

JUDAISM AND (OR?) DEMOCRACY: THE RELEVANCE OF IRRELEVANCE

Michael Shafir¹

Babeş-Bolyai University
shafirm@euro.ubbcluj.ro

To Zeev Sternhell, teacher, mentor, friend.

Abstract

The first part of this article shows that it is irrelevant to seek to demonstrate that Judaism and democracy are compatible, as they emerged and developed in radically different social environments. Ancient Judaism functioned as a theocracy that had little in common with the Greek *polis*, while the latter has few commonalities with modern democracy, which sharply distinguishes between the private and the social spheres. Attempts to demonstrate the contrary are echoes of American political culture, from which their proponents stem. The second part examines the links between the political culture of the early Labor Zionist leaders, which overwhelmingly impacted that of the State-in-the Making and of post-1948 Israel. While some claim that these links lead to Jewish “civil society” nuclei, as they existed in the European Diaspora, others differentiate between the Western and the East Central European perceptions of democracy. Belonging, as it did, to the latter category, the early Zionist leadership embraced the Herderian thought, in which the individual is conceived as organically part and parcel of the nation and as relevant only insofar as he/she serves its destiny. As such, and in spite of the secularism originally promoted by the early Labor Zionists, religion came to occupy an important role in the attempt to inculcate the values of nation- and state-building. In this paligenetic argument the former irrelevance of Judaism becomes a highly relevant factor, particularly after Israel’s 1967 victory in the Six Day War, hindering the separation of religion and politics and the autonomy of the individual.

Key words: Judaism, democracy, Labour Zionism, Israel

Motto: Those who wish Israel to be a truly liberal state or Israeli society to be open must recognize the fact that liberalism derives from the initial attempt, in the seventeenth century, to separate

¹ I am deeply grateful to Professor Moshe Idel for his rich article “Messianic Scholars: On the Early Israeli Scholarship, Politics and Messianism,” *Modern Judaism*, 32 (1), 2012, 22-53, to which he drew my attention after reading the manuscript of this article. I am also grateful for his critical remarks, being entirely responsible for maintaining my own views on most points of his criticism.

religion from politics. A liberal state can be only a secular state, a state in which the concept of citizenship lies at the center of collective existence. Kant and the “philosophers” of the French Enlightenment have taught us that the only free and open society is one that recognizes the independence of reason and the autonomy of the individual. Reason determines the frontiers of knowledge, and reason, not religion, should form the basis of our moral and political decisions... Thus, a state cannot be liberal as long as religion plays a major role in governing society and politics, or as long as the state is defined as the operative arm of the nation, conceived as a living organism, a unique creation, one of a kind.

*Zeev Sternhell*²

An apple and a pear may mix well in a fruit salad, but the mixture adds up to two fruits only for those who fail their arithmetic class. Judaism, a monotheist religion claiming the longest vintage among such creeds, was born as a theocratic construct.³ As such, it encompassed all aspects of life, both private and social. Democracy, on the other hand, sharply distinguishes between the private and the social spheres. It makes no sense whatever to appeal to the Greek *polis* to demonstrate the contrary, for the differences between *polis* democracies (plural, of course!) and modern democracies are as numerous as widely known. Modern democracies cannot be grasped outside the legacy of Illuminism (Sternhell: 2009). But modern totalitarianism cannot be grasped outside that legacy either; not only as a counter-reaction to Illuminism, but, far more relevant, as a mass-phenomenon of what Jacob Talmon defined as “democratic totalitarianism,” which is at the same time a new form of messianism (Talmon: 1961, 1991, 1996).

And yet, time and again, debates emerge on whether Judaism is or not democratic. There seem to be two main reasons for this phenomenon. On one hand, the failure of the two main anti-democratic movements of last

² Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State*, XIII. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), XIII.

³ Indeed, scholars nowadays consent that although the concept of theocracy is Greek, it was coined for the Greeks by Flavius Josephus in an attempt to describe a form of government that was unfamiliar to them: “Our legislator [Moses] had no regard to any of these forms, [monarchy, oligarchy, republic] but he ordained our government to be what, by a strained expression, may be termed a theocracy [*theokratia*], by ascribing the authority and power to God, and by persuading all the people to have a regard to him, as the author of all good things.” Avihu Zakal, “Theocracy.” For a somewhat different translation in which the “legislator” is God himself see W. M. McPheeters, “Theocracy.”

century, fascism and communism, has left democracy as apparently the only viable alternative. As a consequence, to be democratic is “in”, inviting at the same time demonstrations that enemies or adversaries are “non-democratic.” The paradoxical effect is a re-legitimation of antisemitism under the guise of anti-Zionism (as if Judaism and Zionism were one and the same) and the (futile) effort to counter the attack by demonstrating, as it were, that Judaism is not only democratic in form, but above all in essence. Although such efforts (on both sides) are not necessarily novel (after all, antisemitism in disguise is not a novelty either, as demonstrated by the early Holocaust negationists (Bardèche: 1948; Shafir: 2003), they intensify as the Israeli occupation of territories conquered in the 1967 Six Day War approaches the landmark of half-century. On the other hand, there is no way to escape addressing the link between Zionism and religion without inviting the question “why not Uganda.” The query refers to Theodor Herzl’s brief flirtation with the idea of the Uganda proposal of the British authorities in 1903 to transform their colony into a temporary refuge for Russian Jews, a proposal rejected at the 1905 Seventh Zionist Congress (accessed 28 October 2014). Even in its secular form, the “return to Zion” entailed a subsumed religious legitimacy. It still does so today, and the consequences became clearer after the Six Day War, splitting Israeli (Jewish) society, as well as the Jewish Diaspora. Paradoxically, at the opposite poles of this spectrum, there is agreement, as Daniel Elazar remarked: “The far right claims that Judaism is antithetical to democracy, so therefore proposes to jettison democratic institutions in the Jewish state. Perversely, the far left agrees with the right’s premises, and thus concludes that Israel should abandon Judaism.”(Elazar: 2014)

The Irrelevant

It is often pointed out that respect for human rights is the most important essence of modern democracy and that no human right can be more sacred than life itself. The right to life, according to some, is the first among the rights that Thomas Jefferson first called “inalienable” and endowed on men “by their Creator,” as the American Declaration of Independence put it.”(accessed 30 October 2014). Thou shalt not kill,” according to the partisans of this view, is thus some sort of early Jewish version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Covenant Jews struck with the Almighty no less than an early Convention on the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide. But it is conveniently overlooked that the Almighty promised the people of Israel to destroy all those who oppose their march

to the Holy Land⁴; that lapidation was the punishment for (among other sins) not respecting the Sabbath (Numbers, 15:32-36); cursing God (Leviticus, 24:10-16); rebelling against parents (Deuteronomy 21:18-21); posing as a virgin while not being one for the purpose of marriage (Deuteronomy 22: 13-21); and sexual intercourse between a man and a woman engaged to another partner, in which case both were to suffer the punishment. Terrible as this may sound, this makes Judaism into neither “democratic” nor “totalitarian,” but rather into a “sociocratic” and, above all, a particularist religion. There is no contradiction between the Sixth Commandment and the physical elimination of Israel’s enemies once one grasps that “pagans” are not considered to be human.⁵(Elazar: 2014; Porton: 1994)

The Covenant itself is presented by some as fore-modeling the future essence of American democracy, for Federation stems from the Latin *foedus*, *foederis* (meaning covenant). But this is just as accurate as claiming that German banking stems from horsing because one of the major German banks used to be called Hypobank. Of course, the Founding Fathers were versatile in the Bible and would not hesitate to overstretch any likely connection. Claiming that the twelve tribes confederated (Elazar, 2015; Elazar, Kincaid, 2000) is hardly convincing, and in any case limited in time (the first two generations under Moses and Joshua) and space (crossing the desert). Even David Elazar, who opines that King David and King Solomon exercised rule with the consent of the tribes, admits that the “disappearance of the tribal federation as a reality after the fall of the northern kingdom can be said to mark the end of the original monarchic epoch in Jewish constitutional history.” (Elazar, 2015) That alleged early “federation” is no more than an all too “democratic” interpretation – an overstretch of the Founding Fathers’ own overstretch. As Beth Wenger,

⁴ More modern and “liberal” interpretations have it that not physical opponents are meant here, but inner traits among the Israelites such as greed or lust, which should be purged out before the Promised Land is reached.

⁵ “Judaism is not pluralistic when it comes to recognizing paganism among the nations...and classical Judaism does not accept a pluralism that rejects the Torah...Jewish monotheism is very strict on the religious level. Rejecting the one God is not acceptable human behavior,” according to Elazar (a “liberal” Orthodox Jew). Elazar, “Judaism and Democracy.” On the other hand, there are numerous precepts (*mitzvot*) imposing a decent and humane treatment of foreigners that accept God. See Gary G. Porton, *The Stranger within Your Gates. Converts and Conversions in Rabbinic Literature* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994); and in Exodus 22:21 the Israelites are told “Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.”

director of a Jewish Studies program at the University of Pennsylvania put it to a symposium (accessed 1 November 2014 ; Wenger, 2012):

I am always struck that when I teach American Jewish history, there are always students who assert confidently that the Bible teaches democracy. The Bible, of course, represents a theocracy, not a democracy, which isn't to say that there aren't some ideas about social justice and democratic values that have biblical origins. The reason that students will argue that Judaism teaches democracy is because they are heirs to a long tradition in which Jews in America have consciously constructed the notion that Judaism is essentially democratic. In forging their own identity in the United States, Jews redefined the contours of their own culture so as to enhance the image of a symbiosis between Judaism and American democracy. Since America itself had been created as a "new Promised Land" and its founders regularly drew on biblical paradigms and rhetoric to define American values, Jews seized upon this pervasive motif and used it to shape their own communal identity. They continually stressed how much American democracy was founded on biblical ideas, and since Jews were the original People of the Book, they claimed for themselves and for Jewish culture a role as ideological progenitors of the nation...There is nothing inherent in either American culture or Jewish tradition to render them fundamentally compatible, but American Jews created this construction of American Jewish culture. It was a kind of self-fashioning... American Jews created a history and heritage for themselves in the United States that demonstrates their belonging in and fundamental contribution to American culture. That effort—sometimes conscious, sometimes subconscious— was so successful that in the 21st century, students in my classes are often certain that Judaism itself teaches democracy.

