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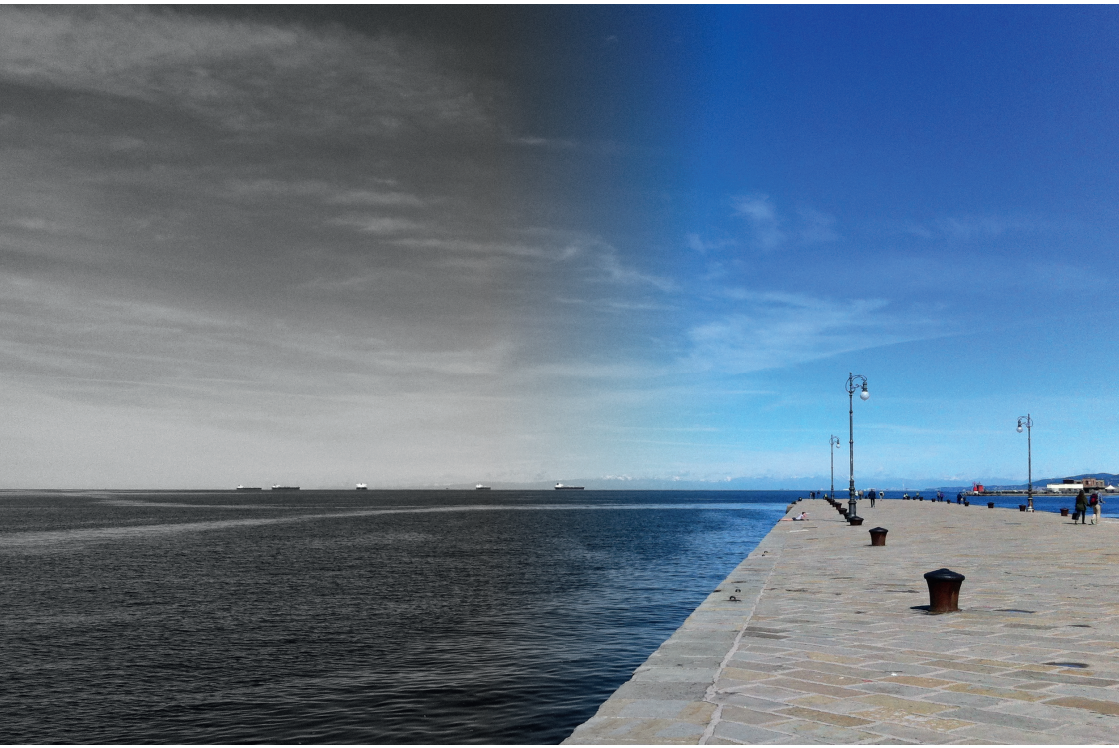
Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies in Germany



"They Took to the Sea"
Jewish History and Culture in Maritime Perspective(s)

(2022) №. 28
Universitätsverlag Potsdam

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"They Took to the Sea" – Jewish History and Culture in Maritime Perspective(s)

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Editors' Preface

In 1964 Samuel Tolkowsky published his book *They Took to the Sea: A Historical Survey of Jewish Maritime Activities* and offered an early compendium on Jewish maritime actions throughout the ages. It was obvious "that in this first attempt to present an account of Jewish maritime activities since the conquest of Canaan by the Hebrew tribes till the present," the author wanted to draw attention to a hitherto neglected and practically unknown aspect of Jewish history. It was his hope "that others may follow in his footsteps and endeavour to fill in the gaps left in his story." Almost sixty decades later this volume of PaRDeS, the journal of the Association for Jewish Studies in Germany, seeks to reexamine Jewish history from maritime perspectives, use the outcome of over 60 years of research, and draw attention to new projects on Jews and the "sea".

While Tolkowsky had predominantly focused on Jewish maritime activities from Antiquity to the dawn of the Modern Age and had emphasized the role of "seafaring Jews" in Biblical times, the Age of Discovery, and the early modern period, this issue will expand the knowledge on maritime Jewish history and culture in the modern era. While the images of Noah's ark, King Salomon's adventures at sea, Jewish pirates, and "Marrano" merchants spring to mind, this volume will broaden the perspective in order to stress the overall importance of the maritime space in Jewish history and culture.

This issue of PaRDeS therefore explores Jewish experiences with and within the maritime world and increases our knowledge of historical and cultural developments in connection with the sea, particularly during modern times. The collected contributions relate to Jewish maritime activities, including seafaring, fishing, port activities, migration experiences, and to maritime influences on Jewish history, culture, and literature. The issue brings together contributions from fields including history, geography, political, economic, cultural and literary studies as well as contributions focusing on historiography and literature pertaining to the fusion of Jewish and Maritime studies. Such an interdisciplinary approach enables us to draw a broader picture of Jewish history and culture and reevaluate historical narratives of maritime Jewish activities, histories, and imaginations – an idea which Tolkowsky would have also supported.

Such an endeavor was only possible due to the support and openness of the Association for Jewish Studies in Germany. I would like to thank the board of the Association for entrusting the editors with publishing this specific issue and PaRDeS in general. Moreover, I thank specifically my coeditor Markus Krah, whose time as one of the chief editors of PaRDeS will end with this issue. His new position as John H. Slade Executive Director of the Leo Baeck Institute – New York | Berlin is a good reason to hand over the editorship but is also a perfect opportunity to continue building bridges over the Atlantic – an idea which Markus Krah has already promoted in the 2021 issue of PaRDeS (no. 27).

I would also like to thank authors, book reviewers, and Oskar Czendze, who co-organized the book review section of this volume. All of them invested their time and energy to write articles or serve the scholarly community by reviewing the newest publications in Jewish Studies. All individuals involved in this issue of the journal were challenged by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences: the closure of or the reduced access to archives, new online teaching obligations, or health issues are just some of the challenges, which evolved in 2021/2022. This burdened all authors, reviewers, editors, publishers, and all others and led to a delayed publication of the newest issue of PaRDeS. However, the efforts to turn this edited issue into reality and the commitment to this project do make it all the more inspiring, and I thank all contributors.

Potsdam University Press made the actual production of this journal a smooth, professional, and enjoyable process. I would like to thank the copy editor, typesetter, and proofreaders as well as our colleagues at Universitätsverlag Potsdam: Andreas Kennecke, Marco Winkler, and Naomi Koch. I would also like to thank Kristin Schettler, who designed the cover of this issue. The support I received from each and every one of them has been extraordinary.

This publication was made possible by the support of the Association for Jewish Studies in Germany, the University of Potsdam, and the Institute for the History of the German Jews in Hamburg. The financial, intellectual, and emotional support has been crucial for this project. It symbolizes the flourishing field of Jewish Studies as well as the vivid academic network and culture which the Association for Jewish Studies in Germany represents.

Björn Siegel/Markus Krah

Contents

Book Reviews

Introduction

"They Took to the Sea" – Jewish History and Culture in Maritime Perspective(s)

by Björn Siegel

This issue of PaRDeS draws attention to the "sea" and gives new insights into an often neglected and forgotten part of Jewish history and culture. The volume was inspired by the book *They Took to the Sea* by Samuel Tolkowsky, in which the author wanted to "present an account of Jewish maritime activities since the conquest of Canaan by the Hebrew tribes till the present".[1] With his attempt to collect and present stories of Jewish maritime activities Tolkowsky did not claim to have done more than shed light on "a hitherto neglected and practically unkown aspect of Jewish history." And he continued: "It is his hope and fervent wish that others may follow in his footsteps and endeavor [*sic*] to fill in the gaps left in his story."[2] Thus, this issue of PaRDeS takes up this task and follows in the footsteps of Tolkowsky. While he focused in his work on the Biblical seafaring tribes, the role of Jewish merchant seamen in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the influence of Jewish seafarers in the Age of Discovery, as well as the "Marranos", who sailed the Seven Seas – as he argued –, the articles in this volume will offer new perspectives on Jewish maritime history and culture in modern times. The volume, therefore, not only follows Tolkowsky's wish to uncover more aspects of Jewish maritime activities but also takes a closer look at his lifetime.

Tolkowsky, who was born in Antwerp (Belgium) in 1886, migrated to Palestine in 1911 and became a citrus farmer and exporter there. Early on he got engaged in Zionist affairs, became a member of the Zionist Political Committee in London during the First World War (1916–1919) and served as Secretary of the Zionist Delegation to the Peace Conference at Versailles. Thus,

1 Samuel Tolkowsky, *They Took to the Sea: A Historical Survey of Jewish Maritime Activities* (New York, NY/London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), 9.

2 Tolkowsky, *They Took to the Sea,* 9.

he not only became one of the first researchers on Jewish maritime history and culture but also an important figure in the field of modern Jewish seafaring. He held several positions in connection with shipping and marketing citrus fruits from Palestine and became the first chairman of the Israel Maritime League. After the Second World War he was elected as chairman of ZIM Israel Navigation Company, the first national shipping company of Israel.[3] His biography does point to the important developments in the modern era, which he also described in a short chapter in his book. Under the title "Maritime Revival in Modern Israel" he emphasized the significance of the developments in the 1930s and 1940s and offered a historical narrative, which linked his present to the past.[4] Thus, his work illustrates that Jewish history and culture took place and was made in different maritime spaces.

Consequently, the contributors of this issue study different maritime spaces and examine their embedded narratives and functions. They follow in one way or another the discussions which evolved in the last decades and focused on the importance of spatial dimensions. These questions opened up possibilities for studying the production and construction of spaces, their influences on cultural practices and ideas, as well as structures and changes of social processes.[5] The spatial turn did enable an interdisciplinary debate which led to a rich discussion on "What exactly is space/place?" and "What can we learn from using such categories in our analyses?" Yi-Fun Tuan, for example, answered these questions with the following quote:

3 Tolkowsky published widely on the Jewish colonization process and the history of one of the main maritime gateways, the port of Jaffa. Cf. Samuel Tolkowsky, *Achievements and Prospects in Palestine* (London: English Zionist Federation, 1917); Samuel Tolkowsky, *The Gateway of Palestine: A History of Jaffa* (London: G. Routledge, 1924). For a personal account, cf. Raphael Patai, *Journeyman in Jerusalem: Memories and Letters, 1933–1947* (Lanham, MD/Boulder, CO/New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2000), 28–30.

4 Tolkowsky, *They Took to the Sea*, 261–289.

5 Susanne Rau, *Räume: Konzepte, Wahrnehmungen, Nutzungen* (= Historische Einführungen 14), (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 2013), 8. There is a rich literature on the spatial turn, thus the following titles are just a small selection: Cf. Charles W. J. Withers, "Place and the 'Spatial Turn' in Geography and in History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 4 (2009): 637–658; Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann (eds.), *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008); Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Vered Shemtov, "Introduction: Jewish Conceptions and Practices of Space," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 3 (2005): 1–8; David Cesarani, Milton Shain, and Tony Kushner (eds.), *Place and Displacement in Jewish History and Memory: Zakor v'Makor* (London/Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2009); Barbara Mann, *Space and Place in Jewish Studies* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

> What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value … The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa.[6]

The growing awareness of spatial dimensions and research perspectives also influenced Jewish studies and led to several initiatives which offered new perspectives on Jewish history and culture. The research group ('Graduiertenkolleg') *Makom* at University of Potsdam, for example, aimed at introducing the categories "space/place" to Jewish studies. Initiated by Julius H. Schoeps and Joachim Schlör as well as supported by Anna Lipphardt, Julia Brauch, Alexandra Nocke and others, the research group reexamined Jewish history and culture and established narratives which worked against the notion of a lack of spatial dimensions in Jewish history due to the long-standing nonexistence of a Jewish state. Furthermore, the group studied the concept of the Jewish people as the people of the book and the idea of the book as the portable homeland, and counterbalanced the stereotype of the wandering Jew, which implied a lack of belonging and being rooted.[7] Charlotte E. Fonrobert also disputed these stereotypes and stated that "the effect and meaning of uprooting and dislocation, the significance of belonging to a place (or to various places), the emergence of diaspora communities […]"[8] were central issues in Jewish history and culture and therefore had to be revisited and reexamined according to spatial research questions. In a similar vein, Richard Cohen wrote in his edited volume on *Place in Modern Jewish Culture and Society* that 'place' is a key "to explore the tensions that characterize Jewish culture in modernity – namely, between the sacred and the secular, the local and the global, the historical and the virtual, and Jewish culture versus other cultures."[9] Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup furthermore emphasized in *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History* that such questions and perspectives are

6 Tuan (1977) cited in Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 8.

7 Cf. Anna Lipphardt, Julia Brauch, and Alexandra Nocke, "Exploring Jewish Space: An Approach," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place,* eds. Anna Lipphardt, Julia Brauch, and Alexandra Nocke (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 1–23.

8 Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, "Review Essay: The New Spatial Turn in Jewish Studies," *AJS Review* 33, no. 1 (2009): 155–164, here 155.

9 Richard I. Cohen, "Preface," in *Place in Modern Jewish Culture and Society,* ed. Richard I. Cohen (Studies in Contemporary Jewry: An Annual XXX), (Oxford/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), VII–XI, here VII–VIII.

important to understand Jewish history and culture, especially in the context of migration and minority studies.[10]

Despite all of these discussions on "space" and "place", the maritime realm remained an often neglected and forgotten one. Early attempts to study and draw attention to this specific space did not lead to further reflections. Some rare examples were Max Grunwald's book *Jews as Shipowners and Seafarers* [Juden als Rheder und Seefahrer, 1902] or Raphael Patai's study on *Hebrew Shipping* [Ha'Safanut ha-Ivrit, 1938].[11] Despite Tolkowsky's book in 1964, the interest only grew stronger at the turn of the century, when Raphael Patai's study was translated and republished under the title *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (1998), and Nadav Kashtan's special issue of *Mediterranean Historical Review* on "Seafaring and the Jews" (2000) gave new insights into maritime Jewish history and culture.[12] Joachim Schlör supported this new interest in maritime spaces, which he had already introduced and discussed as part of *Makom,* and called for the establishment of Jewish Maritime Studies at a conference in Southampton (2009). In so doing, he aimed to not only provide new ideas for Jewish historical and migration research but also strengthen the link between literary and historical studies as well as diaspora and migration studies. Moreover, he also promoted a stronger link to the newly evolving field of mobility studies.[13] The growing interest led to a new research field, which flourished in the following years and continued to illustrate the importance of maritime perspectives on Jewish history and culture.[14] Several research projects, such as Todd Samuel Presner's study on *Muscular Judaism* or Dimitri Shumsky's essay on "This Ship is Zion", demon-

10 Simone Lässig, Miriam Rürup, "Introduction: What Made a Space 'Jewish'?" in *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History,* eds. Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup (New York, NY/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017), 1–20, here 1.

11 Cf. Max Grunwald, *Juden als Rheder und Seefahrer* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1902).

12 In 1998 an English version of Patai's book was published: Cf. Raphael Patai, *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Nadav Kashtan, "Seafaring and the Jews: Introduction," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 15, no. 1 (2000): 1–4. In 2001 the special issue was republished as an edited volume, Nadav Kashtan (ed.), *Seafaring and the Jews* (London/Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001).

13 Cf. Joachim Schlör, "Towards Jewish Maritime Studies," *Jewish Culture and History* 13, no. 1 (2012): 1–6. Cf. Joachim Schlör, "Tel Aviv: (With Its) Back to the Sea: An Excursion into Jewish Maritime Studies," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8, no. 2 (2009): 215–235.

14 This is just a selection of some of the newer research, cf. Maoz Azaryahu, "The Formation of a 'Hebrew Sea' in Pre-State Israel," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7, no. 3 (2008): 251–267; Gilbert Herbert, "A View of the Sea: Jews and the Maritime Tradition," in *Jewish Topogra-*

strated how fruitful the inclusion of a maritime perspective could be.[15] Their research expanded the knowledge on the "Jewish sea" and Zionist thinking and revealed the economic, ideological and social role of maritime spaces in Jewish history and culture. Other research projects demonstrated the importance of the Mediterranean Sea. These studies revealed and discussed the different meanings and values that were attributed to this specific maritime space.[16] One of the latest important research projects is Kobi Cohen-Hattab's detailed study on *Zionism's Maritime Revolution.* In his book he demonstrated that the "revolution", which took place in Mandatory Palestine, was crucial to understand Jewish and Zionist history and culture at the time. He also stated that these developments had "reverberations that continued to be felt today."[17]

The use of maritime spaces, the endowed value and given ideological power as well as the fusion between past, present and even the future also became visible in some of the older research studies. Raphael Patai, for example, linked his contemporary experiences of the riots in Palestine in April 1936 to his research on Jewish maritime activities. He used the story of his visit to excavations carried out by the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society in Sheikh Abreikh (Beit Shearim), where sketches of ships and other symbols of seafaring were discovered, to explain his interest in the history of the Jewish sea. Moreover, he declared:

phies: Visions of Space. Traditions of Place, eds. Julia Brauch, Anne Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 181–199; Hannan Hever, "The Zionist Sea: Symbolism and Nationalism in Modernist Hebrew Poetry," *Jewish Culture and History* 13, no. 1 (2012): 25–41.

15 Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 155–186; Dimitry Shumsky, "'This Ship is Zion!' Travel, Tourism, and Cultural Zionism in Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 104, no. 3 (2014): 471–493.

16 Cf. Alexandra Nocke, "Israel and the Emergence of Mediterranean Identity: Expressions of Locality in Music and Literature," *Israel Studies* 11, no. 1 (2006): 143–173; Alexandra Nocke, *The Place of the Mediterranean in Modern Israeli Society* (Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2009); Yaacov Shavit, "The Mediterranean World and Mediterraneanism: The Origins, Meaning and Application of a Geo-Cultural Notion in Israel," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 3, no. 2 (1988): 96–117; David Ohana, *Israel and Its Mediterranean Identity* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Matthias B. Lehmann and Jessica M. Marglin (eds.), *Jews and the Mediterranean* (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 2020).

17 Kobi Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution: The Yishuv's Hold on the Land of Israel's Sea and Shores, 1917–1948* (Berlin/Boston, MA/Jerusalem: De Gruyter Oldenbourg/Magnes, 2019), 8. Cf. in general also Kobi Cohen-Hattab, "The Test of Maritime Sovereignty: The Establishment of the ZIM National Shipping Company and the Purchase of the Kedmah, 1945–1952," *Israel Studies* 20, no. 2 (2015): 110–134.

> that there were Jewish shipowners, captains, sailors and crews, who were not only keen seamen experienced in all the dangers, pains, excitements and pleasure of seafaring, but having a deep personal affection for the sea, developed the same attractive properties of imaginations, fantasy and romanticism, which are known to us as being characteristic to all other seafaring peoples, both ancient and modern.[18]

Thus, Patai's remarks take us back to the discussions on maritime spaces and the embedded narratives mentioned at the beginning and, hence, to this issue of PaRDeS. In this volume the different contributors offer case studies of their current research that all look at narratives, functions and ideas connected to different maritime spaces. The projects reflected in the articles of this volume range from the 1930s to the present. They illustrate how the "sea" became a space in which being Jewish and being a refugee was discussed. They demonstrate how the maritime space was endowed with value and gained not only economic but also ideological importance. They show how Jewish maritime history was written from a male perspective and discuss how influential the "sea" remained in the creation of a "Jewish future". Lastly, they demonstrate how maritime aspects did influence literature, which documented Sephardic-Jewish networks and family structures but also fueled imaginations and fantasies of Jewish seafarers and pirates in the past. Thus, all articles in this volume offer different maritime perspectives on Jewish history and culture and demonstrate the great potential of such a maritime turn.

Despite the different perspectives and case studies in this volume, the issue cannot and does not claim to cover all aspects of Jewish maritime history – similar to Tolkowsky's intention. Nevertheless, it offers new insights into Jewish history and culture by taking us out to "sea" and, in so doing, inviting us to revisit Jewish history and culture from different maritime perspectives.

[18] Raphael Patai, "Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 32, no. 1 (1941): 1–26, here 1–2; 26 [citation].

Articles

Joan Gluckauf Haahr, JEWS-Facebook group, December 21, 2018: "My parents sailed from Amsterdam to New York on May 20, 1937, one [*sic*] of six passengers (all refugees) aboard the Belgian freighter 'Mercier'. My father, obviously enjoying the voyage." Joan Gluckauf Haahr, *Prisoners of Memory: A Jewish Family from Nazi Germany* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Full Court Press, 2021), photo gallery (not paginated).

"Israel am Meere": The Sea Voyage as a Place and Time for Questions about Jewish Identity

by Joachim Schlör

Abstract

For Jews in Germany, the period following the Nazis' rise to power in January 1933 was a period of decision-making on many levels: How should they respond to the persecution? If they decided to emigrate, many more decisions had to be made: How does one leave a country, and where should one go? A key moment in the process and in the cultural practice of emigration is the beginning of the sea voyage – when the need for departure and the hope for a new arrival jointly create a period of liminality. Looking at reports from sea voyages of exploration and emigration from the 1930s, this contribution discusses the question whether, and in what ways, such reflections can be read in the context of religious experiences and in the search for Jewish identities in times of turmoil.

1 Introduction

For quite a number of years now, David Jünger, Björn Siegel and the author of this contribution have discussed the idea to put together an anthology of texts – memoirs, diaries, letters, newspaper reports – about the sea voyages of German-Jewish emigrants of the 1930s and 1940s on their route to new destinations. All three of us have published contributions to the history and the meaning of this particular moment in place and time, an experience that was shared by many and, at the same time, very individual.[1] Our common assump-

[1] Joachim Schlör, "'Solange wir auf dem Schiff waren, hatten wir ein Zuhause': Reisen als kulturelle Praxis im Migrationsprozess jüdischer Auswanderer," *Voyage: Jahrbuch für Reise- und Tourismusforschung* 10 [Mobilitäten!] (2014): 226–246; Joachim Schlör, "Reflexionen an Bord: Die Schiffsreise als Ort und Zeit im Dazwischen," *Jahrbuch für Exilforschung* 35 [Passagen des Exils, ed. Burcu Dogramaci and Elizabeth Otto] (2017): 54–68; Joachim Schlör, "Die Schiffs-

tion is that such texts provide an opportunity to discuss central questions of Jewish identity in modern times, and that the period between departure and arrival has often been used as an opportunity for reflection. The liminal phase, to use a notion coined by Arnold van Gennep and further developed by Victor Turner,[2] between the departure from the "alte Heimat" and the arrival in a "neue Heimat" was visualized in 1938 by Fritz Freudenheim, in a drawing that depicts his family's emigration from Berlin to Montevideo.[3] Often based on personal documents, this research has contributed to the development of Jewish maritime studies.[4] In the context of this special issue on *Jewish History and Culture in Maritime Perspective(s),* I will try to work out the importance of the moment of confrontation between Jewish travellers – mostly, but not only, emigrants – and the media of travel, the ship and the sea, in more detail. Moreover, I will address the question whether there is a specific Jewish religious experience that informs documents such as the following excerpt from an article by Robert Weltsch in *Jüdische Rundschau* (1934) and places them in a wider context of the experience of the sea and the sea voyage as a trigger for debates about Jewish identities and as a catalyst for the making of decisions in times of turmoil.

> The farther the ship gets from the shore of Europe, the further we distance ourselves from the emotional turmoil in which a Jew in Europe now lives. […] Everyone on the ship feels something of it. Many descriptions of trips to Palestine are known

reise als Denkraum: Quellen zur deutsch-jüdischen Emigration zwischen dem Abschied von Europa und der Ankunft in Palästina," in *Agenten, Akteure, Abenteuer: Beiträge zur Ausstellung 'Europa und das Meer' am Deutschen Historischen Museum Berlin,* eds. Jürgen and Martina Elvert (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot 2018), 307–314; David Jünger, "An Bord des Lebens: Die Schiffspassage deutscher Juden nach Palästina 1933 bis 1938 als Übergangserfahrung zwischen Raum und Zeit," *Mobile Culture Studies: The Journal* 1 (2015): 147–163; Björn Siegel, "Die Gerusalemme und Tel Aviv: Zwei Schiffe für Palästina," in *Das Schiff als Thema der Moderne: Schiff und Zeit – Panorama Maritime,* Beiheft 1 der DGSM, eds. Maike Priesterjahn and DSGM (Bonn: Köllen Druck+Verlag, 2020), 155–176.

2 Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1961); Victor W. Turner, "Liminalität und Communitas," in *Ritualtheorien: ein einführendes Handbuch,* eds. Andrea Belliger and David Krieger (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998), 251–264.

3 Fritz Freudenheim, Von der alten Heimat zu der neuen Heimat, c. 1938. © Jüdisches Museum Berlin, courtesy of Irene Freudenheim.

4 Raphael Patai, *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); David Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550–1950* (Parkes-Wiener Series on Jewish Studies) (London: Routledge, 2002); Kobi Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution: The Yishuv's Hold on the Land of Israel's Sea and Shores, 1917–1948* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

> from recent years, impressions that always begin with a description of the ship trip. […] There is something gripping about this community of traveling Jews from all over the world, who are striving for one goal. There are always a few originals and oddballs among them, as well as strange destinies. One often finds more of the essence of the Jewish question in such lively individual fates than in many a scholarly discussion.[5]

Weltsch, who does not speak in the first person, places himself within the larger community of European Jewry that shares the memory of a difficult past – "The fate of the Jews has been recognized as one of the great world-historical tragedies of the last two millennia" – and faces an insecure future – "Now, in a particularly peculiar way, Judaism is also at a crossroads."[6] This situation, for him, is symbolized both by the voyage he reports from, a trip across the Mediterranean to Alexandria and finally Jaffa (and Tel Aviv), and by the ship, the "Marietta Pacha", that carries a group of very diverse travellers in search of their roots and *en route* to a promising re-connection with the land of Israel. Thus, he raises essential questions, which this article will also address: "Where are we standing? Where are we headed? What eternal values do we recognize?"[7]

2 Confronting the Sea as a Part of God's Creation

In the first part of my contribution, I will try to place Robert Weltsch's description of the sea voyage in a larger context of reflections about the "crossroads" between tradition, assimilation and the challenge of Zionism by discussing three texts (chosen from the growing collection for our planned anthology) by Felix Aber, Nathan Birnbaum and Isaak Rülf. In his article, "Das

5 "Je weiter sich das Schiff von der Küste Europas entfernt, um so mehr gewinnen wir Abstand von dem Aufruhr der Gefühle, in welchem ein Jude in Europa jetzt lebt. […] Jeder auf dem Schiff fühlt etwas davon. Man kennt aus den letzten Jahren viele Beschreibungen von Palästinareisen, Impressionen, die stets mit der Schilderung der Schiffsreise beginnen. […] Diese Gemeinschaft von reisenden Juden aus aller Herren Länder, die einem Ziel zustreben, hat etwas Packendes. Immer sind ein paar Originale und Sonderlinge darunter, immer auch seltsame Schicksale. Man findet in solchen lebendigen Einzelschicksalen oft mehr vom Wesen der jüdischen Frage als in so mancher gelehrten Erörterung." Robert Weltsch, "Palästina 1934: Der erste Bericht unseres Schriftleiters Dr. Robert Weltsch," *Jüdische Rundschau,* March 28, 1934, 3. [All translations are mine, JS].

6 Weltsch, "Palästina 1934," 3.

7 Weltsch, "Palästina 1934," 3.

Erlebnis des Meeres in der Bibel", Rabbi Dr. Felix Aber (1895 Breslau, today Wrocław, Poland–1964 New York) decribes his experiences on board the ship *Bremen*[8] and tries to understand the larger phenomenon that – so I would try to argue – informs the particular political situation:

> One of the deepest impressions I had during the tour of the giant ship of North German Lloyd, the 'Bremen', was the magnificent first-class library hall. It is paneled with fine wood. The individual panels are covered with graphic characters of different peoples and cultures. An orchestra of folk of nations' voices resounds for the celebration of the element to which the 'Bremen' is entrusted, for the praise of the sea. Valuable material has been brought together in this room, which awaits processing – initially also translation – for a work that, to my knowledge, does not yet exist, a chronicle of the ways in which the individual people and regions experienced the sea.[9]

During his own maritime experiences, Aber tries, in a very eclectic way, to trace the occurrence and experience of the sea in the biblical narrative ("dem Erlebnis des Meeres in der Bibel nachzugehen und seine Eigenart zu kennzeichnen"). In opposition to modern forms of adoration or sublimation, human beings in antiquity regarded nature in two basically different ways: The Greeks saw it as a given background for human activity, while the Jews regarded it as the theatre of God's work in creation.

In addition to these religious aspects of the sea and the sea voyage, Aber also argues that "not only the outer events of the world, but also the inner life of the soul is reflected in the experience of the sea. The expanse of the sea is

[8] Dr. Felix Aber finished school and University in Breslau, served in the German Army 1914–1918, received his PhD in 1922 and his rabbinical exam in 1923. From 1924 to 1938 he served as rabbi and head of the religious school in Bremen. He emigrated to Canada in 1938 and to the US in 1939 where he served as a rabbi in different congregations in New Jersey and the State of New York.

[9] "Mit den tiefsten Eindruck beim Rundgang durch das Riesenschiff des Norddeutschen Lloyds, die 'Bremen', hat in mir der herrliche Bibliothekssaal der ersten Klasse hinterlassen. Er ist mit edlem Holze getäfelt. Die einzelnen Tafeln sind mit den Schriftzeichen verschiedener Völker und Kulturen bedeckt. Ein Orchester von Völkerstimmen erklingt zum Preis des Elementes, dem die 'Bremen' anvertraut ist, zum Preis des Meeres. In diesem Raum ist wertvolles Material zusammengetragen, das der Bearbeitung – zunächst auch noch der Übersetzung – harrt, für ein Werk, das meines Wissens noch nicht existiert, und das Kunde geben müßte, wie die einzelnen Völker und Zonen das Meer erlebten." Rabbiner Dr. Felix Aber, "Das Erlebnis des Meeres in der Bibel," *Jahrbuch für die jüdischen Gemeinden Schleswig-Holsteins und der Hansestädte und der Landesgemeinde Oldenburg* 2: 5691 (1930/1931): 118–124.

the sublime parable of boundless suffering".[10] Aber also points to the important connection between the technological development that made it possible for human beings to cross the sea and the older fears and anxieties still bound in the narrative:

> The experience of the sea has lost nothing of its gigantic magnitude since it was celebrated in the Song of the Red Sea, has lost nothing of its gigantic size, and even today, high at sea, the old psalmist's words resound in many a human breast:
> O LORD, how manifold are your works! / In wisdom have you made them all; [the earth is full of your creatures] / Here is the sea, great and wide / which teems with creatures innumerable / living things both small and great. There go the ships / [and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it]. (Psalm 104: 24, 25.)[11]

This "connection" – for want of a better word – has already been expressed in a text written in January 1923 by Nathan Birnbaum (1864 Wien–1937 Scheveningen): "Am Meere. Gedanken und Erinnerungen".[12] I came upon this article in Caspar Battegay's book "Geschichte der Möglichkeit. Utopie, Diaspora und die 'jüdische Frage'"[13] – and that is indeed the context I am interested in here. Birnbaum writes about two experiences on board the ship:

> Everything else was just introduction. Only now are we heading out into the Atlantic Ocean. We drove north to west. Just yesterday we stopped in the port of a well-known Scandinavian city. We stayed on the ship. But two people from the city came to us: the Rav and the Parness.[14]

This encounter with a small Jewish community made up mostly of refugees from Eastern Europe reminds him of an earlier voyage during which he felt completely alone in the world,

10 Aber, "Das Erlebnis," 123.

11 "[D]as Erlebnis des Meeres hat, seit es im Liede am Schilfmeer gefeiert wurde, von seiner gigantischen Größe nichts eingebüßt, und noch heute erklingt hoch auf See das alte Psalmistenwort in mancher Menschenbrust: 'Wie groß sind Deine Werke, o Gott / Sie alle hast Du in Weisheit geschaffen! / Voll ist die Erde Deines Besitzes / Hier das große und weite Meer / Wo die Schiffe ihres Weges ziehen!" Aber, "Das Erlebnis," 124.

12 Nathan Birnbaum, "Am Meere: Gedanken und Erinnerungen," *Der Israelit,* January 4, 1923, 8.

13 Caspar Battegay, *Geschichte der Möglichkeit: Utopie, Diaspora und die 'jüdische Frage'* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2018), 113–154.

14 "Alles Übrige war nur Einleitung. Erst jetzt steuern wir in den Atlantischen Ozean hinaus. Wir fuhren über Norden gegen Westen. Noch gestern hielten wir im Hafen einer bekannten skandinavischen Stadt. Wir blieben auf dem Schiffe. Aber zwei Leute aus der Stadt kamen zu uns: Der Raw und der Parneß." Birnbaum, "Am Meere," 8.

> there was wonderful sea air and my soul could not breathe. There was moonlight on the floods, and my soul saw not. After all, it wasn't such an easy thing: the ship dances on the sea, far, far from all coasts, the depths danced beneath it …[15]

He describes this as a moment when longing turned into anxiety. After a while, the feelings subside, and he retires to his cabin, but the memory stays on. During his second journey, things have changed: "today my soul is already drinking God's air, God's light, God's warmth, longing to draw ever closer to him …"[16] While at the first occasion he was scared, because he had taken an unprepared look into "God's workshop", he is now calmer and feels mostly reverence. "My soul was not accustomed to his measure. Today I am no longer afraid of him, who after all is also the father." Birnbaum compares his former existence, before revelation, to a prison and to a busy city street: "The soul had been forgotten altogether. It was lying somewhere in the mud of the street." Now he feels peace and is able to enjoy the creation.

> Oh sea, sea! Years after years one has lived on the mainland, in the big city, running around like a madman among thousands of other madmen and being pushed around, one has fought with all kinds of evil spirits, against foreign violence and against one's own bad thoughts, one has soiled oneself from top to bottom and in the dizziness has lost one's own soul, trampled on it with one's own feet and let the feet of others tread on it … And suddenly – a few steps across the pier: the mainland has sunk! Another world! No running, no pushing, no dirt, no war with yourself and others. And you have your soul again. […] The Sabbath of the Torah and the Sabbath of the sea – both a single Sabbath of the Lord.[17]

15 "Da war wunderbare Seeluft, und meine Seele konnte nicht atmen. Da war Mondlicht auf den Fluten, und meine Seele sah nicht. Schließlich wars ja keine so einfache Sache: das Schiff tanzt auf dem Meere, weit, weit von allen Küsten, unter ihm tanzten die Tiefen …" Birnbaum, "Am Meere," 8.

16 Birnbaum, "Am Meere," 8.

17 "Oh Meer, Meer! Jahre über Jahre hat man auf dem Festland gelebt, in der großen Stadt, ist wie ein Wahnsinniger unter tausend anderen Wahnsinnigen herumgerannt und herumgestoßen worden, hat man mit allerlei bösen Geistern gekämpft, gegen fremde Gewalt und gegen eigene schlechte Gedanken, hat man sich von oben bis unten beschmutzt und hat in dem Taumel die eigene Seele verloren, mit eigenen Füßen sie getreten und von fremden Füßen sie treten lassen … Und plötzlich – einige Schritte über den Schiffsteg: Das Festland versunken! Eine andere Welt! Kein Rennen, kein Stoßen, kein Schmutz, kein Krieg mit sich und Anderen. Und man hat die Seele wieder. […] Der Sabbat der Thora und der Sabbat des Meeres – beide ein einziger Sabbat des Herrn." Birnbaum, "Am Meere," 8.

One step further back in time. In April 1901, Isaak Rülf published "eine Pessach-Betrachtung" in the Zionist paper *Die Welt*: "Israel am Meere." Rülf (1831 Rauischholzhausen, Hessen–1902 Bonn) was a German rabbi and a Jewish politician, most well-known for his work in support for the Jewish community in Memel, for Russian Jews and Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe but also for his early support of Chibbat Zion and the Zionist movement. In his article, he plays with an old Jewish saying that a man's character can be determined by his relation to "Beutel, Becher, Zorn und Spiel" – money, drink, wrath, and play – and adds a fifth criterion, man's ability to make decisions in critical situations.[18] His example is, logically, the story of Pessach, Israel's exodus from Egypt:

> The children of Israel had left Egypt and were celebrating their first Passover […]. On the seventh and last day of this first Passover feast they had arrived at the sea shore in order to gain access to the other shore from here.[19]

Rülf then goes on to compare the different attitudes among those who have arrived at the shore and know that their persecutors are just behind them – 1) there is no way out, let us jump into the sea; 2) let us go back to Egypt; 3) let us try to fight them; and 4) let us try to negotiate – with the attitudes of the Jews of his day towards Zionism:

> Modern Zionism has gripped the hearts of all Jews very powerfully and stirred them right down to their innermost life. […] Again, the fellow believers and people stand as it were on the edge and beach of the sea and look longingly across to the Holy Land, which for the large masses of the oppressed and persecuted, as well as for everyone who feels insecure and scary in his home felt, could offer a friendly and sentimental refuge, yes, for the entire Jewish nation, a firm footing, a strong rear guard, if it could be obtained.[20]

18 Isaak Rülf, "Israel am Meere: eine Pessach-Betrachtung," *Die Welt* 5, no. 14 (1901): 4–5.

19 "Die Kinder Israels waren aus Ägypten gezogen und feierten ihr erstes Pessach-Fest […]. Am siebenten und letzten Tage dieses ersten Pessach-Festes waren sie am Meeresstrande angelangt." Rülf, "Israel am Meere," 4.

