that one day, the nations will seek to follow its

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[46] Ahad Ha'am, "Anticipation and Survivals" (*mukdam u-me'uchar ba-ha'yim*), in *Selected Essays,* pp. 67-79, pp. 78-79.
[47] Grintz, p. 369.
[48] Ahad Ha'am, "Anticipation and Survivals," p. 73.
[49] Ahad Ha'am, "Anticipation and Survivals," pp. 74-5.
[50] Ahad Ha'am, "Priest and Prophet," in *Selected Essays,* pp. 125-138, p. 132.
[51] Ahad Ha'am, "Priest and Prophet," p. 133.

example. "We have but to open our Prayer Book, and we shall see almost on every page how constant has been the striving after the realization of the prophetic ideal in all its world-embracing breadth, constant throughout the blackest periods of the Jew's history, when his life has been most precarious, and persecution has driven him from country to country. […]. The Jew is both optimist and pessimist; but his pessimism has reference to the present, his optimism to the future. This was true of the Prophets, and it is true of the people of the Prophets."[52]

Kaufmann, nonetheless, had a measure of affinity to Ahad Ha'am's views on the role that the Prophets played in Israelite history and his contemporary political views. In contrast to Herzl and other various Zionists, Ahad Ha'am believed that the purpose of Zionism should be the establishment of a "Spiritual Center" which would serve as a "heart" to the "scattered limbs of the national body."[53] His Zionism was thus very much an elitist project, which appealed especially to intellectuals and other 'spiritual' leaders who believed in constructing Zionism as a 'city upon a hill,' where "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2). Scholem, as we have seen in the previous chapter, very much believed, for example, in a Zionism led by a spiritual elite, in which he saw himself as playing an active role.

Kaufmann, however, rejected all of Ahad Ha'am's premises, as well as his practical politics. In the essay "[On] The National Will to Survive" (*hefetz ha-kiyum ha-leu'mi*; 1920), Kaufmann rejected the biological-evolutionary explanation for Israel's continued existence in exile.[54] At the beginning of the

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[52] Ahad Ha'am, "Moses," in *Selected Essays,* pp. 306-330, pp. 327-8.
[53] Ahad Ha'am, "Spiritual Center" (1907), in Achad Ha'am [sic], *Ten Essays on Zionism and Judaism,* tr. Leon Simon, (London: Routledge & Sons, 1922), pp. 120-129, p. 123, ff. See also his essay "The Negation of the Diaspora" ([*sheli'lat ha-galut*] 1909), which seems not to have been translated into English.
[54] "[On] The National Will to Survive," *Miklat,* Vol. 4 (June – August 1920), pp. 175-194. Kaufmann's most distilled critique of Ahad Ha'am could perhaps be found in the essay "The Central Ideas of Ahad Ha'am" (*ikkarei de'ot'av shel Ahad-Ha'am*), published originally in *Ha-T'kufa,* 1938, and reprinted in Barshai's anthology, pp. 140-159.

essay, he acknowledged the great service Ahad Ha'am fulfilled in the development of Jewish thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at a time when the metaphysical idealism of both Nahman Krochmal in the East, as well as of Heinrich Graetz in the West, could no longer satisfy the intellectual yearnings of a new generation that had been brought up revering the tools of modern science. Kaufmann acknowledges that in this respect, Ahad Ha'am did a great service in bringing Judaism up to date with the most modern of theories.[55] At the same time, however, Kaufmann rejected the idea that as vague a concept as a "national will to survive" could explain historical developments. This idea seemed to him like one more metaphysical construction, obfuscating concrete, historical investigation. "The national will to survive," he argued, "like all the visions attributed to the 'collective soul,' has no basis in reality apart from in the lives of the *individuals* that make up the nation. […]. And if we want to understand the nature of the national will to survive, we inevitably have to analyze the feelings of the individual and discover the national elements that make up this will."[56] Kaufmann explained that national characteristics – culture, religion, language, customs, and so forth – are not acquired through biological determinism, but rather, through human actions: through education and other acts of cultural transmission. To understand the mentality or even the 'soul' of nations, so to speak, one must therefore study the values and morals – the guiding Ideas – that these nations sought to preserve.

In many respects, this was the logic behind the writing of *Golah ve-Nekhar*, which seeks to explain the Jewish Idea and to show its development and effects on the Jewish people and their history. Within the contents of the book, Kaufmann also dedicated a substantial section to Ahad Ha'am, mostly repeating the points he had made in the previously published essays (GvN, I, pp. 190-207). In the remainder of the book, however, Kaufmann proceeds to reject the biological-evolutionary

[55] "[On] The National Will to Survive," p. 175.
[56] "[On] The National Will to Survive," p. 179.

standpoint not merely as a 'premise,' but also as a 'philosophy of history.' As Zalman Shazar noted in his obituary of Kaufmann, in Kaufmann's writings there was no notion of "development" or "progress."[57] Monotheistic faith, according to Kaufmann, emerged on the stage of history not in a piecemeal fashion, gradually out of a regnant polytheism, but rather, *all at once*. Naturally, it did not "spring full-blown into existence."[58] Nonetheless, it contained a completely new idea, which differed from paganism not only quantitively (in the number of gods which it revered), but qualitatively, *essentially*:

> The religion of Israel effected a *revolution* in the world view of man. An abyss separates it from paganism. The motto of the new faith was 'the Lord is One,' but it is a mistake to think that a merely arithmetic difference sets off Israel's religion from paganism. The pagan idea does not approach Israelite monotheism as it diminishes the number of its gods. The Israelite conception of God's unity entails His sovereign transcendence over all. It rejects the pagan idea of a realm beyond deity, the source of mythology and magic. The affirmation that the will of God is supreme and absolutely free is a new, nonpagan category of thought (emphasis added).[59]

Contrary to Ahad Ha'am's (and Wellhausen's) claims that Israelite faith was first developed and disseminated by the Prophetic elite, Kaufmann also maintained that Judaism was a popular religion, which grew, so to speak, from the bottom up; if anything, Kaufmann argued, Prophetic 'justice' was merely one manifestation the original monotheistic Idea. This was a theme he maintained from the beginning of his career, in "The 'Judaism' of Ahad Ha'am," through *Golah ve-Nekhar* and *The History of Israelite Faith*, and up until his late biblical writings. In *The History of Israelite Faith,* he thus

[57] Zalman Shazar, "Yehezkel Kaufmann z"l: In Memoriam" (Hebrew), *Davar*, 15 November 1963, p. 15.
[58] "The Biblical Age," p. 14. Hebrew: p. 59.
[59] "The Biblical Age," pp. 12-13. Hebrew: pp. 71-2.

wrote, for example, "Biblical religion is […] not an esoteric religion of a spiritual elite like the higher pagan religions, but is a growth that is rooted in and nourished by the popular religion of Israel."[60] In one of his last publications, published posthumously in 1964, he similarly wrote as follows: "The visions of the classic prophets elevated the spirit of the people and fostered its ability to preserve and believe in its future. But the primary cause was the monotheistic faith [*emmunat ha-ye'chud*]. It was not the prophets that safeguarded the nation, but the monotheistic nation that that cultivated the prophets and transmitted their teaching from one generation to the next."[61]

The reason Kaufmann would repeatedly return to this issue, however, was not merely antiquarian. Kaufmann rightly felt that in setting the record straight on the relationship between Prophecy and the nature of Israelite faith, he was making a statement about the political nature of Judaism (broadly conceived), which inevitably had normative implications on the development of contemporary Zionism. For in contrast to Ahad Ha'am's elitism, Kaufmann believed in the power of the nation and its people. In suggesting that the Prophets were the 'creation' of the nation, as it were, rather than the other way around, Kaufmann thus retold the biblical narrative as something of a democratic tale, reflecting the belief in the power of the people to transform reality. Moreover, in contrast to Ahad Ha'am and his spiritual followers, Kaufmann believed that Zionism should be a project taken up by the nation as a whole, rather than that of a mere 'select few.' He would take up this argument once again in his famous debate with the members of Brit Shalom, many of whom saw themselves as adherents of Ahad Ha'am and his vision of Zionism.

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[60] Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel,* p. 133.

[61] Yehezkel Kaufmann, "On the Question of the Influence of the Monotheistic Faith as a Historical Factor" (*li-she'elat ko'cha shel emmun'at ha-ye'chud ke-gor'em histori*), in idem. (ed.), *'Oz le-Dawid: kovets mehkarim be-Tanakh mugash le-David Ben-Guryon bi-melot lo shiv'im ve-sheva' shanim,* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1964), pp. 480-485, p. 483.

