ONE

Dispossession, Displacement, and Dreams

THE MEANINGS OF AUTO-EMANCIPATION

No idea was more fundamental to Zionism than the ingathering of Jews in the land of Israel and the ending of their exile.[1] Those who came to live in the land of Israel were thought to have embarked on a transcendent journey interpreted by Zionism as not simply leaving the lands of their birth but rather as rejecting them and the oppressive conditions they imposed on Jews. Such a passage could not simply be described as immigration, and the modern Hebrew term *Aliyah*, invented for this homecoming, conferred both a direction—ascending—and a sense of undertaking a national mission.

But to conclude that the ending of exile simply required a change of address and physical contact with the land of Israel would be far too simple. For the term *exile* carried burdens of reference so deeply rooted in the personality of Diaspora Jewry that nothing short of negating the Diaspora as symbol, culture, and system of authority could truly bring Jews back to their home and to themselves as fully emancipated human beings.

Although Zionism's core idea of rejecting the Diaspora required the movement of Jews across continents and oceans, it inspired no explicit philosophical engagement with the problems necessarily unleashed by changes in population and by populations changing not only their dwellings but also their views of where they truly belonged. Not that the Zionist canon was indifferent to immigration but rather that it could not anticipate, openly and easily, the special kind of displacement Jewish immigrants would experience in Palestine. Because Zionists believed the land of Israel to be their historic homeland, they expected Jewish immigrants to Palestine to fit in instantly and without problems. But instead of feeling at home, many were thrown back upon a sense of their ties to the cities and

towns they left behind. The fact that Jewish immigrants in Palestine, many of them former Zionist activists, still focused on their birthplaces strained the limits of all Zionist ideologies that attempted to find explanations for a phenomenon so at odds with their assumptions and worldview.

Zionists did realize and acknowledge that "exile" was as much a psychic as a physical event and that exchanging domiciles did not necessarily eliminate or erase all of the Diaspora's negative traits. But exile's psychic contours could not be totally mapped because the loneliness of immigrants often had a concrete numerical source that could never be publicly mentioned. Many of Palestine's Jewish residents came from densely populated Jewish centers. By immigrating to Palestine, these Zionists had transported themselves from areas of Europe with heavy concentrations of Jews to a geographic space where Jews often comprised a small percentage of the local non-Jewish—Arab—population and where the question of demography had to be shrouded in silence and dealt with, if at all, only by indirection and implication. Zionists could not afford to draw attention to an issue that might compromise the legitimacy of their struggle for Jewish independence or confound it with old-fashioned European colonialism.

Great Britain's support for a Jewish national home as a condition of assuming the burdens of governing Palestine only pressed more powerfully on Zionist theorizing to bury or sideline the demographic issue. By positing the establishment of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel as not only desirable but also inevitable, Zionism had to avoid grappling explicitly with the considerable gap in the size of the Jewish and Arab populations in Palestine. Although Palestine's Jewish population rose during the period of British rule, Jews never caught up to the Arabs, whose numbers increased more by what were understood as natural processes—longer life expectancy and higher birth rates—than by man-made and presumably artificially contrived political forces. Moreover, the numerical relationship of Jewish immigrants to their former densely populated homes in Europe and to the significantly larger stream of Jews from their hometowns moving westward intensified the general unease in Palestine's Jewish community about its future and reinforced the tendency of its leading thinkers to insulate Zionism's central tenets from some of the grueling questions a direct and explicit engagement with the demographic issue would undoubtedly raise.

It is with the notion of demography as subtext that I come to consider some of the major works of Zionist theory. The demographic issue took refuge in several linguistic shelters, the first and most important that Zion-

ism was concurrently an ideology of national liberation and of radical transformation.[2] Here was the contradiction: the intensely felt need to rescue masses of Jews from poverty and discrimination by bringing them to the land of Israel to form an independent political community clashed with the equally profound Zionist commitment to create in Palestine a new kind of Jewish nation. Many of Zionism's classical texts embodied the contradictory objectives even as they claimed to reconcile them in their "imagined communities." In the end, two quite different logics governed discussions of immigration and often worked at cross-purposes. National independence presupposed a number of subordinate principles concerning mass migration and economic development, whereas national transformation suggested presumptions about the characteristics and abilities of individuals as setting the criteria for selecting suitable immigrants. Immigration was at the service of either a political struggle or a vision of radical change. The two objectives effected a contradiction, with the second potentially canceling out the first by implying that the ordinary writ of numbers might not be an absolute requirement for state-building, and that quality could indeed replace quantity. It also shifted the thinking about the impetus for immigration away from individual choice to a process of selection.

At its origins, Zionism aimed to alter, in the most fundamental sense, the meaning of being Jewish. The world seemed to be falling apart before the very eyes of Jews who lived in the areas of Eastern Europe where Zionism originated even before it had a name or a political structure.[3] The specter of disintegration and atomization was very real to Jews who were leaving their homes, in increasing numbers, to escape a politics that confined them to poverty, exposed them to constant humiliation, and rendered them helpless when attacked. What would put their world back together again?

This was a question the fixed ideas and customary habits of the Jewish people could not answer. Nor could they explain how to come to grips with the changes tearing apart so many Jewish communities in the nineteenth century, thus reinforcing the sense that the times had either abrogated or rendered irrelevant the religious rules organizing Jewish life. From the first, it appeared to many—who would soon be labeled *Maskilim*, or proponents of Enlightenment (*Haskala*)—that Judaism rather than anti-Semitism was the problem.

In this understanding, Jews could alter their condition only by overcoming their fears of cultural exchange with non-Jewish society and by

forging alliances with its progressive forces. Proponents of Enlightenment expected that even in Russia, Jews would eventually be granted full rights and citizenship, since liberal reforms were already gathering force under Czar Alexander II. In return for acceptance and access to modern education, Jews would bring their artistic and literary creations as offerings to a Russia with global ambitions. But the Enlightenment project depended, of course, on circumstances beyond the control of Jews. Many Jews did not see the benefits of moderating their religious and cultural differences in a place whose leaders were, at best, highly ambivalent about welcoming them into their mainstream, especially at a time when there appeared to be attractive alternatives: the United States, for one, beckoned and seemed ripe with opportunity. But emigration to the United States destabilized Jewish existence by radically altering their residence and the very grounds of their communal ties.

Zionism thus emerged as one of many competing strategies put forward as Jews struggled for survival in an era of profound upheaval but also of promise, albeit not one easily redeemable. No one imagined that Zionism's goal to transform the Jewish people was to be quickly achieved. Although the road to a better life in America seemed more easily traveled, it, too, had its stumbling blocks, particularly for Jewish identity. Like Zionism, the *Haskala* proposed a new Judaism focused on culture and the revival of Hebrew as a basis for creative interactions between Jewish writers and their non-Jewish counterparts. But unlike Zionism, the *Haskala* posited that Jews would find their liberation and fulfillment in the lands of their birth. Still, the *Haskala* confounded expectations by attributing the debilitating weakness of Jews to their own traditions. Zionism, however, pushed further by imagining Jews possessed of the power to preserve their collective identity, but only if they remade it by regaining sovereignty in their ancient homeland. Yet imagining Jews living and working in the land of Israel was radically different from actually thinking about how to move them from one continent to another. It is no surprise, then, that from the moment Zionism asserted a Jewish national identity as the basis for its political ambition, its discourse was filled with inconsistent references to the nature of the political community whose interests it claimed to represent. A Jewish national identity was affirmed and not yet formed. The new society to be created in the land of Israel would be modern but also traditional.

It was events that forced Zionism to recast discourse into blueprint and provide a comprehensive program for developing Palestine. The defeat of

the Ottoman Empire in World War I and the 1917 proclamation of Great Britain's Balfour Declaration in support of the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish national home provided an extraordinary opportunity for Zionists to turn their dreams into reality. But they also triggered problems Zionism had not anticipated and was not fully prepared to resolve.