20 "Der neuzeitliche Zionismus hat die Herzen aller Juden gar mächtig ergriffen und bis in das innerste Leben hinein aufgerührt. […] Wieder stehen die Glaubens- und Volksgenossen gleichsam am Rande und Strande des Meeres und schauen sehnsüchtigen Auges hinüber nach dem Heiligen Lande, das für die grossen Massen der Gedrückten und Verfolgten, sowie für einen jeden, der sich in seiner Heimstätte unsicher und unheimlich fühlt, eine freundliche und rührselige Zuflucht, ja für die gesamte jüdische Nation einen festen Halt, einen kräftigen Rückenschutz bieten könnte, wenn es zu erlangen wäre." Rülf, "Israel am Meere," 5.

Rülf discusses the four options of choice: 1) complete assimilation in the "sea of peoples" ("im Völkermeere"); 2) a return to slavery and dependence; 3) fight against antisemitism and for Jewish pride; and 4) reduce our Judaism to a private faith and give up on the national idea. He, very obviously, argues for the national option, for a combination of religious and national pride. However, he chooses his words carefully: "Remember who you are and what you are and have been!" It is the situation at the shore, at the threshold between land and sea,[21] that evokes and even demands this serious and deep self-reflection. Despite their differences in approach and attitude, all three authors regard the confrontation between the human body and spirit on the one hand and the sea on the other as a moment to make decisions.

3 Confronting Jewish Identities during the Sea Voyage

I will now discuss examples from the cultural history of the sea voyage in the process of emigration and analyze further texts in order to demonstrate the specific role of the ship beyond the religious realm. Even before 1933, Felix Aber was very active in his exploration of the ship and its quality as a means not just of transport. The articles – "Zur ersten Ausreise der 'Bremen'. Vorbildliche Einrichtungen für jüdische Reisende"[22]; "Jüdische Einrichtungen auf deutschen Schnelldampfern. Zwei Tage auf den Dampfern 'Bremen' und 'Europa'"[23]; "Reisebriefe an das 'Israelitische Familienblatt'. Zwischen zwei Schnelldampfern in New York"[24] and "25 Jahre koschere Küchen auf den Dampfern des Norddeutschen Lloyd"[25] – need to be read in the context of the last period of Eastern European-Jewish transmigration from Russia through a huge number of "points of passage" across the European con-

21 For the notion of the "threshold" in Jewish cultural practice, see Joachim Schlör, "Faith in Residence: Jewish Spatial Practice in the Urban Context," in *Space and Spatiality in German-Jewish History,* eds. Simone Lässig and Mirjam Rürup (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 231–245.

22 Felix Aber, "Zur ersten Ausreise der 'Bremen'. Vorbildliche Einrichtungen für jüdische Reisende", *Israelitisches Familienblatt* [henceforth IF], July 25, 1929, 16.

23 Felix Aber, "Jüdische Einrichtungen auf deutschen Schnelldampfern. Zwei Tage auf den Dampfern 'Bremen' und 'Europa'," *IF,* April 10, 1930, 1–2.

24 Felix Aber, "Reisebriefe an das 'Israelitische Familienblatt'. Zwischen zwei Schnelldampfern in New York", *IF,* August 25, 1932, 10.

25 Felix Aber, "25 Jahre koschere Küchen auf den Dampfern des Norddeutschen Lloyd", *Israelit,* September 29, 1932, 18.

tinent.[26] Rabbis and community leaders in port cities, such as Aber in Bremen or Rülf in Memel, witnessed the large waves of transmigrants from the East on their way to the United States, Australia, South America or South Africa and helped to create aid organizations, such as the *Jüdischer Hilfsverein* (Jewish Aid Association), to stir them along.

In a sense, the technological development in transatlantic and transnational seafaring created a framework for the function of the ship as a means, a tool, in the emigration process. The port cities of departure and arrival, together with the established network of aid organizations, formed the logistic and even consumer-oriented infrastructure that served the needs of hundreds of thousands of emigrants. "Jüdische Einrichtungen" such as kosher kitchens or prayer rooms, as described by Aber, catered to the needs of the observant travellers. In more peaceful times, all these elements could be described in nearly pastoral terms. After 1933, however, with the growing need for Jews in Germany to seek refuge elsewhere, a time had come to make decisions and rethink Jewish identities. David Jünger, in his *Jahre der Ungewissheit. Emigrationspläne deutscher Juden 1933–1938,* has shown in detail how decisions concerning emigration were made.[27] Train stations, ports and ships became central places, theatres of departure in an "emotional geography".[28] To those who made the decision to travel further away, to Palestine, the United States, South America, South Africa or Australia, it was the ship, and everything connected to it, that symbolized the way out.[29] Of course, documents from and about the sea voyage offer a whole variety of aspects worth consideration; I will concentrate on thoughts and reflections on Jewish identity, or rather identities.

Alfred Kupferberg led a group of emigrants and travellers – those who still intended to return to Germany – from Frankfurt to Haifa in Palestine,

[26] Tobias Brinkmann, ed., *Points of Passage: Jewish Transmigrants from Eastern Europe in Scandinavia, Germany and Britain 1880–1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).

[27] Cf. David Jünger, *Jahre der Ungewissheit: Emigrationspläne deutscher Juden 1933–1938* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

[28] Joachim Schlör, "'Ach, man läßt mich durch, es ist gelungen.' Die Überschreitung der deutschen Grenze in Emigrationsberichten", in *Grenze als Erfahrung und Diskurs: Literatur- und geschichtswissenschaftliche Perspektivierungen,* eds. Hermann Gätje and Sikander Singh (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2017), 217–227.

[29] Cf. Marion Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees: Hope and Anxiety in Portugal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020).

and he reported on his experience in a lead article for the *Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* on March 1, 1934. His first words capture the tense atmosphere of a journey that, on the surface, "feels" like any journey in normal times, but there is something else: "a certain tension, an uneasy nervousness, the feeling of being faced with uncertain, perhaps exhilarating, perhaps disappointing experiences".[30] Moreover, during his train ride to the Riviera coast, he stated that the fact that they were aware of the seriousness of the decision, even before their arrival in the "Land of the Jews", made them

> from tourists, emigrants, [from] emigrants – into Jews. It was a piece of Jewish destiny, a very tiny but no less symbolic, indeed poignant part of the fundamental destiny, so to speak, of this remarkable community of fourteen million people …[31]

On the ship Kupferberg notes, in a hopeful mood, that the existing and visible differences between 3rd class passengers from "Berlin, Frankfurt and Breslau" and those from "Minsk, Pinsk and Mohilew" already begin to diminish:

> [It] is not only opinions and principles that the passengers from Eastern and Western Europe throw overboard the 'Aquitania' with astonishing speed; moreover, they seek to penetrate with common zeal into the rudiments of the Hebrew language.

The 2nd or Tourist Class is marked by a western bourgeoisie, the "Tausendpfünder" [those who have been granted a visa by the British Mandate authorities on the grounds of having the sum of 1,000 Palestinian pounds at their disposal to bring along and invest]. Still, they don't have the air of "capitalists", instead appearing modest, restrained, apprehensive even, and gather around

30 Alfred Kupferberg, "Deutsche Juden im jüdischen Land: Bericht unseres Redaktionsmitgliedes von der Palästinareise des 'Israelitischen Familienblattes'," *Israelitisches Familienblatt,* March 1, 1934, 9.

31 Kupferberg, "Deutsche Juden," 9 [I quote the German version in more detail]: "Alle aber waren […] von der Einmaligkeit der Situation erfüllt, in der sie sich befanden. Sie hatten sich, aus welchen Gründen immer, entschlossen, das Leben dort in der alten Heimat, in der ihre Gefühle und Gedanken in guten und schweren Zeiten eingewurzelt waren, abzubrechen, um ein neues Leben in einem Lande zu beginnen, von dem sie vieles erhofften, das sie in vielem fürchten, und das ihnen in fast jedem Betracht unbekannt ist. Sie wissen es; und daß sie sich des ganzen Ernstes der Entscheidung bewußt waren, das machte sie, schon vor der Ankunft im "Land der Juden", aus Touristen, Auswanderern, Emigranten – zu Juden. Es war ein Stück jüdisches Schicksal, ein ganz winziger, darum aber nicht minder symbolhafter, ja ergreifender Ausschnitt aus dem sozusagen grundsätzlichen Geschick dieser merkwürdigen Gemeinschaft von vierzehn Millionen Menschen, das sich mir an jenem Nachmittag enthüllte, während der Zug unentwegt am Südhange der Alpen, durch die norditalienische Ebene, auf die Rivieraküste zurollte."

a group of leading Jewish personalities such as Kurt Blumenfeld and Rabbi Joachim Prinz, whose presence on board lends an atmosphere of serenity and importance to the occasion.

While many articles focus on practical advice for the organization of such a voyage[32] or discuss the changing political circumstances, particularly in British Mandate Palestine, a report by Eva Reichmann-Jungmann on her "Palästinafahrt" aboard the *Gerusalemme* goes deeper and discloses more personal elements of the emotional geography:

> Even during these first few days, when it is only slowly forming, when people get together and get to know each other, and in the violently rushing experience of the voyage, natural beauty and unfamiliar on-board operations, it is only with difficulty that you feel your way towards your own feelings, even in this confusing abundance of impressions the certainty emerges that this will not be a herd journey with mass consumption of things that one must have seen, but that the community journey here has a meaning that it otherwise lacks: Jewish people are getting ready together for an experience that affects them all together. [Everyone's desires] come together in one hope. May the country prepare a place for the great love that is brought to it to develop.[33]

Another article published in the *Jüdische Rundschau* in 1932 pointed out that such trips should be used much more intensely to promote the Zionist idea of a return. There is a "receptive mass of Palestinian tourists, who are readily available simply because of the forced concentration on the ship" – why are they not better prepared for their arrival?[34] The ship itself appears as a

[32] Cf., for example, Heinz Marcuse, "Wege nach Erez Israel: Ratschläge für Palästinareisen," *Israelitisches Familienblatt,* February 20, 1936, 15.

[33] "Schon in diesen ersten Tagen, in denen sie sich erst langsam formiert, in denen sich die Menschen zusammenfinden und kennenlernen, und man sich in dem gewaltsam anstürmenden Erleben von Schiffsreise, Naturschönheiten und ungewohntem Bordbetrieb nur mühsam zu seinen eigenen Gefühlen herantastet, schon in dieser verwirrenden Fülle der Eindrücke drängt sich die Gewissheit vor, dass dies keine Herdenreise sein wird mit Massenkonsum von Dingen, die man gesehen haben muss, sondern dass hier die Gemeinschaftsfahrt einen Sinn erhält, der ihr sonst fehlt: jüdische Menschen machen sich gemeinsam bereit für ein Erlebnis, das sie alle gemeinsam betrifft. [Die Wünsche aller Einzelnen] fügen sich zusammen in der einen Hoffnung. Das Land möge der grossen Liebe, die man ihm bringt, eine Stätte der Entfaltung bereiten." Eva Reichmann-Jungmann, "Palästinafahrt," *C.-V.-Zeitung,* November 11, 1937, 17.

[34] Heinrich Woznianski, "Werbung auf Reisen: Zur A.-C.-Sitzung," *Jüdische Rundschau,* July 26, 1932, 282. See also N.N., "Zum Volke finden! Vor Triest an Bord der 'Gerusalemme', Mitte April 1935," *Jüdische Rundschau,* April 30, 1935, 2.

"schwimmendes Judenland" [a floating Land of the Jews], which fulfilled its function by – and on – arrival. This has been shown very elegantly in a text by Arthur Eloesser (1870 Berlin–1938 Berlin):

> Such memories, such hopes are certainly carried quite unconsciously and unconcernedly by our ship, which seems very unsuitable for any pilgrimage, equipped with all necessary and unnecessary travel comfort, still burdened with all class differences and prejudices of western civilization, according to its rank also obliged to an educational trip that put the passengers ashore in Athens, Constantinople, Rhodes and exposed them to the instructions of the guides, who babbled in German, English and French. Until we reach the Palestinian coast and Haifa with an uncertain educational gain and with a certain loss of time of almost three days. It is the actual experience for which we have mentally prepared ourselves, from which we expect an answer to our expectation and a solution to our tension.[35]

One of the most impressive reports was written by Gerson Stern (1874 Holzminden–1956 Jerusalem). He and his wife, on October 25, 1935, went on board the *Tel-Aviv* – the new flagship of Arnold Bernstein's Palestine Shipping Co.[36] – in Trieste:

> We look at each other: our hands find each other. We sail on a Jewish ship to the Jewish land. Outside the Bora howls, but here inside & inside we are safe. The Bora may howl here & there and wherever. We stand in our room on Jewish ground & our goal is before us. Our goal is so clear & the way mapped out. See only him,

[35] "Solche Erinnerungen, solche Hoffnungen trägt gewiß recht unbewußt und unbekümmert unser Schiff, das für alle Pilgerfahrt sehr ungeeignet scheint, ausgerüstet mit allem nötigen und unnötigen Reisekomfort, noch beladen mit allen Klassenunterschieden und Vorurteilen westlicher Zivilisation, nach seinem Range auch verpflichtet zu einer Bildungsfahrt, die die Passagiere in Athen, Konstantinopel, Rhodos an Land setzt und den Belehrungen der deutsch, englisch, französisch plappernden Führer aussetzt. Bis wir mit einem ungewissen Bildungsgewinn und mit einem gewissen Zeitverlust von fast drei Tagen die palästinensische Küste und Haifa erreichen. Es ist das eigentliche Erlebnis, auf das wir uns seelisch vorbereitet haben, von dem wir auf unsere Erwartung eine Antwort, auf unsere Spannung eine Lösung erwarten." Arthur Eloesser, *Palästina-Reise 1934. Mit vier Abbildungen und einem Nachwort v. Horst Olbrich* (Berlin: Verlag Horst Olbrich, 2019), 3 [manuscript].

[36] Cf. Joachim Schlör, *Endlich im Gelobten Land? Deutsche Juden unterwegs in eine neue Heimat* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2003), 76–77; Björn Siegel, "Die Jungfernfahrt der 'Tel Aviv' nach Palästina im Jahre 1935: Eine 'Besinnliche Fahrt ins Land der Juden'?," in *"Ihre Wege sind liebliche Wege und all ihre Pfade Frieden" (Sprüche 3,17): Die Neunte Joseph Carlebach-Konferenz. Wege Joseph Carlebachs. Universale Bildung, gelebtes Judentum, Opfergang*, eds. Miriam Gillis-Carlebach and Barbara Vogel (München a.o.: Publications of the Joseph Carlebach-Institute, 2014), 106–125.

> walk only him. The present is calling. The sea, the slightly overcast sky, the gliding ship that carries you, the world lies beyond those islands. You don't know anything about her. One is only connected to the sea and the sky, from which the light trickles down. You are so free, so detached.[37]

He regards his fellow travellers, as Friedrich Voit comments, as "a living mirror of the diverse Jewish community united by a common history that keeps them in the present while promising a future to be explored."[38] Stern writes:

> You feel the differences, you see how everyone wears, how everyone wears differently. But something special happens, which manifests itself from the moment one enters the ship. Above what separates, which seems to me to be a special rhythm, stands something that unites.[39]

Given the manifold social and cultural differences between the travellers, what could that uniting force be? "Die geistige Haltung. Verwurzelung im Judentum" [The mental attitude. Rootedness in Judaism], Willy Cohn suggests in an article for the *Israelitisches Nachrichtenblatt,* February 16, 1939. While Jews in Eastern Europe, he argues, were securely anchored in Judaism, German Jews only had very limited access to the true assets of their religion, they lack the security of the soul.

> When all the various preparations required for emigration have been made, when all the papers needed for this have been obtained, then the moment comes when the emigrating Jew stands on board the ship and has to prepare himself for what is often a very long journey. After a certain time, the mood of farewell subsides, the new country is still a long way off, and many a person will then ask themselves

[37] "Wir schauen uns an: unsere Hände finden sich. Wir fahren auf einem jüdischen Schiff nach dem jüdischen Land. Draußen heult die Bora, aber hier drinnen & in uns sind wir geborgen. Die Bora mag heulen hier & dort und wo auch immer. Wir stehen in unserem Raum auf jüdischem Boden & unser Ziel liegt vor uns. Unser Ziel ist so klar & der Weg vorgezeichnet. Nur ihn sehn, nur ihn gehen. Die Gegenwart ruft. Die See, der leicht bewölkte Himmel, das dahin gleitende Schiff, das einen trägt, die Welt liegt hinter jenen Inseln. Man weiß nichts von ihr. Man ist nur verbunden mit dem Meer & dem Himmel, aus dem die Helle niederrieselt. Man ist so frei, so losgelöst." Gerson Stern, diary, quoted in Friedrich Voit, *Gerson Stern: Zum Leben und Werk des jüdisch-deutschen Schriftstellers (1874–1956)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 154.

[38] Voit, *Gerson Stern,* 155.

[39] "Man fühlt die Unterschiede, man erkennt, wie jeder trägt, wie jeder anders trägt. Aber es geschieht ein Besonderes, das sich kundtat von dem Augenblick an, als man das Schiff betrat. Über dem Trennenden, das mir ein besonderer Rhythmus zu sein scheint, steht ein Einigendes." Gerson Stern, diary [fn. 32], 155.

> what intellectual tools of a general and Jewish kind they took with them apart from the modest removal goods. If he is a Jewish-conscious person, his soul, which has a capacity for memory of thousands of years, will involuntarily be forced to compare it with earlier migrations of our people.[40]

In contrast, Cohn argues, they do have a kind of spiritual or at least intellectual luggage in terms of general education. How many libraries had to be given up in the emigration process! Now, the land of Israel offers them a return to Judaism and its culture: "Anyone who still has a little time, whose ship's siren has not yet sounded for departure, can use the weeks and months that are left […] to supplement his Jewish-style luggage."[41]

This luggage was taken to places other than Palestine. Whereas "homecoming" is the central trope in most reports about sea voyages to Palestine, and often also to the United States, the destination of, for example, Shanghai apparently cannot contain the same promise. It rather symbolizes a foreseeable continuity of "Unterwegssein" – a Jewish experience, but at the same time a universal one, shared by migrants of our own days. The challenge of decision-making, as explained by David Jünger and Guy Miron in their studies of Jewish space and time in Nazi Germany,[42] produced a specific cultural practice that found its most symbolic form in the sea voyage. During this period, none of the travellers could be certain to have made the right decision. Consequently, the authors quoted here were looking for guidance in religious traditions and experiences of the Jewish relationship to the sea.

40 "Wenn alle die mannigfaltigen Vorbereitungen getroffen sind, die die Auswanderung erfordert, wenn alle Papiere beschafft sind, die dazu gebraucht werden, dann kommt der Augenblick, wo der auswandernde Jude an Bord des Schiffes steht und sich für eine oft sehr lange Reise einzurichten hat. Nach einer gewissen Zeit klingt dann die Abschiedsstimmung ab, das neue Land ist noch in weiter Ferne, und so mancher wird sich dann fragen, was er außer dem bescheidenen Umzugsgut an geistigem Rüstzeug allgemeiner und jüdischer Art mit hinausgenommen hat. Wenn er ein jüdisch-bewusster Mensch ist, so wird unwillkürlich seiner Seele, die ein Erinnerungsvermögen, von Jahrtausenden aufzuweisen hat, der Vergleich mit früheren Wanderungen unseres Volkes sich aufdrängen." Willy Cohn, "Die geistige Haltung: Verwurzelung im Judentum," *Israelitisches Nachrichtenblatt*, February 16, 1939, 1.

41 Cohn, "Die geistige Haltung," 1.

42 Jünger (cf. Fn. 27); Guy Miron, '"Lately, almost constantly, everything seems small to me": The Lived Space of German Jews under the Nazi Regime'. Jewish Social Studies, Volume 20, Number 1, Fall 2013, 121–149. Idem., '"The Politics of Catastrophe Races On. I Wait." Waiting Time in the World of German Jews Under Nazi Rule'. Yad Vashem Studies, Vol. 43:1 (2015), 45–76.

The ship *Atid* of Atid Navigation Company Ltd., Haifa. Photo from the Borchard family album. © Digital collections of the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Library, University of Haifa. The year of the photograph and the photographer are unknown. Courtesy of Daniela Borchard.

Pioneers of Independent Jewish Shipping: The Emergence of Private Jewish Shipping Companies in Palestine, 1934–1939

by Kobi Cohen-Hattab

Abstract

The birth of the Yishuv's national shipping company, ZIM was preceded by private enterprise; the sea had not traditionally been a focus of the Zionist movement. In the 1930s, a five-year span of private commercial shipping saw three companies in the Jewish community in Palestine – Palestine Shipping Company, Palestine Maritime Lloyd, and Atid – before shipping was cut short by the outbreak of the Second World War. Despite their brief lifespans and their negligible contribution to general shipping, these companies constituted an important milestone. Their existence helped shift the Yishuv leadership's attitudes about shipping's importance for the community and the need for it to be supported by national institutions.

1 Introduction

Historical processes contain no small number of changes that are initially led by private agents, without the involvement of institutional or national authorities. In many cases, institutional initiatives and bureaucratic labor frameworks are born only after private activity has broken ground and laid foundations for a changing reality. This was the case for the Jewish shipping industry in Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century.[1] Jewish shipping's most significant development took place in the five years preceding the Second World War (1934–1939), when an awakening occurred in Palestine's

[1] The territory under discussion was often referred to as "Palestine (Land of Israel)" during the British Mandate period; in this article, "Palestine" is used for the sake of brevity.

private shipping sector and several private, Jewish-owned shipping companies were founded.

The Second World War led to the paralysis of commercial shipping; with its conclusion, the Yishuv's central leadership established the first national shipping company, ZIM. It was then that the leadership recognized the great importance of an independent, national shipping company, one that would act out of Zionist considerations and advance the Yishuv's goals in the field of maritime transport.[2]

The current article examines these developments in three sections: the first provides background on the relationship of Palestine's Jews with the sea; the second outlines the reciprocal relationship between the early Zionist movement and maritime activity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and the third discusses private entrepreneurship in shipping, which was born with the end of the First World War and continued throughout the 1920s, most prominently during the five years that preceded the outbreak of the Second World War.

2 Historical Background: Zionism and the Sea at the End of the Ottoman Period

The nineteenth century's Industrial Revolution, one element of which was the growing use of automation and steam power, led, inter alia, to the building of steamships and the resurrection of trade with lands across the seas.[3] The growing use of steam led to an increase in ships' capacity and speed; their safety also gradually improved. Commercial activities in the Mediterranean Sea – and on its eastern shores in particular – also expanded. Sea traffic and trade on the Mediterranean's eastern shores, including Palestine, developed further with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the growing European superpowers' interest in Palestine.[4] Technological changes in shipping and

2 Kobi Cohen-Hattab, "The Test of Maritime Sovereignty: The Establishment of the ZIM National Shipping Company and the Purchase of the 'Kedmah,' 1945–1952," *Israel Studies* 20, no. 2 (2015): 110–134.

3 Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2007); Gavin Weightman, *The Industrial Revolutionaries: The Making of the Modern World, 1776–1914* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2007).

4 Moshe Maoz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine, 1840–1861* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968); David Kushner, ed., *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1986); Alexander Schölch, *Palestine in Trans-*

ground transport during the nineteenth century had a pronounced effect on the development of Mideastern port cities.[5]

The late-nineteenth-century emergence of the Zionist movement in Europe took place, then, during a period when sea traffic was high; the development of ports was an important part of European life.[6] It can even be conjectured that Herzl's description in *Altneuland,* prophesying the central role of Haifa and its port, was influenced by ports and shipping at the time:

> A magnificent city had been built beside the sapphire blue Mediterranean. The magnificent stone dams showed the harbor for what it was: the safest and most convenient port in the eastern Mediterranean. Craft of every shape and size, flying the flags of all the nations, lay sheltered there.[7]

But no plan was made for the Jewish nation to hold on to the sea. In Zionist ideology, which aspired to gather the scattered Jewish nation's exiles, the sea was a means of transit, a space to be traversed en route to the Promised Land – but it did not carry inherent significance. One reason for this, evidently, was that the sea generally, and shipping in particular, had held a peripheral role in Judaism and Jewish history for generations due to Jewish physical and mental disengagement from seafaring professions and lifestyles.[8]

formation 1856–1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993).

5 Yehuda Karmon, "The Mediterranean Ports of Israel Compared with the Type of the 'Mediterranean Port,'" *Studies in the Geography of Israel* 11 (1980): 133–151 (Hebrew); Ruth Kark, "The Rise and Decline of Coastal Towns in Palestine in the Nineteenth Century," in *Commerce in Palestine throughout the Ages,* eds. Benjamin Z. Kedar, Trude Dothan, and Shmuel Safrai (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1990; Hebrew), 324–337; Ruth Kark, "Transportation in Nineteenth-century Palestine: Reintroduction of the Wheel," in *The Land that Became Israel: Studies in Historical Geography,* ed. Ruth Kark (New Haven, CT: Magnes Press, 1990; Hebrew), 57–76.

6 Richard Lawton and Robert Lee, eds., *Population and Society in Western European Port Cities, 1650–1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002); David Cesarani and Gemma Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006).

7 Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland: Old New Land: novel,* trans. Paula Arnold (Haifa: Haifa Pub. Co, 1960), 38.

8 A more central role was attributed to the few Jewish marine tradesmen, the growth of port cities, the development of marine cartography, and piracy; cf. Gilbert Herbert, "Jews and the Maritime Tradition," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place,* eds. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2008), 181–199; Haim Finkel, *Jewish Pirates* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1984; Hebrew); Ruth Gertwanger and Avshalom Zemer, eds., *Pirates: The Skull and Crossbones* (Haifa: National Maritime Museum, 2002; Hebrew). Relatively few studies have been conducted on the Jews' maritime history; cf. Raphael Patai, *Jew-*

The sea was not perceived as a component in nation-building. The "New Jew" and "Jewish work" as the foundational Zionist ethos directed Jews to work the land; the sea was a nonentity.[9] This is evident in the meager literature about the sea, in contrast with the abundance of works on conquering the land and making the desert bloom.[10]

Moreover, the sea and sailing were fraught with terror and turbulence. The encounter with a massive steel steamship and the infinite expanses of the sea left passengers greatly overwhelmed and fearful of the unknown.[11] Galician-born Jewish-Austrian journalist Joseph Roth supplied a psychological-religious explanation for Jewish immigrants' reluctance to sail to the United States:

> The Eastern Jew is afraid of ships […]. For centuries he has been living in the interior. The steppes, the limitlessness of the flat land, these hold no terrors for him. What frightens him is disorientation. He is accustomed to turning three times a day towards *Misrach,* the East. It is more than a religious imperative. It is the deeply felt need to know where he is. […] At sea […] he doesn't know where God lives.[12]

ish Seafaring in Ancient Times (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1938; Hebrew); Raphael Patai, *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Samuel Tolkowsky, *The Jews and the Sea* (Tel Aviv: Palestine Maritime League, 1936; Hebrew); Samuel Tolkowsky, *Back to the Sea* (Haifa[?]: Palestine Maritime League, 1939). See also the most prominent book on Jews and shipping over time: Nadav Kashtan, ed., *Seafaring and the Jews* (London: Frank Cass, 2001).

9 For more, cf. Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew,* trans. Haim Watzman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 160–184.

10 Hannan Hever, *Toward the Longed-for Shore: The Sea in Hebrew Culture and Modern Hebrew Literature* (Bnei Brak: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2007; Hebrew), 13. Ze'ev Jabotinsky's Revisionist movement viewed the sea as a path to forming an independent Zionist entity, see Yaacov Shavit, "Hebrews and Phoenicians: A Case of an Ancient Historical Image and Its Usage," *Cathedra* 29 (1983): 173–191 (Hebrew); Amit Gish, "'The Hebrew Conquest of the Sea': The Etzel Museum as an Expression of the Perception of the Sea in the Revisionist Ethos," *Theory and Criticism* 24 (2004): 113–131 (Hebrew); Zeev Jabotinsky, "Conquest of the Hebrew Sea," in *The World of Jabotinsky: A Selection of His Works and the Essentials of His Teaching,* ed. Moshe Bella (Tel Aviv: Dfusim, 1972; Hebrew), 265.

11 Gur Alroey, *The Quiet Revolution: Jewish Emigration from the Russian Empire, 1875–1924* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2008; Hebrew), 184. Jews' relationship with the sea requires an examination that is out of the bounds of the current study. For more, see *Mediterranean Historical Review* 15, no. 1 (2000) (special issue titled *Seafaring and the Jews,* ed. Nadav Kashtan); Patai, *Children of Noah;* Joachim Schlör, "Towards Jewish Maritime Studies," *Jewish Culture and History* 13, no. 1 (April 2012): 1–6.

12 Joseph Roth, *The Wandering Jews: The Classic Portrait of a Vanished People* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2001), 98.

Up until the First World War, the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine and leading Zionist organizations had done nothing to develop the sea. It was only after the war had ended that the sea was recognized as essential to reinforcing settlement within the shaping of new Jewish nationalism in the land.

The change in the Yishuv and Zionist leadership's approach to the sea began in the mid-1930s and was evident in a number of prominent milestones: the 1935 decision of the nineteenth Zionist Congress to establish the Jewish Agency's Maritime and Fisheries Department;[13] the 1936 inauguration of the Tel Aviv port, the first and only Hebrew port, in response to the Arab boycott and the Jaffa port's closure to Jewish activity;[14] the establishment of fishing villages along the land's shores and the development of fishing ponds with the backing of the Jewish Agency; the establishment of the nautical school next to the Technion in Haifa in 1938; and the inauguration of ZIM, the national shipping company, at the end of the Second World War in 1945.

3 Early Attempts to Purchase Ships and Establish Jewish Shipping Companies

From the early Mandate period, private Jewish companies from Palestine made attempts to purchase ships and found shipping companies. In late 1919 the British government approved the establishment of the Pioneer Motor Boat Company.[15] Its ship, *Hehalutz* (the pioneer), was evidently the first Jewish shipping line to move passengers and cargo between the eastern Mediterranean's ports.[16] It began as a private initiative after the First World War when, as Baruch Katinka described it, the "roads were rocky, the railroad did

[13] The Zionist Executive, *Decisions of the Nineteenth Zionist Congress, Lucerne, June 20–September 6, 1935* (Jerusalem: Zionist Organization Executive, 1937; Hebrew), 529. Bar-Kokhba Meirovitz was elected the first director of the department and Dr. Naftali Wydra was director of the Haifa office. The two accompanied the development of Zionist sea culture throughout the British Mandate; Zvi Herman, *Conquering a Route at Sea: Chronicles of Hebrew Shipping* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad with ha-Ḥevel ha-Yami le-Yisrael, 1978; Hebrew), 55–56.

[14] Shimon Stern, "Tel-Aviv Port: An Episode in the History of Eretz-Israel," *Cathedra* 25 (1982): 113–134 (Hebrew); Björn Siegel, "Open the Gate: German Jews, the Foundation of Tel Aviv Port, and the Imagined Power of the Sea in 1936," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 66 (October 2021): 6–24.

[15] M. Gurvitz to M. Ussishkin, Jerusalem, November 24, 1919 (Hebrew), Central Zionist Archives Jerusalem (hereafter CZA), L3/65-1.

[16] M. Gurvitz to the Zionist Organization's Trade and Industry Department, London, November 14, 1919 (Hebrew), CZA, S8/1156; Shai Kauly, "The 'Halutz' on the Sea," *Etmol* 195 (2008): 3–5 (Hebrew).

not run, and the conveyance of merchandise and agricultural products from Jaffa to Haifa came at great expense."[17] Three Jewish partners from Tel Aviv – Avraham Lifshitz, Moshe Ben-Zion Sapir, and Levi Borstein – purchased an Arab sailing ship, transformed it into a thirty-horsepower motor vessel, and installed two passenger cabins on board.[18] Under the headline "Private Jewish Ship," *Haaretz* newspaper described the "small, one-hundred-ton ship of Mr. Lifshitz and Co."[19]

The investors' plan was to operate the ship as a commercial vessel. The *Hehalutz* conducted a number of trips between the land's shores and those of Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Cyprus. It took cargo and passengers but also performed some acts that were decidedly national in nature. The ship's crew, apparently, helped immigrants come to the land's shores at times.[20] When docked in Cyprus, the ship's crew represented the Yishuv on a visit to a PICA (Palestine Jewish Colonization Association) colony, reinforcing the bond between the communities. It also participated in the rescue of Christian refugees from the Muslim pogrom in Tyre and Sidon, transferring dozens of Christian families from Lebanon to safe shores.[21]

But a trip aboard the *Hehalutz,* with its shoddy construction, was dangerous and, in a perilous storm in 1921, the ship was separated from its anchor and shattered on the rocks at Jaffa. All of the crew members survived, but it was the end of the first Jewish ship and the efforts to establish the first Jewish shipping company.[22]

Other attempts to establish shipping companies later in the 1920s never reached profitable economic activity. One initiative came from a group of wealthy American Jews, who bought the *President Arthur,* a large dual-engine steamship with a capacity of fifteen thousand tons, in 1925. In order to purchase it, the American Palestine Line was founded, and the company's

17 Baruch Katinka, *Then and Now* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1961; Hebrew), 247. The story of *Hehalutz* appears in some memoirs from the time. See, for example, Isaac Rokach, *Tales of the Jaffa Orange Groves* (Ramat Gan: Masadah, 1970; Hebrew), 156–159.

18 Kauly, *"Hehalutz,"* 4.

19 "Private Jewish Ship," *Haaretz,* December 17, 1919, 3 (Hebrew).

20 Eyewitness report from Sara Kauly, daughter of Levi Borstein; Kauly, *"Hehalutz,"* 5.

21 Jeremiah Helpern, *The Revival of Jewish Seafaring* (Tel Aviv: Hadar, 1961; Hebrew), 334.

22 Helpern, *Revival,* 42–45, 332–334. For other versions of the conditions surrounding the *Hehalutz's* demise, see Zeev Hayam, *Ships' Tales* (Tel Aviv: Ahiasaf, 1968; Hebrew), 44–45; Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 49–50.

flag was raised on the ship's mast before its maiden voyage under new ownership. It was, most probably, the first transatlantic cargo or passenger ship to fly a Jewish flag. On March 12, 1925 the ship departed from New York for Haifa. On its deck were 216 Jewish passengers, voyaging to Palestine for the inaugural ceremony of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. But the firm's end was quick and bitter: the ship took one voyage to Haifa and Europe before the company was dismantled due to a lack of working capital and insufficient professional knowledge.[23]

The motorized vessel *Gozal,* which arrived in Haifa's port in 1927, constituted another attempt to purchase a ship and establish a private shipping company. The boat belonged to the Nesher cement factory, founded by Michael Pollack, who understood the importance of maritime transport as an inexpensive and convenient means of transferring goods and purchased a ship to move cement to the Mediterranean's eastern ports. After extensive searches, an appropriate ship – shallow and small, previously used to transfer bricks – was found. The deck could take two hundred tons, it had a crew of six people, it flew the British flag, and it was registered at the Port of London. The *Gozal* sailed from Haifa to Cyprus, Alexandria, Tripoli, Tartus, Latakia, Beirut, Port Said, and the Suez Canal. In 1929, with the mounting rioting in Palestine, Nesher's sales to neighboring Arab countries came to a near complete standstill, and two years later the company's management opted to sell the *Gozal.* It was transferred to Italian ownership and sailed for a few more years; during the Second World War, it sank on Italy's shores.[24]

Other shipping companies founded by the early 1930s also lasted no longer than two years; their failure stemmed primarily from a lack of experience – both in terms of management and financials and in terms of seafaring. The shortage of starting capital and working capital was noticeable, and competition with foreign shipping, with its vast experience, was also a significant factor.[25]

[23] Hayam, *Ships' Tales,* 55; Zeev Hayam, *Sea Routes: Chronicles of Israeli Shipping* (Tel Aviv: Otpaz in cooperation with ha-Hevel ha-Yami le-Yisrael, 1972; Hebrew), 13; Helpern, *Revival,* 334–335.

[24] Hayam, *Ships' Tales,* 62–66; Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 50.

[25] On additional failed attempts to found Jewish shipping companies between 1919 and 1933, cf. Hayam, *Ships' Tales,* 55–69, 88–89, 93–94.

4 The Emergence of Private Jewish Shipping Companies in Palestine in the 1930s

From the second third of the 1930s, a shift occurred in the field of Jewish shipping. With economic growth in the land, immigration increased, and mounting activity was recorded at Haifa's port, whose construction had been completed in late 1933. Changes in Europe also led to efforts to establish Jewish shipping – most notably the rise of the Nazis to power in early 1933. A transfer agreement (the "Ha'avara" Agreement) was signed; Germany's Jews were permitted to take possessions and goods to Palestine. The agreement led, among other things, to an awakening in Palestine's Jewish shipping sector.[26] Most of the interest came from German Jewish seamen, though some was from Romanian Jewish seamen and maritime tradesmen. Between 1934 and 1937 nine private, Jewish-owned shipping companies were founded in Haifa. These companies operated eight ships and 136 boats,[27] employed more than two hundred sailors and seamen, and sailed between Palestine and European shores as well as to the Syrian and Egyptian coasts.[28]

Palestine Shipping Co. Ltd.

