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# Pathways of Early Post-Zionism

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

When does a post-Zionism start? This seemingly simple question calls for a seemingly simple answer: when Zionism has run its course, or, in Eric Cohen's formulation, has undergone "routinization."<sup>2</sup> This in turn raises a question much less straightforward: *when* precisely does Zionism run its course?

The primary objective of this chapter is to challenge two strongly entrenched assumptions concerning post-Zionism as a salient political and intellectual feature of Israeli public life, and to shatter the scholarly consensus built around them. The first is that post-Zionism is a relatively recent phenomenon, which has developed gradually over the two decades since Israel's victory in the June 1967 war, with the attendant transitions in the make-up and self-definition of Israeli society, only to reach its full bloom following the conclusion of the Oslo accords between Israel and the PLO in 1993.<sup>3</sup> The second is that post-Zionism, by mounting a challenge to Israeli ethno-nationalism, is inherently "progressive," perforce "left-wing."<sup>4</sup> The following pages will endeavor to demonstrate that these two assumptions are deficient in the extreme, since they do not take into account the broader scope of post-Zionist thinking, preaching, and activity,

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1 I am grateful to Prof. Derek Penslar (Harvard University), Margalit Shinar (daughter of Adya Horon), and Dr. Kary Rubin (daughter of Eri Jabotinsky) for their assistance with research for this chapter. I also acknowledge with gratitude the support of the Israel Institute (Washington DC), which funded my postdoctoral fellowship at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies in 2015–2017, and of the Leverhulme Trust and the Isaac Newton Fund, which fund my early career fellowship at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies in Cambridge in 2018–2021.

2 Eric Cohen, "Israel as a Post-Zionist Society," *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1995): 203–214.

3 For examples of various aspects of this approach see Nadia Abu el-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 272–276; Alain Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation: Zionist Thought and the Making of Modern Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 270–271; Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2005); Ephraim Nimni, ed., *The Challenge of Post-Zionism: Alternatives to Israeli Fundamentalist Politics* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2003).

4 Nimni, *The Challenge of Post-Zionism*; Uri Ram, *Israeli Nationalism: Social Conflicts and the Politics of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 111–115; Chaim Isaac Waxman, "Critical Sociology and the End of Ideology in Israel," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 1 (1997): 194–210.

in terms of history and content, and concomitantly ignore what I believe are the genuine intellectual sources of post-Zionism.

To own the truth, students of post-Zionism have on occasion betrayed their awareness of the insufficiency of this paradigm. Laurence Silberstein, in the introduction to his quite exhaustive study of post-Zionism, remarks that

The current usages of the term postzionism [sic!] are by no means the first. Prior to the 1990s, one encounters scattered uses of the term. For the most part, it served to indicate that zionism [sic!], having established a refuge for the Jewish people and effecting a renewal of a Hebrew national culture, had fulfilled its goal of normalizing the existence of the nation. Insofar as zionism had attained two of its basic goals, the establishment of a Jewish state and the normalization of Jewish life, zionist institutions were no longer necessary. Now, postzionism means something very different. In its current usage, postzionism is the product of a crisis in Israeli life.<sup>5</sup>

Silberstein's evident fascination with the "current usage" of "post-Zionism" means that he is not at all interested as to *when*, *how*, and *why* the term was used "prior to the 1990s." His discussion is heavily focused on the closing decades of the twentieth century, though he does give a fair share of attention to both liberal and radical critiques of Zionism enunciated from the 1960s onwards, without, however, looking earlier. In a manner different from Silberstein's, Daniel Gutwein offers an interpretation of the 1990s post-Zionism as a *right-wing* phenomenon by pointing out that it was promulgated by the ascendant middle class of Israel, which looked for an ideological justification to dismantle the collectivist practices of Labor Zionism by attacking its core collectivist ethos and tenets. Post-Zionism, Gutwein writes, "make[s] use of the category of 'the Jew' in order to dismantle Israeli collective identity as defined by 'the Zionist'" and "employ[s] arguments from the arsenal of the politics of identity to undermine the hegemony of Labor Zionism."<sup>6</sup>

Gutwein's is a class analysis ensconced within a Marxist perspective, which he frankly admits. Without denying the merits of Gutwein's insight, my argument will be of a different nature, as it will draw upon the methodological framework of intellectual history. That is, my key proposal will be that if post-Zionism can indeed be viewed as rightist, this is so not because it dissented from Zionism by abandoning nationalist worldview, but because it *upheld* it.

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<sup>5</sup> Laurence J. Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Gutwein, "Left and Right Post-Zionism and the Privatization of Israeli Collective Memory," in *Israeli Historical Revisionism: From Left to Right*, ed. Anita Shapira and Derek J. Penslar (London/Portland: Frank Cass, 2003), 34.

This chapter will thus fill in the gaps left by Silberstein, Gutwein, and others who dealt with contemporary post-Zionism, by arguing that a comprehensive critique of Zionism's philosophy and policy was formulated in circles deeply immersed in Zionism's development and implementation as early as in the mid-1940s, that is, *before* the establishment of the state of Israel. It will further demonstrate that the intellectual sources of this critique are to be traced to the radical flank of rightist Revisionist Zionism; that this critique has in many senses anticipated the 1990s post-Zionism, yet at the same time remained strongly committed to principles of national self-determination, making its relationship with the 1990s post-Zionism a dialectic one; that, in consequence, the latter should be more accurately viewed as "second-wave" or "second-generation" post-Zionism, whereas the 1940s-1950s post-Zionism ought to be redefined as "first generation." Below I will offer a detailed exploration of a number of organizations that sprung on the margins of Revisionist Zionism during the 1940s-1950s in the United States and in Israel. Among them some are better known, like The "Hebrew Committee of National Liberation," and some are less known or not known at all, such as the "Kedem Club" or "Club 59." Scrutinized together, they show that the post-Zionism that accompanied the establishment of Israel constituted a concerted and continuous effort by a solid group of Jabotinskian political thinkers and activists, who by abandoning their Zionist-Revisionist upbringing attempted to put forward a *raison d'état* that would detach Israel from Zionism and re-establish it on different moral and political foundations inspired by American and French republicanism. In the course of their activity iconoclastic assessments were made concerning Zionism, the Jewish nation, and the policy of Israel during the first decade of its existence; all of them will be exposed and discussed in this chapter. I will conclude by assessing the similarities and differences between first-generation and second-generation post-Zionism and will ponder the reasons for the former's demise since the 1960s and its potential for re-emergence.

## Stage One: The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation

On December 10 1947 the *New York Herald Tribune* ran on one of its inner pages a short article styled as a letter to the editor, signed by "Peter H. Bergson, Chairman, Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, Washington DC." The article, titled "Post-Zionism," was dated to December 4 1947, less than a week after the

*N.Y. Herald Tribune* Dec. 10/47  
**Post-Zionism**

To the New York Herald Tribune:

The current fighting in Palestine must not obscure the deep and urgent question regarding the soundness of creating a "Jewish State" as a means of solving the Jewish problem.

We Palestinians react to the United Nations partitioning of our country with mixed feelings. The Hebrew people cannot sanction the alienation of eighty-seven per cent of their national territory, out of which two new Arab sovereignties have been carved. But serious as is the loss of territory, the lack of any definition of the human boundaries of the new state is equally grave—and even dangerous.

What does a Jewish State mean? Will it be a kind of Jewish Vatican? Will the Jewish government represent the Jews of the world? Will all the Jews in the world eventually move to the Jewish State, or will they become part of a special international nation?

Clearly, it should be understood, we of the Hebrew Liberation Movement oppose the concept of a "world Jewish nation," which strives, through the Jewish Agency, to place the label of "Jewish State" on the thirteen per cent of Palestine which has not been surrendered to the Arabs. In view of the fact that more than ten million Jews live outside of Palestine, and are not in D. P. camps or in danger, but enjoy full citizenship in many lands, the insistence upon a world Jewish Nation is bound to ensnare many good Americans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, etc., who are Jews, in a difficult and ugly situation.

It is our conviction that the decision of the United Nations offers a choice between a Jewish State as an unique entity, a religious-cultural-political center for World Jewry, or a Hebrew Republic of Palestine, as a normal and modern nation without any ties or ramifications among these citizens of other lands who are of Jewish faith.

The crux of our program lies in a sharp separation between "the Jews," as a religion, and the Hebrews, as a nation. World anti-Semitism feeds mainly on the fact that "the Jews" are a unique entity. This abnormal existence can now be ended by enabling all the uprooted Jews in Europe, Africa and the Middle East to go to the Hebrew Republic of Palestine, while those who do not go to Palestine will actually become fully integrated in the nations where they now live. The five and a half million American Jews do not want to go to Palestine. They seek complete status as Americans—of Hebrew ancestry and Jewish faith—just as all Americans have a national origin and a religion, without any hyphenated political allegiance.

According to our program, after a brief transition an entire new structure will arise and the present abnormal position of Jews everywhere will end. In contrast to this, the Jewish Agency seeks to institutionalize the problem. Their proposed ghetto-like "Jewish State" will only perpetuate the abnormality of the Jewish position.

We are neither anti nor non-Zionist. We are post-Zionist. We recognize the great merits of that movement in the past—in a free Palestine monuments and highways will be named in its honor—but the Zionist program is today archaic.

The Hebrew Committee believes that a public discussion of this problem is vital to the interests not only of the Hebrew nation but also to all American citizens. We feel sure that in such a discussion most Americans will support our views, and that the Hebrew Republic of Palestine will soon take its normal place in the family of nations where it will maintain the friendliest economic and diplomatic relations with the people of the United States.

**PETER M. BERGSON,**  
 Chairman Hebrew Committee of  
 National Liberation  
 Washington, D. C., Dec. 4, 1947.

Peter Bergson's article on

#### HEBREW REPUBLIC VS. JEWISH STATE

appeared in N. Y. Herald Tribune  
 N.Y. Post

12/10/47  
 12/17/47

Fig. 1: Hillel Kook's article "Post-Zionism," New York Herald Tribune, December 1947. Reproduced by permission of the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism.

United Nations General Assembly voted to partition the British Mandate of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. This is how Bergson commented on this fateful event:

The current fighting in Palestine must not obscure the deep and urgent question regarding the soundness of creating a “Jewish State” as a means of solving the Jewish problem [...] What does a Jewish State mean? Will it be a kind of Jewish Vatican? Will the Jewish government represent the Jews of the world? [...] Clearly, it should be understood, we of the Hebrew Liberation Movement oppose the concept of a “world Jewish nation,” which strives, through the Jewish Agency, to place the label of “Jewish State” on the thirteen per cent of Palestine which has not been surrendered to the Arabs<sup>7</sup> [...] It is our conviction that the decision of the United Nations offers a choice between a Jewish State as a unique entity, a religious-cultural-political center for World Jewry, or a Hebrew Republic of Palestine, as a normal and modern nation without any ties or ramifications among these citizens of other lands who are of Jewish faith. The crux of our program lies in a sharp separation between “The Jews,” as a religion, and the Hebrews, as a nation [...] We are neither anti nor non-Zionist. *We are post-Zionist.* We recognize the great merits of that movement in the past – in a free Palestine monuments and highways will be named in its honor – but the Zionist program is today archaic.<sup>8</sup>

A week later the *New York Post*, which had for several years offered its sympathetic pages to the Hebrew Committee, published a more extensive essay by Bergson, in which the author went as far as to question the basic principles of the Zionist program and called for the disestablishment of the main political bodies responsible for its implementation:

We say that whatever the term “Jewish people” means, whatever may be its religious, cultural or historical significance, one thing is certain: it cannot possibly be defined as a political entity which has a state [...] Thus we propose the creation not of a “Jewish State” but of the Hebrew Republic of Palestine, in which Jewish, Christian and Moslem [sic!] citizens will have fullest equality, and opportunity under the law of the land [...] We want to forge, in these coming months, a normal, modern and liberal Hebrew Republic, and not a religious, cultural and political center for “World Jewry” called the “Jewish State” or “Judea” [...] We therefore propose that the Jewish Agency should be dissolved [...] the World Zionist Organization, and particularly the Zionist Organization of America, should

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<sup>7</sup> This calculation is based on the inclusion of Trans-Jordan in Palestine.

<sup>8</sup> Hillel Kook Archive (hereinafter HKA), file 25; HKA/30 (emphasis added); Rebecca Kook (“Hillel Kook: Revisionism and Rescue” in *Struggle and Survival in Palestine/Israel*, ed. Mark LeVine and Gershon Shafir (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2012), 157, 167) erroneously dates this article to 1945.

become a movement of friends of Palestine and should accordingly cease to be a sectarian organization.<sup>9</sup>

How did it come to pass that only days after Zionism's greatest political achievement to date such a scathing attack was launched on it by none other than the nephew of Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook (1865–1935), the chief Rabbi of Palestine under the Mandate and the main theoretician of religious Zionism? Furthermore, how has the significance of the first-ever appearance in print of the term *post-Zionism* – and thus a landmark in the intellectual and political history of Zionism (despite its contemporary low visibility) – evaded scholars who have otherwise devoted a great deal of attention to the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation and its leader?

“Peter H. Bergson” (more often simply “Peter Bergson”) was the political pseudonym adopted by Hillel Kook (1914/1915–2001) when he arrived in the United States in 1940 at the behest of the founder and leader of Revisionist Zionism, Zeev Jabotinsky (1880–1940). His role was to lead the American delegation of the ETZEL (Hebrew acronym of “National Military Organization”) Palestinian underground militia, of which Jabotinsky was the nominal commander. Kook explained later that the surname “Bergson” was adopted in deference to his father (to signify “(rabbi Dov) Ber [Kook’s] son”), while “Peter” was chosen after Piotr Strassman, son of a prominent Zionist-Revisionist activist in Poland, Lilia (Alicja) Strassman (1908–1959). Kook had become intimately acquainted with the Strassman family during his stay in Europe in the late 1930s while he was coordinating Jewish illegal immigration to Palestine on behalf of ETZEL.<sup>10</sup> Having grown in a religious household in Jerusalem, Kook lost his faith as a teenager and devoted himself instead to Jewish nationalist politics. He joined the splinter *Haganah B*, which broke off from the mainstream *Yishuv* militia, the *Haganah* in 1931, and remained with it after a second split in 1937, when it became the ETZEL and acknowledged the leadership of Zeev Jabotinsky. During the early 1930s Kook also belonged to a student fraternity in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the *Ṣuḥbah* (Arabic for “Brotherhood”), where he came to know some of the future leaders of Palestinian Revisionism and its breakaway groups, such as David

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<sup>9</sup> HKA/50 (published version); HKA/25; Jabotinsky Institute Archive (hereinafter JIA), file 7/1/4n (typescripts). The essay was also reprinted in *Congressional Record* (80<sup>th</sup> Congress, first session; HKA/25), thanks to Bergson’s exceptional lobbying skills, of which more will be said below.

<sup>10</sup> Hillel Kook’s interview to the Division of Oral Documentation at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry in the Hebrew University, 1968 (HKA/34). Piotr Strassman’s brother Andrzej (now Gabriel) became a well-known Israeli journalist.

Raziel (1910–1941), Avraham Stern (1907–1942), and Uriel Heilperin (1908–1981).<sup>11</sup>

Kook's achievements in Europe made him the senior ETZEL member outside Palestine. It was thus natural for him to assume command over the organization's delegation to the United States, dispatched there at the beginning of the war to lobby for a Jewish army alongside the Allies and to create a political base in a country heretofore largely neglected by Zeev Jabotinsky's movement. Under Kook's leadership the "cut-off battalion" (an expression of Jabotinsky's that symbolized the delegation's loss of contact with ETZEL in Palestine due to wartime circumstances, but which acquired additional meaning after Jabotinsky's death in August 1940<sup>12</sup>) quickly developed into an independent body, both politically and, what is more significant, ideologically. By the time he made his repudiation of Zionism public in 1947, Kook headed the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, the latest of the several organizational transmigrations the ETZEL delegation went through. The Committee consisted of just seven members: apart from Kook, they were Zeev Jabotinsky's only son Eri (1910–1969); the veteran Revisionist activists Shmuel Merlin (1910–1994) and Arie Ben-Eliezer (1913–1970); the former head of the naval school run by the Revisionist youth movement *Beitar* in the Italian harbor of Civitavecchia in the 1930s, Yirmiyahu Halpern (1901–1962); the Chicago archaeologist Pinchas (Pierre) Delougaz (1901–1975); and the Palestinian–American businessman Theodore Bennahum (1906–1972). This membership only partially overlapped with the original membership of the ETZEL delegation constituted in 1940, and Ben-Eliezer's role in it was purely nominal, since in 1943 he was delegated to Palestine, quickly arrested by the British, and never returned to the United States.