After forming a Zionist Commission "to survey the situation and plan for the future,"[4] Great Britain soon discovered that there was no Zionist consensus on such matters of central importance as immigration. Trying to forge a united stance on immigration during the British Mandate period stirred controversies not only because of principles firmly rooted in opposing Zionist ideologies, but also because the very concepts and idioms structuring debates always held something back, having been forged to manage contradictions, not to resolve them or to establish priorities. That such language controlled deliberations long after it was invented suggests that it had become part of an important cultural legacy.

Zionist ideologies, now so thoroughly mapped by historians of political thought on a range of economic and social issues, have not been probed extensively in reference to the issues of demography and immigration. It is symptomatic that the foundational texts of the Zionist national creed—Leon Pinsker's *Auto-Emancipation* and Theodor Herzl's *Jewish State*—could be written with only passing comments on immigration, even though the notion of returning to a homeland was so deeply embedded in the logic of the Zionist argument that some asserted it as a Jewish natural right. Any examination of how immigration and demography influenced the development of Zionist thought must begin, therefore, with an inquiry into classical texts for the ideas and vocabulary deployed in the Zionist canon that formed the linguistic grid used to describe, interpret, and judge the meaning and importance of Jewish immigration to Palestine.

LEON PINSKER AND THEODOR HERZL

When misery in Russia prompted open calls for Jewish emigration, they came from two quite distinct directions. One is best represented by Leon Pinsker, who created the first Zionist framework for supporting a small number of land purchases as the basis for Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine. Pinsker's *Auto-Emancipation* focused attention on immigration by noting that Russian Jews were a population already on the move but without a clear communal direction. Pinsker attributes "this lamentable outcome of the emigration from Russian and Roumania . . . to the

momentous fact that we were taken by it unawares; we had made no provision for the principal needs, a refuge and a systematic organization of the emigration."[5] Pinsker characterized the emigration as chaotic and absolutely aimless.

> Now we wander as fugitives and exiles with the foot of the ruffianly boor upon our necks, death in our hearts, without a Moses for our leader, without a promise of land which we are to conquer by our own might. We are driven through the lands of all rulers; here we are escorted further with all politeness, in order that we may not introduce a plague; there fortune grants that we are provided for anywhere and anyhow, in order that we may freely and unmolested—deal in old clothes, make cigarettes, or become incompetent farmers.[6]

The 1881 hostilities in Russia that supposedly triggered the massive migrations and wreaked havoc with traditional institutions and values also, he claimed, foreclosed options for independence and security for Jews wherever they sought refuge. "And even for the few who were so happy as to reach the goal of their desires, the longed-for haven, found the latter no whit better than the dangerous road. Wherever they came, people tried to get rid of them. The emigrants were soon confronted by the desperate alternative of either roaming about without shelter, without help, and without a plan in a strange land, or wandering back shamelessly to their no less strange and loveless home country. This emigration was for our people nothing but a new date in martyrology."[7] Jews would discover that no political system, however democratic, could guarantee them protection against discrimination because Jew-hatred, Pinsker contended, was not triggered by a particular form of government, nor was it capable of being suppressed in societies where power resided with the masses. Rather, it erupted because of the highly anomalous condition of Jews in the modern world as a nation without a land of its own. "To sum up what has been said, for the living, the Jew is a dead man, for the natives an alien and a vagrant, for property-holders a beggar, for the poor, an exploiter and a millionaire, for patriots a man without a country, for all classes, a hated rival."[8]

By redefining the purpose of emigration, Pinsker posited a way out of the disorder and Jewish displacement, for he saw in the cumulative power of individual voluntary decision-making the possibility of turning the realm of self-development and self-realization into a means of winning

respect from the world and of ending anti-Semitism. Although describing a shared Jewish fate, Pinsker grounded his expectations in the idea that individuals would take charge of their own fate. At a minimum, Zionism would establish a framework for organizing this mass movement of what he called "surplus Jews." Ideally, Pinsker hoped to endow the act of migration with national significance by presenting it as heir to the Enlightenment protest against the discourse of religious fate that explained and justified Jewish suffering.[9] Thus did Pinsker conclude that "the proper, the only remedy, would be the creation of a Jewish nationality, of a people living upon its own soil, the auto-emancipation of the Jews; their emancipation as a nation among nations by the acquisition of a home of their own."[10]

The publication of *Auto-Emancipation* proved to be as much of an event as a dissemination of a philosophic argument. Its publication generated the momentum for the establishment of a Zionist movement by planting in Jewish consciousness the idea of the reasons for the deep and persistent global rage known as anti-Semitism. Pinsker showed how Jews "in the midst of the nations among whom . . . [they] reside . . . form a distinctive element which cannot . . . be readily digestible by any nation."[11] They are the perpetual "Other"—for capitalists, the Jews are communists; for communists, the Jews are inherently bourgeois; for Poles, the Jews are Russified, whereas for Russians, the Jews constitute a nationalist threat.[12]

This anomalous position destabilized all the countries where Jews lived because complete national unity cannot be effected with them within any known recognized borders, and violence and chaos erupt across borders when they are forced out. For Gentiles, Jews brought to awareness their own failures and insecurities about the inadequacies of their societies. For Jews, the rage against them produced all sorts of rationalizations for oppression which are incorporated as truthful and deserved. In iconography across the centuries, Jews were accused of "crucifying Jesus . . . [drinking] the blood of Christians . . . [poisoning the] wells . . . [taking] usury . . . [and exploiting] the peasant."[13] These are charges aimed against a whole people, prime suspects in crimes that can neither be confirmed nor denied through a judicial system. As long as human beings are insecure, they will ascribe to other people feelings of alienation they can neither abide nor accept in themselves, and Jew-hatred will be part of the collective fabric of the social order. Trying to stop what is virtually an unending state of war against Jews through legislation or through the spreading of democracy is a hopeless quest for a purity that can never be forged in the public domain for a problem that essentially operates secretly within the self.

In distributing responsibility for this condition, however, Pinsker turned directly to Jews, who were shamed into passivity by their experiences of oppression. Apart from convincing Jews that they could, indeed, change their situation, he also tried to grant them a way to give themselves what they needed most: self-respect. Jews would be perpetual victims in a psychic warfare that provides false comfort to the perpetrators of violence unless they assumed responsibility for their own personal and national liberation.

Although Pinsker's call for a Jewish national liberation led to the unification of local Zionist associations into a single framework, known as *Hibbat Zion* (Lovers of Zion), it did not change the destination for most Jews leaving the lands of their birth for a better life. David Vital made explicit *Hibbat Zion*'s marginal impact when he wrote:

> This will to pursue purposes which, on the plane of the material and the concrete, were wildly disproportionate to the manifest needs and demands of the people out of whom they emerged, whose condition they knew better than anyone, and whose fate and interests, when all is said and done, were their principal, state public concern, was a salient feature of *Hibbat Zion*.[14]

For most Jews, the formal establishment of the first Zionist movement in 1882 had little meaning, and more than a decade later, the mighty tide of Jewish immigrants from Russia still turned westward, whereas a trickle headed east to the land of Israel. This juxtaposition convinced Theodor Herzl not to reject the Zionist idea but rather to reconfigure and repossess it.[15] Herzl saw in the turmoil engendered across countries in Europe by the many displaced Jews the need to instill in Zionists a new kind of political consciousness. Pinsker may have imagined the Jewish nation as a political construct, but he did not stipulate that its existence warranted concerted political action. By contrast, Herzl insisted that only if Zionism produced a clear political program and instructed its leaders to engage in diplomacy with all relevant and powerful nations could it secure a homeland that would make a difference for the majority of Jews and for the Jewish people as a nation.

Herzl identified Zionism's logic and dynamic as depending not on individual consciousness or will, as it had for Pinsker, but rather on an entirely new mode of political action. "Those Jews who fall in with our idea of a State," he wrote, "will attach themselves to the Society, which will thereby be authorized to confer and treat with Governments in the name of

our people. The Society will thus be acknowledged in its relations with Governments as a State-creating power. This acknowledgment will practically create the State."[16] Surprisingly, Herzl calculated that the Jews had a strong negotiating position.