The implications of Wenger's "sentence" are important, for it draws attention to the importance of political culture and its influence on ways Judaism would be reflected in its modern Zionist reincarnation. For the moment, suffice it to mention that Daniel Elazar himself (1934-1999) was a product of that American Jewish political subculture—one that in Israel has been always in minority in a political culture dominated in its early ideological shape by Central and East European Jewry. If I insist on his writings ignoring others, it is not only because Elazar cannot be dismissed as a bigot, but also because he was to a large extent one of the pioneers of modern Jewish Political Studies. In the introduction to a book he edited in 1991, Elazar wrote that this was a new subfield of both political science and Jewish studies dealing with "the Jewish people as a corporate entity

functioning as a body politic in any place where Jews are organized for public purposes, even for limited ones, and in some places, as in the State of Israel, where they are organized in a comprehensive way." Political Jewish Studies, he added, are "not only concerned with contemporary Jewry, but with the phenomenon of the Jewish collectivity at any time and in any place." (Elazar, Cohen, 1991: 3)

Such a project, of course, has numerous pitfalls, for "any time and place" assumes not only the existence of documents and their interpretation, but above all proving that there is relevant continuity from time to time and place to place. And this is precisely what Elazar does throughout his impressive work. In my opinion, it is also precisely why he fails. He builds on axioms (that he calls "assumptions") and fails to prove relevance over time. These deserve a brief review. I have marked the questionable assumptions with the proper mark:

The first is that the Jewish people is a corporate entity (?), hence by definition it must find some way to function as a polity under different circumstances in order for it to pursue its normative aspirations, whether these be defined as survivalism, as it seems to be the case for much of contemporary Jewry, or whether they be defined in the traditional terms of Jewish religion as the pursuit of *malkhut shamayim* (the Kingdom of Heaven) or anything in between. Jews sooner or later—usually sooner rather than later—come to the conclusion that the Jewish people must function as a polity in order to pursue their normative ends. Therefore the Jewish people will always seek to function as a polity (Elazar, 1991: 3-4).

Ever since the Babylonian exile the axiom of the "corporate entity" has known numerous historical pauses, while its return proves little beyond memory and perhaps the famous dictum of Jean Paul Sartre that the generic Jew is defined by the non-Jew. In his "third assumption," Daniel Elazar tells us "Jews have continued to function as a polity throughout their history." Obviously, "polity" for him extends beyond the notion of the functioning state, and that is perfectly legitimate. One cannot but agree with Elazar when he writes that "one of the most intellectually interesting aspects of the discipline [of Jewish Political Studies] is the study of the adaptation of what is, after all, the oldest extant polity in the Western world to a great variety of circumstances." The question remains, however, if the study of the alleged adaptation does not lead to comparing the initial apples to latter pears and even bananas, and subsequently "proving" that apples are bent, as reflected in the argument that Judaism's closest rival in

Western longevity is the Catholic Church. The two, it is claimed, “operate on diametrically different principles of organization with regard to the allocation of authority and the organization of power. The Catholic Church is hierarchical. The Jewish people covenantal or federal (based on the Latin *foedus*=covenant).” One needs only be reminded of Wenger’s “self-fashioning” diagnosis.

Anyhow, if “polity” is to be understood as an organized community anywhere and everywhere, does one than learn from it anything beyond the Aristotelian *homo politicus*? One does so only if one accepts Elazar’s further implications of the first axiom:

Central to the Jewish political tradition is the idea of covenant (*brit* in Hebrew) and its application to the word of action. The constitution (?) of the Jewish people as a whole reflects a mixture of kinship and consent (?). In other words, people born into a particular set of tribes consented through covenant to function as a community. One can read the Sinai Covenant from a political point of view as the establishment of both *am* (people) and *edah* (congregation or assembled community). In Jewish political terminology harking back to the Bible, an *am* is a nation (*goy*) with a God-given vocation. For Jews, that vocation was established by the covenant. The *am* becomes the kin consenting while the *edah* is the organized product of that consent- the polity. (Elazar, 1991)

Let me first address (in a somewhat lighter tone) the “consensual” allegation. The Bible throws some doubt on it. As I put it elsewhere, as Jews “we never delegated” anyone to sign that contract in our name. “But Moses did so, and the first thing he does after descending from that hike he undertook on Mount Sinai is to slam the contract on our heads just because some of us were admiring a great piece of jewelry: the Golden Calf.” (Branda, Cuceu, Ursuțiu, 2007: 52) On a more serious note, to apply the concept of constitutionality to Biblical times is to introduce precisely that conceptual stretch I was mentioning above. Yes, there are pre-modern constitutions, and that claimed to have been received by the Israelites on Mount Sinai is not even the oldest. It was preceded by, among others, the Code of Hammurabi in Babylonia or the Assyrian code. But before the *Magna Carta* (1215), such documents never referred to individual freedom, without which any mention of “constitutionality” is not more than metaphorical. Strangely enough for a believer like Elazar, what he does is to desacralize the Torah. He admits as much in his “second assumption”,

according to which “exploration of the Jewish polity can be undertaken with the tools of political science.” (Elazar, 1991: 4)

But even liberal Orthodox scholars⁶ such as Elazar take distance from the propensity to attribute features such as pluralism to the alleged democratic essence of Judaism. He writes: “It is accepted that there is one Torah binding on all Jews, and a clear *halakhic* (accessed 1 November 2014) tradition growing out of the Torah.” Somehow jumping over centuries, he nonetheless adds that “regional and local differences” in interpretation are recognized as legitimate and that “since the middle ages it has been difficult to overrule local rabbinical courts in any *halakhic* matters.” Furthermore, “any honest look at Jewish constitutional history clearly reveals that the interpretation of the Torah itself has changed greatly from epoch to epoch,” which “suggests the possibility of a real degree of pluralism in such matters.” (Elazar, Cohen 1985) Yet he adds:

Contemporary Orthodoxy, with its efforts to develop a monolithic approach to *halakhic* and religious matters, is just as erroneous as contemporary liberal Judaism which claims that there is no legitimate authority in Jewish life, that any Jew can do whatever he or she wants to in matters *halakhic* and religious. (Elazar, 1967)

Whereas the relationship between Judaism and democracy is “a qualified positive,” according to Elazar, that between Judaism and self-government is said to be “very positive indeed. The classic Jewish political tradition of the Bible makes it clear that sovereignty is God’s but day-to-day governance is in the hands of the people within the framework of the Divine constitution.” The Torah, he asserts, “makes it clear that there is no single preferred regime (not even the Davidic monarchy which later came to be preferred by many, especially after it no longer existed), and that it is up to the people to establish appropriate political systems which must meet the appropriate moral, social, and religious requirements.” Still, he is absolutely confident that there can be “no doubt about the republican character of the classic Jewish polity, nor has there been throughout Jewish history.” This is somewhat odd, coming as it does from the pen of a scholar who spent half of his professional time teaching in Israel, where he

⁶ Not to be confused with either the so called Liberal (or Reformed) Jews and Judaism or with the Conservative stream of Judaism. It goes without saying that Orthodox Judaism has nothing whatever in common with Orthodox Christianity, with the possible exception of the belief in God. Under „liberal Orthodox“ I mean Orthodox Jews bent to interpret tradition less strictly, but within the confines of Orthodoxy.

witnessed how modern Jewish “republicanism” was time and again pigmented with calls equating the hour’s political heroes (Premiers Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon) with “David, King of Israel,” as the Talmudic text had it. (accessed 1 November 2014) Perhaps it is even stranger for a political scientist certainly familiar with the roots (and not only etymological) of the concept of *mamlakhtiut* (etatism), deriving from the Hebrew *mamlakha* (kingdom)—a concept that was central to David Ben Gurion’s political creed, as Elazar himself wrote (accessed 1 November 2014; Adelman, 2008: 36-176)

Elazar is forced to admit that what he calls Jewish republicanism “had a certain aristocratic tinge because of the prominent role it gave to notables from leading families and priests, prophets and sages who had responsibilities for interpreting the Torah, all of whom had to share power in some way.” This, he says, “led to the frequent appearance of oligarchic rule in the ancient Jewish polity and in diaspora Jewish communities, as degenerated forms of aristocratic republicanism, but in any case the regime remained republican.” One cannot help wondering when did the author last visit the “court” (in the royal rather than the judicial sense) of one of the famous rabbis who were his contemporaries and to what extent would he have defined the court of, say, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, as “republican.”