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<sup>11</sup> Raziel was killed in combat in Iraq while heading the ETZEL; Stern was killed by the British police in Tel Aviv while in hiding as the leader of the so-called "ETZEL in Israel" (which after his death became the LEHI, Hebrew acronym of "Fighters for the Freedom of Israel"); Heilperin, who changed his surname to Shelach but was better known under the literary pseudonym Yonatan Ratosh, became a poet, a political thinker on his own right, and the leader of the anti-Zionist "Canaanite" movement, of which more will be said below. He also edited the *Haganah B's* weapons manual, *haEqdach* (*The Pistol*, 1935), whose clandestine printing was arranged by Kook. See Kook, "Hillel Kook," 161–162; Orna Miller, "'HaBatalion heChatukh' weHantiyot ha'-Kna'aniyot' baETZEL uviTenu'at haCherut – me'haWa'ad ha'Ivri' ad 'LaMerchav': Opozitziya le-Hanhagat haETZEL we'Cherut'" ("The Cut-Off Battalion' and the 'Canaanite' Tendencies in the ETZEL and the Cherut Movement – From the 'Hebrew Committee' to 'LaMerchav': An Opposition to the Leadership of the ETZEL and 'Cherut'"), *Iyunim biTequmat Israel* 14 (2004): 156; Monty Noam Penkower, "Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, Hillel Kook-Peter Bergson and the Campaign for a Jewish Army," *Modern Judaism* 31, no. 3 (2011): 2.

<sup>12</sup> Penkower, "Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky," 10.



The activities of the “Bergson group” (as it commonly became known; alternatively the “Bergson boys”) and its various affiliates, which included such lobbying bodies as the Committee for an Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews, the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, the American League for a Free Palestine, and the Hebrew Committee, have been well researched.<sup>13</sup> Most scholars have chosen to concentrate on the wartime activity of the group, when it led a vocal public campaign first for the formation of a separate Jewish army to battle Hitler, and then, after the Holocaust had become public knowledge in the United States in November 1942, for the salvation of Nazism’s not yet exterminated Jewish victims. The post-war period has received less attention, though, as I shall argue in this chapter, it was a no less important stage in the short history of the Bergson group, and intellectually probably the most captivating.

It remains beyond doubt that in several respects the work of Hillel Kook and his associates was highly innovative. Scholars have pointed out that they were probably the first Jewish political organization to foresee that following the Second World War the global geopolitical center of gravity would shift from Europe to North America;<sup>14</sup> they realized in real time that the Holocaust was a yet un-

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**13** A non-exhaustive but representative sample is Eran Kaplan, “A Rebel with a Cause: Hillel Kook, Begin and Jabotinsky’s Ideological Legacy,” *Israel Studies* 10, no. 3 (2005): 87–103; Kook, “Hillel Kook”; Rafael Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America: The Rise and Impact of the Jabotinsky Movement in the United States, 1926–1948* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 2002); Rafael Medoff and David Wyman, *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America, and the Holocaust* (New York: New Press, 2002); Miller, “HaBatalion heChatukh”; Monty Noam Penkower, “In Dramatic Dissent: The Bergson Boys,” *American Jewish History* (March 1 1981): 281–309; Penkower, “Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky”; Louis Rapaport, *Shake Heaven and Earth: Peter Bergson and the Struggle to Save the Jews of Europe* (Jerusalem: Gefen Press, 1999); Arye Bruce Saposnik, “Advertisement or Achievement? American Jewry and the Campaign for a Jewish Army, 1939–1944: a Reassessment,” *Journal of Israeli History* 17, no. 2 (1996): 193–220; Avi Shilon, “Milchemet Sheshet haYamim wehit’orerut haRa’ayon haKna’ani” (“The Six-Day War and the Resuscitation of the Canaanite Idea”), *’Iyunim bitequmat Israel* 11 (2017): 102–129; Judith Tydor Baumel, *The “Bergson Boys” and the Origins of Contemporary Zionist Militancy* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Judith Tydor Baumel, “The IZL Delegation in the USA 1939–1948: Anatomy of an Ethnic Interest/Protest Group,” *Jewish History* 9, no. 1 (1995): 79–89; David S. Wyman, “The Bergson Group, America, and the Holocaust: a Previously Unpublished Interview with Hillel Kook,” *American Jewish History* 89, no. 1 (2001): 3–34. Some reports on the Bergson group activities reached Palestine in real time through the periodical *haChevra* (Society), edited by the Revisionist Yaacov Weinschel (see various issues of the journal in 1944–1947). It is easy to observe that English-language literature on the topic significantly outweighs the Hebrew-language literature: food for thought.

**14** Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America*, 46–47, 55.



seen, unique, and *collective* Jewish experience, a view that has taken root in the West only since the 1960s; they pioneered the use of public relations and effective marketing to the general American society to advocate Jewish and Zionist causes by tapping into the anti-British sentiment present in the American national consciousness since the American Revolution and enhanced by the presence of a large Irish diaspora there; having quickly mastered this feature of American public life, they effectively transgressed the sectarian politics of established Jewish-American political organizations;<sup>15</sup> they were also a precursor of the numerous ethnic advocacy groups that made their presence felt in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>16</sup> All this is certainly true and adds a lot to our understanding of the issue at stake; however, my take on the Bergson group, and especially the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, will be different. I shall approach it from the methodological vantage point of the history of ideas, my purpose being to trace and investigate the path of these initially radical Zionists toward the ultimate repudiation of Jewish nationalism in favor of a self-declared post-Zionist worldview.

Kook's article "Post-Zionism" was an expression of the sentiments that overtook members of the Hebrew Committee in the wake of the United Nations' decision on the partition of Palestine on November 29 1947. An ideological maximalist yet political pragmatist, Kook realized that rejection of the decision (as advocated by Shmuel Merlin, who succeeded Kook as the head of the Committee in early 1948) was politically unsound. In a letter of December 3 1947, Kook urged his fellow members of the Committee to accept the partition as the lesser evil and attempt to utilize it in order to disseminate their ideas regarding the shape and *raison d'état* of the state about to be established. He emphasized that the UN decision created an advantageous momentum for post-Zionism:

Immediately after the U.N. vote there has developed a tremendous swing in favor of our basic ideology and structure – that of establishing a Hebrew republic of Palestine as a normal and modern nation as distinct from an international "Jewish State" [...] We feel it is our duty to play a leading role in the shaping of the character of the "Jewish State" and transform it into a small Hebrew republic of Palestine so that the treachery of the [Jewish – R. V.] Agency will be limited solely to a territorial loss, while today partition differs from our program also in basic principles.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Baumel, *The "Bergson Boys,"* 52, 88, 98, 130 – 131, 258 – 259; Kaplan, "A Rebel with a Cause," 91; Kook, "Hillel Kook," 165; Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America*, 88.

<sup>16</sup> Baumel, "The IZL Delegation in the USA."

<sup>17</sup> HKA/5.

This was therefore Kook's tactical reason for declaring himself openly a post-Zionist at that crucial point of time. This "coming out," unsurprisingly, caused a tempest in a teapot within the Zionist American press. The "Bergson boys" were used to being vilified by both mainstream Zionist and Revisionist-Zionist speakers in the United States, who sidestepped their usual feuds to denounce them as fraudsters and renegades (and were obviously paid in kind; a huge part of Kook's archive is a documentation of his paper battles against established Zionism in America).<sup>18</sup> This time, however, the attacks were more severe and qualitatively new: Kook was lumped together with such prominent religious anti-Zionists as Rabbi Elmer Berger (1908–1996). One of Kook's detractors was the Revisionist Eliyahu Ben-Horin (1902–1966), who came to the States together with Kook and worked closely with him in the early days of the ETZEL delegation. While Ben-Horin was unable to accept (or, to judge by his letter to the *New York Herald Tribune* of December 11 1947, even to grasp) Kook's new conceptualization of Jewish identity, he remained in agreement with him regarding the need to maintain liberal standards in the future state – which, given David Ben-Gurion's domination in the "organized *Yishuv*," was far from obvious.<sup>19</sup> Another chasm was simultaneously opening between the Hebrew Committee and ETZEL in Palestine, which had been led since 1943 by Menachem Begin (1913–1992). The Committee played a very important role in appointing Begin to the position – this was one of the reasons for Arie'el Ben-Eliezer's departure to Palestine – yet Begin proved himself not the pawn Kook half-expected him to be. Although Kook claimed later that it was under his influence that Begin's ETZEL replaced in its statements "Jew" with "Hebrew" as the agent of the anti-British struggle, finding in this distinction, in the words of Eri Jabotinsky, "a deep moral truth,"<sup>20</sup> Begin's worldview remained steadfastly Jewish and Zionist.<sup>21</sup> I will revisit the effects of

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**18** See, for instance, HKA/19 (repudiation of the Hebrew Committee by the (Revisionist) New Zionist Organization of America, November 1945) and HKA/23 (repudiation by the Jewish National Council, December 1946).

**19** HKA/50. Ben-Horin, of note, never moved to Israel and passed away in the United States. Another early Revisionist ally of Kook, Ben-Zion Netanyahu (1910–2012; father of the current prime minister of Israel), wrote a lengthy article attacking the Hebrew Committee very shortly after its formation ("The Fiasco of the Hebrew Committee," *Zionews*, July 1944 [HKA/15]). As mentioned above, the ETZEL delegation was from the outset institutionally independent from the Revisionist Party, which was an early cause of frictions.

**20** Eri Jabotinsky, "Jews and Hebrews" (a series of articles, 1947, JIA/3/13/410).

**21** HKA/34; HKA/63; Baumel, *The "Bergson Boys"*, 174–177; Kaplan, "A Rebel with a Cause," 87, 92–93; Miller, "'HaBatalion heChatukh'," 155, 158–159; Colin Shindler, *The Rise of the Israeli Right: From Odessa to Hebron* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 6; Sasson Sofer,

this conflict between ETZEL and its “cut-off battalion” in post-1948 Israeli politics in the next section.

Kook’s stay in America from 1940 to 1948 was for him a formative experience. By his own account, before coming to the United States “he had expected American Jewry to be simply *one more* Jewish community, not significantly different from those he had encountered in Warsaw [...] Paris and London.” However, Kook’s daughter points out, “what he encountered [...] was a Jewish community of a vastly different type.”<sup>22</sup> This community, Kook discovered, was made up of *Americans* of Mosaic faith. Penkower specifies: “Once in America [...] the Bergsonites came to realize that many of the country’s five million Jews had become fully integrated into the United States as citizens. Accepting the American separation of state and religion, most American Jews maintained in varying degrees their religious heritage but were completely indifferent to their former national origins.”<sup>23</sup> Reflecting this new realization, the Hebrew Committee declared that

The five million Jewish citizens of the United States [...] are Americans who wish to remain Americans. Like all other Americans they have a national extraction (in their case Hebrew) quite apart from, and in addition to, their religious affiliation, which is Jewish [...] It is therefore inaccurate, unjust and presumptuous to speak of these Jews, citizens of free countries, as if they were part of an existing national entity, loosely referred to as “the Jewish Nation” or “the Jewish People.”<sup>24</sup>

In other words, the ETZEL delegation discovered civic national identity. What in America was the foundation of public life was hardly known in Eastern Europe and the *Yishuv*: national identities in this part of the world were predominantly (though *not* universally) built on the premises of ethno-nationalism. An undated statement by the American League for Free Palestine (one of the Hebrew Committee’s satellite organizations) encapsulated this worldview simply and elegantly: “[A nation] is merely the decision of groups of everyday men; a fusion of men resulting from common interests and ideals, reacting upon economic, political environments.”<sup>25</sup> The dilemma faced by the ETZEL delegation now presented it-

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*Zionism and the Foundations of Israeli Diplomacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 228–231.

<sup>22</sup> Kook, “Hillel Kook,” 164 (original emphasis).

<sup>23</sup> Penkower, “In Dramatic Dissent,” 299.

<sup>24</sup> HKA/19.

<sup>25</sup> American League for Free Palestine, *The Survival and Freedom of the Hebrew Nation is your Concern!* (HKA/29). See also ALFP, *The Right of Stateless and Palestinian Jews to Nationhood* (HKA/36).

self in the following way: how to reconcile American Jews' loyalty to their nation with advocacy on behalf of the anti-British national liberation struggle in Palestine. With their entire activity re-framed in such terms, Kook and his associates were compelled to reconsider their own Zionism. Kook's daughter points to the solution they arrived at: "[T]he tragedy of European Jewry [Kook reasoned – R. V.] was that they were denied the liberty of choosing their nationality and were frequently not accepted into the body politic. The entire *raison d'être* of Zionism became clear to Hillel: *to grant this freedom of choice to Jews*."<sup>26</sup> To this needs to be added that once Kook realized that such a solution was impossible within the ideological framework of Zionism, whose core ethno-nationalistic principles were an inherent contradiction to civic liberalism, he decided to abandon Zionism entirely.

What, then, is the intellectual mainspring of the worldview of which Hillel Kook holds the copyright by naming it "post-Zionism?" I argue that it was a radical reinterpretation of Zeev Jabotinsky's fiercely secularist brand of Zionism (to which Kook claimed to adhere till his last day), a reinterpretation inspired by a synthesis of the principles of civic nationalism with a historical vision that contradicted the Zionist master narrative of Jewish history. This vision was supplied by Adya Gur Horon – a half-forgotten though highly significant figure of twentieth-century Hebrew intellectual history. Horon (real name Adolphe Gourevitch, 1907–1972) was one of the first associates of Jabotinsky to break with Zionism back in 1935, when he realized that Zionism's political program was not based on what he considered a firm historical-ideological platform. Horon, by profession a scholar of the history and languages of the ancient Near East, went on to develop his own historiography of Hebrew antiquity, which, translated by himself and his disciples into modern nationalistic terms, formed an alternative national idea to Zionism. This idea, known as the "Young Hebrews" ideology, or "Canaanism," was most enthusiastically taken up by Hillel Kook's acquaintance Uriel Heilperin (Yonatan Ratosh), who in 1939 established in Tel Aviv the "Committee for the Consolidation of the Hebrew Youth."<sup>27</sup> This committee advocated a native Hebrew territorial–linguistic national identity within the framework of the Levant (the Land of Kedem or the Land of Euphrates, in "Canaanite" terminology), which would be connected with Jewish heritage only biologically – but *not* morally, ideologically, or politically. Ultimately, "Canaanism" became a strong and intellectually consistent challenge to Zionism within Israel – a *nationalist*

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<sup>26</sup> Kook, "Hillel Kook," 166 (emphasis added).

<sup>27</sup> Yehoshua Porath, *Shelach we'Et beYado: Sippur Chayaw Shel Uriel Shelach (Yonathan Ratosh) (The Life of Uriel Shelach (Yonathan Ratosh))* (Tel Aviv: Zmora, 1989), 186.

*anti-Zionism* that haunted the state of Israel till it gradually died out in the 1970s and 1980s, with the passing away first of Horon, then of Ratosh.<sup>28</sup>

The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, and especially Hillel Kook, Shmuel Merlin, and Eri Jabotinsky (who was Horon's lifetime friend), belonged to the wider orbit of "Canaanism"; that is, they were influenced by, and accepted major parts of, Horon's theories, but never in such a radical way as Ratosh – they rather evinced what Avi Shilon terms "moderate Canaanism."<sup>29</sup> As explained by Rebecca Kook, "Hillel, who had close relationships with leading members of what came to be known as the Canaanite movement, drew upon the secular and political elements of the Hebrew idea but saw the Hebrew nation as the natural, historical development of the Jewish nation rather than a *new* nation distinct from the earlier Jewish one."<sup>30</sup> Saved from occupied France by the American diplomat Varian Fry (1907–1967), Horon arrived with his family in the United States in late 1940, where he took up a job as a lecturer of Semitics at the French expatriate higher education institution, the École Libre des Hautes Études in New York. Horon was never a formal member of the Hebrew Committee, though his role as the *éminence grise* behind the Committee's departure from Zionism was openly acknowledged. Speaking before the Committee in April 1945, Horon stated:

As I mention the Committee, I must say a word about my own position regarding this Committee. It is rather peculiar. I am not a member of it, yet I am not a real outsider either. Some of the most active men in this movement I have known for years, some of them I may call my friends and comrades-in-arms. Yet I had no part whatsoever in the creation of the Committee, and no influence on the shaping of its policies, for which I cannot feel responsible. *And yet I feel very much responsible for the very name of this Committee, for the name of Hebrew, and for the ideology which should be connected with such a name.*<sup>31</sup>

In the same lecture Horon developed at length his ideas regarding Hebrew history, Jewish history, and their meaning for the contemporary political struggle

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<sup>28</sup> For an extensive discussion of Horon's historical studies and their connection to "Canaanism" see Romans Vaters, "'A Hebrew from Samaria, not a Jew from Yavneh': Adya Gur Horon (1907–1972) and the Articulation of Hebrew Nationalism" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Shilon, "Milchemet Sheshet haYamim."

