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SINCE 1934 — A LABOR ZIONIST JOURNAL

# JEWISH Frontier

SINCE 1934

A LABOR ZIONIST JOURNAL

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## Post-Peres Labor

by Susan Hattis Rolef

**L**abor's leadership primaries, held on June 3rd, were lacking in tension or excitement. The result — a victory for former Chief of Staff Ehud Barak — seemed all along a foregone conclusion, even though there were some within the party, who hoped until the last moment that unlike Benjamin Netanyahu in the Likud primaries back in March 1993, Barak would get less than 50% of the votes. They felt that too sweeping a victory, especially in a situation where there were four contestants, would encourage Barak to act within the Labor Party as Netanyahu had done in the Likud — as a soloist, eager to neutralize all potential sources of opposition to himself.

Barak ended up getting 50.33% of the votes. Yossi Beilin came in second with 28.51% Shlomo Ben Ami third with 14.17% and Efraim Sneh fourth with 6.6%. Given these results, Barak's position in the party seems safe, even though Haim Ramon — who decided not to participate in the current leadership contest, because he is still held responsible by many for Labor's failure in last year's election due to the excessively mild election campaign which he ran, and for the collapse of the Histadrut after he was elected its Secretary General in May 1994 — has stated that under certain circumstances he might still stand for election against Barak in 1999.

Even though it was obvious to everyone that former Labor Party chairman Shimon Peres preferred Beilin of the four candidates — he kept mum. Peres himself said that it was because he felt that his position as outgoing leader called for formal neutrality, but there were some who said that the whole situation was simply too painful for him, and as he had done previously in similar situations (for example, after going through with the rotation agreement with Yitzhak Shamir in October 1986), he just clammed up.

Peres's sulking somewhat spoiled the festive atmosphere, which should have accompanied the changing of the guard in the Labor Party, from the generation born in the 1920s to that born in the 1940s — skipping over the rather gray generation of apparatchiks and professional politicians born in the 1930s. Some were angry with Barak for not being more magnanimous with Peres, when he refused to consider Peres being appointed Party President. But Barak was probably right in his decision.

**P**eres has apparently not yet resigned himself to change, and is not yet ready to assume the role that should rightfully be his: that of the wise old statesman, whom former friends and foes alike come to consult. He still wants to be at the center of the stage, refusing to grasp that for him the curtain has gone down, and that despite his many talents and achievements he will never again be given the opportunity to try to win an election. "Am I a loser?" he asked at the last meeting of the Labor Party Conference, and the crowd shouted back "yes". The sad truth is that Peres never won a national election, though twice he became Prime Minister by default — once in 1984, within the framework of the National Unity Government, in a situation of a draw between the left-Arab bloc and right-religious bloc; the second time in November 1995, after Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. Before Peres can formally assume the role of elder statesman, and be welcomed as such by Barak, he must undergo a metamorphosis. In his present mood he could easily turn into a liability to a Labor Party which urgently needs to change its image, though some Likudniks have already cynically embraced Peres "as the first victim of the over-ambitious Barak".

As to Labor's newly elected leader, Barak seems to be willing to build a leadership team

in which three other contestants, and Haim Ramon, in addition to the leading MKs who supported him in the leadership contest — Binyamin (Faud) Ben Eliezer, Avraham Beiga Shohat, Uzi Baram and Hagai Merom — will all take part. However it is difficult to tell what form this leadership will take, or what Barak's own leadership style will be like. Barak started off by holding meetings with each of the personalities involved. He is a good listener, but many of those who have worked with him in the past argue that — to rephrase several lines from one of the songs in the famous musical "My Fair Lady" (it was Prof. Higgins talking about women) — "He will ask for your advice, your reply will be concise, he will listen very nicely and go out and do precisely as he wants."

According to press reports Shohat and Baram are pressing Barak to set up a leadership team made up of no more than 12 personalities, with whom he will consult regularly. Beilin and the chairman of the party's Knesset parliamentary group, Ra'anana Cohen, are pressing for the setting up of a "shadow cabinet", such as is customary in Britain, and the appointment of specific personalities to head specific "shadow ministries" to keep tailing the real ministers and trying to give them as hard a time as possible. Barak is said to prefer the formation of clusters of party members to deal with particular spheres, both on the current level and planning level.

The name of MK Professor Shlomo Ben Ami is raised as the person most likely to overhaul Labor's attitudes and policies on social issues. Ben Ami, a Moroccan born history professor from Tel Aviv University, who was appointed by Peres as Israel's first ambassador to Spain in January 1986, was the only non-Ashkenazi among the four contestants to the leadership and the only one among them to have experienced the hardships endured by the new immigrants, who came from the Muslim countries in the 1950s. Shohat — who was Minister of Finance in the years 1992-1996 — will undoubtedly continue to be responsible for Labor's economic policy, though Benny Gaon — the man who in the late 1980s and early 1990s saved *Koor* (at that time an industrial conglomerate owned by the Histadrut and today a privately owned multinational) from liquidation and is its current President — has recently expressed interest in helping to formulate

Labor's future economic strategy.

More immediately Barak must decide about the future of the post of Secretary General of the Labor Party. In the past the Secretary General was a politician, elected by the Central Committee to run the party apparatus. Since the Labor Party was formed in 1968 the following personalities held the post: Pinhas Sapir (1967-1970); Arie Lova Eliav (1970-1971); Yisrael Yeshayahu (1971-1972); Aharon Yadlin (1972-1974); Me'ir Zarmi (1974-1977); Haim Bar Lev (1977-1984); Uzi Baram (1984-1989); Micha Harish (1989-1992); Nissim Zvili (1992-1997). All but Zarmi were Knesset members when elected. After Nissim Zvili failed to get Peres elected President of the Party, he announced his intention of resigning the post right after the leadership primaries. Barak responded by stating that he intended to do away with the post and instead hire a professional Director General (Netanyahu appointed Avigdor Liberman — today the Director General of the Prime Minister's Office — as Director General of the Likud after he was elected Chairman in March 1993). Peres has been trying to talk Barak out of the idea, as have several others who regard themselves as candidates for the post, such as MKs Ra'anana Cohen, Ori Orr and Hagai Merom, and individuals like Shlomo Ben Ami and Efraim Sneh.

This is a serious issue, since it concerns the future structure and management of the party, which in the age of primaries, its current dire financial situation, major changes in the country's Labor Movement (Histadrut, kibbutzim and moshavim), is without doubt a totally different sort of body than it was in the past, and is starting to resemble the parties in the U.S., which between elections maintain a skeleton apparatus and only come to life several months before elections. For the time being Barak has decided not to decide, and has temporarily assumed for himself the tasks of the Secretary General. However, before long he will have to take a decision on this issue as on many others.

Though Barak's style of leadership will be most affected by his personality, 35 years of military experience and his inclination not to express precise policy proposals rather than general principles and outlines, his agenda will be dictated by whether or not the current

*(continued on page 13)*

## Zionism and the Jewish State-in-the-Making

By Mark A. Raider

**I**n the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Jewish communities of Europe were traditional in character: Jews were a corporate unit with distinct religious practices and institutions, limited to a narrow range of trades and professions, and excluded from agriculture, the economic pursuit of the majority of the non-Jewish population. The Jews viewed themselves as a people consigned to exile and passively awaited redemption in the midst of an alien and frequently hostile majority.

This period witnessed a complex phenomenon known as Jewish emancipation: the process by which the Jews, especially those in Western and Central Europe, were propelled towards new social and economic opportunities and began to assimilate into Gentile society. Jewish ideologues of the emancipation process sought to redefine the Jews as a religious community, aware of and responsive to the norms of Gentile society, and to denigrate or weaken the national element in Judaism. Jews, it was argued, could and should become Frenchmen, Germans, Englishmen or Poles of the "Mosaic faith." In this way, the liberal ideologists hoped, the age-old "Jewish question" would be solved.

At the same time, a perception grew among the leadership of emancipated Jewry in Western Europe that their seemingly backward East European coreligionists were not only in need of support and defense, but of economic and educational assistance in order to become "modern" and "western." This feeling prompted the founding of a French Jewish institution dedicated to the defense and improvement of the Jews throughout the world, the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* (1860). Similar communal bodies were soon founded in other Western

lands, such as the British Board of Deputies, the American Board of Delegates for Civil Liberties and the German *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*.

**W**hile Jewish liberalism dominated the thought of the emancipated Western Jewish leadership, there was a strain of dissident thought that objected to the loss of Jewish identity and national awareness. The typical proponents of anti-assimilationism were born and educated in areas outside the Western Liberal Mainstream — in the Balkans or the cultural borderlands of Eastern Europe, where integration did not appear to be a viable option, and where traditional values still held strong. This phenomenon is especially striking in the biographies of the first proto-Zionists: Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai (1798–1878), who lived in the Balkans at the time the local population freed itself from the political control of the Ottoman Empire; Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1785–1874), who emphasized biblical laws concerning settlement in the Land of Israel; and Moses Hess (1812–1875), who rediscovered Jewish nationalism after a distinguished radical career in which he helped to lay the ideological foundations of European socialism. Hess's book *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862), was an eloquent appeal for the reassertion of Jewish national identity.

### East European Milieu

In 1881-82, following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II by revolutionary terrorists, a wave of *pogroms* [anti-Jewish riots] broke out in the Russian Empire. Scores of Jewish communities were attacked and pillaged, hun-

dreds were killed and injured, and thousands were left without means of a livelihood. The pogroms had the immediate impact of speeding up the process of Jewish disenchantment with the ideology of liberalism.

The most obvious problem was that of the Jewish refugees, a problem whose solution was widely seen to lie in emigration. An immediate rivalry developed between the *Amerikantsy*, represented by such groups as *Am Olam* [Eternal People], who saw the United States as the obvious safe haven, and the *Palestintsy*, who desired resettlement in Palestine. The *Palestintsy* saw colonization as the most effective means of reasserting a Jewish national identity, whereas they feared American society promised wholesale assimilation and the disappearance of the emigrants' Jewishness.

In 1882 scattered groups of Palestine-minded students united to found the *Bilu* movement, an organization dedicated to creating exemplary agricultural colonies in Eretz Israel. The *Bilu* pioneers derived their name from a passage in the book of Isaiah, II:5: "O House of Jacob, come let us rise up." Although the Movement failed to effect mass migration to Palestine, *Bilu* partisans did succeed in establishing a few settlements in Palestine. More importantly, they laid much of the ideological groundwork for Russian Jewish pioneers in this period, including the philosophy of Jewish manual work which later came to be known as the "conquest of labor." The Zionists' success in Palestine depended on the concurrent development of agricultural and industrial pursuits.

While radical Jewish youth pursued specific projects aimed at Jewish liberation in Palestine, the movement for a new exodus received ideological justification from Leo Pinsker (1821–1891), who in 1882 published an influential pamphlet entitled *Auto-Emancipation*. Pinsker, a veteran Russian Jewish journalist, called for the creation of an autonomous Jewish national home.

Pinsker headed a movement — known as *Hibbat Zion* [Lovers of Zion] — from 1884 until his death. The efforts of the Russian Zionists were largely ineffectual, save for the establishment of a few agricultural colonies in Palestine, dependent on the largesse of the important French Jewish philanthropist Baron Edmond James de Rothschild.