Palestine Shipping Co. Ltd. owned the *Tel Aviv,* a mixed passenger-cargo ship that operated in Palestine from 1935 to 1936, considered the first passenger ship to belong to Palestine's Jews. The company was founded by Jewish shipping tycoon Arnold Bernstein from Hamburg, Germany, who had begun to show an interest in commercial ties between Palestine and Hamburg in the late 1920s. Hitler's rise to power had hastened a number of the country's wealthier Jews to emigrate to Palestine, taking their money with them. One of them was Bernstein, who founded Palestine Shipping Company in late 1933

26 Yoav Gelber, *New Homeland: Immigration and Absorption of Central European Jews, 1933–1948* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1990; Hebrew), 23–39, 78–92, 427–428. On the transfer agreement, see Avraham Barkai, "German Interests in the Haavara-Transfer Agreement 1933–1939," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 35, no. 1 (1990): 245–265.

27 David Gurevich, *Manufacture, Transportation, and Commerce: Report and General Abstracts of the Census taken in 1937* (N.p.: Department of Trade and Industry, Jewish Agency for Palestine, 1939; Hebrew), 61.

28 B.-K. Meirovitz to E. Kaplan, Tel Aviv, January 13, 1937, CZA, S11/44; Meirovitz, *To the Sea,* 6–7.

with other German immigrants.[29] The company's manager and agent in Palestine was Bernard Herskovitz, a man with extensive shipping experience who was well-known in the country's shipping circles. In 1934, with the transfer agreement, the company bought an old ship from the Bernstein Shipping Company. This was also consistent with German interests, as the work done on the ship provided employment for shipyard workers.[30]

The *Tel Aviv* was a ten-thousand-ton cargo ship that was repaired by the new owners and repurposed as a passenger ship. It held cargo and four hundred passengers; its speed was thirteen to fourteen knots, above average for its day. On May 17, 1935, the ship was registered at the Haifa port as SS 1, and, ten days later, it set sail for Trieste. Its regular line was Haifa–Trieste–Haifa, a route that took roughly two weeks.[31]

The ship was known to be superbly organized and clean, ensuring a high caliber in the passenger cabins; all cabins were ventilated, in contrast with other ships in the eastern Mediterranean. The ship sailed its route for two and a half years. It had a special kitchen and dining room installed for those who ate only kosher food; it even had a synagogue. The ship owners chose to have only one passenger class, of a uniform level, and thus the ship pioneered tourist class in the Middle East. The crew wore uniforms, the officers with an extra Star of David on the stripes on their sleeves or epaulets, and the sailors with a cap with a ribbon that said *Tel Aviv Ship.* When the ship reached the port of Haifa or left it, the Land of Israel maritime ensign flag was raised and Hatikva (the Jewish national anthem) played on the deck. This drew resentment on the part of the Arabs, who ruled Haifa's port at the time. The port's manager, Mr. Rogers, demanded that the flag not be raised on the ship's foremast, but rather the official Palestine flag; Herskovitz refused.[32]

29 For more on Arnold Bernstein, cf. Björn Siegel, "Envisioning Jewish Maritime Space: Arnold Bernstein and the Emergence of a Jewish Shipping Industry in the Interwar Years," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 30 (2018): 178–189; Björn Siegel, "Arnold Bernstein," Immigrant Entrepreneurship: German-American Business Biographies (1720 to the Present), accessed April 4, 2022, https://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entries/arnold-bernstein/.

30 Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 62–64; Hayam, *Ships' Tales,* 117–120; Yoav Gelber, "The Zionist Policy and the Transfer Agreement, 1933–1935," *Yalkut Moreshet* 17 (1974): 97–152 (Hebrew).

31 Hayam, *Sea Routes,* 21; Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 62–64; Hillel Yarkoni, *The Sea, the Ship, and the Jewish People* (Haifa: Pardes, 2009; Hebrew), 211.

32 Hayam, *Ships' Tales,* 117–120.

The ship was considered groundbreaking in terms of its Jewish seamen as well. The owners constantly toiled to increase the number of Jews working on board: when the ship first arrived at the Haifa port, it had a crew of 142, only two of whom were Jews; on its first voyage it had eleven Jewish crew members, and two years later, it had 132.[33] The appearance of the large white steamship on the shores of Palestine, with the words "Tel Aviv" adorning its bow in Hebrew lettering, left an immense impression on the Yishuv and its leadership and was perceived as the realization of the Zionist dream of maritime sovereignty.[34]

However, the *Tel Aviv*'s presence in the Mediterranean also did not escape the competing companies; in its early days it encountered problems stemming primarily from competition with the Italian national shipping company, Lloyd Triestino, which was backed by the Italian government and very influential in the field of shipping at the time. Before the *Tel Aviv,* the Haifa–Trieste line had been the Italian company's traditional route, and thus it did everything in its power to create obstacles for the ship. Delays in the supply of water and food at the ports, a publicity campaign against the ship in the Italian press, and most notably the drastic lowering of fares were all acts that the *Tel Aviv* had difficulty combating.[35]

Moreover, a disagreement broke out within the Yishuv leadership regarding whether the central institutions should use Yishuv funds to support private enterprise. The private companies complained that the leadership did nothing to encourage shipping pioneers. Despite being based in private capital, they claimed, their contribution to the Jewish economy and society in Palestine was an important one; the Jewish Agency, as a significant customer of the foreign companies, should pressure Lloyd Triestino to cease its

33 Protocol of Zionist Executive meeting, May 19, 1935, 1 (Hebrew), The Central Zionist Archives – (hereafter: CZA); Hayam, *Sea Routes,* 13; Daniella Ran, "The Contribution and Influence of the German Immigration to the Development of Shipping in Palestine" (MA thesis, University of Haifa, 1993), 59–63.

34 Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 63–64; David Remez, *To the Sea Spirit* (Tel Aviv: ha-Hevel ha-Yami le-Yisrael, 1952; Hebrew), 29–32.

35 Abba Hushi, Haifa Workers' Council, Haifa, to Moshe Sharett, Jewish Agency Executive, Jerusalem, March 21, 1935, iv-208-1-788-b, Pinhas Lavon Institute for Labor Movement Research (hereafter LI), Tel Aviv (Hebrew); Protocol from a meeting of the delegation representing the Travel Agencies' Union in Tel Aviv with Hocherdof, director of Lloyd Triestino in Tel Aviv, June 16, 1936, CZA, S11/C19.

efforts against the Jewish companies.[36] The Jewish Agency and Yishuv leaders sailed consistently on Lloyd Triestino's ships, and the Jewish Agency's Aliyah Department was reputed to be the company's biggest client.[37] But the Yishuv leadership was in no hurry to jeopardize its ties with Lloyd Triestino, which brought the majority of the immigrants to the land; quite the opposite. Moshe Sharett, a leading Zionist, felt that the Yishuv could not afford to start a war when there was no possibility of organizing immigration to Palestine without Lloyd Triestino's ships.[38]

However, the rivalry with Lloyd Triestino was, it appears, not the only hurdle for the Palestine Shipping Company and the *Tel Aviv*. The ship was old, and often needed repairs and restoration; passenger traffic to and from Palestine slowed, in the years of rioting, as did immigration,; administrative expenses were too high; the company displayed a lack of professionalism, poor management, and a deficiency of working capital and was devoid of public support – all leading to the company taking losses.[39]

Two years after its purchase, the company could no longer keep the *Tel Aviv*. The Yishuv leadership's policy of avoiding conflicts with national shipping lines and eschewing the support of private enterprises from Yishuv funds ultimately led to the dismantling of the Palestine Shipping Company. In September 1937 the *Tel Aviv* was removed from the list of Palestine's ships. Sold to a Japanese company, it sailed for the Far East and appears to have sunk in the Indian Sea in 1944.[40]

The national disappointment with the demise of the *Tel Aviv* mirrored the earlier national excitement and pride: the *Tel Aviv* was seen as a great missed opportunity, and the Yishuv leaders shouldered at least some of the responsibility; they had not given public support to the enterprise that they viewed as having great economic and national importance.[41] The sale of the

36 B. Herskowitz and L. Berkovits, Jewish Shipping Association, Tel Aviv, to the Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, May 25, 1936, CZA, S11/C19.

37 For more details, cf. Daniella Ran, *Between Ships and Wharf* (Haifa: Pardes, 2008; Hebrew), 32–33.

38 Moshe Sharett to the Chamber of Commerce, Haifa, July 18, 1935, iv-250-27-5-100, LI, Tel Aviv (Hebrew); Moshe Sharett to the Executive Committee of the Histadrut, August 4, 1935, iv-250-27-5-100, LI, Tel Aviv (Hebrew).

39 Herman, *Menahem Rivlin,* 63; Hayam, *Ships' Tales,* 119.

40 Hayam, *Ships' Tales,* 120.

41 Remez, *Sea Spirit,* 29–32.

Tel Aviv was a bitter pill, burned in the national consciousness, and appears to have provided the backdrop of later efforts to establish a national shipping company.[42]

Palestine Maritime Lloyd

Palestine Maritime Lloyd's shareholders were Jewish seamen, including Eliezer (Leizer) Berkovitz, a businessman involved in shipping, who had moved to Palestine from Romania; engineer Emanuel Tuvim; and Ignazio Messina, a Jewish shipowner from Genoa, Italy.[43] The company purchased two mixed passenger-cargo steamships from the Italian partner, hoping to create a fixed shipping line between Haifa and Constanța on the Black Sea: the *Risveglio* was renamed *Har Zion,* and *Progresso* was renamed *Har Carmel.* These were strong, sturdy ships with a capacity of fifty-four thousand tons each, a speed of thirteen knots, and space for some four hundred tons of cargo apiece. Each of the ships, after being restored, was able to transport 110 passengers, 40 in first class and 70 in tourist class.[44]

The company established a number of principles meant to ground it within Jewish shipping: the company's management must be businesslike and professional; it must be integrated in the building of the land and serve its interests; its crucial capital must be Jewish (the company had to remain Jewish-owned); the ships' flags must be Jewish; the ships' crews must be Jewish; and Palestine's products must supply the ships.[45] At the end of 1937, it was reported that the company employed seventy Jews among its total of one hundred workers. It was also the first company to employ a group of stevedores from Salonica in unloading its ships, and the first Jewish company to hire

42 Kobi Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution: The Yishuv's Hold on the Land of Israel's Sea and Shores, 1917–1948* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 200–248.

43 Hayam, *Ships' Tales,* 109–113.

44 Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 59. For more on the rise in passenger and cargo transport, cf. B.-K. Meirovitz to E. Kaplan and Y. Gruenbaum, Tel Aviv, 30 December 1938, CZA, S11/22; undated report, likely written by Bar-Kochba Meirovitz, CZA, S11/22. On the *Har Zion* and *Har Carmel* in the marketing of Jewish shipping at the time of British rule, cf. Ayelet Kohn and Kobi Cohen-Hattab, "Tourism Posters in the Yishuv Era: Between Zionist Ideology and Commercial Language," *Journal of Israeli History* 34, no. 1 (2015), 69–91.

45 Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 59–62; Hayam, *Ships' Tales,* 109–115; Helpern, *Revival,* 337–338; Mayer Gelbart, *Jews and Seafaring: A Historical Study* (Tel Aviv: Agudat Yorde Yam Zevulun, 1940; Hebrew), 78–80; Yarkoni, *The Sea,* 154–157.

Palestine Lighterage and Supply Ltd., which had been established at Haifa's port in 1934, for stevedoring.[46]

Har Zion and *Har Carmel*'s service in Palestine was short-lived. In early 1938, when the *Har Carmel* was anchored at the fuel port in Constanţa, a fire erupted and the ship went up in flames. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the *Har Zion* was appropriated by the British fleet. In late August 1940, on its way from Liverpool to the port in Savannah, Georgia, it was torpedoed by a German submarine and sank in the Atlantic with its thirty-six crew members. Only one survived. Among the fatalities were seventeen Jews.[47]

Palestine Maritime Lloyd encountered tough competition on the part of foreign companies, some of whom had governmental support. Its challenges were much like those of the Palestine Shipping Company, but Palestine Maritime Lloyd was able to remain active until its ships were seized by the British navy.[48] During its three and a half years, the company transferred 18,185 passengers, constituting 13.5 percent of passenger traffic per year, and took an average of 40 percent of the land's total cargo.[49]

Atid

Atid Navigation Company Ltd. was the third Jewish shipping company in Palestine in the 1930s. Its founders were the Borchard family, Jews from Hamburg, who also owned the shipping company Fairplay. They had been active in shipping from the early twentieth century in Europe's North Sea and partly moved their company to Palestine when the Nazis rose to power. Atid was founded in Palestine in 1934 and run by Jens Borchard, a lawyer by profession, who had previously been the secretary and a director of the Orient Shipping Line.[50] Atid attempted to employ Jewish crews on its ships and took pains to

46 Summary of 1937 in Hebrew shipping, CZA, S11/14/B.

47 For more on Palestine Maritime Lloyd's other ships and the ultimate demise of the company, cf. Yarkoni, *The Sea,* 156–157.

48 Hayam, *Sea Routes,* 14.

49 In 1936, the Palestine Maritime Lloyd was responsible for almost 60 percent of overall cargo traffic. See Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 62.

50 T. Ben-Nahum, "Hebrew Shore Shipping," *Yam* 6, 1938, 1 (Hebrew). For the Orient Shipping Ltd. (founded in Haifa in 1934), cf. Ran, "German Immigration," 54–55; Yarkoni, *The Sea,* 19–20, 48–49, 198. On Jens Borchard, see Ruth Berndt, ed., *Haifa's Notable Citizens: Biographies* (Haifa: Iriyat Haifa, 1984; Hebrew), 9–12.

train Jewish sailors.[51] With the founding of the Tel Aviv port, the company's ships became a major factor in the new port's solidification, and in its first days of unloading cargo on the shore, they were nearly the only ones who regularly visited the new anchorage.[52]

The company's first ship was the *Atid,* which was joined by two cargo ships – *Amal* and *Alisa* – in 1935. Its lines in the early years ran through the Danube lands to Budapest and even Vienna. The company added the *Richard Borchard,* meant for the lengthier European lines;[53] however, it soon became clear that these lines were not profitable, and the company chose ports in southern Romania as the route's final stops. Its primary activity was shore service in the eastern Mediterranean, and its ships regularly docked in Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, and Cyprus.[54] In 1936, the company moved fifty thousand tons of merchandise and employed forty Jewish workers.[55] The company was registered in Palestine; it flew the Land of Israel's flag and claimed to be working to involve Jews on its ships and to trade in the land's produce when possible.[56] Atid was also competing with veteran foreign companies and Arab ships whose freight charges were lower. The company found itself in economic and administrative straits and was forced to retire the *Richard Borchard* and *Alisa* before the Second World War, continuing to operate only the *Atid* and *Amal.*[57]

Atid's vessels were commandeered during the Second World War for Britain's Royal Navy, and transferred troops and supplies to the various battles. In appreciation, the navy allowed Atid to purchase a number of immigrant ships and boats that had been seized by the British for a relatively low price.[58] Not all of the company's ships survived the war, but its best ships were not sunk or damaged, and at the war's end the company's financial state remained good. It appears that the professionalism, the experience, and the

51 Jens Borchard to the Jewish Agency, Haifa, February 24, 1936, CZA, S11/24.

52 IML center meeting, CZA, S11/19; Baruch Rosenberg, *The Rise of Jewish Shipping* (Tel Aviv: Dfus Hotza'at Eretz Yisrael, 1938; Hebrew); Siegel, "Open the Gate", 1–19.

53 Rosenberg, *Jewish Shipping;* publicity pamphlet with Atid's schedule of ships' journeys, Summer 1936, iv-250-27-2-246, LI, Tel Aviv (Hebrew).

54 A. Ben-Yaakov, "On Atid," *Yam* 6, 1938, 1–2 (Hebrew).

55 Bar-Kochba Meirovitz (most probably), September 1937, CZA, S11/14/B.

56 Ben-Yaakov, "On Atid.", 2.

57 Yarkoni, *The Sea,* 198.

58 Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 54–55; Hayam, *Sea Routes,* 59–61.

international ties the family had established running Fairplay made it possible for Atid to survive even under difficult conditions.[59]

5 Conclusion

The Yishuv's institutional foray into shipping was preceded by private enterprise. Palestine Shipping Company, Palestine Maritime Lloyd, and Atid all reflected an awakening in the field of shipping; their five years of private commercial shipping were cut short by the outbreak of the Second World War and the resultant incapacitation of commercial shipping.[60] Until the 1930s, dozens of Romanian, Italian, Polish, and French passenger ships – as well as ships from other countries – worked regularly in Palestine, the Black Sea, and southern Europe; only a few ships were privately owned by Jews.[61] Six of the 589 ships that arrived in Palestine in the five years prior to the war were Jewish Palestinian ones, bringing an approximate 4 percent of the cargo and 6 percent of the passengers that came by sea.[62] The Jewish companies competed with stronger and more experienced ones, some of which were state-owned or received significant government support. However, the Jewish Agency's priorities in distributing resources placed shipping low on the scale. Decision-makers at the time preferred agricultural settlement and transportation infrastructure for isolated settlements to the sea and shipping – which were not yet perceived by the institutions as important within the Zionist idea.[63]

Despite the fact that the private shipping companies' activity was short-lived and its relative proportion within general shipping to and from Palestine was small, it must be viewed as an important milestone: the companies provided income for no small number of Yishuv families as well as experience that served Yishuv members in the years that followed. The end of their activity right before the Second World War further highlights the dearth of ships for immigration and the dependence of Jewish shipping on foreign

59 Missing author, "Atid at the End of the War," *Yam,* January 1946, 4–5 (Hebrew).

60 Ran, "German Immigration," 69–71.

61 Outline for discussion on proposed plan for arranging Jewish maritime transport, April 26, 1944, CZA, S74/160; F. O. Rogers, Port Manager, Memorandum on the present prospects for new steamship in Palestine, August 21, 1945, CZA, S74/56.

62 N. Wydra, Palestine maritime transportation, September 24, 1946, CZA, S74/56.

63 Dr. Wydra to E. Kaplan, July 16, 1937, CZA, S11/14/B; N. Wydra, Palestine maritime transportation, September 24, 1946, CZA, S74/56; Herman, *Conquering a Route,* 133.

shipping at the time. This gradually spurred the Yishuv leadership to action, especially during periods of crisis, and a change in approach to the national role of shipping began to take shape. The leadership slowly came to recognize that shipping must be supported by state funds, or – in the case of the Yishuv in Palestine – national institutions.[64]

The Jewish national fleet was one of the most noticeable signs of independence and statehood in the late British Mandate period on the road to newfound Israeli independence. ZIM's ships were considered a symbol, and those boarding the ships felt they were already stepping on the Land of Israel.[65] And while the Yishuv's national shipping company could only be born with the circumstances that were in place after the Second World War, it was the private shipping companies that paved the way, laying the foundations that first led many of the Yishuv's members to the idea of an independent Jewish shipping company.

64 Missing author, Outline for discussion on proposed plan for arranging Jewish maritime transport, April 26, 1944, CZA, S74/160; Y. Zeva, "Establishing a Commercial National Fleet," *Mishmar,* April 7, 1947, 2 (Hebrew).

65 Cf. Herbert Gilbert, *Symbols of a New Land: Architects and the Design of the Passenger Ships of ZIM* (Haifa: Architectural Heritage Research Centre, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, 2006).

Henrietta Diamond, © Courtesy of The National Maritime Museum, Haifa Museums collections, Photo Number 88-84(1).

Mothers of Seafaring: Henrietta Diamond and the Question of Female Representation in the Jewish Maritime Realm

by Franziska Weinmann

Abstract

The article aims to trace the contribution of Jewish women in the Yishuv's maritime history. Taking the example of Henrietta Diamond, a founding member and chairperson of the Zebulun Seafaring Society, the article seeks to explore the representation and role of women in a growing Jewish maritime domain from the 1930s to the 1950s. It examines Zionist narratives on the 'New Jew' and the Jewish body and studies their relevance for the emerging field of maritime activities in the Yishuv. By contextualizing the work and depiction of Henrietta Diamond, the article sheds new light on the gendered notions that underlay the emergence of the Jewish maritime domain and illustrates the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in it.

1 Introduction

This article examines patterns of female participation and representation in the formative years of the Zionist maritime sector in mandatory Palestine and Israel. Based on a biographical case study of Henrietta Diamond, a founding member and chairperson of the Zebulun Seafaring Society, the article aims to trace gendered representations in the Yishuv's maritime realm as well as their linkages to broader questions of gender roles in Zionism. In doing so, the article adds to the growing field of Jewish maritime history by drawing on perspectives from gender studies.

A range of recent research undertakings displays a growing interest in the diverse field of Jewish maritime history. Whereas Joachim Schlör[1] and Gilbert

[1] Joachim Schlör, "Towards Jewish maritime studies," *Jewish Culture and History* 13, no. 1 (2012): 1–6.

Herbert[2] discuss the relevance of applying a maritime perspective in Jewish studies in general, Kobi Cohen-Hattab's study *Zionism's Maritime Revolution* applies a maritime studies perspective to the Zionist nation building process in his examination of the Yishuv's political and institutional turn to the sea.[3] In a similar vein, Maoz Azaryahu investigates the transformation of the Mediterranean into a "Hebrew Sea" and emphasizes the role of Tel Aviv within this process.[4]

Much like Jewish maritime history, a growing number of publications regarding gender roles and Zionism illustrate the pertinence of linking Jewish identity and history to the more general questions raised by gender studies. As Todd Presner demonstrates, the Zionist image of a 'New Jew' was strongly infused with gender labels and was created in opposition to anti-Semitic stereotypes, which aimed to link Jewishness to femininity, unmanliness, physical weakness, and other qualities considered inferior.[5] This notion of the 'New Jew' was decisively shaped by the ideas of Max Nordau, who invented the concept of "muscular Judaism", the regeneration of the Jewish people through body and sport culture.[6]

In contrast to these stereotypes, Zionists saw the 'New Jew' as healthy and masculine, working the fields with his strong body in the historic homeland of Palestine/Eretz Israel. The transformation process was to be achieved in two ways: First, Zionists opposed anti-Semitic prejudices and distanced themselves from the image of a 'Diaspora Jew', which had emerged in inner-Jewish debates and was associated with backwardness, unmanliness, and physically weakness. Second, by mastering the environment and working on the soil of

2 Gilbert Herbert, "A View of the Sea: Jews and the Maritime Tradition," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place,* eds. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 181–199.

3 Kobi Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution: The Yishuv's Hold on the Land of Israel's Sea and Shores, 1917–1948* (Berlin/Boston, MA: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

4 Maoz Azaryahu, "The Formation of the 'Hebrew Sea' in Pre-state Israel," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7, no. 3 (2008), 251–267.

5 Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London/New York, NY: Routledge 2007); Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History. The Role and Representations of Women* (Seattle, WA/London: University of Washington Press, 1995), 142.

6 Moshe Zimmermann, "Muscle Jews versus Nervous Jews," in *Emancipation through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe,* eds. Michael Brenner and Gideon Reuveni (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 13–26; Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation,* 144–145.

Palestine/Eretz Israel, Zionists aimed to liberate the body, spirit, and Land – thereby fulfilling the Zionist dream of creating a 'New Jew'.[7]

Not only did Jewish men feel "a need to distinguish themselves from women and to eliminate any hint of the feminine in their self-presentation",[8] but in Zionism the male Jew was also portrayed as the key figure, representing the physical engagement of the 'New Jew' in his historic homeland. Thus, "in seeking to create the New Jew, they also rejected the modern West's equation of Jewishness with femininity, for the New Jew was clearly and unabashedly a masculine creature."[9]

As a result, the negative representation of femininity as well as a strong emphasis on the land and its function within the male dominated Zionist project of creating a 'New Jew' contributed to a demotion of women in Zionism. Despite this backdrop, a growing female self-awareness and commitment to the national cause as well as the lived experience in the myriad roles women came to occupy in the Yishuv spurred the development of a "new Hebrew civil woman".[10] Shilo, who traces this development from the First Aliyah (1881–1903) to the founding of the State of Israel, stresses "the double or multiple image of the new Hebrew woman". Whereas women in the First Aliyah fulfilled the tasks of wives and mothers, many women of the subsequent immigration waves arrived without a family and identified with national aims. During this time, the national sphere became more important than the domestic one. However, equal distribution of labor continued to be an "impossible mission".[11]

Nevertheless, as the 'new Hebrew woman' turned from the private to the public sphere, a new image of Jewish women in the Yishuv's evolving society began to emerge. Especially the involvement in war efforts – some women became members of Palmach and Haganah – changed the picture. Consecutively, the "double image of the new Hebrew woman", traditional and modern,

7 Yael Zerubavel, *Desert in the Promised Land* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2018), 27–30.

8 Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation,* 153.

9 Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation,* 142.

10 Margalit Shilo, "The Double or Multiple Image of the New Hebrew Woman," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 1 (1998): 73–94, here 74.

11 Shilo, "The Double or Multiple Image," 80.

developed and became "part of a Zionist myth around the female counterpart of the new Hebrew man".[12]

Based on Shilo's portrayal of the "double or multiple image of the new Hebrew woman", the article seeks to integrate women, participating in the Yishuv's maritime realm, into discussions about evolving female Jewish identities in the Yishuv's society and to trace their role in the national endeavor. In doing so, the article is structured in four parts. After analyzing the integration of maritime labor into the Zionist ideal of the 'New Jew' the article traces the contribution of Jewish women to the maritime sector. Following a biographical case study of Henrietta Diamond, chairperson of the Zebulun Seafaring Society, the article sheds light on her depiction and asks what her story might tell us about the participation and representation of women in the maritime realm in the Yishuv's evolving society.

2 Integrating maritime work into the framework of the 'New Jew'

A process which led to a more general sea-awareness and acknowledgment of maritime labor – including the fields of fishing, port work, and shipping – took place during the 1930s in the Yishuv. The influx of Jewish port workers after the opening of Haifa's deep-water port and the establishment of Jewish fishing kibbutzim and maritime sports organizations were just a few examples of an expanding maritime sector. The *Yom haYam* (day of the sea) celebrations, maritime literature, and naval training in the context of different youth movements were additional signs for a beginning process of institutionalizing and nationalizing the maritime realm.[13]

With the opening of Tel Aviv's port in 1936 and the increasing political conflicts following the Arab revolt of 1936–1939, shipping and port work gained even broader attention. The establishment of the first Jewish port and the participation in trafficking Jewish immigrants (*Ha'apalah*) and weapons to the Yishuv by sea changed the Zionist perspective towards the maritime

[12] Ines Sonder, "'Das wollten wir. Ein neues Land …' Deutsche Zionistinnen als Pionierinnen in Palästina, 1897–1933," *Medaon. Magazin für Jüdisches Leben in Forschung und Bildung* 8, no. 14 (2014), 1–14, here 5 (my own translation).

[13] Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution;* Björn Siegel, "'Going Down to the Sea': David Ben-Gurion's Maritime Turn and Jewish Migrations to Mandatory Palestine, 1933–1948," *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* 125 (2021): 129–146.

realm as well. Nevertheless, despite a growing awareness regarding the sea in general and the recognition of the importance of 'Hebrew labor' in the maritime field in particular, the sea-workers still had to fight for integration into the framework of Zionism, in which forming the body through working the soil was a major narrative.[14]

The idealization of a physically fit, male Jewish body and the Zionist attempt to shape the Jewish body through agricultural labor in Eretz Israel was only gradually expanded to the maritime realm. The value of sea work in relation to the efforts of the Jewish pioneers who worked on the fields was debated. When Ben-Gurion declared "Our land's sea awaits its redemption, just as the land awaited and awaits it",[15] he linked the sea to Zionist discourses on the appropriation of Eretz Israel. However, it remained questionable whether the "redemption of the sea" would change the Jewish body in the same way as the "redemption of the land" was supposed to do. In 1936, the newspaper *Jüdisches Volksblatt* recapitulated: "Der Seemann ist ein völkisch genauso gesunder Typ wie der Bauer,"[16] to emphasize the (physical) adequacy of seamen in the Jewish state-building project.

Since sport and body culture were central elements of the Zionist concept of the 'New Jew', physical training became a crucial factor, but unlike Max Nordau's original approach in the Yishuv, "it was not perceived as body development by means of gymnastics and sports, but as an ideal to be realized through Hebrew labor, pioneer work and the building of a military force."[17] Early activities of sea sport organizations reveal the appropriation of Zionist discourses. The education of the youth and preparation for national and military duties went hand in hand with body development according to the role model of the 'New Jew'.[18] Many of the participants in the illegal immigration operations were former members of maritime sport associations.[19]

14 Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 49; Yael Zerubavel, *Desert in the Promised Land* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2018), 27–33.

15 Ben-Gurion, "Towards the Sea," 7.

16 Dr. Emanuel Stein, "Das Jüdische Meer," *Jüdisches Volksblatt,* April 17, 1936, 3–4.

17 Haim Kaufman and Yair Galily, "Sport, Zionist Ideology and the State of Israel," *Sport in Society* 12 (2009): 1013–1027, here 1018.

18 Haim Kaufman, "Jewish Sports in the Diaspora, Yishuv, and Israel: Between Nationalism and Politics," *Israel Studies* 10, no. 2 (2005): 147–167; Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution,* 240–248.

19 Shimshon Bober, ed., *A Navy: Stories from the Sea Companies* (Israel: Unknown Publisher, 2004; Hebrew).

Newspaper reports honored the pioneering effort and physically hard work in the fishing settlements and attempted to locate the fishermen in the Zionist model of a 'New Jew'.[20] Placing the Jewish fishermen in the Zionist framework, the writers lobbied for a broader recognition of the fishermen's arduous work and the unique character of their project. Eventually, Ben-Gurion was convinced that "[i]n water culture, […] we will create a new type of Jew who complements and diversifies the type of Jews created in field work."[21]

3 The Contribution of Jewish Women to the Maritime Sector

While the depiction of Jewish fishing pioneers or port workers was gradually embraced by Zionism and its leaders, the contribution and participation of Jewish women in the maritime sector was less acknowledged. Since most of the archetypical occupations – like those of fishermen, seafarers, ship owners, and port workers – were considered male professions, a gendered dominance in the field of maritime activities in the Yishuv's Jewish community was broadly accepted by Zionist leaders. Such a male focused view on maritime work and labor was reinforced by the adoption of Zionist images of the 'muscle Jew'.

While Zionist narratives heavily stressed the importance of the male Jewish body and linked this image to the cultivation of the land, they only gradually expanded the pioneer's field of activity to sea work and rarely mentioned the occurrence of women in the new maritime sector. Nevertheless, women took part in the founding period of a Jewish maritime domain and were crucial in shaping the developing sector.

Already during the early years of activity, most of the water sport organizations had a women's section. Zehava Gov, member of the first girls' group of Hapoel's sea sport division in Tel Aviv, described the initial skepticism against the new female group. She proudly recalled the weekly training at the Yarkon river, which became part of her weekend routine, the sailing courses and swimming lessons, the naval training courses, and the preparations for supporting *Ha'apalah* activities.[22]

[20] "The Second Week of Plugat HaYam's Aliyah to the Bay of Acre," *Davar,* June 16, 1939, 4; "A night at the settlement site of Plugat HaYam," *Davar,* October 11, 1939, 8.

[21] Ben-Gurion, "Towards the Sea.", 7.

[22] Bober, *A Navy,* 84–85.

In Haifa, the Sea Scouts of the Hebrew Reali School had several girls' groups and in 1932 more girls than boys were interested in becoming Sea Scouts.[23] Female members of Maccabi Haifa, which formed a successful swimming division already by the 1920s, took part in many water sport competitions and were trained by female instructors. Only their uniform distinguished them from the boys' groups.

In the fishing kibbutzim, female members were responsible for ordinary work. According to personal stories of women from Sdot Yam, they used to work in the kitchen or in the children's home, growing vegetables in the garden or washing clothes.[24] Aliza Levy describes the division of labor with a concise slogan: "By the slogan 'boys to the ships and girls to the pots' we were sent to Sdot Yam. And who then dared to rebel against the leadership of the movement?"[25]

However, a few members decided to become fisherwomen. One of them, Tovah Netzer, worked for three years in repairing nets before she decided to pursue a different occupation:

> The nets of the *Mikhmoret* ships were fixed in the port of Haifa, on the platform. I worked there too, even though it was hard to let me inside the port, which was a military zone during World War II and usually only men were allowed to enter. But Dr. Wydra, from the Fishery Department of the Agency, managed to get me an entrance permit – and I went inside. Since I was already next to the boat, I also wanted very much to work in fishing, on the "Aliza". The fishermen accepted my request – and so I became the first Hebrew fisherwoman (after 2000 years) at the Mediterranean Sea.[26]

Describing the hardships of becoming a fisherwoman at Lake Hula, Gerda Cohen illustrates her experiences as a young woman in the fishing kibbutz Hulata during the 1930s. Beyond the hard work, Cohen encountered initiation rituals and arduous tasks in order to get accepted, being the only woman on the boat. Besides the hardships, her stories also entail depictions of the beauty

23 Protocol about scout activities, Hebrew Reali School Archive, Haifa, 1931–1932, box no. 446-1.
24 Several members complained how hard it was to clean the port workers' clothes, cf. Yisrael Meir, ed., *Between Fields and Sea: Stories of Sdot Yam's Veterans 1936–1956* (Sdot Yam: Unknown Publisher, 1985; Hebrew), 24.
25 Meir, *Between Fields and Sea,* 27.
26 Meir, *Between Fields and Sea,* 64.

of nature, revealing a romantic approach towards fishing. However, gendered aspects of the work entailed problems as well: "The boys did not want to work with girls, not because they were not good at work, they tried hard so usually they were really good. But they disturbed them. After all, they spent a great amount of time together on the boat, and it is quite an intimate closeness."[27]

4 Henrietta Diamond's Seafaring Mission

In a sector in which the ubiquitous contributions of women were routinely made invisible, Henrietta Diamond presented a curious anomaly. In 1949, the newspaper *HaBoker* featured an article conspicuously titled "Mother of Hebrew Seafaring" that outlined Diamond's importance:

> At a time, when our youth did not even dream of maritime life; when the voice of seafaring pioneers merely aroused a weak echo in the Yishuv; when only poor Arab boats sailed our coasts – already Henrietta Diamond realised the great value of seafaring for our country, and by the beginning of the 1930s she was extending her helping hand to a small group of Jewish seafaring pioneers and laid the foundation of the Zebulun Seafaring Society.[28]

Born Nye Beckerman in Frankfurt in 1876, Diamond took the name of her husband Salomon Sigismund after the couple got married in their early twenties. Shortly after the wedding, they moved to Leeds where Diamond built up a successful corset factory while her husband worked as the cantor of the Great Synagogue in Belgrave Street. She changed her name to Henrietta Diamond and became actively involved in Zionist activities in Leeds. She admired Herzl and expressed her devotion to Zionism in her work for the "Leeds Ladies Zionist Association", which she had already founded in 1899 with Rebecca Umanskii, wife of Dr. Moses Umanskii, an attendee at the first Zionist Congress in Basel 1897. Diamond became involved in the establishment of Leeds's first Jewish hospital, the Herzl Moser Hospital in 1905. Together with her close friend Umanskii she organized the Palestine Bazaar, an annual enterprise to collect funds for Zionist activities. Additionally, she served as an activist for

27 Gerda Cohen, *To Live with a Lake* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 2001; Hebrew), 64.

28 Yitzhak Zeitlin, "Henrietta Diamond: Mother of Hebrew Seafaring," *HaBoker,* November 25, 1949, 6.

the Jewish National Fund in London and was one of the founding members of the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO).[29]

Her interest in Jewish seafaring started during her first trip to Palestine in 1930, when she saw a boat launch ceremony at the Yarkon river, organized by Emanuel Tuvim and Meir Gurvitz. The latter was the initiator of the Water Commission and an early supporter of the maritime sector.[30] In a speech to the Leeds Zionist Society she described the beginning of her commitment with the following words:

> When I arrived in Tel Aviv in 1930, I looked at the sea-shore and blue sea, so perfectly undisturbed by any boat or activity of any kind and I was surprised, and, knowing England's busy shores I began to agitate for the sea and I said "whilst the Dead Sea is alive now, you have the dead sea outside your door".[31]

From then on, the wealthy businesswoman and Zionist activist dedicated herself to Jewish seafaring in general and to the support of the Zebulun Seafaring Society in particular. Full of confidence and commitment, she collected funds and soon became the chairperson of the young association, which emphasized three main goals in its self-description: a) connecting the new movement to ancient Jewish sea-history, b) preparing the Jewish community in Palestine for a future national maritime industry and trade, and c) becoming part of modern seafaring nations.[32]

In the first years of her engagement Diamond achieved notable accomplishments.[33] Due to her large contributions, the association could finance the building of a docking station in Herzliya, open branches in Hadera and Netanya, and continuously expand its training centers in Tel Aviv and Haifa. Furthermore, Diamond was able to attract influential personalities to Zebulun and to collect huge amounts of donations. After more than 20 years of activism in England, she had established a network of well-known Zionists to

29 Derek Fraser, *Leeds and Its Jewish Community: A History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 115–121; Zvi Herman, *Conquering a Route at Sea: Chronicles of Hebrew* Shipping (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1978; Hebrew), 80–87.

30 Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution,* 36–55.