Philosophical Aspects of Kaufmann's View of History

A theme that runs through many of Kaufmann's writings is the role of the exceptional in history. One example of this is the importance he assigns to the unique individual in history, or to use his words in *Golah ve-Nekhar,* "the question of *personality*" (GvN, I, 20). Kaufmann did not exactly believe in the 'Great Man' theory of history, made popular perhaps most famously through the writings of Thomas Carlyle, and at one point even admits that "the 'great man' cannot become 'historic' except through the *social role* that he fulfills." Nonetheless, to Kaufmann it was important to assert that certain individuals play an exceptional role in the life of a nation or of many nations (GvN, I, 20-22). "Select individuals," he also wrote, "create and leave an indelible mark upon many" (GvN I.158). Kaufmann rejected the notion that individual genius could be explained through psychological or material explanations. To him, this seemed like another attempt at explaining phenomena through metaphysical or biological determinism. According to Kaufmann, the genius of certain individuals was impossible to explain: "Can one 'explain' through historical circumstances Homer, Plato, Shakespeare, Goethe, Rembrandt, Beethoven, etc.? For these 'conditions' existed equally among all their countrymen, their fellow nationals, their class, their age; and why would they be singled out from among all members of their generation and even their family members? Their special qualities are nothing but a great secret, the secret of *spirit*" (emphasis in original).[62]

Kaufmann's analysis could most visibly be seen in his treatment of founders of religions, namely Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, and above all, Moses. Kaufmann believed that Moses played a pivotal role in the establishment and development of the monotheistic creed among the Israelites, and he writes movingly of his importance not only to the Jews, but to world history as a whole: "[At first,] the new vision only glimmered in the soul of that wondrous man, that is, *Moses*, and it was through

[62] "From the Mystery of National Creativity," p. 13.

his power that a revolution took place in the lives of the tribes."[63] Moses was "a man of genius and leader of men, mighty in will and spirit, whose splendor is not dulled by the thirty centuries that separate us from him […]. He fulfilled the longing of his tribesmen for freedom, but his achievement was not merely political. It was his prophetic genius that transformed the liberation of the tribes into the birth of a nation, an event which proved to be one of the crucial junctures of human history."[64]

The singularity of Moses' personality was reflected, according to Kaufmann, also in the uniqueness of the Israelite religion, which cannot be explained merely against the background of the ancient Near East and the surrounding polytheistic nations, or any other explanation for that matter. Like the birth of a unique personality, the appearance of Israelite faith is a mystery. "Why was Israel thus unique among all the peoples in its religious world view? The believer answers: Israel was chosen; the empirical historian can only say: here is revealed the creative genius of the nation. Neither answer is completely satisfying, for no creation of the spirit can be completely explained; there is an ultimate mystery which always eludes us. We may be able to describe the historical circumstances of its appearance; that is the most we can hope for."[65] Similarly, the unique fate of the People of Israel cannot be explained through any 'biographical,' biological, material, or metaphysical explanation. "When we come to investigate this historic vision, we are immediately confronted with a difficult preliminary question: is it even possible to do? To *explain* this spectacle historically and sociologically? Israel's *galut* and its unique record is a *singular* event which had no parallel in world chronicles; […]. How could one then *explain* it, viz., [clarify] the origins and reasons for an unparalleled phenomenon, an 'idiographic' spectacle indeed […]? (GvN, I, 166; emphases in original)."

[63] Yehezkel Kaufmann, "From the Mystery of National Creativity", p. 29.
[64] "The Biblical Age," p. 15; Hebrew: p. 61.
[65] "The Biblical Age," p. 14; Hebrew: p. 59.

The idea of the exceptional also permeated his 'theology.' As we mentioned, according to Kaufmann, what separates monotheism from polytheism was not the number of gods. Other nations, he argued, had beliefs about singular deities in the ancient world. What differentiated the Hebrew God from others, he averred, was His freedom from any predetermined natural laws or mythological construction. Unlike other gods, the Hebrew God was truly sovereign – over Himself and the world. "The Israelite religious idea is that the will of God is transcendent and sovereign over all. Israelite religion does not subject the Deity to a primeval realm and an imposed pattern. Its primary category, differing fundamentally from that of paganism, is the absolute freedom of the Godhead. It liberates the Godhead from mythological and magical subjection: Israelite religion has no theogony; its God did not emerge from a preexistent substance, nor is He subject to or dependent upon anything outside or above Himself."[66]

The Hebrew God, according to Kaufmann, possessed a *will*. This is what had allowed Him to create and transform the world as He saw fit. This is also what made Him a jealous God, whose actions in the world could not always be divined or foreseen. For as Kaufmann wrote in one of his earliest publications, "Historical Floods" (*mab'ulim his'tori'im*, 1913), "where there is Will, there is no Consistency."[67] In this essay, written just as he was beginning his university studies, Kaufmann sought to compare the Hebraic with the Greek worldviews, in order to assess the value of science to life. Like many others at the beginning of the twentieth century, Kaufmann felt a deep sense of unease with the increasing dominance of science over all aspects of life. To Kaufmann, the abandonment of man to science, like the abandonment of man to the whim of metaphysics, meant a denial of ethical

[66] "The Biblical Age," p. 10. Hebrew: pp. 54-5.
[67] "*mabulim histori'im*," *Shaharit,* Vol. I, No. 1 (January, 1913), Part I, pp. 22-26, p. 25. Found online at: https://library.osu.edu/projects/hebrew-lexicon/99995082.php (accessed last on June 28, 2021).

responsibility and the acceptance of tragic fate.[68] By contrast, the Hebraic worldview, with its concept of will, provides a way for man out of this cycle of nihilism.[69] "Along with divine freedom, Israelite religion affirmed human freedom. […]. In contrast to the rigid realm of nature, […], man, created in God's image, possesses the gift of moral freedom; he may do either good or evil at will."[70]

Looking at the condition of his people in the early decades of the twentieth century, Kaufmann also wished to remind them of this lesson. Although they have been in exile for two millennia, they possess the power now to break out of their misery and reestablish their political autonomy. The end of *galut* will take place not because of any providential decree or the fulfillment of any philosophic doctrine, but through the actions of individuals who take matters into their own hands. "When we look upon the fate of the People of Israel in the past and when we attempt to break through the screen of its future, we inevitably must raise the question: Was this fate, *galut*, a historical necessity, and is the future written with a pen upon the board of the 'iron laws' of history […]? Those with a religious or theological view of history, as well as those of pseudo-scientific convictions, will inevitably answer yes to this question." But those, like Kaufmann, who recognized the unique in history, know that history is malleable. "The future is not 'in heaven,' or at least not only 'in heaven,' for the *soul* of man has a decisive influence over the course of events" (GvN, II, 455). One should not put his faith, he argued, in divine or historical redemption. Only hard work and perseverance will allow the Jews to realize their hopes and aspirations. As he wrote in one of his essays from the 1930's, "do no put your faith in [any notion of] 'The Final Battle,' in one instance that would eradicate evil from the face of the earth. Be

[68] Luz, "Jewish Nationalism in the Thought of Yehezkel Kaufmann," p. 182, ff. Kaufmann revisits the comparison between the Greek and Hebraic worldviews in GvN, I. 445-451.
[69] Some of these philosophical themes and others are explore more in depth in P. Slyomovics, "Y. Kaufmann's Critique of J. Wellhausen: A Philosophical-Historical Perspective" (Hebrew), *Zion*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (1984), pp. 61-92.
[70] "The Biblical Age," p. 12; Hebrew: p. 57.

prepared for many battles, small and great, as well as – compromises and concessions. The road is hard and full of woe. But what shall we do, for there is no other way."[71]

Kaufmann's Place in Zionist Politics

As in his personal life, in his political commitments Kaufmann was a lifelong outsider. His positions on specific Zionist policies were often so exceptional and unique that they defied easy classification within the conventional Zionist rubrics of 'Left,' 'Right,' 'Labor,' 'Revisionism,' and so forth. In some respects, he could be seen as a something of a 'centrist,' a straightforward Political Zionist and follower of Herzl, looking for practical solutions for the problem of *galut* instead of engaging in futile ideological discussions over the meaning of 'revival' or 'spiritual regeneration'. And indeed, Kaufmann did consider Herzl a towering figure among Zionist thinkers. What distinguished Herzl from the other 'Lilliputians,' in Kaufmann's view, was that he was one of the few to comprehend the nature of the 'predicament of the Jews' rather than become distracted with the 'predicament of Judaism'[72]. Nonetheless, he criticized Herzl for overestimating the importance of purchasing land for the Jews from some international power, and underestimating the importance of slow, continuous settlement. "Herzl did not understand the value of the colonial enterprise [*ha-mif'al ha-kolonizatori*; said here without its contemporary imperial connotations]. He sought to purchase the refuge [*miklat*] through the agreement of the nations, that is, obtain for Israel a national right all at once and artificially" (GvN, II, 212n2). Like many other Eastern European Jews, Kaufmann also believed that

[71] "Nation and Class," in *Be-Hevley Ha'zman,* pp. 9-100, p. 98.
[72] See, e.g., "Pinsker and Herzl," in Barshai (ed.), pp. 274-296, pp. 284-5. See also "Herzlism and Revisionism," in *Be-Hevley Ha'zman,* pp. 205-11 (discussed below).