## Political Zionism

The fortunes of the fledgling Zionist movement changed dramatically with the appearance of Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), the father of modern Zionism. Herzl was an Austrian Jewish writer and journalist and, until the Dreyfus Affair of 1894, a typical, assimilated, middle-class Jew. Shocked to the core by the virulent display of anti-Semitism surrounding the Dreyfus Affair, Herzl subsequently turned his efforts to the implementation of a Zionist solution to the so-called "Jewish problem." In 1896, after unsuccessful attempts to enlist the support of Franco-Jewish philanthropists, Herzl sought a wider audience with the publication of *Der Judenstaat* [The Jews' State]. In 1897 he launched a Zionist weekly called *Die Welt* [The World] and presided over the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. It was after the first congress that Herzl wrote in his diary: "If I were to sum up the Basel Congress in a single phrase I would say, 'In Basel I created the Jewish state.' Were I to say this aloud, I would be greeted by universal laughter. But perhaps five years hence, in any case, certainly in fifty years, everyone will agree." A total of six congresses were held between 1897 and Herzl's death in 1904, and they created the institutions of the Zionist movement: the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Colonial Trust and the Jewish National Fund.

Herzl pursued his goals through diplomacy aimed at the rulers of European states and the Ottoman sultan. In 1903, the Zionist movement underwent a crisis when the British government offered Herzl a tract of land in East Africa for Jewish colonization. Herzl recommended the acceptance of this territory to his followers as a temporary "safe haven" for the Jews. This "Uganda Project," as it came to be known, ultimately failed, foundering on the hostility of the Russian "Zion Zionists" led by Menahem Mendel Ussishkin (1863–1941).

Upon Herzl's premature death in 1904, the leadership of the movement was captured by the so-called "practical Zionists" who subordinated the long-range, messianic goals of Zionism to the task of building up Jewish settlement in Palestine.

Ahad Haam ["One of the People"] was the pseudonym of Asher Zvi Ginsburg (1856–1927), a Russian Jew who rejected the concept of Zionism as a mass movement, arguing in-

stead that the Jewish people required cultural revival and modernization, objectives best carried out by a small elite based in Palestine. This was a clear rejection of the idea of immediate, mass resettlement. Although never part of the Zionist mainstream, the writings of Ahad Haam had a profound influence on many of the younger leaders of Zionism.

### War and Revolution

In the turbulent decades that bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jewish nationalism, like the Jewish labor movement, spread from Eastern Europe to the West, including the United States. With the outbreak of World War I and the expulsion of Jews from the Eastern War Zone, Zionism was thrust on to the political stage. Against the background of anti-Jewish brutalities, militant nationalism, shattered empires, and new nation-states, the war engendered a revolutionary outlook — transforming Zionism, as many Jews perceived it, from a utopian quest into a practical necessity.

The war also created a dilemma for the Zionist movement, namely which side of the conflict should it support? Palestine, after all, was ruled by the Ottoman Empire, and the Turks were aligned with the Central Powers. Meanwhile, European Jews were fighting on both sides of the war, the outcome of which was uncertain. Ultimately, it was the hostility of the Ottoman Empire towards the Yishuv [Palestine Jewish community] that pushed the Zionists into the Allied camp. Though unofficially true at the war's outset — even when the central Zionist offices were moved from Berlin to neutral territory in New York City — it quickly became apparent that Zionist sympathies lay with the Allies. When the United States finally entered the war in 1917, decisively changing the balance of power in favor of the Allied forces, hopes were raised that Palestine would eventually come under British control. During the war, especially after the great political success of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 (wherein the British government expressed its commitment to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine), the focus of the Zionist debate shifted away from the problems of the diaspora communities and toward Palestine. Two issues now emerged as paramount: the fate of the Yishuv and the vexing problem of Arab-Jewish relations.

After World War I, when the British Mandatory regime's policy unfolded, it became clear that there was no political will to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Instead, during the interwar years, the British government issued a series of "White Papers" clarifying that, in the view of His Majesty's Government, a Jewish "national home" did not mean a sovereign Jewish state. Instead, the British actually imposed severe restrictions on Jewish immigration and the areas of Jewish settlement. Unappeased, however, the Arab community's opposition to the Zionist enterprise intensified.

### Between the World Wars

Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), the primary architect of the Balfour Declaration, emerged as the leader of the Zionist movement after World War I. The political headquarters of the Zionist movement moved to London under his direction, especially since the League of Nations entrusted the Mandate for Palestine to Britain. Despite Weizmann's secure diplomatic standing, the new hierarchy led to a somewhat anomalous situation: the Zionist pioneers actually building the Yishuv did so with a particular social-ideological agenda in view, but the individuals who retained ultimate political control of the Zionist movement lived in a totally different milieu thousands of miles from Palestine.

The geographic distance separating the Zionist leadership in London from the movement in Palestine caused misunderstandings, ideological quarrels and eventually a power struggle in world Zionist politics. A rift emerged between the traditional European-based Zionist leaders and the stewards of the movement in the United States. Louis D. Brandeis (1856–1941), an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court and head of the American Zionist movement, believed that the political era of Zionism had ended with the Balfour Declaration. The new challenge, in his opinion, was to develop Palestine's economic potential and successfully absorb its new immigrants.

In contrast, Weizmann and his followers believed that the political struggle was far from over, and he continued to view Zionism — now officially represented by the Jewish Agency for Palestine — as the national will of the Jewish people. They also differed over a

principle of fundamental importance: the notion of exile and the imperative of Eretz Israel as the authentic home of the Jewish people. Over time, much of the Brandeis group's agenda was adopted and implemented by the Weizmann forces which controlled the Zionist movement.

It was also in the 1930s that the Labor Zionist movement rose from its minority status in the World Zionist Organization to a position of political dominance. At the heart of the Labor enterprise stood the *Histadrut*, the general federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine, created in 1920 by a conference of socialist Zionist parties in Palestine. The *Histadrut* commanded a broad network of agricultural settlements, as well as educational institutions, trade unions, self-defense groups, a workers' press and a workers' health organization, which enabled the Yishuv to cope with different crises through broad measures of cooperative organization.

Probably the single most important factor in determining the Yishuv's future, however, was the fact that the Zionist organization as a whole united behind the objective of attaining Jewish political sovereignty in Palestine. The British government, on the other hand, though it inched toward the policy of partition recommended by the Peel Commission of 1937, was quite uncertain about its short- and long-range objectives. Such ambivalence, compounded by the Arab riots of 1936-39, prompted a British reappraisal outlined in the MacDonald "White Paper" of 1939. In an attempt to meet Arab demands, the British government proposed a limit on Jewish immigration of 75,000 between 1939 and 1944 (when it would cease altogether), and a ten-year transition period to an independent state with an Arab majority. The Jewish Agency believed this to be a clear breach of past British pledges. In the face of this turnabout, compounded by the onset of World War II, David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973), the leader of the Zionist movement after 1935, declared a new Zionist policy agenda: "We must support the [British] army as though there were no White Paper, and fight the White Paper as though there were no war."

The period between the end of World War II and the establishment of Israel in 1948 was characterized by turmoil in Palestine and intense diplomatic activity in the Western capi-

tals. In 1947, against the backdrop of overflowing displaced persons camps in Cyprus and so-called "illegal" Jewish immigration to Palestine — known as "Aliyah Bet" — the British decided on a policy of returning illegal Jewish immigrants to their original ports of departure. The most notorious example in this regard was *Exodus-1947*, a ship carrying nearly 5,000 Jewish refugees. Intercepted off the Palestine coast, the *Exodus* was compelled to return to Hamburg after a pitiful ordeal where the British forced the passengers off the ship and beat those who resisted with clubs and hoses — all in the glare of the world media. This affair signaled Britain's inability to deal with the ever-increasing flow of Jewish immigrants and hastened its decisions to relinquish the Mandate.

After Israel's War of Independence (1948-49), the new state faced an abrupt transition to statehood that strained the country's resources. The existing pre-state institutions were called upon to meet a host of unprecedented domestic challenges including an enormous influx of immigrants and the stabilization of the economy. At the same time, Israel was confronted by a threatening foreign environment, notably an ongoing state of war with surrounding Arab countries and the demands of a sizable population of Palestinian Arab refugees.

### Conclusion

Between the rise of Theodor Herzl and the creation of the State of Israel, Zionism changed in the sense that its original premise and the relative strength of the movement as a whole was dramatically modified. The Holocaust not only annihilated many of the most active bearers of the Zionist program, but also put an end to the complex European-based Jewish-gentile relationship that was central to Zionism's rise. Although Zionism survived in Europe after World War II, the source of its ideological stimulus shifted to the newly emerging centers of Jewish life in Israel and the United States.

American Zionism, like other ethnic nationalist enterprises in the United States, was never large; but the American movement's presence was felt in the wider community. Viewed historically, the movement's strength was not contingent upon its size nor, at a later

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## Is Renewal Underway?

**I**n recent months, Israel's General Federation of Labor, the Histadrut, has shown signs of a renewed sense of purpose. This follows on the heels of radical organizational and ideological changes which have been taking place within the venerable federation.

For more than seven decades the Histadrut played an increasingly vital and dramatic role in fashioning the form of pre-state Palestine and then in creating the State of Israel. Together with Israel's Labor Party, it became a key instrument in fashioning the Jewish state and giving it a social mission which would benefit all of its citizens. It also became a pioneer instrument for integrating Jewish, Arab, and Druze citizens, as well as in providing health care to all citizens, including those living below the poverty line, in isolated development towns, and in Arab villages.

With membership approaching 1.5 million a few years ago, the Histadrut had become a force for change. According to critics within its own leadership, however, it had also become heavy with redundant staff. To some outside observers it was also too deeply involved with the fortunes of the Labor Party. As a result, and in part to pare back expenses after amassing a huge debt, the Histadrut launched a series of significant initiatives.

When the sick fund, Kupat Holim Clalit, was separated from the federation, under the terms of Israel's restructured health care system, membership in the Histadrut dropped to about 400,000. The loss reflected the fact that thousands of people, including retirees and home makers, had become members merely to take advantage of its low cost health care network. Since that watershed, and as a result of more aggressive organizing, membership has

jumped to over 700,000.

In continuation of its major overhaul, hundreds of staff members from central departments and from local labor councils have been retired or retrenched. The restructuring includes grouping more local councils in regional administrative bodies. Most recently, the Histadrut completed its move to new, smaller facilities in Jerusalem. While the results are yet to be measured, a significant savings is anticipated without any major loss in meeting workers' needs.

The Histadrut has committed its resources to continuing the campaign to enroll more members, protect those gains it has made, and position itself in the vanguard of social and political change. It has also moved to assist the peace process and to strengthen its ties with the Palestinian labor movement.

### **Municipal Workers Strike; Histadrut Disputes Treasury**

The labor federation and the National Union of Clerical, Administrative and Public Service Employees took a tough negotiating position with the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in response to Histadrut's view that the Treasury was unilaterally seeking to reduce workers' wages and pensions.

According to Leon Marozowski, General Secretary of the public service employees' union, the government efforts were in violation of specific labor court decisions. Furthermore, the Histadrut declared that these were contrary to earlier government decisions and collective bargaining agreements signed by the Histadrut and the government.

After a month of negotiations, which failed to lead to a resolution of the dispute, the His-

tadrut called for a strike of municipal workers, except for fire and emergency services. Histadrut Chairman and Knesset Member Amir Peretz declared the strike as "a first step" in an effort to change the policy of the Treasury. The labor chief described the issues in dispute as "basic to protecting workers' rights", and threatened that if the strike did not succeed in moving the authorities, "all the workers in the country" will join the campaign.

It was estimated by the Histadrut that approximately 100,000 municipal workers actually took part in the one-day strike, which ended on May 27 when Marozowski and Adi Eldar, Chairman of the Union of Local Authorities, signed an agreement. According to a Histadrut spokesperson, this included a commitment on behalf of the Union of Local Authorities that employees' wages and conditions "would not be reduced". The Histadrut also supported the local authorities' campaign for governmental help in overcoming their problem of "mounting debts", caused by delays in receiving funding for projects and programs transferred to them by the national government in Jerusalem.

#### **Pension Dispute**

In a related development, Amir Peretz and the then Minister of Finance, Dan Meridor, agreed to appoint a joint committee representing the Histadrut and the Ministry to solve a dispute about pension rights and collective agreements.