<sup>30</sup> Kook, "Hillel Kook," 166 (original emphasis). See also Baumel, *The "Bergson Boys,"* 203; Penkower, "In Dramatic Dissent," 300.

<sup>31</sup> A. Horon, "Hebrews and Jews: A Lecture Delivered in April 1945, New York, to the Leadership and Secretariat of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation and the American League for Free Palestine" (HKA/36; JIA/4/52b (emphasis added)).

and nation-formation in Palestine. A striking feature of his talk, delivered in the closing days of the Second World War, as well as of other talks given to the Committee, was Horon's deep historical pessimism regarding Jewry and Judaism in the twentieth century. With the Holocaust in Europe and assimilation elsewhere taking their toll, Horon claimed that Judaism had died a social death:

[Jews] are the followers of Judaism, members of the Jewish church-community [...] Jewry, in scientific terms, is a caste [...] During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, [the Jewish caste] broke up and actually ceased to exist as a distinct social body. We are now witnessing the last chapter in the history of Judaism: the more or less complete, more or less final assimilation of the Jews, in one part of the world, as well as their physical extermination under the pretext of "racialism," in another part of the world [...] Today, Jewry is in the process of complete disintegration [...and] has become merely an abstract notion [...]<sup>32</sup>

Zionism, therefore, is a non-starter for a national liberation movement. "The organs of Zionism do not express and cannot express the Hebrew national movement," Horon told his audience, since

The failure of Zionism, so obvious today, is due to the constant confusion of the two terms and of the two conceptions – Hebrew and Jew [...] Zionism, which was founded on the false assumption that Jewry is a national entity, has become an unworkable compromise between the superstitions of a "racial" or religious Judaism and the realities of the Hebrew rebirth in the Hebrew land.<sup>33</sup>

In consequence,

The Hebrew movement [...] is, and must be, something entirely different from Zionism, and something which by its very nature denies the possibility of a Jewish nationalism or a Jewish nation [...] For half a century, Zionist thought feeds on the Jewish conception of our past, and is therefore trying to do something self-contradictory, I mean – *to build a territorial nation and a state on the philosophy of a church* [...] *Zionism is not a first effort of the Hebrew revival, it is rather the last attempt of Judaism to outlast itself, to gain a new lease on life.* Certainly, something Hebrew is being born in Palestine, – but the forces which bring about this birth are hemmed by Zionism rather than strengthened by it.<sup>34</sup>

The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation was officially formed in protest against the 1943 Bermuda Conference's failure to address the urgent needs of Hit-

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32 (A. G.) Horon, "The Hebrew Movement: An Outline," January 1947 (HKA/36; JIA/4/52b).

33 Horon, "The Hebrew Movement."

34 Horon, "Hebrews and Jews" (second emphasis added).

ler's Jewish victims,<sup>35</sup> and in that sense was a direct continuation of the previous incarnations of the ETZEL delegation – the Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews and the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe – though within a novel theoretical framework suggested by Horon. Kook reasoned that the Bermuda debacle was due to the Allies' lack of understanding of European Jews' radically changed collective status, defined by persecution and extermination. The Allies continued to view Jews as citizens of their respective countries – including those where their civil rights were stripped off as a precursor to genocide. Jews were thus considered alien nationals, not formally different from their oppressors, in contradiction to their factual position and elementary logic. The Hebrew Committee reproached itself for initially following the same train of thought, which it now saw as the reason for its failure to raise a Jewish army, and re-conceptualized European Jewry as a newly-formed fate community, whose vested interest was in joining the Allies as a separate national entity with no national, sentimental, or formal allegiance to the states that had become their killing fields. This, for the Committee, meant a default choice to join the Hebrew nation in Palestine as the only national society to which the Jews of Europe could offer their allegiance due to existing cultural and often familial connections. Once the Committee had reached this conclusion, it introduced a principal innovation in its vocabulary, from now on terming the persecuted Jews of Europe Hebrews, in acknowledgement of their new national status and in distinction from the Jews of the free world, whose Judaism was regarded as having no national meaning or consequence. *Jews* became a term signifying religious-communal identity separate from, and not implying, any national identity, whereas *Hebrews* became a term signifying the already established national community of the *Yishuv* in Palestine, as well as those Jews whose national identity was considered by the Committee to express itself in a desire to join the *Yishuv*. Adya Horon delineated the new operational terminology as follows:

“The Hebrews” comprise today:

- a. The Hebrew settlers already rooted in the Hebrew land, forming there the nucleus of a reviving nation,
- b. Those who want to join the Hebrew nation through an act of free choice and will,

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<sup>35</sup> See Baumel, *The “Bergson Boys,”* 138–141. Baumel also notes that the formation of the Committee took place simultaneously with ETZEL's declaration of revolt against the British Mandate authorities, which means that the Committee was supposed to function as the legal political arm of the paramilitary underground organization, a kind of overseas “Sinn Féin” to ETZEL's “IRA” (Baumel, *The “Bergson Boys,”* 200).



- c. Those who are in need of a Hebrew republic, and who must join the Hebrew nation as their only means of physical and spiritual salvation. This category includes mainly the hundreds of thousands, indeed the millions of oppressed or uprooted Jews and so-called “Non-Aryans” for whom there is no more room in the world outside the Hebrew nation – since nationhood is the law of the modern world. For every man and woman in this category the liberation of the Hebrew land and the creation of a Hebrew Republic is a question of life and death.<sup>36</sup>

The implications of this shift for the political philosophy espoused by the Hebrew Committee were far-reaching. As stated by Eran Kaplan, “Kook had made this distinction [between the Jewish religion and the Hebrew nation – R. V.], for the first time, into the centerpiece of a political worldview”<sup>37</sup> that assumed that emancipated Jews did not, and could not, have any national aspirations beyond those of their general non-Jewish society, whereas persecuted Jews’ only chance of being admitted into the family of nations battling Hitlerism was the assumption of a new national identity centered around a territory with which they (still) had no tangible connection. Zionism’s refusal to adopt this distinction between a national and a religious-communal identity was understood by Horon and the members of the Hebrew Committee as its biggest weakness and internal contradiction, which put emancipated Jews in peril in their home countries while doing nothing to assist oppressed Jews in Europe:

Between the Jews and Hebrews as defined above, there is no strong bond of common interests. Yet there would be no necessity of conflict, if the two terms were as clearly separated as are the realities which they define. In that case, there might even be a common meeting ground: the Jews cannot dwell in peace where they are unless the Hebrews in exile leave and go to their country on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean; and the revival of the Hebrews cannot come about unless they relinquish their present status as Jews and renounce the claim to a double nationality.<sup>38</sup>

The American League for Free Palestine drew the line even farther by stating that such ideo-terminological framework will have the benefit of “absolv[ing]” [sic!] Americans of Jewish ancestry “from Jewish nationhood.”<sup>39</sup>

The materials of the Hebrew Committee abound in critical discussions of Zionism’s intellectual inconsistency and resulting political impotence, the most detailed and eloquent of which is Hillel Kook’s open letter to the president

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<sup>36</sup> Horon, “The Hebrew Movement.”

<sup>37</sup> Kaplan, “A Rebel with a Cause,” 93.

<sup>38</sup> Horon, “The Hebrew Movement.”

<sup>39</sup> American League for Free Palestine, *The Right of Stateless and Palestinian Jews to Nationhood*.

of the World Zionist Organization (and future president of Israel), Haim Weizman (1874–1952), dated April 1945 and published by the American League for Free Palestine.<sup>40</sup> Making his starting assumption that the difference between Hebrew and Jew is “the difference between a nationality and a religion,” Kook goes on to deconstruct Zionism’s intellectual foundations and political program. In many senses, this is a truly prophetic document, foretelling three years before the establishment of Israel all the difficulties a “Jewish State” would encounter, and therefore merits being discussed at some length:

When you speak of a Jewish Commonwealth [the ultimate objective of Zionism as defined in the May 1942 Biltmore Program – R. V.], are you proposing the establishment of a theocratic state? [...] It is impossible to deny that Jews constitute a religious group [...] The term “Jewish Commonwealth” therefore inevitably denotes the suggestion of a theocratic state, precisely such as would be denoted by the term “Catholic Commonwealth” [...] Let us imagine that your proposed “Jewish Commonwealth” has been established. A number of questions will demand answers.

Kook then goes on to pose to Weizman these questions, pertaining to what he defined as the “human boundaries” of the future state and to whom precisely the state would represent in its sovereignty. He ponders in particular the nature of the envisaged relation of the “Jewish Commonwealth” vis-à-vis the Jews of the world, its non-Jewish citizens, and the worldwide Jewish–Zionist bodies, whose future fate and role called for re-consideration. Then he concludes:

The insistence of Jewish leaders that there exists a universal Jewish people which makes it possible for a “Jew” to be a member of the American, the Russian, the Argentine, or, for that matter, the German nation, and simultaneously also be a member of the “Jewish people” is utterly unrealistic and politically meaningless [...] We say, therefore, that it is impossible and unnecessary to maintain in 1945 in the United States the same principles of organization and objectives of a movement which was organized in 1886 in Czarist Russia...

What we propose is to abandon this undemocratic and impractical point of view which calls for arbitrary enforcement of a certain status against the will of the individual [...] It can thus be made clear that there is a Hebrew nation to which adhere only those who wish to adhere to it (as is the case with any other nation) and not a “Jewish nation,” which involves every Jew whether he wants it or not. We want Palestine, therefore, as a free state and not “a Jewish state.” We must with cold sobriety realize the fact that the Hebrew nation is not composed of all the people in the world who are commonly referred to as Jews

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**40** Note the change in name: the previous non-Jewish satellite organization of the ETZEL delegation was called “American Friends of a *Jewish* Palestine.” Avi Shilon (“Milchemet Sheshet haYamim,” 119) notes that Menachem Begin objected to this new naming since it undermined for him the Jews’ religious attachment to the Land of Israel.

[...] We must realize that we cannot have a free state in Palestine and an international “Jewish people” at the same time...

There will be the State of Palestine (or whatever name this self-governed country might call itself): *the national territory of the Hebrew nation*. Here will live several million people adhering to the Jewish, Christian, Moslem and a variety of other religions [...] Palestine will have no state religion [...] In many countries of the world there will be people professing the Jewish Religion, but these will be *purely religious* communities.<sup>41</sup>

Anticipating the tortured debates on “Jewish democracy” that would plague Israeli public discourse from the first day of the state, the Hebrew Committee observed that

The Zionist spokesmen have tied themselves into knots trying to define a “Jewish State.” But however they twisted and turned and evade it, it still boils down to something very suspiciously like a theocratic state. And so they switched. What they wanted they said was a “democratic Jewish State” [...] Either it is a “Jewish State” in which case the citizens of the state are Jews, and non-Jews are something else but not first class citizens. Or else it is a democratic state and it doesn’t matter whether its citizens are Jews or non-Jews. And if it is a democratic state and all citizens enjoy full equality under the law regardless of whether they are Jews or not, what on earth makes it Jewish?<sup>42</sup>

Eri Jabotinsky asserted that this new thinking was in fact directly derived from the conceptions of both his father and the founder of political Zionism Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), who differentiated between assimilated and persecuted Jews in a way resembling that of the Hebrew Committee. Without attempting a critical discussion, Jabotinsky wrote off-handedly that what the two meant by “Jews” was now expressed by “Hebrews.” In effect, he projected his own philosophy back to the older theoreticians of Zionism, and credited Adya Horon with polishing the terminology.<sup>43</sup>

We should not, however, take Jabotinsky at face value and ought to examine how far indeed the Hebrew Committee departed from Zionism; in other words, to what extent was the post-Zionism of Hillel Kook *et consortes* really an anti-Zionist phenomenon?

Firstly, as suggested above, an American-style civic secular nationalism adopted by the Hebrew Committee was incompatible with Zionist ideology, nourished as it was in the conceptual world of East European ethno-nationalism. The Hebrew Committee came to regard the Hebrews (at least in Palestine, less so in

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<sup>41</sup> *A Blueprint for Hebrew Freedom: A Letter from Peter H. Bergson to Dr. Ch. Weizman* (HKA/29, original emphases). For similar utterances see HKA/5; HKA/19; HKA/50; HKA/63; JIA/3/13/410.

<sup>42</sup> HKA/25.

<sup>43</sup> Jabotinsky, “Jews and Hebrews.”

war-torn Europe) as a *voluntary* national community, while Zionism persisted in treating Jews as a community of *pre-determined* destiny. For example, Herzl considered Jews united by religious origin and anti-Semitic persecutions, whereas Eri Jabotinsky contradicted him directly by writing that “anti-Semitic persecutions constitute neither a positive definition nor an effective bond.”<sup>44</sup> On a deeper and more general level, the Hebrew Committee made the implicit claim that insofar as a “Jewish problem” existed, it could be solved *only* through assimilation, either in the free world or in Hebrew Palestine, which by following the western democratic standards would form an egalitarian republic without any collective privileges being conferred upon a particular religious or ethnic group. In both cases, Jewish identity would ultimately dissipate within a different identity, therefore Jews as Jews had no part in the Hebrew project of national liberation. Kook drew practical conclusions from this principle, writing that the Hebrews about to be repatriated to Palestine numbered only two and a half million, whereas “the Zionist formulae of a ‘Jewish people’ may rightly or wrongly be interpreted as applying to about twelve or fourteen million people.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, Kook did away with the essential Zionist principle of the “Ingathering of the Exiles.”

Secondly, whenever the Hebrew Committee mentioned in its documents (both internal and public) its ideological adversaries, it invariably referred to them as “Zionists,” and admitted that to all intents and purposes their ways parted ideologically and practically.<sup>46</sup> In this sense the formation of the Hebrew Committee was the apex of a process the ETZEL delegation had been undergoing from the early days of its existence, and especially since Zeev Jabotinsky’s death in August 1940. Rafael Medoff cites Yitzhak Ben-Ami (1913–1985), a founding member of the delegation, as recalling that “Jabotinsky’s passing severed our last links with traditional Zionism”<sup>47</sup> (Medoff, who goes very little toward concealing his pro-Zionist-Revisionist sympathies, seems entirely oblivious to the true significance of this statement).

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<sup>44</sup> Jabotinsky, “Jews and Hebrews.” These words are actually a quotation from Horon’s “The Hebrew Movement.”

<sup>45</sup> HKA/19.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, a letter to Mark Waldman, December 17 1947 (unsigned, probably written by Kook or Harry Louis Selden, head of the American League for Free Palestine): “We have not in the past devoted a great deal of effort to fighting the Zionist movement. We were travelling more or less the same road... Now, however, we have come to a parting of the ways” (HKA/5).

<sup>47</sup> Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America*, 65. Yitzhak Ben-Ami’s son Jeremy currently heads the Jewish-American liberal Zionist organization J Street (<https://jstreet.org/about-us/staff/jeremy-ben-ami/>; accessed November 13 2018).

Thirdly, the Hebrew Committee openly challenged the authority and *raison d'être* of mainstream Zionist bodies. It dismissed the Jewish Agency as a “voluntary organization of very fine Jewish gentlemen,”<sup>48</sup> who had no legitimate right to make any ruling impacting the Hebrew inhabitants of Palestine, whom they supposedly did not represent, let alone to agree to the severance of Transjordan from Palestine in 1946 (which the Hebrew Committee vociferously protested, mobilizing the support of sympathetic congressmen) and to the additional partition of Palestine the following year. It accused the Agency of striving to create a “truncated [...] precarious ‘Jewish State’ on the small beachhead around Tel Aviv,”<sup>49</sup> which stood no chance of survival and would perpetuate the “Jewish anomaly.” The Hebrew Committee’s alternative objective was “one nation [...] one single Republic – the Hebrew Republic. This Republic will accept all those individuals who want to be part of it, and will grant a status of complete civil equality to every group, religious or other, that would prefer to retain its moral, social, cultural autonomy.”<sup>50</sup> This, significantly, included the Arab-speaking population of Palestine, which was invited to partake in the building of the Hebrew state on an equal footing.

