

ISRAEL

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism was set up in 1962 at Tel Aviv University through the initiative and with the assistance of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the aim of furthering the research and the teaching of the history of the Zionist idea, the Zionist movement and the Land of Israel in modern times.

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No. 2, 2002



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
THE CHAIM ROSENBERG SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES
THE CHAIM WEIZMANN INSTITUTE FOR THE
STUDY OF ZIONISM

Editor: Shalom Ratzabi

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Tel Aviv University

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism

Graphic Editing: Michal Semo, TAU's Graphic Design Studio

Printed in Israel at A.R.T. Offset Services Ltd.

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Summaries

Yosef Salmon

Religion and Secularism in the National Movement

The Zionist movement was largely secular as regards the personal identity of its members, its symbols and values. Zionism served as a bridge for many of its members in their passage from traditional Judaism to secularism. The fact that Zionism drew its symbols from tradition made this move more acceptable but also caused the traditionalists to react more vehemently against the new movement. They regarded Zionism as a greater danger to traditional Judaism than Karaism and Sabbetianism, since it used traditional symbols to attract people to the new secular movement.

This article examines six models of the transformation of traditional values into secular ones: social, ethical, biblical, messianic, cultural and atheistic models. The article also describes how the Zionist movement applied quasi-traditional norms to everyday life in the Land of Israel: observing the Sabbath and Jewish festivals, incorporating the “status quo” into the legal system, preserving the kosher kitchen in public institutions, and adopting the laws of matrimony into the Israeli jurisdiction. The article then describes the process of deconstruction of the Zionist values shaping the entire Israeli *raison d'état*.

The dismantlement of the agricultural settlements and the institutes of the Labor movement engendered a collapse in the models that upheld Israeli society. The article ends by asking whether an Israeli reality denuded of religious identity can withstand the challenges of the times.

Rina Hevlin

Jewish Identity between Tradition and Secularity in Ahad Ha'am's Thought

The article focuses on an aspect of Ahad Ha'am's thought that has hitherto not received attention in the research — the complex relation between Jewish culture and Jewish identity in modern Jewish society. Ahad Ha'am claims that one's identity is formed within one's cultural context. The self is molded in the context of its cultural relationship with the meaningful other. In view of modernity and the secularization of the Western world, which had affected the Jewish world, Ahad Ha'am suggests an alternative meaning for Jewish existence and Jewish identity. His perception of Judaism as a multicultural heritage, which is constantly being molded by new interpretations, is the basis for the formation of a modern Jewish identity. This is a secular identity, based on the one hand on the heritage of the past, and on the other hand on secularizing modernity, with a commitment to both.

Gur Alroey

The Demographic Composition of the “Second Aliyah”

The article examines the composition of the Second Aliyah on the basis of the data of the information bureau in Odessa, which was the main port of departure for emigrants to Palestine. The information bureau published data every two weeks on the characteristics of the emigrants in the Zionist Organization’s newspaper *Ha-Olam*, and at the end of the year it published an annual table summarizing the data on immigration to Palestine. These tables, which cover two-thirds of the people entering Palestine, break down the immigrants by sex, age, country of origin, occupation, reason for coming to Palestine, and so forth. A comparison with the data on immigration to the United States during the same years reveals several interesting similarities, despite the small number who went to Palestine as opposed to the millions who went to the United States. First of all, there is a near-perfect correlation between the trends of immigration to Palestine and to the United States. Whenever there was an increase in migration from Eastern Europe to various countries overseas, there was also an increase in migration to Palestine. Second, most of the emigrants to both the United States and Palestine were families. A quarter of the newcomers to Palestine were children aged fifteen or under. However, unlike the United States, Palestine also attracted people over the age of fifty (25 percent of the arrivals), but not all of these should be regarded as being part of the Old Yishuv.

Dvora Hacoen

The Emergence of New Political Leadership in the 1950s

The mass immigration to Israel that began in the first decade of statehood created a demographic revolution. The veteran leadership, fearing the implications of that revolution, strove to retain its own political power and cultural patterns by assimilating the immigrants into the prevailing cultural system created by the veteran society of European origin. The plan was to foster a new leadership among the immigrants who would help to implement that aim. This project took place during the first decade in the Moshavei Olim (cooperative agricultural settlements of new immigrants).

This article examines the results of that process, which indeed created a new immigrant leadership, although different from the one planned by the policy makers. It describes the factors affecting that development, and the characteristics of the new immigrants’ leadership that emerged in the Moshavei Olim. These developments reflected processes that were occurring more slowly and less perceptibly in other sectors of Israeli society at that time.