> The Society of Jews will treat with the present masters of the land, putting itself under the protectorate of the European Powers, if they prove friendly to the plan. We could offer the present possessors of the land enormous advantages, take upon ourselves part of the public debt, build new roads of traffic, which our presence in the country would render necessary, and do many other things. The creation of our State would be beneficial to adjacent countries, because the cultivation of a strip of land increases the value of its surrounding districts in innumerable ways.[17]

If Zionists earlier eschewed contact with global politics, Herzl elevated it to a central tenet of his activity. Herzl reasoned that if the existence of the Jewish nation was beyond question, then its political rights must be asserted until fully and formally acknowledged and until enacted and safeguarded. The Zionist program must be breathtakingly ambitious: nothing short of fulfilling the political claims advanced on behalf of all Jews.

Emigration marked one of the portentous developments for Eastern European Jews in the nineteenth century, both as a cause and as an effect of social dislocation and anguish. Driven by poverty, masses of Jews who sought employment in the industrializing democracies or even in the newly developed cities and towns in an expanded Russia found themselves possessed of new power to make their own decisions, but also drained of their customary mainstays of support. The once tight braid of social, economic, and religious authority came untwined for Russia's Jews, who were blessed with high birthrates but oppressed by poverty and a harsh regime. Many Jews failed to rise above the level of poverty of their ancestors, and many fell below that level. Russia's Jewish population grew faster than any of the country's other groups and confronted more challenges than the old traditions seemed able to handle. Jewish religious culture devolved into a variety of subcultures, turning small differences into what appeared to the people experiencing them enormous, even unbridgeable gaps. Because religious leaders, like others, no longer exercised absolute moral leadership, they could also not restore unity to the community. It was thus not difficult for many Jews, especially in the aftermath of pogroms, to believe they had no future in Russia.[18]

An immense migration that fragmented families and communities not only doomed an old way of life; it also imperiled the possibility of a future with a recognizable Jewish social order, particularly for families dispersed across continents. Sensitive to the emotional costs of emigration, Herzl observed that although "our cradles we shall carry with us—they hold our future, rosy and smiling. Our beloved graves we must abandon."[19] Confronting the unfolding disorder, Herzl extended the Zionist idea and sought to use it as a substitute for all other conventional Jewish responses to what Derek Penslar has aptly called "the immigration crisis of the 1880s."[20] Convinced that these migrations left people standing alone without the superintending authority of institutions and leaders, Herzl also believed that Jews would welcome new modes of community and control over the direction of their lives. Political Zionism could work as a means of national survival and as an antidote to social and moral fragmentation. Here Herzl introduced some powerful claims. "But we shall give a home to our people. And we shall give it, not by dragging them ruthlessly out of their sustaining soil, but rather by transplanting them carefully to a better ground. Just as we wish to create new political and economic relations, so we shall preserve as sacred all of the past that is dear to our people's hearts."[21]

Not surprisingly, Herzl expressed hostility to the relief work undertaken by Jewish charities in response to the suffering of refugees. The industrialization and democratization of England and America gave hundreds of thousands of Jews a destination for their flight, but the movement of so many poor Jews across Europe, particularly in port cities, triggered such an acute and ongoing series of humanitarian crises as to compromise the material incentives. Confronting masses of Jewish refuges in Western Europe and in the United States put all citizens of these countries on the defensive, with needs and demands clearly outstripping the capacity of local institutions to meet them. Herzl acknowledged the reasonableness of nations' concerns about maintaining order and control threatened by the flood tides of refugees. But going even further, he ominously insisted that Jews would have to reckon with more than the normal turmoil engendered by immigration. For large-scale Jewish immigration to the democracies of Western Europe and the United States would infuse into these countries new forms of hostility against Jews as significantly larger Jewish populations swept people away from practices of enlightened tolerance and led them into typical patterns of discrimination. Jewish citizens of these democracies would eventually encounter the same hatred characteristic of despotisms.

Democracy afforded no permanent protective shield against anti-Semitism, since the rise of nationalism and populism worked interactively to extend and invigorate Jew-hatred. For newly independent European states, uncertain how to define their own collective identities but deluged with tendentious myths of homogeneity, a sizable Jewish population seemed both invidious and backward. But even for democracies, concentrations of Jewish populations with their distinctive lifestyles could not be brought comfortably together with visions of the modern nation-state. It is, perhaps, not stretching the argument too far to note that Herzl found potential for Jewish survival in the very hatred and violence that made the people's lives precarious.

> Is it true that, in countries where we live in perceptible numbers, the position of Jewish lawyers, doctors, technicians, teachers, and employees of all descriptions becomes daily more intolerable? True, that the Jewish middle classes are seriously threatened? True, that the passions of the mob are incited against our wealthy people? True, that our poor endure greater sufferings than any other proletariat? I think that this external pressure makes itself felt everywhere. In our economically upper classes it causes discomfort, in our middle classes continual and grave anxieties, in our lower classes absolute despair. Everything tends, in fact, to one and the same conclusion, which is clearly enunciated in that classic Berlin phrase: *Juden Raus*! [Out with the Jews].[22]

For Herzl, the persistence of this hatred was as striking as the survival of the Jewish people. Because Jews lived outside the reach of most social orders, they were indeed what anti-Semites had always charged—a people set apart. But the stubborn remoteness of Jews that threatened the world also supplied a resource for the people's emancipation. Seen through the prism of the impoverished Jewish masses, isolation had little to recommend it, but for Herzl, it held a fascination and the elements of a new and grand scheme to resolve the Jewish problem, one that would both summon deeply felt sentiments and project a better future.

If national feelings empowered Jews but endangered non-Jews, then a program to end Jewish dispersion in lands where Jews were considered foreign but that also granted them a territory and national home of their own ought to find broad support. Conceding the anti-Semitic charge that Jews did not fully fit into any of the political entities in which they were dispersed, Herzl was confident that providing Jews with an independent

state of their own was the only logical response. Thus, for Herzl, Zionism's greatness emerged in the multiple functions it discharged: ordering the massive disruptions caused by uncontrolled emigration, ensuring stability in a world organized into nation-states, responding to a populism that could not accommodate the Jewish people, and promising a new kind of social unity to a people weakened by the unintended consequences of powerful political and economic forces.

Herzl was not alone in beckoning Jews to embrace their nationhood, nor was he the first to appropriate the right to speak for the people as a whole. But he dismissed the Zionist efforts thus far as a "tea-kettle phenomenon"[23] because they did not embody a strategy for reaching the Jewish masses. Herzl assailed Zionist achievements of the past decade, most notably the agricultural colonies in Ottoman Palestine, as permeated with the values of Jewish philanthropy, providing intermittent aid for the few while ignoring the ongoing plight of the many. Such Zionism failed to address the underlying causes of anti-Semitism, thereby obscuring the possibilities for ending it. Nor could such Zionism appreciate how Jew-hatred might very well be deployed as a weapon to safeguard Jewish interests and as a needed agent of change for the Jewish people.

Underlying Herzl's proposal for a Jewish state, then, was the conviction that it would eventuate in a massive Jewish immigration. A political charter granting Jews the right to establish a state would presumably shape economic destiny as well. International guarantees would offer Jews of all classes opportunities for productive employment and profitable investment. First, immigrants would lay down a modern infrastructure, and second, with foundations in place, entrepreneurs could proceed to develop an industrial base to bring wealth to the country as a whole.

> We must not imagine the departure of the Jews to be a sudden one. It will be gradual, continuous, and will cover many decades. The poorest will go first to cultivate the soil. In accordance with a preconcerted plan, they will construct roads, bridges, railways and telegraph installations; regulate rivers; and build their own habitations; their labor will create trade, trade will create markets, and markets will attract new settlers, for every man will go voluntarily, at his own expense and his own risk. The labor expended on the land will enhance its value, and the Jews will soon perceive that a new and permanent sphere of operation is opening here for that spirit of enterprise, which has heretofore met only with hatred and obloquy.[24]

Without a political charter and international recognition of Jewish national rights, Zionism had no credible future, according to Herzl. The slow pace of achievements in Ottoman Palestine and the ever-intensified rate of Jewish suffering convinced Herzl that earlier generations of Zionists had their intentions compromised by a wrong-headed apolitical strategy. Land settlement and economic development in Palestine should follow, not precede, international guarantees.