Finally, the very name “Hebrew Committee of National Liberation” was styled after the names used by the exiled governments of states occupied by Nazi Germany (e.g. the French/Yugoslav/Greek committees of national liberation), which meant that the ETZEL delegation in its final incarnation saw itself as the Hebrew exiled government-in-the-making. It was thus a rival to established Zionist representative bodies such as the Jewish Agency, the World Zionist Organization, the New [Revisionist] Zionist Organization, and the World Jewish Congress, all of whom supposedly represented the Jews the world over, but not the Hebrews (another effect was the implicit equivalence between Nazi rule in Europe and British rule in Palestine). In this capacity the Committee (unsuccessfully) solicited a place among the various national delegations to the October 1945 San Francisco conference that founded the United Nations. In its ultimate form, Horon proposed, “[t]he [Hebrew] Provisional Government must comprise spokesmen of all the Hebrews in the country and abroad [...] These

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48 “Text of a Statement by the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation on the United Nations Resolution of Palestine, December 2, 1947” and the following document (title page missing, HKA/25). See also “The Case against the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency” (National Convention of the American League for Free Palestine, February 1947; HKA/23); “Statement Issued by Mr. Peter H. Bergson, Chairman of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, at Lake Success, New York, October 15, 1947” (HKA/25).

49 Jabotinsky, “Jews and Hebrews.”

50 Letter to Waldman; HKA/19 (original emphasis).

spokesmen can and should belong not only to the Jewish denomination, but also to other religious communities – Christian, Moslem, etc.”<sup>51</sup>

At the same time, the Hebrew Committee’s outlook did not conform entirely to the “Canaanite” ideology, at least not in the form professed by Yonatan Ratosh and his followers. Firstly, no notion of the Land of Kedem/Euphrates was present in the Committee’s publications; it insisted very strongly on the inseparability of the east and the west banks of the Jordan, but had no wider geopolitical aspirations. Secondly, the relationship between Hebrews and Jews as envisioned by Hillel Kook differed strongly from orthodox “Canaanism.” As explained by his daughter, Kook saw the Hebrew nation as “the modern, nationalist embodiment of the historic Jewish people,”<sup>52</sup> and the Committee’s publications asserted a direct continuity between Jews and Hebrews, in antiquity as well as in modernity. This contradicted the “Canaanite” concept of the Hebrews as a territorial-linguistic nation whose very existence denied the Jewish communal way of life and could not be reconciled with an arbitrary “admission” into the Hebrew nation of all European Jews suffering under Hitler. From his home-base in Tel Aviv, Ratosh strongly denounced the Hebrew Committee for considering as Hebrew “any immigrant, any refugee, any stateless person [...] that has no choice but to move to this country”,<sup>53</sup> and Horon never returned to this idea in his other political writings. In a letter written several years afterwards he pointed that a tension existed between the ideological and the tactical in the Committee’s platform: “The ‘Hebrew Committee’ [...] restricted the definition of ‘Hebrews’ (*for obvious tactical reasons*) to the Jews residing in Palestine and the inmates of European concentration camps.”<sup>54</sup> Horon severed his relations with the Committee after a harsh quarrel with Hillel Kook, on matters probably related more to finances than to ideology, as his daughter Margalit Shinar suggested in an email message to me on November 8 2009. Eri Jabotinsky, however, hinted at differences on matters of principle as well, reporting in his memoirs on a conversation he held with Horon in 1946, in which the latter claimed that Kook would never achieve any prominence, since he was not an ideologue. To this Jabotinsky sardonically

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51 Horon, “The Hebrew Movement.”

52 Kook, “Hillel Kook,” 167.

53 Yonatan Ratosh, *Reshit HaYamim: Petichot ‘Tvriyot (The First Days: Hebrew Introductions)* (Tel Aviv: Hadar, 1982), 171. All translations from Hebrew are my own.

[כל מהגר וכל פליט וכל מחוסר מולדת (...)] וכל אשר אין לו ברירה אלא להגר לארץ הזאת]

54 Letter to Eri Jabotinsky and Shmuel Rosoff, February 10 1956 (HKA/32, emphasis added).

cally replied that Kook didn't need to be one, since he had ideologues on his payroll, which upset Horon.<sup>55</sup>

The proposal that Kook's attitude to ideas and ideologies was above all instrumental is reiterated by the Israeli journalist-politician Uri Avnery (1923–2018), who knew both Ratosh and members of the Hebrew Committee well (and occasionally published short stories and articles in the Committee's journal *The Answer*). In his memoirs Avnery portrayed Kook as a person of exceptional talents in the sphere of networking and public relations, not exactly matched by intellectual prowess.<sup>56</sup> It can be admitted that the Hebrew Committee's insistence on a shared national identity between Palestinian Hebrews and Jewish Holocaust survivors languishing in DP camps in Europe was quite artificial. The Committee, for one, hardly ever produced any empirical evidence that "stateless Jews" were in fact stateless or were willing to renounce their citizenship in order to join their "brethren" in Palestine. This claim, incidentally, had the polemical advantage of permitting the Committee to argue that Hebrews ("stateless Jews" included) outnumbered Palestinian Arabs and thus constituted a democratic majority that legitimized the Hebrew Committee's stated aim of becoming the representative Hebrew government-in-exile.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the above, I believe that the foregoing discussion demonstrated that the Committee's position was strongly influenced by profound ideological considerations. It is therefore misguided to argue, as Medoff does, that the differentiation between Hebrews and Jews was no more than a tactical trick designed to allay American Jews' fears of "double loyalty";<sup>58</sup> to claim so is to blind oneself to a very elaborate intellectual dynamic that formed the background to the Committee's repudiation of Zionism. Such an approach results in some remarkable manifestations of ignorance; for example, Medoff apparently has no idea who Horon was,<sup>59</sup> while Judith Baumel confuses him with Eliyahu Ben-Horin,<sup>60</sup> whose hostility to Kook's post-Zionism was mentioned earlier. Even more outrageously, Baumel and David Wyman both assert that the Hebrew Committee of National

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55 Eri Jabotinsky, *Avi, Zeev Jabotinsky (My Father, Zeev Jabotinsky)* (Tel Aviv: Steimatzky, 1980), 79.

56 Uri Avnery, *Optimi (Optimistic)* (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Acharonot, 2014), 157. Avnery considered Shmuel Merlin, who held a degree from the Sorbonne, the true "mind" behind the Committee.

57 HKA/19; Jabotinsky, "Jews and Hebrews." Menachem Begin was also not averse to employing these quite creative statistics to argue a similar point, though, of course, to him those were "Jews" and not "Hebrews" (Shindler, *The Rise of the Israeli Right*, 226).

58 Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America*, 112–117.

59 Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America*, 247, n. 36.

60 Baumel, *The "Bergson Boys"*, 203.



Liberation and the American League for a Free Palestine were Zionist organizations that struggled for a Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>61</sup>

## Stage Two: “LaMerchav” and the “Kedem Club”

The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation disbanded shortly after the establishment of Israel in 1948. Hillel Kook arrived in Israel simultaneously with the ETZEL ammunitions ship *Altalena* in June 1948 (whose sailing was co-organized by the Hebrew Committee) and was immediately arrested, thus winning the dubious honor of being one of the first political prisoners of the new state. He was released a few weeks later and, together with Eri Jabotinsky, Arie Ben-Eliezer, and Shmuel Merlin, ran for the Cherut (“Liberty”) party, established and led by Menachem Begin on the base of ETZEL, in the Israeli Constituent Assembly elections in January 1949, when it won fourteen seats. The Israeli declaration of independence provided that the Assembly’s purpose was to write a constitution, yet at its second session on February 16 1949 the deputies voted to form a parliament and to postpone the constitution question indefinitely, thus turning a temporary body into a permanent one without meeting the threshold condition. Kook, who saw this as an illegal usurpation of power by Ben-Gurion (whose party had the plurality), reportedly stood up and shouted: “This is a putsch!” We have no documentation of this event: his daughter explained that his interjection was expunged from the record, so we are left only with Kook’s own testimony. In an interview given two decades later he stated that he still considered this step illegitimate and expressed his regret for not having resigned from the Israeli parliament immediately.<sup>62</sup>

The trio, Kook, Jabotinsky, and Merlin, were the parliamentary vanguard of an oppositional faction within the Cherut, formed in December 1950, called “La-Merchav” (“To the Region/Area”). Its name, inspired by the vocabulary of the “Canaanites” (with whom the three used to meet during their parliamentary tenure), expressed a position strongly at odds with Begin’s politics of *yiddishkeit*.

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<sup>61</sup> Baumel, *The “Bergson Boys,”* 190; Baumel, “The IZL Delegation,” 84; Wyman, “The Bergson Group,” 7.

<sup>62</sup> Kaplan, “A Rebel with a Cause,” 93; Kook, “Hillel Kook,” 168; Kook’s interview to the Division of Oral Documentation. For the broader debate (and controversy) over the issue of a written constitution for Israel in the wake of its establishment see Nir Kedar, “Ben-Gurion’s Opposition to a Written Constitution,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 12, no. 1 (2013): 1–16; Orit Rozin, “Forming a Collective Identity: The Debate over the Proposed Constitution, 1948–1950,” *Journal of Israeli History* 26, no. 2 (2007): 251–271.

Orna Miller compellingly demonstrates that “LaMerchav” was the Hebrew Committee’s political afterlife in the Israeli parliamentary system, though not all of its members originally belonged to, or shared views of, the Committee.<sup>63</sup> The political platform of “LaMerchav” was by and large identical to that of the Hebrew Committee, with adjustments to the realities of a state that was no longer theoretical but existed in practice. The most salient element of the position taken by “LaMerchav” was explicit post-Zionism: the assertion that Israel’s victory in the independence war had put an end to Zionism, as opposed to both Ben-Gurion’s and Begin’s understanding of Zionism as a kind of “permanent revolution.” This keystone tenet shaped all other stipulations raised by members of the faction both in the parliament (the *Knesset*) and in Cherut’s internal debates. “LaMerchav” demanded the disestablishment of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, which had now outlived their usefulness; it demanded a written constitution for Israel that provided for the separation of religion and the state, as well as opposed a centralized economy under the grip of political-economic bodies affiliated with the ruling party.<sup>64</sup> In terms of Israel’s regional geopolitical role, it advocated an alliance with the non-Arab peoples (or those it considered non-Arab) in the Middle East, in order to break Pan-Arabism’s hold over the region and thus end Britain’s indirect domination over it; this was to be replaced with a democratic federation of the Levant that had Hebrew Israel and Maronite Lebanon as its leading elements, for which purpose an alliance with the USA might be considered.<sup>65</sup> Simply put, “LaMerchav” advocated a civic secular and liberal nationalism in a state led by its leaders in an ethno-nationalist direction.

“LaMerchav” members of the *Knesset* also struggled for their principles individually. Jabotinsky reportedly demanded that the Israeli parliament’s buffet be non-kosher.<sup>66</sup> He repeatedly advocated the completion of the Constituent Assembly’s abandoned task, arguing that as long as Israel remained without a written constitution, it would not be able to disentangle itself from the three existential paradoxes inherited from what he called “the Zionist stage” of Hebrew history: Israel’s relations with its religious Jewish citizens, with Diaspora Jewry, and

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63 Miller, “‘HaBatalion heChatukh’.”

64 See a memorandum by Shmuel Merlin (“Towards Collapse or Prosperity; Problems of Israel’s Economic Independence – Analysis and Outline of a Solution,” May 12 1949; HKA/8).

65 Miller, “‘HaBatalion heChatukh’,” 155, 168–184.

66 See Yehoshua Porat’s talk at a memorial event on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of Eri Jabotinsky’s death, held at the Jabotinsky Institute in Tel Aviv on June 18 2009 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gPLFhjrZo>; accessed October 26 2017).

with the Arabs.<sup>67</sup> Jabotinsky, following his father and his “Canaanite” friends, professed a very strong hostility to Arab nationalism in all forms, and stated openly that for him Arabic was a foreign language whose usage must not be permitted in a Hebrew parliament.<sup>68</sup> He declared his belief in the ultimate equality between Arabs and Jews within a Hebrew secular state, but also revealed that he considered it necessary to temporarily limit Arab citizens’ rights in Israel until this particular paradox has been solved. Most vocally, he objected to granting Arabic-speaking Israelis collective rights as a national minority, fearful of the replay of the pre-war “minorities’ question” in Europe, which brought down more than one state. In his insistence on the Arabs’ ultimate assimilation into Hebrew society, Eri Jabotinsky deviated from his father’s position, who was in favor of cultural-national autonomy for the Arab citizens of the future Jewish state.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, Jabotinsky championed in the *Knesset* the struggle of the Arabic-speaking Maronite citizens of Israel to return to their village of Bir’am on the Lebanese border, from which they had been evicted by the Israeli army in 1948 under a fraudulent pretense of security and with a promise to be allowed to return shortly, which was never kept.<sup>70</sup>

The challenge of “LaMerchav” to Menachem Begin was short-lived. The leader of the Cherut mastered enough votes in a party plenum to push the faction members away from positions of influence. By the time of the elections to the second *Knesset* in July 1951, both Kook and Jabotinsky functioned as solitary parliamentarians, having resigned their membership of the Cherut. Neither they nor Merlin got re-elected to the *Knesset*, and they retired from public life. Jabotinsky devoted himself to an academic career as a lecturer of mathematics at the Technion (apart from 1963–1965, which he spent at the Haile Selassie University of Addis Ababa, a choice echoing the positions taken by “LaMerchav”). Kook and Merlin returned to the United States, where Kook became an investment broker and financed the “Institute for Mediterranean Affairs,” co-chaired with

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67 Eri Jabotinsky’s speech in the *Knesset*, May 8 1950 (JIA/5/13/410).

68 To drive home his point that the absence of a constitution meant that in Israel there was no legal requirement to use only Hebrew in the *Knesset*, Jabotinsky concluded one of his speeches in French. According to contemporary press reports, his words were literally drowned in a tumult (JIA/5/13/410). Notably, when making this speech, Jabotinsky conceded that he was speaking in his own name only, demonstrating the tensions between “LaMerchav” and Cherut’s leadership.

69 See Rafaella Bilski Ben-Hur, *Kol Yachid Hu Melekh: HaMachshava hachevratit wehaMdinit shel Zeev Jabotinsky (Every Individual a King: The Social and Political Thought of Zeev Jabotinsky)* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1988), 281–291, 329–332.

70 See Jabotinsky’s memorandum on behalf of the Bir’am refugees (HKA/32). According to Hill-el Cohen (*’Aravim Tovim (Good Arabs)* (Jerusalem: ’Ivrit, 2006), 135), the Bir’am cause was taken up by the Cherut party as a whole.

Merlin. During the 1950s he attempted to reprise his Hebrew Committee glory days by founding a “Committee to Save the Middle East from Communism,” but was dissuaded from further action by the Israeli legation.<sup>71</sup> The purge initiated by Begin against “LaMerchav” brought the already strained relations between him and Kook to the point of hatred. Uri Avnery writes that Kook had held Begin in deep contempt ever since the late 1930s in Poland when he was active as an ETZEL emissary and Begin was the local head of Beitar. When Begin was elected to the premiership in May 1977, Kook reportedly said that he would not have trusted Begin to run a grocery store, let alone a state.<sup>72</sup> In an interview from 1968, Kook openly called Begin “a liar.”<sup>73</sup> There were certainly personal motives behind this conflict, along with deeper ideological schisms; in the words of Orna Miller, the demise of “LaMerchav” signified “the end of a ‘Canaanite’ stream that developed in the Revisionist movement in the preceding two decades” and the reversal to a Jewish political worldview and mentality.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, the failure of “LaMerchav” should not obscure a very significant aspect to its brief lifespan: it was the first, and as of yet also the last, case of post-Zionism gaining official ground and a voice in the Israeli parliament. No other instance of post-Zionism, either historically or today, can boast of such an achievement.

