

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: AHAD HA'AM AND ISRAEL
FRIEDLAENDER: CULTURAL ZIONISM IN
AN AMERICAN CONTEXT

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History

Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg, 1856-1927) was an influential Zionist leader and publicist. This thesis explores his ideas on Zionism, the diaspora and American Jewishness. These views are put in comparison with those of his early American disciple, Israel Friedlaender (1876-1920). The negation of the exile has been a major part of Ahad Ha'am's thought, and his sporadic references to American Jewry are no exceptions. Despite this, Cultural Zionists in the United States, such as Friedlaender, were able to use his ideas as a basis for diaspora Zionism. The comparison between Ahad Ha'am and Friedlaender will show some of the early ways in which Ahad Ha'am's views were adapted in what was soon becoming the world's largest Jewish community.

AHAD HA'AM AND ISRAEL FRIEDLAENDER:
CULTURAL ZIONISM IN AN AMERICAN CONTEXT

by

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Preface

The relations between the Jewish community in Israel (or pre-state Palestine) and the Jewish diaspora has been a perennial topic for discussion since the inception of the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century. In my thesis, I first look at writings of the Russian Jewish writer and Zionist leader Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg, 1856-1927), on the question of what should be the relation between the Jewish settlement in Palestine and American Jewry, and then look at how his ideas migrated to the United States through the writing of his disciple, Israel Friedlaender (1876-1920). The centrality that The State of Israel plays in the Jewish identity of many American Jews today bears an intriguing resemblance to the vision of Ahad Ha'am, who argued that Jewish settlement in Palestine should serve as a cultural center of Jewish revival and a source of culture and identity to diasporic Jewry. While Ahad Ha'am's views in general have been much discussed in academic scholarship, his views on American Jewry, and their relation to the cultural center in Palestine, have not aroused much scholarly interest. This thesis is, hopefully, a first step in that direction.

The first part of this thesis will provide a brief intellectual biography of Ahad Ha'am, survey his views on Diaspora Zionism, and conclude with his attitude towards American Jewry. While Ahad Ha'am did not engage in systematic reflection or analysis of American Jewry, his references to the subject in letters and publicistic writings suggests that he saw America to be

simply another place of Jewish “exile,” not fundamentally different than any other foreign land.

Ahad Ha‘ams ideology changed and evolved over time, partly as a pragmatic response to developments in the Zionist world and in the world at large. What is referred to as ”Ahad-Ha‘amism” is, by definition, a pastiche of some of the ideas Ahad Ha‘am expressed at some point in his career. But despite his evolving ideology, I will argue that Ahad Ha‘am's negative views of diasporic existence (and hence Jewish existence in the American diaspora) remained constant. In his mind, diaspora Jewishness is defective, lacking in meaning and substance, unable to respond to the challenges of the modern world, and exists in a state of economic hardships and physical dangers. The latter is what Ahad Ha‘am eventually termed “the Problem of the Jews.” the economic, political and social constraint on Jewish lives, could not be solved through immigration to Palestine. It therefore needed to be solved within the context of Diasporic Jewish existence. The spiritual problem, on the other hand, what he termed “the Judaism problem,” could be alleviated only by the establishment of a cultural center in Palestine.

The second part of this thesis will examine the migration of Ahad Ha‘am’ ideas from Russia to America, through an exploration of his close disciple, Israel Friedlaender. The chapter compares Friedlaender’s views on three issues with those of Ahad Ha‘am: Ahad Ha‘am himself (that is, how he was to be portrayed), American Judaism, and Biblical prophecy. The chapter will show that in all three issues, Friedlaender’s views are closely similar to

Ahad Ha'am's, but that there are subtle, though significant, modifications.

These changes reflect both Friedlaender's appropriation of Ahad Ha'am's views, and their adaptation within the American context.

Some of these themes have been previously explored in scholarship. The life and thought of Ahad Ha'am has been a frequent fodder for Zionist historiography. In recent decades, biographies by Yossi Goldstein¹ and Stephen Zipperstein² have been published. More recently, Adam Wagner and Yigal Raz devoted a significant portion of their book on Theodor Herzl to a critical examination of Ahad Ha'am's ideology.³ Eliezer Schweid – arguably himself a leading cultural Zionist – explored Ahad Ha'am's relation to the diaspora.⁴ Friedlaender's life has been the subject of a biography by Baila Shargel, which also related his ideas to those of Ahad Ha'am.⁵ Ahad Ha'am's influence on early American Zionism was explored by Eviatar Friesel, who also included some of Friedlaender's ideas in his article.⁶

This thesis will differ from the work of these previous researchers in several ways. The main difference is in the detailed comparison between Ahad Ha'am and his American disciple. Some have dealt with some parts of the

¹ Yossi Goldstein, *Ahad Ha'am, Biyografiyah [Ahad Ha-Am: A Biography]* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishers, 1992).

² Steven Jeffrey Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (London: Halban, 1993). Kindle edition.

³ Yigal Wagner and Adam Raz, *Herzl: Maavakayv miBayit umiHuz [Herzl: the conflicts of Zionism's founder with supporters and opponents]* (Jerusalem: KKL-JNF; Keren Berl Katynelson, 2017).

⁴ Eliezer Schweid, "The Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Judah Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996).

⁵ Baila Round Shargel, *Practical Dreamer: Israel Friedlaender and the Shaping of American Judaism* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1985).

⁶ Eviatar Friesel, "Ahad Ha-Amism in American Zionist thought," in *At the Crossroads*, ed. Jacques Kornberg (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

comparison, but did not go the whole way. While Schweid did survey Ahad Ha'am's views on the negation of the exile, he did so – typically of his writing – with few examples. He also did not include a survey of the influence of these ideas on the diaspora itself. While Shargel does explore some of Friedlaender's Ahad Ha'amist tendencies, she does not place an emphasis on either Ahad Ha'am or Friedlaender's views on the diaspora. Friesel mentions Friedlaender as a major example of Ahad Ha'am's influence. However, while he points out the similarities between him and Ahad Ha'am, Friesel looks at their differences, but pays little attention to Friedlaender's opinion on issues other than Ahad Ha'am himself. This results both in an over-emphasis on relatively minor differences, while at the same time failing to deeply explore their similarities. Ironically, he also did not point out some other significant distinctions.

This thesis will give a detailed analysis of Ahad Ha'am's views on the diaspora, and will survey his references to American Jewry. Crucially, the thesis will provide a detailed comparison between Ahad Ha'am and Friedlaender's ideas. Such a comparison will show that there is a deep influence of Ahad Ha'amist ideas in Friedlaender's thought, evident not only in his writings on Zionism but also in his views on other matters. The thesis will also provide a detailed analysis of Ahad Ha'am's views on American Jewry, in a way that has not been done before. The thesis will show that while Ahad Ha'am was skeptical towards the diaspora, his American disciple Friedlaender used Ahad Ha'amism to develop a kind of diasporic American Zionism. Though the thesis

will focus on Friedlaender, this sort of Ahad Ha'amist influence also affected many other American cultural Zionists and Jewish leaders.

Preliminary Notes on Terminology

“Ahad Ha’am”

Asher Ginzberg’s pen name “Ahad Ha’am” has become associated with him and is far better known than his actual name. This presents a challenge to those who write about him. Steven Zipperstein chooses to refer to him as Ginzberg up to the point in which he adopted the pen name, upon the publication of his first article, *This is Not the Way*. Yossi Goldstein, on the other hand, refers to him consistently as Ahad Ha’am.⁷

My choice is the same as Goldstein, but I believe I must explain it. As Goldstein notes, Ahad Ha’am himself emphasized that his acquaintances and family members referred to him by his original names, or variations thereof. My focus here, though, is not on Asher Ginzberg the man but on Ahad Ha’am the thinker, and perhaps on Ahad Ha’am the mythical figure. The dichotomy between the two was expressed by Leon Simon, who dedicated his translation of Ahad Ha’am’s selected articles “to my teacher Ahad Ha-’am and to my friend Asher Ginzberg.”⁸

It seems his friends and family have also helped in the transformation of the man into the pen name. By the end of their lives, Asher and Rivkah

⁷ Steven Jeffrey Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet : Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism*, (London: Halban, 1993). Kindle edition. location 1179-1191. Yossi Goldstein, *Ahad Ha'am*, biyografiyah [**Ahad Ha-Am: A Biography**] (Jerusalem: Keter Publishers, 1992), 15.

⁸ Ahad Ha’am, *Selected Essays*, trans. Leon Simon (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1912), 1.

Ginzberg lived in Ahad Ha'am street in Tel Aviv. His impressive tombstone does not include the name Asher Ginzberg, nor does it lists the dates of his life. Rather, it bears only the two words "Ahad Ha'am," trusting that should be enough to convey all the information a visitor might need to recognize the grave's occupant. The man thus chose to be superseded by his image. Three plots to the left of him, a much simpler tombstone, albeit made of the same stone, reads simply: "Here lies Rivkah, wife of Ahad Ha'am." His sister, Esther, published her memoirs under the title "In the home of Ahad Ha'am's Parents."⁹ The man, his wife, his sister and his parents are thus defined by history not by their own personhood and accomplishments, but by their relation to the man or more accurately – to his public persona, as expressed by his pen name.

Indeed, the pen-name he chose for himself may have been one of Ahad Ha'am's most powerful and lasting creations. When reviewing his worldview, it is worth therefore to reflect on the signification of the name. The name's literal meaning, one of the people, suggests humility. Indeed, as Ahad Ha'am himself noted towards the end of his life:

The idea of this pen name was to make it clear that I was not a writer, and had no intention of becoming one, but was just incidentally expressing my opinion on the subject about which I wrote as "one of the people" interested in the people's affairs.¹⁰

⁹ Ester Gintsberg-Shemkin, *Bevet Horaiv shel Ahad Ha'am biKefar Hoptshitsa: Mizikhronot ahoto*, Hebrew (Haifa: Zikhronot, 1941).

¹⁰ As quoted by Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, location 1186.

Goldstein notes, however, that the use of a pen name was also intended to guard the author from the criticisms his first article was sure to raise.¹¹ Zipperstein notes that in Russian, the terms "Ahad Ha'am" and "Asher Ginzberg" both have the same initials.¹² Zipperstein also pokes away at the veneer of humility the name evokes, by noting that in some contexts, humility implies greatness. He also points out that the name may be a Biblical allusion to Genesis 26:10, in which Abimelech angrily says to Isaac: "What have you done to us! One of the people might have lain with your wife." Zipperstein refers to Rashi's interpretation that the expression means "the special one of the people, i.e. the king."¹³

Zipperstein does not mention the only other time the expression appears in the Bible. At one point in the book of Samuel, David chooses not to take an opportunity to harm his rival, King Saul. Instead, he rebukes Saul's general, Abner, for neglecting his duties in guarding the king, saying that "one of the people came to do violence to your lord the king" (1 Samuel 26:15).¹⁴ So the deceptively simple pen name can imply a desire for leadership, a desire to harm the leadership, or both.