Furthermore, The Israeli-American scholar is persuaded that the classic division of powers has existed in Judaic republicanism long before Montesquieu revealed it to the rest of the world:

[I]n the traditional constitution and throughout Jewish history power has always been divided among three domains, known in traditional Hebrew as *ketarim* (crowns): That of Torah, responsible for communicating God’s word to the people and interpreting the Torah as constitution to them; *Kehunah* (priesthood), responsible for being a conduit from the people to God; and *Malkhut*, which may be translated as civil rule, responsible for the day-to-day business of civil governance in the *edah* [the Jewish polity]. (Elazar, 1967)

When two (*Ketarim* and *Malkut*) out of the three alleged “arms of power” are etymologically related to Kingdom, one cannot help wondering how much “republicanism” is left in the arrangement. Yet Elazar at least refrains from bringing up the *Sanhedrin* as an example of Jewish self-rule, as other scholars did. He is just content with describing the *Sanhedrin* as that branch of the government entrusted with “the powers of legal interpretation” and

“the ultimate human agency for interpreting the law.” (Elazar, 1978) But what *was* the *Sanhedrin*?

If Josephus bestowed on the Greeks the notion of theocracy, the latter apparently reciprocated with *Sanhedrin*, which apparently derives from the Greek Συνέδριον (sunedrion, meaning council).⁷ According to some, the roots of the *Sanhedrin* long preceded Greek influence over the region. Stuart A. Cohen, a prominent contributor to Elazar’s earlier cited book, embraces his approach and goes back to times as far back as the “twelve tribes in the wilderness,” though admitting that this might be “arguable”. In fact, the beginnings of the *Sanhedrin* as an institution are fuzzy, as is its functioning. “We are still ignorant,” Cohen admits, “about the precise histories of some governmental institutions (notably the *Sanhedrin*...).(Elazar, 1991: 62-57) As is admitted elsewhere in the same volume, it is not even clear whether a single *Sanhedrin* (called *Sanhedrin Gdolah*, or the Great *Sanhedrin*) existed in Jerusalem, with local branches subordinated to it or whether these local branches (called *Sanhedrin Ktana*, or Lesser *Sanhedrin*) were functioning autonomously and perhaps fulfilling other functions.

According to Cohen, the *Sanhedrin* was the embodiment of the *Keter Malkhut*. Whereas recruitment to the *Keter Kehuna* was on strictly genealogical basis (the Levites and the Kohanim), recruitment to the *Keter Malkhut* was not. Still, the 71 members of the *Sanhedrin* were far from being democratically elected. Membership was “conferred by co-option rather than election,” and, more important, “prospective candidates were usually drawn from the wealthy or otherwise influential classes of the land—a category which obviously included the high priests and their immediate circle, but was not restricted to that group.” (Elazar, 1991: 58-62) Cohen tries hard to demonstrate to his readers that, at least nominally, the religious and the executive branch were separate, but is forced to admit that the High Priests “had always been princes as well as priests” and that consequently, “as a whole” the Jewish polity of the time “approximated the ‘theocracy’ of Josephus’ description.” (Elazar, 1991: 61)

Presenting the Small *Sanhedrins* as proof of democratic self-management is also a gross exaggeration. Not devolution, but streamlining seems to have brought them to life. These institutions were not really Jewish in origin. They were born as a result of the decree of the Roman governor of Syria,

⁷ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13178-sanhedrin>, accessed 4 November 2014.

Gabinius (57 B.C.), who abolished the hitherto functioning form of government, dividing the country into five provinces, each with its own *Sanhedrin* in place. (accessed 4 November 2014) A Lesser *Sanhedrin* had 23 members; on specific issues, the Great *Sanhedrin* could also convene with this number of attendants. Eventually, the Lesser *Sanhedrins* spread to different cities that had a larger (for that time) population. It is not clear what qualification one had to meet in order to be a member of the Lesser *Sanhedrin* apart from age (40), but according to one expert in ancient Jewish legislation, the Lesser *Sanhedrin* was not as class-dominated as its Great counterpart. Members, who were not paid for service, “were men of all sorts of calling, earning their livelihood by the pursuit of those callings.” One thus found on the courts “carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers, weavers, perfumers, apothecaries, teachers, physicians.” (Hirschberg, 2014)

It is (strange as it may sound) neither in the *Keter Malkhut* nor in the *Keter Kehuna* that one may find a democratic glimpse, but rather in the *Keter Torah*. Or maybe it is not that strange, considering the fact that the Torah was given to the congregation as a whole. As Cohen puts it, “In terms of composition, the *Keter Torah* was the most heterogeneous of the three domains.” He is probably exaggerating when he describes the domain as “an open society,” but by now one should have become familiar with the propensity of Jewish Political Studies scholars to employ modern day terminology out of its time. The *Keter Torah* was certainly not a “Popperian” island in a sea of “closed society,” for it functioned within that society and observed its rules. However, he is correct when he puts the domain in a comparative perspective *within* that system:

Admittance to its ranks depended entirely on scholastic merit and spiritual avocation. In comparison to these criteria, those of genetic accident (the distinguishing mark of the *kohanim*) or material advantage (the ultimate test of *malkhut*) were considered relatively inconsequential. This was a situation which certainly endowed the *Keter Torah*...with a large measure of popular support. At the same time, however, it also permitted and encouraged the entry into the *Keter Torah* of various types of personalities: priests and paupers, manual laborers and miracle workers, scribes and ascetics. It thus tended to deprive the domain of a true sense of cohesion. (Cohen, 1991: 63-64)

In other words, the world of Talmudic “sages” was rift with arguments pro and con different interpretations of the Written (the Torah with its 613

commandments) and the Oral Law (the *Mishna* and the Talmud). Traditionally, this mental gymnastics has been dubbed as *pilpul*, originally meaning “adding pepper,” but eventually also acquiring the sense of “wasting time for little purpose.” These “intellectuals” of the times of the Second Temple were often not agreeable to the “locus” of real power. No wonder that modern times intellectuals, such as Amos Oz and his daughter, historian Fania Oz-Salzberger, resonate to their legacy, despite repeatedly stating that they are atheists. The sages, they write, “formed a veritable democracy of debate and interpretation: an all-male democracy indeed, bound to the hierarchy of intellectual brilliance, but open to every Jewish man with a cerebral penchant, regardless of birth and status.” (Oz, Oz-Salzberger, 2012: 10)

Perhaps. But, as Shlomo Avineri has put it, debating the possible links between Judaism and democracy is

“just like asking whether democracy is a Christian or a Muslim idea...With some *pilpul* one can find a sentence here and there in the great sea of the Talmud which can be interpreted as supporting democratic ideas...But if one takes seriously the basic norms of Judaism as originating in divine revelation, obviously such eternal values cannot open to the vagaries of human opinion.”⁸

Furthermore, as Avineri (2014) put it more recently,⁹

[To seek to anchor] Israeli democracy in the Jewish tradition...is totally lacking in foundation. The Hebrew Bible imparted to Israel—and to the whole world—lofty and sublime values, but democracy is not one of them. Similarly, one finds important legal and moral elements in the *Mishna* and the Talmud, but no mention of a representative or elected regime. If the first immigrants had tried to establish a polity in the image of David or of Solomon, the result would have more closely resembled Saudi Arabia than a free and democratic society.

At a symposium whose works were published in 2014, Avineri underscored that “Democracy in a distinctly modern phenomenon...while monotheistic religions have been around for millennia.” Viewed from that

⁸ “Symposium: Is Democracy a Jewish Idea?”

⁹ Shlomo Avineri, “The origins and challenges of Israeli democracy.” In *Haaretz*, 3 October 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/.premium-1.618881>, accessed 30 October 2014.

perspective, to ask “Is Democracy a Jewish Idea?” is to a large extent “an irrelevant question.”¹⁰

Political Culture, Judaism and Zionism.

At the same symposium, the Israeli scholar, who authored several tomes on the origins of modern Zionist thought (Avineri, 1981, 1990, 2013) nonetheless emphasized that the question becomes relevant when addressed in the context of the “current political discourse in Israel.” “Paradoxically,” he said in that context “one can discern a set of Jewish traditions that made possible for Israel to develop along democratic lines.” Basically, Avineri’s argument is that long before Israel became a state, Diaspora Jewry developed a political culture that prompted democratic organization, and *that* political culture was also reflected in what has been called the State-in-the-Making, or the *Yieshuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine during the nineteenth century, until the formation of the State of Israel in 1948):

For centuries, [Diaspora] Jews did possess institutional structures that were based on representation and some sort of electoral process—the *kehilla*, or congregation. Absent a state structure or a hierarchical church, the only way Jewish life could be maintained was on a free associational basis in which ordinary Jews congregated together, elected their own leadership, secular and religious, taxed themselves and established the institutions needed for the preservation of their culture—synagogues, schools, welfare support groups and burial societies.

The Israeli scholar wrote in 2014 that it was “not completely wrongheaded to search for the roots of Israeli democracy in the immigrants’ countries of origin,” though “*not in the general political culture of those lands.*” (accessed 30 October 2014) Outside Israel, few readers were probably aware that this apparent side remark was aimed at his former colleague, Professor Zeev Sternhell, as we shall note. According to Avineri, Israel’s democratic roots should rather be sought “in the social and political structures of the Jewish Diaspora.” It is a paradox, he wrote, that although “Jewish sovereignty was lost when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jews in their lands of dispersion created political structures of their own—different from those in the societies within which they lived—and these became the bedrock of Israeli democracy.” (accessed 30 October 2014) The statement invites a

¹⁰ “Symposium: Is Democracy a Jewish Idea?”

double question. First, could there exist a *secular* Jewish political culture in Diaspora that would develop in total isolation of the dominant political culture of the host countries, as Avineri implies?; and, second, in view of the fact that the Jewish pioneers of the early 1900s were emphasizing the necessity to “leave behind” Diaspora mentalities, would that not affect attitudes towards the legacy of the “parallel society” to which the scholar attributes so much importance? In actual fact, as we shall observe, just as in post-communist East Central Europe the legacy of “parallel societies” was nonetheless intertwined with communist legacies, the emergent Israeli society would reflect *both* separate Jewish values and structures (including religious ones) and the local non-democratic values of the common (Jewish and Gentile) polities.