Shortly after his departure from the *Knesset* Eri Jabotinsky summed up his unsuccessful fight for a constitution for Israel (in the drafting of which he solicited Horon’s help)<sup>75</sup> in an article he published in 1952 in a brochure put out in the United States by the “Levant Club” – an expatriate Maronite-Lebanese organization with which Horon closely cooperated.<sup>76</sup> This article has the historical value of probably being the second occurrence of the explicit term “post-Zion-

71 HKA/30; Miller, “‘HaBatalion heChatukh,’” 182.

72 Avnery, *Optimi*, 157. Avi Shilon (“Milchemet Sheshet haYamim,” 124) confirms that Kook was unhappy with Begin’s electoral victory.

73 Kook’s interview to the Division of Oral Documentation (also Baumel, *The “Bergson Boys,”* 235). Nonetheless, in all relevant materials of the ETZEL delegation Begin is lionized as a Hebrew liberation warrior.

74 Miller, “‘HaBatalion heChatukh,’” 185.

[סימו של זרם 'כנעני' שהתפתח בתנועה הרוויזיוניסטית בעשרים השנים הקודמות]

The Jewish–American Zionist Medoff misses, as usual, the entire point: “During their first term in parliament [...] Kook and Merlin quarrelled with Begin over a variety of ideological and personal issues, and soon they opted to withdraw from the political scene and return temporarily to the United States” (Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America*, 214).

75 Eri Jabotinsky’s letter to Horon, November 6 1950 (JIA/4/4–4א).

76 Eri Jabotinsky, “Israel and Zionism: Why Israel has no Constitution,” *The Levant: Behind the Arab Curtain* (HKA/36).

ism,” and the first after the establishment of the state.<sup>77</sup> In it Jabotinsky dismisses the notion that the absence of a constitution in Israel is due to the coalition calculations of Ben-Gurion, and asserts that it reflects a deeper existential problem – the lack of a defined relationship between the state and Zionist ideology on the one hand, and the world Jewish diaspora on the other:

It is today no secret that the liberation of Israel from Britain was brought about by forces acting outside the Zionist Organization or even against it [...] Yet these were all aspects of a conflict that belonged to the “Zionist period.” *Today Zionism as such has ended by achieving fulfilment. We are now in what should be called the “post-Zionist period” in Hebrew history.* Zionists who refuse to disband or to re-organize, deny this [...] In the main, it can be said that the people of Israel are moving farther and farther away from Zionism and more and more towards an integrated Hebrew nationhood, based on a territory and a language, thus considering as foreigners all those, *whatever their religion or race*, who are not joining it [...] Psychologically and politically, the population of Israel today is formed by a very different type of people than those who are the rank and file of the Zionist Organization outside Israel...

It is mainly because of this conflict between Israel and Zionism that Israel, after four years of existence, still has no Constitution [...] The real reason that prevented the drafting of the Constitution was the ever growing perception that Israel is but a beginning – that it is only a beachhead, an ideological and material beachhead of civilization on a vast new continent [...] The discovery that the Middle East is populated by groups and peoples who are in fact second-rate citizens in their own countries is what makes it possible to conceive of Israel spreading its ideals over the adjacent lands [...] This is the new conception that Israel (*not* Zionism) is bringing to the Middle East, and this is the sense in which Israel feels to be a beachhead [...] In fact, the very name “Israel” is restrictive. It is a compromise between the Zionist past, which would have called it “Zion” or “Judea,” and the Hebrew future where it will sound somewhat like “Hebrewland.”<sup>78</sup>

Jabotinsky’s position after 1948 consists, as the above quote demonstrates, of two essential elements: that the Israeli national identity is a new one, not Jewish but not completely detached from Jewish heritage, on the one hand; and that Israel has a regional “manifest destiny” on the other. This is what Jabotinsky means when he hints that the name “Israel” is transitory; back in 1948 the American League for a Free Palestine expressed a similar dislike of the name “the

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<sup>77</sup> This assessment does not include private correspondence between ex-members of the Hebrew Committee and “LaMerchav,” where, one might assume, references to “post-Zionism” were quite ubiquitous (see, for instance, Eri Jabotinsky’s letter to Hillel Kook, December 6 1949; JIA/13/4–48).

<sup>78</sup> Jabotinsky, “Israel and Zionism” (first emphasis added). This article was reprinted in Hebrew in the “Canaanite” periodical *Alef*, though, curiously, with the paragraph on post-Zionism omitted (Eri Jabotinsky, “Israel wehaTziyonut: Madu’a Ein Techika leIsrael?,” *Alef*, September 1952, 3–4, 15).

State of Israel,” which brought associations with *l'État Français* [“French State”], the official name of the Vichy statelet in France during World War II (its suggested alternative was “the Republic of Israel”).<sup>79</sup> These two interrelated principles were developed into a complete program by a political club established by Eri Jabotinsky in his home city of Haifa in the mid-1950s, the “Kedem Club” (its full name was “Kedem: a Hebrew Liberal Club,” later changed to “the Israeli Liberal Club,” much to the dissatisfaction of Adya Horon). This seems mainly to have been a one-man project, since apart from Jabotinsky, the only other Club member whose identity is known is Shmuel Rosoff (1900–1975) – an important Haifa architect who has left several landmarks in the city, son of one of the first Russian Zionists Israel Rosoff (1869–1947) and a childhood friend of Vladimir Nabokov (it was Rosoff who lent the future author of *Lolita* his high school diploma to enable Nabokov to enroll at the University of Cambridge).<sup>80</sup> The main objective of the club was to formulate and advance a new *raison d'état* for a post-Zionist Israel, based on the assumption that the establishment of the state meant the fulfillment and closure of Zionism's historical purpose. The club's statute described its aims in the following way:

To contribute to the progress of the Levant by developing, clarifying and propagating the following basic ideas:

- a. Integration of the State of Israel into a Levant freed from Pan-Arab domination over the various peoples of this region, including the Moslem Arabs themselves, who are being incited by their leaders to Holy War and to the subjugation of other peoples.
- b. Moulding of an Israeli nation firmly rooted into the soil of its ancient homeland.
- c. Liberalization of the State of Israel – separation of State and Church, development of a civilized, progressive society, ensuring for the individual a life of freedom and dignity.<sup>81</sup>

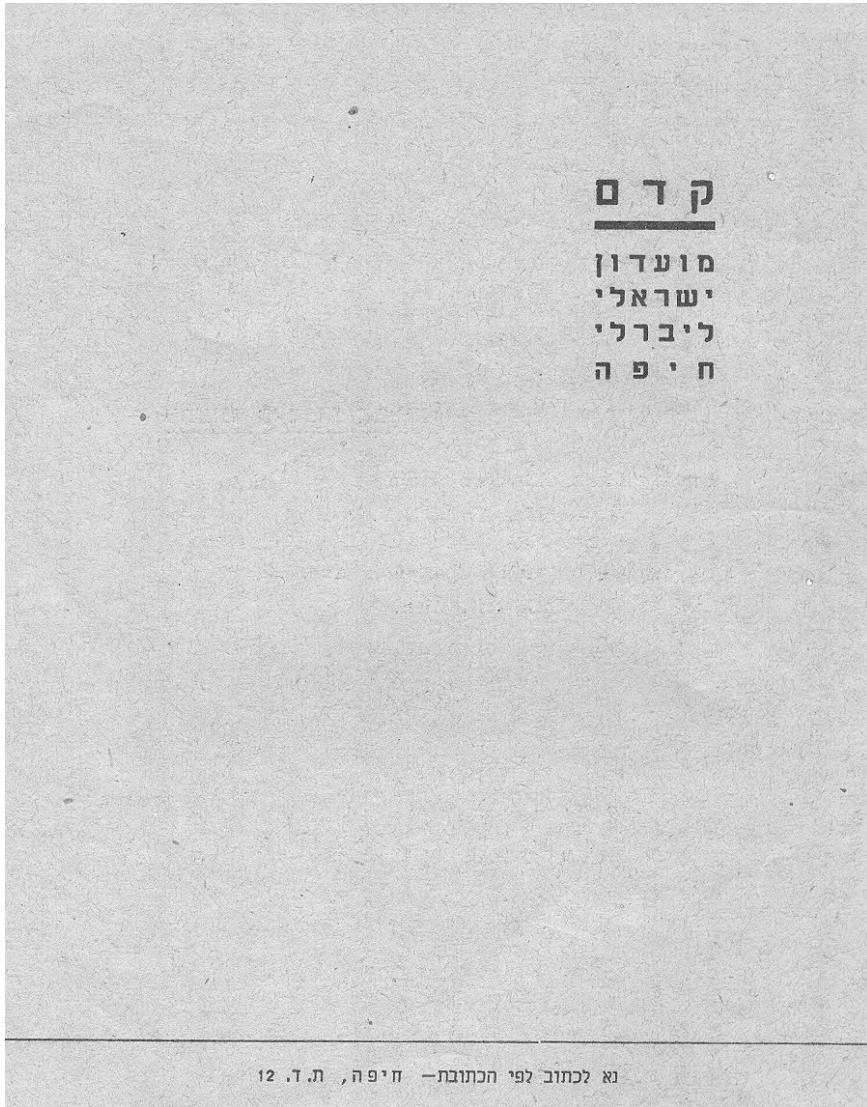
To achieve these ends a deep transition was advocated both in Israel's internal and external policy, in accordance with Jabotinsky's view that Israeli national identity could not be expressed by Zionist moral and political vocabulary,

<sup>79</sup> Editorial, *The Answer*, December 17 1948, 4 (HKA/62).

<sup>80</sup> Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: the Russian Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 166. In a letter to Horon from December 8 1955 Rosoff states that the Club “consists of a nucleus of 5 or 6 men surrounded by 40 or 50 ‘well-wishers’” (JIA/4/4–48), but he doesn't name them.

<sup>81</sup> JIA/2/12/48 (the statute of the Club is reproduced in four languages: Hebrew, Arabic, French and English).





**Fig. 2:** Statute of Kedem Club.

Reproduced by permission of the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel.



לקדם ארץ הקדם...

## »קדם« מועדון ישראלי ליברי.

### 1. ממת המועדון.

לתום לקדם ארץ הקדם על-ידי הבורה. פיתוח התפזה של הרעיונות והסודים האלה:

(א) שלוב מדינת ישראל באזור הקדם המשותף מהשתלשלות פן-ערבית

על עמי האזור ועל הערבים-המסלמים עצמם, הנגזרים על-ידי מנהיגיהם להרפתקאות של דיכוי עמים וגזיואר דתי.

(ב) גיבוש האומה הישראלית, המשרשת באציה כבימי קדם.

(ג) ליברליזציה של מדינת ישראל, הפרדה בין דת למדינה ויצירת חברה נאורה ומתקדמת, המבטיחה חיי חופש וכבוד לפרט.

### 2. חברות במועדון.

חבר יכול להקבל כל אורח מדינת ישראל, ללא תבול דת, גזע ומין, בחנאי שמועמדותו תוצג ע"י שני חברים לפחות ותאושר ע"י האסיפה הכללית. אולם לא יתקבל אורח ישראלי, שהוא גם נזין מדינה דתה.

החברות במועדון אינה נוגדת השתייכות לכל מפלגה פוליטית או ארגון דתי.

### 3. פעולות המועדון.

יסוד מועדוני »קדם« בערים שונות. עריכת פגישות חברתיות, הרצאות, קורסים וסדורים הפצו דברי דפוס.

המועדון ישיק בעבודתו מומחים לבעיות סכניות, גיאוגרפיות ואנתיות של האזור.

המועדון יחפש דרך לפתרון בעיות הפליטים הפלשתינאים.

בעיקר יתמסר המועדון לעריכת חכנית לארגון מדיני של עמי ארץ הקדם. בעריכת חכנית זו ישתתפו אישים בני כל אומות האזור.

• כתבתו בארצות הברית:

LEVANT CLUB 37 Wall St.

New York, N.Y.

LEVANT CLUB 10214 Charlevoix Ave.

Detroit, Mich.

Pour le progrès du Levant...

## « KEDEM », Club libéral israélien.

### 1. But du club.

Le club entend contribuer au progrès du Levant par l'étude, le développement et la diffusion des principes idéologiques suivants:—

- (a) Intégration de l'état d'Israël dans un Levant libéré de l'empire pan-arabe, qui opprime les différents peuples de la région, y compris les arabes-musulmans eux-mêmes, que leurs dirigeants incitent à la guerre sainte et aux conquêtes.
- (b) Consolidation de la nation israélienne dans le pays de ses ancêtres.
- (c) Création d'un régime libéral; séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat; développement d'une société civilisée et progressive sauvegardant la liberté et dignité de l'individu.

### 2. Admission au club.

Tout citoyen israélien, sans distinction de race ou de religion, peut devenir membre du club. Sa candidature doit être présentée par deux membres au moins et approuvée par l'assemblée générale. Ne sera pas admis comme candidat un citoyen israélien, ayant une seconde nationalité.

Les membres du club sont libres d'appartenir à n'importe quel autre groupe politique, social ou religieux.

### 3. Activités du club.

Création de clubs similaires dans des villes diverses. Organisation de réunions, conférences, cours et excursions. Publication et diffusion de brochures et pamphlets.

Le club s'assurera le concours d'experts qualifiés pour l'étude des problèmes techniques, géographiques et ethniques du Levant. Le club cherchera une solution au problème des réfugiés palestiniens.

Le club se consacrera surtout à la mise au point d'un projet de réorganisation politique des peuples du Levant.

Ce projet se fera en collaboration avec des personnalités appartenant à tous les peuples de la région.

نحو تقدم المشرق...

٠١ «قدم» نادي اسرائيلي حر

اهداف النادي

المساهمة في تقدم هذه البلاد العربية في القدم عن طريق بث وتنمية وإيضاح

المبادئ الاساسية التالية:

(أ) ادماج دولة اسرائيل في هذه المنطقة العربية في القدم محررة من حكم

اي سيطرة عربية في شعوبها وفي عربها المسلمين انفسهم المناهقين

وورا زعمائهم الذين يطوحن بهم ن الجهاد الديني وفي مغامرات

شأنها اضطهاد الشعوب.

(ب) تطوير الامة الاسرائيلية وثبيت اقدامها في بلادها كما كانت في القدم.

(ج) تفسير المبادئ الحرة للتسامح في الدولة والفصل بين الدين والدولة

وايجاد مجتمع راق متقدم يؤمن لل فرد حياة حرة كريئة.

٠٢ العضوية في النادي

يقبل عضواً في النادي كل مواطن اسرائيلي قطع النظر عن دينه او عرقه

او جنسه بشرط ان يرشحه عضواً على الاقل ويوافق النادي على عضويته في

اجتماع عام ولا تقبل عضوية أي شخص يحمل جنسية اسرائيلية وجنسية اخرى.

٠٣ ايجاد اندية في المدن المختلفة وعقد اجتماعات ذات صيغة اجتماعية والقيام

بمحاضرات وتنظيم دورات دراسية ورحلات وث منشورات لهذه الغاية.

يسمى النادي بصورة خاصة بنسب خبرا في الشؤون الفنية والبرافية وفي

اصول الامم ما يتعلق بالمنظمة ويسمى النادي — في ضمن مساعيه المختلفة —

البحث عن طريق حل مشكلة اللاجئين الفلسطينيين.

البحث عن طريق حل مشكلة اللاجئين الفلسطينيين.

البحث عن طريق حل مشكلة اللاجئين الفلسطينيين.

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البحث عن طريق حل مشكلة اللاجئين الفلسطينيين.

البحث عن طريق حل مشكلة اللاجئين الفلسطينيين.

*For the progress of the Levant...*

## "KEDEM", The Israeli Liberal Club.

### 1. Aim of the Club.

To contribute to the progress of the Levant by developing, clarifying, and propagating the following basic ideas:—

- (a) Integration of the State of Israel into a Levant freed from Pan-Arab domination over the various peoples of this region, including the Moslem Arabs themselves, who are being incited by their leaders to Holy War and to the subjugation of other peoples.
- (b) Moulding of an Israeli nation firmly rooted into the soil of its ancient homeland.
- (c) Liberalisation of the State of Israel—separation of State and Church, development of a civilized, progressive society, ensuring for the individual a life of freedom and dignity.

### 2. Membership.

Every Israeli citizen irrespective of race or religion is eligible for membership, provided he has been proposed by at least two members and has been approved by a General Meeting.

An Israeli citizen having a second nationality is not eligible for membership.