"Yahadut"

The term "*yahadut*" is frequent in Ahad Ha'am's writing. The Hebrew term can be translated into English by one of three terms: 'Jewry,' in the sense

¹¹ Goldstein, *Ahad Ha'am*, 85.

¹² Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, location 1191.

¹³ Rashi on Genesis 26:10.

¹⁴ Here I chose to alter NJPS, which reads "one of [our] troops came to do violence to your lord the king."

of Jewish people; ‘Judaism’ in the sense of Jewish religion; and ‘Jewishness,’ in the sense of Jewish culture, properties, etc. Ahad Ha’am, who was affected by Russian and romantic nationalism, sees three meanings as connected: the nation (Jewry) is linked through its national spirit (Jewishness), which until the Enlightenment took a religious form (Judaism).

It is relatively clear, from context, when Ahad Ha’am uses the term to mean Jewry, and I shall use that term in those instances. The distinction between the latter two terms, however, is not as clear. Ahad Ha’am assumed there was only one true Jewish spirit. That spirit is secular and nationalistic but has historically taken a religious form. Most English translations use “Judaism.” Leon Simon, whose translation of “Selected Essays” had “the advantage of the author’s revision.”¹⁵ This edition uses the term “Judaism.” However, Simon was aware of the problem. In his introduction he used the term “Hebrews” because “‘Jew’ and ‘Jewish’ have acquired a specifically religious connotation.”¹⁶

Ahad Ha’am himself showed some ambivalence about the term “Judaism.” In a letter to Eliyahu Lubersky, he refers to “the ‘Judaism’ invented by the German Reform.”¹⁷ The word “Judaism” appeared in English in this Hebrew letter, perhaps indicating disapproval.

Nevertheless, while I will sometimes use “Jewishness” in my own discussion, I will use “Judaism” when translating or describing Ahad Ha’am’s ideas. The

¹⁵ Ahad Ha’am, *Selected Essays*, trans. Leon Simon (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1912), 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁷ Ahad Ha’am, Letter to Eliyahu Lubersky, 04.26.1907, in: *Igrot Ahad Ha’am*, Arie Simon (ed.), (Tel Aviv: Dvir 1958), vol. 4, 88.

first reason for this choice is its consistent use in previous translation and scholarship. The second reason is that “Jewishness” as connected with Jewish culture was not in common usage in English in Ahad Ha’am’s lifetime. Ahad Ha’am’s ideas helped paved the way to the distinction between Jewish religion and culture. The word “Jewishness” was developed to address that him would be anachronistic.

“Nation”

Some contemporary theorists of nationalism have accepted Benedict Anderson’s view that the nation is an “imagined community.” Nations belong to the realm of epistemology. They are distinguished from one another due to different national consciousness.¹⁸ Ahad Ha’am, on the other hand was a nationalist. Like most of his contemporaries, nationalist and non-nationalists alike, thought of nations in a very different way. A nation is not imagined; its distinctness from other nations is an ontological, almost biological difference. A nation has its own essence, its own national spirit or *Volkgeist*. The nation may evolve, but its essence remains constant. Ahad Ha’am viewed the Jewish people as belonging to such a nation. His view of nationhood can be discerned in his mission statement of his Hebrew periodical, *Hashiloah*. In the first issue, he stated that the publication was not intended to provide answers to urgent questions concerning the nation, but rather to ensure that all Jews are aware of the importance of the questions:

¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. revised and extended edition. (London: Verso. 1991), p. 6–7.

What is our national essence for which – or because of which – we are struggling with all of creation for thousands of years? What are our lives in all the lands of our dispersal? To what degree are they truly **our** lives? In what ways do they require – and are capable of – reform? And above all – the question of the future, whether and when we will arrive on the hoped for shore, despite the great storm that rips us limb from limb, carrying them one by one to the great sea?¹⁹

These questions suggest that there is a teleological aspect of the Jewish nation according to Ahad Ha'am, a purpose, a final destination to which the nation should strive. The nation is, in its essence, an independent force. The Jewish nation, however, is in an unnatural state of subjugation and separation. These characteristics are inherent to Ahad Ha'am's view of nationhood, which is a fundamental concept in his writing.

Translation and Transliteration

I have used the *Encyclopedia Judaica*'s transliteration guideline throughout. For place and people names, I have used the standard English spelling. When quoting English sources using Hebrew terms, I have kept the original transliteration even if it does not conform to my guidelines. Except otherwise stated, I use NJPS for Biblical quotations. Citations from other

¹⁹ Ahad Ha'am, Statement of Purpose for "haShiloah." in: Ahad Ha'am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, Hebrew (Berlin: Judisher Verlag, 1921), vol. 2, 3.

Hebrew sources, including the Talmud and Ahad Ha'am's writings, are my translation unless otherwise stated.

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Chapter 1: Ahad Ha'am, America, and the Negation of the Exile

Chapter One: Ahad Ha'am, America, and the Negation of the Exile

Early Years: 1891 - 1895

Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927) was an influential Zionist leader, thinker and publicist.

This chapter will give a brief intellectual biography and will show how his thinking developed over his lifetime. The chapter will also survey his views on diaspora Jewry, or in the phrase he usually used, "Judaism in exile," and, in particular, his view on Judaism in America. While his ideology, and his articulation of it, evolved over time, its central focus remained the same: Zionism is the proper response to what he called the "problem of Judaism." The problem, he felt, was a spiritual one and stemmed from the lack of cohesion in emancipated Jewry, as well as a lack of a collective, national consciousness in world Jewry.

As early as his first published article, "This is Not the Way" (1891), Ahad Ha'am emphasized the need for addressing the spiritual question of the revitalization of the national spirit.²⁰ The article also established the fiery critical tone toward other writers that would dominate many of his future works. At the time of writing, Eastern European proto-Zionists,²¹ the *Hovevei Zion* ('Lovers of Zion'), focused on practical settlement activities in Palestine. Ahad Ha'am criticized that trend, claiming that cultural work needed to be done to bring a larger part of Jewish nation into the fold.

²⁰ Ahad Ha'am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, Hebrew (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1921), vol. 1, 1-7.

²¹ The term 'proto-Zionist' is often used to refer to Jewish nationalists who sought to settle Palestine before Herzl founded the political Zionist movement in the 1890s.

The project of returning to the national homeland would not succeed without a wide, popular movement to support it. Thus, the national sentiment that was, according to Ahad Ha'am, the historic heart of Jewry before it was corrupted by exilic passivity, would have to be reinstated. To use anachronistic terminology from a more recent era of Zionist history, Ahad Ha'am was calling on his fellow proto-Zionists to "settle in the hearts" of the Jewish people first before they settled on the ground.

That criticism alone led to a large controversy in proto-Zionist circles. But that was just the beginning of his temperamental relationship with the nascent Zionist movement. The next major crisis came in 1891 during his first visit to Palestine. As Steven Zipperstein notes, his diary and letters at the time show some positive impressions of the voyage,²² but these impressions did not make it into his report, "Truth from the Land of Israel," which he published in *Ha-Melitz* in 1891.²³ In it, he surveyed what were in his opinion the many obstacles that inhibited the movement in realizing its dream of massive Jewish colonization of Palestine. He claimed that the Zionist colonists were not able to be self-sufficient; that most of them came from a less than established economic background, causing financial difficulties; that their reliance on the production of wine did not make for a good economic system;²⁴ He warned that, despite existing sentiment to the contrary, neither the Arab inhabitants nor the Turkish authorities would be likely to sit idly by as a foreign movement established a national presence in their land.²⁵

²² Zipperstein, "Elusive Prophet." Kindle edition, location 1558.

²³ Ahad Ha'am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 1, 1-7.

²⁴ And, he added, the reliance on alcohol is a less than dignified path to the redemption of Zion.

²⁵ As Alan Dowty notes, while it is this last point that has been often mentioned in recent discussions of the article, it is only a minor point in the article. He also notes that the various criticisms of the article did not mention the Arab question, nor did Ahad Ha'am refer to it in his response to that

The new direction Ahad Ha'am would go in after "Truth from the Land of Israel" was hinted at in one point in the article:

To Eretz Israel or to America? [...] to America *and* to Eretz Israel. The economic side of the Jewish question needs to be answered in America, while the idealistic side—the need to create a fixed center for ourselves by settling a large mass of our brethren in one place on the basis of working the land, so that both Israel and its enemies will know that there is one place under the heavens, even if it is too small for all the nation, where a Jew can raise his head like any other person, earning his bread from the land, by the sweat of his brow, and creating his own national spirit—if this need has any hope of being fulfilled, it is only in Eretz Israel.²⁶

The notion that the answer to the physical survival aspect of the Jewish question would not lie in mass settlement, but rather that the Land of Israel would serve a function in the formation of the "national spirit," became a major theme in Ahad Ha'am's thought. Later that same year, he started developing his idea of the Land of Israel as a "cultural center." In his eulogy to the proto-Zionist, Leon Pinsker, he suggested that the land could be

A center of Torah and wisdom, of language and literature, of manual labor and spiritual purity, to the point where a Hebrew in the diaspora might consider it a pleasure to view with his or her own eyes one time the "center of Judaism." and when they return home they will say to friends: "If you wish to see an example of

criticism. Alan Dowty, "Much Ado about Little: Ahad Ha'am's 'Truth from Eretz Yisrael', Zionism, and the Arabs," *Israel Studies Israel Studies* 5, no. 2 (2000): 154–81.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

the true person of Israel, in their true nature, be they a Rabbi or a sage or an author, be they a farmer or craftsman or a trader – go to the Land of Israel and you might see them....”²⁷

And later he noted, ostensibly summarizing Pinsker’s worldview but actually describing his own, that “the Land of Israel cannot be a safe haven to the Jews, but could and should be so for Judaism.”²⁸ So Jewish life would still exist mostly in the Diaspora, but the cultural center in the Land of Israel would serve as a focus of Jewish culture, that would provide an elixir of life for the ailing diasporic Jewishness. Eventually, the national sentiment that would arise because of that cultural center, would naturally lead to a desire to immigrate to the Land of Israel.²⁹

“Truth from the Land of Israel” was a turning point for Ahad Ha’am in another way, too. Before his visit to Palestine, Ahad Ha’am was seen as a possible leader for the Zionist movement. But his “calumnies against the land.” as some of his opponents characterized them,³⁰ hurt his standing among other prominent Zionists. The role of leader was, for the time being, left vacant.