Herzl misunderstood the relationship between the Jewish religion and the Jewish national culture (GvN, II, 374).[73]

Perhaps surprisingly, Kaufmann's relationship to the physical Land of Israel seemed to change over the years. Although he recognized the place and allure of the Land of Israel in the Jewish historical imagination, as well as the importance of the efforts that have already taken place since the 1880's, at first he shared Herzl's ambivalence about whether the Land of Israel could serve as the locus of Jewish life, given the various physical and technical constraints of the time. In *Golah ve-Nekhar,* written mostly in the early- and mid-1920's, Kaufmann recognized that there were two peoples who could claim ownership over the land, the Jews and the Arabs. He also recognized that Arab nationalism was on the rise: "the twentieth century will be for Asia what the nineteenth century had been for Europe: a period of popular sovereignty and national self-determination" (GvN, II, 467-8, ff). As such, he initially felt that the Land of Israel could not serve as a longstanding solution to contemporary Jewish plights, and in the spirit of Herzl also contemplated some alternative solutions such as Argentina or Uganda (GvN, II, 470-2).[74] By the early 1930's, however, he was already singing a different tune. The reason was not that he was suddenly overcome by any religious or nationalist sentimentalism, but rather, because of practical considerations: he came to see that the Jews could not possibly undertake other projects of national settlement apart from the one already taking place in the Land of Israel. In 1937, he was similarly motivated by practical considerations when he rejected the conclusions of the Peel Commission, which called for the division of the land into two states: a Jewish state in the land west of the Jordan River, and an Arab state in the eastern parts, in Transjordan. Kaufmann believed that the Transjordan must be included within the borders of the Jewish dominion in order to

[73] See also Kaufmann's "Pinsker and Herzl," pp. 287-8. On the debate between Herzl and the Russian Jews on "the cultural question, see Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement (1882-1904)*, tr. Lenn E. Schram, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), pp. 138-140, ff.
[74] Cf. also Barshai, p. 25.

accommodate the Jewish masses. As he explained in 1938, on the eve of the Holocaust: "There is space for those diasporic communities in Europe *which are diminishing before our eyes*. But – only in the entire land, which includes the land East of the Jordan [*ever ha-yarden*], [and only] through massive population adjustments [*t'mura amoka*], and significant international aid" (emphases in original).[75] Naturally, Kaufmann would somewhat alter his views on Jewish territorialism in the aftermath of the Second World War and the establishment of the state.

In the early 1930's, he wrote several essays on the development and direction of Labor Zionism. Kaufmann was entirely supportive of the "Hegemony of Labor" in the pre-state *Yishuv*, because he believed that this was a time for settlement, productivity, and social transformation – the goals and aims of Labor Zionism at the time. Echoing his arguments about the 'New Jew,' he wrote in one of his essays: "We need the agricultural worker […]. We need the working masses who can create continuous Hebrew settlements. […]. [This] hour is indeed one for the 'Hegemony of Labor.' Not because we need to purify ourselves from the 'filth of laziness' or from the 'filth' of the ghetto, et cetera, […], [but] because this hegemony is a precondition for our *national settlement* [project] […]. This is the immense national significance of the Labor Movement, which *in practice* fulfills the ultimate need [*ha-mitzva ha-le'umit ha-el'yona*] of this period, despite its theoretical deficiencies."[76] Elsewhere, he wrote that the Labor Movement was "the lifeline of the national revival movement."[77] Nonetheless, he was irked by the movement's excessive preoccupation with ideological clarification, as well as its leaders' otiose attempts to make the movement align more closely with the tenets of international Marxism. He also believed that the joining of Zionism with Socialism was extremely problematic, and not only due his strong anti-metaphysical stance. The two ideas, he believed, were incompatible in

[75] "Caught in the Spiderwebs" (*bi-svach ku'rei ha-aka'vish*), *Moznaim*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1938), pp. 417-429, p. 429. Cf. Barshai's Introduction, pp. 24-25.
[76] "Class Warfare in Israel," p. 143.
[77] "On National Peace," *Be-Hevley Ha'zman,* pp. 195-204, p. 202.

their ultimate goals. The former ultimately stemmed from the long-standing, traditional Jewish yearning for 'national redemption' and return to their homeland, whereas the latter, in his view, aimed at the elimination of all class and national conflicts at once. Like Scholem, Kaufmann did not believe Zionism was a messianic movement that "would put an end to all social ills at once." It was a "realistic" movement that sought incremental change and improvement to the Jewish lot. Any attempts to unite Socialism and Zionism were thus ultimately "based on casuistry and faulty reasoning."[78]

The need to transform the Jew into a laborer was also behind Kaufmann's uncharacteristically combative line in the debate over "Hebrew Labor" (*avodah iv'rit*) in the early 1930's. The debate revolved around the question of whether to hire Arab laborers to work alongside – or even instead – of Jews in the various agricultural settlements and industries established in the pre-state *Yishuv*, or whether to insist on hiring Jews only. This debate brought to the surface many issues regarding the character of the Jewish settlement, including class, economics, democratic participation, the relations between Jews and Arabs, and more.[79] Many of the arguments revolved around the fact that Arab laborers were seen as cheaper and more efficient, whereas Jewish laborers were considered expensive, 'unskilled' and inefficient. Other arguments were made in favor of the creation of mixed-labor opportunities as holding possibility for future Jewish-Arab cooperation in other realms. Still others believed that the Jews must provide the Arabs with equal employment opportunities in the name of equality. To Kaufmann, the question of Hebrew Labor was the most important political issue of the day. "The fate of our entire enterprise depends on the victory in the struggle for Hebrew labor," he wrote.[80] Although he was generally averse to taking his political convictions to the national arena, in 1934, Kaufmann even attended political gatherings in Kfar Sava, where local orchard managers had

[78] "Nation and Class," pp. 99-100.
[79] This debate was thoroughly explored by Anita Shapira in one of her first books, *ha-Ma'avak ha-nikhzav: 'Avodah 'ivrit, 1929-1939,* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, 1977).
[80] "Hebrew Labor," p. 168.

hired Arab laborers, in support of Hebrew labor.[81] He absolutely dismissed the narrow economic interests of the orchard managers and other landowners. To Kaufmann, this seemed like pure selfishness which did not take into account national needs. He similarly rejected the arguments for the hiring of Arab laborers, whether for 'moral' or 'practical' reasons. Kaufmann believed that the creation of continuous Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel was of the ultimate necessity for Jewish survival, and all other considerations were secondary in importance. The Land of Israel, "'our land,"' he argued, was the only place where the Jewish laborer has a place of his own. His right to work therefore took precedence.[82]

Kaufmann's adherence to a kind of Herzlian 'centrism' can perhaps be discerned most clearly in his critiques of two 'radical' movements (radical at least for the time) operating in the pre-state *Yishuv* in the 1920's and '30's, on the Right and on the Left, respectively: The Revisionists and Brit Shalom. His critique of Revisionism is interesting because in certain respects, Kaufmann agreed with some of the movement's main tenets. To begin with, both Kaufmann and the Revisionists held Herzl in great esteem, seeing him as the most clear-sighted visionary of the Zionist Movement. Secondly, Kaufmann identified with the Revisionists' position against the union of Zionism and Socialism, what the Revisionist leader Jabotinsky called "monism"; in Jabotinsky's words: "in accord with our Herzlian world outlook we do not recognize the permissibility of any ideal whatsoever apart from the single ideal: a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan as a first step towards the establishment of the State. That is what we call 'monism'."[83] Thirdly, Kaufmann was not too far from the Revisionists' position that physical settlement of the land ("colonization") was the sole guarantee of future territorial

[81] See Barshai's Introduction, p. 21. More details on the circumstance of the Kfar Sava demonstrations could be found in, *inter alia*, Mordechai Naor, "The Struggle for Hebrew Labor in Kfar Sava, 1934" (Hebrew), *Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv,* Vol. 34 (1986), pp. 141–161. Naor mentions that among other attendants one could find the poets Bialik and Tchernichowski, and labor leaders such as Berl Katznelson (p. 143).
[82] "Hebrew Labor," pp. 175-179, and onwards.
[83] Quoted in Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology,* p. 243.

rights. On many, and probably most other issues, however, Kaufmann differed sharply from the Revisionists. Kaufmann believed that the Revisionists had perverted Herzl's ideology. As he explained in one essay dedicated to the subject, Herzl carried not only the "political" flag, but also the "social" one. He was therefore not a "monist," according to Kaufmann; he simply understood the difference between urgent, practical tasks, and secondary, 'theoretical' disputes.[84] Kaufmann also criticized the Revisionists for their overemphasis on the state as the ultimate goal of Zionism, rather than a means. In the early '30's, when the Revisionists started presenting themselves as the 'patrons' of the middle classes and of "private capital," he criticized them for undermining the national efforts carried by the pioneers.[85] Kaufmann did not share the concern of other members of the *Yishuv* that the Revisionists were as dangerous as the Fascists in Europe. Although he acknowledged that Revisionism borrowed some elements from European Fascism, namely, "radical chauvinism, the reverence for military might, the idea of the dictatorship of the 'leader,' the hatred of 'Marxism,' 'thuggery,' et cetera," he did not believe that they posed a danger to the *Yishuv* and its institutions.[86] He took the Revisionists seriously and thought they ought to be criticized for their errors. But he did not view them as a threat.