Members of the Club may belong to any political group or party, or religious organization.

### 3. Activities of the Club.

Sponsoring the establishment of "KEDem" Clubs in various towns; conducting of regular meetings, lectures, courses and excursions; publishing and distributing printed matter.

The Club will endeavour to enlist the participation in its work of experts on the technical, geographical and ethnographic problems of this region.

The Club will strive towards the formulation of a plan for the solution of the Palestine refugee problem.

The Club's main endeavour will be the drafting of a plan for the political reorganization of the peoples inhabiting this region.

This draft plan will be worked out jointly with persons belonging to the various peoples of the Levant.

#### Correspondents in U.S.A.:

LEVANT CLUB

37 Wall St.

New York, N.Y.

LEVANT CLUB

10214 Charlevoix Ave.

Detroit, Mich.

which did not accept that national identity was a matter of free self-definition.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Jabotinsky saw in the continued existence of Zionism an unmediated danger to Israeli sovereignty: “Shaking off the unnatural bonds with the voluntary ghettos inhabited today by the Jews of the free world,” Jabotinsky wrote in an April 1954 memorandum prepared for the Kedem Club, is “a simple security imperative: today the world regards us as just another Jewish community, and the world knows perfectly well what is to be done with Jewish communities.” He further says that this peril is perpetuated by the Israeli government, which, by clinging to Zionist principles, is mainly preoccupied with survival and hesitates to announce Israel’s geopolitical and strategic objectives in the Middle East. This, according to Jabotinsky, foments internal decay and invites external attack.<sup>83</sup>

The Kedem Club defined Israel’s regional aim as working to establish a federation modelled after the United States (with “extensive State rights [...] more so than in the U.S.A., because of the ancient character and deep tradition of the peoples involved”),<sup>84</sup> united by a secular constitution and allegiance to the Hebrew historical and cultural legacy, whose global significance would be in defeating and rolling back Pan-Arabism in the Eastern Mediterranean: “Our overall purpose in the coming period is the transformation of the Levant into a political Federation of States and Territories, each of which is to be endowed with its own ethnic and cultural flavor,” the Club program stated.<sup>85</sup> Not a global superpower, but “a regional power of the size of France”, rhapsodized Eri Jabotinsky, whose suggested name would be “Ha-‘Ever” (‘העבר’, “The Country” in Hebrew), “Levant Union” or “Semitic Federation.” In this federation all Middle

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**82** Jabotinsky wrote the following on this matter: “[My approach to national self-definition] is based on the principle of a person’s right to define himself. This principle means that if you wish to know to which nation one belongs, go and ask him: if he says he’s a Frenchman, you ought to believe him, since the right to determine this is exclusively his own”

[הגדרה זו (...) מבוססת על יסוד זכות ההגדרה העצמית של האדם. פירוש יסוד זה הוא שאם ברצונך לדעת לאיזו אומה משתיך אדם מסוים, לך ושאל אותו: והיה ואמר לך כי צרפתי הוא, תאמין לו, כי לו ואך לו הזכות לקבוע דבר זה]

(Eri Jabotinsky, “Memorandum” [HKA/32; a truncated version of the same memorandum is found in JIA/1/12/4א]).

**83** Jabotinsky, “Memorandum.”

[ההתנערות מהקשרים הבלתי טבעיים עם הגיטאות-מרצון בהם חיים יהודי העולם החופשי כיום יש לה חשיבות בטחונית פשוטה: אנו נראים כיום בעיני העולם כאחת הקהילות היהודיות ואת אשר עושים עם קהילות יהודיות יודע העולם היטב]

**84** “Tentative Formulation for a Program of Action,” Haifa, November 19 1956 (HKA/32; JIA/3/12/4א).

**85** “Tentative Formulation.”



Eastern nations currently oppressed by Pan-Arabism would enjoy self-determination; this included first and foremost the Hebrews of Israel and the Maronites of Lebanon, but also Kurds, Druze, Shiites, and all non-Arab ethnic and religious minorities scattered throughout the Levant, whose legacy in the land went deeper than the Arab-Muslim presence. A space would be left for future colonization by migrants (preferably, but not necessarily, Jewish), who would create their own separate states within the federation. Taking his cue from the autonomy of the Mormons of Utah, Jabotinsky conceded that “an Arab state or two may also come into existence”, along with a theocratic Jewish state. The latter would serve as a laboratory for the functioning of religion in public life, and would thus be released from the requirement to separate state and religion, a principle that would otherwise be enforced on the federal level. The Federation’s liberal principles would be enshrined in a constitution that would ensure full equality and autonomy to citizens both personally and collectively, with its overall Hebrew character preserved by federal legislation.<sup>86</sup>

The idea that a Hebrew state’s existential *sine qua non* would be a *mission civilatrice* in the Middle East, incompatible with inward-looking Zionism, had appeared back in 1947 in Eri Jabotinsky’s series of articles “Jews and Hebrews,” cited above. When discussing Israel’s historical role as a barrier to Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism, Jabotinsky slips into outlandish conspiracy theories, describing Great Britain as the mastermind behind a global project of a Pan-Islamic caliphate stretching from Indonesia to Morocco:

[The idea is] to establish a Muslim federation from the periphery of Australia in the Pacific Ocean, through to Indonesia, Pakistan, south-central Soviet republics of Middle Asia, Afghanistan, Persia and the “Arab World” to the Atlantic Ocean. *En route*, the plan is to swallow up Burma, India and Israel, and to deliver Turkey, the Muslim areas of Europe and even central Africa back to Islamdom [...] This plan is sustained – financially, militarily and politically – by England and the United States [...] The US sees in this plan a chance to stir up unrest in the Soviet Muslim republics [...] [while] England [...] probably wishes to restore the British Empire on novel foundations [...] [which will provide] a route back to India, to Israel and to the eviction of the French from North Africa.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Jabotinsky, “Memorandum.”

[מעצמה מסוגה של צרפת]  
[ואף בודאי מדינה ערבית אחת או שתיים]

<sup>87</sup> Jabotinsky, “Memorandum.”

[פקיסטן היא המרכז של תכנית פן איסלמית שכונתה להקים פדרציה מוסלמית שתשתרע ממבואות אוסטרליה באוקיינוס השקט, דרך אינדונזיה, פקיסטן, הריפובליקות של דרום מרכז אסיה שבברית המועצות, אפגניסטן, פרס ו"העולם הערבי" עד לאוקיינוס האטלנטי. בדרך, התכנית הזו מתכונת לבלוע את בורמה, הודו, ישראל ולהחזיר לאיסלם את תורכיה ואת החבלים המוסלמיים של אירופה ואף את מרכז אפריקה (...). התכנית הזו נתמכת בכסף, נשק וסעד מדיני – ע"י אנגליה וארה"ב (...) ארה"ב רואה בתכנית אפשרות להתסיס את הריפובליקות

To stem this grandiose design, Jabotinsky suggested making inroads into India in order to achieve there a regime change toward one that was more nationalistic and hostile to Pakistan, which he regarded as an illegitimate Muslim sectarian state (Jabotinsky even proposed that Israel might be interested in tightening relations with radical Hindu nationalists faithful to the legacy of the pro-Nazi Chandra Bose); to challenge the United States openly on the world diplomatic stage; to derail Soviet influence in the Middle East by assisting a (probably imaginary) underground movement in the USSR that looked to overthrow the Communist Party or by organizing illegal Jewish immigration from there drawing from the Zionist experience of the 1930s; to lend full support to France in its struggle against the Algerian independence movement; and to actively recruit supporters and followers in neighboring Middle Eastern states, on whose ruins the Hebrew Federation was supposed to rise. Jabotinsky was very explicit about the latter: he stated that Israel must sow dissent and internal discord in its hinterland by manipulating and mobilizing non-Muslim minorities in the Arab League states, so that they would eventually be able to cooperate fully and equally with Israel and Lebanon in the establishment of the Federation.<sup>88</sup>

To attract these minorities to Israel, it must first “constitute a laboratory and a framework for the envisaged Federation. The modification has to be both in the direction of liberalization [...] and that of the separation of state and church.”<sup>89</sup> In practice, says Jabotinsky, this will mean the complete de-Zionization of the state and the termination of Zionist institutions at home and abroad. Other steps include “personal representation in the Knesset, abolition of military government [which ruled the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel and was ultimately abolished only in 1966], nationalization of the Sick-Funds, opening of Labor Unions to full membership of all citizens regardless of race, nationalization of the Qeren Qayemet. *A clear distinction between Israelis and Jews of foreign countries.*”<sup>90</sup>

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המוסלמיות של ברה"מ (...) אנגליה (...) יש כאן כנראה רצון לחדש את האימפריה הבריטית על יסודות חדישים (...) זוהי גם דרך לחזור להודו, לישראל ולגרש את הצרפתים מצפון אפריקה]

<sup>88</sup> Jabotinsky, “Memorandum.”

<sup>89</sup> “Tentative Formulation.”

<sup>90</sup> “Tentative Formulation” (emphasis added). In the Hebrew version of the same document (which is more extensive but similar in essentials to the English version) Jabotinsky also emphasizes the importance of a secular unitary education. A fatal mistake he identifies in Israel’s internal policy is the treatment of all non-Jewish minorities as “Arabs” instead of differentiating them according to ethno-religious identity and even playing up these differences artificially by offering preferred treatment to Christians and Druze (Jabotinsky, “Memorandum”).

The last sentence is key, and Jabotinsky in his “Memorandum” meticulously detailed the terminological and ideological differences between Jews and Hebrews, which would be the principal cornerstone for a post-Zionist Israel:

Regarding the confusion concerning the terms Jewish, Zionist, Hebrew and Israeli, the [self-] definition mentioned above means the following: A) an Israeli is any person who due to certain circumstances is a citizen of Israel. This is exclusively a formality and has no bearing on this person's opinions, feelings or origin. B) A Jew is any person throughout the world that belongs in one way or another to the Jewish religion and Judaism without any bearing on this person's patriotic sentiments. C) A Zionist once meant a person who wished to abandon Diaspora life in order to come to this country and live like a Hebrew. It was a Hebrew-in-the-making. Today the adjective has lost its precision and is applied to a foreign (non-Israeli) Jew who is positively disposed toward Israel without any intention of joining it. (*I believe that today, after the Zionist period has come to an end by accomplishing its objective, we must not employ the hollow word Zionist*). D) A Hebrew is a person that sees himself part of the renewed nation. His being Hebrew is dictated exclusively by his internal feeling. This is not similar to his being a Jew: most of the Jews, even in the free world, do not tie their own fate or the fate of their children to our fate and have no plans to do so in the future. This is not similar to his being an Israeli, since there are many Israelis who do not regard themselves as part of the sovereign Hebrew nation (and this includes both Jewish and non-Jewish elements – especially among the orthodox and the communists) [...] The confusion surrounding the problems of Jews and Hebrews must be terminated also, and perhaps especially, because there is no possibility to implement all the plans above as long as our leaders see themselves as emissaries and agents of world Jewry. In order to succeed (and survive) we must integrate psychologically and spiritually with the area in which we live [...] Clear things must be said to the Jews of the world: we the Hebrews are interested in immigrants. We are interested above all in a Jewish *'Aliyah* and therefore the gates of our country stand open to you, on the condition that you become Hebrews by disconnecting yourselves from the countries to which you now belong. With Jews who refuse to do so we shall continue to maintain good relations subject to our interests but maintaining awareness that those are foreigners.<sup>91</sup>

**91** Jabotinsky, “Memorandum” (emphasis added).

[לגבי התסבוכות שבין המושגים יהודי, ציוני, עברי וישראלי הרי פירוש ההגדרה הנ"ל הוא זה: א. ישראלי הנו כל אדם שעקב התפתחות מסוימת הנו אזרח ישראל. דבר זה הוא פורמלי בלבד ואינו קשור בדעותיו והרגשותיו ומוצאו. ב. יהודי הוא כל אדם בעולם המשייך את עצמו בצורה זו או אחרת לדת היהודית וליהדות ללא כל הבדל של הרגשותיו הפטרייוטיות. ג. ציוני היה פעם אדם שרצה לעזוב את חיי הגולה לבא לארץ ולהיות כאן עברי. זה היה מין עברי בדרך. היום טושטש הדבר והתואר ציוני נתן ליהודי נכרי (לא ישראלי) הרוכש[!sic] ידידות למדינת ישראל בלי כונה להצטרף אליה. (לי נראה כי אסור להשתמש היום, לאחר שהתקופה הציונית נסתימה מתוך השגת מטרתה, במלה ציוני שהתרוקנה מתוכנה). ד. עברי הוא אדם הרואה את עצמו שותף לאומה המיוחדת שהוקמה. היותו עברי תלוי אך ורק בהרגשותו הפנימית. הדבר איננו זהה עם היותו יהודי: רוב רובם של היהודים אפילו בעולם החפשי, אינם משתפים את גורלם ואת גורל ילדיהם עם גורלנו ואינם מתכוונים לעשות זאת גם בעתיד. הדבר איננו זהה עם היותו ישראלי מכיון שיש ישראלים רבים אשר אינם רואים עצמם כחלק של האומה העברית הרבנית (זה כולל כאחד אלמנטים לא יהודיים ויהודיים – ביחוד בין האדוקים והקומוניסטים) (...) יש לשים קץ לבלבול השורר בקשר לבעיות היהודים והעברים גם, ואולי אפילו ביחוד מפני שאין כל אפשרות להגשים את



These principles were defended very emphatically by Shmuel Rosoff in his letter to Shmuel Merlin of November 18 1956, in which he wrote that the point he considered “of greatest importance” (perhaps more than Jabotinsky) is “the necessity to underline and proclaim the *anti-Jewishness* of Israel”.<sup>92</sup>

One of the issues the Kedem Club tackled (apparently at the insistence of Shmuel Rosoff) was the Palestinian refugee question. Defining it as a question of priority that “stands in our way as a great obstacle to any further progress,” in Rosoff’s words to Merlin, the Club envisioned the liquidation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (an “artificial Kingdom [...] which today is on the eve of being partitioned by its neighbors” and a bastion of British imperialism in the Middle East) and the resettlement of the refugees there, so that in time they might join the Hebrew Federation and thus reestablish their status as free and equal citizens:

The rehabilitation of the Refugees should be accomplished within the boundaries of “Jordan” under the international control but by an Israeli authority. A large chunk of the budget of Israel should be allocated to the project. After 5 years, the territory should be allowed to decide whether it wishes to federate with Israel (thus returning to the Palestine Refugees a stake in the whole of Palestine) or not. Simultaneously during this period, any refugee desiring to forego his rights to resettlement and wishing to swear allegiance to the State of Israel will be permitted to do so and be given a full compensation for his lost property and be admitted to Israel.<sup>93</sup>

This peculiar version of the “Right of Return” was advocated back in 1949 by Shmuel Merlin, who wrote that “there are about three hundred thousand Arab refugees [sic!], most of whom will probably return and take up their place both in the society and economy of the country.”<sup>94</sup> This position was opposed by Horon, who from the United States served as a liaison between the Kedem Club and the Lebanese-Maronite expatriate “Levant Club,” in whose activities he was deeply involved and to whose publications he constantly contributed.

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התכנית הנ"ל כל עוד מנהיגנו יראו את עצמם כשליחי יהדות בין לאומית ועושי רצונה. בשביל להצליח (ואף בשביל להתקיים) עלינו לעבור תהליך של אינטגרציה נפשית ורוחנית עם האזור הגיאוגרפי בו אנו יושבים (...) ליהודי העולם צריך לאמר דברים ברורים: אנו העברים מעונינים במהגרים. בראש וראשונה אנו מעונינים בעלייתם של מהגרים יהודים ולכן שער ארצנו פתוחים בפניכם בתנאי כי תפסיקו את השתייכותכם לארצות להן אתם משתייכים ותהיו לעברים. עם היהודים המסרבים לעשות זאת נקיים גם להבא יחסים טובים בהתאם לאינטרסים שלנו, אולם מתוך ידיעה כי נכרים הם)

<sup>92</sup> HKA/32 (emphasis added).

<sup>93</sup> “Tentative Formulation.”

<sup>94</sup> Merlin, “Towards Collapse or Prosperity” (he calls the refugee numbers cited by Arab and British sources “an exaggerated atrocity propaganda”).