None of the above diminishes from the validity of Avineri’s argument. It just defends it from becoming (again) overstretched. For, indeed:

In the absence of a state or a quasi-church institution, the only way Jews could preserve and maintain their identity, their faith and their customs wherever they were—be it Krakow or Casablanca, Prague or Fustat (Old Cairo)—was by voluntary means. The only recourse for Jews anywhere who wished to build a synagogue or to ensure a place of burial for their dead, to give children an education, to find a mentor to instruct the community in its religious tradition, or to help the poor among them was to organize themselves on a voluntary basis: to choose a few of their own people and entrust them with their mission; to levy taxes on themselves; to appoint a rabbi; and to regularize relations with the ruling authorities.

He observes, however, that this religious organizational mode of functioning was not induced by religious precepts, stemming rather from environmental social necessities:

Lacking an authorized hierarchical institution that would help determine how this was to be done, each group set up its own institutions and leadership. Jewish communal structures thus emerged not according to biblical or Talmudic injunctions (there are none), but on the basis of the practical demands of concrete societal life.

It is also to the Diaspora *kehillot* that Avineri traces back divisions and squabbles characteristic of intra, but particularly inner party fighting that would emerge in both the State-in-the-Making and in post-1948 Israel,

where (as the joke has it) “three Jews have four different political opinions”:

Clearly, the community was not democratic in the modern sense of the word (women did not have the vote, and in many communities not all men were enfranchised). Nevertheless, it was based on the principle of representation: Jewish community records attest to political struggles, disputes, conspiracies and factionalism—the bread and butter of representative society. In some cases, when the quarrels and disputes intensified, communities split, with those in the minority breaking away and forming a separate entity.

He underscores the paradoxical situation, whereby

The Jews who arrived in the first waves of immigration to Palestine were for the most part secular, and some of those who came in the second and third waves were militant atheists, who had rebelled against rabbinic authority and religious tradition. Yet in setting out to create a new society in Palestine, they were stepped in the well-established tradition of political behavior practices by their ancestors.

Thus, when Kvutzat Degania, the first kibbutz, on Lake Kinneret [established in 1909], split into Degania Aleph and Degania Bet [in 1920], their members were replicating the behavior of their parents and grandparents, who might have left a particular synagogue and set up a *shtiebel*—a place for communal Jewish prayer—of their own that was more congenial to their outlook. (accessed 30 October 2014)

Without stating it outrightly, Avineri is in actual fact embracing the Laborite¹¹ socio-historical model of analyzing the transformation of the Jewish Yishuv into the modern State of Israel.¹² In condensed form, this

¹¹ In the generic sense, meaning all streams and parties that would first give birth to *Mifleget Poalei Eretz Israel*, or Mapai (1930) and later (1968) to *Mifleget Ha'avoda*, or the Labor Party.

¹² The most prominent scholars who forged this model are Dan Horowitz, Moshe Lisak and Anita Shapira. See Dan Horowitz, Moshe Lisak, *Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the Mandate* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978); *Idem, Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); Anita Shapira, *Berl. The Biography of a Socialist Zionist: Berl Katznelson 1887-1994* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); *Idem, Halicha al Kav Haofek* [Going Towards the Horizon] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1989) (in Hebrew); *Idem, Yehudim Hadashim, yehudim yeshanim* [New Jews, Old Jews] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997) (in Hebrew); *Idem, Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force 1881-1948* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); *Idem, Israel: A History* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012).

approach is rendered in Avineri's contribution to the 2012 symposium on Judaism and democracy:

From its inception, the Zionist movement was built on such representative principles, and Israel's democracy grew out of these sources. The first *olim* [new immigrants] organized themselves, in villages, towns and *kibbutzim*, according to familiar modes; since the 1920s the Representative Assembly of Jews in Eretz Israel was elected in multi-party contested elections. It was this Jewish tradition of representation that made the transition from the Yishuv to the State of Israel possible—no need to “adopt” a British or French model. Yes, democracy has a Jewish ancestry—but this political tradition grew out of the real needs of actual, living Jews, not from religious texts or commandments.

More specific, following in the footsteps of their Diaspora forefathers, the Jews in Palestine (much unlike Palestinian Arabs¹³) grasped the opportunity offered by the British Mandatory authorities to Jews and Arabs to set up separate organizations for internal management affairs. They had no difficulty in setting up institutions that would smoothen and facilitate the transition to statehood once that opportunity arose in 1948. A body entitled the Representative Assembly of Palestinian Jews (*Asefat Ha'nivharim*) functioned on the principle of parliamentary representation. “No fewer than twenty parties and groups contested the first elections to the representative body, held in 1920.” Representation was on the basis of a proportional system (whose purpose was to avoid leaving out almost anyone, thus strengthening the legitimacy of the executive—The National Council, or *Va'ad Leumi*- vis-à-vis the Mandatory authorities). No one ever obtained a majority under this “all under one umbrella” system—neither during the transition to statehood or after independence, though the threshold needed for gaining representation was slightly increased after many battles. Coalitions (and hence compromises) became the bread and butter of Israeli politick and politicking. Additionally, a Jewish Agency was set up to include the Yishuv representatives and the Diaspora Zionist movement, “on similar representational and coalitional basis.” Against this background “no difficulty arose in 1948 from the ‘state in the making’

¹³ “The parallel Arab body during the Mandate period—the Arab Higher Committee under the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini—consisted of local dignitaries and sheiks, and never held elections,” Avineri writes, adding that :“It may be said that the inability of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Hamas to come up with an effective joint normative framework today stems from the absence of a democratic tradition, a situation that is common to other Arab societies.”

framework to the trappings of a sovereign state,” Avineri writes. (accessed 30 October 2014)

Even if he refrains from calling it so, Avineri’s approach puts political culture at its center. The subtitle of the last section of his article (No democracy out of a vacuum) is a telling illustration of the argument’s essence. And it is precisely that essence that has been challenged by Zeev Sternhell, whose analysis cast a large shadow over the democratic political culture brought to Palestine by the Zionist pioneers, nurtured by them in the institutions of the State-in-the-Making and surviving in contemporary Israel.

In a book published in 1998, Sternhell set up to examine the “ideology that guided the central stream of the labor movement in the process of nation-building and to investigate how it met the challenge of realizing its aims.” The author observed that his book was, at the same time, “a study of the intellectual, moral, and ideological foundations of present-day Israel and a reflection on its future.” Unlike many proponents of the Laborite approach, Sternhell casts doubt on Zionism being a synthesis of nationalism and socialism, as claimed by some of the most prominent figures among the founding fathers and their latter-day interpreters. The former has always prevailed over the latter, according to him. “Was the nationalism of the labor movement and its practical expression, the pioneering ideology of conquering the land—first by means of a Jewish presence and Jewish labor and later by force, if necessary— in any way special?” he asks. Furthermore, “Did it have a universalistic, humanistic and rationalist basis that distinguishes it from nationalism flourishing in Eastern Europe, where Zionism originated, or was Labor Zionism simply one of the many variations of the historical, ethnic and religious brands of European nationalism?” Last but (for the purpose of this article by no means least): “Did it ever have the potential to overcome the religious substance of Jewish nationalism and thus establish a liberal, secular and open society, at peace with itself and its neighbors?” (Sternhell, 1999: 3)

Sternhell’s answer to all three questions is negative. Zionism, he believes, shares many of the features of *nationalist socialism*— notion he employs in order to avoid the term “national socialism,” which has been “contaminated by its association with the Nazis.” (Sternhell, 1999: 3-4) Perhaps uniquely qualified to make this statement as a foremost expert in proto-fascism and fascism (Sternhell, 1999: 7), Sternhell finds many

commonalities between Zionism and nationalist doctrines that sprang up in Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Although he considers Zionism to be a milder version of those doctrines, (Sternhell, 1999: 15) it also shares with them many common traits. Whereas Avineri attributes the construction of Israeli democracy to the Jewish legacy of the Diaspora rather than to Judaism as such, Sternhell places a large question mark over those legacies' democratic essence. Not the traditions of democratic representation in autonomous structures, but those of the community as supreme value mark the political culture of the early and latter day Zionism, according to Sternhell—at whom his colleague's remark highlighted above has been apparently directed. That communal value is a reflection of the larger environment left behind, for Zionism, he writes, was not the inheritor of West European nationalism.