His critique of Brit Shalom is interesting for other reasons, namely, that the group consisted of some of his later colleagues, including Scholem and Baer. To some degree, the critique was also an extension of Kaufmann's critique of Ahad Ha'am, who served as something of a role model for many Brit Shalom members. The critique came in the aftermath of the 1929 uprisings, when Brit Shalom actively called upon the Zionist leadership to halt from its attempts to secure a Jewish majority and a Jewish homeland. According to the logic of the Brit Shalom members, the establishment of a Jewish national home required the consent of the local Arabs. For without consent, they argued, the Jews

[84] "Herzlism and Revisionism," in *Be-Hevley Ha'zman,* pp. 205-211, p. 207.
[85] "Class Warfare in Israel," p. 161. Cf. Barshai's Introduction, p. 19.
[86] "Class Warfare in Israel," p. 161; "On National Peace," p. 198.

would have to resort to conquest of the land by force. Such a course of action, they believed, would be immoral, and cast a long shadow over the Jewish community in the Land of Israel.[87] Kauffman rejected this logic entirely. In an essay published in Brit Shalom's journal *She'ifotey'nu* ("Our Yearnings"), he asked the group's members to clarify: in what way were they Zionist?[88] Kaufmann believed that surrendering the fate of the Zionist enterprise to Arab goodwill effectively abjures Jewish sovereignty. Having the Arabs consent to future Jewish immigration and settlement, he argued, would ultimately mean that the Jews would be creating one more "exilic" settlement in the Land of Israel rather than an independent Jewish homeland. Alluding to a competing vision of Jewish nationhood, Simon Dubnow's construction of autonomous Jewish communities around the diaspora, Kaufmann forcefully asked,

> Why should we sacrifice so much in order to erect in the Land of Israel a 'symbiotic' [i.e. mixed], exilic community, when we already have so many such communities, stronger and greater, in other countries? Why Zionism then and not Dubnowian autonomism? […]. [What] will be the difference, from the perspective of cultural independence, between the Jewish community in the Land of Israel and those in the diaspora, if the local one does not stand on healthy ethnic foundations […]?[89]

Kaufmann continued his long debate with Ahad Ha'am when pointing out that the declared goal of the Brit Shalom intellectuals, to establish a spiritual center in "'the historic atmosphere' of Hebrew culture" would not only fail to end *galut*, but also would not be attained without "the element of [continuous] ethnic settlement." A Jewish community on its own, without the element of sovereignty,

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[87] Barshai's Introduction, pp. 16-17. The literature on Brit Shalom is of course voluminous. See, *inter alia,* Zohar Maor, "Moderation from Right to Left: The Hidden Roots of Brit Shalom," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Winter 2013), pp. 79-108; Shalom Ratzaby, *Between Zionism and Judaism: The Radical Circle in Brith Shalom* [sic] *1925–1933*, (Brill: Leiden, 2002).
[88] "*al derech ha-shalom*," *Sheifoteinu,* Vol. 3, No. 3 (Sivan 1934), pp. 76-84. Reprinted as "Our Lot in the Land" (*mishpa'teynu ba-aretz*), in *be-hevlei ha-zman,* pp. 212-219. All references are to the reprint.
[89] "Our Lot in the Land," p. 213.

would mean that "ghetto culture would be our lot here as well, [even] with the historic atmosphere." Previous Jewish settlements in the Land of Israel, such as during late antiquity or with the community of Kabbalists in Safed in the seventeenth century, he points out, were no different than any other "exilic-ghetto-like center" in the diaspora.[90] The only path forward for the Jews, he argued yet again, was to end exile and leave ghetto culture altogether.

The Debate over Israeli Territorialism in the Post-Independence Period and Kaufmann's Late Biblical Works

In contrast to Baer and Scholem, who were overall disappointed with the direction Zionism took following the declaration of Israeli independence – with Ben-Gurion's leadership, with the intense process of centralization, and what they considered the elevation of the state to the level of ultimate purpose of Zionism – Kaufmann seems to have generally supported the developments in Israeli politics in the post-independence era, although not indiscriminately.[91] He was also close to Ben-Gurion on a personal level, participating regularly in the "Prime Minister's Bible Study Circle," which gathered in Ben-Gurion's house.[92] He also edited a collection of essays on biblical themes "Presented to David Ben-Gurion on his Seventy-Seventh Birthday" (1964).[93] In turn, Ben-Gurion held Kaufmann in the highest esteem. The prime minister saw Kaufmann's biblical studies as compatible with his own

[90] "Hebrew Labor," p. 175. It is interesting to note that despite his criticism of those who participated in auto-anti-Semitism, Kaufmann calls those who refuse to recognize the need for Jewish sovereignty "ghetto-possessed, ghetto-rotten to their very core" (*achuley ghetto, re'kuvey ghetto ad mo'ach atz'motey'hem*), thus engaging to some degree in a new kind of Zionist anti-Jewish sentiment ("Hebrew Labor," p. 181; cf. Barshai's Introduction, p. 21).

[91] One can only speculate why figures such as Kaufmann and Dinur, both of Eastern European origins, supported Ben-Gurion and the general political developments of the 1950's, while Scholem and Baer (and Buber, and Simon, and others), of German-Jewish origins, did not.

[92] David Ben-Gurion, *Ben-Gurion Looks at the Bible* (*'Iyunim ba-Tanakh*), tr. Jonathan Kolatch, (Middle Village, N.Y., Jonathan David Publishers, 1972 [1969]), n.p. (Translator's Note).

[93] *'Oz le-David,* see bibliographic details above.

plan to make the Hebrew bible a cornerstone of the Israeli education system and of the new, 'national' Jewish identity.[94] In one of the meetings of the bible study circle, Ben-Gurion said the following:

> In general, I consider myself a disciple of Professor Kaufman [sic] – as a student who is learning, not as a scholar; […]. I consider Professor Kaufman one of the most profound and original thinkers in connection with the early faith of Israel and in arriving at an understanding of the Bible, though I do not accept his dogmatism.[95]

Kaufmann's support for the state and the establishment seems to have been reflected above all in the biblical studies he wrote in his final years, perhaps above all his commentaries on the Book of Joshua (1959)[96] and of the Book of Judges (1962).[97] In choosing to write about these books, Kaufmann was motivated above all by scientific-professional reasons. In 1953, he published the English monograph *The Biblical Account of the Conquest of Canaan* (the Hebrew version was published in 1955).[98] This was in many ways Kaufmann's first important international publication, which helped establish his reputation biblical criticism circles outside of Israel as well. As he notes in the Preface to the commentary on Joshua, part of what motivated him to write the book – and later, also the commentary on Judges – was his wish to answer some of the critics of that earlier English monograph. In addition, Kaufmann saw his investigation of Joshua and Judges also as part of his own lifelong quest to investigate the beginnings of Israelite faith. As he wrote to his student, Moshe Greenberg, in 1960: "I do not plan to comment on all the Former Prophets, but the case of Joshua and Judges is special: these books relate the *beginnings* of the people of Israel, and their testimony is decisive also for

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[94] See, inter alia, Barshai's Intro, pp. 14-5.
[95] *Ben-Gurion Looks at the Bible,* pp. 55-6.
[96] *The Book of Joshua* (*sefer ye'hoshu'a*), (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1959 [2nd Edition: 1963]).
[97] *The Book of Judges* (*sefer shoftim*), (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1962).
[98] *The Biblical Account of the Conquest of Canaan,* tr. M. Dagut, 2nd Edition, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985 [Hebrew original: 1953]).

the beginnings of the *religion* of Israel."[99] Nili Wazana notes, importantly, that Kaufmann had written on the entire biblical corpus in his massive *History of the Religion of Israel*, and yet Joshua and Judges were the only two biblical books to which he dedicated commentaries, which shows the degree of his commitment to the question of early Israelite faith.[100] And yet, given the time period in which these commentaries were composed, it seems unlikely that Kaufmann was not also motivated by broader concerns.

Since the beginning of the Hebrew revival movement, these books, and the Book of Joshua in particular, served as something of a model for the generation of thinkers who sought to foster a more 'earthly,' even 'pagan' Jewish identity. The themes of these books – the end of the Egyptian 'exile' and the settlement of Zion, the military conquest of the Land of Canaan, the turn from the 'religious' leadership of Moses to the 'national' leadership of Joshua and the Judges – made them especially appealing to the younger generations of Hebrews and Zionist pioneers. As far back as the late nineteenth century, for example, the poet Shaul Tchernichovski (1875-1943) famously wrote in a poem of "The God of the Conquerors of Canaan in a Storm" (Before the Statue of Apollo, 1899)[101]. In Berdyczewski's story "The Exodus" (1907), the protagonist is enthralled by Joshua's conquests: "I would read how Joshua and the entire People behind him crossed the Jordan, destroyed Jericho and Ai, and with bow and sword conquered the Land for the People of Israel […]."[102] In the post-independence period, however, following the successful conclusion of the War of Independence and the establishment of a Jewish military force, these books took on renewed relevance and immediacy. The poet Nathan Alterman, for example, wrote in that period some interesting poems using Joshua'

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[99] Quoted in Nili Wazana, "The Legacy of Yehezkel Kaufmann's Commentaries to Joshua and Judges," in *Yehezkel Kaufmann and the Reinvention of Jewish Biblical Scholarship*, pp. 181-203, p. 182.
[100] Wazana, p. 184.
[101] The changing relationship to the Book of Joshua in Zionist and Israeli society has been masterfully discussed by Lea Mazor, "The Rise and Fall of the Book of Joshua in the *Mamlakhti* School System in View of Ideological Shifts in Israeli Society" (Hebrew), *Studies in Jewish Education,* Vol. IX (2009), pp. XXI-XLVI.
[102] "*ha-yets'ia*," Public Domain, found on https://benyehuda.org/read/8418 (Accessed on June 11, 2021). My translation.

generation as a metaphor for contemporary Israelis, who were similarly 'delivered from exile' and conquered their land.[103] Ben-Gurion himself frequently alluded to Joshua in his speeches, for example in a speech from 1950, where he said the following: "No biblical interpreter, Jew or gentile, in the Middle Ages or in the present, could have interpreted the chapters of [the Book of] Joshua as well as did the Israel Defense Forces last year."[104] Moreover, the first book studied at Ben-Gurion's bible study circle was the Book of Joshua.[105] It therefore seems unsurprising that Kaufmann would turn to write on these books as well.