Ahad Ha’am and Herzl

When, in 1896, Theodor Herzl emerged on the scene with his *Der Judenstaat*, he caused quite a stir among the Hovevei Zion. After the following year’s Zionist Congress, Ahad Ha’am fired off yet another in his series of polemical articles. In “On

²⁷ Ahad Ha’am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 1, 83-4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 83-84.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 84.

³⁰ Thus comparing Ahad Ha’am to the Biblical spies; see Num 13:32. For a summary of the criticism – published, of all places, in the official publication of the Israeli National Insurance Institution – see: Yaakov Kellner, “The Truth from the Land of Israel: Protest, Criticism, and Correction,” *Bitahon Soziali*, no. 18–19 (n.d.): 70–80 (Hebrew.)

the Congress and its Creator,”³¹ he criticized Herzl and his faction for his approach to the Jewish question. He ridiculed Herzl’s definition of Jewish nationalism as being defined by a common, outside opponent – Antisemitism – rather than motivated by an internal need for national identity and cohesion.

After the now familiar pattern of controversy and responses, Ahad Ha’am chose to publish yet another critique of the Congress. this time, of one of the ideological focal points of the congress: Max Nordau’s speech on the status of world Jewry. Nordau claimed that Western and Eastern European Jewries faced different manifestations of the Jewish Problem. In the east, Jews faced dangers to their physical existence, expressed by harsh economic conditions. In the west, on the other hand, the distress faced by Jews was a moral one. Westernized Jews, according to Nordau, abandoned their uniqueness so that they might integrate into society. That integration never came, leaving the Jews detached from both their own culture and the general culture that surrounds them.

In his article “The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem,”³² Ahad Ha’am dismissed Nordau’s geographic dichotomy and claims that the moral form of the Jewish Problem is not limited to the west. Eastern European Jews also face a moral distress. True Jewish culture that lasted thousands of year is in danger of being lost due to social and cultural conditions. The Ghetto (a term he used to refer to the physical and cultural separation of the pre-emancipated Jew from his surroundings) provided Jewish segregation, which was the mechanism that enabled Judaism to be

³¹ Ahad Ha’am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 1, 56-60.

³² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 22-35.

preserved. The passing of the Ghetto threatened communal ties and pressures and encouraged Jews to bring in foreign elements onto their culture, and might lead to assimilation. Judaism was thus in danger of losing cohesion, resulting either in extinction or in disintegration, producing multiple Judaisms with no relation to each other.

The tension with Herzl's "political Zionism" – "Western Zionism," as Ahad Ha'am called it, or as Herzl called it, simply, "Zionism" – came to head after Herzl published his second book dealing with his Zionist vision – *Altneuland*. The book received ample praise from the Zionist world, with Ahad Ha'am's response constituting the one predictable exception. Ahad Ha'am's biting review accused Herzl of being unrealistic in his expectation of the formation of an independent society in Palestine within twenty years. He also criticized the nature of that society that Herzl fashioned in the model of European states because it did not reflect organic Jewish cultural values. Ahad Ha'am criticized the lack of Hebrew as the spoken language, the lack of emphasis on Jewish culture, and Herzl's bizarre description of the Temple.

Herzl's newspaper, *Die Welt*, printed a response to Ahad Ha'am written by Herzl's right hand man, Max Nordau.³³ Nordau addressed many of the points raised by Ahad Ha'am, but on cultural issues, his responses seem to obfuscate more than give serious answers. For example, on the question of Hebrew, Nordau claimed that Herzl simply omitted to mention the national language. Regarding the Temple, Nordau claimed that Herzl's location of the Temple in a place other than the Temple

³³ Max Nordau, Achad Ha'am über Altneuland, *Die Welt*, 13.03.1903, 1-5.

mount would not be a problem for the common Jewish citizen. Nordau's harshest words were saved for the very end, in which he charged that

Ahad Ha'am is a secular Protest-Rabbi.³⁴ We have nothing against that. We cannot stop his opposition to Zionism any more than we can stop that of the Protest-Rabbis. But we have the right and obligation to protest his self-identification as a Zionist. He is not a Zionist. He is the opposite of a Zionist. There is no more obvious trick than when he speaks of "Political" Zionism, to create the impression that there is some other kind, a mysterious kind, one that is never explained, his own kind. "Political Zionism" is a tautology. A Zionism that is not political, that is, that does not seek the establishment of a homeland for that part of the Jewish nation that cannot or will not remain in exile, is in fact not Zionism. Whoever defines that term in a way other than that of the Basel program is a guilty of trickery. That we must say to our brothers in Russia, who are good Zionists, or surely want to be good Zionists, and do not see clearly what Ahad Ha'am is doing.³⁵

Thus the battle lines were drawn. Nordau understood by 'Zionist' someone who adhered to the beliefs held by himself and by Herzl. This strong rebuke triggered a wide controversy, and a wide array of Zionist writers and activists responses started publishing responses.³⁶

³⁴ A term coined by Herzl to refer to a group of German rabbis who wrote a letter against holding a Zionist Congress in Germany. See: Getzel Kressel, "Protestrabbiner," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, 2nd ed., vol. 16 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 634, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX2587516130/GVRL?>; Yigal Wagner and Adam Raz, *Herzl: Maavakayv miBayit umiHuz* (Jerusalem: KKL-JNF; Keren Berl Katynelson, 2017), 525–26.

³⁵ Max Nordau, "Achad Ha'am Über Altneuland," 4–5. Translation mine.

³⁶ The fires of the Herzl-Ahad Ha'am dispute are still raging. In their recent book on Herzl, Yigal Wagner and Adam Raz devote a large space to a critical view of what they derisibly call "Ahad Ha'am's 'method'." They correctly criticize Ahad Ha'am for espousing a rigid view of Judaism, that

As was noted above,³⁷ Ahad Ha'am differentiated between the economic and idealistic sides of the Jewish problem. But it was as part of his criticism of Herzl and Nordau that the distinction became a major part of his ideology, elucidated by his distinction between "the problem of the Jews" and "the problem of Judaism." Ahad Ha'am claimed that Political Zionists, such as Herzl, were focusing on the wrong part of the equation – the economic troubles of Jews – that could not be resolved through the means they were suggesting.

In the spring of 1903, Herzl met with British Colonial secretary Joseph Chamberlain. Chamberlain offered Herzl a piece of land in eastern Africa for the formation of a temporary Jewish homeland. Pressured to find an urgent solution to the Jewish Problem by the Kishinev Pogrom earlier that year, Herzl was inclined to accept the proposal. He used that year's sixth Zionist Congress as a platform to promote the Uganda Scheme,³⁸ as the plan came to be known. Herzl's proposal was a modest one: he merely asked the Congress to form a committee to explore the option. That, however, was enough to plunge the Zionist movement into turmoil, and even though the discussion only took place

does not account for historical or cultural variation. However, they tie this criticism to a mistaken claim that he based his world view on a pseudo-scientific, social-Darwinian view of nationalism. Ahad Ha'am does make some spurious references to such ideas, but claiming that they central to his ideology is a stretch. If the two self-described Herzlian Zionists were trying to prove that Ahad Ha'am was influenced by ideas common to his age, that is definitely true – Ahad Ha'am was a product of his age, as was Herzl and any historical figure. Their misrepresentation of Ahad Ha'am's ideas are not surprising given their curious decision to provide few references to Ahad Ha'am's own writing, instead mostly on secondary sources, mostly those critical of Ahad Ha'am. Even the few times they quote Ahad Ha'am are mostly referenced through those secondary sources. In any case, whatever value might put on their discussion of Ahad Ha'am, they do little to answer his criticism of Herzl's disregard to the cultural aspects of Zionism, or to his points regarding the practical feasibility of Herzl's vision. See Yigal Wagner and Adam Raz, *Herzl: ma'avaḳav mi-vayit ume-ḥuts* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2017), 469-524.

³⁷Page 3.

³⁸ Adam Rovner, *In the Shadow of Zion : Promised Lands Before Israel* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 45-78.

on the last day, the entire Congress became known as the “Uganda Congress,” or the “Weeping Congress.” The passage of Herzl’s proposal by a small margin was not enough to quell the disagreement.

Ahad Ha’am saw the Uganda Scheme as a validation of his criticism for Herzl’s ideas. The scathing article he wrote, “The Weeping,”³⁹ criticized not only Herzl but also his Eastern European supporters, many of whom opposed the Uganda Scheme. He surveyed various past proposals to form Jewish states in locations other than Palestine. All those efforts failed, and so, he predicted, would the Uganda program. He also took the opportunity to declare Herzlian political Zionism to be dead. However, Zionism itself would survive, he promised, and would know to caution leaders who promised its fulfillment without effort and within a short period of time.

History would prove that Herzlian Zionism was not, in fact dead. Herzl himself, however, was not long for this world. The Uganda congress was the last one he attended. The death of the forty-four-year-old in July 1904 shocked the Zionist world, including Ahad Ha’am who used the introduction to the third part of his collected works to eulogize Herzl.⁴⁰ He praised Herzl’s political abilities, and correctly predicted Herzl’s influence would be felt for years to come. He also suggested that Herzl himself would become a national hero – ironically, drafting his rival’s image in his efforts to create a renewed national culture.

³⁹ Ahad Ha’am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol . 3, 200-208.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, v-x.

Ahad Ha'am's predictions concerning the cultural importance of Herzl's character would prove accurate. What he did not predict, however, was the effects of Herzl's death on his own writing.⁴¹ In the last decade, Ahad Ha'am had been able to better define his own ideas in opposition to Herzl's Political Zionism. With the loss of his great rival, his own intellectual path became less well defined and he would have fewer avenues to develop it.

Viewing Ahad Ha'am and Herzl's controversies with the benefit of hindsight, later readers may consider both sides to be partially right and partially wrong. The question of the feasibility for a Jewish homeland in Palestine seems strange as the State of Israel celebrates the seventieth anniversary of its founding. However, Ahad Ha'am's questioning of the willingness of Jewish masses to join such a state is still justified. The state could not gather enough of a population to become a major part of the world's Jewish population until after the Holocaust, with its annihilation of more than half of Europe's Jewish population. Additionally, the immigration of Mizrahi Jews shifted the demographic balance of world Jewry. Even after the Holocaust, and even after seven decades of the Law of Return, much of the world's Jewish population chooses not to immigrate to the Jewish state. This does not mean that the state is not important to them – on the contrary, it holds a valuable place in the Jewish identity of many Jews. Ahad Ha'am's model of a cultural center for the diaspora seems relevant.