On the Western part of the European continent, nationalism had been born as a “political and legal phenomenon” as a result of the fact that state-building had preceded nation-building. The process led to “the unification of populations, which were very different in their ethnic origins, cultural identities, languages and religions.” It could therefore have individualism as its focus. (Oz, Oz-Saltzberger, 2012: 176-180) Contrary to that,

To the east of the River Rhine, however, the criteria for belonging to a nation were not political, but cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious. German, Polish, Romanian, Slovakian, Serbian, and Ukrainian identities came into being not as the expression of an allegiance to a single independent authority but as the result of religion, language, and culture, which were very readily regarded as reflecting biological and racial differences. Here the nation preceded the state. The thought of Johann Gottfried von Herder was most relevant to Eastern Europe, not the teachings of Locke, Kant, Mill, or Marx. (Sternhell 1999: 10-11)

Furthermore, Sternhell, unlike Avineri, does not dismiss the persistence of values that can be traced back to Judaism but questions their consistency with the democratic character of the modern state. He notes that among Zionism's founding fathers “the veneer of secularism was very thin; beneath it, the burning embers of Jewish tradition continued to smolder.” (Sternhell 1999: 15)

Let us follow Sternhell's argument on what nationalist socialism had consisted of a bit further. Its different doctrines (for there is more than just

one variety thereof) “appeared in Europe in the last years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth as an alternative to both Marxism and liberalism.” What unifies those doctrines, however, was the “acceptance of the principle of the nation’s primacy and its subjection of the values of socialism to the service of the nation.” As a result, “the universal values of socialism were subordinated to the particularist value of nationalism.” In practice, he writes:

this was expressed by a total rejection of the concept of class warfare and by the claim of transcending social contradictions for the benefit of the nation as a whole. This form of socialism preached *the organic unity of the nation* and the mobilization of all classes of society for the achievement of national objectives. According to the theory, this process *was led by natural elites*, whose membership was determined not by class, origins or educational qualifications, but by sentiment, dedication, and readiness to make sacrifice for all. (Sternhell, 1999: 7)

The attitude of the national socialists toward the propertied classes, as demonstrated throughout the tome, was ambivalent at best. The founding fathers of Zionism preached both the organic unity of the nation and elitism as “understood necessity” in the Hegelian sense. On one hand, for the purpose of mobilization, they often employed idiomatic social ideas, aimed at reinforcing the hegemony of the leadership and developed structures (such as the *Histadrut*¹⁴ under the British mandate) that construed social dependency. Social classes with independence potential, such as the bourgeoisie, were viewed with suspicion. On the other hand, the national socialists (as, indeed, socialist Zionism) rejected class warfare as endangering the supreme value of national unity and made it clear to the bourgeoisie that it has nothing to fear from them as long as it agrees to contribute with their wealth to both nation-building strategies and to national socialist hegemony:

Nationalist socialism quite naturally disliked people with large fortunes, the spoiled aristocracy, and all those to whom money came easily and who could allow themselves to be idle. It lashed out mercilessly at the bourgeoisie whose money power moved from one financial center to another and whose checkbook, close to its heart, served as its identity card...

¹⁴ Established in 1920, the *Ha'histadrut Ha'klalit shel ha'ovdim B'Eretz Israel* had in David Ben-Gurion (elected 1921) its first Secretary.

According to this school of thought, the only real social distinction is between the worker and the person who does not work, that is, the “parasite.” These social categories replaced the Marxist division of society into a class that owns the means of production and a class that does not. This form of socialism was careful not to speak of “proletarians” but of “workers,” and to distinguish not between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but between “producers” and “parasites.”...Thus, workers standing beside the production line and the owners of the industrial enterprise were equally “producers.” Similarly, nationalist socialism distinguished between the “positive” bourgeois, the producer, and “parasitic” capital, between capital that creates employment and adds to the economic strength of society and speculative capital, capital that enriches only its owners without producing collective wealth... All workers were regarded as deserving of protection from the incursion of foreigners.(Sternhell, 1999: 8)

The *Histadrut* was primarily such a structure, for (having as ideological departure point Dov Beer Borochoy’s tenets on the need to inverse the social pyramid of Jewish society by creating a Jewish proletariat), it militated for “Jewish labor,” which in actual fact meant segregation and discrimination against Arab labor.¹⁵ It thus fit into what Sternhell describes as the nationalist socialism’s advocacy of “solidarity between productive national wealth and the worker, between the owners of capital, who provide jobs, and the *native* born workers”. (Sternhell, 1999: 8) This was, as he puts it,

a partnership of interests, but also an ideological partnership: all social classes had to unite in an effort to increase national wealth. All had to contribute to the capability of their society to compete against other nations. According to nationalist socialism, the fate of each social group was organically linked to that of all other classes, and all members of the nation were responsible for one another. Class warfare was obviously out of question.(Sternhell, 1999: 8)

All nationalist socialist versions are indeed “based on the idea of the nation as a cultural, historical, and biological unit, or figuratively, the extended family,” Sternhell notes. (Sternhell, 1999: 8) In this configuration, individuality is, at best, secondary. Both liberalism and Marxism are viewed by nationalist socialists as enemies:

¹⁵ Only in 1959 was this changed, admitting Arabs to the organization’s ranks.

Liberalism views society as a collection of individuals forever struggling for a place in the sun, a sort of open market in which the sole driving force is personal gain. Marxism views society as a place of conflict between hostile classes, groups driven by the inner logic of the capitalist system to fight one another restlessly. The originality of nationalist socialism was that it refused to accept society as a theater of war. It also refused to contemplate any intermediate or partial solutions. Nationalist socialism rejected neo-Kantian reformism, out of which democratic socialism developed; it rejected Austro-Marxism, which tried to deal with the national question within the Marxist framework; and it also rejected attempts to bring Marxist economic thinking in line with technological and scientific developments at the beginning of the century. (Sternhell, 1999: 9)

This is the “historical and intellectual context in which the modern Jewish national movement came into being.” It is a context in which “Organic nationalism is far more relevant to its history than the revolutionary socialist movement”:

Zionism was born into a world of violent and vociferous nationalities, a world with no national and religious tolerance, *a world in which the distinction between religion and nation, or between religion, society and the state, was unknown and perhaps inconceivable*. Such distinctions were luxuries that only the West Europeans could afford. In this respect the peoples of Eastern Europe were not dissimilar to those of the Near East at the beginning of the century: the struggle for national revival was paramount, and each nation knew that all its gains were necessarily achieved at the expense of other nations. (Sternhell, 1999: 11)

It was this “zero sum game,” in other words, that the Zionist founding fathers (and practically all of them stemmed from Eastern Europe) brought with them to Mandatory Palestine at a time when the region itself was the scene of a similar (and similarly deadly) “game.” Neither Marxism nor liberalism stood a chance here, both being perceived by the leadership of the early Zionism (despite lip service) as “a mortal danger to the nation.” As Sternhell puts it, “The rationalism of Marxism and of liberalism, the view of the individual as the final object of all social action which was common to Marxism and liberalism, the concept of class warfare which gave Marxism its meaning, or the principle of individual competition central to liberalism obviously menaced the very foundation of national

identity," for "Both threatened to tear apart its fabric of ethnic and cultural unity." (Sternhell, 1999: 11) In their stead, the early Zionists preached an organic view of the nation, who would (re)conquer the soil by armed struggle, if necessary. This ideology had a lot in common with the *Blut-und-Boden* (Blood and Soil) vision of the European nationalist socialism. (Sternhell, 1999: 10)

Within this framework, attitudes toward religion were more than ambivalent among the founding fathers. After all, they were both the carriers of Emancipation and of its failures—and this no longer applies to the East Europeans among them alone. Benjamin Herzl himself was a wholly assimilated Jew who rediscovered his roots as a result of the Dreyfuss affair. He, as well as Max Nordau, was above all a promoter of liberalism within the Jewish Zionist context, just as Borochof was the partisan of adopting Marxist solutions to the same context. Neither was the option of the leaders of the Second *Aliyah*, or wave of immigration, which started in 1903. As Sternhell puts it, these leaders "were the first to make the primacy of the nation the goal and to separate Jewish nationalism from [either two] universal principles." (Sternhell, 1999: 80) Within this new context, religious elements came to play a role that was hitherto unmet in either Biblical Israel or in Diaspora.

Earlier, Shmuel Almog had pointed out that "the Second *Aliyah* people had a common belief that their own evolving society should be Jewishly superior to any other community elsewhere." But what did *Jewishness* mean in this context? The author distinguishes among four categories of attitudes toward religion among these pioneers: empirical, humanistic, dialectic and mystic. The first category "assumed that religion was outdated and its influence was on the wane." While "indifferent to metaphysics and the supernatural," it "saw the essence of Judaism in the deeds of the Jews." (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 249) One might add that David Ben Gurion's famous (post 1948) saying "It does not matter what the *goyim* say, what matters is what Jews do," had roots precisely in this modality of thinking and acting. As head of the labor movement during the State-in-the-Making, these policies were reflected in the "conquering of the land," that he and his followers regarded as the primary task of the Yishuv. But this was just the beginning. As we shall see, Ben Gurion eventually embraced secular messianism—and went beyond that secular variant. The second category (one should add: "that never imposed itself") "was intent on replacing religious values with humanist ones." The category that Almog calls dialectic "made do with a spiritual quality that had manifested

itself within the pioneering life." We shat dwell on it at some length below. Finally, "the mystic category attached a higher meaning, or religious connotation, to the new way of life." (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 249) One might add that this is the category whose direct inheritor is the Gush Emunim and other colonizers in territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

Anita Shapira has made other relevant distinctions among members of the early Zionist labor movement displaying an ambiguous attitude toward religion. On one hand, they were the inheritors of two antireligious traditions: that of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) and that of the socialist movement" and were engaged in a "*Kulturkampf*" against Jewish Orthodoxy, which "viewed any change in the old order as a threat to the entire structure of traditional Jewish society." (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 251) For their part, the socialists, who were carriers of the movement that "began to emerge in Russia in the late nineteenth century" were "marked by a stroke antireligious streak":

When these young socialists arrived in Palestine, two groups they encountered there confirmed the antireligious stance. The Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem epitomized all that they found repulsive in the Jewish religion in the present conditions: poor, uneducated, superstitious, cowardly, zealous, lacking in self-respect, living on the *halukah* (charitable funds received from abroad by Jews in Palestine for the distribution among the needy. (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 252)

The encounter with the First *Aliyah*¹⁶ was even more traumatic:

The deeply religious colonists in Petach Tikva demanded that all Jews maintain a religious way of life. They refused to hire the young socialists on religious, cultural and economic grounds, employing Arab laborers in their fields instead. The young socialists, in turn, regarded these Orthodox Jews as the epitome of hypocrisy, disguising class interests and prejudice by sanctimonious piety. (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 252)

¹⁶ Mostly East European Jews, who came to Ottoman Palestine between 1882-1902. See "Glossary" in Sternhell, *The Founding Myths*, 391, for the five *Aliyah*. As he notes, "The practice of numbering the 'waves' of immigration was introduced by immigrants of the Second *Aliyah* in order to distinguish themselves from their predecessors and successors."