Even a brief perusal in their contents show that his concerns were highly contemporary: the stages of conquest, the effects of geography on battle, the advantages and disadvantages of the Israelite fighting force, types of leadership, the nature of the Jewish regime, and more. Yet when juxtaposed with contemporary events, even more parallels emerge. To begin with, in both commentaries, Kaufmann seems to allude to the inter-Israeli debate on the incomplete conquest of the Land of Israel. The borders of the Land of Israel were of course a topic that was hotly debated since the early decades of Zionist settlement. Long before the debate on the future of Judea and Samaria that emerged with the victory in the Six Day War in 1967, Zionist leaders and thinkers were fiercely debating the desired borders of the Jewish territory, its implications vis-à-vis the non-Jewish populations, and the consequences of establishing greater borders in relation to the status of Zionism in the eyes of the world. Apart from the aftermath following the 1937 Peel Commission, there were two more times during Kaufmann's lifetime in which a debate on national borders sprung up.[106] The first took place

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[103] See Ehud Luz, "Reading in Two of Alterman's Poems from 'The Seventh Column (Ha-Tur-Ha-Shviyi)'" (Hebrew), *Dappim: Research in Literature*, Vol. 12 (1999-2000), pp. 147-154.
[104] Quoted in Mazor, p. XXVII.
[105] Mazor, p. XXVIII.
[106] On the place of borders in Zionist thought, as well as the different reactions to the changing borders of Zionism, see the various essays in the anthology *Stop! – No-Border In Front of You* (Hebrew), eds. Hani Zubeida and Raanan Lipshitz, (Rishon LeZion: Yedioth S'farim, 2017). Cf. also Anita Shapira, "The Bible and Israeli Identity," *AJS Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Apr., 2004), pp. 11-41, especially the early parts.

after the War of Independence, when the 1949 lines of ceasefire (the so-called Green Line) were deemed by many as being just that; that is, as lines of ceasefire, not permanent borders. On the Right side of the Israeli political spectrum, as well as – and perhaps especially – on the Left, many thus believed that in a future war, the Israelis would be able take over the parts of the land that were left unredeemed. The second such moment followed the Suez Crisis in 1956, when Israel was first able to conquer the Sinai Peninsula, only to relinquish its control following international pressure. (Kaufmann died before the Six Day War). It seems that echoes of these debates can also be discerned in Kaufmann's writings.

At the beginning of his commentary on the Book of Joshua, Kaufmann writes that the relationship between the Torah and the Book of Joshua is the relation between ideal and realization. "One [concerns] the Idea, and the other is the realization of the Idea [*ide'a*]." The conquest of the land, therefore, was ultimately an expression of the Jewish yearning. He notes that while in the Book of Judges the sins of the Israelites prevent them from completing the national conquest, in the Book of Joshua there is no sin. The conquest stops only due to Joshua's old age. "The conquest is thus not seen as an *evil*, as a national disaster […]. The break is considered temporary, the completion of the conquest is assured […]" (Joshua, 2-3; emphasis in original).[107] The main plotline of the Book of Joshua, he writes later, is "the unfinished conquest"; its central narrative concerns "the *national conquest* of the Land of Canaan, the strategy, the unfolding of the conquest, its incomplete fulfillment, its future completion" (Joshua, 33-4; emphasis in original). Kaufmann suggests that the ultimate aim of Joshua's conquests is the "Greater Land of Canaan" (*eretz kna'an ha-g'dola*): "The Torah knows no concept of a small Land of Canaan [*eretz kna'an k'ta'na*]. […]. The People will conquer the Land of Canaan in its *entirety* – such is the ruling Idea. 'The Land' is a constant, well-defined concept, and the fate of the

[107] All references are to the 2nd edition (1963).

Canaanite that dwells within it had been predetermined – *herem* or expulsion. […]. For the Torah does not know *any borders* but the ideal ones" (Joshua, 7; emphasis in original).

Given Kaufmann's position in the 1930's in the aftermath of the Peel Commission, these lines at first make it seem as if he continued to support territorial maximalism or expansionism. Further reading, however, seems to suggest that he supported Ben-Gurion's pragmatic approach, distinguishing between ideals and reality. Ben-Gurion advocated this approach in particular in his debates with Menachem Begin, leader of the opposition *Herut* party, who in the aftermath of the establishment of the state, continued advocating the conquest of the "Greater Land." In a 1949 speech, Ben-Gurion answered Begin: "Well, what does the 'Full Land' [*sh'lemut ha-aretz*] really mean? [The land on] both sides of the Jordan [River] or only this side [i.e. the West Bank]? […] Let us presume that we could conquer all of the western parts of the Land of Israel. And I am certain we can. Then what? We will become one state [with the Arabs]. […] we will be a minority." In 1952, he further stated: "There are no natural borders and no historical borders, but there are unnatural borders, and we must distinguish between the State of Israel and the Land of Israel."[108] Echoing Ben-Gurion's pragmatism, in his commentary on Joshua, Kaufmann notes that the territory beyond the Jordan River was never included in the ideal of Greater Canaan. The Israelites only ended up settling there because of special circumstances. The Jordan River, he writes, is the land's "eastern border" (Joshua, 7), thus perhaps reminding those like Begin that the conquest of territory now found in the Kingdom of Jordan could not be justified by resort to scripture. More importantly, however, he introduces into his biblical interpretation a distinction between "The Ideal Land" and "The Realistic Land" (*eretz y'isra'el ha-re'alit*). The Ideal Land is congruent with the borders as promised to Abraham in Genesis 15 (and elsewhere). The realistic land is the area "from Dan to Beersheba," what the Israelites were able to conquer in

[108] Both speeches are quoted in Avi Shilon, "David Ben Gurion on the Issue of Borders" (Hebrew), *Zion,* Vol. 80, No. 3 (2015), pp. 407-434, p. 427, ff.

Joshua's time. He also introduces the ideas of "unredeemed Israel" and the imperial borders reached under Kings David and Solomon (Joshua, 7-9, ff). By doing so, Kaufmann was able to 'diffuse' any maximalist interpretations.

In his commentary on the Book of Judges, he further distinguished between Wars of Conquest (or settlement: *milkh'amot kibbush ha-aretz*), Wars of Independence, and Wars of Empire (Judges, 1-7, ff). In light of the calls for expansionism among certain members of Israel's ruling elite – and in the aftermath of Sinai Campaign – Kaufmann thus introduced the notion of war aims as a way to categorize Israel's various military campaigns, perhaps adding another element of prudence into the public debate. Despite his advocacy of judiciousness, however, it should be noted that Kaufmann was no pacifist. In his commentary on the Book of Joshua, he thus emphasized that "there was no peaceful settlement" of the Land of Israel. Using language reminiscent of his earlier debate with Brit Shalom, Kaufmann dismisses the idea that the settlement of the land could come in peaceful ways. "All was conquered in war. During the Age of the Patriarchs there was peaceful entry. But then there were no tribes seeking to settle, only families migrating to a land that was not theirs" (Joshua, 57). To assure the nation a place of its own dwelling, war must be waged.

The Jewish Regime

Another subject with potentially contemporary implications, which preoccupied Kaufmann in the decades between the establishment of the state and his death, was the nature of the Jewish regime, in particular the transition from the Period of the Judges (*t'kufat ha-shoftim*) to the establishment of the Israelite monarchy. Decades earlier, in *Golah ve-Nekhar*, in an effort to counter the voices on the Left and Right that saw in the establishment of a Jewish State the ultimate goal of Zionism, Kaufmann belittled the significance and glory of the ancient Israelite Kingdom:

> The Kingdom of Israel was established in an intermediary period, at the time of decline for the great kingdoms of Babylon and Egypt. It was one of those small provincial states that would come along from time to time in the lands of Shinar-Egypt when the power of the big centers had waned. […]. And in all the political tumults of the period, the People of Israel did not occupy a significant place. […]. It did not even conquer the entire land which it considered its rightful domain […]. For a long time [this people] was divided into tribes, trampled by its small neighbors. Then it became inspired to establish a state 'like all nations'. But this state reached its peak in the days of David. David was, in fact, the only political hero of the Hebrew Nation. […]. In the days of Solomon the period of glory continued, but signs of decline were already on the horizon. [After his death] the state began its descent, to rise again no more (GvN, I, 290).

Over the next few decades, however, Kaufmann's stance began to change. In the 1940's, when the political weakness of the Jews came to be seen as a clear threat to the survival of the nation, Kaufmann came to extoll the virtues of political independence and of kingship.