31 Henrietta Diamond, Paper read at the Living Newspaper of the Leeds Zionist Society, July 31, 1941, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA), folder Z4/31.483.

32 Zebulun Palestine Seafaring Society, Third Annual Report, December 1935, CZA, folder A114/93.

33 Newspaper article regarding 10 years of Zebulun, cf. Yitzhak Zeitlin, "The first decade of Seafaring – the group Zebulun," *HaBoker,* October 25, 1940, 6.

whom she kept sending letters and information material. She was in contact with Chaim Weizmann, Simon Marks, Israel Rokach, Edmond de Rothschild, and the Marchioness Lady Reading, who became the international president of Zebulun. Diamond also corresponded with several fishing and seafaring experts like Emanuel Tuvim and Zeev Hayam in Mandatory Palestine or the German Captain Gustav Pietsch in Gdynia. The latter worked as instructor for the "Nautical and Fishery School Gordonia Maapilim" in Gdynia, which was affiliated with different *Hachshara* groups in Poland and Zebulun. She even initiated the establishment of several branches around the world and Zebulun training centers were to be found in England, South Africa, Poland, Canada, and the United States.[34]

Based on Gustav Pietsch's survey of the Palestinian coast, Diamond mobilized all her resources to reserve a plot of land near the crusader fortress of Atlit for a future fishing settlement. For that purpose, she traveled to Palestine in 1936. During her stay, Diamond met Robert Gottlieb of PICA[35] in Haifa and visited the site near Atlit. Following that visit, she reported to James de Rothschild, President of PICA, informing him about the important future role of this plot for the development of Jewish seafaring:

> On arrival there, I found Mr. Gottlieb most kind and ready to help us and he advised me to go to Athlit and see it for myself. […] Now is the moment to begin Marine Redemption, otherwise we fear we will be too late, as Jewry so often is. The only place where fishing boats could shelter is at Athlit and the Yarkon River at Tel Aviv. […] With a concrete plan and place, we are sure Jewry will help financially and quickly to realise this important object, without which Palestine will remain small and unsafe. It is the sea that will triple the size of our nation at home.[36]

Her approach of connecting nationhood and seafaring was certainly influenced by her British background. She admired the Royal Navy and imagined a future Jewish navy to be educated and trained in the same way. She voiced her admiration in a report of a meeting between Zebulun members who were trained in England and members of the British Navy: "At that moment, when

34 "The Zebulun Seafaring Society. Activities in four countries," *The Jewish Chronicle,* March 21, 1947.

35 The Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA) was founded in 1924 to purchase land for establishing Jewish settlements in Mandatory Palestine.

36 Henrietta Diamond to James de Rothschild, Haifa, March 17, 1936, CZA, folder J15/13235.

our finest Jews mixed with the best among the British, a remarkable and unforgettable gathering, I could visualize what it would mean to a have a closer union with the British Merchant Service."[37]

The training and recruitment of Jews to the Royal Navy, among them several graduates of Zebulun, enabled the young boys to receive naval military training and to learn from high rank British officers. Emphasizing the courage of four Zebulun graduates who succeeded to save the freighter El Fath from fire during an air attack near Famagusta in August 1942, Admiral Cunningham, Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, sent a letter of praise to the Zebulun branch in Tel Aviv.[38] The ties to the Royal Navy and the acknowledgment by Cunningham were very important to Diamond, who repeatedly referred to his letter.

Although Diamond was involved in the first attempts to connect the maritime realm to official Yishuv structures[39], it became difficult for Zebulun to survive as soon as new institutions were founded. On deck of the steamer *Tel Aviv,* on the way to the 19th Zionist congress in August 1935, influential members of the Yishuv set up institutional structures for maritime activities. Furthermore, the World Zionist Congress addressed different areas of sea work and declared its support of Jewish transport and shipping companies as well as the establishment of a Maritime and Fisheries Department within the Jewish Agency.[40] Zebulun's annual report at the end of the same year informs readers about the creation of the new department and a future co-operation and assistance.[41]

With the establishment of the Palestine Maritime League (PML) two years later, Zebulun had to fight for recognition and financial support.[42] Connected

37 Diamond, Paper, July 31, 1941, 1.

38 Reprint from the Jewish Chronicle, "Praise from the Admiral. Jewish Sea Officers' courage noted.", January 16, 1942, CZA folder Z4/31.483.

39 Correspondences between Diamond and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi reveal the interest of the Jewish Congress regarding seafaring and the establishment of a commission for the sea by the Jewish Agency, cf. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi to Henrietta Diamond, Letter, February 23, 1933, addressing interest by the Jewish National Council (JNC) about "National character" of marine training, CZA, folder J1/4456.6.

40 Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution,* 145 and 155–157.

41 Zebulun Palestine Seafaring Society, Report, December 1935, 1.

42 Minutes of a conversation between Mrs. Henrietta Diamond, Mr. Issy Bonn, Mr. Norman M. Jacobs and Mr. D. Meerovitch of the Maritime Department of the Jewish Agency (JA), August 6, 1945, CZA, folder J1/6765.

to the Jewish Agency, the PML's aim was to bring all seafaring organizations together and form an umbrella organization. The founding of the new institution was directed towards Zebulun, since it was the largest Jewish sea-organization at that time.[43]

The growing influence of the PML became a disappointing experience for Diamond. She fought for recognition of Zebulun as a forerunner in the maritime field. She repeatedly emphasized that Zebulun was never connected to any political direction. "Zebulun's only fault is, that we do not go off the deep end about political colours."[44] Diamond kept sending letters to inform about Zebulun's activities, to get financial funding, and to complain about the vanishing support. "We are pennyless in Tel Aviv, our Haifa boys are in the street, having no club rooms and I must help from my small means and that is becoming very difficult."[45] Growing increasingly desperate about Zebulun's future, she repeatedly sent letters to Chaim Weizmann. Forwarding the letters to the Jewish Agency's treasurer, Eliezer Kaplan, Weizmann became annoyed by Diamond's persistence. By 1943, Weizmann's exasperation was palpable: "But if anything could be done to meet her wishes in some way, it would be a relief to me. I get letters – with voluminous annexes – from her rather frequently, and frankly, would like to be spared."[46]

Diamond finally moved to Israel in 1949 and lived in the "Villa Zebulun" in Nahalat Yitzhak until her death in 1958. She continued to lobby for support and campaign for Zebulun. However, the ongoing marginalization of Zebulun took a personal toll on her and she became bitterly disappointed. In the end, Diamond was relegated to a nuisance by the men that took over the process of Zionist maritime institutionalization and her contribution is largely forgotten in contemporary Israeli historiography.

5 Public Representations of Henrietta Diamond

During thirty years of activism, Diamond became a public figure in the maritime realm. Yet, the representation of her in the public discourse remained occupied with her as a woman rather than as an activist for Jewish seafaring.

43 Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution*, 188.
44 Henrietta Diamond to Chaim Weizmann, Letter, April 27, 1952, Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA), folder 2633.
45 Diamond to Weizmann, April 27, 1952.
46 Chaim Weizmann to Eliezer Kaplan (JA), Letter, August 24, 1943, CZA, folder Z4/31.483.

Diamond was repeatedly portrayed in the Yishuv press.[47] Besides several portrayals in Zebulun publications honoring her commitment, *HaBoker* published the article "Mother of Hebrew Seafaring" in 1949, and one year later, Yitzhak Zeitlin published an article concerning the 20th anniversary of Diamond's activities. Descriptions of her person connect to her small and burly body, her formal dresses, her Britishness, and her gender. Through her public engagement, she gained the nickname "Mother of Hebrew Seafaring".[48] Henrietta Diamond was not the only woman wearing this title. Lucy Borchardt, owner of the Jewish shipping company Fairplay, was called "Mother Borchardt" or "Mother of Jewish Seafaring", while herself referring to the sailors who worked for the company as "her children".[49] In a similar vein, Diamond's activities became associated with motherhood and care while members of Zebulun were described as "her children" or "her boys", as evidenced in report by the Sunday Chronicle:

> A private navy, formed by a 60-years-old grey-haired British woman, is now serving with Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham's Naval Forces in the Mediterranean. Mrs. Henrietta Diamond founded the navy to train boys in Seamanship. All the time Mrs. Diamond supervised the maintenance of the navy from wherever in the world she was, and she is a great traveler. Mrs. Diamond waits at her home in Leeds for letters from "her boys" telling how they are helping to fight the Axis.[50]

Evidently, the "Zebulun family" constituted a cohesive group identity and a bond that extended well beyond the initial years of training:

> There is no Hebrew ship in which the disciples of Zebulun do not sail as sailors. They have reached adulthood, they have families of their own, but they have not

47 Cf., for example, Yitzhak Zeitlin, "The first decade of Seafaring – the group Zebulun," *HaBoker,* October 25, 1940, 6; Yitzhak Zeitlin, "Henrietta Diamond. Mother of Hebrew Seafaring," *HaBoker,* November 25, 1949, 6; Yitzhak Zeitlin, "Henrietta Diamond. 20 years of maritime activities," *HaBoker,* June 9, 1950, 5.

48 Zeitlin, "Henrietta Diamond. Mother of Hebrew Seafaring".

49 Ina Lorenz, "Seefahrts-Hachschara in Hamburg (1935–1938). Lucy Borchardt: 'Die einzige jüdische Reederin der Welt'," in *Bewahren und Berichten. Festschrift für Hans Dieter Loose zum 60. Geburtstag,* ed. Hans Wilhelm Eckardt (Hamburg, Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte 83, 1997), 445–472; Rebekka Großmann, "'Mutter Borchardt' – eine jüdische Reederin," in Hamburger Schlüsseldokumente zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte, January 1, 2018, https://dx.doi.org/10.23691/jgo:article-168.de.v1.

50 John Fishman, "Woman's 'private' navy fights the Germans. Four of 'her boys' win praise from Admiral Cunningham.", *Sunday Chronicle,* June 14, 1942.

> forgotten Ms. Diamond. She is considered among them the "Mother of the Hebrew Sea".[51]

Beyond the gendered characteristics of motherly care and – in the case of her interactions with Weizmann – vexing overreach attributed to her, Diamond was a conscious participant in Zionist women's activism. Diamond made use of her ties to WIZO and her close relations with Henrietta Szold and Rebecca Umanskii, who were not part of the maritime realm but supported Diamond in her activism as a female Zionist.[52]

After her death in 1958, Yitzhak Zeitlin commenced her obituary with the following episode, which reveals both her relevance and embeddedness in the Zionist project:

> On the occasion of the founding of the Tel Aviv port, a glorious celebration was held in which a large crowd and also the heads of the settlement of those days participated. On the stage sat the late Menachem Ussishkin. He saw in the front row a woman, aged, a typical British. He got off the stage and invited her to sit at the presidential table. It was Henrietta Diamond, the pioneer of the Hebrew navy. Ussishkin knew her well from England. Her useful and extensive work in the maritime field was also well known to him.[53]

6 Conclusion

Henrietta Diamond was one of the most prominent proponents of Jewish seafaring activities during the 1930s and 1940s through her engagement as chairperson of the Zebulun Seafaring Society. She corresponded with well-known Zionist figures and seafaring experts all over the world. Passionate about the topic and reluctant to accept the male-dominated world of Jewish seafaring, she became an activist in the maritime field and linked it to her preceding work in Zionist women organizations.

Diamond was influenced by a European-style imperial model, which implied for the Zionist movement to become sea-minded. Shaped by her British background, she understood the importance of seafaring from a practical and nationalist point of view. Despite her initial involvement in the institutional-

51 Zeitlin, "Henrietta Diamond. 20 Years of Maritime Activities".
52 Letters between Henrietta Diamond and Henrietta Szold, cf. CZA folder J1/4456/6.
53 Yitzhak Zeitlin, "Henrietta Diamond. Of blessed memory," *Haaretz,* August 7, 1958, 4.

ization and politicization of the maritime realm, she fell victim to that very process in the end.

However, her activism generally remained out of touch with the situation of most female actors in the Yishuv's maritime domain, who fought for recognition in the new maritime sector. Even though she wore the title "Mother of Jewish Seafaring" with pride and referred to the Zebulun members as her "boys", the focus on motherhood in fact subverted her achievements. The story of Henrietta Diamond illustrates the situation of women in the maritime sector and reveals a gap between the perspective of a western European, upper-class feminist woman and that of female members of maritime sports and training organizations or fishing kibbutzim, who were part of a society in which agricultural work and the ideal type of a physically strong male body were crucial elements. Despite widespread female participation in sport organizations and fishing cooperatives, most of the leading positions were filled with men. As a result, women's actual contributions were largely forgotten and marginalized in Zionist maritime historiography.

Women in the maritime realm had to assert themselves in two respects: They had to fight for support of their work in relation to their male coworkers and were confronted with a more general lack of recognition for their maritime labor. As Diamond's case highlights, this dual marginalization was also at play at the level of political activism and Zionist institution-building. Only a few female participants in Zionism's maritime activities are commemorated today and usually not for their work in building up the new sector.[54] Thus, uncovering Henrietta Diamond's struggle to establish Zebulun as the primary institution of Jewish seafaring offers valuable insights into an often neglected aspect of the Zionist project and the gendered dynamics at play. Additionally, the case underscores the benefit and urgency of further research integrating the often disjunct agendas of Jewish maritime history and gender studies.[55]

[54] Commemorated for her engagement as a paratrooper during World War II, Hannah Szenes became a symbol of the new society. Unbeknownst to most, she was also involved in the establishment of the Fishing Kibbutz Sdot Yam, cf. Shilo, "The Double or Multiple Image," 91.

[55] For their help, input, and engagement with this article, I want to thank David Bayer and Björn Siegel as well as Erez Gitai for pointing my interest to the female members of the Reali School's Sea Scouts in Haifa.

Kibbutz Zerubavel © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Ann Bicky; Photo archive no. 64251 Kibbutz Zerubavel

"Creating a Maritime Future": Hamburg and the Revival of Jewish Seafaring and Fishing Traditions in the 1940s and 1950s

by Björn Siegel

Abstract

This article explores the importance of the port city of Hamburg in the evolving discourses on the creation of a maritime future, a vision which became influential in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. While some Jewish representatives in the city aimed at preserving and intertwining Hanseatic and Jewish traditions in order to secure a Jewish presence in the port city under the pressure of the Nazi regime and thereafter, others wanted to create new emigration opportunities, especially to Mandatory Palestine, and create a Jewish maritime future in Eretz Israel. Different Zionist organizations supported the newly evolving maritime ideas, such as the "conquest of the sea", and promoted the image of a Jewish seafaring nation. Despite the difficulties in the 1940s, these concepts gained influence post-1945 and led to the foundation of the fishery kibbutz "Zerubavel" in Blankenese/Hamburg. However, the idea of a Hanseatic Jewish future also remained influential and illustrates how differently a "Jewish maritime future" was imagined and used to link past, present and future.

1 Introduction

In early March 1946 survivors of the Shoah lobbied for the refoundation of the Jewish Community in Hamburg and proclaimed it a "necessity" to rebuild Jewish life in Germany after the "national-socialist terror against our Jewish fellow men".[1] The newly formed board of the Jewish community aimed at re-establishing a community based on democratic values and Jewish traditions

[1] For the reprint of the original letter (Hamburg, March 1946) and the citation [all translation in this article are by the author], cf. Uwe Lohalm, ed., *"Schließlich ist es meine Heimat …": Harry Goldstein und die Jüdische Gemeinde in Hamburg in persönlichen Dokumenten und Fotos* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verlag, 2002), 96.

which could redefine a Jewish future in the Hanseatic port city. The port of Hamburg and its strong connection to the maritime world evolved as central elements in the proposed recreation of a Jewish future in Germany post-1945.

The newly evolving Jewish community of Hamburg, however, was not the only one to instrumentalize Hanseatic traditions and its imbedded maritime images in order to create a Jewish future after the Shoah. In the same year, in which the new Jewish community in Hamburg called for participation, the German branch of the Poale Zion movement initiated the foundation of a maritime *Hachshara* training center in the port city, which was about to educate a new elite, restart Jewish seafaring traditions and offer a different path to the future post-1945.

By examining the early discussions of a Jewish future in the port city of Hamburg and studying the attempts to reinvent Jewish traditions of seafaring and fishing at the Elbe River post-1945, the article sheds new light on the debates on a Jewish future in Germany after the Second World War. Moreover, it discusses the role of maritime traditions in the processes of a so called Jewish national regeneration and, thus, illustrates the importance of the "sea" in the creation of a Jewish future.

2 A New Beginning

On July 8, 1945 twelve Jewish survivors of the Shoah came together in order to reconstruct Jewish life in the war-torn port city of Hamburg. Just two months after the city's surrender to British troops and the final declaration of the end of the war (in Hamburg) on May 3, 1945, the idea of rebuilding a Jewish community after the Shoah mirrored the strong cultural and emotional connection and – as Ina Lorenz described it in her study – "the strong willingness" of the Jewish survivors to stand one's ground ["ein starker Behauptungswille"].[2]

The election of a communal board on September 18, 1945, which is understood as the actual moment of the Jewish community's refoundation post-1945, led to the appointment of Harry [Heimann] Goldstein as head of the

[2] Ina Lorenz, "Wiederaufbau im 'Land der Mörder': Die zwölf 'Gründungsväter' der Jüdischen Gemeinde," in *Aus Hamburg in alle Welt: Lebensgeschichten jüdischer Verfolgter aus der "Werkstatt der Erinnerung"*, eds. Linde Apel, Klaus David, and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 2011), 164–187, here 167.

community.[3] Goldstein, who was born and raised in Waldenburg (Silesia), moved to Hamburg in 1906/07 and served in the German Imperial Army during the First World War. He became a leading member of the local branch of the Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten [Association of Jewish War Veterans] and sponsored Jewish sports group such as "Schild". Moreover, he became an influential organizer of welfare services in the Jewish community until the dissolution by the Gestapo in 1943. Protected by his marriage to Clara Goldstein (née Rohweder), he survived oppression and persecution in Nazi Germany and established himself as a spokesperson for Jews in the Hanseatic port city shortly after the end of the Second World War.

In a speech given on November 4, 1945 Goldstein described the "gigantic mass murder" organized by Nazi authorities and commemorated the murdered community members. However, he hoped "that their suffering and death may not have been in vain, but may be a blessing for our beloved homeland, to which we feel closely connected despite all that has happened."[4] In several speeches and lectures he glorified the history of Hamburg's Jewish community and stated names of prominent local rabbis. He also stressed the importance of Jewish intellectuals and businessmen such as Gabriel Riesser, Albert Ballin, Max Warburg and Leo Lippmann, who had influenced the society of the city. His strong emphasis on being rooted in Hanseatic history implied a strong connection to the port city, its history and maritime traditions. While he aimed at reconnecting the Jewish presence in the city post-1945 with Hamburg's Jewish and maritime historical past, he knew that these links had been undermined by the brutal persecution, oppression and annihilation of Jewish life during the Nazi reign. In the time of the Nazi regime, the sea had become a space of emigration and a route for Jewish refugees fleeing persecution and oppression.[5]

3 Arno Herzig, "Vorwort," in *"Schließlich ist es meine Heimat …": Harry Goldstein und die Jüdische Gemeinde in Hamburg in persönlichen Dokumenten und Fotos,* ed. Uwe Lohalm (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 2002), 7–11, here 7.

4 Harry Goldstein, "Ansprache Harry Goldsteins anlässlich der Gedenkfeier für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus am 4. November 1945 im Krematorium in Ohlsdorf," in *"Schließlich ist es meine Heimat …": Harry Goldstein und die Jüdische Gemeinde in Hamburg in persönlichen Dokumenten und Fotos,* ed. Uwe Lohalm (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 2002), 46–48, here 48.

5 For this issue, cf. Joachim Schlör, "Reflexionen an Bord: Die Schiffsreise als Ort und Zeit im Dazwischen," *Jahrbuch für Exilforschung* 35 [Passagen des Exils, ed. Burcu Dogramaci and Elizabeth Otto] (2017): 54–68; David Jünger, "An Bord des Lebens: Die Schiffspassage deut-

In addition, in the 1930s and 1940s Goldstein witnessed that various Zionist groups, such as the *Hechaluz* movement (founded in Germany in 1922), had initiated maritime training centers ["Seefahrts-Hachscharah Zentren"] which promoted seafaring and fishing.[6] These efforts to revive maritime traditions were based on a very different historical narrative than Goldstein's promoted vision: Goldstein on the one hand stressed the role of Albert Ballin, General Director of the Hamburg-America Line (HAPAG), and his strong affiliation to Germany and its maritime ambitions. The turn towards the "sea" by the *Hechaluz* and other Zionist groups on the other hand promoted the sea on a different level, which challenged Goldstein's understanding of a Jewish present and future in Hamburg pre- and post-1945.

3 A Zionist Turn towards the Sea

With the foundation of the maritime training centers across Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s Zionist groups, such as the *Hechaluz* movement, aimed at offering new emigration possibilities to German Jews, which were confronted with growing measures of oppression and persecution by the Nazi regime.[7] While the majority of German Jews, e.g. Goldstein, still hoped for a *modus vivendi* with the regime, the evolving focus on maritime labor and traditions reflected a new attitude of several leading Zionists towards the "sea" due to its potential economic resources and its important symbolic value to the Zionist movement.

In 1933 David Ben-Gurion, influential member of the Zionist movement, lobbied for a "second adventure" following the "people of the city's conquest of the land". For him the "conquest of the sea" was the next and logical step in the formation and regeneration of the Jewish nation.[8] Three years later

scher Juden nach Palästina 1933 bis 1938 als Übergangserfahrung zwischen Raum und Zeit," *Mobile Culture Studies: The Journal* 1 (2015): 147–166.

6 The *Hechaluz* consisted of different Zionist groups, such as the Poale Zion, and became an important movement in Germany, cf. Knut Bergbauer, "'Auf eigener Scholle': Frühe Hachschara und jüdische Jugendbewegung in Deutschland," in *Hachschara und Jugend-Alija: Wege jüdischer Jugend nach Palästina,* eds. Ulrike Pilarczyk, Ofer Aschkenazi, and Arne Homann (Gifhorn: Medienagentur Knecht GbR, 2020), 23–54, here 32–33.

7 For more details, cf. David Jünger, *Jahre der Ungewissheit: Emigrationspläne deutscher Juden 1933–1938* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

8 David Ben-Gurion, "Towards the Sea," *Davar,* October 31, 1933, 7 (Hebrew). For more information, cf. Maoz Azaryahu, "The Formation of the 'Hebrew Sea' in Pre-State Israel," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7, no. 3 (2008): 251–267.

Moshe Shertok, a member of the Jewish Agency, also urged Jews across the globe to "continue the work of turning the Jews into a seafaring people."[9] In a similar vein, Meir Dizengoff, mayor of Tel Aviv 1921–1925 and 1928–1936, strongly supported the foundation of Tel Aviv port and, in so doing, became another vital spokesperson for a maritime Jewish revival.[10] Consequently, several Zionist groups founded initiatives to promote Jewish shipping and fishing industries or maritime-related sports associations.[11] Especially the *Hechaluz* movement began to establish maritime training centers in Germany and Europe in order to form and educate a new, "sea-oriented" Zionist elite.[12]

> If in the last months the Hechaluz turned its special attention precisely to the maritime hachsharah, it is because the land and its necessities, the struggle for the economic independence of the Jewish Yishuv, the construction of the port of Tel Aviv and the expansion of Jewish shipping primarily determine the career choice of its chawerim.
>
> The struggle for the economic independence of the Yishuv must not refer solely to the economic sectors associated with the land. Without the conquest of the sea, we will always remain dependent. A people living on the shores of a significant sea cannot live permanently without this branch of the economy without facing serious economic disadvantages and damage. Therefore, the sailor is communally and socially as valuable to the normal structure as the farmer and agricultural worker. And just as agriculture was developed years ago, today the conquest of the sea is one of the most important Chaluzian tasks.[13]

Other reports portrayed the overall importance of the maritime *Hechaluz*' training centers for the Jews in the diaspora and the formation of a Jewish future.[14] The *Hechaluz* even praised the specific role of the port city of Hamburg in the process to revive Jewish seafaring and fishing traditions. The existing

9 Anonymous, "Marine Day at Levant Fair," *Palestine Post,* May 29, 1936, 1.

10 Anonymous, "And there will be a Port in Tel Aviv," *Ha'aretz,* May 20, 1936, 1 (Hebrew).

11 For a broad study, cf. Kobi Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution: The Yishuv's Hold on the Land of Israel's Sea and Shores, 1917–1948* (Berlin/Boston, MA: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

12 For early maritime initiatives, cf. Samuel Tolkowsky, *They Took to the Sea: A Historical Survey of Jewish Maritime Activities* (New York, NY/London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), 261–277.

13 Anonymous, "Seefahrts-Hachscharah: Aus der Arbeit des Hechaluz," *Jüdische Rundschau,* February 9, 1937, 4.

14 Anonymous, "Auf dem Wege zum Beruf: Jüdische Jugend berichtet über ihr Arbeitsleben," *Jüdische Rundschau,* March 18, 1938, 6.

Beth Chaluz [home for Zionist pioneers, founded in 1932] and the different opportunities in the port to work in "sea-related fields", such as shipping and fishing but also ship loading and building, were described as important assets. Next to the maritime training centers on the Danish island of Bornholm and in the Italian port city of Livorno, Hamburg emerged as a central point of reference for the "Zionist maritime revolution" organized by the *Hechaluz*.[15] Moreover, in competition with other maritime training initiatives, e.g. in Civitavecchia/Italy (organized by Revisionist Zionists) or the city of Danzig (today Gdańsk/Poland; led by Gustav Pietsch and "Gordonia"/Zebulun), the port city of Hamburg evolved into a major hub for Zionist maritime training.[16]

All these efforts were not only ideologically driven but also aimed to counterbalance British immigration policies for Mandatory Palestine. Under the British authorities a specific immigration quota had been installed which strictly regulated immigration and linked it to the economic capacity of the Mandate.[17] Consequently, the *Hechaluz* had to deal with a strong opposition by the British Mandate authorities due to the strict immigration regime. Moreover, it also realized that the Nazi regime increasingly undermined the efforts to create a new Jewish future "on the sea".

Despite the rising measures of persecution and the ongoing policies of oppression by the Nazi regime, the port city of Hamburg continued to play an important role within the Zionist maritime revolution due to its still existing German-Jewish shipping and towing companies.[18] Zionist representatives had lobbied for the support of several Jewish shipping experts, such as Lucy Borchardt, owner of the Fairplay Dampfschleppschifffahrtsgesellschaft

15 Cf. Anonymous, "Zur Schulentlassungen: Berufsbildungsstätten für jüdische Jugendliche," *Jüdische Rundschau,* March 4, 1938, 7.

16 On the role of Danzig, cf. Susanne Zeller, "Das Schicksal von Kapitän Gustav Pietsch (1893–1975): Ein Mitglied der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei wird zum Retter für Juden," *Mitteilungsblatt Yakinton. Journal für die Jekkes in Israel* 308 (2021): 5–10; Dennis Riffel, "Flucht über das Meer: Illegal von Danzig nach Palästina," in *Überleben im Dritten Reich: Juden im Untergrund und ihre Helfer,* ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2003), 154–165; Jaroslaw Drozd, "Gdynia to Neve-Yam: The Jewish Fisherman's Courses within the Bays of Gdanks and Puck in the Interwar Poland," in *Studia Maritima,* Vol. XXVI, ed. Edward Wlodarczyk (Szczecin: Polish Academy of Sciences Committee of Historical Sciences University of Szczecin, 2013), 55–68.

17 There is a rich research literature on this topic, for details, cf. e.g. Dvora Hacohen, "British Immigration Policy to Palestine in the 1930s: Implications for Youth Aliyah," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 2 (2001): 2006–218.

18 Anonymous, "Der Stand der Seefahrts-Hachsharah," *Jüdische Rundschau,* July 20, 1937, 7.

(Hamburg), and Arnold Bernstein, who had established the Arnold Bernstein Shipping Company (Hamburg) as well as the Palestine Shipping Company (Haifa) with its well-known ship "Tel Aviv".[19] Hamburg therefore provided training opportunities, for example for stewards, sailors or engineers, but also fishermen and seamen.[20]

The hope to build up an independent merchant navy and form a new maritime elite while also establishing fishery industries on the Palestinian coast and promoting Jewish ports in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jaffa as well as creating a Jewish maritime future were driving forces in all the different efforts and initiatives, e.g. by Lucy Borchardt and the *Hechaluz* representative Naftali Unger.[21] In his auto-biographical work "Margot", Unger spoke of "hundreds of Jewish youth" in the seafaring *Hachshara* in Hamburg, which was probably an exaggeration but nevertheless indicated the importance of the port city during the Nazi era.[22] Accordingly, some of the *Hachshara* participants in Hamburg dreamed of their own *Hachshara* ship, a "hachshara kibbutz on the water"[23] as Avraham Barkai pointed out; a dream that was to become a reality only after 1945.

With the imprisonment of Bernstein in 1937 and his forced emigration to the USA as well as the flight of Borchardt to the UK and the dissolution of

19 Cf. Ina Lorenz, "Seefahrts-Hachshara in Hamburg (1935–1938): Lucy Borchardt – 'Die einzige jüdische Reederin der Welt'," in *Bewahren und Berichten. Festschrift für Hans-Dieter Loose zum 60. Geburtstag,* ed. Hans Wilhelm Eckardt [also *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 83] (Hamburg: Verein für Hamburgische Geschichte, 1997), 445–472; Björn Siegel, "Die Jungfernfahrt der 'Tel Aviv' nach Palästina im Jahre 1935: 'Eine besinnliche Fahrt ins Land der Juden'?," in *'Ihre Wege sind liebliche Wege und all ihre Pfade Frieden (Sprüche 3,17)': Die Neunte Joseph Carlebach-Konferenz, Wege Joseph Carlebachs. Universale Bildung, gelebtes Judentum, Opfergang,* eds. Miriam Gillis-Carlebach and Barbara Vogel (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 2014), 106–125; Björn Siegel "Arnold Bernstein": Biographie im Rahmen des Forschungsprojektes des Deutschen Historischen Instituts (GHI) *Immigrant Entrepreneurship:* German-American Business Biographies (1720 to the present) [Publikation 2014/2015], accessed June 15, 2022, http://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org.

20 Anonymous, "Der Stand der Seefahrts-Hachschara," 7. Cf. Anonymous, "Zur Schulentlassung – Bildungsstätten für jüdische Jugendliche," *Jüdische Rundschau,* March 4, 1938, 7; Anonymous, "Auf dem Weg zum Beruf – Jüdische Jugend berichtet über ihr Arbeitsleben," *Jüdische Rundschau,* March 18, 1939, 6.

21 Rudolf Melitz, ed., *Das ist unser Weg: Junge Juden schildern Umschichtung und Hachscharah* (Berlin: Joachim Goldstein Verlag, 1937), 37–41; Lorenz, "Seefahrts-Hachshara in Hamburg," 445–472.

22 Naftali Unger, *Margot* (Jerusalem: n.p. 1974; Hebrew), 59.

23 Avraham Barkai, *Vom Boykott zur 'Entjudung': Der wirtschaftliche Existenzkampf der Juden im Dritten Reich, 1933–1943* (Frankurt a. M.: S. Fischer Verlage, 1988), 100–105.

the German *Hechaluz,* the idea of creating a Jewish maritime future in Hamburg came to an end. However, many Zionists continued to dream of such a future, which mirrored how strong "the ancient Jewish people's relation to this mightiest and oldest of the elements"[24] was – as Raphael Patai described it in 1941. In their understanding the "sea" not only represented an important economic resource and a national asset but also linked the Jewish past and present to the future.

4 The Fishery Kibbutz "Zerubavel" – A Maritime Vision post-1945

In 1945 the left-wing Poale Zion movement discussed the ideas of a Jewish maritime future again. They hoped to support Shoah survivors by establishing a fishery kibbutz at the Elbe River and, in so doing, offer Jews, and especially Jewish displaced persons (DPs) from eastern Europe, new opportunities. Being aware of the maritime traditions of the Hanseatic port city, the Poale Zion movement realized that Hamburg not only offered a strong link to the maritime world but also evolved into a major rescue hub post-1945. Jewish survivors including young adults and children found refuge in several camps such as the DP camp Bergen-Belsen (Bergen-Hohne) or the newly established American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC, short "Joint") Warburg Children's Health Home in Blankenese/Hamburg. Under the leadership of the Joint and its representatives David Rothman and Erich Warburg, the later was founded on the Warburg family estate on the Kösterberg.[25]

Survivors from Theresienstadt found a home here as did groups of children who had been liberated from different concentration camps. Many of them arrived from Bergen-Belsen in January 1946. Along with other Zionist organizations, such as *Ha'Shomer Ha'Zair, Koordinazia, Gordonia, Dror* or *Ha'No'ar Ha'Zioni,* the Poale Zion movement wanted to give these Jewish children and young adults a new family, grant them relief and education, but also offer them a professional career and a sense of belonging. Thus, in March 1946 the

[24] Raphael Patai, "Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times," *The Jewish Quaterly Review* 32, no. 2 (1941): 1–26, here 26.

[25] Cf. Ina Lorenz, "Ein Heim für jüdische Waisen – AJDC Warburg Children Health Home Blankenese (1946–48)," in *Jüdische Welten – Juden in Deutschland vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart [Festschrift für Monika Richarz],* eds. Marion Kaplan and Beate Meyer (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005), 336–358.

Poale Zion movement established the fishery kibbutz "Zerubavel" [Serubabel] in Blankenese/Hamburg with the support of the Joint and the Jewish Agency in order to revitalize Jewish fishing and seafaring traditions at the Elbe River, help traumatized and uprooted Jewish DPs and create a new maritime future (again).

By using the name "Zerubavel" the Poale Zion movement on the one hand linked their endeavor to the history of Zerubavel [Serubabel], the grandson of King Jojachin, who led the Jewish tribes out of the Babylonian exile to the Land of Israel and began to rebuild the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. On the other hand, the name "Zerubavel" also linked their efforts to one of Poale Zion's most important leaders Yakov Vitkin "Zerubavel" (1866–1967). He was born in Poltava (Russian Tsarist Empire, today Ukraine) and joined the Poale Zion movement at an early age. In 1906 he was elected to the movement's "executive board" and had close contacts to other Poale Zion representatives, including Ber Borochov. He published Yiddish-language newspapers such as "Der Yiddisher Arbeter" and immigrated to Palestine in 1910.[26] While he did not negate the Jewish diaspora, he nevertheless considered living in Palestine to be the desirable goal for all Jews – ideas which Ber Borochov also supported.[27] Even though the Poale Zion movement remained a rather marginal phenomenon in Germany, Zerubavel succeeded to promote its ideas across the globe. Post-1945 he became a major spokesperson of Shoah survivors and DPs in Germany and Europe.[28] Thus, he also supported the opening of the fishery kibbutz in the "Elbkurhaus am Mühlenberg" in close proximity to the AJDC children's home. The specific maritime link, which the kibbutz represented, attracted numerous young adults: in March 1946 70 participants,

[26] Yael Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten: The Survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 97.

[27] Shmuel Almog, "The Role of Religious Values in the Second Aliyah," in *Zionism and Religion,* Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry Series 30, eds. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (Hanover, NH/London: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 244–245. Cf. Jan Rybak, "The Radical (Re-)Interpretation of Jewish Class and Nation: Poale Zion and the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917," in *Jewish Radicalism: Historical Perspectives on a Phenomenon of Global Modernity*, ed. Frank Jacob and Sebastian Kunze (Berlin/Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2020), 101–128.

[28] In 1915 he left Palestine and worked in the USA and the Soviet Union, but returned to Palestine in 1935. For more on the Poale Zion movement in Germany, cf. Momme Schwarz, "Eine jüdische Randerscheinung: Der Poale-Zionismus in Deutschland", accessed March 28, 2022, https://www.yadvashem.org/de/education/newsletter/7/poalei-zion-in-germany.html.

in July 1946 81 and in November 1946 50 were registered.[29] Many of them had close connections to the AJDC children's home, which was described by the Yiddish-language newspaper *Unzer Sztyme* as "a children's colony in Erez Israel" despite its location in Blankenese.[30] Another article in *Unzer Sztyme* outlined the fishery kibbutz itself:

> On the way back I visited the fishing school, which I took a closer look at. The fishing school, which has been in existence for 5 months, has proven during this time that it can train qualified fishermen. The comrades from the school are preparing for emigration in this way. The director of the school, Abraham Schweike, is an expert in his profession, employed as instructors are also some Germans, who already have many years of practical experience. At present, 80 comrades participate in a theoretical course at the school. But the most important thing is the practical work.[31]

5 Two Jewish Futures Collided

Similar to the Zionist group *No'ar Chaluzi Me'uchad* (*"Nocham"*), which established a naval training kibbutz in the DP camp of Deggendorf (Bavaria) in the American Zone, the Poale Zion movement opened its maritime training center in Hamburg/Blankenese.[32] Under Abraham Schweike [Abraham Schweiko], who was born on July 6, 1914 in Chełm (Russian Tsarist Empire, today Poland), the idea of training a new elite and form out a maritime future

29 "Jüdische DP Lager und Gemeinden in Westdeutschland – Hamburg: Fischerei-Kibbuz Serubavel (Hachschara)," accessed March 17, 2022, https://www.after-the-shoah.org/hamburg-fischerei-kibbuz-serubavel-hachschara-fishery-kibbutz-zerubavel-hachsharah/.