Nonetheless, these members of the Second *Aliyah*, as those who would follow in their footsteps in the Third and the Fourth *Aliyah*¹⁷ stemmed in general from traditional Jewish households. "They rebelled against the authority of religion, but they were not cut off from traditional Jewish culture." In a description that is somewhat valid even in today's Israel, Shapira writes:

Secularization was a gradual process, the pace of which was not necessarily determined by conviction. A person tended to observe the religious commandments as long as he or she lived in the home of his parents. Sometimes, a young man would maintain a kosher kitchen in his own home, so that his parents could eat at his table, but he would smoke secretly on the Sabbath. (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 253)

She uses a distinction that was current among the members of the Third and Fourth *Aliyah* to summarize attitudes toward the Jewish religion prevalent at those times: religion, tradition and *Yiddishkeit*. The first refers to "a system of faith and beliefs, and the laws deriving from them, that prescribes a particular way of life." Tradition, on the other hand "relates to the external aspect of the customs, rooted in religion." Whereas "religion views the commandments as immutable," since "they were revealed by God to Moses at Sinai," tradition "entails a fundamentally secular approach." It "implies that religious law was not divinely imposed but develops from habits and customs adopted over the course of time and sanctified by long practice." Tradition, unlike religion, "lacks the force of obligation inherent in religion: practices are no longer compulsory, but optional; one can choose those one likes, while disregarding others." Finally, *Yiddishkeit* "relates to a body of ethnocultural traits connected with the habits of a Jewish household and relations within the family and between people." Whereas "tradition focuses mainly on cultural and spiritual matters, *Yiddishkeit* centers on daily life, folklore, and humor." (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 253-254)

Shapira believes that the three terms "constitute a declining scale of commitment towards Judaism." The young socialists, she writes, "adopted a negative approach towards religion, a semipositive one towards tradition, and an even more positive one toward *Yiddishkeit*." The latter "provided ideological legitimacy for their longing for the Sabbath and holidays in the

¹⁷ 1919-1923 and 1924-1928, respectively. Immigrants who arrived to Palestine between 1932-1939 are considered to belong to the Fifth *Aliyah*. *Aliyah* is the Hebrew plural of *Aliyah*.

homes of their parents, the aromas of mother's cooking and the whole way of life in the Jewish diaspora." Yet these "concrete expressions of their ethnic and cultural identity were inevitably tied to religion":

Youth who abandoned religion but wanted to maintain ties to the Jewish people through symbolic or ritualistic expressions were bound to borrow religious symbol and rituals. These practices were usually adopted instinctively, with little acknowledgement of their religious sources. The decision as to what constituted tradition and what *Yiddishkeit* was personal: some maintained very few customs; others observed the dietary laws and even studied Talmud. (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 254)

Several caveats deserve attention: First and foremost, Shapira's insights refer only to the Ashkenazi immigrants. It is ironical that the revival of Modern Hebrew and the decision to adopt the Sephardic pronunciation was prompted, *inter alia*, by the New *Yishuv's* determination to cut off all ties with the "Old Jewish Diaspora" (which was Ashkenazi in practice and spirit), and forge the New Jew. Yet among themselves, the members of this new elite, preferred indeed to speak in the old "*mame lushn*" [mother tongue in Yiddish], while at the same time displaying a patronizing attitude towards the non-Ashkenazi immigration. Second and perhaps more important, the "symbolic or ritualistic" expressions displayed toward religion were neither merely symbolic nor just ritualistic.

Zeev Sternhell shows that one of the chief early ideologists of the Second *Aliyah*, Aaron David Gordon (1856-1922), was an "integral nationalist" cast in the Herderian heritage. (Sternhell, 1999: 52-59) Gordon's writings echo nearly the whole gamma of *volkisch* thought¹⁸. He rejected the individualist "society," for the nation was in his eyes "not a mechanical conglomeration of individuals," not "a mere artificial conglomeration, devoid of the spirit of life," but an entity that was "bound up with nature" and the very source of life: "the nation created language (that is, human thought), religion (that is, man's conception of the world, the expression of man's relationship to the world), morality, poetry, social life. In this sense, one can say that the nation created man. "The nation, for him, was a living body, incapable of existing for long if uprooted from its roots in the soil where it grew, for it

¹⁸ For two of the best books on that tradition see Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981).

would thus be either “completely dried up” or “overlaid with the spirit of another nation.” (Sternhell, 1999: 53) This organic view of the nation, Sternhell remarks, had also a religious component, for, as in both Western and Eastern Europe, any “cultural-organic conception of the nation necessarily included religion, which it saw as an inseparable part of national identity.” (Sternhell, 1999: 56)

But in “integral nationalism religion had a social function, unconnected with its metaphysical content. Generally, it was a religion without God; in order to fulfill its function as a unifying symbol, religion required only external symbols, not inner content.” Not only Gordon, but also “the great majority of the leaders of the Second *Aliyah*... regarded religious heritage or ‘tradition’ as having value in itself without any connection to ceremonial or metaphysical beliefs.” (Sternhell, 1999: 56) Sternhell thus attributes to the observance of tradition a considerably more important role than Shapira’s “optionality” and focus on just “cultural and spiritual matters.”

Furthermore, he notes,

In the Zionist context, the religious element was reinforced by a supremely important factor: for the founders, the Bible was not only a tool to cement the inner unity of society but an indispensable weapon in the struggle for the land. “We in this country,” said Gordon, “created the saying ‘Man is made in the image of God’ and this statement has become part of the life of humanity. With this statement, a whole universe was created.” From this he drew the following political conclusion: “*With this, we gained our right to the land, a right that will never be abrogated as long as the Bible and all that follows from it is not abrogated.*” (Sternhell, 1999: 57)

The “relevance of irrelevance,” as I called it above, begins to become clear against this background. For the founding fathers, the Bible had ceased to be a Covenant—or in any case it was *more* than just that. It was turned into the ultimate blueprint for (re?)constructing the New Jew. If the Talmudists could endlessly argue on rabbinical interpretations of God’s word, the pioneers were a lot more interested in using the Bible as a map for both justification of geographical location and for hero-modeling. This also explains why biblical figures and even religious holidays underwent significant transformations. As Shapira writes:

Although until recently considered inferior to the Talmud, with rejection of the *galut* (negation of exile) the Bible became central to

the Zionist curriculum system. To be sure, the Bible was no longer perceived as the revelation of the divine truth, but rather as a work of literature and history, subject to scholarly criticism...Portions of the Bible dealing with the commandments were treated as marginal. On the other hand, those chapters that described the life of Jews in their ancient land were emphasized in the belief that the students would be attracted by its vigor...The Bible not only strengthened the "rejection of the *galut*" concept; it also served as a link to ancient Jewish history and Jewish cultural heritage without demanding religious commitment...

The Bible was read as a great literary work, revealing human nature in all its strengths and weaknesses. It also served as the history book of the Jewish people. The settlement of the tribes, the tales of heroism and defeat, the stories of people living on the land—all these added up to a great saga, which was the emergence of the Hebrew nation...

Through the stories of the Bible, Palestine came to life as a tangible reality. Upon arrival in Palestine...immigrants traced the footsteps of their heroes and searched for Jewish settlements of old or places of special significance in Jewish history. (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 260-261)

This went hand in hand with an effort to lay emphasis on those religious holidays carrying a national (and sometimes nationalist) significance, at the expense of those that did not necessarily do so and with national hero-worshipping:

The Zionist movement as a whole attached much greater significance to Hanukkah than it had merited in the past. The focus of the holiday changed: the miracle of the cruse of oil, which had been its central theme, now yielded to the heroism of the Maccabees...Lag baOmer underwent a similar transformation: traditionally a holiday celebrating the feast of Bar Yohai and centered on the temporary relief from the mourning period during the counting of the [month of] Omer, it turned into a holiday of heroism, whose symbol was Bar Kokhba. (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 264)

On the other hand, Berl Katznelson (1887-1944), a leader of Labor Zionism close to Gordon¹⁹, was rebuking his party's youth movement for failing to properly mark Tisha Be'av, the Jewish calendar day when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 69 C.E., which is a day of mourning according to religious precepts. On that day, he wrote, the people of Israel (i.e. the

¹⁹ For a biography see Anita Shapira, *Berl*.