One could discern his evolving views, for example, in his critique of Martin Buber. In 1942, Buber published the book *The Prophetic Faith*, his first major publication in Hebrew, and the second installment of his unofficial biblical trilogy, alongside *The Kingdom of God* (1932) and *Moses* (1945). In this book, Buber interprets the biblical narrative in light of his own vision of theocratic anarchism, identifying the Period of the Judges in particular as something of a Golden Age, when the Israelites experienced the rule of God on all aspects of life, political, social, spiritual, and so forth. The establishment of Kingship in Israel, however, put an end to that Golden Age. According to Buber, the King should have been, like the Judges before him, merely a representative of the Will of God; yet the establishment of a Kingdom created a new, secular entity in Israel, which tore asunder the perfect

theopolitical unity of yore. This, according to Buber, was the reasoning behind the 'anti-political' message of Classical Prophecy.[109] Shortly thereafter, Kaufmann published a thorough review of the book in *Moznaim,* the flagship publication of the Hebrew Writers Association in Israel.[110] Kaufmann clearly recognized that Buber's intention was to provide more than an interpretation of the biblical narrative. Nonetheless, he approached Buber's text as he would any other work on biblical scholarship, refraining from any 'supra-commentary' on Buber's philosophy. In his review, Kaufmann rejected Buber's idealization of the Period of Judges, as well as his belittlement of the ensuing Period of Kingship. The Bible, Kaufmann writes, describes the Period of Judges as one of "nearly unceasing idol worship." It was a period of anarchy only in the negative sense of the word, where "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6, elsewhere). Only the establishment of kingship in Israel, Kaufmann then emphasizes, "put an end to public lawlessness." In contrast to Buber's argument, Kingship – according to the testimony of nearly the entire Bible – was seen as the elevation to "a higher legal-moral plane."[111]

In the years following the establishment of the state, Kaufmann seemed to arrive at a more nuanced position, recognizing the values and merits of both the Judges' as well as the Kings' political leadership. In "The Biblical Age," Kaufmann writes of both the Period of Judges as well as the age of Kingship with appreciation of their respective contributions to Jewish thought and achievement.[112] He calls the Period of the Judges in this text to be "one of original, monotheistic creativity." The Judges, as a political regime, he writes, was an original form of political organization, "a typical and

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[109] Buber's theopolitics has been extensively explored recently by Samuel H. Brody, *Martin Buber's Theopolitics*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018).

[110] "Torat Ha-Nevi'im," *Moznaim,* Vol. 15 (1943), pp. 155-159, 234-243. Reprinted posthumously in *Me-Kiv'shona shel Ha-Yetzi'ra Ha-Mikra'it,* pp. 256-280. All references are to the reprint.

[111] "Torat Ha-Nevi'im," pp. 272-3. Kaufmann of course does not ignore the few anti-monarchic verses provided by scripture (Judges 8:23, I Samuel 8 and 12, Hosea 13:1-11). But he rejects Buber's contention that these are more important than the rest of scripture, which provides a different picture altogether ("Torat Ha-Nevi'im," p. 259).

[112] "The Biblical Age," ibid.

peculiarly Israelite expression of its early monotheism."[113] In another essay, he added: "the Judges were not only national heroes; they were *religious* heroes as well. The Judges were *charismatic* leaders. But their charisma was Israelite: their special quality was that God had *elevated* them and *sent* them to fulfill a certain role in Israel. The Judges were *men of spirit* [*an'shei ru'ach*], *prophetic* characters. God and His angels reveal themselves to them […]."[114] He also acknowledged that the Period of the Judges was filled with "rich literary creativity, in poetry and prose, in writing and orally." Nonetheless, Kaufmann also acknowledged here the political weakness of the regime. Alluding perhaps to his earlier critique of Buber, he writes: "The Kingdom of God was a noble ideal and a sublime vision; it succeeded in emancipating Israel and conquering Canaan. But it failed in the long struggle with the neighboring peoples—Moab, Philistia, and the rest—who warred incessantly with Israel and aimed to conquer it. It also failed to insure domestic tranquility and justice."[115]

From this perspective, the institution of monarchy in Israel became a manifest necessity. "Politically speaking," Kaufmann writes, "there was, of course, no innovation in the institution of monarchy. Throughout the Near East it was the long-standing, recognized form of government. In fact monarchy was viewed as a primary form of the state, with kings conceived of as the successors to gods or demigods who reigned in primeval times." The Israelite monarch, like his Near Eastern brothers, "was an absolute autocrat." And yet, there was nonetheless something special about Israelite monarchy, which distinguished it from its neighbors: it was, in Kaufmann's words, a "prophetic creation". The first three Israelite kings were all "inspired men": "Saul 'prophesies,' David is a divinely inspired poet, Solomon has divine wisdom." In addition, there was also "a certain democratic element in Israel's monarchy" in that it was "based on a covenant between the people and the king, made

[113] "The Biblical Age," pp. 38-40.
[114] "The Major and Minor Judges" (Hebrew), *Beit Mikra: Journal for the Study of the Bible and Its World*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1962), pp. 10-15, p. 11.
[115] "The Biblical Age," p. 41.

before God," even though the content of the covenant was "nonetheless autocratic."[116] It should therefore be seen as a unique creation of the monotheistic Idea, distinct from other royal regimes, "a product of monotheism." Like the preceding era of the Judges, the early monarchy "was a time of monotheistic creativeness in literature and life."[117] But it, too, would decline and fall. The decline, according to Kaufmann, began in the last days of King Solomon.[118] After his death, the kingdom was divided. Idol worship, which according to the biblical narrative was extinguished during the reign of the first three kings, appeared again in Israel. The establishment of the Kingdom, then, brought to the Israelites glory and security. For a while, it also brought them earthly glory. Yet like all worldly constructs, this too, in time, would pass. Writing in the early sixties, at a time when Israel's national state was on the ascendant, it may have been an important lesson to keep to mind.

[116] "The Biblical Age," p. 46, ff.
[117] "The Biblical Age," p. 48-9.
[118] "The Biblical Age," p. 53.

Epilogue:

The Jerusalem School and the Jewish History of the Future:

Some Considerations

The purpose of this study had been to bring attention to the latent and explicit political thought found in the writings of three members of the first-generation of Jerusalem School historians: Yitzhak Baer, Gershom Scholem, and Yehezkel Kaufmann. I have attempted to highlight the normative implications of their historical writings, and to draw connections between their scholarship and ideology. By way of conclusion, I wish now to consider in brief the legacy of these historians, and to suggest possible avenues by which their historical and political thought may be of use to us today. In contrast to the previous chapters, these remarks are offered here only as conjectures, in a somewhat disjointed fashion, with the hope that they may serve as the basis for future inquiries.

I.

In the conclusion to his study of the first-generation of Jerusalem scholars, David Myers returns to some of the main tensions animating their work: "between localization and globalization, between professional and existential demands," "between Europe and Palestine, Exile and Zion, and, perhaps most importantly, between critical history and collective memory," and so forth.[1] In his account, these historians were never truly able to resolve these tensions, which in many respects haunt

[1] David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History,* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 185.

the historical discipline in general and Jewish historiography in particular. Myers did not intend to write an elegy; his aim was merely to present the complexity and nuance of the lives of some very ambitious individuals who – at least in comparison with their stated goals – had only a moderate amount of success. Nonetheless, one could not help but notice that the arch of his story follows something of a tragic storyline. The protagonists of his study are portrayed at its ending as – for lack of a better word – failures, anachronistic figures, with very little to teach us today: "As the Jerusalem scholars attempted to 'return to history,' they were […] taking a leap forward with their front legs while their back legs remained stuck in an older world. Consequently, their return to history was never completed."[2]

In 2009, in a paper entitled "Is there still a 'Jerusalem School?'," he presented a somewhat different picture, showing that in some respects the Jerusalem School was very influential in shaping the Israeli education system and in shaping the academic study of history in the State of Israel.[3] But here, too, he concluded by saying that the individuals making up this school remained transitional figures, and as such, could not really serve as models. The new generation of Israeli historians, he argued, must forge its own path, "moving from the comforting confines of the local historiographical milieu, with its recognized scholarly strengths and political disposition, to a larger and less-known universe borne of a globalized world, with its substantial promise of methodological and intellectual boundary-crossing."[4]

[2] Myers, *Re-Inventing*, ibid.
[3] David N. Myers, "Is there still a 'Jerusalem School?' Reflections on the state of Jewish historical scholarship in Israel," *Jewish History,* Vol. 23, No. 4 (2009), pp. 389-406.
[4] Myers, "Is there still a 'Jerusalem School?,'" p. 403.

II.