> . . . the WZO's Basel Program called for "the programmatic promotion of settlement of Jewish farmers, artisans, and tradesmen" in Palestine. Since it was written by a committee of both political and practical Zionists, it is obvious that this program could mean different things to different people. To the politicals, Herzl, among them, the program called for planned settlement after a charter had been attained from the Ottoman Empire, not for immediate activity.[25]

Although the differences between Herzl and his opponents were typically expressed in their attitudes toward the linkages between economic and political developments, they were also reflective of their diverse perceptions of the possibility or desirability of a mass immigration as the basis of a national home. For where Herzl asserted a nexus between the political and economic—the public and private—others harbored a strong suspicion of official authority and of the possibility of a massive Jewish immigration to Palestine. Many Zionists could only imagine a tiny fraction of the Jewish world ever making its way to the land of Israel. Herzl's program reflected a faith in the future and in politics that many of his Zionist opponents simply could not muster.

A convergence of events before the outbreak of war in 1914 brought enough bad times to dampen the ebullience of even the most ardent of political Zionists: Herzl's untimely death came in 1904, and periodic Ottoman ordinances restricting immigration to Palestine made land purchases ever more difficult and expensive. Finally, and most important, with little Ottoman imperial control over credit and business, entrepreneurs had to act on their plans without the expectation of adequate financing or of generating the factors for sustained economic development. Failures multiplied faster than success stories in these years, and disappointed Zionists searched for relevance and perhaps solace in precisely the kinds of activities Herzl deemed inappropriate or premature. Shortly after Herzl's death,

the World Zionist Organization broadened its support for urban and agricultural settlements and for the educational projects that had always provoked far-reaching controversy with Zionism's Orthodox members. These activities had a positive impact on the membership of the Zionist organization still recovering from the loss of their most effective leader and attempting to maintain a spirit of hope even without being able to list significant accomplishments.

AHAD HA'AM

Framed by European theories of social engineering, the sponsorship of colonies in Palestine was buoyed by beliefs that planning indeed meant progress.[26] And Zionist cultural schemes generated new possibilities for creative work from journalism and literature to art and architecture. Culture itself became an important conduit of the Zionist message as the scale of Hebrew literary production enlarged.[27] New books expanded the canon of Hebrew literature. Hebrew newspapers widened their circulation. Palestine's Jewish schools employed teachers increasingly committed to using Hebrew in their classrooms for all subjects.[28] To many Zionists, culture now seemed to be the principal instrument of nation-building,[29] and no one could explain that development better than Ahad Ha'am, who had pondered, for many decades, profoundly and systematically, the relationship between cultural and national activities. Ahad Ha'am believed that only a minority of Jews would ever live in the land of Israel, but depending on their cultural productivity, their influence could radiate well beyond their numbers.

Present at Zionism's founding, Ahad Ha'am was also its most consistent critic. Both the modest objectives of *Hibbat Zion* and the grandiose schemes of Herzl's World Zionist Organization drew Ahad Ha'am's ire and some of his most critical assessments and vituperative comments. With its earlier stress on improving the material circumstances followed by the subsequent emphasis on achieving political rights, Zionism tried to minimize the physical suffering of the Jewish people while asserting a feeling of national belonging without properly attending, according to Ahad Ha'am, to the forces necessary to produce it.[30] Simply alleviating economic distress and political subordination would not resurrect and secure the identity of the nation.

Zionism's claim to represent the national interests of the Jewish people could be validated only if its activities maintained the community against

the economic, political, and cultural forces that had already begun to disperse them. Putting the problem in that way explains why Ahad Ha'am unleashed criticism of the very first Zionist efforts at small-scale settlement. Modern forces had already weakened the influence of religion and of local associational life for Jews. Having lost their sense of a common purpose as defined by their religious tradition, Jews would not be directed to follow another arduous course simply as a matter of national obligation. Finding little merit or consolation in the idea of the traditions of their ancestors, Jews were now unlikely to find the idea of national duty compelling. Modern Jews were replacing the idea of communal obligation with the notion of personal ambition. Thus the full mobilization of Jewish sentiments for national tasks could no longer draw on the Jewish notion of communal obligation. An effective Zionism had to find a way to join individual interest to national service. "Thus has the core of the nation's soul been turned upside down. Love of the nation is no longer pure; it is no longer given independently. The highest purpose pursued by our people is the private and they pursue the interests of all the people only when they intersect with their own."[31]

Ahad Ha'am noted that modernity had altered settled traditions and people in many different ways, but among the most important, it had opened up hitherto enclosed enclaves to the idea that they could move across countries and find homes without communities. Jews left small villages for large cities; they walked away from family and community and what they once considered life's certainties—a shared religious faith and set of obligations. Their bewilderment about who they were as human beings and as a people could not be easily rectified, and certainly not with proclamations imposing on them a set of national obligations to replace the once tightly worn mantle of religious observance.

When Zionists spoke about raising the standard of living or embracing freedom, they were encouraging Jews to live in the United States, mused Ahad Ha'am. By contrast, when they focused on strengthening the elements of Jewish identity—or on the process of converting ancient religious texts into a modern literature—Zionists were addressing, with honesty, the real Jewish problem by admitting, in effect, that their nation was as yet not fully formed.

> To Eretz Israel or to America? . . . Those singing the praises of *Eretz Israel* admitted to their opponents that it could not, at present, absorb the mass of people moving from their countries of birth, especially merchants and

> craftsmen looking for an immediate source of sustenance who do not have the energy to prepare everything required for working the land and waiting for the fruit of their labor. . . . The economic side of the Jewish question needs to be answered in America.[32]

No longer tied tightly to religious values, subject to constant challenge from current intellectual fashions or bound to the traditional ordering mechanisms under assault from the rise of new political forces, Jews were confused about the nature of their identity and either deeply suspicious of the modern world or totally ignorant of their heritage. For Ahad Ha'am, Zionism actually represented the culmination of a century-old process of destabilizing religious authority and devaluing traditional institutions. For years, educated Jewish writers had been equating rabbinical strictures with fanaticism and insensitivity to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community. New opportunities for education and work were already leading many Jews to question the values that made it difficult for them to gain access to the full benefits of the world unfolding before them. Although the new intellectual modes had shifted outlooks and principles, emerging political forces had weakened—or in some countries, even dismantled—local structures of authority. The nation-state, with its centralized bureaucracies, left little room for communal autonomy. Ceasing to see themselves as part of a world ruled by God through ordained law, Jews were in desperate need of new ways of understanding themselves. Zionism offered the nation as the solid reference point, but, as Ahad Ha'am observed, without producing programs for transforming Jewish religious tradition into a modern culture and for molding a consciousness of community that embraced rather than retreated from modernity, it would not be effective or resonate with meaning for Jews.[33]

It was on these grounds that Ahad Ha'am found much of conventional, mainstream Zionist practice through Herzl's tenure both naïve and superficial. Ahad Ha'am considered Zionism's initial preoccupation with material conditions misplaced. As heady as their members were about their growth, the Jewish agricultural colonies in Ottoman Palestine hardly foreshadowed the social transformation many Zionists predicted. Religious Jews residing in the holy land, criticized by Zionists for their dependency, seemed ever more so in the new agricultural colonies. Ahad Ha'am warned Zionists not to be beguiled by the prospect of either economic gains or political achievements.[34] Despite the rhapsodic reports about conditions in Palestine, the country had an unpromising economic

future. Romantic descriptions of life in the new agricultural colonies may have promoted Jewish immigration, but contributed little to economic growth or to the development of an autonomous community. Farmers still operated with a crushing burden of debt; workers lived on the edge of poverty; roads did not go very far inland and were often impassable in the rainy season. And just as the economic balance of world Jewry would always tilt away from the small and poor communities in the land of Israel because the distribution of the world's natural resources did not favor Palestine, so, too, would the demographic relationship never be significantly different. Jews in Europe had high fertility rates and would replenish their numbers as quickly as people left their homes. "Between 1881 and 1914 more than 2.5 million Jews migrated from Eastern Europe to the West, but their population in Eastern Europe increased too."[35] For that reason, a national home, comprising only a small percentage of the world's Jews, could not end anti-Semitism.