⁴¹ Herzl has been adopted as a cultural hero by the Second Aliyah, which started the year he died. See: Motti Zeira, 'We were Orphans: The Children of His Dream: The Image of Herzl in the Eyes of the Members of the Second Aliyah.' in *Maanit Halev: Minhag Dvarim leMuki Zur*, ed. Avraham Shapira (Tel Aviv: Hakibuz haMeuhad, 2006), 75–94. The state of Israel has also used Herzl's figure in various ways, such as placing his picture above the speakers in its declaration of independence and in the Knesset, reintering him in the center of the national pantheon, etc.

Later Years and Death

In 1907 Ahad Ha'am moved to London, in order to manage the British branch of the Wissotzky Tea company. There he developed a following among the local Zionist activists. They viewed him as a representative of the old guard, a link to the original generation of Zionism. One of the younger Zionists that formed a bond with Ahad Ha'am was the Polish born Jewish biochemist Chaim Weizmann. Weizmann had a connection to Ahad Ha'am since the first days of his Zionist activities.⁴² He was a member of Benei Moshe, the secret society founded by Ahad Ha'am. Later on, when Weizmann organized a youth conference in opposition to Herzl in 1901, he urged Ahad Ha'am to speak there. Ahad Ha'am refused, in one of his many lost opportunities to expand his political power. Weizmann, though a Political Zionist, held the question of Hebrew culture in high regard. His contentious relationship with Herzl finally came to a breaking point through the Uganda affair. That, coupled with his and Ahad Ha'am's immigration to Britain (Weizmann to Manchester, Ahad Ha'am to London) set the stage for a close relationship between the two, culminating in their joint work lobbying the British government for a recognition of Zionism. In this way, ironically, Ahad Ha'am played a major role in securing the Balfour Declaration – a major achievement for Political Zionism.

Although Ahad Ha'am shared some of the optimism his colleagues felt at the declaration, he was not without his typical pessimism and misgivings. He warned that the declaration should not be viewed as not the be-all and end-all of

⁴² Ben Halpern, "The Disciple, Chaim Weizmann," in *At the Crossroads*, ed. Jacques Kornberg (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 156–69.

Zionism. There was no guarantee of new immigration waves or of economic success. In his forward to the 1920 edition of *On the Crossroads*, his collected essays, he warned that the riots that occurred earlier that year were a sign that the Arab population in Palestine would not be quick to forgo their place in the land, recalling his previous warning on the subject in “Truth from the Land of Israel.”⁴³ He himself, however, chose this as the right time to immigrate to Palestine, and he moved to Tel Aviv in 1922. By this time, his failing health prevented him from engaging in much more scholarship. His final years were devoted to publishing his letters. Ahad Ha’am died in Tel Aviv on January 2, 1927, at the age of 71. He was buried in Trumpeldor Cemetery.

Views on Diaspora and Exile

Though Ahad Ha’am’s views on many issues evolved during his lifetime, his views on Jewish diasporic existence remained largely the same. His mistrust of diasporic life, which we shall examine below, remained constant. The term “diaspora.” as used here, is in fact anathema to Ahad Ha’am; he consistently refers to Jewish existence among the nations as *galut*, ‘exile’. Although “the negation of the exile” - the notion that exilic existence is inherently negative - is a major and consistent component of his thought,⁴⁴ it is also one of the most misunderstood. As Allan Arkush notes, Ahad Ha’am is often mistakenly viewed as an anti-statist Zionist, while in fact his ideology allowed for a state

⁴³ Ahad Ha’am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 1, xxiii.

⁴⁴ See Eliezer Schweid’s survey of the negation of the exile by Ahad Ha’am and his disciples: Eliezer Schweid, “The Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches,” in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Judah Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York and London: New York University, 1996), 147–50.

when the time would come.⁴⁵ Similar misconceptions attribute pro-diasporic views to Ahad Ha'am.

Ahad Ha'am consistently viewed exile in a negative fashion, as a source for the problem of Judaism. For example, in the very first line of his very first article, he summarizes exilic history as "many centuries of external poverty and humiliation and internal hope and faith for heavenly mercy."⁴⁶ Later in the same article, he diagnoses the main folly of contemporary Judaism as a lack of national sentiment.⁴⁷ He claims that Jews once viewed themselves primarily as parts of a single nation. The political upheavals of the destructions of the first and second temples led rabbinic thought to introduce more individualistic sentiments. Jews now focused on their own personal happiness. As a result, what Ahad Ha'am considered the original messianic vision – that of a future political reemergence – could not be satisfying to contemporary Jews who would not take part in that redemption, since it did not fulfill their individual aspirations. And so the messianic dream became corrupted into a mystical promise of resurrection, so that every Jewish person could personally benefit. The approach taken by Proto-Zionists so far, he argued, tried to appeal to that individual instinct (e.g., profiting from agricultural settlement,) rather than the proper collective one, and was therefore doomed to fail. He proposed a cultural project to restore a collective, national sentiment among the Jewish people first, which would lead to a wide support for settlement efforts in the future. Ahad

⁴⁵ Allan Arkush, "Cultural Zionism Today," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 19 (2014): 1–14.

⁴⁶ Ahad Ha'am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 1, 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 6.

Ha'am's diagnosis of the problem would remain largely the same, though his ideas for a solution would later become more refined.

In the Exile, the national spirit could not truly express itself. That was true even if Jews were awarded with political rights by their fellow citizens. For example, in response to the French Jewish hopes for fuller emancipation, Ahad Ha'am wrote that such emancipation would only be a state of "internal slavery hidden by external freedom."⁴⁸ In order to accept emancipation, Jews must abandon their Jewish national identity and align themselves solely with the nation in which they dwell. Similarly, he criticizes Y.L. Gordon's famous line, "Be a man outdoors and a Jew in your tent":

A man outdoors cannot simply remain an abstract man but must take on some form. If he is not a Jew, then he is a Russian, a Pole, a German, etc. Our authors⁴⁹ knew this secret but cunningly refrained from revealing it. In order to attract the nation to the foreign forms they adored, they concealed them by naming them "man", thus reversing the Talmudic dictum to say "The nations of the world are called 'man', and you are not called 'man'."⁵⁰

He characterizes the definition of humanity and civilization employed by the Jewish Enlightenment movement, or *Haskalah*, as an internalization of foreign definitions. This not only leaves out Jewish definitions of civilization, but also leaves Judaism in stagnation:

⁴⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, 124.

⁴⁹ The maskilim.

⁵⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, 89. Cf "You are called 'man,' idolators are not called 'man.'" (Bava Metzia 114b)

They have abandoned the Jew completely to his tent. They made no attempts at improving his living spirit, the moral and social qualities that were the origins of all the visions shaping his life style [...] Inside his own “tent,” the “Jew” remained as he was: a slave, possessing all qualities derived from that title, qualities he absorbed in his exile. Even Reform houses of Prayer see arguments, sometimes leading to violence, for the sake of obtaining some imaginary honor, and even Hebrew aristocratic halls are filled with a sense of self-abnegation and supplication.⁵¹

These criticisms were directed toward assimilationist ideas. But Ahad Ha‘am also criticized the notion that Jewish culture can be rescued within the diasporic framework. The most evident reflection of that is his criticism of the great Jewish historian and publicist Shimon Dubnow.

Dubnow, who Ahad Ha‘am called “one of our finest Russian language authors,” believed in cultural autonomy, according to which Jews would remain in the diaspora, but would be able to pursue their cultural objectives there. As Marcos Silber has shown,⁵² Dubnow was influenced by Hegelian notions of nationhood by describing the nation as having three historical stages: the racial-tribal stage, the territorial stage, and the spiritual-cultural stage. Jews have ascended to that final stage. Territorializing world Jewry, as the Zionist movement suggests, would be a degeneration into an earlier stage of development. Instead, he envisioned a “nation of nations.” a multinational state

⁵¹ Ibid., vol. 1, 89-90.

⁵² Marcos Silber, “Dubnow, the Idea of Diaspora Nationalism,” *Iyyunim Bi-tekumat Yisrael*, no. 15 (2015): 83–101. (Hebrew)

in which each individual nation would have its equal place. He saw similar constructions in the Austro-Hungarian Empire as well as in Switzerland.

Similar to Ahad Ha'am, Dubnow believed in the strength of the traditional, pre-emancipation Jewish community. Unlike Ahad Ha'am, however, Dubnow did not believe that strength came from the Ghetto's seclusion, but rather from the community's organizational structure. That strength, however, came at a cost of seclusion and ignorance of the wisdom and culture of their surrounding nations.⁵³ As a historian, Dubnow placed a great emphasis on the notion of Jewish centers. He claimed that Jewish life and culture had many centers over Jewish history, such as Babylon, Spain and Germany. These Jewish centers were able to sustain a sense of Jewish nationhood. Dubnow thus rejected Ahad Ha'am's belief that a meaningful Jewish existence must rely on a connection to the Land of Israel.⁵⁴ He viewed the formation of a autonomic community as a civil right. Thus the establishment of a Jewish cultural autonomy would be satisfy both the particularistic demands of the Jewish national spirit and the universal ideals of equality and freedom.⁵⁵

Ahad Ha'am rejected the notions of cultural autonomy in the diaspora. He did not trust a plan that would rely on an acceptance by foreign nations of Jewish equality. It is unlikely, he argued, that strong nations would provide such concessions to weaker nations. He also claimed that there is a difference between nations that exist next to one another, as in Switzerland, and nations

⁵³ Joseph Turner, *The Relation to Zion and the Diaspora in 20th Century Jewish Thought: A Study in the Philosophy of Jewish Existence* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad, 2014), 105-106 (Hebrew).

⁵⁴ Turner, 99-100.

⁵⁵ Turner, 107-108.

that exist one within each other. While most nations stayed more or less within the confines of their historical territory, the Jews were spread far and wide all over the world. This will prevent a challenge to their autonomy within the confines of a larger state, if they were not to be gathered to a unified territory. But most of all, the challenge is with the national consciousness of Jews themselves. He acknowledges that there was once Jewish national sentiment in the exile, but that was only, he claims, in the Ghetto – when Jews were physically and culturally separated from their non-Jewish environment.

So he rejected both options that would have Jews remain in the exile, either as assimilated individuals or as a collective autonomy. In these ways he was similar to Herzl. Whether the main issue was the physical or spiritual existence of Jews, both thinkers agreed with the negation of the exile, the notion according to which there is no value to exilic existence. Both agreed that the ultimate answer would be in a Jewish collective existence in the Land of Israel. One difference, in this regard, was in the feasibility and timetable of this vision. Another one is regarding the nature of the future state.