Jews) “bewails its destruction and servitude and remembers the bitterness of exile.” (Sternhell, 1999: 163) Similarly, he opposed the inclination among members of the Third, Fourth and Fifth *Alioth* to favor symbols with a non-religious content, regarding them as inferior to traditional symbols. The most important such symbol was the observance of Passover and the reading of the Passover *Haggadah* (the religion-sanctioned tale of the Exodus of Jews from Egypt). As Anita Shapira writes, “For Katznelson, Passover epitomized the collective memory of national redemption, in its annual repetition always invoking new hope.” (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 267) In the modernized versions of the *Haggadah* read in *kibbutzim*, she shows:

The passages of the original *Haggadah*, derived from *midrashim* and rabbinic lore, were eliminated; they were considered the spiritual creation of the diaspora and therefore unfit for the modern Hebrew nation. In their place were biblical passages from the Exodus story, as well as modern poems, the theme of which were spring, harvest, growth and prosperity. (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 267)

Biblical hero-worshiping was not a monopoly of the Labor movement, of course. Zeev Jabotinsky, the founding father of the rival political Revisionists, in 1927 published the novel *Samson the Nazarite*.²⁰ Mighty Samson, captured by the Philistines due to his treacherous wife Delilah, dies shouting “*Tamut nafshi im Plishtim*” (Let my soul die with the Philistines) and “the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life,” says the Biblical text.²¹ (Wiesel, 2003: 129-135) Like Bar Kokhba, Samson would be turned into an important object of renewed hero-worshiping in Hebrew and Israeli culture. (Oz, Oz-Saltzberger, 2012: 142, 218)

It must also be mentioned that many among the leaders of Labor Zionism were charismatic personalities who resembled the rabbinical figures dominating their “courts.” According to Shapira:

²⁰ Translated into English in 1930. See Zeev Jabotinsky, *Samson the Nazarite* (London: M. Secker, 1930). There latest Jabotinsky biography is Hilel Halkin, *Jabotinsky: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). For a more critical view see Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, Chapter 15, 159-186.

²¹ Elie Wiesel, *Wise Men and Their Tales: Portraits of Biblical, Talmudic and Hasidic Masters* (New York: Shoken Books, 2003), 129-135

Basically, the Palestine labor movement was a religious movement. It might be called a “secular religion” or “political messianism,” to use terms current in modern historiography, but it stands as a religious movement even without the secular modifiers. Its inner character was religious and it parallels the millennial sects in Christianity and the mystical movements that had accompanied normative Judaism. It was first and foremost a great fraternity of believers—people whose lives were directed by an all-consuming faith. This faith had many shades and was variously perceived by different groups²², but it had a common denominator: the belief that the end of the days was within sight, that the realization of the Zionist idea was immanent... The leadership of this “holy community” was based in the hidden religious layer and frequently marked by its charismatic qualities. Yitzhak Tabenkin²³ and Meir Yaari,²⁴ for example, were frequently compared to hasidic rabbis and their disciples, a comparison not entirely unfounded. These leaders, and to some extent Berl Katznelson, were authoritarian; they rejected criticism, demanded complete loyalty and total submission, and appealed to the emotions of their followers. Meir Yaari, who came from a hasidic family, was famous for the special power he exercised over his followers. Some described it as magic, others as demonic...

One cannot appreciate the nature of the *Kibbutz Meuhad* movement²⁵ without taking into account the impact of Tabenkin’s personality and the

²² Indeed, although my article focuses on the Labor movement as a whole, there were many streams within that movement and more than once they were at each other’s throats. But in addition to that movement, all Zionist parties of the times, including the religious Zionists parties, such as the Mizrahi or the Ha’poel ha-Mizrahi and the followers of Zeev Jabotinsky’s Revisionists were part of this common denominator.

²³ Alongside Ben Gurion, one of the founders of the Ahdut Ha’avoda party (a successor formation of Poalei Zion) in 1919. In 1930, the party merged with Ha’poel Ha’tzair to form Mapai and Tabenkin went along with the merger. However, as Faction B, it split again in 1944, forming together with Ha’Shomer Ha’Tzair the new Ahdut Ha’avoda, one of whose leaders was Tabenkin. The two formations split again in 1954 into Ahdut Ha’Avoda and Mifleget Ha’poalim Ha’Meudedet (Mapam). The three political parties (Mapai, Ahdut Ha’avoda and Mapam) were reunited in 1968. After 1967, Tabenkin (1988-1971) was opposed to returning any part of the territories conquered in the Six Day War, which reflected his earlier positions, as Sternhell shows in *The Founding Myths*, 115, 215, 224.

²⁴ Leader (along Baruch Hazan) and founder of Ha’shomer Ha’tzair and Mapam. Yaari (1897-1987) was one of the last Israeli leaders to renounce Marxism. At the time of Stalin’s death in 1953, his party’s daily, *Al Ha’mishmar*, was still lamenting the loss of “the sun of all nations” and the party itself went into official mourning. See Nadav Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), 166.

²⁵ The United Kibbutz Movement, one of whose founders in 1927 was Tabenkin.

irrational reverence he engendered in his followers. Tabenkin, who could trace his ancestry to a rabbinic dynasty, was not renowned for the logic of his arguments; he did, however, have a gift for firing up the imaginations of those who responded to his philosophical outlook. These people followed him even when they could not accept his views. Ostensibly, Katznelson always appealed to reason, basing his views on well-founded, rational arguments. But actually he had, as well, a deep-seated power through which he did not so much convince people as “conquer” them. During the 1920s, these leaders, with their dedication to a life of toil and poverty,²⁶(Stenhell, 1999: 196-197) were not unlike leaders of a religious sect.

This sacred congregation had its own rituals. The participants in *kibbutz* assemblies or the great political conventions of the Second *Aliyah* and of the 1920s and 1930s experienced a deep sense of catharsis. These conventions were not intended to be intellectual discussions but rather a process through which the community was to attain purification and reach the spiritual elevation needed for its cohesiveness. (Almog, Rainhaz, Shapira, 1998: 254-258)

Among the leadership of the movement, some would soon discover or rediscover messianism. Shneur Zalman Rubashov, who, as Zalman Shazar would become Israel’s third president between 1963-1972, or Ben Zion Dinaburg, who would be Education Minister under the name Ben Zion Dinur between 1951-1955, (Idel, 2012: 25) were far from being the most prominent. As Moshe Idel notes, “Ben Gurion, [who] started his career as a pragmatic leader of Jewish workers, ...become gradually fond of the role of messianism in what he conceived to be the consciousness and mission of the State of Israel.” (Idel, 2012: 43) According to Idel, “Ben-Gurion was stubborn in his refusal to separate Zionism from messianism. Indeed, he declared straightforwardly that the State of Israel is the creation of the messianic faith . . . We need this faith in order to continue our struggle.”(Idel, 2012: 40)²⁷ In short, what Roger Griffin called the “palingenetic myth”(Griffin, 1991: 32-36) became part and parcel of the

²⁶ Not quite. Among the leadership, many lived comfortably well off in the largest urban areas, despite nominally belonging to a *kibbutz* and claiming to be engaged in agriculture. See Stenhell, *The Founding Myths*, 196-197.

²⁷ citing David Ohana, *Messianism and Mamlachtiut, Ben-Gurion and the Intellectuals, Between Political Vision and Political Theology* (Beersheba, 2003) (in Hebrew), 353.

allegedly “practical Zionism” of the Labor movement, thus confirming Sternhell’s inclusion of this movement among the “socialist nationalists.”

It is more than revealing that the Labor leader was here at precisely the opposite pole than that manned by the most prominent scholar of messianism of the times, Gershom Sholem (or Martin Buber, for that matter (Idel, 1998: 321-323). Messianism, in Sholem’s eyes, was apocalyptic and as a modern Zionist he (or his student, the future historian Jacob Talmon who, like his mentor, was “frightened by the Nazi and Communist misuse of messianism)” (Idel, 2012: 44) resolutely rejected this perspective:

I absolutely negate that Zionism is a messianic movement and that it has the right to employ religious terminology for political goals. The redemption of Jewish people, which as a Zionist I desire, is in no way identical with the religious redemption I hope for in the future . . . The Zionist ideal is one thing, the messianic ideal is another, and the two do not meet except in the pompous phraseology of mass rallies which often infuse our youth with a spirit of new Sabbateanism, which must inevitably fail. The Zionist movement has nothing in common with Sabbateanism.

No wonder that when the scholar and the politician met in 1961, Ben Gurion, who was apparently acquainted with his writings and positions reportedly told Sholem: “the project of your life is far away from me.” (Idel, 2012: 201)

One cannot, therefore, but subscribe to Sternhell’s conclusion in his book’s epilogue that mystique had played (and alas, continues to play) a prominent role in what he calls the “historical-religious continuum” reflected in modern Israeli political culture. He reminds his readers that it was not the Right (which came to power only in 1977), but Labor under the two future architects of the Oslo accords, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Defense Minister Shimon Peres that had been the champions of renewed Jewish settlement in the West Bank. In 1974, the Gush Emunim settlers composed of “yeshiva graduates and disciples of the Bnei Akiva religious youth movement” set up the first settlements in Hebron, which was “viewed as another return to the source: the people of Israel coming back to its mythical birthplace,” for it was in Hebron that the biblical Abraham “had settled on his return from Egypt.” The same Gush Emunim settlers in 1975 established near Nablus the first settlement, called Elon Moreh. Although Rabin “was aware of the grave error of settling in the heart of the

thickly populated West Bank," he "was unable to stand against those who insisted that he should be true to the principles of Zionism. He yielded to Peres, not only out of weakness but because the leadership of the Labor Party did not succeed in resisting the Zionist fervor of people whom many regarded as true pioneers, worthy successors of the builders of Degania and Tel Yosef." (Sternhell, 1999: 337)

Rabin's assassination in November 1995, according to Sternhell, was "an act of resistance" against a process that would have signified a "passage to normalcy." By normalcy he means "an open, secular society...based on the search for the happiness of the individual rather than the defense of tribal values." He was "the victim of the opposition led by the religious nationalist Right, firmly backed by the hardcore of its secular counterpart." (Sternhell, 1999: 338) Worse, "the violent struggle against the Oslo agreements enjoyed the passive support and tacit consent of the official, respectable Right":