Moshe Idel and Amos Funkenstein, in separate essays, also discuss the decline in the influence of the Jerusalem School over the years, although only implicitly. They both attribute this decline to the general crisis of the historic discipline worldwide, although from different perspectives. Idel, in "The Rise and Fall of the Historical Jew," traces the emergence and decline of a "new Jewish type," the historical Jew. "Whereas in the past Jews identified [as Jews] primarily through ritual – with biblical or rabbinic Judaism, one philosophy or another, or different mystical conceptions of God or the people, in the nineteenth century Jewish self-identity became centered around the historic experience of the nation."[5] The early representatives of this type, according to Idel, were the men of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* school – Zunz, Frankel, Steinschneider, and their peers. They were the first, in his view, to make historical consciousness a central part of Jewish identity. In the middle of the twentieth century, he continues, the influence of this type, and way of thinking, reached its zenith with the Jerusalem School historians in Israel, Salo Baron (1895-1989) in the United States, and others who were not necessarily historians, but nonetheless embodied the historical way of thinking about the Jewish experience, such as Martin Buber. Idel notes, however, that in the ensuing decades, the principal interpreters of Judaism, namely Emmanuel Levinas, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, Joseph Ber Soloveitchik, David Hartman, Harold Bloom and George Steiner, were no longer historians, nor did they seek to relate to Judaism in a purely 'historical' manner.[6] Idel explains this decline of the historical "type" as part of the general crisis of the historic discipline in recent decades. "As the privileged status of [the historical discipline] weakened in general, [its status] also weakened in Jewish self-conception."[7]

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[5] Moshe Idel, "The Rise and Fall of the Historical Jew" (Hebrew), in *Beyond it: Festschrift for Elazar Weinrib*, eds. Amir Horowitz, Ora Limor, Ram Ben-Shalom and Avriel Bar-Levav, (Ra'anana: The Open University Press, 2006), pp. 171-207, p. 174. (Idel mentions that this essay was translated from English, although I was unable to locate the original; the translation provided here is my own).

[6] Idel, p. 200.

[7] Idel, p. 201.

Funkenstein, in his famous last lecture, "Jewish History Among Thorns," offers a comparable analysis.[8] Funkenstein traces the rise of the historic discipline to the rise of the nation state in the nineteenth century. "The nineteenth century was, by all accounts, the golden age of historical studies in Europe. […]. History acquired not only disciplinary-institutional autonomy but even a hegemony of sorts over other disciplines: historicism became the matrix of discourse for the nineteenth century, the recognized essence of modernism, the cardinal mode for understanding society and even nature itself."[9] As faith in the homogeneity – and even desirability – of the nation state as political form waned, however, so did the faith in a "single master narrative" which can explain reality. The historian, who in the nineteenth century was seen as something of the high priest of culture, a faithful interpreter and mediating figure between the individual and the world, thus lost his status:

> Just as society has lost its faith in its own homogeneity and in its right to impose a cultural or political homogeneity, historians have lost their belief in the collective subject. The status of the master narrative has been undermined only because that of the historical subject in which the historian participates has also been undermined.[10]

Funkenstein notes that in Western historiography we can thus now see a revolt against the dominance of master narratives in the social sciences (this lecture was published in the mid-'90's), with such thinkers as Hayden White, Michel Foucault, and others, challenging the primacy of the historic discipline as faithful interpreter of the past.[11] Similar developments, he contends, happened in the field of Jewish historiography. Like Idel, Funkenstein notes the influence of Scholem, Baer, Dinur, and other historians in the middle decades of the twentieth century, which he correlates with the rise of

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[8] Amos Funkenstein, "Jewish History Among Thorns" (1995), in *Thinking Impossibilities: The Intellectual Legacy of Amos Funkenstein*, ed. Robert S. Westman and David Biale, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 309-327.
[9] Funkenstein, "Jewish History," p. 311.
[10] Funkenstein, "Jewish History," p. 314.
[11] Funkenstein, "Jewish History," pp. 313-4, ff.

the Jewish nation state. He contends that the decline in the influence of these historians, like historians in general, could be attributed to the decline in the faith of a general master narrative, in this case, the Jewish-Israeli. In some of the new debates in Jewish and Israeli historiography, he thus sees a common thread: "their deliberate or accidental challenge to the very *possibility* of an unequivocal master narrative and an identified historical subject" (emphasis in original).[12]

III.

There is no doubt that the crisis of the historic discipline worldwide had important repercussions on Israeli historiography. Israeli academe is part of a more global network of scholars, and worldwide trends surely affect the direction and development of Israeli scholarship. But could there be other reasons for the waning influence of these historians? In the spirit of the founders of the Jerusalem School, could we find other, "internal" reasons for this decline? In one of his essays, the literary critic Assaf Inbari writes of the decline in the use of romantic language – particularly the use of evocative natural imagery – in Hebrew poetry and literature in the middle decades of the twentieth century, after many Hebrew poets and writers left their European dwellings and made *aliyah* to the sun-scorched Land of Israel:

> Religious Zionists, from A. D. Gordon to [the painter] Mordecai Ardon, who arrived in Israel to merge with its coveted body, were hit upon arrival with 'intense brightness which penetrates the eye', as Gordon wrote in his 'Letter from the Land of Israel': an unpleasant light, almost insufferable to these Europeans, whose Zionist yearnings, from the wintry distance of their homeland, did nothing to prepare them for the encounter with the bright-white landscape.

[12] Funkenstein, "Jewish History," pp. 317-8.

> […]. 'Welcome be upon your return, sweet bird / From the warm-countries to my window', wrote nineteen-year-old Bialik. When he wrote 'warm-countries', he did not know the meaning of the Israeli heat. 'In the warm, beautiful land', he wrote, 'where spring dwells forever'. […]. When he arrived in Palestine, thirty-two years later, he discovered that the adjectives 'warm, beautiful' may require some second thoughts […].[13]

In some respects, something similar happened to Israeli historiography in the decades after the establishment of the state. As the original members of the Jerusalem School grew older and eventually passed away, the second-generation members, students of Baer, Dinur, Scholem, and Kaufmann, began recoiling from the romantic-organic imagery of their teachers, as well as from their attraction to 'vitalist' phenomena and to the unique, creative 'genius' of the Jews. The reason may not have been necessarily the encounter with the unforgiving climate of the Land of Israel, but rather, the academic and political climate in the Hebrew University and in the State of Israel more generally. Daniel Gutwein, in a book review, explains this crisis succinctly:

> The problematic aspects in the 'Jerusalem School's' ideology became manifest, paradoxically, in the public-political realm. The neo-romantic, organistic outlook, to which the [members of the] 'Jerusalem School' adhered, contained from the beginning irrational, and even totalitarian tendencies, that could potentially inspire public sentiments that were diametrically opposed to the enlightened, moderate, political and social views of its founders. These [potentialities] did not come to pass during the early years of the 'Jerusalem School', the period of the *Yishuv*, due to the character of the social-political milieu in which [these historians] operated, and whose historical consciousness they sought to influence. But after the establishment of the state,

[13] Assaf Inbari, "Life of Betrothment" (*ha'yey i'russ'in*), originally published in the exhibition catalogue "The Return to Zion: Beyond the Principle of Place," arranged by Gideon Efrat, (Zman le-Omanut, Tel Aviv, January 2002). A copy of the essay could be found online at http://inbari.co.il/articles/erusin.pdf (last accessed July 27, 2021).

> when the prospects for [these threats] became more likely, this school's outlook, as a scientific school, had to be adapted to the new realities."[14]

According to Shmuel Almog – whose book Gutwein was reviewing – the first-generation of scholars did not make these adaptations. This change in outlook, rather, fell to one of their students, Shmuel Ettinger (1919–1988), possibly the most prominent among the second-generation historians. "In [his] last years," Almog writes, Ettinger "was especially fearful of the rise of the irrational element in [Israeli] society […]." He "was aware that the organistic view had served in the past – and could possibly strengthen in the future – tendencies that were unsafe to society," and as such, sought to affect a change in both the language and the conceptual basis of the Jerusalem School.[15] Jacob Bernai, Ettinger's biographer, echoes Almog, writing that Ettinger perceived in his teachers' imagery "real danger" (*sa'kana shel mamash*).[16] And Ettinger himself, in several places, expressed his fear of the "irrational," as for example in one of the last interviews he gave to a local Jerusalem publication:

> I dedicated my life to education, to the attempt to influence individuals to be more open, to rationalism, I hoped that we could have here a modern state. All ideological, irrational approaches, whether of [the settlers of] Gush Emmunim, the [right-wing] Herut Party, or the Lubavitcher Rebbe, are disappointing.[17]

Ettinger began his political life as a Marxist, and in later years abandoned Marxism and became a liberal. As such, it seems unsurprising then that Ettinger associated the dangers to Israeli society exclusively with the elements of 'cohesion' in a society – with nationalism and religion – while

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[14] Daniel Gutwein, "The Dialectics of Zionist Historiography," *Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv*, Vol. 69 (1993), pp. 115-21, p. 119.
[15] Shmuel Almog, "The Mission of the Historian (on Shmuel Ettinger z"l)," (Hebrew), in idem., *Nationalism, Zionism, Antisemitism: Essays and Studies,* (Jerusalem: ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit, 1992), pp. 13-21, pp. 16-7.
[16] Jacob Barnai, *Shmuel Ettinger: Historian, Teacher, and Public Figure,* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2011), p. 344.
[17] Quoted in Jacob Barnai, *Shmuel Ettinger*, p. 423 (my translation).