The labor federation protested the fact that agreements signed in May 1996 had not been implemented. Peretz insisted that the Histadrut could not ignore the issue of pension rights since nearly fifty per cent of those who entered the ranks of pensioners in the last year, or 7,000 out of 15,000 workers, are being harmed by the government's non-compliance.

#### **Campaign Against Child Labor**

The Histadrut has overwhelmingly endorsed an international effort to end the exploitation of child labor and declared that it was "joining the fight . . . led by UNITE (the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees) and the AFL-CIO in the United States and the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation, ICF TU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) and ILO (International Labor Organization), internationally."

UNITE president Jay Mazur, who is also president of the National Committee for Labor Israel, praised the decision as "a classic example of labor solidarity undertaken by Israel's democratic labor movement. It also demonstrates how the work place has become globalized, and that social and economic issues no longer tolerate borders."

The leadership of the Histadrut was presented with a proposal from its Strategic Planning Department whose chairman, Benjamin Jassour, recently took part in a Histadrut study mission to this country. That mission was organized by the AFL-CIO and the Minister Counselor for Labor Affairs at the Embassy of Israel in Washington, in cooperation with the NCLI.

The proposal urged the Histadrut to "lead a public campaign to highlight and oppose the exploitation of child labor in the world". Amir Peretz referred to the practices adopted by certain multinational companies as "modern slavery." He agreed to chair a public council which would include, among others, workers' representatives, the Consumers' Protection Authority, the Histadrut Trade Union Department, and the Working and Student Youth Organization (HaNoar HaOved v'HaLomed). Its mission, according to a Histadrut spokesman, is to "make the facts about exploitation of child labor available to the general public."

To highlight the effort a "Moral Standard Emblem" will be given to products manufactured under conditions satisfying international labor standards, suggesting that these should be preferred when making purchases.

— Jerry Goodman, Executive Director,  
National Committee for Labor Israel  
— Israel Histadrut Campaign

#### **CORRECTION**

A typographical error in the poem "Early Call" in our May/June issue altered the meaning of the line.

The correct version is:

"And not a song."

Sorry, Henry Glickman!

# In the Spirit of Harav Kook

## What Would He Say Today?

By Dr. Gustave Pearlman

**T**here was a time, before and during the British Mandate that the present conflict between the religious and secular in Israel was almost non-existent. Much of this was due to the teachings of HaRav Avraham Kook, who as Chief Rabbi defined the work of rebuilding Eretz Yisrael by secular Halutzim as holy. We in the Labor Zionist movement should know about this extraordinary man.

Born in Latvia in 1865, HaRav Kook made aliya in 1904 and died in Jerusalem in 1935.

This article tells about significant decisions HaRav Kook made, and takes the journalistic liberty of "interviewing" him about modern Israeli issues.

**A**t the turn of this century, during the early days of what was then called the *Yishuv*, the present day regrettable conflicts between the *haredim* and the secularists were almost non-existent. In the 1900s, many of the *Halutzim* came from observant families in the *shtetl*. Although they were rebelling against what they considered the restrictions and irrelevancy of religious practice as they saw it, these still remained part of their background. Consequently, when they encountered HaRav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook, the first chief Rabbi of what was later to be Israel, there was respect, consideration and understanding. HaRav Kook regarded the work which the pioneers were doing to build up the land as holy; even endowed with special sanctity. He called the return to Eretz Yisrael "the beginning of divine redemption. The labor of the *Halutzim* in the fields is essential to meet the vital material needs of the people. This will be followed by progress towards Israel's spiritual needs."

He was called the Rabbi of the Liberal, Labor, Kibbutz Workers Movement because of his many compassionate decisions which were important in promoting a kind of purposeful unity among the various inhabitants of the land.

1) He clearly and strongly stated:

"Workers have the right to strike. The Torah commands us to do what is right in the eyes of God. If an employer exploits his workers it is their duty to insist that he correct this. If he refuses, they have the right to strike.

2) He acknowledged that the observance of *Shmittah* (leaving the fields fallow every seventh year) would mean economic ruin for the struggling agricultural Kibbutzim. Realizing this, HaRav Kook abrogated *Shmittah* for the farms, with a Talmudic procedure which satisfied both the religious and the secular. For the seventh year the farms were "sold" to gentiles, thereby making the use of their produce permissible. For the strictly observant, including himself, HaRav Kook decreed "we are not required to eat at the harvest of *Shmittah* year if it is not acceptable to us, but it is forbidden to deny the livelihood of others."

We must be concerned about the relationship of religious piety to moralism. Piety should not push aside the natural sense of morality. There is no dichotomy between the sacred and the profane. Whatever is essential to human life is sacred.

3) Then there was the controversy of soccer games in Tel Aviv on Shabbat. The teams asserted that they were definitely going to play. The orthodox importuned HaRav Kook to issue a *cherem*, a ban, against them. HaRav Kook said,

It is not my way to go searching out the sins of Israel. Tzaddikim do not complain of evil but rather increase goodness; they do not complain about the faithless but rather they increase faith; they do not complain about ignorance, but rather increase knowledge.

The ban was not issued. He constantly spoke about the holiness of Shabbat. He emphasized how important it was to respect it and set it aside in some way. He stated his hope that perhaps this would be the first step leading to more observance. The athletes agreed that tickets to the games would not be sold on Shabbat, but had to be purchased in advance. A compromise was reached and a dispute was avoided.

4) HaRav Kook founded the first and only Yeshiva which taught both a modern trade and traditional Hebrew knowledge. It is still in existence today and is called Merkaz HaRav. He wrote,

The physical life of mankind should be infused with religious purpose. The true Mystic is not isolated in esoteric studies but is involved in communal life. In social passion is hidden a divine spark. It shines forth both as social devotion and heightened spiritual enthusiasm which exist together as do darkness and light.

5) HaRav Kook was invited to speak at the dedication of the Technion in Haifa. Several of his very strict colleagues urged him to decline but he took the opportunity to express himself about the necessity of research:

Research will never lead to evil, because of the faith in reason that all great thinkers of upright hearts have in common. We must try to magnify the fountain of knowledge that issues from the Torah source and add many ideas which will develop. We must be very careful that the products of scientific research will be directed toward the greater good of society and not fall into the hands of evildoers.

Several years ago there was a fine program on PBS portraying and "interviewing" significant personalities in the history of mankind, such as Socrates, Plato, Galileo, Maimonides, Einstein etc. With the background we have about HaRav Kook, his opinions about current happenings in Israel should be instructive. His statements and actions were seminal factors in the peaceful cooperation of both the religious and secular groups. Let us imagine his responses to an interview by the *Jewish Frontier* about important issues in Israel today:

**JF (Jewish Frontier):** What do you think

about construction on Har Homa?

**HK (HaRav Kook):** Under ideal conditions it is legal and should be allowed. But practically it is not wise. In the foreseeable future when genuine peace will prevail, it should be possible for Israelis and Palestinians to live wherever they wish all over Israel as it is with different ethnic groups in the U.S. But right now it is dangerous and unwise. The concept is sound, especially as it involves modern housing for Palestinians as well, but the timing is not correct now.

**JF:** What about giving up land for peace?

**HK:** When two nations have claims on the same land, a viable compromise must be worked out and mutually enforced so that violence and destruction is avoided.

**JF:** What is your opinion about the Judaism of Ethiopian immigrants?

**HK:** We should first say the prayer of Thanksgiving for their rescue from exile and life-threatening persecution. They should be welcomed and accepted into our midst; educated, and their lives be brought up to the higher standards of the rest of Israel.

**JF:** What do you think of the activity of the Conservative and Reform Movements in Israel?

**HK:** I believe that the institution of the Chief Rabbinate in Israel should be the fore-runner of the re-establishment of the Sanhedrin of ancient times. Representatives of all shades of Israeli opinion will deliberate. It is not the province of private individuals to decide these issues. There were great changes at the times of the Perushim (Pharisees). Great changes are occurring now. They must and will be addressed.

**JF:** What is your opinion about the election results? Why is there a coalition between the religious parties and Likud?

**HK:** Shimon Peres had many excellent progressive ideas for the future of the entire Middle East. He wrote and planned for water desalination, reversal of the "desertification" of much of the land, development of a water power system between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea and growth of tourism. These long-term plans would have benefited both Israel and neighboring states as well. His defeat was a tragedy for all. Permanent lasting peace is essential for such projects to be possible. I don't see the Likud going in that direction.

A growth in religious devotion will not occur through politics. It will happen through an evolutionary process, which is already taking place. Several prominent Rabbis and Reshei Yeshivot come from secular families.

**JF:** What do you advise to promote peace between the religious and secular elements of Israeli society?

**HK:** We must always remember these three basic tenets of Judaism, and apply them as we act and think in any situations of possible conflict which may arise:

- 1) *Chaverim Kol Yisroel* — All of Israel are friends and partners.
- 2) *Kol Yisroel yesh lahem chelek b'olom haba* — All of Israel have a share in the world to come. (Everyone — no matter whether they are secular or religious — is equal before God.)
- 3) *Kol Yisroel arayvim zeh lazeh* — The people of Israel bear responsibility for each other. One group cannot neglect the welfare of another.

**JF:** What have you done personally towards these ends?

**HK:** I travelled and spoke at Kibbutzim and Moshavim throughout Israel. Many non-religious families decided to have halachic weddings and Brit Milah (covenantal circumcisions); many of our Yeshiva boys grew to understand their secular countrymen.

I urged the religious groups to attend and participate in the World Zionist Congress. I said to them, "How can you reject Zionism when God has already chosen Zion?"

On the eve of Shavuot, I opened the doors of my home to all who wanted to study Torah. I did not question if they were observant or not or even whether they were Jewish or not. We studied that the Mitzvah to love one's neighbor includes non-Jews and secular people. "The righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come" we are taught in our Talmud.

### Conclusion

It is important that we, in the Labor Zionist Movement, know about HaRav Kook. His voice speaks out from the past, condemning those who deny the Judaism of others and who cast stones. There are today orthodox Rabbis and observant Jews brought up in the traditions of HaRav Kook, practicing them as he did. Would that there were more.

### POST-PERES LABOR

*continued from page 4*

Israeli government will survive to the year 2000. Barak has already expressed his hope that new elections will be held within a year, but it is difficult to see how this might be achieved, given the fact that under the law for the direct election of the Prime Minister only 61 MKs or more can cause the holding of early elections. Despite widespread dissatisfaction in all parties with the functioning of the current Prime Minister, there aren't 61 MKs in the Knesset today willing to vote against him and thus bring about the holding of early elections. At the same time, two private member bills, proposing the amendment or cancellation of the law, which were recently tabled in the Knesset, failed to get through a preliminary reading.

The Labor Party under Barak's leadership will be much more visible as a fighting opposition force than it was under Peres' during the past year. The 64,000 dollar question is whether it will convince the new immigrants, the supporters of Shas and other haredi parties, and middle-of-the-roaders that Barak rather than Netanyahu (or possibly Minister of Defense Itzik Mordechai) is the man they should vote for.

### ZIONISM

*continued from page 8*

stage, even its remarkable fundraising ability. Instead, American Zionists were most influential as leaders who helped to inculcate in American Jewry a sense of kinship and responsibility for the Yishuv and the State of Israel, and helped to build bridges between the two societies.

The establishment of the State of Israel solved one major problem in modern Jewish life — the need for a Jewish homeland. At the same time, the birth and development of the State of Israel created new dilemmas and continues to pose new challenges: to Jews and non-Jews, to Jews in Israel and to those in the diaspora, and within Israeli society itself.