The act of cultivating ties to the land of Israel as an expression of national identity could not proceed either from naïve ideas about combating Jew-hatred or from false information about the society. To that end, "Truth from the Land of Israel," one of Ahad Ha'am's most famous essays, concluded that a movement with political claims could not discount Palestine's Arab population.

> From abroad we are accustomed to believing that the Arabs are all desert savages, like donkeys, who neither see nor understand what goes on around them. But this is a big mistake. . . . The Arabs, and especially those in the cities, understand our deeds and our desires in Eretz Israel, but they keep quiet and pretend not to understand, since they do not see our present activities as a threat to their future. . . . However, if the time comes when the life of our people in *Eretz Israel* develops to the point of encroaching upon the native population, they will not easily yield their place.[36]

Ahad Ha'am's searing critique of Zionist movement activities recognized that the movement's focus on securing international support and on building a material base could easily persuade Zionists that a state and a sound economy would be sufficient for Jewish renewal. To Ahad Ha'am, Herzl's stress on politics looked even more ominous than the rosy beliefs about the meaning and impact of the few agricultural colonies planted by *Hibbat Zion*. Despite Herzl's impressive organizational achievements, all

efforts to secure a political charter for Jewish settlement led only to rejection and disappointment. Simply transferring Jews to the land of Israel would do little to instill vibrancy into the community because it left intact behavioral patterns formed in the context of subordination and discrimination. Juxtaposing material and spiritual developments was not intended to suggest that attention be directed to one or the other exclusively but rather that even dramatic economic improvements could not bring about the cultural renaissance Jews so desperately needed. Embracing a cultural past without redefining and changing it would not resolve the heart of the Jewish question. On the subject of the moral character of the Jewish people, Ahad Ha'am did not mince words: "Whoever has not seen how land is now bought and sold in Eretz Israel has never seen vile and vicious competition. All that goes on among the small shopkeepers and middlemen of the 'Pale' are justice and virtue compared to what goes on currently in *Eretz Israel*."[37]

Given the obstacles to change, how could such a poor and weak Jewish people achieve the act of retrieval Zionists, such as Ahad Ha'am, insisted was necessary? By establishing a spiritual center in the land of Israel, Jews could rely not on winning political rights or on attracting the Jewish masses to build a strong economy, but rather on the kind of cultural activities to which they were historically and perhaps instinctively drawn. Revitalizing a population that numbered in the millions, most of whom had little formal education and who varied enormously in language, was a project without any real precedent. Herzl had posited that a single political action would produce the decisive change. But Ahad Ha'am saw this change as unfolding in a slow, laborious process involving education, religion, the arts, and daily life.

> And when we add to this the general obstacles, material and moral, that any mass immigration of people coming to settle in a new country encounter in their path—and even more when their intent is to change their entire way of life, to transform themselves from merchants into workers of the soil—then, if we truly and seriously seek to achieve our end in the land of our fathers, we will no longer be able to conceal from ourselves the fact that we are setting forth in a massive war and that such a war requires extensive preparations: it requires clear and detailed knowledge of the condition and features of battlefield, it requires overall planning to delineate in advance all future actions, and it requires good weapons—not sword and spear, but a mighty will and total unity—and

above all it requires skilled leaders, suitably trained, who will go before the populace, who will bring together and organize all the activities in accord with the requisites of the goal, and no one will defy them. Only under these conditions can we hope that, despite all the obstacles, the doable will be done and we will be well able to overcome, because nothing can stand against the will and unity of an entire people.[38]

Ahad Ha'am's Zionism aimed at nothing less than the renovation of Jewish popular culture both within a spiritual center in Palestine and across all the lands where Jews resided. Its success would be measured not simply by what was established in the land of Israel but also by what evolved in the Jewish Diaspora. Although Ahad Ha'am wished to change the very character of the Jewish people by altering its customs, morals, and practices, he did not believe it possible or desirable to do this only within the limited territorial space of a spiritual center. Zionism ought to insure a harmony of interests and unity of purpose among all Jews.

If Ahad Ha'am's spiritual center represented a radically transformed way of ordering the Jewish world, it nonetheless retained crucial similarities to the traditional religious structures it sought to displace. Like religious law, Hebrew was invested with sacredness and charged with the task of not only revitalizing a language but also building a nation. The perfect language, once thought the creation of God, would now be developed and spread by an educated, rather than by a religious, elite, and through the modern media, rather than by poring over classical texts.

Ahad Ha'am endorsed the idea of a small national center that, by dint of its creativity, would exercise significant spiritual influence on Jews dispersed across the globe. The national home would be a spiritual center for all Jews because of the cultural activities produced by an elite with literacy in classical texts and in the best of recent humanistic studies. Zionist culture would be disseminated in Hebrew and would enable Jews to withstand the onslaughts of modernity without losing their identity. The union of people, however small in numbers, and on their ancestral land, as the base for the revival of language was critical for Zionism and for Jewish survival. Indeed, Jewish identity would be reconstituted, but not by the common people, who lacked the skills and talent to find within the religious tradition the elements from which to build a modern Jewish culture.

The language Ahad Ha'am marshaled to describe his own stance revealed that his confrontation with the Zionist mainstream had as much

to do with power as with principle. Although the creation of the Zionist movement was hardly the work of the Jewish people themselves, the debates among leaders introduced two languages of power—one dismissive of the criteria that had historically conferred rank and privilege in Jewish society, and the other reflective of traditional divisions. Herzl effectively implanted the first set of linguistic resources—the notion of common and equal political rights—into Zionist discourse by insisting that a Jewish state could serve as a national home for the Jewish masses. Zionism had always asserted a Jewish national identity, but since its activities encompassed only a small percentage of the population, the movement provided little opportunity for empowering a new kind of elite. In terms of social class or cosmopolitan sophistication, Herzl could hardly be considered typical of the Jewish masses, but in terms of Jewish education and religious knowledge, he did have more in common with the people than with the traditional elite that possessed fluency in Hebrew and the expertise necessary to parse religious legal texts. Although Herzl's social vocabulary acknowledged class differences—contrasting entrepreneurs and workers—his political terminology fostered a broad sense of the Jews as a people.

The radical implications of Herzl's political language were not lost on his Zionist colleagues. The call to reject Herzl's populism came with particular force from Ahad Ha'am, who argued that fluency in the Hebrew language joined with a vision of cultural transformation could serve as a solution to the Jewish problem and ought to be a requirement of legitimate political authority in the reconstituted society. Even Ahad Ha'am's goal to standardize Hebrew and purge it of all grammatical irregularities and confusions owed its extraordinary vigor to a sense of mission that would animate its principal agents. Ahad Ha'am's language reform could only be developed in print and not in word because it was necessary for a new educated elite to define and control the rules, a linguistic approach with affinities to the traditional structure of Jewish power. Ahad Ha'am did not find the use of Hebrew in print and Yiddish in speech at all troubling. Remarking that for him, Yiddish held "no terrors,"[39] Ahad Ha'am showed distinct contempt for the early Zionist efforts to revitalize Hebrew as a spoken language. In 1893, after a visit to Palestine, he wrote:

> He who hears how the teachers and the students stammer, for lack of words and expressions, will immediately realize that such "speech" cannot evoke in the speaker's or the listener's heart any respect or love for

the limited language, and the child's young mind (who learns also French) feels even stronger the artificial chains imposed on him by the Hebrew speech.[40]

In effect, then, Ahad Ha'am challenged Herzl in a language steeped in a vernacular of hierarchy and intellectual rank imported from an earlier era. To a people once bound together by the religious strictures interpreted by rabbis as authorized leaders, Ahad Ha'am's proposal to join Jewish religious texts to modern humanistic studies was revolutionary and unsettling. But the subversive nature of Ahad Ha'am's call for cultural change, which on some level threatened the social order, also preserved aspects of a traditional distribution of power with dominance reserved for an educated elite. The theoretical conflicts over Jewish priorities or over how to reconstruct a nation in despair were also a struggle over structures of power. Zionist discourse, then, contained not only different visions of political development but also quite diverse languages to advance these claims. Battles may have been pitched over priorities, but ultimately they were about the criteria for exercising legitimate power.