Ahad Ha'am's main viewpoint was that exile is bad and cannot be made good: "Life in exile, even in their most ideal, will always be life in exile, meaning the opposite of the life of national freedom, which are the goal of the Zionist movement."⁵⁶ While he strongly supported the negation of the exile, he doubted that ending the exile could be achieved in the sort of short time frame that Herzl and his allies envisioned. And he maintained that the Jewish state,

⁵⁶ Ahad Ha'am, *'Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 2, 132.

even if it were to arise, would not solve the physical problem of Jews as individuals:

Truth is bitter, but with all its bitterness it is better than illusion. We must confess to ourselves that the “ingathering of the exiles “ is unattainable by natural means. We may, by natural means, establish a Jewish State one day, and the Jews may increase and multiply in it until the country will hold no more: but even then the greater part of the people will remain scattered in strange lands.⁵⁷

That is why, in his opinion, the Zionist movement should concern itself with cultural works that will prepare the Jewish people into the sort of mass migration that the Herzlian dream requires.

Views on Judaism in America

As was shown above, Ahad Ha'am's theoretical framework relies on the fundamental distinction between Jewish exilic existence and a Jewish national existence based around a return to the ancestral land. Jewish life, without a cultural center, would simply continue to suffer from the Judaism problem. Ahad Ha'am lived during a transformative period for world Jewry, where large masses of Jews from Eastern Europe, especially the Russian Empire, migrated elsewhere, the vast majority of them to the United States. Given Ahad Ha'am's anti-exilic viewpoint, it is also no surprise that he made sure to paint this immigration only as a superficial one, as it still takes place within an exilic

⁵⁷ Ibid., vol. 2, 25-6.

framework, simply transposing the location of that exile. In his review of Ahad Ha'am's views on the exile, Schweid simply notes that

Ahad Ha'am did not pay separate attention to the future status of Jewry in the great land of immigration, America. However, we will not be straying from the truth if we claim that he posited that without a spiritual center in Palestine, the status of the Jews in America would be similar to that of those in the liberal countries of Europe, i.e., "Servitude in the Midst of Freedom."⁵⁸

As was mentioned previously, already in "Truth from the Land of Israel," Ahad Ha'am referred to the United States, and the notion, suggested by some,⁵⁹ that it could provide a solution to the Jewish Question: "The economic side of the Jewish question needs to be answered in America, while the idealistic side [...] is only in Eretz Israel." Immigration to The United States could be a solution for Jewish individuals, he thought, but not for the Jewish collective. The implication of that notion was that the Zionist movement itself would be concerned not with individual hardships, but with the future collective success of the nation. That observation, he says, should be obvious, and his discussion of it is "not a discovery of some new America."⁶⁰ Another implication was that

⁵⁸ Schweid 149-50. Schweid, "The Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches," 149–50.

⁵⁹ See Israel Bartal, "The Heavenly America: the United States as an Ideal and Exemplar for Eastern European Jewry," in *Be-ikvot Columbus: Amerika 1492-1992*, ed. Miri Eliav-Feldon (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1996), 511–22. (Hebrew.)

⁶⁰ Ahad Ha'am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 1, 55.

while immigrants to other lands are responsible only for themselves, immigrants to the Land of Israel had a responsibility to the nation as a whole.⁶¹

In a subsequent article, he used immigration to America as a demonstration of the inherent problems of political Zionism:

In the last twenty years, at least a million Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe to the lands of America and Africa – a sizeable number, that would have been sufficient for the establishment of a Jewish state; however, this did not make much of an impact on their origin countries. The ratio between Jews and citizens in those countries did not improve, since the actual number of Jews in those countries did not decrease. The void left by those who left was filled by natural population growth.⁶² Were this Emigration wave directed toward the land of Israel, he claimed, there would have been enough settlers to found a Jewish state – but the demographic reality of Jews in Eastern Europe would not have changed, just like it hadn't changed due to immigration to America.⁶³

This, he argued, pulls the rug beneath political Zionism, since it shows that even mass immigration does not change the reality of exilic existence.

At one point, Ahad Ha'am chose to kill two birds with one stone, addressing both the autonomistic emphasis on Yiddish as a national language and the idea of cultural Jewish life in America. While discussing Yiddish –

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., vol. 2, 100.

⁶³ Ahad Ha'am, *Al Parashat Derakhim*, vol. 2, 100.

which he, like other Hebraists, derisively referred to as “Jargon”⁶⁴ – he points out its lack of longevity:

In America, where Jargon and its literature is now flourishing, it is merely the language of the older generation. They grew up in Europe and brought their language to America with them. Their children, however, who were born and educated in America, speak English and do not know Jargon. Were it not for immigration, with its annual supply of multitudes of Jargon speakers, this language would have no trace in the new land. But immigration to America is bound to dwindle. With it, the number of Jargonists shall surely decrease over time.⁶⁵

He goes on to say that this process, of substituting Yiddish for local languages, also happens in Eastern Europe. And so the reliance on Yiddish rather than on Hebrew as a national language would only result, within a few generations, in two dead national languages. The Yiddishist, and by extension, the autonomist dream, in America and elsewhere is bound to fail.

The emphasis on America as a possible solution for individuals but not for the collective is explained by the lack of a relationship between the Jewish people and American land:

America has everything other than one thing: the historical basis. Only a historical basis can generate the great marvel of tying tens of thousands of

⁶⁴ He explains that the alternative Hebrew term, “Yehudis.” is not appropriate since his readers include many Jews that don’t speak the language, and because the Bible uses the term to refer to Hebrew (2 Kings 18, 26).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 126-7.

merchants and traders to a land; to renew a living national spirit amongst a scattered and dispersed people.⁶⁶

And so, America remains merely an expansion of the diaspora, rather than a new form of Jewish existence, an answer to the Jewish question.

Perhaps Ahad Ha'am's longest reflection on American Jewry comes as part of his editorial for the 100th issue of the *Hashiloah*, the Hebrew periodical of which he was the founding editor. He wrote that the publication's main objective was the raising of the national question, a question he viewed as the most important of the moment. This question, he notes, could no longer be ignored by anyone in the Jewish world. He points out that even the "elders of the Seminary in Cincinnati – the great fortress of yesteryear,"⁶⁷ cannot keep it away.

Ahad Ha'am was referring to the flagship of the reform movement in America, the Hebrew Union College seminary (HUC), and its emphasis on the notion of *prophetic Judaism*. This notion was influenced by the British reform rabbi Claude Montefiore (1858-1938). Montefiore had great appreciation for the Biblical prophetic literature, to the point that he suggested placing them in the synagogue's arch instead of the Torah scrolls.⁶⁸ He promoted the notion that it is the Jewish mission was to spread the universal values of Judaism. Jews in the diaspora must take up the role once played by prophets and spread moral teachings in the spirit of prophetic writings. In his conception, this notion

⁶⁶ Ibid., vol. 3, 102.

⁶⁷ Ibid., vol. 4, 105.

⁶⁸ Michael A Meyer, *Response to Modernity : A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 215.

required the Jews to remain scattered. He was an ardent anti-Zionist, and publicly opposed the Balfour declaration.⁶⁹ This notion was also popular in Hebrew Union College, where "students had the opportunity not only to study the Prophets but to consider ways of applying prophetic morality to current social problems."⁷⁰

This notion, of course, goes against Ahad Ha'am's framework since it suggests a value to exilic life. And so he took the opportunity to criticize the conduct of some members of the faculty at the seminary.

He brought up an incident in which two seminary teachers gave lectures that disregarded this prophetic view of Judaism by implying "that Jews are still their own nation, rather than a congregation of prophets, the carriers of justice within the nations"⁷¹. As a result, he claims, they were expelled from the Seminary.⁷²

At the same time, Ahad Ha'am brought up what he claimed to be an opportunity for the proponents of prophetic Judaism to spread their moralistic ideas:

It is well known that a moral disease has been spreading through America for some time. This disease reveals the beast within humanity in all its ugliness. It puts the very notion of humanity to shame. The hatred of

⁶⁹ Ibid, 216.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 302.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ahad Ha'am was not accurate about the details. Only one of the two teachers was dismissed due to a Zionist lecture, not in the classroom but in a Sabbath sermon. The other one was fired for attending a Zionist benefit in New York. For more details, see: Herbert Parzen, "The Purge of the Dissidents, Hebrew Union College and Zionism, 1903-1907," *Jewish Social Studies* 37, no. 3/4 (1975): 291-322. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/4466896>.

“Blacks” has at least some excuse in the past. Now, however, it is supplemented with the hatred of “Greens” – natives of Japan and China. In the name of “White Culture.” Americans are performing acts of murder and robbery without remorse. Recently I read an enlightening article about it, showing this dreadful phenomenon to its full horror.

The fact that the leaders of Reform Judaism concentrate, according to him, on internal struggles rather than on battling this racist wave is to Ahad Ha’am proof of the failure of this prophetic Judaism. However, he put his trust in the younger generations, hoping that they understand the folly of their teachers, and will one day suppress them:

They are silent, and their disciples are silent. But who knows whether the latter ever wonder as to this silence. Do they ever ask themselves: our Rabbis taught us that the purpose of our dispersal among the nations is to carry on the role of the prophets. These prophets, after all, were not afraid to stand with the downtrodden everywhere. They fearlessly declared to kings their transgressions and to the nations their sins. And we, in exile, could not protest against the “Baals”?⁷³

Prophetic Judaism, the distinctively Reform notion that the Jewish role among the nations is to provide a moral guidance in the light of the Torah, was anathema to Ahad Ha’am’s ideas. Exile, he believed, had no purpose. It is a tragedy that needs to be ended. Even within the reform movement at the time, Prophetic Judaism and Zionism were seen as contrasting viewpoints. In this lengthy anecdote, the longest reference made by Ahad Ha’am to American Jewry in his published writings, he dealt

⁷³ Ibid., vol. 4, 103-6.

a blow to proponents of this notion. Not only did Hebrew Union College suggest a dangerous ideology, they also failed, in his opinion, to live up to their ideals.

To sum up: while Ahad Ha'am accorded no systematic treatment to the state of American Jewry, his few public references to America and its Jewish future as a world center of Jewish culture were dismissive. In the next chapter we shall see how one of his ardent followers, Israel Friedlaender, interpreted Ahad Ha'am's ideas in America. Friedlaender's view of American Jewry, while not completely optimistic, is certainly more positive than that of his teacher, seeing a potential for Jewish renewal in America.

Chapter Two The Beginnings of Ahad Ha'amism in America: Israel Friedlaender

Friedlaender on Ahad Ha'am

The previous chapter looked at the life and thought of Ahad Ha'am, focusing on his treatment of the diaspora and American Jewry. This chapter will look at how Ahad Ha'amism was interpreted in an American context. Specifically, this chapter will focus on one of the first interpreters of Ahad Ha'amist cultural Zionism in America, Israel Friedlaender.