Zionism — nearly one hundred years after its inception and almost half a century since Herzl's vision of a Jewish State was realized — is still the only Jewish movement that continues to deal with these fundamental questions in their totality.

by Jon Nalley

## The Lynching of Leo Frank

His brethren's homes beneath the peach  
blossoms,  
are boarded up, they have fled the neighbors'  
jeers,  
the sight of your noose in the sultry air.  
Dreyfus and Bellis have bettered the  
Georgian  
on Devil's Island and in Tsarist Russia.

Schiller, Heine are not read beneath gentle  
gaslight,  
post-bellum breezes smell faintly of decompo-  
sure.  
Behind concrete walls and steel doors that  
slam,  
a pencil manufacturer can hear the seething  
bile  
of flagellant Dixie sons who clamor for his  
blood —  
filled with adrenalin. Fear's sweat beads an  
urbane forehead.

Appeals are ignored, where he lives — except  
for the brave  
governor's. A death sentence becomes life in  
prison.  
His innocence is dismissed amid raging  
cauldron eyes.  
Commission pries open his cell, casts a fate  
before the mob.

Almost a century later in a modern city —  
"too busy to hate," its Peachtree Plaza lifting  
up to the sky — the limp body hangs from a  
tree.  
There is no comfort to his family. This blood  
libel,  
stagnant and dry, clings to the walls of the  
Underground.

## A Friday Night

(to Selina Trieff)

"¿Se habla español?"

Continuing ed . . . that class at Cooper Union  
brings me to this unlikely Shabbat,  
trajects from a SoHo gallery  
with a couple of classmates.

Me, the young one,  
barely 25 and new to our metropolis.

Wine is sipped with chatter and glances.  
Paintings — yours and others',  
that old friend of yours with a black beret,  
brings me romantically to Ferlinghetti,  
Kerouac.

Your friends, the *mishpoche*,  
kind of kin desired,  
dazzle absolutely.

Among enchanters,  
that brassy, Westchester real estate agent,  
a red-diaper baby  
who decries her parents' Stalinism,  
over Hunan dishes —  
a whole fish on a blue porcelain plate,  
never before tried.

A painting at your place,  
one of yours —  
haunts me, like *The Lottery*,  
took me seriously,  
"Ah, the story by Shirley Jackson,"  
you note.

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# American Jewish Politics

## A Critique of J.J. Goldberg's *Jewish Power*

By Daniel Mann

**T**he time was August 1975, when Washington tends to be hot and humid and news from the capital is relatively subdued. That summer was about midway between the beginning of Gerald Ford's administration following the Nixon resignation in 1974 and the 1976 presidential elections. The American Jewish polity was likewise between great events: The Yom Kippur War and its aftermath, and the Jackson-Vanik amendment linking detente to the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate, were highlights of 1973-4, while Camp David would not take place until 1978. In fact, the biggest issue confronting the Jewish community that summer was the proposed American sale of 14 Hawk anti-aircraft missile batteries to Jordan, in retrospect a question of such limited significance that it does not even appear in J.J. Goldberg's important and challenging new book, *Jewish Power*.

In those days the so-called "Israel lobby" — actually an agency of the organized American Jewish community operating in Washington — was also relatively subdued. Not that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was unknown, but Morris Amitay had only recently assumed professional direction of the organization from its founder, I. L. (Si) Kenen, and was still at the beginning of a project of expanding staff, membership, finances, and public recognition, a process that has increased exponentially under succeeding executives in the ensuing decades. In the summer of 1975 the transition was still under way from what Goldberg correctly calls "a one-man office run by its tireless founder . . . the affable and understated Kenen." Somewhat like the "Jewish vote," the existence of which was more often denied than flaunted as became the practice more recently, caution and discretion were

the rule when it came to acknowledging that a Jewish lobby was indeed operating in Washington, and quite effectively for that matter.

But the rules were apparently changing. On August 8, 1975 the *New York Times* published a long article on page 2, reporting that representatives of 14 national Jewish organizations claiming to speak for four million American Jews were meeting once a week at the AIPAC office. The article went on to describe the plans Amitay had for expanding his agency and offered the efficient work of AIPAC in securing blockage by Congress of the projected Hawk sale to Jordan as an example of the lobby's operations. The Times reporter got all 14 organizational names right, though to be precise one of them was not "national" but rather the local Jewish Community Council, which I represented at those meetings. According to Goldberg, "the inner workings of the Jewish organizational world are arcane, byzantine and convoluted, so much so that even seasoned insiders often feel lost without a compass" and adds that "it does not help that so many of the names sound virtually identical." However, that did not deter the Times. After the article appeared, the inside joke in Jewish Washington was that there is no Jewish lobby, and it meets every Tuesday afternoon at the AIPAC office.

It should be noted that later the same month AIPAC celebrated a final victory with its allies in Congress on the issue of the Hawks: In what might strike one as a decision by the wise men of Chelm but what was actually a typical facesaving Washington compromise that served its purpose, the sale went through but Jordan agreed to accept "fixed defensive and nonmobile anti-aircraft weapons" aimed away from Israel. In the ensuing years

much greater issues faced — and still face — the Jewish community in the area of American-Israel relations, and AIPAC was transformed — ironically in the wake of its defeat on the AWACS issue in 1981, as detailed by Goldberg — “from a small agency, run by the national Jewish organizations as their congressional lobbying arm, into an independent mass-membership powerhouse run by its wealthiest donors,” particularly a right-wing “Gang of Four” that did not hesitate to undermine American support for the Rabin-Peres Oslo peace process in recent years.

All this, and much more, is to be found in *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment* (Addison-Wesley, 1996) by former New York correspondent and now a contributing editor of the *Jerusalem Report*, J. J. Goldberg, described by two authoritative admirers, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and ADL’s Abraham Foxman, as an “astute . . . seasoned observer of the communal and political scene . . . and the American Jewish community.” Of course, he is known to many readers of this magazine as one of its former editors as well as the prime editor of *Builders and Dreamers*, the 1983 anthology on the Labor Zionist youth movement Habonim Dror.

In fewer than 400 pages, the author describes the history, current operations and status of almost every significant umbrella organization of the community and many of its individual agencies, large and small; the role of the community-relations field in civil rights and liberties, immigration law, black-Jewish relations, and support for Israel and for Soviet and Ethiopian Jews; the impact of watersheds such as the Holocaust and the Six-Day War; the ways in which the community deals with assimilation and intermarriage; Jews in politics, the government, and the media (the latter a particularly discerning treatment); and the complexities of Israel-Diaspora relations.

The book is replete with anecdotes, including a few new ones; catchy titles, e.g., “Separated by a Common Faith: American Jewry’s One-Way Love Affair with Israel,” and one-liners, e.g., “George Bush was not wrong in believing that . . . Jews were indisputably a powerful political force when he convened his September 12 [1991] press conference. Bush’s mistake was saying it out loud.” In short, the author fulfills what he states to be the purpose of his

book — “to explore the workings of Jewish power politics in contemporary America” — and does so remarkably well, combining journalistic insights with historical contexts. He has thus provided his readers — first of all, the American Jews themselves and then “other Americans” whom he invites “to read on and find out what their neighbors are up to” — a comprehensive and penetrating analysis that is unique even in a period of so many books on topics of Jewish interest.

A recurring theme in this book is that while Jews are not necessarily as powerful as some non-Jews may think, particularly our enemies, we are surely not so weak as many Jews themselves perceive. In the author’s words, there is a “gap between the Jews’ self-image of vulnerability and the reality of Jewish power”:

Any serious description of American Jewish politics — the exercise of power by and within the Jewish community — must inevitably be colored by this perception gap. The gap runs like a crack through the base of the edifice called the Jewish community. Coursing up through the structure, it becomes a yawning chasm of ignorance and mutual incomprehension, dividing the Jewish community’s leaders from their presumed followers.

The author goes on to place this chasm in the context of America and the world today: “sweeping changes in the world . . . the dangerous uncertainties facing all political systems . . . the growing insecurity and mistrust of the public . . . a national political system that is increasingly balkanized . . . the political unease afflicting American society as a whole.” And while he sides with sociologists like Steven M. Cohen who insist that the famous 52 per-cent intermarriage rate is a statistical exaggeration (an analysis I also agree with, though I do not accept Goldberg’s concomitant deprecation of the perceived demographic crisis), he does acknowledge that “even the spread of Jewish assimilation — the growing abdication of Jewish community life by individual Jews — differs only in degree from Americans’ declining participation in the broader political process.”

If Goldberg had been satisfied to attribute the intra-communal gap to malaise, apathy, assimilation, and an insecure world, that would have served his purpose admirably. But



then he produces a villain, or actually a cabal of three factions that rose to power in the wake of the Six-Day War, or more precisely, "the waiting period *before* the war [author's emphasis] . . . those three tense weeks in May, [in which] countless American Jews experienced a shattering anxiety that Israel might be destroyed . . . an anxiety so consuming that it overshadowed what actually happened when the war came."

Who were — and still are — the three bad guys? Since the author identifies the aforementioned chasm between the "activists and . . . the broader population of American Jews" as one of the themes of his entire work, it is worth quoting what might be considered the crux of the book:

In the popular mind, the New Jews of 1967 — the Zionists, the Orthodox, and the neoconservatives — quickly came to be identified as the leadership of the American Jewish community. Their defiance was so strident, and their anger so intense, that the rest of the Jewish community respectfully stood back and let the New Jews take the lead. The minority was permitted to speak for the mass and became the dominant voice of Jewish politics.

In this new mood, the cause of Jewish advocacy underwent a fundamental transformation of values. The world after 1967 was regarded as a hostile place divided between the Jews' friends and their enemies. The values that for so long had characterized American Judaism — equality, tolerance, and social justice — became suspect in New Jewish leadership circles. A new set of basic values came to replace them: loyalty to the Jewish people, commitment to its survival, and hostility toward its enemies.

The Jews who rose to the leadership of the Jewish community were those who most embodied these new values. Jews now expected to be represented not by those who best expressed their beliefs and aspirations, but by those who seemed to them to be "most Jewish": most loyal to the Jewish people and its traditions, or most hostile to its enemies.

In Goldberg's view this coalition of "New Jews" — described elsewhere in the book as "Orthodox separatists, hardline Likud Zionists, and conservative Republicans" — continues to rule and run Jewish communal life and public affairs on all fronts: Black-Jewish, Israel-Diaspora, etc. Now, anyone involved in

the life of the community, surely including the readers of this journal, would be disingenuous to claim that Goldberg's argument has no basis in fact. We have all seen, and struggled against, the phenomena he cites. The question, however, is the extent to which the tripartite right-wing coalition can serve as *the* explanation for the "chasm" between the leaders and the masses. If it were that simple, then the progressive, pluralist, and pro-Oslo opposition could concentrate its counterattack on one — or, at most, three interconnected — targets, with some hope of success if only because of the cyclical nature of politics.

Unfortunately, the situation is much more complicated than that. First, there are the conditions noted above that Goldberg correctly cites: apathy, unease, insecurity, divisiveness, ignorance, assimilation, etc. It would be giving the right wing too much credit to say that they *caused* those problems. They may have exacerbated them but the situation of American Jews, for better or worse, has a life of its own without reference to the ideology of certain key leaders.

Second, the record is nowhere as bleak as the paragraphs quoted above suggest, and the best evidence of that is to be found throughout the book: Jews still hold liberal positions and vote Democratic in disproportionate numbers; community-relations agencies still maintain and implement a progressive agenda; there is still life in the Black-Jewish coalition. And there are also innovative Jewish social-action programs, such as Leonard Fein's Mazon.