The Kedem Club was in fact supposed to be the Levant Club's opposite number within Israel, working towards the aligned goals of releasing Israel from Zionism and of releasing Lebanon from the yoke of Pan-Arabism (the US correspondence addresses given in the Kedem Club brochure are those of the Levant Club in New York and Detroit). Therefore, in his extensive correspondence with Eri Jabotinsky and Shmuel Rosoff in 1955–1956,<sup>95</sup> Horon warned against adopting policies that might seem reasonable in the narrow Israeli context but would repel potential allies among nationally-minded Maronites both in Lebanon and the American diaspora. For this reason he decried the change of the Club's designation from "Hebrew" to "Israeli," since this might be interpreted as a forfeiture of the Hebrew regional expansive vision in favor of a parochial Israeli-centered outlook (from an American angle, he also questioned the wisdom of using the designation "liberal," despite Rosoff's strong defense of the term).<sup>96</sup> Horon particularly objected to making the Palestinian refugee question into a central matter for the Club and to the Club's insistence on a strict separation of religion and state. The former he wanted to solve within a general federative framework in the Levant instead of pushing it to the front of the stage. The latter, he explained, would be unacceptable to Maronites, whose feeling of national identity was strongly shaped by Christianity; he also had personal reasons for protesting enforced irreligiosity, not being an atheist himself, and he denounced the "communist atheism" advocated by the 'Canaanites'.<sup>97</sup> In addition, both issues – the separation of religion and state and the solution to the Palestinian refugee problem – were raised by left-wing circles in America, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, whose society, or even association with, Horon wished to avoid at all costs.

The envisaged joint activity of the Kedem and the Levant clubs fits into a much longer history of ideological and practical cooperation between Hebrew settlers in Palestine and nationalist anti-Arab Maronites in Lebanon.<sup>98</sup> The latter took a sympathetic view of Zionism, and thus, Horon warned, the differentiation between "Jews," "Hebrews," and "Israelis" was meaningless to them. This might be the chief reason for the ultimate failure of the cooperation between Israeli post-Zionists or "Canaanites" and the Levant Club.

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<sup>95</sup> HKA/32; JIA/4/4–48.

<sup>96</sup> Rosoff's letter to Merlin.

<sup>97</sup> Letter by Horon to Eri Jabotinsky, February 5 1955 (JIA/4/4–48).

<sup>98</sup> For a participant's contemporary evidence see Eliahu Elath, "'Phoenician Zionism' in Lebanon," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 42 (Spring 1987): 38–56. See also Kristen E. Schulze, *Israel's Covert Diplomacy in Lebanon* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

## Stage Three: “Club 59” and Afterwards

The Kedem Club was not post-Zionism’s swansong during the 1950s, despite Zionism’s growth in power by the end of the decade. A very vocal post-Zionist organization, yet completely unconnected to the people of the Hebrew Committee or “LaMerchav,” was “Semitic Action” established by Uri Avnery and the veteran co-leader of the LEHI, Nathan Yalin-Mor (1913–1980), in protest against Israel’s support for France in Algeria and its collusion with France and the UK against Egypt in 1956. The pro-Arabism of “Semitic Action” ruled out any potential cooperation with ex-members of the Kedem Club, but in other respects *The Hebrew Manifesto* published by “Semitic Action” in two editions in 1958–1959 followed quite faithfully the principles of Kook’s and Jabotinsky’s post-Zionism. These included the affirmation of the existence of a Hebrew–Israeli nation, separate from world Jewry though not to the extent advocated by the “Canaanites,” the essentiality of a written constitution, separation of religion and state, abolition of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization, secularization of state education, release from bondage to both the USSR and the USA, etc. The *Manifesto* also called for Israel to integrate with the region instead of serving as a proxy state for world imperialism, the first step being the solution of the refugee problem by establishing a Palestinian state instead of the Kingdom of Jordan that would federate with Israel. This was probably the first non-communist political document in Israeli history that spoke of the Palestinians as a nation deserving self-determination and offering a path to it.<sup>99</sup>

All in all, “Semitic Action” is a relatively well-known episode in the history of early post-Zionism, one that was extensively described in political memoirs and analyses, not least by Uri Avnery himself. However, another post-Zionist society formed a number of years after “Semitic Action” remains totally in the shadows. During the early 1960s a “Club 59” (so called after the year of its establishment) organized a series of talks and political meetings to promote post-Zionist ideas. The charter of the Club laid out its principles in the following manner:

- i. The State of Israel is the first imperfect expression of the Hebrew national rebirth;
- ii. Israel must develop as a national Hebrew state, perforce multi-racial and multi-denominational, and not as a glorified Jewish ghetto;
- iii. The mission of Israel is twofold: – to guide as many as possible among the dispersed Jewish people toward the normalcy of national Hebrew existence, – and to free from

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<sup>99</sup> Avnery, *Optimi*, 510–529; <http://uriavnery.com/he/publications.html> (accessed April 17 2019). Materials related to “Semitic Action” and *The Hebrew Manifesto* are preserved in Uri Avnery’s archive deposited in Israel’s National Library.

oppression as much as possible of the Levant (wherein lies the historic Hebrew territory);

- iv. The appeal of Israel must therefore be directed not only to its own citizens, and not only to the Jews; but also to the oppressed “minorities” in the Levant and to all those forces in the world, particularly the Mediterranean world, which are threatened by Panarabism, or by Communism, or both.

These aims were to be achieved in the following ways:

- a. To strengthen, deepen and broaden the Hebrew national outlook and movement in Israel, among its Jewish as well as non-Jewish population;
- b. To seek understanding, friendship and support for this movement abroad, both in the East and the West – especially in the Mediterranean world and quite particularly within Israel’s own neighbourhood, i.e. in the Levant area;
- c. To help raise the cultural standards of human relations, while resisting all forms of bigotry, chauvinism or discrimination inimical to such standards;
- d. To further the development of an intellectual, social and political elite capable of providing guidance and leadership for the stated ends...<sup>100</sup>

I have not been able to ascertain the membership or the extent of the Club’s activity, though it is fair to surmise that its members were probably supporters of the Cherut or the Liberal Party, keen to advance civic-democratic concepts of nationhood, in opposition both to Begin and Ben-Gurion. Its statute, which is preserved in both typescript and handwritten form in Adya Horon’s archive (which suggests that he was one of the Club’s founders immediately after his move to Israel in 1959), displays some tension between “Canaanite” and Zionist tendencies.<sup>101</sup> The questions that Horon jotted down during his lectures for the Club also demonstrate that at least some of his listeners were not ready to embrace “Canaanite” anti-Zionism.

“Club 59” was perhaps the last organized instance of the first generation of post-Zionism: the one whose intellectual mainspring was right-wing liberal nationalism, embodied in Zionism by Zeev Jabotinsky’s political thinking with its emphasis on secular national identity, and strongly filtered through “Canaanite” influence that detached it from Zionist principles. Neither the “Canaanites” nor first-generation post-Zionists succeeded in leaving a strong imprint on the Israeli society within which they lived, and by the 1960s their significance had waned almost completely. Hillel Kook returned to Israel in 1969, yet never managed to

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**100** All materials pertaining to “Club 59” (most of them in English) are located in Adya Horon’s private archive.

**101** For example, paragraph three of the draft constitution of the Club stated that “any Jew” could become a member, but this was amended by hand to “any person.”

gather a following in a manner even remotely resembling his “stardom” days in wartime Washington. In the late 1960s he attempted with Eri Jabotinsky to form a think tank in Israel that would mirror his American “Institute for Mediterranean Affairs,” but the initiative was cut short by Jabotinsky’s untimely death in the summer of 1969. In 1975 Kook, together with Shmuel Merlin (who remained in the United States until his death in 1994), submitted a memorandum to the Israeli government, which detailed their proposals for breaking the political and strategic impasse Israel found itself in following the October 1973 war. When the memorandum yielded no official reaction (the prime minister then was Yitzhak Rabin (1922–1995), a faithful follower of Labor Zionism), they published it as a full-page advertisement in a number of Israeli dailies. The close-typed ad called for the adoption of a new *raison d’état* for Israel based on the assumption that Zionist ideology had no role to play after 1948, and that perpetuating its principles and mechanisms had a corruptive influence on the Israeli body politic:

Following the declaration of the State there should have been opened a new page in our history, a new period of national independence. This new page is yet to be turned over [...] A transitional period [...] morphed into a permanent way of life. Emergency missions were routinized and justified by ideologies of false Zionism. Matters pertaining to sovereignty were abandoned [...] as if the great national revolution did not take place at all. After almost thirty years it is time to put an end to this anachronistic situation, which twisted all notions, terms and expressions of sovereign political life and rendered principles of a just society meaningless [...] This radical shift in philosophical, psychological and political approach assumes that the State of Israel is no longer the beginning of the realization of Zionism. The opposite is truth: the establishment of the State signified the end of Zionism as a national liberation movement [...] This assumption leads to the conclusion that Israel must no longer be regarded as an instrument and avant-garde of the world Zionist movement...<sup>102</sup>

**102** Hillel Kook, Shmuel Merlin, “Hatza’a leWikuach Leumi” (“Proposal for a National Debate”), *Haaretz*, April 18 1975, 5. See also Miller, “HaBatalion heChatukh,” 187–188; Shilon, “Milchemet Sheshet haYamim,” 120–124.

[עם הכרזת המדינה, צריך היה להיפתח דף חדש בהיסטוריה שלנו, ולהתחיל עידן חדש של עצמאות לאומית. דף חדש זה עדיין לא נפתח (...) תקופת מעבר (...) הפכה מתקופת מעבר להווי פרמננטי. משימות של שעת חירום הפכו למצב רגיל, ויצרו אידיאולוגיות של ציונות כוזבת כדי להצדיקו. ענייני המדינה הסוברנית הוזנחו (...) כאילו המהפכה הלאומית הגדולה לא התחוללה כלל וכלל. לאחר תקופה של שלוש שנה כמעט, הגיע הזמן לשים סוף למצב אנכרוניסטי זה שבתוכו כל המושגים, המונחים והבטויים של חיים מדיניים עצמאיים התעוותו, ועקרונות של חברה מתוקנת והגונה סורסו (...) השינוי הרדיקלי בגישה פילוסופית, פסיכולוגית ומדינית זו מושתת על ההנחה שמדינת ישראל איננה יותר שלב התחלתי של הגשמת הציונות. אלא להפך: שהקמתה של המדינה היוותה סיומה של הציונות בתור תנועת שחרור לאומי (...) המסקנה מתנחה זו היא שאין לראות יותר במדינת ישראל מכשיר וחיל חלוץ של התנועה הציונית העולמית...]

The most sensational element of the ad, which demonstrates how far Kook and Merlin had moved forward since their Hebrew Committee days, is the idea that Israel's transition into a sovereign liberal state was dependent upon comprehensive peace with the Palestinians. At a time when even publicly mentioning the Palestinian issue in Israel bordered on blasphemy, Kook and Merlin echoed the *Hebrew Manifesto* (in the composition of which they had played no part whatsoever) by declaring that the Palestinian nation existed beyond any doubt, that it deserved its own independent state, and that peace with this state was an urgent existential need for Israel. More than half of the ad is an exhaustive blueprint of Israel's future relations with the Palestinians: the authors envisioned free representative elections on both banks of the Jordan and Gaza, followed by negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Constituent Assembly, with the aim of establishing a Palestinian state on *both banks of the Jordan* that would ultimately merge with Israel into a confederation, and thus, in accordance with the old ETZEL ideology, the Land of Israel would once again be united. Kook and Merlin wrote frankly that one of their objectives was the elimination of the PLO from the political process, since they regarded it as a non-representative usurper of the Palestinian cause and a pawn of the Pan-Arabist regimes that blackmailed the entire world with their oil.

The idea that the Palestinian problem could be solved by the elimination of the Kingdom of Jordan was not new; as we saw above, twenty years earlier it was raised by the Kedem Club. Uri Avnery in the mid-1950s also considered Jordan as the main enemy to Israel by being the obstacle to Palestinian independence,<sup>103</sup> enough to include its obliteration in the *Hebrew Manifesto*. Yet how distant this was from the Hebrew Committee's publications only thirty years earlier, which, if mentioning the Arab Palestinians at all, assured the American public that they were no enemies to the Hebrews and would gladly take part in the Hebrew nation-building since they had no national identity of their own.<sup>104</sup>

The part of the ad relating to Israel's inner reform reflects Kook's worldview after 1948, summarized by Eran Kaplan in the following way: "To Kook [...] the modern state of Israel was an anomaly: a nation-state without a nation [...] The source of this anomaly, according to Kook, was the absence of a constitution that would define the parameters of Israeli nationalism."<sup>105</sup> Israel, according to Merlin and Kook, must redefine itself as the sovereign state of the *Israeli nation* (a

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<sup>103</sup> Avnery, *Optimi*, 478–480.

<sup>104</sup> See HKA/19 (the Hebrew Committee also presciently warned against expelling the Palestinians, as did Zeev Jabotinsky in the late 1930s (Shindler, *The Rise of the Israeli Right*, 144)). For Kook's updated ideas see also Kaplan, "A Rebel with a Cause," 97–98.

<sup>105</sup> Kaplan, "A Rebel with a Cause," 94.

new term that replaces the “Hebrew nation”) and renegotiate accordingly its relations with Diaspora Jewry; it must adopt a new and liberal immigration law that would replace the Law of Return;<sup>106</sup> it must separate religion and state; it must abrogate its treaty with the Jewish Agency; it must finally adopt a written constitution that would enshrine all those principles and ensure Israel’s continued existence as an *Israeli* state.<sup>107</sup>

Although Eri Jabotinsky, who died in 1969, did not live to see the transition in Kook’s worldview, in his last years he too had the opportunity to re-examine the views he had held since the days of the Hebrew Committee. A staunch secularist, Jabotinsky was nonetheless enamored by Israel’s capture of Temple Mount in the 1967 war, and joined the “Movement for Greater Israel,” which advocated holding on to the captured territories. In a letter to the Palestinian mayor of Hebron he wrote that for him “the Temple Area constitute[d] the symbol and quintessence of Hebrew Nationhood.”<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, he might have started to doubt his previous dismissal of Zionism as obsolete. In an email dated March 8 2017 his daughter Karny Rubin informed me that very shortly before his death, when the first Jewish immigrants from the USSR started to arrive in Israel (in what eventually became the 1970s *’Aliyah*), Jabotinsky admitted to his wife Aviva, who had always insisted that Zionism still had a role to play, that she was right and he was in error. Although in his 1954 “Memorandum” Jabotinsky made a passing reference to the “numerous Hebrews still trapped in the communist world” [יש גם עברים רבים הכלואים בתוך העולם הקומוניסטי], he confessed that he had not believed that the Soviet Union would ever liberalize. If so, first-generation post-Zionism rested on two assumptions that are unrelated only at first sight: that Jordan was an unviable state and that the Soviet Union was there to stay. Both assumptions, as we know in hindsight, proved wrong.

## Conclusion

By probing the essential principles of Kookian post-Zionism we can finally approach the guiding question of this chapter: how is it possible that post-Zionism intellectually originated in the most right-wing and militant margins of Zionism? How can we account for Kook’s insistence that in making the claim for Zionism’s obsolescence he was actually following faithfully in the footsteps of Zeev Jabotinsky?

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<sup>106</sup> See also Kaplan, “A Rebel with a Cause,” 96.

<sup>107</sup> Kook and Merlin, “Hatza’a leWikuach Leumi.”