30 Jizchak Tadmor, "Die Geschichte des Kinderheimes Blankenese von Januar 1946 bis März 1948," in *Kirschen auf der Elbe – Erinnerungen an das jüdische Kinderheim Blankenese 1946–1948,* ed. Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Blankenese (Hamburg: Klaus Schümann Verlag, 2010), 26–59, here 39 [pictures: 218].

31 Anonymous, "Blankenese – Izchkow," *Unzer Sztyme,* September 15, 1946, 3–4 cited in Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Blankenese, ed., *Kirschen auf der Elbe – Erinnerungen an das jüdische Kinderheim Blankenese 1946–1948* (Hamburg: Klaus Schümann Verlag, 2010), 222.

32 Cf. Noar Chaluzi Meuchad (Nocham)/Germany, "Announcement of the opening of a new session at Kibbutz Kovshei Hayam the sailor's Kibbutz at the Jüdische Marineschule in the Deggendorf DP Camp", n.p.; Yad Vashem Documents Archive, Item ID 4407428, M.1 – Central Historical Commission (CHC of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in the US Zone, Munich, Subgroup M.1.P – Collection about Displaced Persons – DPs, File no. 786. Cf. Jim G. Tobias, "Die Eroberer der Meere," *haGalil onLine,* December 26, 2016), accessed March 15, 2022, https://www.hagalil.com/2016/12/matrosen/.

regained momentum in the Hanseatic port city.[33] Similar to the initiatives in the 1930s, the participants received theoretical and practical instruction in various fishing techniques, netting or fishery processing but also in navigation and ship construction. In 1946 a first report described the fishing kibbutz at the "Elbkurhaus" and the beginning renovations of the bomb-damaged location.[34] Thanks to the support of the Joint (David Rothman) and the newly established UNRRA, the kibbutz did become a reality and tolerated by the British Military as well as, later on, German authorities.[35] With a total of three brigades (30 persons each) and up to four fishing boats, the kibbutz members undertook trips of approximately two weeks on the sea or six days on the river.[36] Moniek Izbicki [Moritz Izbicki/Moniek Bicky], born on February 17, 1929 in Łódź, Poland, described the fishery kibbutz in the "Elbkurhaus" – flagged with a British banner.[37] Izbicki, who had survived Łódź Ghetto and the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen, took refuge in the AJDC children's home but also participated in the activities of the kibbutz.[38] In addition to the leader Schweike [Schweiko], it was above all the male and female "comrades" such as Izbicki, but also Moses Reisman [Moshe/Mosze Rajzman, born on January 25, 1923, in Łódź, Poland], Abraham Sandman [born on October 13, 1911 in Gostynin, Russian Tsarist Empire, today Poland], Gitl Glaser [Gisa Glaser, born on March 10, 1925 in Polien-Glod, Romania] and others, who implemented the ideas of a maritime future.[39]

33 A.E.F. D.P. Registration Record Szwajko, Abram (DP Camp Hohne/Belsen, 14.10.1945), Bad Arolsen Archive, Nachkriegszeitkartei (A–Z), Sign. 03010101 oS.

34 Norbert Wollheim, "Bericht – betrifft: Jüdische Fischereischule in Hamburg-Blankenese," Lübeck (November 12, 1946), 12; Yad Vashem Documents Archive, Protocols of the Central Jewish Committee (CJC) regarding the daily life of the Jewish communities, the DP camps and the various Jewish organizations in the British Occupied Zone in Germany, 1946–1950, Item ID 3686775, O.70 Rosensaft Bergen-Belsen Archive, file no. 13, Microfilm code 99.1875.

35 For a detailed study on the founding history, cf. Sigrun Jochims-Bozic, *"Lübeck is nur eine kurze Station auf dem jüdischen Wanderweg": Jüdisches Leben in Schleswig-Holstein 1945–1950,* Reihe Dokumente – Texte – Materialien 51 (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 172–183.

36 Anonymous, "Blankenese – Izchkow," *Unzer Sztyme,* September 15, 1946, 3–4 cited in Verein, *Kirschen auf der Elbe,* 222–223.

37 Several pictures are stored at the Ghetto Fighters House Archives in Israel.

38 For a picture, cf. The Fishery Kibbutz in Blankenese/Hamburg; USHMM Photo collection, Photograph Number: 64251.

39 Anonymous, "Blankenese – Izchkow," *Unzer Sztyme,* September 15, 1946, 3–4 cited in Verein, *Kirschen auf der Elbe,* 223. For more on Gitl Glaser, cf. Walter Schiffer, *Das Andenken verlängern: Grabinschriften der jüdischen Displaced Persons auf dem Zelttheaterfriedhof in Bergen-Belsen* (Lich: Verlag Edition AV, 2017), 96–97, 263–266.

These efforts were acknowledged not only by eastern European Jewish DPs but also by "German Jews" in the Hanseatic port city and the newly appointed leader Goldstein.[40] Tensions arose between the representatives of the eastern European Jewish DPs in Belsen-Hohne and the newly established Jewish community in Hamburg. These conflicts were based on different understandings of being Jewish, the allocation of international aid and supplies and the reconstruction of Jewish life in Germany. While both Josef Rosensaft (Belsen) and Goldstein (Hamburg) supported the kibbutz, the different interests in forming out a Jewish future in the port city led to ongoing debates. Goldstein, who visited the kibbutz in June 1946, understood the importance of the place in creating a Jewish future but also stated that it was a "branch of the 'Belsner'". Thus, he not only criticized that it was used as a warehouse for black market activities, which caused troubles with the British Military and German authorities, but also questioned the use of maritime traditions in order to create a Jewish future in the port city.[41]

These discussions grew even stronger when immigration certificates for Palestine were released for children from the DP camp in Belsen-Hohne and representatives began to organize group transports in 1946.[42] Especially the question of illegal immigration was discussed and led to further tensions with the British Military administration. On October 17, 1946, the British Labour MP Richard B. Stokes questioned the Minister for the Affairs for the Control of Germany and Austria, John Hynd, in the British House of Commons, about the provision of fishing boats for Jewish DPs in Blankenese.[43] Stokes' inquiry linked the activities of the maritime training center "Zerubavel" to illegal immigration activities, although Hynd denied this in his response.[44] Nevertheless, a similar connection was made in the *Daily Telegraph* which called the fishery kibbutz a "cover of Jewish propagandists" and a place of illegal

40 Lohalm, *"Schließlich ist es meine Heimat …"*, 19, 102–103.

41 Lohalm, *"Schließlich ist es meine Heimat …"*, 31.

42 Juliane Wetzel, "Zielort: Erez Israel – Jüdische DP-Kinder als Hoffnungsträger für die Zukunft," in *Kirschen auf der Elbe – Erinnerungen an das jüdische Kinderheim Blankenese 1946–1948*, ed. Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Blankenese (Hamburg: Klaus Schümann Verlag, 2010), 17–25, here 21–22.

43 Wollheim, "Bericht – betrifft: Jüdische Fischereischule in Hamburg-Blankenese," 12.

44 Cf. Helmut Schwalbach, "Fischerei am Anleger Dockenhuden: Der Kibbuz von Blankenese," *Hamburger Klönschnack* 10 (2006), 18–20.

immigration work.[45] Even though Josef Rosensaft and Norbert Wollheim published a counterstatement in the *Daily Telegraph* (November 25, 1946) and tried to present the history and explain the ideas of the fishery Kibbutz to the public, the British Military administration announced the closure of the fishing school and the transfer of the remaining DPs to Neustadt/Holstein.[46]

The announcement of the British Military administration was perceived as a "combat measure" and a threat to the propagated maritime future. Wollheim noted: "The kibbutz is determined not to vacate the school without resistance and has therefore asked the Central Committee for an immediate demarche before unpleasant consequences occur."[47] According to the testimony of Paul Trepmann, the British Military authorities took over the kibbutz with the remaining participants almost two weeks later (November 21, 1946).[48] A report in *Unzer Sztyme* commented on these events with bitterness: "And on the German waters Germanic people are already living again and the English rulers no longer need to fear that perhaps a ship will sail from Blankenese to Israel with illegal emigrants."[49] Wollheim and Rosensaft, who attended a meeting with Hynd at Norfolk House on November 25, 1946, protested against the procedure and treatment of the kibbutz and its students. The British authorities, however, referred to a supposed "creation of a naval school" in the near future, dismissed both representatives and, in so doing, destabilized the idea of a maritime future at the Elbe.[50]

45 Anonymous, "Jewish Post in Hamburg: Palestine Traffic", *Daily Telegraph,* November 18, 1946, cited in Schwalbach, "Fischerei am Anleger Dockenhuden," 19.

46 For the counterstatement, cf. Jochims-Bozic, *"Lübeck is nur eine kurze Station auf dem jüdischen Wanderweg",* 176. For the closure and transfer to Neustadt, cf. Lennart Onken, "'One step in the difficult task of rehabilitating those who have suffered under Hitlerism': Die jüdische Fischereischule "Serubavel" in *Jüdisches Leben in Blankenese,* ed. Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Blankenese (Hamburg, 2023 unpublished manuscript), 1–10.

47 Wollheim, "Bericht – betrifft: Jüdische Fischereischule in Hamburg-Blankenese," 13.

48 Other sources documented that the kibbutz members had already abandoned the place. Lohalm, *Harry Goldstein und die jüdische Gemeinde in Hamburg,* 31.

49 Schwalbach, "Fischerei am Anleger Dockenhuden," 18–20.

50 Discussion with Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster – Staatsminister Hynd, November 25, 1946, Norfolk House, 4–5; Yad Vashem Documents Archive, Protocols of meeting of Central Jewish Committee (CJC) representatives with representatives of the British authorities, 1946–1950, Item ID 3686765, O.70 Rosensaft Bergen-Belsen Archive, file no. 5, Microfilm Code 99.1875.

6 Conclusion

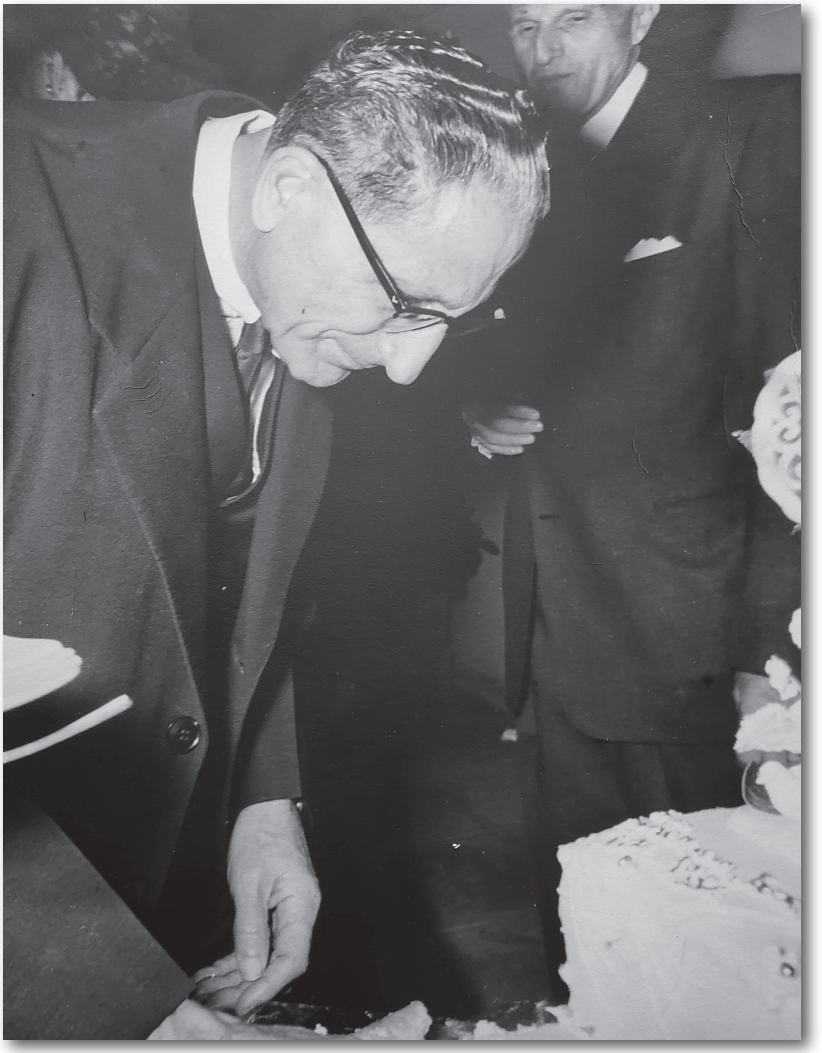
Some of the participants of the maritime training centers pre- and post-1945 emigrated to Palestine, respectively the State of Israel, and fulfilled their dream of a maritime future. Others, like the shipping experts Arnold Bernstein and Lucy Borchard(t) or the head of the fishing kibbutz "Zerubavel", Abraham Schweike [Schweiko], and the "comrade" Moniek Izbicki, emigrated to other destinations, for example the USA or the UK.[51]

While the dream of a Zionist maritime future did come to an end in Hamburg, Goldstein continued to lobby for a different vision. Goldstein, whom Hannah Arendt described in her Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Field Report (1950) "as a decent man" who worked hard for the "reconstruction of Hamburg community life"[52], linked the Jewish present in Hamburg to the glorious, maritime past of the port city one more time. Moreover, Lady Rose Henriques, who traveled to Germany and Hamburg as a representative of the Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain, published a report in September 1955 and stated that the people of Hamburg with "their seafaring character" and their enthusiasm for shipbuilding and ship launching were a unique and "sea-oriented" phenomenon. She praised the "Grand Old Man" ["der Große Alte"], as she described Goldstein, and saw him as an integral part of this unique Hamburg phenomenon. Moreover, she applauded his efforts to create a Jewish future in the city, intertwining Hanseatic and Jewish history.[53] While the Poale Zion movement had lobbied for a Zionist maritime future, Goldstein continued to promote a Hanseatic Jewish one in the port city. Both were eager to restore and cherish Jewish maritime traditions in the port city. However, these efforts, which relied on reinventing Jewish seafaring and fishing traditions, led to a very different understanding of a Jewish future.

51 On June 24, 1949, for example, Schweiko, his wife Brocha, and his daughter Jenta, who was born in Hamburg (June 17, 1946), emigrated to the USA via the DP camp Belsen-Hohne and the transit camp Bremen-Grohn. Cf. Refugee/Displaced Person Statistical Card, Szwajko, Abram, DP-Camp Hohne, June 29, 1948, Bad Arolsen Archive, Nachkriegszeitkartei (A–Z), Sign. 03010101 oS.

52 Hannah Arendt, Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Field Reports, 1948–1951, Field report no. 18, February 15 – March 10, 1950 published by Hamburger Schlüsseldokumente zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte, https://dx.doi.org/10.23691/jgo:source-126.de.v1.

53 Cited in Lohalm, *"Schließlich ist es meine Heimat …"*, 35–38.



Jacob Brandon's Golden Anniversary Photo. © Courtesy of Grant Brandon

The Port Jew and Nuestra América: Narratives of Collective Responsibility and Belonging

by Dalia Wassner

Abstract

Jacob Brandon Maduro's *Memoirs and Related Observations* (Havana, 1953) speak to the lasting yet malleable legacy of Jewish Caribbean/Atlantic mercantile communities that defined early modern settlement in the Americas. A close reading of the *Memoirs,* alongside relevant archival records and community narratives, lends new perspectives to scholarship on Port Jewries and the Atlantic Diaspora. Specifically concerned with Jacob's adoption of such leading intellectual and political tropes as the Monroe doctrine, José Martí's *Nuestra America,* and a Zionism that evolved from an ideology to a reality, the *Memoirs* reveal a narrative at once defined by the tremendous upheavals of the first half of the 20th century, and an enduring sense of Jewish diasporic peoplehood defined through a Port Jew paradigm whereby the preservation of Jewish ethnicity is understood as synonymous with the championing of modernity.

1 Introduction: Port Jewries and the Americas

A contemporary generation of scholars has embarked on the important task of tracing early Sephardic settlements in the Americas, producing innovative frameworks for conceptualizing the trajectory of Jewish life across the region with an appropriate focus on the Caribbean.[1] Indeed, renewed scholarly at-

[1] For more on Jews of the Caribbean, cf. Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews in the Caribbean* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014); Josette C. Goldish, *Once Jews: Stories of Caribbean Sephardim* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009); Stanley Mirvis, *Sephardic Family Life in the Eighteenth-Century British West Indies* (Ph. D. diss., City University of New York, 2013). For more on the Atlantic Jewish diasporas, cf. Dale Rosengarten, "Port Jews and Plantation Jews: Carolina-Caribbean Connections" in *The Jews in the Caribbean,* ed. Jane S. Gerber (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 289–310; Katalin Franciska Rac and Lenny A Ureña Valerio, *Jewish Experiences Across the Americas: Local Stories through*

tention has amplified current understandings of the economic ties and institutional relations that existed between Jews in various American colonial lands, as much pertaining to those powers that allowed and, at times, encouraged Jewish early modern settlement in the Americas as to the resulting expansive diaspora iterations pursued primarily through maritime mercantile avenues.[2] These new frameworks for understanding Caribbean Sephardic Atlantic Jewries in turn carry important implications for evolving notions of Jewish paths to modernity.

In what was a pathbreaking argument about Trieste Jewry published twenty years ago, Lois Dubin understood that a certain case study of Italian port Sephardim suggested a distinct path to modernity or cosmopolitanism, one that did not follow the Western European model of Haskalah as a necessity to accessing economic, political, or civic participation; this was an assessment Dubin then expanded to other locales, including Atlantic Jewries, thereby rendering a broader hermeneutic historical tool with which to help bridge the gap between Jewish history in North and South America and, in so doing, involving a critical role for Caribbean Port Jews. This school of scholarship has posited that Atlantic Jews served as veritable "harbingers of modernity,"[3] thereby encouraging contemporary historians to more carefully consider the importance of an aqua-centric approach to history and to diaspora studies. In

Global Lenses (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2022); Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Federica Francesconi, Stanley Mirvis, Brian M. Smollett, and Jane S. Gerber, *From Catalonia to the Caribbean: The Sephardic Orbit from Medieval to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Jane S. Gerber,* Brill Series in Jewish Studies Vol. 61 (Leiden: Brill, 2018); and Jonathan Irvine Israel, *Diasporas Within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740),* Brill Series in Jewish Studies Vol. 30 (Leiden [etc.]: Brill, 2002).

2 For more on Port Jews, cf. Lois Dubin, "Introduction: Port Jews in the Atlantic World 'Jewish History,'" *Jewish History* 20, no. 2 (2006): 117–127; Lois C. Dubin, "'Wings on Their Feet … and Wings on Their Head': Reflections on the Study of Port Jews," *Jewish Culture and History* 7, no. 1 (2004): 14–30; Chris S. Monaco, "Port Jews or a People of the Diaspora? A Critique of the Port Jew Concept," *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 2 (2009), 137–166; David Sorkin, "The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50, no. 1 (1999): 87–97; Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); David Cesarani and Gemma Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990: Commerce, Community, and Cosmopolitanism* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006). See also the special issue of *Jewish History* (20, 2006) and Jonathan D. Sarna's introduction, "Port Jews in the Atlantic: Further Thoughts" *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 213–219.

3 Dubin, "Introduction: Port Jews in the Atlantic World 'Jewish History,'" 124.

this vein, Adam Sutcliffe argues for the centrality of Atlantic Jewry in lending complexity and accuracy to current understandings of Jewish History:

> [I]ntegrating an Atlantic perspective into Jewish history extends beyond the decentering of the nation-state paradigms [and builds on Jonathan Israel's attention] on Sephardim as the international "cross-cultural brokers" par excellence from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century, possessing a cultural malleability and a geographical reach unmatched by any other trading diaspora in the period. [… I]n an Atlantic context, in which ethnic definitions of Jewishness were generally more important than religious or communal ones, and in which personal identities were often highly fluid and indeterminate, the very organizational category of 'Jewish history' is itself stretched and problematized.[4]

Monaco too understands this conceptualization as offering "a welcome counterpoint to what Sorkin referred to as the 'Ashkenazification' of modern Jewish history." Furthermore, Monaco suggests a stronger emphasis on shared worldviews whereby ethnicity, "not as an object or as entity but rather as a way of looking at the world – [implicates] a cognitive rather than objectivist orientation."[5] A reimagined centering of identity on ethnicity as applied to maritime diaspora trading alliances of Atlantic Jewries through the late 1800s carries important implications for the modern period. These academic dialogues have lent new paradigms for understanding Sephardic Jewish families who built networks of business and community, accompanying the expansion of empires and the subsequent emergence of American republics and nation-states. Consequential scholarship on Port Jewry in fact led to Dubin's evolved academic goal to focus on the complex relations between commerce, culture, and cosmopolitanism among and across diverse port Jewries.[6]

When considering diverse historical hermeneutic paradigms of Sephardic diaspora studies alongside dynamic new scholarship on Port Jewries, Jacob Brandon's *Memoirs* lend provocative insights into the dialectic nature of evolving Jewish life and collective narratives in the Americas during the first half of the 20th century, spanning from the establishment of the modern state

4 Adam Sutcliffe, "Jewish History in the Age of Mercantilism," in *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800,* ed. Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 18–32, here 19.

5 Monaco, "Port Jews or a People of the Diaspora?," 142.

6 Dubin, "'Wings on Their Feet … and Wings on Their Head'," 15.

of Panama to the establishment of the modern state of Israel. The present article suggests that a cultural and intellectual approach to modern American Atlantic Jewish sources lends important implications for Port Jewry scholarship and maritime scholarship in the 20th century, thereby further challenging the boundaries of social science disciplines and encouraging continued scholarly debate about the substance and parameters of American Jewry.

2 Jacob Brandon Maduro: An Entrepreneur of the Vintage Cloth

Jacob (Jack) Brandon Maduro's *Memoirs* provide a lens into the enduring legacy of the Port Jew among Atlantic Sephardi mercantile families, through the personal narratives of an eloquent member of one such foundational family, revealing a contemporary advocacy for bridging Jewish communities of South and North America while evidencing a persisting, if altered, Jewish presence in the 20th century Caribbean. The *Memoirs* and supporting archival sources indicate that Jacob Brandon Maduro was proud of his mercantile and familial heritage, and that it was precisely his Jewish ethnicity that fueled an activist responsibility to an evolving American Jewish diaspora reimagined between the 1920s to 1950s.[7]

The *Memoirs* provide a firsthand account of Jacob Brandon Maduro's business ventures, his Jewish communal and state commitments, and his cultural interests; however, the source is perhaps most compelling in rendering a narrative effected through fused enunciations of classic American tropes, including such contradictory ones as the quintessentially Monroe Doctrine and Martí's *Nuestra America,* employed in concert to espouse the responsibility of interwar and post-WWII US Jewry to support Caribbean and Latin American Jewry. The intellectual and cultural tropes engaged by Jacob Brandon Maduro demonstrate a didactic attempt to reconcile conflicting contemporary politics of the Americas in service of a persistent familial Jewish role envisioned as a bridge between communities, economies, and governments at the onset of WWI, during the unfolding tragedies of WWII, in light of the establishment

7 We learn that the Brandon Maduro Family moved in mercantile familial circles within the U.S. (NY, PA, Chicago), Cuba, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Hamburg, London, Paris, and Australia in the 1910s, before the outbreak of WWI (cf. Brandon, *Memoirs,* 77–82). For concurrent primary documents, cf. Cuba, 1943–1997, B'nai B'rith International Archives, MS-900, Box D2-1, Folder 12. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

of the State of Israel, and responsive to the rise and fall of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba. Throughout, Jacob does not waiver in espousing a worldview in which his Jewish ethnicity serves to navigate any number of current cultural and political milieus, negotiations Jacob makes while strengthening very Jewish Atlantic maritime and diasporic identities and internal connections of which he was a product. The overarching narrative and arguments of the *Memoirs* thereby confer to justify the author's dedicated stewardship of a collective contemporary Jewry in the Americas, which is at every point equated with the broader betterment of society and in defense of a cosmopolitan western civilization in a world increasingly divided between the allies of democracy and its foes.

3 Weaving a Life and a Narrative

Jacob Brandon Maduro was born in the Republic of Panama on August 4, 1880, and was educated at Dr. Fach's Collegiate Institute of New York. After graduation, he worked with his uncle Isaac at the U.S. office of the Brandon Brothers Banking Firm. The Memoir chronicles Jacob's family business in Panama, including the extraordinary respect his father David claimed among Jews and non-Jews alike due to his noteworthy and plentiful contributions to the institutional foundations of the young country. For example, the *Memoirs* describe David Brandon's involvement in tending to the wounded and dead during the Belisario Porras Revolution; we learn of David's business as a banker in Panama and his family's role in financing the U.S. completion of the canal, an involvement not detached from David's support of the independence coup and his friendship toward Dr. Manuel Amador Guerrero, the first President of Panama. In fact, it is in the pages addressing David's funeral, which several corroborating sources cite as the first and only time that the Cathedral bells rang for a non-Catholic in the country, that mark the second mention of Jacob's family's Jewish heritage thus far in the *Memoirs,* here summoned to remark that Jews and non-Jews, people of all colors and races, mourned his father's passing, after which Dr. Amador himself promised to look after David's widow.[8] The Memoir later traces Jacob's marriage to Esther Steinberger of Bradford, Pennsylvania, as well as their return to Panama and

[8] Brandon, *Memoirs,* 57; Stanley Fidanque Brandon, *Amor, Trabajo y Altruismo* (Panama: Pan American Printing Company, 2016).

Jacob's responsibility to the family business after his marriage. Throughout, Jacob's parents' connections to high-ranking government officials present prominently.[9] The move back to Panama as a married man was followed by another stint in New York and then New Rochelle, before Jacob and Esther moved in 1922 yet again, in a move proving to be the one of greatest longevity in bringing the family for 30 consecutive years to Havana, Cuba.

Throughout the *Memoirs,* the reader is privy to reflections on theology, organized religion, and the changing world order as it unfolded throughout the 20th century, inclusive of its paradigm-shifting revolutions, destructions, and rebirths.[10] For example, in his single years in New York, Jacob recounts a higher affinity for attending Ethical Culture lectures by Dr. Felix Adler on Sundays at Carnegie Hall, rather than attending Saturday morning prayer at the Sephardi synagogue at Shearith Israel at 19th St. & Broadway or subsequently at Central Park and West 68th St. with his uncle Isaac, who was a dedicated congregant of the community led by the esteemed Sephardic rabbi, Reverend Harry Pareira Mendes. In this context, Jacob reflects on his father's own wariness toward "dogmatic religion" and how this inclination probably influenced his son's contemplating attending Dr. Stephen Wise's synagogue in New York but ultimately preferring Sundays at Carnegie Hall. Drawn to the vibrant intellectual community assembled by the school of Ethical Culture and its leaders, including Dr. Felix Adler, Dr. Elliot, and Dr. Franz Boas, Jacob resonated with these secular models of spiritual and moral development, and found himself in good company of a certain brand of Jewish New York intellectuals, most notably of German provenance.[11] Nevertheless, the family

9 The Memoirs also reveal that Jacob and Esther entertained William Taft, then Secretary of State to Theodore Roosevelt, among others who visited the Canal Zone, and were guests of President Amador alongside the Bishop of Panama (cf. Brandon, *Memoirs,* 64–65). Also included is a letter from January 15, 1928, where Jacob Brandon and his eldest son Earl receive Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States in Havana Cuba (cf. Brandon, *Memoirs,* 105).

10 Jacob Brandon Miscellaneous Writings include *Verses* (Havana: Editorial Selecta, 1945); *Verses Vol. III. I* (Havana: Editorial Selecta, 1946); *Miscellaneous Writings Vol IV.* (Havana: Editorial Selecta, 1946); *Peace River (A Message in Metaphor) How Precious is Freedom?* (Habana: Imp. Fernandez y CIA, S. en C., 1952); *Select Miscellaneous Writings* (Havana: Imp. Fernandez y CIA, S. en C., 1952); *Materialism Vs. True Substance* (Havana: Imp. Fernandez y CIA, S. en C., 1954); *Once More we Ask of him Who Passeth, "Wither Goest Thou"?; Eloquence; An Invisible Power.* (Havana: Cuba Intelectual, 1957).

11 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 10. Jacob writes about not being very observant in religious rituals but recalls that Friday night services were held at Uncle Isaac's home in New York City and the family attended Saturday services at Shearith Israel at 19th St. & Broadway and then at Cen-

homesteads that formed the center of the shared ethnicity that so defined Port Jews comprised the same markers still evident in the Panamanian family identity before and after the turn of the century, a characteristic that endured in their New York setting. Friday night dinners in Panama between 1892 and 1897 are reported as counting on all members of the Brandon Maduro family gathering without fail at Grandma Maduro's house. Yet it is in the Havana years that Jacob's sense of responsibility grows for the Jewish community in America enunciated as a pan-American entity, evidenced most notably through Jacob's advocacy and leadership in bringing B'nai Brith and Hillel to Cuba and reflected in his stated (if, at first, tempered) pride over the creation of the modern state of Israel.

Most strikingly, the arguments that Jacob employs in narrating his support of Jewish education and cultural organizations on the island are offered in explicit service of a meaningful sense of Jewish identity and peoplehood to be shared among all Jews in Latin America as part of the Americas writ large, an argument effected through an unabashed mixture of narratives borrowed from Monroe and Martí. The resulting narrative in fact pulls from two disparate and contradictory visions of "America" that are themselves results of different historical periods (1823 and 1891, respectively), yet employed in Jacob's narration of the mid-twentieth century, they read as an amalgam crafted to advocate as much for the Jews' validity in post-independence Cuba as for a post-World War II transnational Jewish network of communities in the Americas. The narrative's unifying thread is a call for a broadly conceived Jewish diasporic ethnicity pursued most urgently in response to World War II, its refugee crisis, the atrocities committed by Hitler and his allies,[12] the

tral Park and West 68th St., where the esteemed rabbi Reverend Harry Pareira Mendes officiated. For more on Franz Boas's reception by contemporary US academics, cf. Morris E. Opler, "Franz Boas: Religion and Theory," *American Anthropologist.* New Series 69, no. 6 (Dec. 1967), 741–745; and George Makari, *Of Fear and Strangers: A History of Xenophobia* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2021).

12 Jacob's vehemently scathing description of Hitler's rise to power (and that of his willing collaborators, including Goebbels and Himmler) is presented in a chapter titled "Hitler, Mephistopheles Incarnate" (Brandon, *Memoirs,* 139–140). Jacob also informs the reader that there were German sympathizers among Cubans and Spaniards in Cuba, and notes that part of his assumed leadership role in the country involved curbing their influence in Cuba, an activity Jacob pursued also through active participation in the local press, i.e. the Diario la Marina (cf. Brandon, *Memoirs,* 147). For more on the fascist experience in Cuba, cf. Katia Figueredo Cabrera, *Cuba y la Guerra Civil española: mitos y realidades de la derecha hispano-cubana* (1936–1942) (Havana: Universidad de La Habana, 2014).

emergence of Cold War politics, and also the threat of acculturation among Latin American and Caribbean Jewries. In this context, the birth of the modern State of Israel serves mostly as an additional source of pride to be shared among the Jews of the Americas as an integral part of world Jewry.

4 American Jews, also in Cuba

If in Cuba Jacob at first resisted joining the United Hebrew Congregation over concerns that the general meetings would not be as efficient or well-cultured as the ones he was accustomed to in New Rochelle, he soon acceded as "it was not in Jack's nature to reside permanently in a community without trying to make some personal contribution to its progress."[13] At the same time, Jacob's employed language and imagery reveal assurances to the reader of Cuba's desirability as a destination for Jewish settlement, due as much to the hospitable nature of the land as to that of its people. Here Jacob lauds the lack of anti-Semitism on the Island, which he attributes in large part to the Hispanic affinity shared between the Sephardim and the Cubans.[14] Cuba is portrayed as a natural home to [Sephardic] Jews like himself, but the designation could be extended to any Jews who were willing to learn the language and show respect for local customs, proving to be grateful guests. The extent to which the argument *is not* concerned with symbiosis or authenticity equals the extent to which it *is* concerned with peaceful cohabitation. It is a perspective more applicable to Port Jewries than to acculturation arguments prevalent among Western Jewries who modernized through processes of Haskalah.

Illustratively, Jacob reflects on a country where for thirty years he bred his family with some "social and cultural distinction," noting his appreciation as a Jew for his new home, a sentiment on which he expounded by hailing the hospitable nature of the habitat and its people.[15] The praise is resonant of the admirable Cuban independence fighter José Martí. Jacob himself reflects (in English) on the difficulty of finding a translation that can do justice to such a hero's words and wisdom, one that would aptly convey the revolutionary's efforts that led Cubans (and all Americans) to claim their own authentic

13 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 114.
14 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 115.
15 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 119.

identity based on a shared unique history and land. Martí's influence is evident in Jacob's own renditions on Cuba:

> Although Mankind is one genus in the order of Nature, there exists in all native and inherited cultures an ethnic individualism which contributes in its own imagery, style and rhythm to the Symphony of the Universe. We find the same quality of uniqueness in each snow-flake, in the petals of each flower, in the lines of every human hand, in the unrepeated drapery of each sunset; indeed, in every object that meets the human eye. By this means Universal Intelligence manifests its infinite versatility, and pours Its glory into receptive minds among the Children of Men.[16]

When one compares the language of Martí's "Nuestra America," the resonance of the cadence and sentiment are clear:

> [O]ne who knows what elements his own country is made up of, and how best to marshal them so as to achieve, by means and institutions arising from the country itself, that desirable state in which every man knows himself and exercises his talents, and all enjoy the abundance that Nature, for the good of all, has bestowed on the land they make fruitful by their labor and defend with their lives. The government must arise from the country. The government's spirit must be the spirit of the country. The government's form must be in harmony with the country's natural constitution. The government is no more than the equilibrium among the country's natural elements.[17]

Yet Martí famously extolls the validity of that which is born of American soil over that born in Europe, extending the warning to the neo-colonial threat that then loomed, namely in the control and influence embodied by their closest neighbor, the United States:

> No Yankee or European book could furnish the key to the Hispano-American enigma […] From the Río Bravo to the Straits of Magellan, the Great Cemi, riding high astride a condor, has scattered the seeds of the new América across the romantic nations of the continent and the suffering islands of the sea![18]

16 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 123.

17 José Martí, "Nuestra América," in *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics,* ed. Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr, Alfredo Prieto, and Pamela Maria Smorkaloff (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 119–124, here 120.

18 Jose Marti, "Nuestra América," 122.

This element of Martí is entirely ignored in Jacob's writings. From a Cuban perspective, the abuses of colonialism and urgent warnings about neo-colonialism are as prevalent in Martí's message as they are in his enduring legacy; from a Port Jew mentality and an enduring Atlantic Jewish mindset concerned not with inter-American powerplays but rather focused on the importance of maintaining a connected world based on shared access to goods, services, and communities, the primordial conversation is the one uniting communities divided only by circumstance and distance.

5 Translating Cuban Idealism to Jewish Pragmatism

Jacob's stated pride in the Cuban people and their heritage, enunciated through his reverence of Martí as the imperishable Cuban statesman and visionary, is reiterated by the Jewish communal leader when assuming responsibility for his Jewish European brethren during WWII. Working alongside the US-run Joint Distribution Committee and the Cuban government, Jacob labored tirelessly for three years to help Jewish refugees sailing from Germany while urging US Jews' assistance as the refugees' stay in Cuba became prolonged.[19] For his work, Jacob was awarded a distinction of "Caballero (Knight of the Order)" in 1940 by Cuban President Federico Laredo Bru, who was succeeded by Fulgencio Batista in May of that same year.[20] For this same work in aiding the Jewish refugees of the Second World War, Jacob was approached to head the application for a B'nai Brith Chapter in Havana. While at first Jacob was hesitant to undertake the task due to his stated disillusionment with Jewish organizations on the island, he reportedly acceded upon understanding it was to be an international endeavor, one that would be affiliated with the Anti-Defamation League and would thus provide a link with American Jewry "and the rest of the civilized world [… with …] the fight against racial injustice [being] powerfully backed in Washington."[21] In considering his own

19 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 152. For more on the JDC work in Cuba, cf. archives: "Cuba: Jewish Refugee Assistance," JDC Archives, accessed August 10, 2022, https://archives.jdc.org/project/cuba-jewish-refugee-assist/; and Zhava Litvac Glaser, "Laura Margolis and JDC Efforts in Cuba and Shanghai: Sustaining Refugees in a Time of Catastrophe", in *The JDC at 100: A Century of Humanitarianism,* ed. Avinoam Patt, Atina Grossmann, Linda G. Levi and Maud S. Mandel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), 167–204.

20 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 153.