Third, in some respects Goldberg oversimplifies his argument. Weren't the fears in and around the Six-Day War of 1967 vindicated by the experience of the Yom Kippur War of 1973? Is it fair to cite Begin's comparison of Arafat to Hitler as an example of the misuse of Holocaust terminology, lumped together with Ted Turner's comparison of his losing a business bid to the situation of the Jews under the Nazis?! After all, Rabin was no less insistent that Arafat disavow his genocidal positions as a condition for the Oslo agreements. On another topic, wasn't Jewish opposition to rigid quotas in the 1978 Bakke case justifiable, no matter how shrill *Commentary* and other opponents of affirmative action may have been? The fact of the matter is that Black leaders in their more candid moments acknowledged at the time that Bakke was a weak case from

their standpoint and would give affirmative action a bad name, while the Jewish agencies took the opposite side more in sorrow than in anger.

It is nuances such as those that are missing from the text — on those issues, and others as well. For example, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, rather than having “backfired,” proved to be a necessary though surely not sufficient tool for rescuing Soviet Jews, as evidenced by the increase of emigration in 1979 to over 50,000, thus approaching the “benchmark” figure of 60,000 agreed to by Kissinger, Jackson, and Dobrynin in 1974. In fact, the Jewish community was tempted to drop its opposition to improved trade conditions for the USSR because of the 1979 emigration rates and later expressed regret that it may have missed an historic opportunity.

Another example is the creation of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, which proved to be much more than what Goldberg dismisses as “a national museum of Jewish suffering.” In actuality it has succeeded beyond the expectations of many concerned individuals to combine the American and universal themes of the Holocaust with the specifically and uniquely genocidal dimensions pertaining to the fate of the Jews. Moreover, that was the important theme of President Clinton’s address at the dedication of the museum, rather than the ceremonial language cited by Goldberg, and it was a factor in Clinton’s appointment of new leadership of the Holocaust Memorial Council. And one more significant omission: the impact on Jews in the 1960s of ethnic consciousness in several Catholic groups.

These complexities are cited not to disparage this book but rather out of respect for its considerable achievement. While journalistic in style it offers historical depth well beyond what one usually encounters in this type of work. There are more than a few oversimplifications, both of broad issues and of specific situations, and a few missing attributions, e.g., Daniel Elazar’s pioneering work on the Jewish political tradition in general and the organized American Jewish community as a “polity” in particular, and Henry Feingold’s pre-eminent role in interpreting the weakness of the American Jewish community during the Holocaust. But these points are raised as indications of how a very good product could be made

even better.

*Jewish Power* is well-edited, with almost no typos and with user-friendly endnotes, a comprehensive index, and a glossary of acronyms. Nevertheless, there are some errors, including an uncanny tendency to place events one year before or after they actually happened. Thus Jackson-Vanik was passed in 1974, not 1973; Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy took place in 1974-5, not 1975-6; Herbert Lehman defeated John Foster Dulles in a special senatorial election in New York in 1949, not the regular election of 1948; Ford’s reassessment of America’s Mideast policies took place in 1975, not 1976 (in fact, it had as much to do with the collapse of South Vietnam as it did with Israel’s resistance); the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, though negotiated at Camp David in 1978, was actually signed in 1979; the World Zionist Congress that split on the question of the settlements took place in 1982, not 1983; and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, not 1990. This puzzling pattern of one-year misses extends back almost two centuries: the “Jew Bill” that gave Maryland Jews the right to serve in public office without taking a Christian oath was passed in 1826, not 1825. And one important date is off by a decade: AIPAC was founded in the 1950s, not the 1940s, and the process of its establishment and further organization was somewhat more complex than Goldberg describes.

There are also some factual errors and noteworthy omissions: *Moment* is a bimonthly, not a monthly magazine. There were other presidents between Teddy Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan who had Jewish personal friends; Baltimore should be added to the list of larger cities that have Jewish members of Congress, and some of the other communities cited are not “tiny”; the Nazis never actually marched through Skokie, and that entire story could have merited inclusion in the book; the WZO does not name all the top officers of the Jewish Agency; Bernice Tannenbaum headed the WZO American section, not Hadassah, in 1988; and it is the United Israel Appeal, not the Agency, that together with the JDC “technically owns” the UJA. In addition, the role of the American labor movement as a steadfast ally of the Jewish polity is neglected, as is the world of youth, students, and academics.

Then there are a few regrettable uses of

words: the Wailing Wall instead of the Western Wall in Jerusalem; Falashas for the Ethiopian Jews, who do not like that name; and "millennium" (three times in the last chapter!), a word that is both Christological and pretentious. (As we will see below, several important developments in the 1990s described or anticipated by Goldberg have already altered course well before the year 2000.) Additionally, not every quotation can stand alone: Max Fisher's contention that "Kennedy wouldn't ship any arms [to Israel]. Johnson didn't either" is contradicted by the facts as stated elsewhere in the book.

**B**ecause this book will prove useful as a text or reference in courses on Jewish communal studies and American politics, the extensive bibliography should be commended, but again there are some important omissions, including several excellent analyses of and anthologies on contemporary American Jewish political and social life that have appeared in the past two decades, and some highly regarded American Jewish histories. The Morris and Freund collection of material from the field of Jewish communal service through 1952 is on the list, but the two-volume anthology edited by Graenum Berger dealing with the 1970s and 1980s and aptly titled *The Turbulent Decades* is missing, although it is much more comprehensive and reflects the enhanced Jewish priorities of the field.

**T**he final point in this critique has to do with Goldberg's descriptions and projections of changes in key Jewish institutions and processes, some of which have already unraveled in the short year since publication. The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), described by Goldberg as "nothing more than a toothless reflection of its fiercely independent member-agencies," has not only changed its name to the Jewish Council for Public Affairs but also overcome the resistance of its national agencies and accorded increased priority to its local affiliates through changes in voting procedures and the establishment of its own Washington office. Meanwhile the plans for merging the Council of Jewish Federations and the United Jewish Appeal have been deferred and a more gradual process initiated in its stead. (One might also ask whether the "consolida-

tion of the CJF" and the concomitant strengthening of the community through "the power of the purse" will lead to a "truly representative council of American Jewry," as Goldberg advocates, or whether we will instead be confronted with further strengthening of the right, on the one hand, and the hegemony of the lowest common denominator in community policy-setting, on the other.) Other new developments not anticipated by Goldberg are affecting the WZO, the Jewish Agency, AIPAC, and the Netanyahu government in Israel.

This final point is stated the least critically of all those in this review, for there is always a risk in projecting even the immediate future, let alone defining longterm trends, especially in a book that provides depth and breadth to its analysis. (It makes one look forward to the second edition.) In any event, the questions I have raised in this essay are intended as a collegial tribute. For J. J. Goldberg's *Jewish Power* is timely, comprehensive, stimulating, informed, and thus indispensable, besides which it reads well! It is therefore both a welcome and a needed addition to the literature about the American Jewish polity. □

**On the centennial of the  
first Zionist Congress in  
1897, we share the  
passion of the Jewish  
people to fully realize its  
noble ideals.**



**Jay Mazur      Jerry Goodman**  
*President      Executive Director*

**National Committee for Labor Israel  
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# Madeleine Albright and the Magic Circle of Jewishness

By Harold Ticktin

Commenting on Madeleine Albright's discovery of her Jewish antecedents, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser and Ms. Albright's thesis adviser at Columbia University said: "Americans have a very naive view of the symbiosis and interpenetration between Jewish and non-Jewish populations in Central Europe before World War II." Brzezinski added that many families of this type "saw what was coming and probably thought it best to protect the family [with Baptism]."

It is extremely unlikely that either Madam Albright or Dr. Brzezinski ever read a letter from Ludwig Bourne, a Jewish convert to Christianity in 1832, written from Berlin to Jeanette Wohl in Paris in which Bourne said:

"It's a kind of miracle! I've experienced it a thousand times and yet it seems new to me. Some find fault with me for being a Jew; others forgive me; still others go so far as to compliment me for it; but every last one of them thinks of it. They seem caught in this magic circle of Jewishness; none of them can get out of it."

Ironically, the letter is quoted in a volume called *Jews and Judaism in German Letters After 300 Years* published in Vienna in 1935, three years before Kristallnacht, the beginning of the Holocaust which would overwhelm these and all other sentiments affecting the relationship between Jews and non-Jews.

Brzezinski's key word is "symbiosis." Until Hitler it was more or less taken for granted that such a process had taken place between Europe (even Eastern Europe) and its Jews. If there really was a symbiosis, Germany was considered the most fertile ground, with Freud and Einstein leading a European cohort that included Franz Kafka, Heinrich Heine, Gustav Mahler, Primo and Carlo Levi, Leo Szilard (discoverer of atomic fission), and a host of scientists, dramatists, critics and musicians.

Today, there is a school of historians who argue that no such animal ever existed. Cer-

tainly David Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is the leading example of the anti-symbiotic school. What Brzezinski calls symbiotic, Goldhagen incriminates as an unrelenting eliminationist hate, peculiarly German.

Both sentiments cannot be true. Or can they? When one considers that Stalin, Molotov, Gomulka, even the King of Romania had Jewish wives, that intermarriage, secularization, the university, professionalization, and assimilation (called Polonization in Brzezinski's native Poland) in the interwar period transformed Eastern European Jewry from rural religious insularity to desire for Westernization in even less than a generation, it is at least arguable that Brzezinski is correct.

Yet, some 165 years after Herr Bourne wrote to Madame Wohl, it seems that the morbid interest in Jewish roots (taints?) has subsided little. The Albright affair itself illustrates that the magic circle remains aglow. After World War I, Europe saw a stew of nationality mixes emerge that made the Austrian-Hungarian Empire look downright homogeneous. Yet no one speaks of a German-Czech, Hungarian-Romanian, Italian-Croat or any other such national "symbiosis." But from Disraeli to Ms. Albright, the revelation of a Jewish connection produces immediate excited titillation, a covert hint of scandal.

In commenting on the events surrounding the Albright revelation, Abraham H. Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith stated, "What I find so distressing and perplexing is how long the tentacles of the Holocaust are." However well intended Foxman's statement, it is incomplete, even incorrect; it is not the tentacles of the Holocaust that reach out and grasp people within the magic circle of Jewishness. It is the antecedent history, combined with the Holocaust, that has astonishingly left its glow in place in the same way as when a former Ger-

man Jew wrote to a friend in Paris in 1832 to describe precisely the same dilemma which Albright experiences today.

There is no satisfactory explanation for this phenomenon. Except, perhaps, for the coiled entrails of the Judaic-Christian split and the absolute human necessity for casting contempt on those from whom one has decided to part company. The Albright case intrigues because it occurs on the furthest cusp possible, with the dimmest shadow of Jewishness in the magic ring, yet made full-blown instantaneously by nothing more than the revelation itself.

Fifty-two years since the immigration of "DP's" was metamorphosed into the softer "survivor" term, I have come to know many people with histories closely resembling that of Madeleine Albright. I think of a pair of doctors, husband and wife, whom I've known for almost 40 years and yet have never been very sure of their antecedents because of the cover the war places on their relationship, leaving even their children in doubt as to who is Jewish and who is Gentile and who protected whom and where in Warsaw between 1939 and 1945.

**A**lbright's parents were far from alone in their desire to spare their children the horrors which they foresaw in which many unfortunately died, not merely six million, but one by one to that number.

On August 19, 1947, a letter was written from England to a now deceased friend of mine who had managed to escape from Poland to Bolivia in 1940. The writer hoped to give her closure on the death of her brother who, by that time, she was almost sure was dead.

The friend described the death of the brother who had been killed in the Warsaw uprising (not the Warsaw Ghetto uprising). At the beginning of the letter was Roman Rosenberg, M.D. Here are his words:

"After all the happenings of the war and the post-war period, we have decided that there is no more room for Jews in the world except for Palestine. Since we are not going to Palestine, but to Australia, we decided to quit being Jewish. I do not know if it will help us, but perhaps it will help save our children and grandchildren from fates similar to ours. In any case, we have changed our name and that is why I write you as Ronald F. Rosleigh, M.D."