Israel Friedlaender was an Orientalist, a Biblical scholar, a teacher at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and an activist in the Jewish community and Zionist circles. He was born in 1876 in Woldiva (today Poland). At eighteen he moved to Berlin, where he studied in the Berlin University and in the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary, although he was never ordained.⁷⁴ In 1903 he was among the teachers invited by Solomon Schechter to teach at the new Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York. In 1920, he went on a relief mission for Ukrainian Jews, to investigate and prevent pogroms in the wake of the Russian civil war. On July 5th, he, an American travel companion, and a local Jewish resident, were murdered near the town of Kamenitz-Podlotsky.⁷⁵ Friedlaender was forty-four when he died. Despite his death at a relatively young age, he was able to make a lasting effect on the Jewish community⁷⁶.

Friedlaender's relationship with Ahad Ha'am started long before his immigration to America. As early as 1897, he got Ahad Ha'am's permission to

⁷⁴ Baila Round Shargel, *Practical Dreamer: Israel Friedlaender and the Shaping of American Judaism* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1985), 4.

⁷⁵ Shargel, *Practical Dreamer*, 32-35.

⁷⁶ Shargel, *Practical Dreamer*, 201.

translate his articles into German.⁷⁷ In 1903, during the *Altneuland* controversy, it was Friedlaender that Ahad Ha'am turned to for a German translation of his 1898, during the *Altneuland* controversy, Friedlaender published an article defending Ahad Ha'am. Friedlaender's collected essays, *Past and Present*, contains two articles on Ahad Ha'am. One of these is a review of the fourth Hebrew volume of *'Al Parashat Derakhim* (*At a Crossroad*, henceforth, *'Crossroads'*), Leon Simon's English translation of selected essays, and Friedlaender's own German translation of the second volume of *'Al Parashat Derakhim*.⁷⁸ My focus here is on the first article, simply titled *Ahad Ha'am*,⁷⁹ based on a lecture Friedlaender gave in 1906 to introduce the American public to Ahad Ha'am.

In a typical passage from Friedlaender's biographical survey, he described Ahad Ha'am's as somewhat of a child prodigy, teaching himself medieval Jewish philosophy and other areas of study on top of the Talmudic studies traditional to Jewish boys. In particular, an apologetic tone is evident when Friedlaender explains Ahad Ha'am's lack of formal higher education by claiming that "the limits of college and university were much too narrow for him."⁸⁰ His source was most likely from a letter Ahad Ha'am wrote to him when Friedlaender wanted to add a short biography to the German introduction for *Crossroads*. In the letter, however, Ahad Ha'am insists that his upbringing was "unoriginal [...] just as most Hebrew writers of my

⁷⁷ Ahad Ha'am to Friedlaender, April 24 1898, *Iggerot*, vol.2, 69.

⁷⁸ Israel Friedlaender, "Some Ahad Ha'am Publications," in *Past and Present: A Collection of Jewish Essays* (Cincinnati: Ark Pub, 1919) 423-430. *Past and Present* has many typos, most likely due to a lack of copy editing. I corrected those.

⁷⁹ Israel Friedlaender, "Ahad Ha'am," *Past and Present*, 399-422.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 406-407.

generation were raised."⁸¹ The same details that Ahad Ha'am described as mundane were transformed by Friedlaender into hagiography. Another notable change is their treatment of medieval Jewish philosophy. While Ahad Ha'am mentions the study of medieval writings as one of his early areas of study, Friedlaender gives it special emphasis and claims that it these studies that "have called forth [in Ahad Ha'am] a desire for modern education."⁸² This emphasis is related to Friedlaender's worldview, and we shall return to it later.

Friedlaender presents Ahad Ha'am's thought as one centered on *tehiyat ha-levavot*, literally "the resurrection of the hearts," meaning the persuasion of the Jewish people to once again view Zion as their spiritual center.⁸³

The ideal of Zion must once more become the national ideal of the Jews, as it had been down to the time of Jewish emancipation, when it was sold for a mess of pottage – filling their hearts, shaping their thoughts, stimulating and directing their activities.⁸⁴

He most likely took this notion from Ahad Ha'am's first article, "This is Not the Way." Being a Biblical scholar, Friedlaender uses a Biblical example to explain Ahad Ha'am's views, comparing his and Ahad Ha'am's era to the era of the return of Jewish exiles from Babylon after the Cyrus proclamation. Just like then, political conditions were ripe for mass Jewish emigration to the Land of Israel. But in both eras only a small minority of the nation actually emigrated. However, the land has

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 406-7.

⁸³ Friedlaender, "Ahad Ha'am," 415.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

returned to be a spiritual center to the nation dispersed in the exile in the days of the return from Babylon, and so it needs to be again.⁸⁵

Alongside his many words of appreciation, Friedlaender also criticized Ahad Ha'am's teachings as not capable of sustaining a mass movement:

From a philosophical point of view, Ahad Ha'amism is far superior to Herzlianism. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the Zionism of Ahad Ha'am would never, and could never, have become a national movement like political Zionism. Ahad Ha'am's pen-name is, after all, a mere pretense. He is not the spokesman of the people. He is only the representative of the dwindling minority of the "few," who will always find it difficult to place themselves within a popular movement. Ahad Ha'amism in its integrity and totality must necessarily remain outside the boundaries of political Zionism, originated by Herzl. But as its counterbalance, as its vivifying and modifying principle, Spiritual Zionism is the necessary complement of Political Zionism. And were I to name the two men who have had the largest share in shaping the destinies of the modern national movement, I would first mention its father – Herzl, and right afterwards its mentor – Ahad Ha'am.⁸⁶

Friedlaender is proposing here a reconciliation of sorts, a "compromise," between Herzl and Ahad Ha'am. Despite his great appreciation for Ahad Ha'am, he says that his ideas do not have the drawing power as Herzl's, and it is not likely to inspire a similarly popular movement. Friedlaender is in fact proposing the utilization

⁸⁵ Ibid., 420.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 421-422.

of Herzlianism to promote the Ahad Ha'amist agenda, with the former acting as a drawing force for the latter. In their recent book on Herzl, Wagner and Raz claim that the notion of compromise between Ahad Ha'am and Herzl ideologies only emerged in a later period.⁸⁷ Here we see that they were incorrect. Friedlaender provided such an interpretation as early as 1906, during Ahad Ha'am's lifetime and only two years after the Herzl's death.⁸⁸

Friedlaender appears to view Ahad Ha'am and Herzl as representing two separate aspects of Zionism, both of which need to be grasped, which in turn implies a bifurcation of the spiritual and material aspects of Zionism: the revival of the Jewish national spirit (Ahad Ha'am) and the material security of the Jews (Herzl), respectively. Jews who live in lands where they are physically insecure need the practical Zionism of Herzl. Others, who are physically secure, as in America and Western Europe, would only need the spiritual Zionism of Ahad Ha'am.

Evyatar Freisel reads Friedlander as interpreting Ahad Ha'am in this manner and criticizes him for it: He cites the following passage from Friedlaender's aforementioned article:

It is [Ahad Ha'am's] firm conviction that Zionism will never solve the material problem of Jewry. [...] the material misery of our people is not due to the Golum [...] it is due to the fact that a majority of our people are concerned in the land of the Czar. The abolition of the Pale of Settlement in Russia, or the distribution of Russian Jews over the globe, will do more towards

⁸⁷ Wagner and Raz, *Herzl*, 480.

⁸⁸ Friedlaender's appreciation for Herzl was great and genuine, as can be seen in the name of his firstborn son, Robert Herzl Friedlaender, born approximately nine months after this lecture, on – of all dates – December 25, 1906 (Shargel, 165).

alleviating Jewish material distress than the establishment of a Jewish center in Palestine. On the other hand Zionism – and only Zionism – is able to solve the Jewish spiritual problem, the problem of Judaism, or, what is identical with it, the problem of Jewish culture.⁸⁹

Friedlaender writes that according to Ahad Ha'am, Zionism cannot solve the Jewish problem since it originates not in the exile but in the fact that Jews were situated mostly in the Pale of Settlement, ruled by the hostile tsarist regime. However, Zionism can solve the Judaism problem. Friesel views this as a deviation from Ahad Ha'amism. He writes:

In Friedländer's explanation, the "material" and the "spiritual" problems of modern Jewry were bifurcated. Indeed, some of Friedländer's American colleagues went even further along these lines. Ahad Ha'am, on the other hand, saw both problems as really one. Material distress was not only, or necessarily, of economic origins; it was equally social and civil, and in this broader meaning it had been a major cause of Jewry's spiritual problem in Western Europe.⁹⁰

According to Friesel, Ahad Ha'am viewed the material and spiritual problems of the Jews as a single problem with a single, unified source.⁹¹ Friedlaender, on the other hand, viewed them as two separate problems that could be solved separately. As evidence for this claim, Friesel cites Ahad Ha'am's article *Slavery in Freedom*. In this article, Ahad Ha'am discusses the plight of French Jews, in the first European country

⁸⁹ Ibid., 416-417. Quoted in Friesel, 136.

⁹⁰ Friesel, 136.

⁹¹ Evyatar Friesel, "Ahad Ha-Amism in American Zionist Thought," in *At the Crossroads*, ed. Jacques Kornberg (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 133-41.

to introduce emancipation. He shows that even French intellectuals wonder why anti-Semitism there has not perished. He claims that the reason for that is the spiritual problem. Despite that, the article discusses mostly the spiritual slavery hidden inside emancipation's material freedom. Friesel does not cite a specific passage, but he might be referring to passages such as this:

However the truth is, that if our western brethren were zealous to their rights, they would not have considered devoting their people to spiritual goals or objectives, as long as it did not yet achieve its material objective, which every being has; as long as it did not make for itself life conditions that shall fit its spirit and provide for it the means to develop its strength and abilities, its unique form, in a straightforward manner, as its nature befits it. Only then, when it shall achieve all of that, it is likely that its course of life would attract it to that occupation that will allow it to become a teacher unto other nations and once more be beneficial to humanity, as befits the modern spirit. And if, at that time, some "thinkers" will claim that this occupation is the objective of our people, for which it was created, I will not be able to share that belief but I will not make war with the for semantics alone.⁹²

Ahad Ha'am claims here that the solution to the spiritual problem depends to an extent on material well being. But this does not indicate that the solution to the material problem cannot be separated from the spiritual one. His words here do not contradict Friedlaender's reading. Friesel also claims that "there was a subtle

⁹² Al Parshat Derakhim, Vol. 1, 131-2

tendency among American cultural Zionists to pass over the *material* side of the Ahad Ha'amian equation on Palestine and emphasize the *spiritual* side.”⁹³

Friedlaender's description of Ahad Ha'am as not holding that the exile is a material problem is an exaggeration. In the previous chapter we saw that Ahad Ha'am views exile as a deep problem and as a fundamentally negative condition. At the same time, we also saw that he presents the two problems, the spiritual and the material, as distinct. We even saw how in "Truth from the Land of Israel," for example, he claims that the material problem could be solved in America. There is no "material side" to Ahad Ha'am's equation on Palestine, as he explicitly wrote many times that the material problem could not be solved in Palestine. This "subtle difference" is, at most, a difference in emphasis, and even by that standard it is unclear why Friesel chose to focus on this aspect of Ahad Ha'am when his writings are filled with examples closer to Friedlaender's reading.