Ahad Ha'am's idea of cultural transformation had an enormous impact on Zionist politics, but its roots in an old elitist model of power had a disquieting effect. Many who were enthusiastic about cultural change were ambivalent or even hostile to hierarchy and dominance as a template for political rule. Particularly for the young Labor Zionists coming to Palestine in the aftermath of the violence and turmoil resulting from the failed 1905 Russian Revolution, the decision to speak only Hebrew demonstrated that culture was as important as work to the structure of their lives, but even as it echoed Ahad Ha'am's spiritual Zionism, it also signaled a commitment to the concept of a common citizenship and shared power.

In our day, when the book has become common property, no literature can exist for just a few. Nor does Hebrew literature have the features of aristocratic literature. It lives in everyone and hence wants to find a way to everyone. And it is also out of the question to agree that most of the nation will hear about the most precious and original intellectual activity of the nation either from its friends or from its enemies. And, although Hebrew is not yet everyone's reading language, it is already the spoken language. . . . This is the war of survival of the Hebrew language. . . . The language created by Mendele and Bialik will save us from the dominion of foreign languages, and the New Hebrew Man will speak the language

> of Brener and Gnesin. Just as music requires a fitting resonance to be understood, so a great work of literature requires comprehending readers and many readers.[41]

Hebrew thus acquired ideological charges before Jews possessed a framework for a national home. Hebrew gave Zionists a way to connect to their past not so much through tales of ancient glory as through knowledge of their land. "The influence of the Bible on the Second Aliya," observed Labor Zionist activist Yitzhak Tabenkin, "served as a tangible link to the whole country, reviving the threads that connect the immigrant to every spot in the land, through associations evoked from childhood (Jerusalem, Judea, Shomron, the Galilee, the Jordan, mountains and valleys). The Bible served as a kind of birth certificate, helped to break the barrier between man and the land, and nourished a sense of homeland."[42]

The dedication to the Hebrew language formed part of the process of shaping the *Yishuv*'s public realm, a process that encompassed Jews who resided in Palestine's towns as well as in its agricultural settlements. The 1918 Zionist census stated that 40 percent of Palestine's Jewish community claimed Hebrew as their native language, and more significantly, the percentage grew among the younger residents, reaching a peak of 75 percent of the population in Tel Aviv, Palestine's newly founded Jewish town.[43] On this view, the decision by teachers, parents, and students to mount sustained protests in 1913 against the use of German as the language of instruction in a new technical school to be opened in Haifa was not altogether unexpected. Nor was the commitment of Tel Aviv's founders to record its public documents in Hebrew.

Reviving Hebrew as a spoken language commemorated a past and a course of action for the future. It marked the dawning of a new age even if economic and political goals seemed totally beyond reach. Hebrew belonged as much to a glorious ancient political history traced in classical scriptures as it did to a male religious elite. But the language was open to appropriation to divergent uses and to a multitude of users. In claiming the language, young secular Zionists could profess their Jewish identity, their nationalist political ambitions, and even radical social objectives while implicitly recalling a distinctly deferential traditional culture. Hebrew showed how Zionism could work in different directions both for preservation and for radical change. Hebrew embodied and emboldened an ideology that appeared to make consensus the basis of Zionism.

Indeed, fostering the revival of Hebrew as the only authentic language in which to express Jewish nationalist feelings submerged conflict over other divisive political and economic issues. At the same time, for the groups embracing Hebrew, it became a strategy for relocating Zionist leadership to Palestine from Europe,[44] to the new generation of immigrants, and to workers rather than to the social engineers.

THE DISCOURSE ON IMMIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF BUILDING THE JEWISH NATIONAL HOME: HAIM ARLOSOROFF AND MOSHE SMILANSKY

Ironically, among Zionists, the establishment of the Jewish national home in 1918 provoked as much controversy as hope. Securing international recognition seemed proof of Herzl's political approach, although it was also taken as evidence that the incremental method of the practical Zionists seemed to work. In one sense, these disagreements carried over from earlier years, but in another, they foreshadowed future debates over economic and political policies and over relations with Great Britain as mandatory power. But in responding to the challenge of turning discourse into practice, Zionists found themselves confronting the issues of immigration either as focus or subtext of policy stances.

Insightful commentaries on immigration are sprinkled through the journals, published articles, and letters of many Zionist leaders, but I wish to direct my attention to the work of two significant figures in Palestine's Jewish community—Haim Arlosoroff and Moshe Smilansky—both of whom participated in the public realm during the period of British rule and wrote essays pondering the issue of immigration and its role in Jewish national development. Both also understood that world and regional politics brought the question of Jewish immigration to a new contested pitch, making it impossible for Zionist leaders simply to repeat the ritualistic pieties of the past.

Four interrelated areas reveal the extent and limits of Zionist efforts to restructure their public realm: territorial boundaries, land ownership, agricultural settlement, and culture. Great Britain's sponsorship of a Jewish national home in Palestine changed the configuration of power and forced Zionists to devise new strategies of action to advance their interests. How Zionist groups came to embrace these new strategic calculations was no simple story and was mediated not only by events but also by ideologies and acts of interpretation. Because Zionists inherited a set of concepts

that were the outgrowth of earlier controversies, they had to rework them in light of the pressures of simultaneously promoting immigration and economic and political development. And as they forged their views on immigration, Zionists sometimes unwittingly gave new and contradictory meanings to such core concepts as work, freedom, and national identity.

Second, Great Britain defined internationally recognized boundaries that acted as a stimulus to economic development. The mandatory power also established a security infrastructure, adding government muscle to the Jewish drive for land and linking what were once far-flung agricultural outposts into large settlement communities. Finally, recognition of Hebrew as one of Palestine's official languages significantly expanded the ambit of cultural goals and activities.

Both Arlosoroff and Smilansky put the equation of demography and economic development at the heart of the process by which a Jewish national home could be secured, but they drew strikingly different conclusions from the linkage. Arlosoroff stressed the need for selective immigration and controlled development. For him, the demographic issue was not a simple matter of counting the numbers of Jews and Arabs in Palestine but rather of calculating their respective productive forces. Shifting attention away from the communal, Smilansky underscored the nexus between personal initiative and expansion, implying that the national home's success would be measured by Jewish demographic growth. But although demographic questions in earlier Zionist debates always revolved around the numbers living in the land of Israel as a percentage of the masses of needy and impoverished Jews worldwide, those same questions, for Smilansky, were directed to the population balance between Palestine's Jewish and Arab residents.

Arlosoroff's theoretical essays partly reflected his adherence to a non-Marxist version of Labor Zionism, but they also extended that ideology. Not the lofty, profitable achievements of private capitalists but the humble efforts of manual laborers and farmers could be expected to produce sustainable economic development and a genuine community. "A person who is not productive is not part of the community," wrote Arlosoroff in his attempts to tease out the components of community from physical labor. "Only those who sow the earth with their own hands, plant themselves, body and soul, in the land."[45]

Compelling as the success stories of entrepreneurs were, they did not necessarily increase the wealth of Palestine's Jewish community, according to Arlosoroff, or add to its social enrichment. Particularly if entrepreneurs

operated on a capitalist model, ever hard-pressed to extract a higher return on their investments, they were necessarily disposed to lowering labor costs as much as possible and to hiring Arab rather than Jewish workers. The Arab economy was thereby strengthened by the capital investments of Jewish entrepreneurs, and so the imperatives of capitalist enterprise inhibited rather than promoted Jewish immigration and population growth. The vision of the land of Israel as holding a special destiny for the Jewish people could be fulfilled only if national institutions exercised control over land purchases and agricultural settlement. Like many of his colleagues, Arlosoroff incorporated the idea of labor into a new discourse on moral improvement, on national duty, and on recovering the true and authentic meaning of life.