<sup>108</sup> JIA/4/4–48.



tinsky? As mentioned briefly above, this chapter wishes to demonstrate that first-generation post-Zionism was a case of a radical reinterpretation of Jabotinsky's teachings coupled with a strong "Canaanite" input in terms of future vision. Eran Kaplan is particularly adamant that Hillel Kook's ideological journey away from Zionism was the logical consequence of his allegiance to Jabotinsky:

[Kook] believed that Jabotinsky's legacy meant that war [for national liberation] [...] was to be confined to the revolutionary phase of Zionism – but once independence had been won, Israel should have focused its energies solely on creating a civil society rather than continuing to fight battles that were motivated by a false historical sense [...] Following Jabotinsky, Kook saw Zionism as a revolutionary liberation movement with a single purpose: to free the Jewish people from their exilic condition by creating a nation-state. Once the state was created, however, Kook believed, the mission of Zionism ended.<sup>109</sup>

We cannot understand Kook's re-interpretation of Jabotinsky without taking into account the latter's principle of "monism" (single aim), over which he broke ranks with Labor Zionism. Sasson Sofer explains that monism meant for Jabotinsky and his followers the rejection of

[A]ny ideology other than Zionism, which it perceived as constituting a perfect and complete ideal [...] monism appears as absolute loyalty to one aim, "a state with a Jewish majority on both sides of the River Jordan" [...] everything was subordinated to the need to attain the aim. Nothing could dwell alongside it or come between it and the ultimate objective [...] In [monism], political Zionism was regarded as a value which stood on its own, having no need of universal values to support it. The supreme aim of political sovereignty subordinated everything and towered above all else [...] It has been claimed that [monism] relates to the absolute supremacy of the nation and national considerations, regarding the national will as the highest motivating force in history. Another view links monism with the "corporate" view of Revisionism in which, through the demand for national unity, social and economic interests are subordinated to the interests of the nation...<sup>110</sup>

Finally, and most significantly, Sofer says, monism meant that "Jabotinsky deferred making any decision about the character and values of the future Jewish society to the period which would follow independence." Herein lies the key: Jabotinsky, who died in 1940, did not live to see the State of Israel come into life, but his followers and disciples from the Hebrew Committee, "LaMerchav" and the

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<sup>109</sup> Kaplan, "A Rebel with a Cause," 94, 98. Penkower ("Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky," 35, n. 10) argues that Kaplan overlooks the differences between Kook and Jabotinsky and over-emphasizes the affinities, but I still consider Kaplan's analysis valid. After all, Kook's position was shared by Eri Jabotinsky who, of all people, can hardly be accused of misunderstanding his own father.

<sup>110</sup> Sofer, *Zionism and the Foundations of Israeli Diplomacy*, 211–213. For a more detailed discussion of 'monism' consult Bilski Ben-Hur, *Kol Yachid Hu Melekh*, 227–334.

Kedem Club *did*. And the conclusion they drew from this fact, as noted by Kaplan above, was that the “monism” stage was over and the time was ripe to re-examine the character and values of the state, as bequeathed to them by their teacher. Having drawn inspiration from the American version of political society, they wished to apply what they regarded as the most advanced, liberal, and effective solutions in Israeli public life. For this purpose, they brokered an ideological alliance with the anti-Zionist “Canaanites,” who had developed their own vision for a Hebrew–Israeli society based on shared principles and values. Therefore, post-Zionism is grounded in Zeev Jabotinsky’s philosophy only with regards to the *past*; with regards to the *future*, however, it was “Canaanism” that supplied the answer.

This answer is diagnosed by Uri Ram, a contemporary post-Zionist thinker in his own right, as the “normalization” stage that Israeli society entered having achieved its ideological objective. Normalization means that the ideology that had led to the formation of the state becomes redundant by victory, but is nonetheless perceived as legitimate and necessary at the preceding historical stage. When victory is achieved, preservation of the ideology becomes a hindrance to the normal functioning of the society and might even develop into an existential danger. In this sense, first-generation post-Zionism is what Ram calls a “post-ideological” approach to questions of Israel’s *raison d’état*.<sup>111</sup>

Hillel Kook, who died in 2001, lived long enough to see second-generation post-Zionism burst onto the Israeli social and political stage with renewed force after the late 1980s and especially after the signing of the Oslo Accords with the PLO in 1993. “Beginning in the 1980s,” writes Assaf Likhovski,

[T]wo groups, the “new historians” and the “critical sociologists,” revolutionized the study of Israeli history and society, seeking to undermine the “founding myths of Israel.” These two groups produced a very impressive and influential body of works [...] The arguments made by the new historians and critical sociologists produced heated debate in Israel. Questions were raised about the factual accuracy, theoretical underpinnings, and claims of novelty of the Post-Zionist paradigm [...] [M]any of the arguments of the Post-Zionist paradigm have been accepted and assimilated by the Israeli academia and, to a certain extent, even by Israeli popular culture.<sup>112</sup>

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**111** Uri Ram, “Post-Tziyonut: He’Asor haRishon – Sotziologia Shel ‘Ir’ur ‘al Hegemonia Leumit” (“Post-Zionism: The First Decade – A Sociology of Questioning the National Hegemony”), in *Chevre weKhalkala beIsrael: Mabat Histori we’Akhshawi* (*Society and Economics in Israel: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*), ed. Avi Bareli et al. (Jerusalem – Beer Sheva: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel, 2005), 820–822.

**112** Assaf Likhovski, “Post-Post-Zionist Historiography,” *Israel Studies* 15, no. 2 (summer 2010): 4. The two most comprehensive English-language book-length treatments of second-generation

Likhovski's words demonstrate that second-generation post-Zionism is hugely different from its first-generation counterpart, which remained an isolated voice on the margins of Israel's political discourse during the first decade of the state's existence. Analysis of the second generation is way beyond the limits of the present chapter, and I have no pretense of doing justice to it within a few concluding paragraphs of a work whose main purpose was to bring back to memory a radical critique of Zionism enunciated on the eve of the state's establishment. It would be a truism to state that current post-Zionism, which Likhovski characterizes as using "a moralizing and judgmental framework [...] in which there were heroes and villains, the Zionists playing the role of the villains,"<sup>113</sup> constitutes a major element of contemporary Israel's political culture and discourse. It has become, as suggested by David Ohana, a state of mind for many Israelis wary of an ideology that some of them regard as outdated and – fewer still – as outwardly criminal.<sup>114</sup> It also encompasses many more spheres than first-generation post-Zionism, which was limited to the political sphere: second-generation post-Zionism re-examines critically Israel's history, including its founding ideological myths; its sociology and society-making processes; its civic versus religious identity; its literature and culture, etc. In addition, with regards to post-Zionism in the academia, it is strongly influenced by late twentieth-century Western modes of critical thinking, with their challenging of established narratives, values, and epistemological tools that starkly contrast with the first generation's outspoken positivism.<sup>115</sup> Above all, first-generation post-Zionism originated in the internal logic of Zionism (or a certain current thereof), while second-generation post-Zionism attests to a dynamic mixture of influences from within and without Israel.

Another notable difference between first-generation and second-generation post-Zionism is that the latter is strongly identified (at least at a superficial glance) with the Israeli left-wing camp, whereas the former, as demonstrated above, originated in the Zionist right wing. First-generation post-Zionism re-

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post-Zionism remain Nimni, *The Challenge of Post-Zionism*, and Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates*; both, however, take a very sympathetic view of post-Zionism.

**113** Likhovski, "Post-Post-Zionist Historiography," 13.

**114** David Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology: Neither Canaanites nor Crusaders* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 21.

**115** Silberstein in fact makes a case in his book that "genuine" post-Zionism is inherently "post-modernist," while all forms of critical thinking on Israel that preceded it are *ipso facto* "incomplete" and valuable only insofar as milestones to the "telos" of deconstructionist post-Zionism. This is hardly an original approach: one can identify it in the Bolshevik interpretation of world history.

nounced Zionism in order to replace it with an alternative national ideology, whereas second-generation post-Zionism is in most cases anti-nationalist, or at least post-nationalist. It is therefore a melancholy albeit not surprising fact that in analyses of modern-day post-Zionism the influence of Hillel Kook and his associates is mentioned even more rarely than that of the “Canaanites.” Uri Ram, whose article cited above concentrates solely on 1990s’ post-Zionism, does acknowledge in brief “the legacy of Hillel Kook” in the historical development of post-Zionism, and is also aware of the connections between post-Zionism and “Canaanism,” though he qualifies (correctly) the latter as a strongly nationalist phenomenon.<sup>116</sup> More knowledgeable appears to be Yosef Gorny, who in 1990 defined second-generation post-Zionism as a “post-Canaanite liberalism”:

The term “post-Canaanite liberalism,” whose purpose is to define the various viewpoints that aspire to the “general normalization” of the Jewish existence, which arose with renewed force during the 1980s, points to the continuity and change within this phenomenon. On the one hand, it takes that the “Canaanite” ideology of the 1940s–1950s – as a cultural–romantic myth and as a political utopia connected to the Semitic space – is obsolete. On the other hand, the liberal element that views citizenship and nationality according to the US example, which became more pronounced in Canaanite thought after the establishment of the state, remains powerful and existent. This means that we observe here a new phenomenon in Jewish public thought, which aspires to define the nation neither by fusing religion and people, according to the Zionist belief, nor by Semitic cultural legacy, according to the first “Canaanites,” but by territorial–political basis, as practiced in Western countries. In this sense, this approach is both directly and indirectly influenced by Hillel Kook’s worldview, for which he struggled forty years ago, on the eve of the state’s establishment.<sup>117</sup>

116 Ram, “Post-Tziyonut,” 809.

[מורשתו של הלל קוק]

117 Yosef Gorny, “HaLiberalizm haBetar-Kna’ani – Gishot ’Akhshawiyot biSh’elat haNormalizatziya Shel haQiyum haLeumi biMdinat-Israel” (“Post-Canaanite Liberalism – Contemporary Approaches to the Issue of Normalizing the National Existence in the State of Israel), *Kiwunim (Directions)* 1 (March 1990): 46.

[המונח “ליברליזם בתר-כנעני”, הבא להגדיר את ההשקפות השונות השואפות אל ה“נורמליזציה הכללית” בקיום היהודי, שנתחדשו בשנות השמונים, מתכוון להצביע על הרציפות והשינוי שבתופעה זו. כלומר, מצד אחד, הוא מבקש לומר, כי האידיאולוגיה ה“כנענית” של שנות הארבעים והחמישים – כמיתוס רומנטי-תרבותי וכאוטופיה מדינית שהיתה קשורה במרחב השמי – עבר זמנה. מצד שני, היסוד הליברלי כתפיסת האזרחות והלאומיות על פי הדוגמה של ארה“ב, שבלט בהגות הכנענית אחרי קום המדינה, נשאר שריר וקיים. כלומר אנו עדים כאן לתופעה חדשה במחשבה הציבורית היהודית, המבקשת להגדיר את הלאום לא על סמך הצירוף שבין עם לדת, כפי שחשבו הציונים, ולא על פי המורשת התרבותית השמית, כפי שגרסו ה“כנענים” הראשונים, אלא על יסוד טריטוריאלי-מדיני כמקובל בארצות המערב. מבחינה זו, גישה זו מושפעת במישרין ובעקיפין מהשקפתו של הלל קוק שעליה נאבק לפני ארבעים שנה, ערב הקמת המדינה]

Insofar as a “Canaanite” background was acknowledged by scholars of second-generation post-Zionism, they largely concentrated on *National Reckoning*<sup>118</sup> by the Israeli journalist and public intellectual Boas Evron (1927–2018), who in his youth was briefly a member of the “Canaanite” movement and later was one of the authors of *The Hebrew Manifesto*. This thick book, which passed almost without notice in Israel – a telling fact in itself – is a meticulously researched demolition of Zionism’s intellectual basis, value-world, and policy. Evron, unsurprisingly, referred to himself as “post-Zionist” [‘בתר-ציוני’], which for him meant “desir[ing] a state indifferent to its citizens’ religious and national affiliations, which has no binding institutional links to the Jewish Diaspora, all of whose citizens are legally equal in theory and practice – and which does not regard itself as a body loyal to a certain ideology or mission, but its only obligations are towards its citizens”.<sup>119</sup> Evron’s position as a member of both the “Canaanite” movement (a membership that lasted, according to his testimony, only three months)<sup>120</sup> and of first-generation post-Zionism, and as one of the intellectual precursors of second-generation post-Zionism, in which he took a lively part until shortly before his death, makes him a unique link between the three and a *memento* of their rarely-acknowledged philosophical sources in right-wing Zionist liberalism. As stated by Laurence Silberstein, “[i]f Canaanism can be said to represent an early effort to construct a post-Zionist ideology for the generation of the 1940s and 1950s, Boas Evron [...] offers a lucid formulation of a post-Zionist ideology for the generation of the 1980s and 1990s.”<sup>121</sup>

Despite the silencing and marginalization, Hillel Kook’s legacy lives on, as does the legacy of “Canaanism.” Both, ironically, live in the fact of Zionism’s cur-

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**118** Boas Evron, *HaCheshbon HaLeumi (National Reckoning)* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1988); Boas Evron, *Jewish State or Israeli Nation?* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995). For a discussion of Evron see Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 105–110; Israel Segal, *Israeliyyut Ezrachit: HaCheshbon HaLeumi Shel Boas Evron (Civil Israel: Boas Evron’s National Reckoning)* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2018); Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates*, 69–84.

**119** Boas Evron, “HaMa’ase – uVavuat haAqademit” (“The Deed – And its Academic Reflection”), *Yedi’ot Acharonot*, March 2 1984, 20–21.

[הרצוה במדינה אדשה מבחינת הדת והלאום של אזרחיה, שאין לה קשרים מוסדיים המחייבים מבחינה ממלכתית] עם התפוצה היהודית, ושכל אזרחיה שווים להלכה ולמעשה לפני החוק – ושאינה רואה במדינה גוף שיש לו אידיאולוגיה כלשהי או כנושא בשליחות כלשהי, אלא שחובותיו היחידות הן כלפי אזרחיו]

**120** Boas Evron, “Ra’ayonot Mediniim weGilgulehem: ‘Otobiografia Post-Tziyonit” (“Political Ideas and their Transmutations: ‘A Post-Zionist Autobiography”), [www.hagada.org.il](http://www.hagada.org.il), September 30 2008, accessed May 14 2017.

**121** Laurence Silberstein, “*The New Hebrew Nation: A Study in Israeli Heresy and Fantasy* by Yaakov Shavit; *The Slopes of Lebanon* by Amos Oz; *Jewish Theocracy* by Gershon Weiler; *HaHeshbon HaLeumi* by Boas Evron,” *IJMES* 23, no. 4 (1991): 688.

rent triumph; as long as the “Jewish State” has not moved to solve the paradoxes exposed by first-generation post-Zionism and “Canaanism,” their critique will continue to resound at every existential turn Israel might experience. It lives in the output of one of Israel’s most controversial philosophers, Joseph Agassi (b. 1927), who, like Kook, comes from a religious background, and whose meetings with Kook in the late 1970s inspired him to wage his own struggle for a secular liberal Israel.<sup>122</sup> It lives in the satiric articles of *Haaretz* publicist Doron Rosenblum (b. 1947), who interviewed Kook in the late 1970s and throughout his journalistic career struggled in the name of “normal down-to-earth” Israelis against the toxic mysticism of the “transcendental People of Israel.”<sup>123</sup>

The newest evidence for the vitality of post-Zionism is the lawsuit submitted to the Israeli Supreme Court in 2003 by the ‘I am an Israeli’ association, to recognize the Israeli nation by the authorities as Israel’s only *staatsnation*. The plaintiffs, among whom we find Uri Avnery, Yosef Agassi, and Hillel Kook’s widow Nili Kook and daughter Rebecca Kook, consider the Israeli nation a territorial–linguistic reality, much in line with the Hebrew Committee’s original definition of the Hebrew nation. The association is led by ‘Uzzi Ornan (b. 1923), the only living member of the “Canaanite” circle of founders. Shortly after the lawsuit was filed Uri Ram wrote that it “opens the second decade of post-Zionism”.<sup>124</sup> The second decade closed in 2013 with the rejection of the lawsuit by the Supreme Court, which reaffirmed the dominant view of Israel’s character as ethno-national by accepting that a civic framing of Israeli identity threatened [sic!] the foundations of the state.<sup>125</sup> We are now in the middle of the “third decade,” according to Ram’s calculations. What will it bring?

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<sup>122</sup> Joseph Agassi, *Liberal Nationalism for Israel: Towards an Israeli National Identity* (Jerusalem: Geffen, 1999), especially Part 2, where he discusses at length Hillel Kook and the Hebrew Committee.

<sup>123</sup> Kaplan, “A Rebel with a Cause,” 97–99; Miller, “‘HaBatalion heChatukh,’” 188; Doron Rosenblum, *Tugat haIsraeliyut (Israel Blues)* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1996); Shilon, “Milchemet Sheshet haYamim,” 123.

<sup>124</sup> Ram, “Post-Tziyonut,” 840.

[תביעת ‘אני ישראלי’ פותחת את העשור השני של הפוסט-ציונות]

<sup>125</sup> For ‘I am an Israeli’ see Nili Osheroﬀ, *Yotze Min haKlalim – Uzzi Ornan: Sipur Chayim* [Uzzi Ornan’s Life Story] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2015): 125–131, 136–140; Ram, “Post-Tziyonut,” 837–841.

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