completely ignoring the potential harm that may be caused to Israeli society through the embrace of liberalism, with its intrinsic individualist, atomistic, and egoistic tendencies. Ettinger's revolt against his teachers, however, reflected more than just an ideological-conceptual disagreement. According to Gutwein, in a different essay, Ettinger was part of a new social class, which emerged in the second decade of Israel's existence, which he calls, following Shulamit Carmi and Henry Rosenfeld, the "State-Made Middle Class." This class, he writes, was created through the "'appropriation of public funds' and drew its influence and its social and economic status from the 'government and public infrastructure'." Ettinger also increasingly represented, in Gutwein's view, his specific milieu, the academic faculty of the Hebrew University, which saw itself in opposition to the state.[18]

Gutwein also writes extensively of how Ettinger's class interests were reflected in his scholarly work. In his publications from the 1960's and '70s, Ettinger openly rejected the historiographic views of his teachers. In contrast to Baer, for example, but also Dinur, Ettinger rejected the idea that the Jewish masses were the locomotives of Jewish history. Ettinger stipulated instead that it was the elite that preserved the moral character of a given society, and as such it was they, not 'the people,' who were responsible for historic change. Unlike his teachers, who emphasized the 'internal' elements in Jewish history, Ettinger also claimed that it was anti-Semitism – that is, an external factor – that preserved Jews in the diaspora. And finally, in contrast to his teachers, who saw themselves, and the Zionist Movement as a whole, as the vanguard of the Jewish People, Ettinger drew attention to the shared destiny of all Jews everywhere, somewhat diminishing from the Zionists' place of privilege within the Jewish world. Gutwein summarizes:

[18] Daniel Gutwein, "Shmuel Ettinger, Anti-Semitism, and 'The Thesis beyond Zionism': Historiography, Politics, and Class," *Iyunim: Multidisciplinary Studies in Israeli and Modern Jewish Society*, Vol. 23 (2013), pp. 83-175, p. 156, ff. (My translation).

> Ettinger offered a historiography that established the superiority of the elite over the regime, and which differentiates between the ideas and values [of a society] from the social and institutional conditions in which they developed. This approach was befitting of Ettinger's principled liberalism, but also served to underscore the academic elite's demand to redefine the [political structure] in a way that would guarantee its status and superiority over the government and the masses […].[19].

IV.

Ettinger's revolt against his masters could also be told through the story of the history of consciousness. In Vico's philosophy of history, he distinguishes between three phases in the life of civilizations: the Age of the Gods, the Age of Heroes, and the Age of Man (or Civilized Age). Each age corresponds to a different epistemology and different mode of expression which he terms, respectively, the "poetic," the "heroic" or "noble," and the "vulgar." The great literary critic Northrop Frye has suggested calling these instead the hieroglyphic, the hieratic, and the demotic.[20] The Age of the Gods belongs to the mythical stage of civilization, where men believe that the gods walk among and commune with them. Their mode of expression is lyrical-metaphorical, or mythopoetic, as for example in the first chapters of Genesis. In the Age of the Heroes, the gods are no longer seen as being in direct contact with mankind, but rather, that heroes, who are descended from the gods, now walk among them, and frequently rule over them (for this reason, Vico also calls this the aristocratic age). At this stage, their mode of expression is allegorical; "man" and "the divine" are no longer seen as occupying the same "magical" realm, but man's actions are endowed with a certain transcendent,

[19] Gutwein, p. 157. See also pp. 147-156; p. 160; ff.
[20] Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), p. 5.

authoritative quality (hence Frye's view that it should be associated with the rule of priests). Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey*, for instance, are products of this mode, as are, in my view, some of the biblical books, namely Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, as well as portions of the Late Prophets. Finally, the last phase, the Age of Man, is rational and philosophical. This age is usually characterized by republican, or democratic virtues, the spread of freedom, popular justice, and so forth. Expression is descriptive, suggesting the complete separation between subject and object, man and nature. According to Frye, this phase characterizes, for example, European civilization since the Renaissance and Reformation.[21]

Vico's view of history is, generally speaking, cyclical, but his explanation of the life of civilizations is more nuanced than the mere repetition of these three phases indefinitely. Thus, at the end of the third phase of his schemata, social order disintegrates. The norms and advances that accompany the progress of reason, to quote from Isaiah Berlin, "inevitably [breed] unrestricted questioning of accepted values, that is, philosophy and criticism, and in the end [undermine] the accepted structure of society."[22] Vico calls this stage the "barbarism of reflection" (*The New Science,* §1106, ff). After this very final state is finished, civilizations return to the beginning, a *corso* and *ricorso.* Vico seems to suggest, however (there is some ambiguity in his description), that nations do not return to the mythical Age of Gods, but rather, to the Age of Heroes. As such, men constantly move between "heroism" and "reason."[23]

Thinking about the Jerusalem historians through Vico, we may say then that in terms of their historical position in the context of Zionism, the figures discussed in this study – Baer, Scholem, and

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[21] Frye, *The Great Code,* p. 13.
[22] Isaiah Berlin, "The Philosophical Ideas of Giambattista Vico," in idem., *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 21-121, pp. 83-4.
[23] This point is neatly explained in a recent paper on Vico populism: Rico Isaacs, "Vico and Populism: the Return to a 'Barbarism of Refection,'" *ProtoSociology*, Vol. 37 (2020), pp. 45-65.

Kaufmann – belong with the founders; to the heroic or aristocratic age. In terms of their origins and education, however, they belong to the final stages of European Civilization, to the very end of the rational age if not at the midst of the barbarism of reflection. This unique combination can help explain their special "grammar," and vacillation between "inspired" and "reasoned" speech, between the language of biology and the language of science.

Ettinger, however, belongs already to a different phase of Jewish-Israeli civilization. And as such, it is unsurprising that he would find his teachers' language to be alien and strange. By the same token, however, it seems more likely that Baer, Scholem, Kaufmann, and their colleague Dinur, will continue holding a place of cultural authority that Ettinger and his coterie could never attain. The writings of the first-generation of the Jerusalem School will continue to excite the imagination and the scholarly agenda of numerous others, while the legacy of Ettinger is already fading.

V.

In a short essay on the relevance of historiography, Hayden White argued that academic historiography has lost the ability to influence public discourse because it committed itself too strongly to the scientific ethos: "[academic history] has sold out any claim to relevance to present existential concerns of the societies in which it is practiced in order to purchase a much more dubious claim to 'objectivity' (or as Carlo Ginzburg would prefer, 'neutrality') in the study of the past." In order to begin to redeem academic historiography, he claims, what is needed is "poetic vision, philosophical

self-reflexivity, and the kind of engagement with the enigmas of human existence that engaged psychoanalysis and ethnography in the early twentieth century."[24]

If White is correct in his analysis, then the crisis of the historic discipline of which Idel and Funkenstein spoke could possibly still be remedied if history again begins to appeal to the human *soul*. And indeed, if we consider the influence of Foucault – who is mentioned by Funkenstein – we see that new forms of historical narrative could still be influential and stir the imaginations of many, leading also to new avenues of research and 'scientific contributions,' so to speak. In the field of Jewish historiography, Guy Miron has already suggested that the various "turns" in the social sciences – linguistic, cultural, and so forth – could help shed light on aspects of Jewish history that have not been researched deeply enough, and thus invigorate the field of Jewish studies.[25] The perspectives he has chosen specifically, in their sub-national and at times anti-national implications, are of course in many ways anathema to Zionism (and quite possibly, Judaism as well). But nonetheless, Miron has helped us begin to see the ways in which these historians could be helpful to us in the future – not through their historical "objectivity," but rather, through their "ideology." For these scholars discussed above were able to create a historiography that still spoke to "human existence" in a way that later historiography could not.

VI.

What of, however, these individuals' political thought? In recent years, there has been a plethora of studies suggesting that the geopolitical makeup of the world is changing, or at least is going

[24] Hayden White, "The Public Relevance of Historical Studies: A Reply to Dirk Moses," *History and Theory*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Oct., 2005), pp. 333-338, pp. 335-6.
[25] Guy Miron, "Language, Culture and Space: The Challenges of Jewish Historiography in the Age of the 'Turns,'" *Zion*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (2011), pp. 63-93.

to change in the very near future. One speculation which has gathered some traction in international relations theory is that the nation state is going to give way to another model of political organization, namely, the civilizational state. Adrian Pabst explains:

> But today we are witnessing the end of the liberal world order and the rise of a new model of political organization—the civilizational state. It claims to represent not simply a nation or territory but an exceptional civilization. In China and Russia the ruling classes reject Western liberalism and the expansion of a global market society. They define their countries in terms of distinctive civilizations with their own unique cultural values and political institutions. The rise of civilizational states is not just changing the global balance of power. It is also transforming post–Cold War geopolitics away from liberal universalism toward cultural exceptionalism. The world is neither converging toward liberal market democracy nor inexorably moving toward ever-more globalization.[26]

This theory is only one among many about the future of the world. It presents both threats and rewards for the Jewish people, especially in Israel. But be that as it may, if the world is indeed going to change, then Jews must be prepared to consider alternative forms of political existence. At such a time, the political thought of Baer, Scholem, and Kaufmann may then serve as such possible models. Perhaps if not for emulation, then at least for inspiration. It is hoped that this study will then serve as a starting point to begin engaging with these important thinkers.

[26] Adrian Pabst, "The Resurgence of Great Power Politics and the Rise of the Civilizational State," *Telos*, no. 188 (Fall, 2019), pp. 205–10, p. 205.

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