21 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 158.

involvement with B'nai Brith, Jacob reflects his successful efforts at securing a meeting with Mr. Henry Monsky at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City early in the year 1946, along with Dr. Abraham Leon Sachar, the latter of whom directed the Hillel Foundation at the time.[22] In no uncertain terms, Jacob advocated for the duty of Hillel to reach Jewish co-religionists in the entire region, with Brandon reportedly positing to Monsky, "What has B'nai Brith done for these co-religionists in other parts of America, and particularly for the rising generation which is absorbing all the idiosyncrasies of Latin civilization?'"[23] Jacob thereafter agreed to head the petition for a Havana Chapter of B'nai Brith and was subsequently nominated to act as the first President of the Charter, named the Maimonides Lodge.[24]

Jacob's tireless advocacy is equally represented in his *Memoirs* and corroborating communal and archival sources as fueled by an overt responsibility to transnational Jewish institutions whose activities and leadership he assessed as critical to preserving an American diasporic Jewish identity decidedly described in ethnic, cultural, and community orientation, rather than along religious terms. Speculating that there must be about one million Jews "south of the Rio Grande and all the way down to Patagonia," Jacob adamantly pursued his mission in Cuba and for a time succeeded in expanding the activities of B'nai Brith there, housed at the United Hebrew Congregation, another Cuban institution where Jacob served as President. As borne out in the *Memoirs* and corroborating B'nai Brith documentation held at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati,[25] Jacob Brandon was determined to ensure that his fellow American brethren's identities would not become secondary to their Cuban, Argentine, or any other Caribbean or Latin American ones. It also bares mentioning that Jacob's meetings in New York were conducted

22 Cf. Brandon, *Memoirs,* 160. Dr. Shachar later became the first President of Brandeis University (1948–1968). Brandeis University was founded by the US Jewish community as an institute for higher education where Jews would be welcome when they faced quotas elsewhere. For more cf Stephen J. Whitfield, Waltham (MA), "Brandeis University", in *Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture Online,* accessed 14 August 2022, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2468-8894_ejhc_COM_0115. Original German Language Edition: Enzyklopädie Jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur. Im Auftrag der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig herausgegeben von Dan Diner. © J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart/Springer-Verlag GmbH Deutschland 2011–2017.

23 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 161.

24 Cf. Brandon, *Memoirs,* 158.

25 Cuba, 1943–1997, B'nai B'rith International Archives, MS-900, Box D2-1, Folder 12. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

as a countermeasure to the activities of the Zionist Committee of the Centro Israelita. If Jacob's efforts were geared toward strengthening the Jews of the Americas, the establishment of the state of Israel presented as a fundraising adversary. The *Memoirs* thereby also echo contentious stances debated in the US most famously between Chaim Weizmann, Albert Einstein, Louis Brandeis, and Felix Frankfurter, as the needs of the nascent state and that of the diaspora were passionately weighed and argued.[26] Yet, by 1953, Jacob reflects on the admirability of the young state and even dedicates a chapter of his *Memoirs* on Israel's fifth anniversary to proudly note the steadfast prominence of Israel in his own thoughts, even lending a comparison of Israel and the U.S. as honorable partners to peace with their neighbors and, as such, serving as comparable partners to enhance global Jewish peoplehood:

> At this point Jews the world over need no longer suffer the pangs of religious self-consciousness and social frustration […]. This new, virile community, heir in great part to two thousand years of dispersion, suffering, and tragedy, reminds us of the extraordinary fact that the Jews as an ethnic group have never surrendered or outlived their sense of responsibility.[27]

Emphasizing the ethnic nature of said Jewish peoplehood, Jacob compares the modern secular greatness of the State of Israel to that of biblical times, noting that ancient Israel also did not survive due to a "blind, ill-founded faith in what had become a venal, intolerant and decadent theocracy."[28] Steadfast in favoring a shared ethnicity and history over a religious practice or belief, Jacob repeatedly accepts responsibility to ensure the endurance of a meaningful and united pan-American Jewry, which with the emergence of modern-day Israel evolves to manifest as a symbiotic partner to a civilized modernity reflected as much in Israel and in its Jewish Diaspora counterparts in the Americas.

Jacob's continued efforts in the 1940s in bringing B'nai Brith and Hillel to Latin America are reflected in his *Memoirs* inclusive of an October 1949 invitation issued by Mayor Harold Turk of Miami Beach, Florida, and delivered

[26] Cf. Walter Isaacson, "How Einstein Divided America's Jews" *The Atlantic,* December 2009, accessed July 20, 2022, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2009/12/how-einstein-divided-americas-jews/307763/; Joel Z. Wagman, *Brandeis, Weizmann and Einstein: Four Days in Cleveland, June 1921,* (s.l. Xlibris, 2020).

[27] Brandon, *Memoirs,* 171–173.

[28] Brandon, *Memoirs,* 173.

personally by Mr. Gilbert Balkin, president of the Anti-Defamation League of New York: Jacob was to be the principle speaker at a November 8, 1949 meeting held at the prestigious Delano Hotel to "promote interest in Inter-American Understanding" and to be held under the auspices of the Miami Beach Lodge of B'nai Brith.[29] Jacob reports extensively on this honor and in the *Memoirs* includes documentation of the favorable reporting of his speech in various Miami press outlets, alongside his award of the "Freedom of the City" key granted in concert with Dr. Manuel Velazquez, Consul-General of Cuba at Miami, who subsequently filed Jacob's speech at the Ministerio de Estado in Havana along with a report on the Meeting.[30] In this very speech, it is worth noting that Jacob emphatically lauds Martí, Monroe, and B'nai Brith as examples to be followed, presented as complementary philosophical and political prescriptions and entities aligned in strengthening inter-American alliances, as necessary at the time of Cuba's independence as a half a century later, when the free countries of the West faced a call to band against the despotism of the East. Adopting the language of the Monroe Doctrine alongside the revolutionary anticolonial sentiment of Martí and the contemporary trans-American goals of B'nai Brith, Jacob ignores the historical specificities of each as well as their contradicting connotations and effects when strung together and instead employs them equally through the purview of the Port Jew and his desire for brotherhood across the Atlantic and throughout the Americas. It is in this context that in the November 1949 meeting in Miami Beach, Jacob advocated for the importance of pan-American allegiances in order to further his mission of fomenting prosperous and enriching Jewish existence throughout a connected and hospitable America on a hemispheric plane:

> I have been a resident of Cuba for more than 25 years. I am happy to be able to say that I have never been made to feel alien to the kindly and hospitable community in which I live. Quite to the contrary, as I have become more proficient in its rich and expressive language and have familiarized myself with its social philosophy well tinted as it is with Hispanic tradition, I have arrived at the conclusion that despite outward divergencies there is a definite trend in the Americas toward cultural unification.[31]

[29] Brandon, *Memoirs,* 164a.
[30] Brandon, *Memoirs,* 164aa.
[31] Brandon, *Memoirs,* 164c.

In the same vein, Jacob Brandon Maduro promotes B'nai Brith's extension to Cuba by extolling the recent designation of the island country as the site of UNESCO's Latin America branch, chosen due to its "strategic importance, but also [out] of appreciation on the part of the statesmen throughout the world that the people of Cuba provide a wholesome psychological balance in the scale of Inter-American solidarity."[32]

The *Memoirs* thus reflect Jacob's furthering of non-Jewish transatlantic partnerships, including UNESCO along the Finlay Institute of the Americas, for example, as consistent with Jewish partnerships throughout the Americas that serve the shared cause of increased defense for human rights and widespread peace. It is a focus born of a cosmopolitan rather than empirical or nationalistic perspectives, one that proved critical to Port Jewries and the emergent Atlantic Diasporas of the 20th century. In this light, the following statement reflects a historical narrative that is entirely consistent with a Jewish identity defined through transnational ethnic lines:

> We proudly behold the increasing stature of B'nai Brith in our own day as a competently trained field-unit wherever danger threatens the social stability of any community in the Americas. With these facts before us, we cherish the hope that this Convention in a foreign, hospitable land will serve as a precedent for other conventions overseas; that it may prove to be the first span in a series of spiritual bridges across the waters which physically separate the peoples of the Americas; that one day not too far away, we shall visualize the completion of the remaining spans of this structure not made with hands, and dedicate it as a memorial to the ageless longing for brotherhood in every human heart, reinforced by equality of opportunity for each and every loyal citizen whatever his race, color or religious creed may be.[33]

Jacob ends his address on November 8, 1949 eager to promote B'nai Brith as an arm of Jewish pride and solidarity that existentially aligned with the important work of UNESCO through an external measure that likewise identified in Cuba a ready partner for a larger regional network for the benefit of all humankind.[34]

32 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 164c.
33 Brandon, *Memoirs,* 164c.
34 Cf. Brandon, *Memoirs,* 157.

6 Conclusions

In Jacob Brandon's Memoirs, the Havana years most strikingly reflect his sense of responsibility for the Jewish community in America writ large. Extolling an amalgamated narrative of Martí and Monroe, and aided by the contemporary missions of B'nai Brith, the Anti-defamation league, and UNESCO, the conglomerate narrative presented in 1953 reads consistent with the perspective of a modern Atlantic Port Jewry, a context where leaders of families became community leaders who advocated as much for local belonging, mercantile entrepreneurial opportunities, and an ethnically defined and culturally engaged Jewish transnational fraternity across the Americas. Evidenced in the *Memoirs* is a narrative that does not overtly doubt the writer's coterminous right to economic entrepreneurship, civic involvement, cultural participation, or Jewish communal organization, and the resultant claims of belonging and acceptance reveal an ensuing responsibility to the communities themselves to maintain their cohesion as part and parcel of pan-American alliances for democracy and against bigotry. Jacob Brandon Maduro as a Sephardic Atlantic Jew embodied the very bridge between the various worlds he traversed.[35]

[35] The author wishes to thank Siena Wigert, her research assistant at the Brandeis Initiative on the Jews of the Americas, for her insight and dedication to the project.

Gravestone of Samuel Palache (c. 1550–1616), Portuguese cemetery Ouderkerk aan de Amstel. © L. Alvares Vega, The Beth Haim van Ouderkerk, Ouderkerk 2004, p. 27

Desperados at Sea

by Michael Studemund-Halévy

Abstract

Pirates are fortune-seeking fighters at sea. Their exploits fire the imaginations of their victims and admirers, drawing a veil over individuals who rarely bear a real name and pursue their adventurous occupations as buccaneers, filibusters, freebooters, privateers, pirates, or corsairs. Piracy, corsairing, and contraband trade were epidemic among the Egyptians and the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Vikings, the Spaniards and the Ottomans, the Muslims, and the Christians. And the Jews.

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is history.
(Derek Walcott, *The Sea is History,* 1979)[1]

1 What careers they were!

At the Jewish cemetery of Willemstadt in Curaçao, at least five gravestones bear depictions of ships, indicating that those buried there had a maritime profession of some kind.[2] Dramatically staged skulls and skeletons with black

1 Carmen Birkle and Nicole Waller, eds., '*The Sea is History': Exploring the Atlantic* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006).

2 Isaac S. Emmanuel and Suzanne Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles,* vol. 1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1970), 230–233 [fig. 14]; Michael Studemund-Halévy, "The Persistence of Images: Reproductive Success in the History of Sephardi Sepulchral Art," in *The Dutch Intersection,* ed. Yosef Kaplan (Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2008), 123–147; Michael Studemund-Halévy, "More than Images: The Iconography of Sefardi Gravestones in the Jewish Cemetery, Bridgetown, Barbados," in *A Sefardic Pepper-Pot in the Caribbean,* ed. Michael Studemund-Halévy (Barcelona: Tirocinio, 2016), 429–488; Natalie Zeldin, *Skulls, Shields, and Narratives: Using sepulchral imagery in Beth Chaim Cemetery to understand the degrees of acculturation in the Portuguese Sephardic community in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century* (unpublished manuscript).

eye sockets and grinning rows of teeth, with or without crossed bones, some accompanied by an hourglass adorn the gravestones of New Christians expelled from Spain and Portugal, who, having been forcibly baptized, found their way back to Judaism in the Old and New Worlds. Whether they were pirates, however, remains uncertain. Skulls, crossbones, and hourglasses are signs for eternity, allegorical *memento mori* symbols, but not hidden references to pirates, adventurers, outcasts, or social rebels, as pirate-loving experts keep trying to make us believe.[3] They might have been captains or sailors, owners of a ship or shipping company, acting on their own account or on behalf of others. Artful epitaphs for rabbis, cantors, Torah scribes, community elders, and merchants tell of messianic hopes, of longing for redemption, and of the deceptions and the dis-deceptions of the vain world – of the desperados at sea, the pirates or buccaneers, and their daring adventures, they tell nothing. *Livros da Nação* (Minute books of the congregation) provide information on the ransom of Jews captured in the slave markets of Muslim barbarians in Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli;[4] files of the Admiralty and notariats tell of routes and resources, captured cargo and slave ships,[5] their Jewish owners, and the pinch.[6] Literary accounts by Jewish authors of shipwreck, robbery at sea, and forcible conversion, however, are rare.[7] Sefardic merchants in Curaçao give their merchant or privateer ships biblical or messianic names such as *Zion,*

3 Edward Kritzler, *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean. How a Generation of Swashbuckling Jews Carved out an Empire in the New World in Their Quest for Treasures, Religious Freedom – and Revenge* (New York, NY: Anchor, 2008); cf. Studemund-Halévy, "The Persistence of Images," 123–147; Studemund-Halévy, "More than Images," 429–488.

4 In the 16th and 17th centuries, Jewish brotherhoods emerge for the rescue of captives who had fallen into the hands of freebooters, cf. Emmanuel and Emmanuel, vol. 1, 223–225; Eliezer Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom in Mediterranean Jewish Society, 1391–1830* (Ph.D. diss., Bar Ilan University, 1980; Hebrew); Daniel Hershenzon, *The Captive Sea: Slavery, Communication, and Commerce in Early Modern Spain and the Mediterranean* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 41–67; Stanley Mirvis, *The Jews of Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: A Testamentary History of a Diaspora in Transition* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2020), 52.

5 Seymour Drescher, "Jews, and New Christians in the Atlantic Slave Trade," in *Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450–1800,* eds. Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering (New York, NY: Berghahn, 2001), 439–470.

6 *Prize Papers* – a research project of the University of Oldenburg promises new insights into life in the colonies, life on the ship as well as maritime trade and privateer wars.

7 Cf., for example, the study by Hispanist Harm den Boer, "¿Católico Zárate, judío Muley? Nuevo acercamiento a Las misas de San Vicente Ferrer," in *Antonio Enríquez Gómez: Un poeta entre Santos y Judaizantes,* eds. J. Ignacio Díez and Carsten Wilke (Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2015), 15–34.

Queen Esther, Samuel the Prophet, or *Shield of Abraham* (most of the early Jewish congregations used names such as *Nidhe Israel* [Scattered of Israel] or *Shearith Israel* [the Remnant of Israel]), even though this put them at risk of being attacked by the Spanish 'Jewish' ships.

Pirates and privateers, a kind of state-sponsored pirates and enemies of all mankind (*hostis humani generis*),[8] have existed since the dawn of history, although their number is probably small and their names, with a few exceptions, are unknown.[9] Piracy, corsairing and contraband trade were epidemic among all seafaring nations and occurred in every region, likewise among the Egyptians and the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Vikings, the Spaniards and the Ottomans, the English and the French, the Muslims and the Christians. And the Jews.

Piracy (*πειρατές* in Greek) means an attempt to seek one's fortune in a maritime enterprise, sea raiding, seaborne plunderers, or sea bandit, with (sometimes) religion as an excuse. Thus, pirates are fortune-seeking fighters at sea. Their exploits fire the imaginations of their victims and admirers, drawing a veil over individuals who rarely bear a real name and pursue their adventurous occupations as buccaneers, filibusters, freebooters, privateers, pirates, or corsairs. Pirates are shady minor historical figures whose biographies are difficult to document or reconstruct. Thus, a history of piracy can only be based on texts concerning pirates and piracy in explicit terms, and in terms used in the culture where the texts were written.[10]

8 Hugo Grotius, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis,* 2013 [Paris 1625], relied on the Old and New Testament and on Aristotle and Cicero for a universal perspective.

9 A relatively small number of studies has been conducted on the maritime history of Jews; see Raphael Patai, *The Children of Noah. Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Samuel Tolkowsky, *They Took to the Sea* (New York, NY: Yoseloff, 1964); Ruthi Gertwagen and Avshalom Zemer, *Pirates: The Skull and Crossbones. Exhibition Catalogue* (Haifa: National Maritime Museum, 2002; Hebrew/English); Nadav Kashtan, ed., *Seafaring and the Jews* (London: Cass, 2001); Haim Finkel, *Jewish Pirates* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1984; Hebrew).

10 Merav Banai, "Piracy in the Ancient World," in *Pirates: The Skull and Crossbones. Exhibition Catalogue,* eds. Ruthi Gertwagen and Avshalom Zemer (Haifa: National Maritime Museum, 2002; Hebrew/English); 250–240; Michael Studemund-Halévy, "Piraten," in Enzyklopädie Jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur. Im Auftrag der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig herausgegeben von Dan Diner (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler/Springer, 2011–2017), vol. 4, 2013, 547–549; for ancient piracy, see Philip de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

With the ever-present threat of piracy, the Mediterranean and the oceans became over the centuries an international space of injustice, a lawless space, or one over which claims of sovereignty proved difficult to enforce, counting, on the one hand, states, and, on the other, individuals operating on behalf of states and trading companies and on their own account.[11] Unlike the merchant profession, piracy that plagued shipping and sea transport is considered an accepted means of personal gain, and the profession of a pirate is questioned just as much as that of a hunter or fisherman.[12]

Piracy and privateering, for example, were considered by the *Ma'amad* (Sefardic Council of Elders) a dishonest dealing, a negative transition in the image of the Jewish congregations, placing the community at great loss and risk. Thus, the *Ma'amad* of the Portuguese Nation in Hamburg punished six members of the community with the *herem* (ban) for robbery of a plough, – on its way to Rouen, – to collect the amount of its insurance policy.[13]

That there were also important Jews among these minor historical figures is confirmed by historical testimonies, at least in the case of Sinan the Jew, Samuel Pal[l]ache, Benjamin Franks and El Pirata Moisés. There may well have been other Jewish fortune seekers at sea, but that falls (very often) into the realm of fantasy.

2 Antiquity – *S'finot piratim*

The history of maritime trade has been accompanied since its beginnings by reports, mythical tales, legends, and unheard-of incidents, above all myths about desperados at sea. In the Greek mythology, Nauplius (Ναύπλιος, i.e. 'seafarer', in Greek), the son of Poseidon, was the first sailor and navigator and was also engaged in piracy and slave trading (in the Hellenistic period the main difference between piracy and warfare was the scale of activity). Many pirates were engaged in legalized sea robbery, like the Cilicians, Illyrians, and Athenians, who in their heyday rendered the Mediterranean, a hotbed of

11 Evangelos P. Samios, *Die Piraterie als völkerrechtliches Delikt,* Ph. D. diss. (Greifswald: J. Abel, 1899).

12 David Abulafia, *The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 88.

13 State Archive of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Jüdische Gemeinden 993, *Livro da Nação,* vol. I, 380.

piracy, with more than a thousand ships plundering the shores as they passed and taking slaves wherever they could find them.

Early references to seaborne raiders with Jewish roots can be found already in antiquity. Much feared on the high sea as well as along the Mediterranean coast were the *s'finot piratim* (ספינות הפיראטים), the pirate ships. Graffiti of a single-row pirate galley with attackers at the bow carrying arrow, bow, and spear in pursuit of two merchant ships decorate the Greek-Roman style ceremonial tomb of Jason, erected in the time of the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaios (1st century BC.) in the Kidron Valley in Jerusalem. Numerous inscriptions assignable to this period record campaigns and sudden attacks by unidentified pirates carried out in various areas of the coastal cities on the Aegean and Ionian islands. The historians Flavius Josephus and Strabo also refer to early Jewish piracy and a stronghold of Jewish-Hasmonean pirates in Joppa (Jaffa).[14]

3 In the Mediterranean – Sinan, the Jew, and Samuel Pal[l]ache, servant to several masters

"Sinan, whose last name is Cœfut, a Jew from the city of Smyrna, a sea pirate possessed of an excellent mind and skill, especially in shipping" – this is how the French engraver and author Jean-Jacques Boissard describes the legendary pirate Sinan in his book *Leben und Contrafeiten der Türkischen und Persischen Sultanen,* published in 1596.[15] In countless, mostly fanciful accounts, the renegade makes a career for himself as Sinan the Jew, Sinān Ra'is [Arabic for 'sea

[14] Patai, *The Children of Noah,* 43; Kashtan, *Seafaring and the Jews;* Tolkowsky, *They Took to the Sea;* Orit Rotgaizer and Sa'ar Nudel, "Piracy, and the Jews (2nd century BCE – 19th century CE)," in *Pirates: The Skull and Crossbones. Exhibition Catalogue,* eds. Ruthi Gertwagen and Avshalom Zemer (Haifa: National Maritime Museum, 2002; Hebrew/English), 216–222; Robert Stieglitz, "Hebrew Seafaring in then Biblical Period," in *Seafaring and the Jews,* ed. Nadav Kashtan (London: Cass, 2001), 5–28; Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World;* Studemund-Halévy, "Piraten"; Michael Studemund-Halévy, "Auf der Suche nach koscheren Piraten," in *Rache. Geschichte und Phantasie,* eds. Max Czollek, Erik Riedel and Mirjam Wenzel (Munich: Hanser, 2022), 94–99.

[15] Lives and portraits of Turkish and Persian sultans from / Ottoman times / to the current Sultan Mahomet II. Also containing historical descriptions / and true outlines of many other noteworthy heroes and heroines, all artfully reproduced using ancient metals, and initially offered to the Holy Roman Emperor Mt. Ferdinand from Constantinople: Originally written in Latin by the scholar H. I. I. Boyssardo V. / and adorned with short poems / but now translated into German. Delicately engraved in copper and republished, cf. Diterich von Bry Leodien (Frankfurt: Kollitz, 1596), 267–273 [my translation].

captain'], Sinão o Judeu, Çifut Sinan, Sinan Cœfvt, etc.).[16] The significance of his name 'the Jew', however, is obscure.

The pirate or corsair Sinan, born in Smyrna as a descendant of Spanish exiles (Sinan's Jewish history is somewhat obscure), is one of a few Jewish and Christian renegades given the opportunity by the Ottoman rulers to ascend the political, social, and military ladder by serving as advisors, doctors, or finance ministers, or by pursuing a military career. Sinan made it to the rank of captain and commander of the Ottoman fleet, conducting extensive maritime operations against the Spaniards. In the naval battle of Preveza in 1538, the Ottoman admiral Khayr al-Din Barbarus and his principal lieutenant Sinan defeated the united imperial armada (Holy League) commanded by the Genoese admiral Andrea Doria and supported by Pope Paul III and the Republic of Venice. In 1550 Sinan became governor (*sanjak-bey*) of Algiers and grand admiral (*kapudan pasha*) of the Ottoman fleet. In May 1553, he plundered the coasts of Italy and Sicily and expelled the Genoese from the Corsican port cities of Bastia and Bonifacio. In a letter dated August 16, 1533, the English ambassador to Rome calls him a fearless Jew (*Judeum illum famosum pyratum*),[17] while Protestant theologist Johann Jacob Schudt describes him in his 1734 book *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten* as a Jewish renegade "who has attained great honors among the Turks, just as apostate Christians are otherwise promoted to high dignities and honorary offices".[18] In 1556, Sinan is said to have fallen ill and to have died just days before a planned departure for a raiding mission to the coast of India.[19] At the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, there was a corsair named Solomon Sakit (d. 1724), a Jew from Livorno who also supplied as double agent supplied information and misinformation to Turkey and Algiers about the Christian kingdoms. He is apparently the one referred to in a book published in 1750 about the Barbary

16 The Turks expressed their contempt towards the renegades through insulting epithets, such as *çifut*, for Jew.

17 *Sinan the Jew* is often confused with *Sinanüddin Yusuf Pasha,* an Ottoman admiral of the 16th century who died in Constantinople in 1553 and was buried in Üsküdar, or with *Sinanüddin Fakih Yusuf Pasha,* an Ottoman grand vizier of the 14th century. For more information on Sinan the Jew, cf. Tolkowsky, *They Took to the Sea,* 172–183.

18 Johann Jacob Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten,* vol. 1 (Frankfurt and Leipzig: 1734), chapter 6, 55–56 [my translation].

19 Rotgaizer and Nudel, "Piracy and the Jews," 220–221; Haim Zeev Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa,* vol. 2, 2nd revised edition (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 2.

pirates as having a monopoly over the ransoming of Christian captives in Algiers[20] – Jews captured by pirates could count on rescue by fellow Jews, the ransom was undertaken by the so-called slave banks. There are numerous cases in which the Jewish community boards in the Caribbean, as well as the Jewish communities of Bayonne, Amsterdam, and Hamburg, reported the redemption of Jewish captives of pirates in fulfillment of their halakhic obligation of *pidyon shevuyim* (redeeming captives or prisoners), a communal rather than an individual duty.[21]

In 1608, after the visit of a Dutch delegation to Morocco, Sultan Muley Zidan (Zaydan) appointed the wealthy, learned, polyglot and diplomatically experienced merchant Samuel Palache (Palacci, Palaggi, Pliaji, Falaji, Palazzo, de Palacios) as his envoy and commercial agent in The Hague and Amsterdam, with the express purpose of forging an alliance against Spain and the privateers in the Barbary States.[22] Samuel Palache, son of a rabbi named Isaac, whose ancestors were said to come from Cordoba and are mentioned as rabbis since the 10th century, was charged with assembling a fleet of pirate ships in the United Provinces. He was a *judío de permiso* – that is, a privileged Jew – who acted as a commercial agent or diplomat on behalf of the sultan Muley Zidan, issued with a privateers' license to drive the Spanish off the Moroccan coast.[23] A talented linguist and wandering diplomat, Palache took orders from the Moroccan side, but did not want to get on the wrong side of the Spanish, either. He indicates his willingness to convert to Christianity if the Spanish

20 Rotgaizer and Nudel, "Piracy and the Jews," 219.

21 In the 16th and 17th centuries, guilds or brotherhoods arose for "prisoner rescue" (mitzva of captives) who had fallen into the hands of privateers. Spain did not have such cofradia (religious brotherhoods) as in Italy (Livorno and Venice) or later in Amsterdam or Hamburg, see Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles,* vol. 1, 223–225; Rotgaizer and Nudel, "Piracy and the Jews," 219; Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom,* 49, 66, and fn. 89.

22 Abraham I. Laredo, *Les noms des Juifs du Maroc* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2008); Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa,* vol. 2, 212–218; Rotgaizer and Nudel, "Piracy and the Jews," 219; E. M. Koen, "Notarial records Relating to the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam up to 1639," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 11, no. 1 (1977): 81–96, here 95.

23 A *judío de permiso* is a practicing Jew who, following the expulsion of 1492, is granted permission to reside in Spain on the condition that he or she wears a sign on the external clothing identifying its owner as a Jew.

were willing to accept him into their secret service. From then on, he maintained close ties with the Spanish court, providing it with secret information about Dutch Moroccan relations. At the same time, he passed information on the Spanish to the Dutch and the Moroccans. As a triple agent he worked both for and against three countries – Morocco, Holland, and Spain – and spent his entire life navigating between four religious worlds: the Jewish, the Muslim, the Catholic, and the Protestant. Raised amid Jewish traditions, Palache, as an ambassador and occasional pirate, attaches great importance to eating kosher food and regularly attending synagogue.[24] It thus comes as no surprise that when he arrived in Amsterdam, his luggage contained ritual objects such as a Torah scroll and religious books. They were initially taken to his townhouse, where the first services were held. Some years later they would be used in the second synagogue in Amsterdam, Neve Salom.

On December 24, 1610, the steward or *stadtholder* Maurice of Orange, the State's General, and Samuel Palache agree on an alliance aimed at providing mutual support and weakening Spain both politically and economically. In this treaty, the sultan and Maurice of Orange also grant their agent Samuel Palache the authority to go on privateer voyages and sell the looted goods along the Moroccan coast. The granting of these far-reaching privileges is the first alliance and trade agreement between a European and a non-Christian state.

Samuel Palache was successful not only as a diplomat for foreign masters but also as a privateer in his own cause. In 1614, on a return voyage from Asfi to Rotterdam, he seizes a Portuguese caravel and a Spanish ship off the Azores, leaves the crews behind on the Azorean island of Santa Maria and takes over the cargo. Not long after, he appropriates the cargo of the English sailing ship *Penelope.* Towards the end of 1614, when a heavy storm forces him to seek refuge in Plymouth, he is captured and jailed at the behest of Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, who served as the Spanish ambassador to England from 1613 to 1622 and and again a few years afterwards. He claimed that Palache was a pirate who converted to Judaism. After paying a large ransom and with the help of bribes from English officials, Palache was able to return

[24] Mercedes García Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 85.

to Amsterdam.[25] The prize was then divided between him, the captain, and the crew. Shortly after the trial, Palache fell ill and died two years later, on February 4, 1616, in The Hague.[26]

Samuel Palache, who succeeded in obtaining the right of settlement for the Jews in Amsterdam eight years earlier (though not for himself), found his final resting place in the Portuguese cemetery *Beth Haim* in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel near Amsterdam, where he was buried in the presence of Maurice of Orange and the assembly of the estates. The inscription on his gravestone reads:

> This is the monument on the final resting place of the learned, pious, and prominent man who carried out his duties to God and his fellow men, of the honorable Haham Samuel Palache, of blessed memory who was called to the heavenly abode on Friday 17 Shevat of the year [5]376.[27]

4 Were there Jewish pirates of the Caribbean? – El Pirata Moisés

Jewish desperados at sea can be located not only in antiquity and in the Mediterranean but since the 16th century especially in the Atlantic, which becomes an Iberian Catholic Atlantic for the colonial powers Spain and Portugal, a Protestant Atlantic for Holland and England, and an enterprising and itinerant Atlantic for the Portuguese Jews (*conversos, Neuchristen, ex-Marranos*) from Recife, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Livorno, and London, who became therein a significant minority. They used the lawless expanses of the seas for their dangerous but profitable business from the 16th to the 18th century. Sefardic Jews and conversos played a central role in the 16th and 17th centuries as pioneers, traders, and settlers in the progressive colonization of the Caribbean region, which was accompanied by the expansion of long-distance trade

[25] David Corcos-Abulafia, "Samuel Palache and his Trial in London," *Zion* 25, no. 2 (1960): 122–133 [Hebrew]; Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa,* vol. 2, 217; David Bensoussan, *Il Était Une Fois Le Maroc: Témoignages Du Passé Judéo-Marocain* (Paris: L'Universe, 2012), 101.

[26] For the gravestone of Samuel Palache (c. 1550–1616) at the Portuguese cemetery Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, cf. L. Alvares Vega, *Het Beth Haim van Ouderkerk* (Ouderkerk aan de Amstel: Pirola, 2005), 27.

[27] D. Henriques de Castro Mz., *Keur van grafsteenen op de Portuguees-Israelitische begraafplaats te Ouderkerk aan de Amstel* (Ouderkerk aan de Amstel: Stichting tot Instandhouding en Onderhoud van Historische Joodse Begraafplaatsen in Nederland, 1999), 91–94; García-Arenal and Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds,* 100.

worldwide. After the rejections and persecutions in Europe, the New World at the same time enabled them to create a Jewish Atlantic and a Jewish World (*Mundo Judío*) with Jewish spaces and places.

However, Jewish and New Christian pirates first began to appear in large numbers at the start of colonial expansion in the 16th century, as sea trade was extended from the European inland seas along Spanish and Portuguese trade routes across the oceans. As the sea trade flourished, four regional centers of piracy emerged that would continue on into the 19th century: the Caribbean, the coast of West Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean. The pirates with letters of marque[28] included, particularly in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean, numerous Jews and New Christians with anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic motives, whose ancestors, or who themselves, had left the Iberian Peninsula because of social discrimination and persecution by the Inquisition or forced baptism. They almost always did business under the protection of or under contract with Ottoman rulers, the English, the Dutch, or trade companies. Sefardic and Ashkenazi Jews had shared financial interests with privateers (smuggling) but were more victims of pirates than perpetrators in piracy, since Jewish merchants from Barbados, Jamaica, and Curaçao had to fear that pirates would attack their ships, take the crew to Spanish territories, or bring them before an Inquisition court – extemporaneous pirate-Inquisitions were a pervasive threat for Caribbean Jewish seafarers that prompted the carrying of affidavits regarding their birth as Jews, which they could then produce in case of capture by Spanish pirates. After all, the Spanish were targeting conversos, not Jews.[29] However, estimating the proportion of New Christians (*conversos, cristãos novos*) and old Christians (*cristãos velhos*) among the privateers is difficult, since only the narrow criteria of the Inquisition determined who was considered a new Christian and who was not. In addition to the many who died in privateering, on the gallows, or in shipwrecks, some of them died highly respected, were buried in Jewish cemeteries and with gravestones that portrayed the deceased as pious men.

[28] A 'letter of marque' was the official commission issued by a sovereign government authorizing attacks on merchant vessels with which that government was at war.

[29] Mirvis, *The Jews of Eighteenth-Century Jamaica,* 50; Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles,* vol. 1, 225–225.

Commissioned by Sefardic or New Christian merchants from Curaçao and St. Eustatius, but also in the service of England, France, and the Netherlands, the pirates and privateers fought on the "silver route", the Spanish Main, to intercept silver destined for Spain from Mexico, Central as well as South America. The Sefardic merchants in Curaçao gave their merchant or privateer ships biblical names such as *Zion, Queen Esther, Samuel the Prophet,* or *Shield of Abraham,* even though this put them at risk of being attacked by the Spanish as 'Jewish' ships. On September 8, 1628, off the coast of Cuba, Dutch Vice Admiral Piet Pieterszoon Hein (1577–1629) of the Dutch West India Company (*Geoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie*) captured, with 25 ships, nine of the 12 ships of the legendary Spanish Silver Fleet (*flota de Indias*). His booty was worth twelve million guilders. Hein received support from the legendary *El Pirata Moisés,* veteran of Dutch campaigns in Brazil and an active, anti-Iberian privateer. Like many of his contemporary pirates, his life is shrouded in mystery. *El Pirata Moisés* was born as Antônio Vaz Henriquez/Vaes de Leon in 1602 to a New Christian family in Antequera or Amsterdam (his father was Abraham Cohen Henriques, alias Francisco Vaz/Vaez, born c. 1572 in Leon, who died in 1638 in Amsterdam and was buried in the *Beth Haim* at Ouderkerk).[30] In 1626, Moses Cohen Henriques retreated with his Jewish crew and his brother Abraham Cohen to Recife, where he is said to have officially returned to Judaism as Moisés Cohen Henriques and acquired the pirate island named after him, Antônio Vaz. On this island the colonial governor, Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, built the town of Mauritsstaad/Mauricia. Subsequently, he laid the groundwork for the Dutch invasion of Brazil. He traveled to Amsterdam and returned to Brazil in 1634 as commander of his ship *As três torres* and 17 additional ships, accompanied by many Jewish sailors, among them Josua Cohen (Antônio Mendes Peixoto) and Jacob Serra (Francisco Serra). In 1637 the Dutch conquered the entire northwestern region of Brazil within two weeks. In 1648 in Recife Cohen Henriques became a member of the Amsterdam-affiliated synagogal community *Kahal Zur Israel* and later of the *Kahal Kadosh Magen Abraham* community led by Rabbi Moses Rafael d'Aguilar on

[30] Isaac S. Emmanuel, *Precious Stones of the Jews of Curaçao* (New York: Bloch, 1957), 272–278; children: Judith, Aron (d. 1653), David [d. 1679], Mozes, Jacob. Epitaph: Sepultura/de varao Abraham Cohen Henriques/que deu sua alma a seu criador/22 Elul 5398 [1. September 1638].

the island Antônio Vaz.[31] Cohen Henriques was later accused in Madrid by the Portuguese Estevão de Aires da Fonseca of being responsible, along with Jews from Amsterdam, for the capture of Pernambuco, where he ended up living with the Dutch for a year with the Dutch for a year in that latter city.[32]

After the reconquest of Recife by the Portuguese in 1654, many Jews and New Christians left the city and sailed for the Caribbean on the Dutch frigate *Valk* but fell into the hands of Spanish pirates, who took them to Jamaica. While the baptized Jews were immediately handed over to the court of the Inquisition in Cartagena despite diplomatic intervention by Holland, 23 practicing Jews were able to continue their journey. They all eventually arrived – or so the legend goes – in Nieuw Amsterdam (today's New York), where they were accepted only after the intervention of the Amsterdam rabbi Menasse ben Israel. There they founded the first (permanent) Jewish kahal community in North America.

Moses Cohen Henriques was not among the new settlers staying instead in the Caribbean. He became an advisor to the legendary English pirate Sir Henry Morgan (1635–1688) and a member of the Brothers of the Coast, a group of privateers guided by utopian ideas of liberty and equality that had a permanent and protected settlement on the small Caribbean island of Tortuga at the turn of the 16th to 17th century.[33] He is believed to have died in Barbados in 1663 or 1664.[34]

5 Atlantic – Benjamin Franks, the reluctant pirate

Over the course of his turbulent life, the Danish jewel merchant Benjamin de Aaron Franks, born in Altona (1649?), a town near Hamburg that was held at that time by the Danes,[35] repeatedly encountered pirates and privateers.

31 Moisés Orfali, *Isaac Aboab da Fonseca. Jewish Leadership in the New World* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2021), 23–24, 92, 97, 181.