Is it possible for this episode in the history of the distinguished office of Secretary of State for the United States of America to emancipate

itself from the magic circle? I think not. There was a Jewish Secretary of State under Nixon and even a Jewish wife of a Secretary of State — the wife of Cordell Hull — under Roosevelt, a time of the cruelest restrictions on immigration imaginable, given the rise of Nazism. But no situation has arisen quite like the magic circles surrounding Madeleine Albright. Whatever else comes out of this remarkable situation, rest assured, as Bourne asserts, everyone will be thinking about it. □

## CONTRIBUTORS

*Susan Hattis Rolef*, PhD, a political scientist, is regular Israel correspondent of *Jewish Frontier*.

*Edward Bernard Glick* is professor emeritus of Political Science at Temple University, Philadelphia. He was a member of the LZA Executive Committee. His books include *Straddling the Isthmus of Tehuantepec* and *Latin America and the Palestine Problem*. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

*Daniel Mann*, president of the Labor Zionist Alliance, is a retired professional communal worker in Washington, and has taught Jewish communal studies at the Baltimore Hebrew University.

*Harold Ticktin*, a Cleveland attorney and active member of the Labor Zionist Alliance, writes frequently for Jewish publications.

*Jon Nalley*, a Habonim alumnus whose short story, "Anne Above All" appeared in *Jewish Frontier* in 1977, has published his poems in a variety of periodicals.

*Dr. Gustave Pearlman*, a dentist in Syracuse, NY, last wrote a "simulated" dialogue between David Ben-Gurion and TV host Bill Moyers. Mr. Moyers' staff, excited by that treatment of *Genesis*, phoned for more copies of the *Frontier*.

*Mark A. Raider*, a member of our Editorial Board, is Professor of Judaic Studies at State University New York.

*Yehuda Riemer*, of Kibbutz Urim, is in charge of a project on Zionist Youth Movements at Yad Tabenkin, the Research Institute of the United Kibbutz Movement.

*David Rosenthal*, of Philadelphia, contributes regularly on Jewish historical events and personalities.

# Learning from Mexican Jewry

by Edward Bernard Glick

**M**exico was not the original New-World destination for most Mexican Jews, especially the sixty percent of them who are Ashkenazim. Rather, it was their reluctant second choice. They, or their parents and grandparents, made the choice after 1924, the year in which the United States imposed quotas that discriminated equally against both Jewish and Gentile immigrants from Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe.

Nevertheless, many Mexican Jews speak English well. Many of them have vacation, business, family, social and school ties to the U.S. As a result, they know much more about us than we know about them. This is a pity, because if we American Jews borrowed some of their organizational and educational models, we might solve some of the problems that vex us so deeply here.

One need not describe Mexican Jewry in detail. It is enough to say that theirs is the third-largest Jewish community in Latin America — only Argentina's and Brazil's are larger — that Mexican Jews have the highest per capita income of any Jewish group in this hemisphere; that most of them live in and around Mexico City; that their *Centro Deportivo Israelita* (commonly called *Yiddisher Sports Tzenter*) is, with its Olympic-sized swimming pool, big, beautiful, and ostentatious; that most Mexican Jewish children attend all-day Jewish schools; that even third-generation boys and girls are fluent in Hebrew and/or Yiddish; that Zionism, particularly Labor Zionism, is the watchword of most Mexican Jews; that many of their children make *aliya* to Israel; and that the *Comité Central Israelita* is Mexican Jewry's organizations masterpiece.

Unlike our conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations — which speaks or acts only after major diplomatic negotiations among its constituent bodies, and which is *not* elected by the entire organized American Jewish Community — the *Comité Central Israelita* unites Mexico's Jew-

ish organizations into a representative body that speaks with dignity, confidence, and respect — and with a single voice — to the government and people of Mexico.

**B**etween 1960 and 1997 the number of Mexican Jews grew from 28,000 to 50,000. This 78-percent increase occurred without any appreciable Jewish immigration into Mexico. During this same period, the Jewish population of the United States declined by at least 10 percent, in spite of the large influx of Jews from Israel, South Africa, and states from the former Soviet Union.

American Jewry's demographic loss is due to an intermarriage rate of over 50 percent — the rate is even higher in the South and in the West — to the high non-marriage rates among young Jews, and to the suicidally negative fertility rate even among Jews who marry other Jews.

American Jews distinguish themselves in many ways. However, their most prominent, if saddest, distinction is that they have the lowest reproductive rate of any ethnic, religious, or racial group in the United States. There is a cause-and-effect relationship between our disastrous demographic condition and what the lawyer Alan Dershowitz has called "the vanishing American Jew." There is also such a relationship — despite the obvious differences in Mexican and U.S. society — between the rise in the number of Mexican Jews, their four-percent intermarriage rate, and the fact that 75 percent of their children attend one of 16 all-day *Colegios Judíos*. Ranging from the most secularly Yiddishist to the most religiously ultra-orthodox, these schools comprise the educational centerpieces of Mexican Jewry.

**I**n his 1994 study *The Power of Jewish Education*, the sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset confirmed that "The longer Jews have been exposed to Jewish Education, the greater their commitment to the community, to some form of religion, and to Israel." Yet, fewer than

20 percent of American Jewish children go to all-day Jewish schools. Apparently, the majority of Jewish parents believe that such schools are not diverse enough and that they provide a segregated education that will hurt their children's entry into the best universities and into the American mainstream.

There are additional reasons why American Jews are not keen to send their children to Jewish day schools, as most Mexican and other Latin American Jews do. One reason is cost. National Jewish organizations in the U.S. always support Jewish education more with words than with money. Another reason is that most American Jews are reared with the notion that public school education is a good thing. Consequently, most childless Jewish couples, and most Jews whose children and grandchildren have long since been graduated from the public schools, more or less willingly pay high taxes to finance public schools.

A third reason is that American Jews live under and believe in the constitutional principle of separation of church and state, which makes it difficult, though not impossible, for federal and state governments to give financial aid to private religious schools.

So we are left with the synagogue school education in this country. While almost every Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist synagogue has a Hebrew school, and many of its children attend it, the school often isn't very good. How can it be, when the children typically attend it for no more than six hours a week, from about 8 to 13 years of age, that is, until their *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*?

**T**he one remedy against incessant assimilation and unbridled intermarriage that American Jews have not yet tried is contributing massive amounts of money to the full spectrum of Jewish day schools. But it is a remedy that has to be tried, even if it means cutting down on individual and communal contributions to Israel and to many old-line national Jewish organizations.

As a community, we have for decades overemphasized anti-defamation and the protection of Jewish rights, to the detriment of effective Jewish education. This is leading us to a time when there simply will not be enough Jews left in this country with the interest to support Israel. Nor will there be enough Jews whose rights the so-called Jewish defense

agencies will need to defend.

Mexican Jews have developed day-school models which, in the main, stress Jewish ethics and peoplehood over Jewish ritual and religiosity, that is, the Talmud's *Pirke Avot* (The Sayings of the Fathers) over the Torah's *Taryag Mitzvot* (the 613 Biblical Commandments). That's why their day schools are so attractive and so effective.

American Jews may never feel ready or able to adopt Mexican Jewry's model of communal organization. But we ought to embrace its approach to education. For when it comes to teaching Jewish values that will ensure Jewish survival, Mexican Jews have a record of success, while American Jews have a record of failure □

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*Recommended Reading*  
**THE ZIONIST IDEA**

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As we mark the centennial of the modern Zionist movement, it seems appropriate to refresh one's knowledge of Zionist history. Hence, a new, updated version of the classic volume, *The Zionist Idea*, by Arthur Hertzberg, is most welcome. The 656 page paperback edition reissued by the Jewish Publication Society (\$24.95) should be on every Jewish reading table.

*The Zionist Idea*, first published in 1959, has taken its place as the single most important resource for understanding the history and the ideology of the Zionist movement. The book has been translated into several languages including Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian.

The book is an anthology drawn from the writings of 37 of the leading thinkers of the Zionist movement, including Theodor Herzl, Ahad Ha-Am, Martin Buber, Louis Brandeis, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Judah Magnes, Max Nordau, Ludwig Lewisohn, Solomon Schechter, Mordecai Kaplan, Vladimir Jabotinsky, Chaim Weizmann, and David Ben-Gurion.

This new edition has been updated with an afterword by the author.

Rabbi Hertzberg is the Bronfman visiting Professor of the Humanities at New York University, and Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Emanuel in Englewood, New Jersey. He received his education at Johns Hopkins, Harvard, and Columbia, and his rabbinic ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. A frequent contributor to periodicals including *Jewish Frontier*, he is the author of numerous books including *The Jews in America*.

## RAANANAH AT 60

Once upon a time, in the Jewish immigrant experience in America, there was a strong drive to assimilate and quickly become part of the dominant culture. Having a clearly Yiddish or Hebrew first name was considered, by some, to be un-American. It was particularly uncomfortable for a young bearer of such a name.

However, in the late Thirties there was a place in the metropolitan New York City area where one could feel quite comfortable with a name like Vevvy, Fruma, Rochele or Yonah. In Raananah Park there were lots of people with these kinds of names. These were ordinary names here, not exotic and certainly not un-American. It was okay to be Yiddish. At a Raananah baseball game, a familiar cheer from the bleachers was "Hustle, Yossl"!

In 1937, a small group of Jewish friends living in New York City founded a summer community in Orange County. They named it Raananah, a Hebrew word for freshness, greenery. Looking for a haven in the country, where families could breathe fresh air and live together in safety and harmony, Raananah was a 65-acre patch of land that would hopefully fulfill such needs.

In addition, these early founders were committed to secular Yiddishkeit and Labor Zionist ideals. They envisioned a community where the land would be collectively owned. There would be, both literally and symbolically, no fences within an open, supportive family life. A former Catholic summer camp with tents and old, run-down, buildings was purchased. Eventually, thirty nine cottages were built.

It is now sixty years later. Raananah Park is celebrating yet another birthday, a testament to the durability of such a unique concept.

There is not much evidence of its humble past. Many of the original simple, basic bungalows have been altered through the years.

They are more elaborate. The interiors are larger, modern kitchens feature dishwashers. Some of the houses are air conditioned. The roads are paved. Leisure facilities now include a popular playground, handball and tennis courts, and an attractive pool. The accompanying sunshades at the pool were a collaborative building experience by members.

There is a community hall, once known as the "casino" and later renamed "Bet Yosef" in loving memory of one of the founders. Weekly Oneg Shabbat programs, gala opening and closing parties, Holocaust memorials and lively general membership meetings all take place here. Warm and meaningful Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur services are now enthusiastically attended by a formerly reluctant "congregation". The building has new siding, a modern loudspeaker, but it is essentially still an unpretentious structure.

"It's not the Hamptons," is how residents cheerfully describe their community. The physical attributes are fine. It is however, the cooperative spirit that still excites people. It is this intangible blend of Yiddishkeit and Chavershaf that binds them and explains Raananah's sixty year old survival. The connection with a Labor Zionist Israel remains as powerful as in the early days. The original visions are as intensely expressed now as in the words of the founders — "to live peacefully, charitably and respectfully among ourselves, to support the creation of a Jewish state and to support the welfare of Jews worldwide."

Raananah Park has shed its modest beginnings. But the common heritage and serious concern for secular Jewish and Labor Zionist issues continues to give the community its special character. Happy 60th! □

On the eve of Israel's  
50th Birthday  
we extend mazel tov to all  
the inhabitants of the Land  
of Israel. May they enjoy  
peace and prosperity.