Friedlaender as an Ahad Ha'amist in America

So much for Friedlaender's description of Ahad Ha'am's writings. Another series of articles concerns Friedlaender's own views on American Judaism. Even in the title of "The Problem of Judaism in America" he uses Ahad Ha'am's terminology: not the "Jewish Problem," but rather the "Judaism Problem." Friedlaender's description of this problem is also similar to Ahad Ha'am:

The problem of Judaism would then consist in the fact that the soul, or spirit, of the Jewish people, as manifested in its culture, has in modern times

⁹³ Friesel, 137.

shown symptoms of decay of so alarming a nature as to make us fear for its continued existence. The beginning of this decay is obviously coincident with the beginning of Jewish emancipation, that is to say, with the moment when the Jews left the Ghetto to join the life and the culture of the nations around them.⁹⁴

So the problem of Judaism is moral and cultural, stemming from the loss of Jewish cultural uniqueness after their exit from the Ghetto. This description is similar to Ahad Ha'am's famous description of the problem:

It was not Jews alone that left the Ghetto. Judaism left with them. Jews only achieved that in certain countries, by the grace of foreign nations; but Judaism did so by itself, in anywhere that it interacted with new culture. The stream of this culture, as it is flowing into Judaism, ruins its ancient forts. Judaism could no longer close itself up and live its own separate life. Our national spirit wishes development, to digest the elements of general culture that come to it from outside, to digest them and turn them into a part of itself, as already happened in different generations. But the nation's exilic life conditions do not fit it. In our own time, culture is adapting itself to each location's national spirit., with every foreigner having to eliminate its independence and subject itself to the ruling spirit. For this reason, Judaism cannot develop itself according to its own path. As it leaves the walls of the Ghetto, it is in danger of losing its own independence, or – at best – its national unity. It may separate into many Judaisms, each one with

⁹⁴ Israel Friedlaender, "The Problem of Judaism in America." in *Past and Present*, 256

its own quality and its own life, as is the number of lands by which it is scattered.⁹⁵

Both Friedlaender and Ahad Ha'am emphasize the Judaism problem as first and foremost a cultural problem, stemming from the abandonment of the "ghetto," i.e., their semi-autonomous existence as a separate category of subject. The similarity between them is also evident in an additional comment by Friedlaender:

We need but cast a glance on the status of Judaism in various countries before and after the emancipation to realize beyond a shadow of doubt the deadly, disintegrating effect of outward freedom on Judaism.⁹⁶

It is hard to imagine that the term "outward freedom" did not come from "Slavery in Freedom," in which Ahad Ha'am used the same terminology to discuss the same phenomenon, where in emancipated lands, in which Jews enjoy material freedoms, Judaism is ailing and disappearing. After reviewing Jewry in several countries, Friedlaender moves to his main subject: Judaism in America. As noted in the previous chapter, Ahad Ha'am did not discuss this issue systematically, but it was evident that he did not see a fundamental difference between the United States and any other diasporic land. What was readable between the lines in Ahad Ha'am, becomes explicit in Friedlaender:

So far the Old World. As for the New, no undue skepticism is necessary to recognize that – leaving aside for the moment the other side of the coin, which

⁹⁵ *Al Parshat Derkahim* vol. 2, 28.

⁹⁶ Friedlaender, "Problem of Judaism," 256

will be presented later – the condition of Judaism and the effect of its free exposure to external influences is scarcely different.⁹⁷

So Friedlaender sees the condition of the Jews in the United States as similar to their condition in other countries – although as he hinted, there is another aspect as well. Friedlaender knew, of course, of the massive growth in organized Judaism in the United States, as expressed in the large number of new synagogues, but he believed this growth to be due not to a renaissance of Judaism in America but simply in the growth of the Jewish population due to immigration:

The expansion of American Judaism is not an organic growth from within, but a mechanical addition from without. Its gain, to use a Biblical simile, is the gain of one who puts his earnings into a bag with holes. As long as the earnings exceed the holes, the bag seems constantly to swell. But no sooner will the earnings have stopped than the bag will begin to shrink and will finally collapse.⁹⁸

The illusion that American Judaism is not in danger is due to the growing numbers of American immigrants. This growth adds enough of a pulse to Judaism to compensate for assimilation. However, when immigration inevitably stops, the problem will be exposed in its full degree. Additionally, this imported Judaism stems from the “ghetto,” which does not exist in the United States.⁹⁹ The reader may recall a similar warning from Ahad Ha’am, quoted in the previous chapter, in which he

⁹⁷ Ibid., 259.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

warned that the use of Yiddish in America would decline over the generations, corresponding with the decline of immigration.¹⁰⁰

Friedlaender and Ahad Ha'am both discuss a well known American phenomenon: the disappearance of particularistic characteristics in second generation immigrants, on which they comment in the Jewish context. Both warn of euphoria from the superficial, temporary growth of Jewish culture in America, claiming that this is only the effect of immigration. Yet while Ahad Ha'am makes in his remarks in the context of pointing out negatives aspects of American Jewish culture, Friedlaender speaks more positively. 'The model he presents for American Judaism is the model of medieval Jewry in the Muslim world, at the so-called "golden period:"

The amount of freedom enjoyed by the Jews of the Arabic epoch was in no way inferior to that of our own. The Jews took an honorable and energetic part in the economic, social and political development of the eastern, as well as the western, Califate. We encounter among the Jews of that period men of affairs wielding a powerful influence in the public life of the country. We find Jewish merchants, Jewish financiers, Jewish dignitaries of high standing; and Jewish viziers and ministers of State are more frequently to be met with their than in our own times. The association with the culture and spiritual influences of the age was just as close and intimate.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ *Al Parshat Derkahim*, vol. 2, 126-7.

¹⁰¹ Friedlaender, "Problem of Judaism," 264.

One might think this reality may lead to assimilation due to the frequent day to day and intellectual interactions between Jews and non-Jews. However, this period led to a renewal of Jewish activity, as expressed by the flurry of new Jewish literature:

Yet the very same age saw a development of the fascinating and so rich in results as never before or after in the lands of the exile. No department in the spiritual treasury of our people remained untouched by the loving care of its sons. Bible, Talmud, Hebrew literature, Hebrew poetry and philology, Jewish philosophy and everything that constitutes the pride of the Jew found in their greatest and most brilliant representatives in that period, and therefore found attachment to Judaism went hand in hand with a noble enthusiasm for everything noble outside of Judaism.¹⁰²

The frequent interaction between Jews and non Jews did not lead to assimilation but to the creation of new Jewish cultural treasures. This fact proves it is possible to live an emancipated life without the loss of Jewish life:

Thus the great Jewish-Arabic period irrefutably shows that Judaism *is* compatible with freedom, and that a full participation in the life of the nations may very well be reconciled with a deep attachment to Judaism and a vigorous activity in its behalf. The same holds true of our own age. There is nothing in modern life or culture which is more opposed and more dangerous to Judaism than were the conditions of that era. Modern Christianity possesses

¹⁰² Ibid., 265.

no more irreconcilable with Judaism of the twentieth century than was the philosophy of Aristotle with the Judaism of the twelfth.¹⁰³

The analogy, according to Friedlaender, is perfect: just as Jews of his own time are attracted to their surrounding Christian culture, so, too, the Jews of medieval times were attracted to their surrounding Muslim culture. But Judaism can withstand this attraction. So far, the road that Friedlaender has taken could find a parallel in Ahad Ha'am. But his emphasis on the medieval analogy is new. Ahad Ha'am did express appreciation to this period's thinkers, most clearly in his article, "The Rule of Intellect," his only attempt at scholarship, which explored Maimonides's body of work on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of his death.¹⁰⁴ Still, this period in history does not play a major role in Ahad Ha'am's view of the contemporary scene as it does for Friedlaender. In fact, the possibility of a major center of Jewish culture outside the Land of Israel is not discussed by Ahad Ha'am, although he was clearly aware of Jewish history, and as was noted above, Friedlaender also emphasized the role of medieval scholarship on Ahad Ha'am's education. Perhaps Ahad Ha'am downplayed this point because Palestine was not an important cultural center for medieval Jewry. Though it had some important rabbis, most notably Nachmanides, important Jewish centers were in Spain (Sepharad) and Germany, (Ashkenaz), Poland and Russia, among others. This, then, appears to be a deviation from Ahad Ha'am's cultural Zionist orthodoxy, in which only Palestine can be a spiritual/cultural center

¹⁰³ Ibid., 267.

¹⁰⁴ Ahad Ha'am, "The Rule of Intellect," *Al Parshat Derakhim* vol. 4, 1-3 (Hebrew) ; Friedlaender also wrote an article on Maimonides on the same occasion (Israel Friedlaender, "Moses Maimonides." *Past and Present*, 159-92); the two exchanged letters on their respective articles (Ah'ad Ha'am to Friedlaender, *Iggerot Ahad Ha'am*, vol 3 , 345-7).

for the Jewish people. Friedlaender implies it is possible to have a significant Jewish life even without a cultural center in the Land of Israel, although that life will become much richer once a cultural center is established.

According to Friedlaender, the problem of Judaism in America does not stem from its contact with a foreign culture. The problem is when the foreign influence is exaggerated, when Judaism shrinks from a natural culture to a religious creed:

But in confronting Judaism with the culture of the surrounding nations we must present it as it is, in its true shape and size, and not as a caricature. It was the fatal mistake of the period of emancipation, a mistake which is the real source of all the subsequent disasters in modern Jewish life, that, in order to facilitate the fight for political equality, Judaism was put forward not as a culture, as the full expression of the inner life of the Jewish people, but as a creed, as the summary of a few abstract articles of fact, similar in character to the religion of the surrounding nations. [...] Jewish living had to be sacrificed for the sake of emancipation. The beliefs of Judaism had to be refashioned so as to purge them of their intimate connection with the Jewish national aspirations. The progress of Judaism was no more an organic development from within, but a mere series of mechanic changes dictated by considerations from without.¹⁰⁵

Friedlaender claims that American Jewry was repeating the mistakes of the Haskalah movement. The artificial changes that were made to Judaism during that time (a thinly veiled attack on the Reform movement) only hurt the organic

¹⁰⁵ Friedlaender, "Problem of Judaism," 267-268.

development of Judaism as it ought to have been. Judaism did not learn from its surrounding cultures, but only served as a poor imitation of them.