On 5 October 1995, exactly one month before the night of the murder, a large demonstration of all factions of the Right was held in Jerusalem. On a balcony overlooking Zion Square in the heart of Jerusalem, the whole opposition leadership was gathered around Benjamin Netanyahu, from the former prime minister Yitzhak Shamir to members of the government set up in June 1996. Facing the leaders of the opposition—today's government—placards denouncing the "traitor" Rabin dressed in the uniform of an SS officer were waived high above the heads of the demonstrators. Not a word of protest was heard from the speakers' platform, and the man who is prime minister at the end of 1997²⁸ never battled an eyelid. For the Right, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres were comparable to the worst enemy the Jewish people ever had. That is how the matter was understood by those present at the demonstration that night, by those who sat opposite the television screens and watched the leaders of the Right stirring up the crowds, and by those who read about it in the newspapers the next day. That is also how it was understood by the man who four weeks later pulled the trigger. (Sternhell, 1999: 344-345)

Yet, in more than one way, Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by that continuum in which "secularism as conceived by the Enlightenment obviously has no place." He fell victim to a mystique shared by the

²⁸ And at the end of 2014, one must add.

founding fathers of his own movement, one that, regardless of whether it “appealed to history and was supposed to be ‘secular’ or was based on ‘divine promise’...revealed the limits of secularism in Eretz Israel and later in the state of Israel.” (Sternhell, 1999: 338)

References

- Adelman, Jonathan. 2008. *The Rise of Israel: A History of a Revolutionary State*, Routledge, New York.
- Almog, Shmuel. “The Role of Religious Values in the Second Aliah” in: Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Rainharz, Anita Shapira *Zionism and Religion* (ed). 1998. 237-250. (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press published by the University Press of New England, 1998).
- Avineri, Shlomo. 1990. *Arlosoroff*, Grove Press, New York.
- Avineri, Shlomo. 1981. *The Making of Modern Zionism*, Basic Books, New York
- Avineri, Shlomo. 1987. *Moses Hess. Prophet of Communism and Zionism*, New York University Press, New York.
- Avineri, Shlomo. “The origins and challenges of Israeli democracy.” In *Haaretz*, , <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/.premium-1.618881>. (30 October 2014)
- Avineri, Shlomo. 2013. *Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London.
- Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Rosh Hashanah 25a (http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Rosh_HaShanah.pdf.(accessed 1 November 2014)
- Biale, David. 1982. *Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah and Counter-History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- “Declaration of Independence.” In http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html.(accessed 30 october 2014)
- Cohen, Stuart A. “Continuities and Convulsions: The Three *Ketarim* During the Second Jewish Commonwealth “in: *Authority, Power and Leadership in the Jewish Polity* (ed) by David J. Elazar assisted by Stuart A. Cohen, Jane Gerber, Robert Friedman, 57-91.(Lanham: University Press of America, 1991).

Elazar, Daniel J. "Covenant as the Basis of Jewish Political Tradition." In *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, <http://www.jcpa.org/dje/books/kincon-ch1.htm> (accessed 3 november 2014)

Elazar, Daniel J. "Introduction: Jewish Political Studies as a Field". In *Authority, Power and Leadership in the Jewish Polity. Cases and Issues* edited by David J. Elazar assisted by Stuart A. Cohen, Jane Gerber, Robert Friedman, 1-27. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991).

Elazar, Daniel J. "Israel as a Jewish State." In *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, <http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles2/isrjewstate.htm>. (accessed 1 november 2014)

Elazar, Daniel J. "Judaism and Democracy: The Reality." In *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, <http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles2/jud-democ.htm> (accessed 31 October 2014)

Elazar, Daniel J. and Stuart Cohen (Eds). *The Jewish Polity. Jewish Political Organization from Biblical Times to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

Elazar, Daniel J. and John Kincaid (Eds.). 2000. *The Covenant Connection. From Federal Theology to Modern Federalism*, Lexington Books, Lanham.

Griffin, Roger. 1991. *The Nature of Fascism* Routledge, London & New York. "Halakha." In *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakha>. (accessed 1 November 2014)

Halkin, Hilel. 2014. *Jabotinsky: A Life*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Hirschberg, Samuel. "Jurisprudence Among the Ancient Jews." In *Marquette Law Review*, XI, 1 December 1926, 25-31.

Horowitz, Dan, Moshe Lisak. 1978. *Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the Mandate*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London.

Horowitz, Dan, Moshe Lisak. 1989. *Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of Israel*, State University of New York Press, Albany.

Idel, Moshe. 1998. *Messianic Mystics*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Idel, Moshe "Messianic Scholars: On the Early Israeli Scholarship, Politics and Messianism," *Modern Judaism*, 32 (1), 2012, 22-53.

Jabotinsky, Zeev. 1930. *Samson the Nazarite*, M. Secker, London.

Kedar, Nir. "Ben Gurion's Mamlakhtiyut: Etymological and Theoretical Roots." In *Israel Studies*, 7 (3), 2002, 117-133.

McPheeters, W. M. "Theocracy." In *BibleStudyTools.com*, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/theocracy.htm> (accessed 30 October 2014)

Medding, Peter. "Ben Gurion: Democratic Political Leadership and Mamlakhtiyut. In *Yahadut Zmanenu*, 5, 1989, 25-49 (in Hebrew).

- Medding, Peter. 1990. *The Founding of Israeli Democracy, 1948-1967*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Mosse, George L. 1981. *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, Schocken Books, New York.
- Ofrat, Gideon. 1980. *Adama, adam, dam: Mitoș he'halutz u'pulhan ha'adama be'mahazoth ha'hitiashout* [Earth, Man, Blood: The Myth of the Pioneer and the Ritual of the Earth in Eretz-Israel Settlement Drama] (Goma Sifrei Mada U'mekhar, Tel Aviv) (in Hebrew).
- Oz, Amos, Fania Oz-Salzberger. 2012. *Jews and Words*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London .
- Porton, Gary G. 1994. *The Stranger within Your Gates. Converts and Conversions in Rabbinic Literature*, Chicago University Press, Chicago.
- Safran, Nadav. 1981. *Israel: The Embattled Ally*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge & London.
- "Sanhedrin." In *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13178-sanhedrin>. (accessed 4 November 2014.)
- Shafir, Michael. "Ex Occidente Obscuritas: The Diffusion of Holocaust Denial from West to East." In *Studia Hebraica* 3, 2003, 23-82.
- Shafir, Michael. "Heretic Thoughts on Jews, history and memory." In *Spiritualitate și cultură europeană. Volum dedicat Profesorului Ladislau Gyémánt la împlinirea vârstei de 60 de ani*, editori Alina Branda, Ion Cuceu și Claudia Ursuțiu, Presa Universitară Clujeană. Editura Fundației Pentru Studii Europene, 2007, 51-58.
- Shapira, Anita. 1985. *Berl. The Biography of a Socialist Zionist: Berl Katznelson 1887-1994*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Shapira, Anita. 1989. *Halicha al Kav Haofek* [Going Towards the Horizon], Am Oved, Tel Aviv. (in Hebrew).
- Shapira, Anita. 2012. *Israel: A History*, Brandeis University Press, Waltham.
- Shapira, Anita. 1999. *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force 1881-1948*, Stanford University Press, Standford.
- Shapira, Anita. "The Religious Motifs of the Labor Movement." In *Zionism and Religion* edited by Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Rainharz, Anita Shapira, 251-272. (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press published by the University Press of New England, 1998).
- Shapira, Anita. *Yehudim Hadashim, yehudim yeshanim* [New Jews, Old Jews] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997) (in Hebrew).
- Stern, Fritz. 1970. *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Sternhell, Zeev. 2009. *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Stern, Fritz. 1978. *La droite révolutionnaire, 1885-1914. Les origines françaises du fascisme*, Seuil, Paris.

Stern, Fritz. "Fascist ideology." In *Fascism, A Reader's Guide, Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography*, edited by Walter Laqueur. 315-376. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976),

Stern, Fritz. *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

Stern, Fritz. 1996. (Ed.) *The Intellectual Revolt Against Liberal Democracy. International Conference in Memory of Jacob L. Talmon*, The Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem.

Stern, Fritz. 1985. *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, Editions Complexe, Bruxelles.

Stern, Fritz. 1983. *Ni droite ni gauche. L'idéologie fasciste en France*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris.

Stern, Fritz, Mario Sznajder, Maia Asheri, 1989. *Naissance de l'idéologie fasciste*, Fayard, Paris.

"Symposium: Is Democracy a Jewish Idea?" In *Moment*, September-October 2012, <http://www.momentmag.com/symposium-is-democracy-a-jewish-idea/> (accessed 1 November 2014)

Talmon, Jacob L 1981. *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution: The Origins of Ideological Polarization in the Twentieth Century*, Secker & Warburg, London.

Talmon, Jacob L. 1961 *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, Praeger, New York.

Talmon, Jacob L. 1967. *Romanticism and Revolt: Europe, 1815-1948*, Thames & Hudson, London.

Wenger, Beth. 2012. *History Lessons: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Wiesel, Elie. 2003. *Wise Men and Their Tales: Portraits of Biblical, Talmudic and Hasidic Masters*, Shoken Books, New York.

Zakal, Avihu. 2008. "Theocracy." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

"Zionist Congress: The Uganda Proposal (August 26, 1903)." In *Jewish Virtual Library*,

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/Uganda.html>. (accessed 28 October 2014)