**Ruby & Martin  
Vogelfanger**



# The Triangle Fire Recalled

**O**n March 25, 1911, the infamous Triangle Fire in New York took the lives of 146 young women trapped in an inferno or who leaped to their deaths through the windows of the plant without fire extinguishers or safe escape routes. Shortly after the tragedy, which later led to major reforms in the garment industry and spurred the unionization of the needle trades, the following letter (dated May 8, 1911) was sent by Ane Adler to her brother Max (Mordecai) Barlas in Krakow, Poland. On the 86th anniversary of the event, this letter was translated from the Yiddish and sent to us by Ben Barlas, Max's son, a longtime Labor Zionist in New York.

May 8, 1911

To My Dear Brother Max:

I received your last post card. Please excuse me for taking so long to answer. I must tell you that I was very sick. I had prepared the money for you, but the cost of the medical care of my sickness, ate it all up. I was confined to bed over four weeks. This sickness cost me over \$50.00, but I couldn't help myself. I also had to undergo an operation.

There was a very sad day recently. One hundred fifty people were burned to death in a fire in a factory. I used to work in that very same factory, but I had left two weeks before the fire occurred.

In the fire were 150 souls . . . children. From this conflagration, even to this day, there are casualties who cannot be recognized; no one knows who they are and they lie unclaimed for two weeks. Our trade carried out a protest march against this horrible murder. None of us worked that day. All of the factories in New York were closed that day. About 100,000 people took part in the protest.

A mass funeral was held for those bodies which had not been identified. Who knows how many mothers are still waiting for letters from their children; and how many were waiting for their dear children to send something for Pesach, and here we didn't know who they were.

I was among the marchers when an acquaintance from Russia recognized me. She was very happy to see me. She took my arm and we

marched together. It was raining very hard. We continued marching arm in arm, until she wouldn't let me march any further. She led me to another street. I didn't watch where I was going. I stepped on a sharp pointed stone which made me fall and caused an internal injury. Because of this injury, I had to pay for medical care with the money I had saved for you, with the added belief that I thought I would die.

But now I feel better. I am very aggravated with myself that my sickness ate up the money I had saved up for you. Don't worry. As soon as I return to work, I will send you the money immediately. At the same time, I lost my job where I was working. But don't worry. You will be here with us.

Now, write and tell me what you are doing. Tell me if you are working and what kind of work you are doing. Tell me everything. I have no more news.

Your dear sister,  
Chana  
Ane Adler  
706 E. 5th St.  
New York, America

*Editor's Note: Mordecai Barlas eventually came to America, worked in the garment industry and served for many years on the staff of the American Trade Union Council for Histadrut (National Committee for Labor Israel).*

## ISRAEL'S FIRST 50 YEARS

The LZA-AHA Group of New York  
salutes the builders of Israel.

May there be a further growth during  
a peaceful era in the next  
half century!

# The Origin of American Habonim

## FROM YOUTH PARTY TO YOUTH MOVEMENT: An attempt at historical interpretation

By Yehuda Riemer

**H**ow did it come about? And who was responsible? In the eyes of its founders and early active members Habonim was almost exclusively their own creation. It was they who changed the framework of Young Poale Zion as a Yiddish-speaking youth section of a Zionist-Socialist Party set up on the Eastern European model in favor of an English-speaking youth movement incorporating Western and American educational methods and an ideology focused on Eretz Israel. And to a large extent this claim seems to be true. Certainly the initiative for reconstitution originated from within the YPZA leaders and it was they who gave it its basic form and direction as well as that independence and self-reliance which prevented the movement from becoming a mere appendage of a senior organization. It is to their credit that they were able to adjust to a historic process which threatened to destroy their organization by giving it new form while preserving and adding to the content. But they did not act in a vacuum: other forces were at work which contributed to this development. In order to better understand the emergence of Habonim in America one must take into account developments on the American scene, within American Jewry and also in the Zionist Movement and in Eretz Israel.

A historic factor of prime importance to be considered are the U.S. immigration laws of 1921 and 1924 which were especially directed towards restricting immigration from Italy and Eastern Europe. We cannot here elaborate on the tragic effects of these laws on the fate of the Jewish people except to point out that the closing of the gates spelled the decline of the then flourishing Yiddish culture in America.

Organizations of Yiddish-speaking immigrants such as Poale Zion were deprived of reinforcements of young people from the "old country" and thus doomed to gradual ageing and decline. Efforts to recruit new blood from American-born youth proved to be a difficult and frustrating process. The many Yiddish schools and summer camps could not prevent the eventual estrangement of the children from the culture of their parents. Young people educated in the folk *shulen* might look upon their Yiddish heritage with sentimental affection, but the future lay with English-speaking America and its values as absorbed in High School and, if at all possible, College. For the Poale Zion to give up Yiddish meant cultural self-negation. But if the Zionist Labor movement in America was to survive, the solution had to come from a different direction.

The first was educational: the growing influence of Talmud Torah and Hebrew Schools where most of the teachers were nationalist Jews, products of the Russian Haskalah and the Hibbat Zion movement. The study of modern Hebrew was especially important since it not only acquainted the youngsters with the literature and ideas of Zionism, but also enabled them to get first-hand knowledge about the growing pioneering enterprise in Eretz Israel. It seems to be no accident that three Talmud Torah graduates (Moshe Cohen, Saadia Gelb, Nahum Guttman), two of whom had also gone to college, were the prime movers in bringing about the change which essentially represented the adjustment of Y.P.Z.A. to its American environment.

Still, while America could provide educational methods and a restatement of Jewish

values in a language understandable to youth, it could not easily set a focal point for their practice. The answer was given by the living example of the Jewish pioneering enterprise then springing up in Eretz Israel, which in addition to its aura of heroism and practical achievement also projected values conforming to American ideals: pioneering, democracy and even the various forms of cooperative enterprise. It is significant that many assimilated Jews were attracted by this practical example. While not particularly interested in the niceties of Zionist theory, they found through support of the "new Palestine" a way of asserting their Jewish identity. Louis D. Brandeis may serve as the most prominent example. For youth raised in socialist-Zionist families, Labor Palestine presented the ideals of their parents in a modern setting. Instead of the Yiddish of the "old country" here was Hebrew which while stemming from the ancient past also signified the future: a modern national culture and a community to be founded on the principles of social justice. If one looks for motivating factors for personal commitment, one must start with the negative: neither anti-semitism nor economic hardship seem to have been instrumental in generating *halutzic aliyah*. The Great Depression, traumatic experience that it was, did not bring about a flight from America. The song "Goodbye America . . . we're going to Palestine, the hell with the Depression" was sung, but it was tongue-in-cheek. And antisemitism in America sometimes hurt, but it didn't threaten one's existence. Still, the spirit of radicalism prevalent at the time may well have influenced Zionist Youth to take active steps towards self-realization.

A different matter were the wave of hatred and repression sweeping the Eastern European lands from which the parents came and with which many still retained close familial ties. When the persecutions started in Germany, young Jews could notice the contrast between their own feelings of outrage and the apathy and even pro-Nazi sympathy of the gentile public.

An even more powerful incentive to action came several years earlier, with the Arab attacks on the Yishuv in 1929. It was this challenge to the Jewish cause which brought about the first aliyah commitment of YPZA and while the immediate results were negligible,

about 200 halutzim from America made aliyah during the ensuing years, thus forging a living link between Young Poale Zion and Eretz Israel.

It was therefore events in Eretz Israel and the modern Labor settlement which could inspire and serve as an ideological and educational focus. But the leaders of this enterprise did by no means sit idly by. For many years attempts were made from Eretz Israel to stimulate the growth of an American halutz movement. One may recall the initiative of David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi who in the days of the first World War organized both "Hehalutz" and a Jewish legion in America. Since then the leaders of the Histadrut and Mapai consistently tried to direct the vast potential of American Jewry towards their cause. While most of these activities were concerned with financial and political support, the possibilities of building up a halutz movement were not ignored. Already in 1931 Ben-Gurion, while on a visit to America, stated goals which were to be realized later on. In his diary he noted that an American halutz movement was possible and claimed that "only this type of movement can strengthen the growing Histadrut and our party." In the same entry he expressed the hope that the "Detroit Kvutzah" would establish an American Kibbutz which would serve as a center for further aliyah from America. He also called for the union of YPZA and Gordonia. His description of a meeting with the YPZA leadership is illustrative of his approach:

" . . . I asked them towards what they educated this youth? — To be 'Poale Zion'. I explained to them that to be Poale Zion cannot be the educational goal of youth, especially in America where the way of life of the individual belonging to Poale Zion has no relation to its ideology and is in fact opposed to it. In the education of youth there must be a personal goal: What should the child be when he grows up? And our youth activities make sense only if we educate towards halutzit and maximum hagshamah . . . We must give the youth something that will arouse their enthusiasm and inspire them . . . [also] they must spend more time studying Hebrew . . . "\*

Other emissaries of the Labor Movement, such as Golda Meir (then Meyerson), Yosef Baratz, Zalman Rubashov (Shazar) also tried to influence the youth organization. In the corre-

\* *Labor Archives, Tel-Aviv, file IV 208/336b*

spondence of Israel Mereminsky (Merom), the head of the overseas relations department of the Histadrut, who visited America in the early thirties one notices besides the usual financial, organizational and political matters a constant demand for the organization of a halutz movement. To these efforts should be added those of Netzah. This youth movement had lost most of its original base of operations due to the suppression of Zionism in Soviet Russia. It was therefore logical that its leadership should turn to the West and especially America. In 1932 the idea of a halutzic youth movement in America was discussed in an exchange of letters between I. Mereminsky and the Netzah leader Yosef Yizraeli, then residing in Riga\*. The shlihut of Lassya Galili in 1933 was in fact originally motivated by hopes of setting up a movement on the lines of Netzah and it was only after confronting the realities of America that he redirected his activities towards setting up "Hehalutz". When Habonim was founded, American Netzah leaders were active in the educational department, but the movements never developed organizational ties and Habonim seems to have adopted little if any of the Netzah ideology. The ability of shlihim such as Lassya Galili to adapt themselves to the existing situation and work within it proved to be advantageous to all. It should be recalled that besides YPZA there existed in America Hashomer Hatzair and Gordonia, both founded in the twenties, and a small Netzah group which was organized in 1932. These movements were branches of European organizations with distinct ideologies and directed towards specific forms of settlement. But with all their differences they had in common the duty of personal commitment, i.e. upon reaching maturity members had to take practical steps towards aliyah or leave the movement. While this demand for ideological integrity was consistent with the educational goals, its rigid application ill fitted the realities of America and doomed the movements to remain small exclusive groups, racked by constant crises as many members and often the leaders showed themselves at the moment of truth to be unwilling to practice

\* *Labor Archives, Tel-Aviv, file IV 208/338b. Yosef Yizraeli himself came to America as a Shaliach to Hehalutz and Habonim in 1939. Netzah is an acronym for Noar Tzofi Halutz (Pioneering Scouting Youth).*

what they had preached. Still, they survived, partly because of the support they enjoyed from educators in Hebrew Schools and also because of the steady guidance they received from their centers in Europe and Eretz Israel. It was this direct contact which YPZA had lacked, and which, with the arrival of the first shlihim, constituted an additional ingredient in its transformation.

It may be recalled that the reestablishment of American Hehalutz (December 1933) preceded that of Habonim by more than a year and more if one considers the Vaad l'Maan Hehalutz, set up in 1932. Many YPZA members had joined these organizations and been influenced by the shlihim. Their example inspired the younger membership. The Hachshara farms set up in those years were not just training centers but also living examples of communal living, proof that "it could be done." The shlihim, living embodiments of the "new breed" of Jews, also served to concretize the message that the idea of halutzic realization was no empty dream.