32 Consejo de la Inquisición, lib. 49, fol. 45; Orfali, 23–24.

33 Ross Kenneth Urken, "The Forgotten Jewish Pirates of Jamaica," in *Smithonian Magazine,* July 7, 2016.

34 Emmanuel, *Precious Stones of the Jews of Curaçao,* 274. The place of his burial, however, has not been found to this day.

35 For his biography, see Samuel Oppenheim, "Benjamin Franks, Merchant, and Captain Kidd, Pirate," *PAJHS* 31 (1928): 229–234; Fritz Heymann, "Der Mann, der mit Kapitän Kidd segelte," in *Der Chevalier von Geldern,* ed. Fritz Heymann (Amsterdam: Querido, 1937), 182–208; Matt Goldish, "The Strange Adventures of Benjamin Franks, an Ashkenazi Pioneer in the Ameri-

He traveled to the English colony of Jamaica and ran a lucrative diamond trade in the notorious pirates' nest of Port Royal. After losing his considerable fortune in the devastating Port Royal earthquake of June 1692, he spends a few years living in Barbados and St. Thomas before moving on to New York. He may have been the first Franks in America. Since his business was going badly, Franks decides to travel to Surat, India, then a well-known hub of the gemstone industry, to seek his fortune as a gem merchant once again. On September 6, 1696, he enlisted on the *Adventure Galley* as a starboard watchman.[36] As a passenger he had no right to demand a share of prize money but had nevertheless to wield a grappling hook and rifle in case of an attack. This three-master, launched only shortly before in Deptford, England, was under the command of the tyrannical captain William Kidd, the most famous pirate in American history, described by King William III as his "loyal and beloved friend."[37] Provided with official *letters of marque* and with the approval of the East Indian Company, Kidd was allowed to capture and plunder the ships and the cargoes of the Spanish and French buccaneers and to attack pirate ships on the trade routes of the Indian Ocean. However, the voyage was ill-starred. Members of the crew fell victim to cholera along the way, and on failing to locate any pirate ships to capture in the Red Sea in the hope of good bounty, the sailors staged a mutiny. After several incidents with English and Portuguese ships as well as with a ship belonging to the Muslim pilgrim fleet, Captain Kidd anchored in the Arabian Sea and in Karwar, near Goa, to take on water and food. Here he was discovered by agents of the East India Company, which held the shipping monopoly in the Indian Ocean and now considered Kidd a pirate to be hunted down rather than the pirate hunter he himself claimed to be. Benjamin Franks escaped from the ship by stealth and made his way to Bombay (today Mumbai). From there, on October 20, 1697, he reported to

cas," in *The Jews in the Caribbean,* ed. Jane Gerber (Oxford: Littman Library, 2014), 311–318; Mirvis, *The Jews of Eighteenth-Century Jamaica,* 50–51. No members of the Jewish Franks family are buried in the Jewish cemeteries in Hamburg, Altona, or Denmark, see Julius Margolinsky, *Jødiske dødsfald i Danmark, 1693–1976* (Copenhagen: Dansk Historik Håndbogsforlag, 1978); Michael Studemund-Halévy, *Biographisches Lexikon der Hamburger Sefarden* (Hamburg: Christians, 2000).

36 Lincoln P. Paine, *Warships of the World to 1900* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 1.

37 Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Richard Zacks, *The Pirate Hunter: The True Story of Captain Kidd* (New York, NY: Hyperion, 2002).

London about his arduous and adventurous journey. In an affidavit, he described himself as a privateer and, being Jewish, swore on the Hebrew Bible that he had never participated in acts of piracy as a member of Kidd's crew ("this I do swear by the Old Testament to the best of my knowledge and what I have heard of the Seamen that all the above written is true").[38] It is this affidavit that later resulted in Kidd being sent to the gallows in an unfair trial held in London on May 23, 1701.[39]

Even though Benjamin Franks, who traveled to England before the trial, was acquitted of the charge of piracy, he had at least one more involuntary encounter with pirates. When he set out from Bristol for Philadelphia after the trial in London, his ship, the *Pennsylvania Merchant,* was captured by the French pirate ship *La Paix* during the crossing, and Franks was taken prisoner. On April 29, 1700, the *La Paix,* under the command of the notorious French pirate Louis Guittar, was in turn attacked off the Virginian coast by the English battleship *Shoreham.* Franks was finally free and went on to New York, where he died sometime after 1716.

6 Epilogue

Pirates, romanticized or demonized in popular culture, lend themselves as a projection surface because they left no written sources, only captivity narratives; several of these reports went through many print runs or were translated into several major European languages. The mythologization of being a pirate is based primarily in the lack of first-person documents (the identity of a pirate is always in question) and the fact that most European narratives are derived from the seventeenth-century Dutch buccaneer Alexander Olivier Exquemelin's pirate book of 1678. Nevertheless, pirates – at least those who are assumed to be of Jewish origin – belonged to or were on the payroll of the ruling elite. They achieved fame and were admired by the people and ennobled by the crown like the pirate captain Henry Morgan, who set flame to the city of Panama in 1670.

38 Deposition of Benjamin Franks October 20, 1697, in *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents,* ed. John Franklin Jameson (New York, 1970), 190–195; Heymann, "Der Mann, der mit Kapitän Kidd segelte," 191–197. Mark P. Donnelly and Daniel Diehl, *Pirates of Virginia: Plunder and High Adventure on the Old Dominion Coastline* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole, 2014), 74–80.

39 Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates;* Zacks, *The Pirate Hunter.*

However, the longing for a kosher version of pirate captains, who made the oceans unsafe with a messianic sense of mission, living Jewish values, observing mitzvot and dietary laws, and who refrained from engaging in fighting during the Sabbath and the High Holidays, springs from a naive fantasy and serves solely to satisfy a need for sensational headlines and the longing for myths of a Jewish hero, factual and fictional. In some circumstances, so does a Hollywood-inspired Jewish pirate.[40]

[40] See, for example, the unspeakable, gimmicky book by Edward Kritzler, cf. Kritzler, *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean.*

Book Reviews

Shaul Magid, Meir Kahane: The Public Life and Political Thought of an American Jewish Radical (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), 296 pp., $ 35.00.

Meir Kahane, as Shaul Magid remarks at the start of his new book published with Princeton University Press, "was more than a militant rabbi and gadfly in American and later Israeli society," and although he is probably not as popular or well-known as other figures of America's Jewish history, according to Magid he "represented a particular kind of reactionary and radical critique of the liberal establishment of postwar America that has gone largely unexplored" (p. ix). Kahane founded the Jewish Defense League (JDL) in New York City in 1968 and became a well-known anti-left Jewish radical in the United States before he moved to Israel in 1971, where he turned into a racist politician and figurehead of his Kach party – for which he was elected to the Knesset in 1984, before the party was banned in 1986 due to racism – until he was assassinated in New York in 1990 as probably one of the first victims of an Al-Qaeda terrorist (p. 192). This figure "seems on the one hand to be a persona non grata in American Jewry, and yet on the other hand a figure whose presence remains ubiquitous, almost like part of the subconscious of a certain slice of American Judaism, especially Modern Orthodoxy" (p. 1). In contrast to the "classic" Jewish radical of the Left, like the famous socialists or anarchists who shaped the American radical tradition during the long 19th century, Kahane in a way represented a new struggle for Jewish identity at a time in which the assimilation of the Jewry to the American way of life of the upper class and antisemitism from the Black community threatened and worried young Jews who were looking for an identity. Kahane, who "represented Jewish pride" (p. 3) and who "clearly had aspirations of grandeur" (p. 4), and the JDL offered them an alternative, a way to be "New Jews" who could be proud about their own Jewishness.

Magid's very intriguing and well-written book presents Kahane's story in its relation to the history of Jewish radicalism in the United States, linking it to the political context of the 1960s and 1970s (ch. 1–4), and also offers some insights into the thoughts Kahane developed while in Israel (ch. 5–6). The author provides many interesting insights into the "colorful and controversial" life of Kahane and tries to integrate it into the "history of American Jews and Judaism," which, according to Magid, "cannot be told without him" (p. 5).

The author does not offer "a biography in any conventional sense" (p. 7) but rather intends to "interweav[e] accounts of his life, activities, and activism with close analysis of his writings" (p. 9). This important book thereby links the life of a right-wing Jewish radical to the political and social spatialities that created Kahane and consequently offers an intriguing account of a period of American (Jewish) history that was in many ways contested by different forces all struggling for a future that was different, especially with regard to social structures and questions about equality and justice. Magid discusses Kahane's position toward and consideration of American liberalism in the first two chapters (pp. 1–74) before analyzing the protagonist's thoughts in relation to the Black Power movement (pp. 75–106), the Soviet Jewry movement, the Vietnam War, and communism more generally (ch. 4).

The founding of the JDL was stimulated by increasing Black antisemitism that was particularly expressed during the Ocean Hill-Brownsville strike in Brooklyn in 1968 (pp. 88–91). This radical Jewish organization, and Kahane as its leading figure, also expressed a rivalry between Jews and Blacks, as a quote from the latter during a press interview emphasizes: "Most Jews came here in galleys long after the blacks were freed. Blacks deserve nothing from us, and that is what they will get. […] If anyone is talking about reparations and if anyone deserves it, we Jews are the first in line" (p. 92). The rivalry between the civil rights movement and Black nationalism, however, did not prevent Kahane from using similar ideas and even developing a form of "Judeo-pessimism" that was often inspired by Afro-pessimist ideas (pp. 87, 94). Next to his criticism of liberal American Jewry and Black nationalism, Kahane also expressed radical ideas against communism, which he actively tried to fight by supporting the Vietnam War together with a college friend, the political lobbyist Joseph Chubra, in Washington, D.C. (pp. 108–111). Communism, according to Kahane, presented "two major challenges to the survival of Jews and Judaism: the erasure of Jewish religious difference and the endangerment of Jewish national aspirations" (p. 111). His anti-Soviet positions were consequently an extension of his national struggle for Jewish identity to the international arena. Kahane therefore remained very American, something that would impact his eventual failure in Israel because, as Magid's book argues, "while Kahane left America […], America never left Kahane" (p. 191). He remained an "American Jew" and failed to overcome the boundaries of his own national radical identity (p. 191). However, Kahane and his ideas remain alive

today, as he "constructed his own countercultural Judaism," and as a Jewish radical as such, he is still a "vexing, disturbing, and compelling product of postwar America" (p. 201).

Magid's masterfully crafted and incisive work allows the reader to follow the genesis of Kahane as an intellectual radical and the transformation of his ideas during the 1960s and 1970s in the United States and the 1980s in Israel. The book, as Magid intended, thus does not offer a classic biography but rather a highly recommended study of right-wing Jewish radicalism in the context of post-WWII America.

Frank Jacob, Bodø (Norway)

Barry Trachtenberg, The Holocaust & the Exile of Yiddish: A History of the Algemeyne Entsiklopedye (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2022), 336 pp., $ 37.50.

In 1931, a group of prominent Yiddish cultural activists, including the eminent Jewish historian Simon Dubnow, convened in Berlin to hatch plans for a Yiddish-language encyclopedia to serve the needs of Yiddish speakers across the globe. Dubnow implored those present to commit to the ambitious project of producing not a Jewish encyclopedia but an encyclopedia in Yiddish, proclaiming: "An encyclopedia is a people's book, one that each nation must possess." (p. 21) Dubnow and his vision of a Yiddish-language general encyclopedia captures the brash optimism of the interwar period, when Yiddish artists and cultural activists envisioned a bright future for Yiddish culture on the European continent. He would not live to see the realization of this dream, murdered at the hands of the Nazis in the Riga ghetto, but the dream would not entirely die with him either. As Barry Trachtenberg illuminates in his important and insightful history of the *Algemeyne entsiklopedye,* the Yiddish cultural nationalist dreams of the 1920s and 1930s would be utterly transformed by the throes of World War II and the annihilation of Jewish Europe, but not destroyed.

The work of the *Algemeyne entsiklopedye* began in Berlin of the 1930s, moved to Paris with Hitler's rise to power, and ultimately landed in post-World War II America where it continued for two decades, into the 1960s. Its history wouldn't be written until the twenty-first century, long after its contributors had passed and well after the disappearance of its imagined

audience. Envisioned as a ten-volume project, the encyclopedia would never be completed. The Yiddish cultural dream that flourished in the interwar period was reduced to a preservation project in the postwar moment. It is a story of the cultural heroism of a group of Yiddish writers and thinkers who firmly believed in the substance of the Yiddish cultural project, who understood the stakes of what was being lost, and selflessly dedicated themselves to rescuing the fragments of the stalled project of diaspora nationalism, even as they recognized its many failings. In *The Holocaust and the Exile of Yiddish,* Trachtenberg records the encyclopedia's epic journey through the devastation of war and genocide, tracing the fate of the volumes and the many hands who participated in it.

In telling the story of the *Algemeyne entsiklopedye,* Trachtenberg follows the long arc of Yiddish culture, offering one of the few glimpses of "the rare and frayed threads of continuity" (p. 30) of a cultural project that spanned the pre- and post-Holocaust eras. The book is divided into three long chapters each of which narrates the project in its different centers: Berlin, Paris, and New York. Trachtenberg weaves the history of the encyclopedia into the broader cultural history of Yiddish in the era under consideration. As Trachtenberg explains, the large majority of such endeavors were usually taken on by state institutions, but Yiddish had no national home, and no national language institute. There was only the YIVO Institute in Vilna, which sought to support Yiddish cultural life, and organizations like the Dubnow Fund in Berlin. Both began to collaborate on the project, however, for only a short time because of the difficulties of working across borders and the financial strain YIVO was facing after erecting a new building. The story would ultimately take off in Berlin, in a period of Yiddish cultural possibility that was short-lived for the city.

The plan agreed upon by all in Berlin was to publish ten volumes on general topics, and a supplemental volume on Jewish subjects, at a rate of two volumes a year. A fundraising tour ensued, with an emissary sent as far as the United States. In the absence of a state authorizing body, this fragile enterprise attracted both praise and criticism, for its politics and its cultural ambitions. Ben Zion Goldberg, the New York editor of the *Der tog* (*The day*), described the encyclopedia as "momentous," but to the unknown H. Yulski, writing for a Bundist literary journal, the editors of the project all in Berlin were situated at too great a distance from their Eastern European brethren to provide

a meaningful project. Yosef Yashunsky in the pages of *YIVO bleter* wrote that the encyclopedists were "attempting to produce a work of general reference, which rested outside the area of their expertise and experiences." (p. 63) The encyclopedia would be haunted by the tension between the dream of a Yiddish-language general reference work and a Yiddish-language encyclopedia of eastern European Jewish life. Indeed, the authors would struggle to create an encyclopedia of knowledge for a language that lacked a university or formal academic body. Moreover, struggling to work in the wake of the financial crises that unfolded across Europe, the Berlin based editors managed to publish a sample volume to attract subscriptions in 1932, which Trachtenberg describes as "one of the last expressions of Jewish optimism about the future of European Jewry." (p. 57) It is hard not to see the doom approaching in the narrative.

The first volume of the Encyclopedia would appear in 1934 in Paris, where many of the Berlin editors fled after Hitler's rise to power. Its poignant that for the next seven years a group of refugees continued so tirelessly to work towards the encyclopedia in a France that no longer welcomed refugees with open arms. The editors had to find new contributors, raise funds, and locate amenable printers for the project. It took time to establish the locations of many scattered contributors. Simon Dubnow, for instance, would make the fatal choice to emigrate to Latvia in this period. Editors had to rely on correspondence to gather the volumes, which delayed the project considerably. The first volume, when it finally appeared, was celebrated internationally. Trachtenberg observes here that entries on pre-modern Jewish life were connected to religion, while the ones on modern Jewry were secular, many on leftist politics, reflecting the ideological worldview of the editors. Paris was also the printing place for the next three volumes of the general encyclopedia and two volumes of the Jewish supplement, *Yidn alef and beys*. These volumes continued the spirit in which the *Encyclopedia* was imagined in the 1930s, envisioning a cosmopolitan world that Jews could participate in, in Yiddish.

Trachtenberg's chapter on the Paris era of the encyclopedia captures the desperation, pathos, and bravery of its editors and authors as they faced the precarity of their own circumstances. Towards the end of the chapter, Trachtenberg describes a frenzied escape to the South of France and desperate attempts to immigrate. The barriers to immigration were enormous. The U.S.

demanded a series of visas almost impossible to obtain. The Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC) in New York petitioned the U.S. government for emergency visas as did the Jewish Labor Committee, which ultimately persuaded the U.S. to issue visas to Raphael Abramovitsh and other leftist Jewish activists who were working on the encyclopedia. The JLC executive director, Isaiah Minkoff, the AFL Labor President, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union President, and the *Forverts* general manager met with then Secretary of State Cordell Hull. The pull of Jewish and labor organizations might be hard to fathom today but attests to the stature of the Jewish left in the U.S. at the time. Many of the *Encyclopedia* staff were granted safe passage to the U.S., where they set about picking up the pieces of their cultural project. It was their connections to the U.S. labor movement that ensured that survival.

Once in New York, the project faced new obstacles. On the one hand, the editors were safe and living in a city with numerous Jewish cultural institutions willing to support them. On the other hand, their imagined audience who might have turned to a Yiddish encyclopedia for general knowledge had all but disappeared, as had the eastern European Jewish world they came from. The editors were aging, and their numbers were further diminished. They had arrived in a new country with many contradictions, as Trachtenberg observes. The Jewish community was affluent but lacking in political pull needed to upend restrictive immigration laws. Granted entry to the U.S. on the condition that they wouldn't take up political activity, their work on the encyclopedia and other cultural endeavors was one through which they might fight fascism. It was in New York that they completed volume five of the general encyclopedia, and it was in New York that they came to understand their once vibrant vision of the project was to become a memorial to a language and culture now endangered. After volume five, the project continued Jewish topics alone, a monument to the lost communities and a reckoning with the new shape of contemporary Jewry.

This group of self-taught Jewish immigrant intellectuals was ultimately followed by a new generation of American-born scholars and writers who continued the work of documenting an eastern European Jewish past, grappling with the face and meaning of Jewish life in post-Holocaust America. It would be interesting for the book to think more not only about the project that died but also the ways it contributed to an American cultural life in which Yiddish was no longer the lingua franca. Ultimately, the book tells the story

of a burgeoning moment in Yiddish culture, and of the fate of that culture in post-war America, a story waiting to be heard, and one that is accessible to students and scholars alike.

Allison Schachter, Nashville/Tennessee (USA)

Tamara Or, Heimat im Exil: Eine hebräische Diasporakultur in Berlin 1897–1933 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020), 431 S., 42,00 €.

Israelis in Berlin – das ist spätestens seit Fania Oz-Salzbergers gleichnamiger Studie von 2001 keine wirkliche Neuigkeit mehr, sondern ein regelrechter Topos im Diskurs um deutsch-jüdische und deutsch-israelische Verhältnisse im 21. Jahrhundert geworden. Aber eine lebendige hebräische Bewegung im Berlin der Weimarer Republik – mit Vereinen und Verlagen, Sprachschulen, Bibliotheken und literarischen Zirkeln? Berlin als Knotenpunkt internationaler Hebraisten-Netzwerke und Schauplatz hitziger Diskussionen über das Für und Wider einer selbstbewussten hebräischen Kultur in der Diaspora? Das Wissen um diese aufschlussreiche Episode in der Geschichte der Wiederbelebung des Hebräischen als Alltags- und Kultursprache ist vermutlich weit weniger verbreitet. Mit *Heimat im Exil* hat Tamara Or quellen- und kenntnisreich die erste umfassende Arbeit zur Geschichte der hebräischen Bewegung in Berlin vorgelegt: von den zarten Anfängen in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten des Kaiserreichs über eine erstaunliche Blüte in den 1920ern bis zum abrupten Ende 1933, das der bemerkenswerten Erfolgsgeschichte retrospektiv eine gewisse Tragik verlieh.

In drei großen Abschnitten zeichnet die Autorin diese Geschichte nach. Im ersten Kapitel „Zwei Nationen am Sinai?“, das die Jahre 1902 bis 1917 umfasst, geht es unter anderem um die Migration aufklärerischer Ideen aus Westeuropa in den osteuropäisch-jüdischen Ansiedlungsrayon und ihren Einfluss auf die Vorstellungen von einer jüdischen „Nation“. Die ersten Kongresse zur hebräischen Sprache und Kultur werden beschrieben und wichtige Wortführer wie Shai Hurwitz und Micha Josef Berdichewsky vorgestellt. Den in diesen Jahren beginnenden Aktivitäten der hebräischen Bewegung in Berlin (Sprachunterricht, Presse) setzte der Erste Weltkrieg allerdings ein vorläufiges Ende. Der zweite Abschnitt „Nachtasyl Berlin und Bialiks Weimar“ (1918–1924) nimmt die Neuausrichtung vor dem Hintergrund der Weimarer Republik und der infolge des Krieges signifikant gestiegenen ostjüdischen Präsenz in Berlin

in den Blick. Fragen hebräischer Erziehung und hebräischer Buchproduktion rücken in den Mittelpunkt, das hebräische Theater wird als wichtiges Medium entdeckt. Besondere Bedeutung kommt der Anwesenheit von Autoren wie Chaim Nachman Bialik und Samuel Josef Agnon zu, deren Weggang aus Berlin nach Palästina 1924 dann auch dieses Kapitel beschließt. Die anschließende Neukonstituierung der hebräischen Bewegung, die trotz *brain drain* ein ganz neues Selbstbewusstsein entwickelt, ist Gegenstand des dritten Abschnitts „Mahanaim – Doppelte Galut, doppelte Heimat", der die Jahre 1925 bis 1933 abdeckt. Institutionen wie das 1929 gegründete Hebräische Volksheim, Persönlichkeiten wie der Historiker Simon Dubnow und Ereignisse wie der Besuch des hebräischen Theaters Habimah, dessen Unterstützung sich zu einer zentralen Aufgabe entwickelt, prägen diese erneute Phase des Wachstums und der Konsolidierung – bis die Aktivitäten der hebräischen Bewegung Anfang 1933 weitgehend zum Erliegen kommen und von Hilfsangeboten für die Auswanderung aus Deutschland abgelöst werden.

Eine der wichtigsten Materialgrundlagen für die Rekonstruktion dieser Geschichte ist die *Jüdische Rundschau,* Organ der Zionistischen Vereinigung für Deutschland, deren Ausgaben (1902 bis 1938) seit einigen Jahren vollständig digital verfügbar sind. *Heimat im Exil* ist insofern auch ein exemplarischer Beleg für die wissenschaftlichen Potentiale einer umfassenden Digitalisierung historischer Periodika, die anderweitig nicht dokumentierte Ereignisse zugänglich macht und so das kritische Befragen etablierter Geschichtsbilder und -narrative ermöglicht. Doch die enorme Vielzahl der zugrundeliegenden Quellen hat nicht nur Vorteile. Die Argumente sind zwar en détail nachvollziehbar und die Anknüpfungspunkte für weiterführende Forschungen anhand der Quellen- und Literaturangaben sowie der angehängten Verzeichnisse von Adressen, Personen und Institutionen zahlreich. Allerdings trägt das Buch an vielen Stellen etwas zu deutlich die Spuren einer akademischen Qualifikationsschrift. Auf mehr als jeder zehnten Seite überwiegen die Fußnoten, die nicht selten aus langen Listen von Artikeln der *Jüdischen Rundschau* oder ausführlichen Hinweisen und Erläuterungen zusätzlicher Kontexte und Begebenheiten bestehen. Auch die Überfülle der nicht eingebundenen Zitate, die als Motti den einzelnen Abschnitten bis in die dritte Gliederungsebene vorangestellt sind, bezeugt ein gewisses Ungleichgewicht von Dokumentation und Argumentation. Umso lesenswerter ist das konzise Fazit, das nicht nur die zuvor ausführlich dargelegten Ereignisse und Entwicklungen

noch einmal auf wenigen Seiten verdichtet, sondern die Ergebnisse auch sehr deutlich in ein kritisches Verhältnis zum zionistischen Masternarrativ und zu der von diesem Narrativ stark geprägten israelischen Geschichtsschreibung setzt. Angesichts dieser klaren Positionierung ist es bedauerlich, wenn auch vielleicht nicht überraschend, dass die Studie – bislang zumindest – nur auf Deutsch erschienen ist.

Zusätzlich zur verdienstvollen und überaus detaillierten Dokumentation der Aktivitäten und Diskurse im Kontext der hebräischen Bewegung in Berlin ist *Heimat im Exil* von einer Reihe übergeordneter, diachroner Fragestellungen durchzogen, die in ihren jeweils konkreten historischen Manifestationen verhandelt werden: Hebräisch oder Jiddisch – was ist die jüdische Nationalsprache und muss man sich auf *eine* Sprache einigen? Land Israel oder Diaspora – schließen sie einander aus oder brauchen sie einander? Wieso verwendet eine eigentlich säkulare Bewegung beständig religiös besetzte Terminologie? Wie unterscheiden sich unterschiedliche Generationen in ihren Haltungen zu den genannten Fragen? Welche Aufgaben übernehmen Frauen in der hebräischen Bewegung? Wie wirken sich politische Entwicklungen etwa in der Sowjetunion oder in Palästina auf die Aktivitäten und Überzeugungen innerhalb der hebräischen Bewegung aus? Verbindendes Moment all dieser Fragen ist ein ideengeschichtliches Erkenntnisinteresse, das der Migration und Transformation von Konzepten wie Nation und Nationalsprache nachspürt, die sich mal von West nach Ost, mal von Ost nach West bewegen und in der Begegnung und im Austausch der unterschiedlichen Protagonist*innen verändern. Berlin erweist sich in diesen Zusammenhängen mal als Knotenpunkt, mal als Durchgangsstation, mal als Ursprung und mal als Aufnahmeort – und stets als überaus geeignetes Brennglas, um die Entwicklungen und Debatten der international verflochtenen zionistischen und hebräischen Bewegung zu untersuchen. Für die sich 100 Jahre später erneut in Berlin konstituierende hebräischsprachige Diaspora mit ihrem komplexen Verhältnis zum Staat Israel sowie zu zionistischen Mythen und Narrativen bietet *Heimat im Exil* zahlreiche konzeptionelle und kulturelle Bezugsmöglichkeiten, wenn nicht gar eine gewisse historische Legitimation.

Sebastian Schirrmeister, Hamburg

Kathrin Wittler, Morgenländischer Glanz: Eine deutsche jüdische Literaturgeschichte (1750–1850) (= Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 79) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 620 S., 99,00 €.

A photograph from 1903, preserved at the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, shows the Darmstadt-born poet and translator Karl Wolfskehl, all dressed up, in a festive Arab costume, holding a massive book in his hands. When Else Lasker-Schüler, as Prince Jussuf, became acquainted with Wolfskehl in Munich some years later, she persistently addressed him as King Ramsenith. In their poetic correspondence, Lasker-Schüler marked their mutual Jewishness as being oriental and special: "Wann ziehe ich mit dir in den Krieg, holder König? Wir werden auf einem Elephanten sitzen […]." (Else Lasker-Schüler, *Werke und Briefe. Kritische Ausgabe, vol. 6: Briefe 1893–1913,* ed. by Ulrike Marquardt (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 2003), 224) Their kingdoms Gibon and Theben were not to be found on any contemporary map. The elaborate Orientalist imagery both Lasker-Schüler and Wolfskehl used in 'real life' and poetry expressed a persistent experience of Jewish particularity and alienation, in spite of the legal emancipation of Jews in Germany in the second half of the 19th century. By calling Wolfskehl Ramsenith, Lasker-Schüler connected him to Heinrich Heine, whose poem "Rhampsenith" forms part of the *Romanzero* (1851), a volume of poetry featuring Heine's *Hebräische Melodien* – a cycle of poems Lasker-Schüler connected to in 1913 by publishing her own poems under the title *Hebräische Balladen.*

Heine features prominently in Kathrin Wittler's impressive study *Morgenländischer Glanz. Eine deutsche jüdische Literaturgeschichte (1750–1850).* As this book reveals, the letters, literary texts, and portraits of Lasker-Schüler and Wolfskehl are merely late additions and continuations of a meaningful tradition of Jewish Orientalism dating back to a transformative and disruptive time in European Jewish history. Wittler's study, published in 2019, explores Jewish Orientalism as a driving force in the literary field of the Enlightenment and so-called Biedermeier period – and as a phenomenon allowing us to discuss correlations of German and Jewish literary history from a new angle. The author examines how and why writers have related to the *Orient* to mark their writing as a formative part of a long-standing, multi-branched tradition of Jewish literature. Conceptualized as a "literary history", Wittler's study uses

the phenomenon of Orientalism as a hall of mirrors enabling her to discuss texts by authors as different as Heinrich Heine, Joel Jacoby, Fanny Lewald, Salomon Maimon, and Moses Mendelssohn – and to treat them as integral constituents of a larger discourse including non-Jewish scholars and writers such as Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Johann Gottfried Herder, or the Lutheran theologian and Hebraist Frantz Delitzsch.

This study of Jewish Orientalism is a complex undertaking: Wittler situates her dissertation, originally handed in at the Institute for German Literature at the Humboldt University in Berlin, between German Studies, Jewish Studies, and cultural studies of Orientalism. In her introduction, she sketches this triple field of reference as well as her topic's relevance as a background to understand current debates on the history of Orientalism and Colonialism. In this context, comments on the characteristics of German Orientalism before 1871 – its quintessentially literary character ("Morgenlandfahrten in der Poesie […] und Morgenlandträume aus Texten", p. 7), as opposed to British Imperialism – remain vague and leave room for debate, but they account for Wittler's decision to focus on literary texts.

Distancing herself from (monolingual) concepts of a German-Jewish literary history, a narrow modern canon of 20th century writers, essentialist ideas of Jewish literature, and a mere critique of Orientalist imagery, Wittler defines her approach as "gebrauchsgeschichtlich". She focuses on agency, practices, self-positionings, situational and controversial references of writers to the shifting semantic field of the *Orient* ("Morgenland", "Osten", etc.). From this perspective ("Gebrauchsgeschichte statt Bilderkritik", p. 12–14), the author shows that Orientalist framings of Jewish literature left ample room for creative and even contradictory messages. Literature turned into the one arena in which the intermediary role of Jews for West-Eastern transfers was actively and controversially discussed. Thus, Wittler strives to change a conversation that has often centered on non-Jewish Orientalist stereotypes of Jews and Jewish literature, by introducing her readers to an overwhelmingly rich and nuanced set of instruments – figurative speech, rhythmic qualities of language, quotations, allusions to biblical texts etc. – used by Jewish writers to create a distinct yet intermediary space for a Jewish literature vis à vis new concepts of history and national literature – and to define Jewish tradition in the age of emancipation:

> "Der literarische Orientalismus dient […] als ein Instrument, um die vielbeschworene *Entfremdung* von der jüdischen Tradition als eine gezielte *Verfremdung* zu gestalten, durch die überhaupt erst eine 'jüdische Tradition' als solche greifbar – und attraktiv gemacht werden kann." (p. 28)

Morgenländischer Glanz contains four main chapters featuring studies of individual literary texts, framed by an introduction (ch. 1) and a brief conclusion (ch. 6). While these four chapters are structured chronologically, each of them focuses on one specific aspect. Chapter 2 explores ideas of "Hebrew poetry" and the impact of new models of antiquity (Herder etc.) as a key to understand the changing standing of modern Jewish literature. Chapter 3 focuses on figures of speech and Orientalist literary symbols. This chapter is especially worth reading because of its approach to the rich fundus of a metaphorical language drawn from flora and gardening to express aspects of geographical, literary, and cultural transfer, dispersion. Chapter 4 explores references to psalm 137 ("By the rivers of Babylon – / there we sat down and there we wept / when we remembered Zion. […]") across literary media and art in order to show why this one psalm was used as a medium to discuss the possibility of Jewish writing. Chapter 5 follows up on West-Eastern symbolism and focuses on one single poem, Heinrich Heine's "Fichtenbaum und Palme", including its various publishing contexts and usages. This unorthodox decision underlines the poem's extraordinary role and formative function in the context of Wittler's study as well as for modern poetry in general.

Wittler gains her most convincing arguments from nuanced readings of relatively unknown (bilingual) literary texts such as Salomon Jacob Cohen's "An die Muse" (אל הגיון) from his book of poetry *Morgenländische Pflanzen auf nördlichem Boden* (1807). The author's ability to present and use her readings to connect dispersed writings by Jewish and non-Jewish writers to a larger nexus of a German Jewish literary history is striking. She covers and organizes a wide array of literary texts, Jewish as well as non-Jewish, German as well as Hebrew, canonical as well as obscure. Against this background, some of her stylistic decisions seem odd. Wittler's style is compact, dense, elegant, and concrete; and yet, she seems to have felt a need to explicate each step of her approach by referring to an inevitably limited set of phrases ("ich zeige", "ich werde herausarbeiten" etc.). Contrary to their rhetorical function, these repetitive phrases suggest a distrust of the author in the obvious explanatory

power and coherence of her work. Maybe this style as well as some ostentatiously dismissive references to earlier research form part of academic convention; but they are soft spots detracting from the study's overall aplomb: Wittler reveals and discusses a widely under-researched corpus of literary texts. She frames her original approach as a literary history but covers, in fact, far more ground – including contemporary historical and philosophical texts as well as works of art, architecture and, parenthetically, notions of habitus and individual performance – and thus explores transgressive creative literary dynamics of Jewish Orientalism.

Caroline Jessen, Leipzig

Theresa Eisele, Szenen der Wiener Moderne: Drei Artefakte und ihre Vorstellungswelten des Jüdischen (= toldot. Essays zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur 14) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 167 S., 25,00 €.

In ihrem Vorwort zum vorliegenden Essay schreibt Yfaat Weiß, dass dieser „virtuos konzipiert und pointiert formuliert" sei. Um es gleich vorwegzunehmen: Ich gebe ihr Recht. Der Essay von Theresa Eisele „Szenen der Wiener Moderne: Drei Artefakte und ihre Vorstellungswelten des Jüdischen", erschienen 2021 in der Reihe „toldot. Essays zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur" und im Verlag Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht veröffentlicht, ist in der Tat ein Gewinn. Von Beginn an widmet sich die Autorin mit feinem Gespür für Sprache und Textkomposition ihrem Gegenstand: der Frage, wie Bildwelten im Wien der Jahrhundertwende die Vorstellungen des Jüdischen tradierten und konstruierten.

Der Einleitung, innerhalb derer die Rolle der Imagination und Inszenierung in Hinblick auf die Frage des authentischen Seins als methodologische Grundlage dargelegt wird, folgen insgesamt drei Kapitel, die sich jeweils einem Artefakt – also vom Menschen Gemachtem, wie es Theresa Eisele beschreibt – widmen. Dabei fokussiert die Autorin drei verschiedene Genres, denen gemein ist, dass sie unterschiedliche Vorstellungen über die jüdische Lebensweise abbilden. Am Beispiel eines Filmbildes, eines Standbildes respektive einer Fotografie sowie eines Theaterstücks beleuchtet die Autorin die Frage, inwieweit die Bildwelten, die sich in den Artefakten widerspiegeln, Authentizität abbilden oder vielleicht nicht doch eher dazu beitrugen, ein

bestimmtes Bild des Juden – seltener der Jüdin – bzw. des Judentums *in toto* zu konstruieren. Diesen Fragen folgend analysiert Eisele den im Jahr 1924 produzierten Stummfilm „Die Stadt ohne Juden" (Regie: Hans Karl Breslauer), das Theaterstück „Klabriaspartie" (Verfasser: Adolf Bergmann) sowie eine Fotografie aus der Reihe „Wiener Typen" (Fotograf: Otto Schmidt). Gerade die relative Unbekanntheit der gewählten Objekte und das beeindruckende Wissen der Autorin über diese machen den Essay so lebendig, ohne dabei den wissenschaftlichen Anspruch zu verlieren. Allen dreien ist obgleich ihrer unterschiedlichen Genrezugehörigkeit die konkrete Inszenierung jüdischer Vorstellungswelten gemein. So wird in dem Stummfilm, dessen Handlung zu großen Teilen auf einem gleichnamigen Roman basiert, ein Gedankenspiel angestellt, in dem sich ein Wien ohne Juden vorgestellt werden soll. Im Film wurden diese der Stadt verwiesen. Besonders die Szenen des Abschieds und der Auszug aus der Stadt visualisieren die verschiedenen jüdischen Lebenswelten. Es werden dabei einerseits die ‚kultivierten' bzw. ‚akkulturierten' Wiener Juden gezeigt, denen andererseits eine größtenteils gesichtslose Masse von traditionsbehafteten aschkenasischen Juden gegenübersteht. Eisele betrachtet den Film unter der Fragestellung, wie die Inszenierung dieser beiden Lebenswelten zur Manifestation der Typisierung innerhalb der Vorstellungswelten des Jüdischen beitrug. Ähnlich verhält es sich auch hinsichtlich des Theaterstücks. Ein Budapester Ensemble brachte Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts in der „Klabriaspartie" diverse jüdische Figuren auf die Bühne, die fernab der bürgerlichen Lebenswelten lagen. In der Posse war die Handlung allerdings zweitrangig, vielmehr ging es dem Ensemble darum, jüdische Kunst aus Osteuropa auf die Bühne zu bringen, um dem ‚akkulturierten' Wiener Juden die vermeintliche Authentizität der sogenannten Ostjuden ins Bewusstsein zu rufen. In der letzten im Essay thematisierten Imagination des Jüdischen spielt das Jüdische an sich nur eine Nebenrolle. Die im Jahr 1873 entstandene Fotoserie „Wiener Typen" hatte nämlich den Anspruch, vermeintliche Originale des Wiener Prekariats abzulichten, worunter neben vielen anderen auch der jüdische Hausierer fiel. Die allesamt gestellten Fotografien suggerierten die Ablichtung der Realität. Kunst und Realismus verschwommen dabei. Allen drei thematisierten Artefakten ist also das Streben nach Authentizität gemein; als Ariadnefaden durchzieht sie auch den Essay. Insofern geht es stets um die Frage, welchen Einfluss Form und Inhalt auf die Wahrnehmung des Jüdischen im öffentlichen Raum zu Beginn des letzten Jahrhunderts hatten.