When Haim Arlosoroff proclaimed, "Neither by claims of historical rights, nor by diplomatic efforts, certainly not by military might or even by numerical superiority, can the Jewish people succeed in its national war of liberation in Palestine,"[46] he was not simply extending the classical Zionist debate about how to create a Jewish national home or even about how to establish a socialist Jewish society, he was also infusing it with new meaning. What he had in mind was a national home "achieved only through the hard and constant energy of settlement and economic reconstruction which will strike roots for all eternity in the soil of our land for the community of Jewish workers and settlers."[47] Because such core Marxist categories as class, capital, and proletariat did not structure the Jewish experience, they could not, according to Arlosoroff, serve as principles shaping the new society. Capitalism could not be the model for developing a viable economic base for a national home precisely because its operations would not attract the kind of reliable Jewish immigration that would stick to its commitments in good times and in bad.

Inspired by the idea of creating a society sustained by values of justice and fairness, Arlosoroff was also convinced that the pattern of development he endorsed made good economic sense. First, Arlosoroff noted that Palestine offered few opportunities for profitable investment. Second, he questioned whether capitalist assumptions would encourage Palestine's few entrepreneurs to embrace inventive development strategies and novel modes of organizing work that would widen opportunities for employment and put labor's interests on an equal footing with those of business. Third, truly private property, which could be bought and sold at will, would complicate the Zionist need to purchase and hold land not only for its stored value but, more important, for its power to strengthen Jewish

national rights and claims. In an economic system that allowed all people to buy and sell property at will, Jews might acquire land, if they could afford the price, during periods of economic expansion, but in downturns, they would be easily tempted to sell. Varying cycles of well-being and distress would not create the conditions for sustaining a large population of immigrants whose material needs and expectations were fairly high. Such an uneven course would not even support the spiritual center envisioned by Ahad Ha'am. Even a cultural center, Arlosoroff insisted, "could not be established without a relatively large and stable community. Culture cannot be created in a laboratory; it emerges as a result of organic growth only from the midst of the natural and creative actions of the people."[48]

The costs of such investments in land and agricultural settlement were so high that Arlosoroff imagined raising these sums only by soliciting financial contributions from Jews all across the globe. Such massive financial aid would provide sufficient capital to build the economic foundations of a genuine national home, one that could transform Jewish artisans and peddlers into farmers and laborers and thus ensure victory for the Zionist cause. The national home could not simply be a refuge for the uprooted. Without economic and social transformation, a Jewish national home had little value. "Does this not mean that we are renewing the economic structures known to us from the countries of the Jewish *Galuth*—that inverted social pyramid, perched on its narrow tip and in danger of being upset by every wind and by anyone's ten fingers? How could there emerge, as such a basis, a self-sustaining national home, a Jewish commonwealth?"[49]

Within Arlosoroff's Labor Zionist ideology, political power was primarily an agency for shaping economic and social relations. Here in this passage he explicitly rejects the idea of an ordinary polity as a legitimate Zionist goal.

> The essence of our endeavour does not extend to organizing a state apparatus or to inaugurating a machinery of government; luckily, we do not have to equip an army or paint fortifications in blue-and-white. We bear, however, the much more difficult task of creating an integrated society on our land, of bringing about the emergence of a settled, active population in a country with productive conditions of life, or laying the foundations of our national economy as well as of our national culture.[50]

Arlosoroff's language of politics was rooted not in nouns like *sovereignty* or *government* but rather in verbs and adjectives of action—*work*, *toil*,

productive. Labor Zionists should acquire power in Palestine's Jewish community in order to map a social and moral order entirely different from that of the Jewish Diaspora. Arlosoroff believed that the vertical rankings and dominance based on wealth and status, so typical of Diaspora communities, should be erased and replaced with a society that enlarged opportunities for those who added to the nation's productive base.

Not aiming to produce a coherent body of democratic thought, but rather to describe a mode of behavior intended to generate solidarity and a unity of interests, Arlosoroff believed that responsibility for defining Jewish character had passed down the social ladder from rabbis and the wealthy to Zionist institutions. Where the traditional rabbinic elite wished to establish Jewish identity upon the basis of religious law, the Labor Zionist elite sought affirmation of its purpose in celebrating the workers' contributions to Palestine's productive forces. To Arlosoroff, the *Yishuv*'s departure from Diaspora Jewish norms had enormous appeal and would be secured when independence and labor resonated widely in the country and when workers generated their own cultural artifacts. "Allow workers to develop their own culture and they will not want to study in universities," observed Arlosoroff.[51] The building of the Jewish national home required not intellectuals but rather workers possessed of a consciousness that they were making the land their home. From laborers and their struggles would come the perspective and elements of a new national Jewish culture—expressed in the new-old language of the Jewish people, Hebrew, and without the limitations of vision ingrained in earlier texts and cultural artifacts. Arlosoroff required that Zionists abandon their fixed ideas of settled identity authorized by religious tradition. Become different, he said, and the fate of the Jewish people, living everywhere in fear or in discomfort, will be different.

Not everyone favored Arlosoroff's approach. Revisionists, for one, found the impetus for their critique of Labor Zionism supplied by Great Britain's mandatory authority, which they claimed amounted to a promise to grant Jews sovereignty. As a corollary of future statehood, Revisionists demanded unlimited Jewish immigration to Palestine.[52] But Revisionist efforts on behalf of such grandiose political claims did not influence mandatory policy-making predisposing the members of this movement to confronting rather than accommodating mandatory powers. Perhaps because their world seemed so hostile, Revisionists promoted attitudes that failed to explain how ordinary daily activities could be transformed into the extraordinary accomplishments of nation-building.

Challenges to Labor Zionism thus came from many different directions, but few were mounted simply on grounds of economic logic. It was in the essays of Moshe Smilansky that the capitalist contribution to Jewish economic development in Palestine received rich, complex, and sympathetic treatment despite the fact that his theories, too, stand as artifacts of a political culture dominated by Labor Zionist rhetoric. Smilansky heaped praise on the agricultural collectives and cooperatives, but not as models of economic development. An economy, subject to demographic and political pressures that inevitably pitted one ethnic group against another, might reasonably contain private and publicly owned enterprises. By taking note of the presence of both capitalism and socialism in Palestine's Jewish economy, Smilansky validated both as crucial factors of production. "National capital was necessary for investment in projects that will not guarantee large profits and to lay the groundwork for subsequent private investments that ultimately insures prudently expended funds."[53]

Despite its economically primitive status, Palestine did offer incentives for private investment, according to Smilansky. Access to relatively cheap land and to a reasonably large European market for crops enabled Jewish farmers to build a profitable agricultural economy that offered employment to significant numbers of immigrants. Although Labor Zionism ruled public discourse, social behavior seemed shaped by a culture of capitalism that invested in housing and in raising the standard of living rather than in productive enterprises. Contradicting both Arlosoroff's analysis and the dominant currents of thought which left capitalists bereft of a role in the national narrative, Smilansky's essays constituted a powerful account of the culture of capitalism as embodying enterprise, service, and progress.