A final but nonetheless important factor was the existence of Habonim movements in Western Europe, notably England, and in South Africa. With all the differences between these and the American movement there were many elements which all of them had in common from the beginning. The educational program of the English and S. African movements influenced the haverim in America. Not much seems to have been taken over wholesale, only the name, some educational patterns and the "Beth" (house) which was adopted as the basic symbol but embellished in a way that emphasized its uniqueness. Still, these few common denominators laid the groundwork for later contacts, common settlements and a world movement.

These then were the foundations upon which Habonim was built. Trying to summarize their significance one might say that its emergence stands for the adjustment of a youth organization patterned on Eastern Europe to American society and its values, the change in emphasis from European Zionist-socialist ideology towards practical involvement with Eretz Israel, where the ideal of a Jewish Labor Commonwealth seemed about to become reality. Hebrew took the place of Yiddish as the primary Jewish language while

*(continued on page 31)*

# JACOB LESTCHINSKY

## Founder of Jewish Statistics

*by David Rosenthal*

A general picture of the origin and aims of the science of statistics will enable us to view more fundamentally the pioneering nature and significance of Jacob Lestchinsky (1876–1966), one of the earliest practitioners of Jewish statistics.

Statistics, a branch of mathematics, aims to translate many facts and figures into an understandable form. One popular definition is “the art and science of analyzing facts and figures in order to arrive at correct conclusions.” The beginnings of that discipline go back to the 18th century, when governments began conducting population studies for taxation purposes. In our own time statistics helps politicians plan their campaigns; it creates the possibility of learning “which way the wind is blowing” or in whom people are placing their trust; what do they really think about the candidates, positive or negative. In a word, what is the mood among “the people.”

Vital statistics are a record of the most essential events in human life: births, marriages, divorces, illnesses, deaths. A study of vital statistics and societal facts and figures tells us what is happening or what has happened to the population of a country. It can also indicate future trends and developments. In the United States vital statistics are based on the census. The Constitution of the United States requires a census to be taken every ten years. At first the census was carried out in order to determine the number of Congressional representatives to which districts were entitled. In time the facts and figures of the census came to include also the fundamental “facts of life” relative to the citizenry.

Among Jews, the broad tasks generally belonging to government functions were left to interested individuals. This was no easy task

for a people as scattered as the Jews are, with such a variegated economy, especially since there was no established way of gathering the data. One of the individuals who carried out this difficult and complex task was Joseph Lestchinsky. Shmuel Niger called him “the person who does our national bookkeeping.”

In the case of the Jewish people this process required certain precautions: Don’t follow the well-beaten path. Break the habits of a people lacking the discipline of a government, a people that does not tolerate regulation of the individual’s thought processes, of thinking according to a predetermined system. Two Jews, Sholom Aleichem once said, will have three opinions, because if one says “yes,” the other may say “yes but not quite” or (as the folk-saying goes: A Jew always answers a question with another question.)

In that world Jacob Lestchinsky tried to introduce the primacy of facts over theories, of economic realities over party resolutions and dogmas. And he did this with the profound seriousness of a scientist and with the simplicity of one who is rooted in the soil of the masses of his people.

Here are several of Lestchinsky’s characteristic features, as well as some facts about his life, as reported by his close friend, the historian Dr. Raphael Mahler. “Having been immersed in the Jewish traditions of the cheder and the study-house — he studied Talmud until he was 18 — Lestchinsky carried the insights and the learning of former generations into the statistical research of Jewish reality. His special personal charm was in the grace and the cordiality, in the warm tone of his language and the wholesomeness of his smile. Thanks to his warmth and the popular style of a folk preacher, he became an interesting speaker without the use of oratorical effects, which were contrary to his very nature.”

In many ways Lestchinsky's life symbolized the fate of the Jewish people itself. Born in Horodycz, Kiev District, in 1876, he lived in Russia until 1921. He then settled in Berlin, where he lived until 1933, when he was driven out of the country by the Nazi government. He then moved to Prague, then Riga and Warsaw. In 1935 (I recall the year because Poland was then under the effect of Marshal Pilsudski's death) *Dos Neie Vort*, daily newspaper of Poale Zion, was running a contest for the submission of a research work on "Our Shtetl". This was supposed to describe the life of the Jews, their social conditions, their ways of earning a living, their economic situation. Heading the research effort was Jacob Lestchinsky, with whom I, as one of the contestants, had established some contact.

During his stay in Warsaw Lestchinsky was the official Polish correspondent for the *Forverts*. In 1937, because of the "hostile reports" in that newspaper, he was ordered to leave Poland. The closest place for him to go to was Switzerland, then Paris. From Paris he sent a research work for the 1938 Jubilee volume of *Heint* entitled "The Impoverishment of the Jewish Masses". In November 1938 he emigrated to New York. In February 1959 he left the United States and settled in Israel (Tel Aviv) and then, after several years, in Jerusalem. "Lestchinsky the wanderer," wrote Dr. Mahler, "like his people, closed the circle of immigration with this safe-haven in the Jewish national homeland."

Despite the hardships of his "wander-life" and despite all the difficult conditions this presented for research, Jacob Lestchinsky left us a scholarly heritage of two-score books and hundreds of essays and articles. With the founding of YIVO he edited almost all of the economic-statistical papers of the Institute. He was also responsible for the monthly "Jewish Economics," which was published in Warsaw until the outbreak of World War II. In 1954 there appeared, under his editorship and with the close co-operation of Prof. Ben Zion Dinur and Prof. Aryeh Tartakower, a book about the sociology of the Jewish people, titled *Klal Yisrael* (Chapters in the Sociology of the Jewish People).

In 1908 Lestchinsky published his first re-

search work on the structure of the Jewish proletariat, "The Jewish Worker in Russia." As early as that he was able to demonstrate statistically that Jewish workers were employed only in small workshops, in technically primitive enterprises that had no electrical power. These circumstances highlight the economic structural needs of the Jewish working class, needs which demanded an immediate solution.

Thirty years later, in the 1938 Jubilee edition of *Heint*, he called attention to similar circumstances in Poland. "The Jewish worker can be found in branches of industry where wages are lower than those of the Polish workers. Among the latter, 70 to 75 percent of the workers are employed in medium and large industries and they are entitled to unemployment compensation. Among Jewish workers, 80% are employed in small workshops with fewer than five workers and they have no unemployment compensation."

In the same article Lestchinsky cites a correspondent of the *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* (a widespread Polish conservative daily in Cracow) of June 2, 1935. The correspondent visited Brzeziny and wrote:

"People there work 20 hours a day during the season and seven months of the year they are unemployed, they go hungry and become emaciated because of this poverty. And they shrink spiritually because of enforced idleness and because of worry and desperation. Working 20 hours a day they turn out 120 pair of children's pants, for which they receive six zlotys, i.e., five groshn a pair! Out of that the 'exploiter' pays the worker 1-1/2 groshn a pair, and for the home worker there remains, for 20 hours' work, four zlotys and 20 groshn. A situation like this demands immediate relief."

From this (as previously mentioned) came Lestchinsky's opinion that these miserable conditions are more structural than political. The war years convinced Lestchinsky that Eretz Israel was fatefully important for the national Jewish future. He wrote: "We were very naive to believe that Hitlerism taught the world anything. We believed that the nations — especially the intellectuals and the political leaders — would want to rid themselves of their anti-Semitism as of a plague, a contagious disease. But it turned out that Hitlerism became even more deeply rooted in the souls of

the broad masses, and one year after liberation come alarms from every country in the world, without exception, that Jew-hatred had become intolerable . . .”

And further on in that article: “What we experienced in Europe is unthinkable in Eretz Israel. Not because those Jews are kneaded out of a different kind of dough. Certainly not! But only because they are already a territorial community, they are actually an organized state collective . . .” (Excerpt from “The New Picture of European Jewry,” *Undzer Shtimme*, Bergen-Belsen, July 1947).

**I**t was not easy, in Jewish society, to revise deeply rooted opinions, to bring to the fore a critical idea, to break through with a new evaluation of the Jewish situation and its future. Jacob Lestchinsky was deeply hurt and angry about that: “There is no more conservative, frozen, bloodless intelligentsia than the Jewish one. If you take a good look at what is going on in the world, how others are tossing away out-lived ideas and assumptions, how they are discarding worn-out social theories and seeking new ways, new goals, new ideals, and how they are turning away from an ideological world, then the situation looks pretty bleak. We are blind, yes, blind, because if we weren’t, we would learn something from new facts.

“But with us, we would sooner remember a phrase, a biblical quotation, than study and think about the new facts. And we are more afraid of new endeavors than we are of the devil. We are afraid that because of the great future we might forget the rotten present . . .” (Excerpt from “One of Our Illusions” in *Yiddisher Kemfer*, March 21, 1941).

Jacob Lestchinsky belonged to one of those Jewish families in which a variety of social convictions existed. His younger brother, Joseph (also known as J. Chmurner), a member of the Central Committee of the Bund in Poland, and one of the editors of the Bundist press, was Chairman of CYSHO (Central Yiddish School Organization) and a member of the Warsaw Jewish Community Administration.

Thus, two brothers, standing at opposite poles of Jewish social thought, influenced the Jewish masses in two opposing, militant ideological trends. □

## HABONIM

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English became the recognized colloquial. *Hagshama halutzit* in Eretz Israel became the central goal but, at the same time, the youth movement preserved its organizational, cultural, and ideological ties with the parent body in America. Of the Poale Zion legacy one might suggest the tradition of pacifism and anti-militarism which is probably one of the reasons why scouting never managed to take hold as an educational tool and a political awareness which at times led to the adoption of positions at variance with those of the official “line” and finds expression in the political activities of Habonim graduates, both in America and in Israel.

All through its existence the movement jealously guarded its independence from the various adult bodies with whom it was associated, be it political party or kibbutz federation. The varied concepts and traditions which it absorbed dictated a policy marked by tolerance, flexibility and compromise, attempting to reconcile the demands of community and movement with the needs of the individual. And it seems that these qualities which were inherent at the time of its foundation were also the secret of what, as youth movements go, may well be called its success. □

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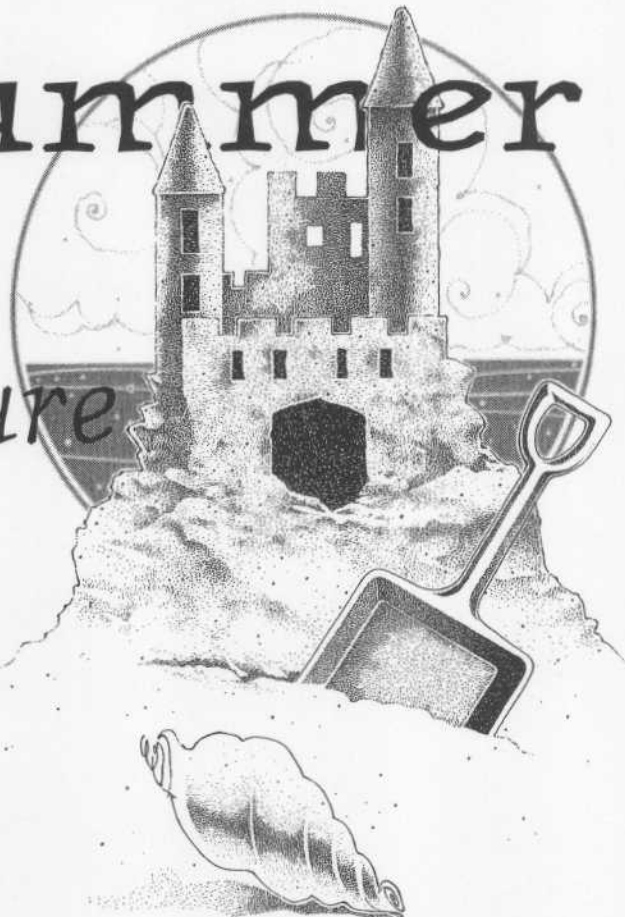
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