Die Artefakte als Kunst und damit durch bestimmte Vorstellungen und Intentionen geprägt betrachtend ging es Theresa Eisele in erster Linie darum, sie auf ihre Funktionen zu untersuchen und damit herauszuarbeiten, inwieweit diese dazu beitrugen, das Judentum und *den* Juden zu inszenieren. Der eigentliche Wahrheitsgehalt oder auch die Frage nach einer authentischen Repräsentation, so Eisele, stehen demnach hinten an. Stattdessen pointiert die Autorin in poststrukturalistischer Manier das Moment der Konstruktion in Hinblick auf das jeweilige Medium; weniger das Wort als vielmehr das Bild konstruiert in dem Verständnis von Eisele die Vorstellungen und Realitäten.

Die Stärke des Essays spiegelt sich insbesondere in der Auswahl der zu behandelnden Objekte wider, die in ihrer Gesamtheit eine beeindruckende Bandbreite der damaligen Dichotomien und jüdischen Aushandlungsprozesse zu Tage treten lässt: Stadt und Land, Hochsprache und Jiddisch, Ost und West, vermeintliche Ursprünglichkeit und Moderne, Assimilation und Dissimilation etc. Durch ihre Fachkenntnis schafft es die Autorin, die drei Artefakte – obwohl nahezu völlig unbekannt, da in Vergessenheit geraten – nicht nur in ihre zeithistorischen Kontexte einzuordnen, sondern in ihrer Analyse auch aufzuzeigen, dass diese ungeachtet ihres ohnehin zur Debatte stehenden Wahrheitsgehalt über die Imaginationen des Jüdischen als repräsentative Beispiele für die grundsätzlichen Aushandlungsprozesse über das Judentum um die Jahrhundertwende in Wien galten und damit *pars pro toto* stehen.

Als alleinige kritische Anmerkung sei darauf verwiesen, dass es bis zum Ende fraglich bleibt, welcher Mehrwert der oftmaligen Bezugnahme auf die „dualistische Geschlechterstruktur" der von der Autorin vorgestellten Medien beikommt. Ein Erkenntnisgewinn geht daraus nicht eindeutig hervor, stattdessen wirken diese Verweise eher artifiziell, da Fragen zur Geschlechtergeschichte/Gender nicht umfänglich im Essay behandelt werden. Neben dieser einzigen Schwäche des Essays bietet dieser viele interessante Einblicke in die Objektgeschichte(n) sowie Visual History.

Elias S. Jungheim, Frankfurt a.M.

Klaus Holz und Thomas Haury, Antisemitismus gegen Israel (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition 2021), 424 S., 35,00 €.

Kaum ein Thema – die letzte *documenta* hat es erneut eindringlich deutlich werden lassen – ist derzeit so ein sicherer Garant für hitzige und hoch kontrovers geführte Debatten wie die Frage, wo berechtigte Kritik gegen den Staat Israel aufhöre und israelbezogener Antisemitismus beginne. Auch Klaus Holz und Thomas Haury gehen in ihrer kürzlich, noch vor der *documenta 15* erschienen Studie *Antisemitismus gegen Israel* von einer nicht weniger brisanten Kontroverse aus: 2020 warf der Antisemitismusbeauftragte der Bundesregierung, Felix Klein, dem afrikanischen Philosophen und postkolonialen Theoretiker Achille Mbembe vor, in seinen Schriften sei israelbezogener Antisemitismus zu finden – ein Vorwurf, der die Forderung nach der Ausladung Mbembes als Eröffnungsredner der Ruhrtriennale zur Folge hatte. Vor allem aber, so der Ausgangspunkt der Argumentation von Holz und Haury, sind diese emotional geführten Diskussionen insofern vertrackt und oft ausweglos, weil ihre Akteure mehr einem einseitigen Lagerdenken folgen und damit auf meist unverrückbaren Positionen beharren, statt sachlich – und dies meint auch: reflektiert – dem Antisemitismusvorwurf bzw. möglichen Befund antisemitischer Überzeugungen zu begegnen. Dies ist selbstredend bei einem solchen Thema leichter gesagt als getan. Die Autoren der vorliegenden Studie versuchen es dennoch. Sie entwerfen dabei allerdings nicht einen schlichten Kriterienkatalog, sondern – im Gegenteil – eine ‚Handreichung' ganz anderer Art, nämlich eine, die sich auf das besinnt, was die wissenschaftliche Beschäftigung mit Antisemitismus in solche Debatten einbringen kann: umfassende und differenzierte Interpretation antisemitischer Deutungsmuster sowie der kulturellen Zusammenhänge und Kommunikationsräume, in denen sich Antisemitismus und der Streit über ihn ereignen.

Die äußerst gründlich recherchierte und sachkundige Arbeit verfolgt dabei zweierlei: Kern der Studie – und dies belegen die Autoren in sieben dicht argumentierenden Kapiteln – ist *erstens,* dass der Antisemitismus gegen Israel eben nicht als ein isoliertes Phänomen oder gar als eine besondere Spielart des Antisemitismus zu verstehen sei. Vielmehr offenbare er sich „in der ganzen Breite der Judenfeindschaft seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart" (S. 351). Der Hass auf Israel, die Täter-Opfer-Umkehr und damit die Stilisierung der Ausgegrenzten, Verfolgten und Ermordeten zum Aggressor

finde sich sowohl vor als auch nach der nationalsozialistischen Rassenideologie, sie stünde bereits am Beginn der Reaktion auf die zionistische Bewegung, präge sowohl den christlichen Antijudaismus als auch den islamischen und postnazistischen Antisemitismus und werde noch in der politischen Linken, in aktuellen identitätspolitischen Debatten und der neuen Rechten virulent. Nirgends sei die antisemitische Anfeindung Israels bzw. der Hass auf die Gründung eines Judenstaates „randständig" (ebd.), so die Autoren. Die genauere Analyse dieser umfassenden Präsenz des auf Israel bezogenen Antisemitismus ist es, die Holz und Haury interessiert und die sie in ihrer Studie eingehend sowie anhand zahlreicher Beispiele nachweisen.

Zweitens nimmt die Arbeit ausgehend davon, dass der Antisemitismus ein tief in die (besonders: westliche) Kultur eingelassenes Weltdeutungsmuster sei, eben diese mit dem Antisemitismus einhergehenden kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Sinnzusammenhänge in den Blick. Dies schließt die Konzentration auf die ‚Selbstbilder' der Antisemiten oder antisemitischen Kollektive, die sich in ihren antisemitischen Überzeugungen ausdrücken, mit ein. Die Autoren berufen sich dabei auf die mittlerweile in der Forschung als gesichert angesehene These, dass die antisemitisch motivierten ‚Judenbilder' letztlich vor allem etwas aussagen über die Akteure bzw. über die soziale Gruppe oder Kultur, die diese hervorbringt und mit der die Antisemiten das eigene ‚Wir' zu konstituieren und zu festigen versuchen. Es ist also auch der Blick hinter die Maske auf die Antisemiten selbst, der Holz und Haury interessiert.

Antisemitismus ist damit weder ein irrationaler, blinder Hass noch eine unabhängig von ihrem Sprecher oder ihrer Sprecherin existierende, kulturell tradierte Weltdeutungsfigur. Die Judenbilder, die die Antisemiten entwerfen, mögen sich ähneln und sich immer wieder etablierter Stereotype bedienen; die Frage, die Holz und Haury umtreibt, ist, was dies über die Antisemiten aussagt und was für Schlüsse sich daraus über den Antisemitismus, seine Motivation und Funktion in einem *bestimmten* historischen und kulturellen Kontext ziehen lassen. So formulieren Holz und Haury:

> „Dasselbe antisemitische Stereotyp – etwa ‚Relativierung des Holocaust' – dient in einem antirassistischen und einem neurechten Selbstverständnis in der Regel sehr unterschiedlichen Bedeutungen, z. B. ‚Opferkonkurrenz' oder ‚Schuldabwehr'. Es ist in beiden Hinsichten ganz und zugleich unterschiedlich falsch. Der Unterschied jedoch kann Antisemitismuskritik nicht egal sein: Sollen vergessene Opfer durch

> falsche Vergleiche mit der Shoah aufgewertet oder vergangene Schuld an den Jüdinnen und Juden in ihrer gegenwärtigen Bedeutung abgewertet werden? Solches zu nivellieren, bedeutet Verzicht auf Aufklärung über Antisemitismus und sollte überdies unter Verdacht gestellt werden. Denn im Verzicht auf präzise und differenzierte Deutung spiegelt sich allzu oft eine politische Präferenz der Kritiker*in. (S. 357 f.) "

Mit diesem Ansatz, der sowohl die Situation der antisemitischen Äußerung oder Tat, aber auch wiederum den Antisemitismusvorwurf und damit die Position der Kritiker*innen, wie Holz und Haury sagen, in den Fokus nimmt, versuchen die Autoren einem Problem zu begegnen, das jede Diskussion über Antisemitismus in den letzten Jahren überschattet hat: die vermeintliche Sicherheit und unhinterfragte Gewissheit der Überzeugung, mit der argumentiert wird. Selbst berechtigte Antisemitismusvorwürfe mündeten allzu oft, folgt man Holz und Haury, in der bloßen und vernichtenden Aburteilung des Gegenübers, statt sich auf die Komplexität des Problems zu konzentrieren. Ein bloßer Kriterienkatalog reiche bei weitem nicht aus, um die Herausforderungen eines vielgestaltigen Antisemitismus wirklich zu erfassen, wie die Autoren betonen. Dies sei der Fehlschluss, dem sowohl die IHRA-Definition als auch die Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism aufsäßen. Lediglich einzelne Äußerungen oder Darstellungen als antisemitisch zu beschreiben, ohne sie in ihrem Kontext zu berücksichtigen, werde dem tatsächlichen Problem des Antisemitismus nicht gerecht.

Damit wirbt das Autorenduo für eine Verstehenshaltung, die in all den immer wieder hochkochenden Kontroversen zum israelbezogenen Antisemitismus fehlt: eine selbstreflexive und in dieser Hinsicht wirklich über sich selbst aufgeklärte Beschäftigung mit Antisemitismus. Holz und Haury entwerfen sozusagen eine Hermeneutik unserer blinden Flecken, die darauf pocht, Ambivalenzen und Unklarheiten auszuhalten. Letztlich ist dieses Buch vor allem eine Aufforderung, bei der Betrachtung des Antisemitismus nicht die eigene Situiertheit, die eigenen Vorannahmen und kulturellen Kommunikationszusammenhänge, von denen aus und in denen gedeutet wird, zu vergessen. In der Hermeneutik hat sich hierfür der Begriff vom hermeneutischen Zirkel herausgebildet. Gemeint ist das Wissen, dass ein Erkenntnisprozess durch viele Faktoren bedingt wird und dass erst dann ein integres, abgewogenes Urteil zustande kommt, wenn eben dieses Wissen um den Kontext und die Einflüsse auf das Verstehen selbst zu Bewusstsein kommen. Man könnte Holz

und Haury vorwerfen, dass sie sich in der Konzentration auf diese Beobachtung zweiter Ordnung vor dem Eigentlichen drücken: eine klare Bewertung vorzunehmen und Farbe zu bekennen, um sich stattdessen in Relativierungen zu versteigen. Sinnvoller ist es jedoch genauer hinzusehen und anzuerkennen, wofür die Autoren plädieren. Sie versuchen nichts weniger als einen Ausweg aus den ermüdenden, weil mittlerweile vorhersehbar geführten Debatten zu weisen. Dies tun sie, indem sie einen breiten Überblick auf das Problem des israelbezogenen Antisemitismus eröffnen, viele Anhaltspunkte für dessen Beurteilung verdeutlichen, zugleich aber die Eigenverantwortlichkeit jedes Einzelnen im Deutungsprozess dezidiert einfordern. Es bleibt nur zu hoffen, dass ein solch gelehrtes und reflektiertes Buch, das seine Leser*innen immer in das Nachdenken über den eigenen Rezeptionsprozess zu verstricken versucht, ein großes Publikum findet. Eine gesicherte und mit Gewissheit angefüllte Lektüre liefert dieses Buch jedoch nicht – und das will es auch gar nicht. Denn das ist eben die Krux mit der Aufklärung und der Mündigkeit: Das abschließende Urteil über den Antisemitismus kann uns keiner abnehmen; auch so ließe sich das Buch von Holz und Haury verstehen.

Saskia Fischer, Hannover

Mark Wortman, Admiral Hyman Rickover: Engineer of Power (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022), 328 pp., $ 26.00.

Hyman George Rickover may no longer be a household name, but Mark Wortman's highly readable new biography makes a good case for why perhaps he should be. The book presents a generally flattering portrait of the irascible Admiral Rickover and his fight to modernize the U.S. Navy and convert its ships to nuclear power. But as the double-meaning of the title suggests, it also chronicles Rickover's deftly engineered path to a position of remarkable personal power within the Navy and in American society. In doing so, Wortman gives readers a compelling window into the human politics and personalities that drove the U.S.–Soviet nuclear arms race during the Cold War and shaped late 20th century American military culture.

Born Chaim Godalia Rykower in 1899, "Rick" immigrated from Russia-Poland as a child. His parents, Abraham and Ruchia, and their three young children settled in the suburbs of Chicago. There, according to Wortman, young Chaim Americanized his name, excelled at school, and through a

combination of unshakable determination, hard work, and a job delivering Western Union telegrams to the office of U.S. Representative Adolph Sabath, managed to secure a position in the Naval Academy's class of 1922. He was a diligent although not outstanding midshipman, but as a young officer, Rickover demonstrated a passion for technology. The Navy sent him to pursue advanced training in electrical engineering, and as the military geared up for World War II, it appointed Rickover to the Electrical Section at the Bureau of Ships, where he honed his talent for leadership and his unwavering insistence upon technological excellence and ruthless efficiency. At the end of the war, Rickover maneuvered himself to the helm of the U.S. Navy Bureau of Ships Nuclear Propulsion Program and the Atomic Energy Commission Division of Naval Reactors – known simply as Naval Reactors (p. 5). For a less driven man, this might have been an unglamorous administrative post, but Rickover used it rebuild the Navy according to his own designs.

Wortman offers readers an absorbing account of Rickover's frustrations, animosities, and battles to drag the Navy into a future that he believed would be defined by technocratic leadership and nuclear power. From his earliest days in the Naval Academy, which he described as a "lousy boy's school," (p. 27) Wortman portrays Rickover as a man at war with the institution through which he built his remarkable career. He bristled under its restrictions and railed against its policies, refusing even to wear a naval uniform. Rickover, Wortman argues, saw the Navy's conservativism as a one-way path to irrelevance, and he eagerly fought against the officers and traditions that he believed kept it anchored to the past. The Navy had no love for Rickover either. Even as he stood poised to oversee the launch the Navy's first nuclear powered submarine, senior leadership looked for ways to block his promotion and push him into unwanted early retirement. As Wortman put it, Rickover "intended to 'save' a Navy that did not want him to save it and despised him for trying." (p. 120)

While much of the book traces his fight to build a nuclear Navy, Wortman makes it clear that Rickover's impact extended far beyond the mechanics of submarine engines. He oversaw an unyieldingly rigorous system for selecting and training the officers who served under him at Naval Reactors, where he ruled as something of a tyrant. Navy brass tried to punish him for bucking conventional criteria for officer promotion, but Rickover's insistence that a modern Navy demanded officers who were not gentlemen but highly trained

technical experts ultimately transformed naval education. Among those officers who succeeded in meeting Rickover's exacting standards, he earned a loyal following. Nuclear trainee Lieutenant James "Jimmy" Carter remained devoted to Rickover throughout his life. After his election as President of the United States in 1976, Carter regularly sought Rickover's council and advice on both domestic and international affairs.

Wortman argues that Rickover's power came, in part, from his knack for positioning himself as something of a celebrity. He gave outspoken testimonies to Congress on nuclear power as well as on Russian advances and American deficits in education and technology. He cultivated powerful friends ready to advance his plans in spite of naval objections and, when needed, Rickover reached over the heads of his superior officers and brought his agenda directly to the American public – like when a member of his team at Naval Reactors stymied efforts to replace Rickover by reaching out to a supportive journalist at *Time,* who eagerly described Rickover's "hard driving […] war on naval indifference" (p. 111) for the magazine's readers.

Rickover appears in this biography as military maverick fighting against the status quo and for 20th century American military and technological dominance. The reader is, however, sometimes left wondering what fueled Rickover's pugnaciousness and relentless drive for power. For Wortman, part of the answer lies in entrenched antisemitism and Rickover's desire to prove within a less-than-welcoming U.S. Navy. Maybe, but Rickover's connections to Jewishness are hard to define. He distanced himself from his parents and siblings, neither of his wives were Jewish, and he seems to have left little evidence about his own feelings about Judaism or Jewish identity. While the Rickover portrayed here is a fascinating character, and Wortman's dynamically written biography offers ample evidence of his impact on American military policy, his motivations remain something of mystery. Even on the topic of nuclear energy, the focus of his career, we are left with unanswered questions. At the end of his career, in 1982, while delivering his final "Rickover lecture" to the members of the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, Wortman recounts that Rickover expressed his devotion to the United States but also his fear that through nuclear power "the human race is ultimately going to wreck itself." (p. 250). It is a striking and disturbing testimony from the man responsible for building the world's deadliest nuclear fleet and provoking the Russians to build their own. Rickover appears here as a man eager

to expound on the failings of others, but not much given to self-reflection. Wortman's engaging biography, however, situates him effectively within 20th century American debates about military might and the nuclear future.

Jessica Cooperman, Allentown/Pennsylvania (USA)

Miriam Udel, Honey on the Page: A Treasury of Yiddish Children's Literature (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2020), 352 S., 29,95 €.

Miriam Udel ist nicht allein eine vielfach ausgezeichnete und renommierte Forscherin in jiddischer Sprach-, Kultur- und Literaturwissenschaft an der Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Im Jahre 2019 wurde sie darüber hinaus als Teilnehmerin der ersten Kohorte des *Executive Ordination Track* der *Yeshivat Maharat* ordiniert, einem Programm, das darauf ausgerichtet ist, qualifizierte Frauen in das orthodoxe Rabbinat einzuführen. Diese Leidenschaft für das Judentum und die Pädagogik zeigt sich in ihrem Streben, die narrativen Texte des Midrasch sowie mittelalterliche Bibelinterpretationen mit modernen jüdischen Literaturquellen zu verbinden. Mit *Honey on the Page. A Treasury of Yiddish Children's Literature* veröffentlichte Udel nun eine wegweisende Anthologie mit Geschichten und Gedichten, die sowohl jüdische als auch universelle Werte (in) der jiddischen Kinderliteratur aufzeigen.

Das steigende Interesse an der jiddischen Sprache und ihren kulturell-literarischen Erzeugnissen sowohl in der Öffentlichkeit als auch im akademischen Milieu resultiert in einer zunehmend hohen Nachfrage nach Übersetzungen eben jener Werke. Um die reichen Primärquellen dieser Welt erfahrbar zu machen, wagen sich immer mehr Übersetzer*innen daran, die Werke namhafter wie auch unbekannter Autor*innen des Jiddischen zu übertragen. In dieses kreative Schaffen hat sich auch Miriam Udel eingereiht, wobei sie eine ganz besondere Schatzkammer entdeckte und nun für englischsprachige Leser*innen zugänglich machte: die jiddisch-sprachige Kinderliteratur.

In ihrer bis dato einmaligen und unvergleichbaren Anthologie *Honey on the Page* belebt sie die Geschichten wieder, die jüdischen Kindern des 20. Jahrhunderts erzählt wurden, um sie in die Historie und Tradition einzuführen, um sie zu amüsieren und inspirieren. Die Werke reichen von magischen Feiertagsgeschichten bis hin zu lustigen Erzählungen. Einzelne Abschnitte führen die Leser*innen in die Vergangenheit des jüdischen Lebens, andere erzählen von Helden mit weltlichen und frommen Erfahrungen. Jack Zipes, seines

Zeichens führender Märchenforscher und emeritierter Professor für deutsche und vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der University of Minnesota, macht in seinem Vorwort zu *Honey on the Page* deutlich, dass die literarischen Werke nicht nur für ein jüdisches Publikum gedacht seien, sondern generelles Verständnis und Empathie erzeugen sollten. Die Texte hätten einen internationalen Hintergrund und ihnen sei ein „ethisches Geschichtenerzählen" zu eigen. (S. xi).

Die Aufteilung erfolgt thematisch in acht Kapitel, beginnend mit (1) Jüdische Feiertage, eng verbunden mit (2) Jüdische Geschichte und Helden. Darauf folgen Abschnitte zu (3) Volksmärchen, Märchen, Wundergeschichten, (4) Weise Narren sowie (5) Allegorien, Gleichnisse, und Fabeln. Je weiter man im Buch voranschreitet, desto universeller werden die Themen: (6) Schulzeit, (7) Im Klassenzimmer des Lebens und (8) Jüdische Familien, hier und dort. Das Material stammt aus der gesamten jiddischsprachigen Welt, von Osteuropa bis Nord- und Südamerika, und umfasst einen Zeitraum von den 1910ern bis in die 1970er Jahre. Es zeichnet sich nicht nur durch ein breites Spektrum an Themen, sondern auch durch eine große Anzahl von Autor*innen aus, unter denen einige bekannte Namen wie Kadya Molodovsky, Moyshe Kulbak oder Leyb Kvitko auftauchen, aber auch weniger vertraute wie B. Oyerbakh oder Malka Szechet.

Wie Udel erläutert, versuchte sie bei der Auswahl auf eine gewisse Geschlechterparität ebenso zu achten wie auf ein ausgewogenes Einbeziehen unterschiedlicher politischer Ausrichtungen (S. 11; S. 16 f.). Sie erschafft eine Art multivokalen Marktplatz der jiddischen Kinderliteratur, auf dem sich eine fulminante Vielzahl von Stimmen tummelt. Udel hat mit erstaunlichem Einfallsreichtum diese unverwechselbaren Stimmen ins Englische transferiert – und dies in jedem Text aufs Neue. Sie findet in ihren Übersetzungen eine Balance zwischen der Vereinfachung und dem Beibehalten des originalen Wortlauts, wie beispielsweise in Yaakov Fichmans „Ein Schabbat im Wald".

Diese Vielstimmigkeit der Übersetzungen bestärkt die Diversität der Texte: beispielsweise Leyb Kvitkos sozialistisches Erziehungsgedicht über das schmutzige Schleckermäulchen Buts, der aus präventiven Hygienemaßnahmen von staatlichen Pflegern gewaschen wird („Buts und die Pflegespezialisten"); oder Yankev Pats Wundermärchen über einen Löwen, der mit einem in der Wüste Gestrandeten Schabbat feiert und ihn dann hinausträgt („Der magische Löwe"); oder Levin Kipnis' „Kinder auf dem Feld", das mit klarem

Bezug zum Talmud als Metapher für die Erziehung neuer Generationen in der Zeit nach der jüdischen Aufklärung dient – und vieles mehr.

Ungewöhnlich für die Publikation eines Wissenschaftsverlags ist diese Anthologie besonders kinderfreundlich gestaltet. Mit einem eigens „Für den jungen Leser" verfassten Vorwort macht Udel deutlich, dass dieses Buch nicht nur für Pädagog*innen, Bibliothekar*innen und Forscher*innen gedacht ist, sondern dem ureigensten Sinn der Texte nachkommen will: für und von Kindern gelesen zu werden. Die gewitzten Illustrationen der renommierten Künstlerin Paula Cohen versüßen das Leseerlebnis, ebenso wie die detailreichen Bordüren und floralen Muster, die das gesamte Buch durchziehen. Neben dieser liebevollen Gestaltung finden sich punktuell auch Illustrationen der Primärquellen wieder. Hier schlägt Udel auch visuell eine Brücke in die Vergangenheit, indem sie zeigt, welche Formen der Visualisierung damals modern waren und diese mit aktuellen kombiniert.

Einen für mich markanten Punkt möchte ich noch hervorheben: Ich war fasziniert und tief berührt gleichermaßen, als ich begann, dieses Buch zu lesen. Miriam Udels persönliche Note und ihre offen kommunizierte Liebe zu ihren drei Söhnen, die dieses Buch durchströmt haben mich eingefangen. Die Emotionalität wertet das Buch in keiner Weise als sentimental oder unwissenschaftlich ab, vielmehr zeigt es ein ehrliches Bild der Autorin, die gleichzeitig Mutter und Forscherin ist. Die Anthologie, mit ihrer brillanten, auf den Punkt formulierten Einführung in die Entstehung der jiddischsprachigen Kinderliteratur, die zudem die Relevanz und Aktualität des Themas in der heutigen Zeit im Zusammenspiel mit den Hintergründen und Entscheidungen der Autorin darlegt, schafft einen klaren Zugang zum Thema, der gleichzeitig persönlich und fundiert ist. Die präzise und verständliche Kontextualisierung der einzelnen Geschichten und Gedichte wird mit Kurzbiografien zu den jeweiligen Autor*innen untermauert.

Miriam Udel hat ein Werk geschaffen, das das Alte und das Neue auf textueller und visueller Ebene zusammenführt. Es ist gleichermaßen Symbiose wie auch Weiterentwicklung und ein wahres Geschenk an die junge und ältere Generation neugieriger Leser*innen.

Caroline Emig, Regensburg

Marina Zilbergerts, The Yeshiva and the Rise of Modern Hebrew Literature (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2022), 184 pp., $ 35.00.

Marina Zilbergerts's *The Yeshiva and the Rise of Modern Hebrew Literature* undertakes an ambitious task: to chart anew the emergence of modern Hebrew literature in Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century. Hebrew literature was informed, the author suggests, by three main forces: the Jewish *Haskalah;* Russian intellectual trends of the time; and elite rabbinic culture. Whereas the crucial role played by the Jewish *Haskalah* and the Hebrew writing associated with it in the formation of modern Hebrew literature has been dealt with at length, far less has been written on the other two.

The book is a welcome addition to the handful of volumes that probe in detail the Russian intellectual context in which Hebrew literature was written and furthers our understanding of the indebtedness of Hebrew writers to nihilist critics and to their emphasis on pragmatism and utility. Yet, Zilbergerts' greatest innovation lies in taking into consideration a third force: the new model of religious learning embodied in the modern *yeshiva,* which emerged in the nineteenth century. The latter had an indelible impact on how Hebrew writers – many of whom attended such *yeshivas* – perceived and conceived of literature.

At the center of the story lies the struggle of Hebrew writers with the notion of literature and, more specifically, with the value of the literary pursuit and textuality. The modern *yeshiva* underscored the importance of engagement with religious texts – particularly the *Talmud* – for their own sake, *"Torah lishma,"* certainly for textual pleasure but, more importantly, as a tool for moral improvement as well as out of a belief that reality itself could be affected by such a textual engagement. This conception of textuality informed the literature of the *Haskalah* both in form and in content: its textual practices were borrowed from the study of the *Talmud,* the book suggests, as well as its belief in the redemptive power of literature, for individuals and collectives alike. Yet, under the influence of Russian critics who turned to pragmatism and utility, coupled with their own personal experience as members of the religious scholarly elite, Hebrew writers came to doubt the value of literature: Can literature truly shape reality? Is there an inherent value in the engagement with texts for their own sake? Or, on the contrary,

are such texts completely removed from reality? Moreover, does such an engagement hamper one's ability to face reality and its tribulations? These questions informed Hebrew writing from the 1860s through the 1880s, leading writers to harshly censure the literary pursuit and textual practices as embodied by the *yeshiva*. The last decade of the nineteenth century, however, saw a renewed investment in textuality, when writers came to conceive the engagement with traditional texts as a source of Jewish cultural vitality. With this the foundation of modern Hebrew literature, the book implies, has been secured.

The chapters of the book are divided into two divisions. The first two chapters set the historical trajectory in motion. Chapter One traces the emergence of the *yeshiva* movement and its ideology, highlighting the textual practices at the center of its pedagogy. As elitist and seclusive, the *yeshiva* set the study of the *Talmud* as removed from practical considerations and from concerns of everyday life. The reading strategies instilled by the *yeshiva* shaped and formed the reading strategies of writers who attended it, even when they switched their attention to non-religious works. Chapter Two shifts our attention to the emergence of nihilism as a major trend in Russian intellectual life. Boldly, whereas the scholarship of Hebrew literature focuses exclusively on Jewish experience (and, more particularly, on the experience of Hebrew male writers), the chapter points at the kinship between the experience of the Jewish Rabbinic and Russian-Christian religious intelligentsias. Members of both intelligentsias grew disappointed with their respective religious education and suffered economic hardship which they attributed to their education. Most importantly, both were formed intellectually by the strategies employed in reading religious texts in seminaries and *yeshivas* alike. No wonder, then, that Hebrew writers found resonance in the writing of former seminarians, who were among the most influential nihilist figures.

Chapter Three serves as a transition, exploring the introduction of key notions of Russian nihilist criticism into Hebrew letters through the writings of the brothers-turned-literary-critics Avraham Uri and Yitzhak Aizik Kovner. Adopting the harsh censure of literature from the Russian context, they sought to purge Hebrew letters from the useless textual practices of rabbinic hermeneutic, and in face of the social and economic plight of Jews in Russia, they promoted realism as a tool for both modeling reality and for affecting social and economic changes.

The final three chapters examine literary works of three key figures of the emergence of modern Hebrew literature. Chapter Four looks at Moshe Leib Lilienblum's autobiography *The Sins of Youth,* and rather than as a story of loss of faith in god and a break from the Jewish tradition – as it has been commonly read –, Zilbergerts reads it as a drama of loss of faith in the value of literary pursuit. It further notes the author's circular logics, in which the rejection of literature is articulated by means of literature as well as his overall ambivalence towards Hebrew letters: Lilienblum insists on his disillusionment with traditional textuality, yet simultaneously manifests continuous attraction to *Talmudic* textual practices. Chapters Five and Six focus on Micha Yosef Berdichevsky and Hayim Nachman Bialik, both of whom attended the Volozhin Yeshiva, a center of the modern *yeshiva* movement. Chapter Five reads Berdichevsky's fiction in its exploration of dangerous textuality: Obsessive engagement with texts undercuts the economic alongside erotic prospects of Berdichevsky's protagonists, as well as their very health. In Bialik's poetry, however, dealt with in Chapter Six, the book sees a shift and a move away from the condemnation of textuality in the name of utility. In recasting the study of the *Talmud* as a source of literary creativity, Bialik once again allowed writers to reassert anew the value of literature.

The Yeshiva and the Rise of Modern Hebrew Literature is clearly and persuasively written, with a great gist. Yet, its endeavor to retell the history of the emergence of modern Hebrew literature falters and is undercut by quite a number of factual errors, unwarranted assertions, and contentious interpretations. A handful of examples must suffice here. On its first page, the book proclaims that, during the nineteenth century, one would have been hard pressed to imagine Hebrew as "a suitable vehicle for imaginative literature" (p. 1), thus eliding an entire history of imaginative Hebrew writing and, in particular, the great popularity of religious Hebrew fiction, the best-known example of which is *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov* (first printed in 1814/15). Or, to claim that Yiddish was, "the one language universally spoken among Jews in Europe" (p. 5) awkwardly elides the languages and cultures not only of Jews in southern Europe and the Balkan but also of many in England, the South of France, and the Netherlands; it also obscures the fact that even in the realms under the rule of the Russian Empire not all Jews spoke Yiddish. Along similar lines, Ahad Ha-Am could not have declined to publish Bialik's "El ha-tzipor" in his journal *Ha-Shilo'ah* in 1891, notwithstanding

what he actually thought of the poem (p. 131), because the journal first came into existence five years later, in 1896. Likewise, Ahad Ha-Am's translation of Pinsker's *Auto-Emancipation* into Hebrew could not have turned the text into the political manifesto of Russia's early Zionists (p. 139), because it was first published only in 1921, when Zionism in Russia had reached its final moment; indeed, it is quite likely that Zionists accessed the book in its original German, Yiddish translation, or one of the two earlier translations into Hebrew. A more careful redaction of the manuscript could have eliminated many of these errors.

Unfortunately, all this limits the validity of the argument put forward in the book. Whereas the book promises to open up new historical vestiges, it is still anchored in old paradigms that have been challenged by now. Most conspicuously, it conflates modern Hebrew literature writ large and the Hebrew writing in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century and, moreover, with a small cadre of *yeshiva* graduates. Whereas the latter remain, no doubt, at the center of the modern Hebrew canon, literary historians have always viewed the emergence of modern Hebrew literature within much wider geographical, temporal, social, and textual horizons (and recent scholars have pushed these horizons even further). Why should one, then, constrain their purview?

The book appears to flatten the complex social and economic reality under examination in other respects as well. It thus reduplicates the claim that a chasm existed between modern Hebrew literature and traditional religious literature (which it curiously limits to the language of law, prayer, and ritual). Yet, the division between the two was not as clear cut. Not only did many writers of modern Hebrew letters remain observant Jews, but many of its avid readers were public religious figures. Whereas, at times, the engagement with secular literature could indeed lead to exclusion and banishment, this was by no means universally so. Indeed, the book itself brings evidence that elite *yeshivas* were at the center of the reading and writing what we deem today to be "secular" Hebrew letters. In what sense, then, can one clearly demarcate the boundaries between the "secular" and the "religious"?

Last, given the central place hailed for the social and economic conditions underlying the emergence of "modern Hebrew literature," *The Yeshiva and the Rise of Modern Hebrew Literature* contains surprisingly little discussion of these conditions. In fact, the book explores in detail just one aspect of these

conditions, the arranged marriage of members of the rabbinic scholarly elite. Important as this may have been to the self-perception of the Hebrew writers under discussion, nothing is said of the vast demographic, social, and economic transformations of Jewish life in the Russian Empire in general during the period that surely were as – if not more – crucial in shaping Hebrew writing and reading, by man and women alike: the rapid growth of the Jewish population, mass migration, urbanization, changing employment patterns, pauperization, and more. Without these, one can hardly understand what writing and reading Hebrew were at the time.

That being said, however, the book does chart what I believe would prove to be a fruitful path for future research. In particular, we should turn our effort to view the life of Hebrew letters within wider socio-economic and textual frameworks, both of Jewish life and of the societies in which Jews were residing.

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Joan Gluckauf Haahr, JEWS-Facebook group, December 21, 2018: "My parents sailed from Amsterdam to New York on May 20, 1937, one of six passengers (all refugees) aboard the Belgian freighter 'Mercier'. My father, obviously enjoying the voyage." © Joan Gluckauf Haahr, *Prisoners of Memory: A Jewish Family from Nazi Germany* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Full Court Press, 2021), photo gallery (not paginated). [page 18]

The ship *Atid* of Atid Navigation Company Ltd., Haifa. Photo from the Borchard family album. © Digital collections of the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Library, University of Haifa. The year of the photograph and the photographer are unknown. Courtesy of Daniela Borchard. [page 34]

Henrietta Diamond, © Courtesy of The National Maritime Museum, Haifa Museums collections, Photo Number 88-84(1). [page 52]

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Gravestone of Samuel Palache (c. 1550–1616), Portuguese cemetery Ouderkerk aan de Amstel. © L. Alvares Vega, The Beth Haim van Ouderkerk, Ouderkerk 2004, p. 27. [page 100]

The sea and maritime spaces have long been neglected in the field of Jewish studies despite their relevance in the context of Jewish religious texts and historical narratives. The images of Noah's arche, king Salomon's maritime activities or the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea immediately come into mind, however, only illustrate a few aspects of Jewish maritime activities. Consequently, the relations of Jews and the sea has to be seen in a much broader spatial and temporal framework in order to understand the overall importance of maritime spaces in Jewish history and culture.

Almost sixty years after Samuel Tolkowsky's pivotal study on maritime Jewish history and culture and the publication of his book "They Took to the Sea" in 1964, this volume of PaRDeS seeks to follow these ideas, revisit Jewish history and culture from different maritime perspectives and shed new light on current research in the field, which brings together Jewish and maritime studies.

The articles in this volume therefore reflect a wide range of topics and illustrate how maritime perspectives can enrich our understanding of Jewish history and culture and its entanglement with the sea – especially in modern times. They study different spaces and examine their embedded narratives and functions. They follow in one way or another the discussions which evolved in the last decades, focused on the importance of spatial dimensions and opened up possibilities for studying the production and construction of spaces, their influences on cultural practices and ideas, as well as structures and changes of social processes. By taking these debates into account, the articles offer new insights into Jewish history and culture by taking us out to "sea" and inviting us to revisit Jewish history and culture from different maritime perspectives.

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