Unwilling to cede the language of production and national commitment to laborers, Smilansky contended that capitalists as well as workers helped productivize society and create jobs, or, in his words, "Petah Tikvah generates capital; Degania consumes it."[54] Reporting on a meeting of the World Zionist Organization, Smilansky described the characteristics of Hebrew immigration to Palestine as "a matter of right and not of pity that can be limited only by the country's economic absorptive capacity—which is not close to being reached." He went on to explain how "immigration, itself, expands that capacity. In the world there are two kinds of immigrants: the ones who go to America happy to close the door behind them since it widens their opportunities. But our immigrant has only one objective: not only to support himself but also to create opportunities for others who will then be able to immigrate and find work."[55]

Palestine's Jewish capitalists were also Zionist pioneers. No matter how extensive, national capital alone, Smilansky insisted, could not bring development to Palestine. For a vibrant economy, private investment was indispensable, and the decisions of private capitalists in Palestine, Smilansky hastened to point out, generally accorded not with some abstract mode of operation but rather with Zionism's national goals. Capitalists, as well as workers, came to Palestine stimulated by a vision, not simply by the possibility of making money.

In the devastating depression of the mid-1920s, Labor Zionist institutions displayed more volatility than those in the private sector. Although this economic downturn hurt private entrepreneurs, it was an unmitigated disaster for Labor Zionism's central organizations. The depression drove *Solel Boneh*, a pillar of the labor movement, into bankruptcy, and it damaged the fiscal structure of the worker's umbrella structure, the *Histadrut*. Unemployment spread in major urban centers, and many workers found themselves engulfed by poverty and facing starvation. In the midst of this crisis, Smilansky noted, the *Yishuv*'s private farmers increased their productivity and offered jobs to the unemployed. Consider the following statement, which quite explicitly makes the connection between private enterprise and the capacity to absorb masses of immigrants: "Security will come to the land of Israel only through the purchase of millions of dunams of land and the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants."[56]

By the 1930s, for a variety of reasons, Zionism's public institutions were able to increase the scope of their investments in land and in agricultural settlement and partly reconfigure the economic order. Although far from the collective economy envisioned by Labor Zionist policy-makers, Palestine's *Yishuv* experienced several years of growth resting on an increasingly well-funded institutional base. But many public organizations found economic salvation primarily through philanthropic largesse as migration from a Europe threatened by Nazism increased both the flow of immigrants to Palestine and the flow of charitable funds to Zionist institutions. Smilansky welcomed these developments not as signs of a debilitating capitalism but rather as consequences of an increasingly diversified economy that could accommodate different interests. But to Smilansky, this economic trend had its dark side because growth was achieved through charitable contributions and the economy was in danger of being dominated by outside organizations. The term *philanthropic* carried negative connotations and was steeped in the Diaspora culture of subordination. "Each time aid was extended to private farmers without strings that

allowed them to make their own decisions, the *Yishuv* grew and flourished. Each time a bureaucracy was created to control the actions of the recipients of aid, a philanthropic atmosphere was created which erected obstacles to growth and only led to losses."[57]

If radicals on the right and left found it impossible to agree on a program for economic development, Smilansky never tired of reminding his readers that many capitalists and socialists actually worked together in harmony. Although strikes and even violence erupted in a few communities over the issue of employing Arab agricultural laborers, the vast majority of private farms, as Moshe Smilansky observed, provided the majority of Jewish immigrants with their first jobs in Palestine. By contrast, "some of the workers' agricultural communities were so tightly knit that they did not extend employment to any salaried workers, including immigrants."[58] Smilansky emphasized that Jewish agricultural productivity sustained the *Yishuv*'s economy primarily through exports and by creating a secure land base. Moreover, private entrepreneurship attracted a mature immigration and nurtured autonomy and independence of spirit, two important Zionist cultural imperatives. By contrast, unprofitable ventures funded through Zionist national institutions often placed workers in new forms of dependency.

IDEOLOGY VERSUS REALITY

Zionists had more of an ambivalent attitude toward immigration to Palestine than they were willing to acknowledge. They eulogized Jewish immigration, elevating it to a religious act by linguistic fiat and by treating the right of every Jew to live in the land of Israel as self-evident and natural. But throughout Zionist history, the process of immigration was complicated by contradictory policies, conflicting priorities, and ambiguous expectations regarding the people who would participate: would they add value to or subtract value from the economy?

The success of Zionism's ambitious project depended on its capacity to create the conditions in Palestine for the establishment of a Jewish state. But identity for most Jews—even those coming to live in the land of Israel—was still powerfully shaped by their religious heritage. Given their long historical experience of living in many lands, most Jews found it difficult to see themselves as part of a distinct nation-state in a single territory. Thus, Zionists had to convert Jews to nationalist norms before they could convince them to participate in their state-building efforts in Palestine.

Complicating Zionist aims was the tidal wave of Jews already on the move, crossing borders that had once held them tightly in check and in place.[59] Jews in Eastern Europe overwhelmingly preferred what was often a laborious journey toward the West rather than the seemingly less promising trip to Palestine, particularly since so many of the people who found their way to the holy land seemed motivated by a religious fervor Jews may have admired but increasingly thought alien. Beckoned by opportunities in the West or even on their home fronts, significant numbers of Jews managed to leave the small towns and villages of their birth for universities and for jobs opening up in the cities, where they acquired positions in centers of finance and commerce. The challenge for Zionists, then, was not only to exercise control over the vast numbers of Jews leaving their homes, but also to ensure that the people it brought to Palestine's shores would serve as agents of national renewal and not as tools for replanting the structure and values of the Diaspora.

Once the need to gather more people was conceded, the question of what kind of people they should be took priority. Zionist debates over immigration reflected political divisions within the movement, but they also revealed to Jews a great deal about the kind of community Zionists wished to create. More important, perhaps, defining the community of the present and the future prompted serious discussions about how Jewish identity might be refashioned. Some Zionists, like Smilansky, became convinced that immigrants would assimilate to the identity they found in Palestine, including some of its Arab elements, and would change that identity, paradoxically, only by assimilating.[60] Worried about the flexibility of such a process, others, like Arlosoroff, insisted that although the new identity would be presented as having been recovered or regenerated, it would also be designed and entrenched through education, work, and political action.

Although there was widespread and general agreement among Zionists on the centrality of immigration for developing the Jewish national home in Palestine, there were important disagreements on the kind of population growth necessary for the achievement of Zionism's state-making and nation-building goals. Two opposing tendencies were operating, both characteristic of unstable times. One was inclined to draw from the capitalist economic and social trends already under way; the other was disposed to experimentation and to tailoring policies to fit national visions. Important as was the clash between them, there were assumptions buried beneath these contrasting views that were equally formidable.

Herzl and Smilansky shaped their reasoning on the subject of immigration around concern for the impoverished Jewish masses and with the demographic prerequisites of statehood in mind. Both seemed to believe that modern education, modern science, and technology would spark the entrepreneurial spirit and capacity necessary to move Jews in Palestine away from their traditions and toward freedom and prosperity. For Ahad Ha'am and Arlosoroff, by contrast, the very idea of a homeland had to resonate with a radically new conception of the nation in order to be meaningful. They were not content to let ordinary Jews forge the nation on their own, leaving the outcome undefined and unclear. But pairing Ahad Ha'am and Arlosoroff does seem problematic. The former disparaged the Zionist focus on economic statistics rather than on Jewish cultural creativity, whereas the latter's constant references to bread-and-butter factors made his appeal sound as if it were grounded in reality. Both men, however, felt comfortable with developing an elite to serve as guardians of Jewish national development. Both imagined or recommended crafting an immigration system, not so much to maximize the numbers brought to Palestine but rather to select Jews based on their demonstrated adherence to Zionism's program for radical national transformation. Both came to see Zionism not as a natural development but rather as a cultural and historical construct, and one that, like all such constructs, embodied principles of an ideological kind about the nature of history and, perhaps most important, about language and its role in shaping the very assumptions often taken for fact.

Thus the conventional wisdom—that in Palestine's Jewish community consensus reigned on matters pertaining to immigration, and that controversies had a negligible effect in politics—misses the point. Precisely because the nation was imagined in categories open to a variety of meanings, debates resounded with similar talk but with no real resolution of differences. If they were not so deeply submerged, opposing approaches to political and economic development might have created the impression that Zionism lacked common ground. For although Zionist thinking recognized the need to connect immigration to national development and debated long and hard about the possible ways to do so, ironically, it could produce no creedal orthodoxy on the subject of immigration.