Yaron Tsur

The Ethnic Problem in the Jewish Agency's
Discussions at the end of the 1950s Mass Immigration

The starting point of this article is that the ethnic problem was a special problem of Zionism arising from the encounter between nationalism and the legacy of colonial relations, an encounter that created an inbuilt potential conflict between Jews from Europe and those from Africa and Asia in the young Israeli society. Against this background, over and beyond the real problems of coping with the unprecedented influx of immigrants of different origins and varying degrees of adaptability to their new country, conditions developed that led to discrimination against the Oriental immigrants. The article traces the ways in which this discrimination became exacerbated towards the end of the period of the mass immigration. It first discusses the attitudes of two of the leaders in the fields of settlement and immigrant absorption at the time, Levi Eshkol and Giora Josephthal. Both these leaders had increasing reservations about the Oriental immigrants, although their views were not identical. The article then shows the special attitude to the "Eastern family" revealed in discussions of the Jewish Agency Executive. Finally, the article analyzes the discussions on restricting the immigration at the end of 1951. It demonstrates how these discussions reflected the conflict between the egalitarian national ethos and the discrimination characteristic of the ethnic problem.

Zvi Zohar

Religious Affirmation of Zionism as a National Liberation Movement: Aspects of the
Thought of Rabbi Khalfon Moshe HaCohen of Jerba

The support of Sephardic and Oriental rabbinic leaders for Zionism has been attributed to their failure to understand Zionism as a secular nationalist movement. Rather, these rabbis are said to have viewed Zionism as a contemporary manifestation of traditional/religious attitudes and aspirations towards the Land of Israel and its settlement. Elsewhere I have argued that this was not the case for leading Sephardic and Oriental rabbis in Eretz Yisrael. The present article makes a similar argument with regard to Rabbi Khalfon Moshe HaCohen (1874-1949), a leading rabbinical figure in one of the most traditional and conservative Jewish communities in North Africa: the south Tunisian Island of Jerba.

Analysis of a seminal text on Zionism by Rabbi HaCohen (c. 1920) shows that he understood Zionism to be a secular nationalist movement, whose goal was ensuring the continuity of the Jewish nation through securing a national territory, a national language, national funds and a national economy. Rabbi HaCohen was cognizant of European Orthodox religious critiques of the Zionist movement, and argued against them. He explained that these Zionist goals were worthwhile and valuable in their own

right, even if they had no connection with any divinely ordained progress towards Messianic redemption. He also asserted that the achievement of these national goals would have a positive religious-psychological effect on the Jewish people: secular-national revival would stem despair and encourage continued hope for ultimate Redemption. Finally, he argued that although we cannot know the Divine Mind, current scientific/technological developments and political developments such as Jewish nationalism could well be partial fulfillments of ancient prophecies. For all these reasons, he concluded that Zionism as a movement with secular national goals was worthy of full encouragement and support by religiously committed Jews.

Yosef Gorny and Avi Bareli

An Involved Intellectual: Rational Will in Nathan Rotenstreich's Social and Zionist Thought

The article analyzes from historical and philosophical perspectives the fundamental role of voluntarism — the vision of a society based on rational will — in Rotenstreich's Zionist Socialism. The analysis focuses on Rotenstreich's criticism of the social and political shaping of the State of Israel in its early years, and on his criticism and practical suggestions concerning the relations between the new Jewish state and the Diaspora. His call to renew *Halutziyut* (political and social voluntarism among young Zionists) was relevant to one of the main problems at that time — the centralization of the new political society — and yet it was essentially nostalgic and politically ineffective. By contrast, his suggestions to revitalize the political life of the Diaspora seem relevant even today.

Reuven Shoham

Nathan Zach Lands "On the Beach of Seas," or: "We" as "New Historians"

This article considers one of Nathan Zach's early poems: "Le-hof yamim" (On the Beach of Seas), published in his first book: *Shirim Rishonim* (First Poems) (1955). In this poem, Zach can be seen as the precursor of the so-called "New Historians." The speakers (the "we") shatter what Gershon Shaked has termed the "master plot of Zionism" and all the basic myths of the Jewish people. The collective voice, the "we," is unusual in Zach's poetry and stands in ironical contrast to the "we" in the poetry of the 1948 generation (Gouri, Hillel, Gilbo'a and others). Zach's "we" are not united in a bloody brotherhood, but are an accidental conglomerate of uprooted people who, by chance, reach the beach of Eretz Yisrael as immigrants and not as *olim* or *ma'apilim*. These people are eternal slaves, permanent "others," from the days of the Egyptian exile until the present, and in their monologue they question the narratives of the Exodus, both then and now, and the fundamental ideological tenets of Zionism. The entire

viewpoint is that of postmodernism: there is no center, only one vast margin. Heroism does not exist, history is the history of slaves suffering endless manipulations by all the establishments and leaderships throughout the generations. The “sacred/mythic time” of the War of Independence is not replaced by the desired “concrete time” of daily and domestic routine (in Eliade terms) but by ironic time and anti-heroes, functioning in the “ironic mode” of literature (Frye). These “we” are helpless victims who do not know why they are here and for whom they are building the new Pithom and Ra’amses in the “Promised Land.” This is a fiercely political and polemical poem, more typical of Zach of the 1980s, before and after the Lebanon War, than of the young Zach.