Friedlaender on Prophecy

The similarities between Friedlaender and Ahad Ha'am do not end with their treatment of Zionism and modern Judaism. They are also found in their treatments of other Jewish issues, first and foremost prophecy. The subject of Biblical prophecy was a major subject of Friedlaender's lectures in JTS, and his students said that his lectures on prophecy, like any other subject, were thinly veiled promotions for Zionism.¹⁰⁶ His opinions on prophecy are expressed in his article, "The Political Ideal of the Prophets." In this article he demonstrates what he considers to be the political element of Biblical Prophetic literature. This political element is focused on supporting and strengthening the Jewish kingdom. His comments on prophecy, just like Ahad Ha'am's, are directed towards the Reform movement's notions of Prophetic Judaism. This idea, originated by Claude Montefiore, was very popular also among the American Reform movement, especially the Hebrew Union College.¹⁰⁷

Friedlaender presents prophecy as essentially political and mundane. In a clear reference to Christianity, he wrote that

...[The] prophets of our people had little sympathy to those who proclaimed 'my kingdom is not of this world', and believed that the problems and perplexities of humanity could be solved by deserting humanity.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Shargel, 56-7.

¹⁰⁷ See above, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Israel Friedlaender, "The Political Ideal of the Prophets," *Past and Present*, 2

At the same time, the prophets are driven by a deep vision concerning reality: “The prophet is a man of reality, but he does not yield to reality.”¹⁰⁹ Prophecy stems from God and its directed towards humanity: “Thus the source of prophecy is divine, its end and means are human agencies for human purposes.”¹¹⁰ Ahad Ha’am, in his classic article, “Priest and Prophet,” has some similar and some different comments on prophecy. He agrees that the prophet is driven by a moral ideal, one that is strongly connected to human reality:

The prophet is “one-sided.” A certain moral idea fills his entire heart and swallows him whole. All of his feelings and senses are engulfed. He is unable to keep his mind off of it, even for a moment. He can only see the world through the prism of his idea, and all he desires is to realize this idea in all circumstances.¹¹¹

On the other hand, Friedlaender’s emphasis on the divine aspect of prophecy is a significant divergence. Ahad Ha’am describes the origin of prophecy in purely secular and moralistic terms: “He only observes what ought to be according to his own internal sense.”¹¹²

Prophecy exists only in society, and is meaningless outside society, which makes it fundamentally political. In this context he cites the final chapter of Maimonides’ *Guide to the Perplexed*:

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ahad Ha’am, “Kohen ve-Navi,” *Al Parshat Derakhim*, vol. 1, 181.

¹¹² Ibid.

Imagine a human being [...] living by himself, without any intercourse with his fellow-creatures. You will find that all ethical ideals are utterly useless to him and contribute in nothing toward the perfection of his character.¹¹³

Friedlaender's discussion of prophecy leads him to make some observations on American Jewry:

Every one of us, whether reared in the ideas of the American constitution, or whether imbued with the spirit of its prototype, the ancient constitution of our Torah, is "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." But while equality, in the sense of equal opportunity, is the indispensable condition of a healthy public life and its only salvation from tyranny, oppression and brutal force, it is just as certain, when taken as a statement of fact, that no two men were created equal. [...] This variety, which is the basis and stepping stone of the harmony of the cosmos, is the result of the process of differentiation, which becomes more and more accentuated, the higher we rise in the scale of nature, and reaches its culmination in man and human aggregates.¹¹⁴

In this passage, Friedlaender shows that the American ethos, as he understands it, is not only compatible with the Jewish spirit, but stems from it. This view allows Friedlaender to believe that it is possible to integrate into American society without assimilation, in the sense of the loss of Judaism. Friedlaender also emphasizes the importance of human diversity. He does not claim, however, that the

¹¹³ *Guide to the Perplexed* III, 54; cited by Friedlaender, "Political Ideal," 5

¹¹⁴ Friedlaender, "Political Ideal," 6.

ideal of *E Pluribus Unum* stems from Judaism. Above we saw how both he and Ahad Ha'am view the idea of multiple Judaisms as a real danger to the cohesiveness of Jewry. However, American belief in diversity is part of the reason that America can be a home for Judaism, even though diversity is not something to be imitated within Judaism.

This is more complicated still as Friedlaender goes on to discuss Jewry not merely as a separate nation, but as a chosen nation:

From the very moment when Israel stepped forth into the light of history it has stood out as a singularly marked national type. When yet scarcely lopped off from the common Semitic stock, it already felt itself to be distinct, not only from the kindred Semitic races, but also from the rest of mankind. This distinction is based on the fact that Israel is the people of God.¹¹⁵

The idea of election is vital to Friedlaender's view of prophecy. It is an election that is tied with Jewry's political nation. The realization of this election is dependent on the nation's separate political existence. That is very different from the Reform idea of election, that viewed the spreading of Jewish values among the nations as the destiny of the Jewish people, a destiny that required it to remain scattered among them. Both view election as vital, but express it differently. And Friedlaender says little about the interpretation of Jews as a chosen people in an American context.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

Describing Jewish history, Friedlaender quotes Ezekiel's words to the exiles in Babylon: "You say, 'We will be like the nations, like the families of the lands, worshiping wood and stone.'"¹¹⁶ This is another clear allusion to assimilation in Friedlaender's own time. Friedlaender ignores the context in which these words were spoken. The prophet was warning the exiles "If you defile yourselves as your fathers did and go astray after their detestable things."¹¹⁷ Jewish idolatry is seen as a continuation of the idolatry performed by their ancestors in the Land of Israel. Friedlaender, however, attributes the appeal of idolatry to the meeting with foreign cultures in exile. This appeal, which Friedlaender interprets as suicidal, was prevented by prophecy:

But Judah did not leap into the abyss of destruction. In the last moment, Judah was caught by an invisible hand from behind and dragged away from the brink. Judah seemed a valley of dry bones, with no sign of life. But suddenly a breath of life came and began to breathe upon these slain. "And the breath came, and the lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great army."¹¹⁸ And the life-giving breath which saved Judah from destruction and infused into it the desire and the power to live was none other than the *political ideal of the prophets*.¹¹⁹

In other words, the prophetic idea was what drove the people to return to their national existence and not to succumb to assimilation. To paraphrase Ahad Ha'am, it can be said that more than Israel kept the prophetic idea, the prophetic idea kept them.

¹¹⁶ Ezekiel 20:32; quoted in Friedlaender, "Political Ideal," 14.

¹¹⁷ Ezekiel 20:30.

¹¹⁸ Ezekiel 37:11.

¹¹⁹ Friedlaender, "Political Ideal," 14-15.

Again, this idea is closely tied with election. What began, he claimed, as a concept of political dominance of Israel to its neighbors, became a notion of a spiritual superiority.¹²⁰ Once again, though, Friedlaender emphasizes prophecy's political aspect:

However, had the prophets done nothing more than to formulate and emphasize the ideal of the religious selection of Israel, they would have done little, or less than little. Their ideal would have resulted in a sort of Utopia, in a Never-land and Nowhere-land, beyond time and space, without any relation to real national life. But the prophets did succeed because, politicians that they were, they blended this transcendental ideal with the concrete historical forces, and thus made it an immediate powerful factor in life¹²¹.

The political ideal of the prophets is composed, according to Friedlaender, of two parts: the physical territory – especially Jerusalem – and the pursuit of Justice:

But however invaluable Zion may be, she is valueless in herself; what renders her invaluable is not the piece of ground she covers, but the ideal she embodies: as a city of righteousness, in which righteousness has its lodging place. “Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation”¹²²

Reform prophetic Judaism is based on the nation's geographic dispersion. Conversely, Friedlaender is proposing a prophetic Judaism whose strength stems from its concentration in a single location – Zion. Friedlaender chose this point to

¹²⁰ Ibid, 15

¹²¹ Ibid, 15

¹²² Ibid, 21.

remove the thin veil from covering his political agenda, when he calls this notion by the term “spiritual Zionism.”¹²³ He admits, of course, that the term is anachronistic, as it originated in the modern era to describe Ahad Ha'am's brand of Zionism rather than in antiquity to describe the ideology of the prophets. However, he felt the term could still be applied to the prophets. In their constructions, he claimed, Zion was the spiritual center of the Jewish nation despite not being its political or geographic seat.¹²⁴ This is, of course, similar to Ahad Ha'am's conception of the spiritual center.

It is at this point that Friedlaender puts forth some of his ideas on nationhood. He implies that a nation's life force is dependent on a national spirit. Paraphrasing Descartes, he claims that the secret to national existence can be expressed in the words “*I hope, therefore I am*”¹²⁵

The similarity to Ahad Ha'am is clear. Time and time again Ahad Ha'am emphasized the importance of a national ethos to national existence. As early as his first article, “This is Not the Way,” he claimed that the correct way towards national freedom is by promoting a national consciousness.¹²⁶

One of the most intriguing parts of Friedlaender's national-political interpretation of prophecy comes when he provides justification to Ezra's instruction for Jewish men to divorce their foreign wives:¹²⁷

There are people, and people in our own midst, who, with an air of unapproachable superiority, are loud in their denunciation of the narrow-

¹²³ Ibid., 22.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 29

¹²⁶ See above, 9.

¹²⁷ Ezra 9:1 – 10:43.

mindedness and cruelty of this action. These censors of morals would sing the praises of those who risk their lives in warfare to gain a strip of land or to satisfy the whim of a ruler, and they go into raptures over the heroism of the four hundred Spartans who fell at Thermopylae , “faithful to the laws of their country.” But those who gathered around Ezra and, faithful to the laws of their country, their God and their people, sacrificed not only their lives, but their lives’ happiness, and disrupted the most sacred and most tender bones of the human heart to save their nation from death and its ideal from extinction, can lay claim to far greater heroism. And were modern mankind, among them our own people, less swayed by pagan standards and ideals, they would venerate the memory of Ezra and his followers, who, by an unparalleled sacrifice, preserved the message of the prophets and succeeded to carry it into the life of humanity.¹²⁸

A more sober scholar may have pointed to this text as merely recording the commandment against marrying foreign spouses, or at least the moment it was intensified. Friedlaender, however, sees the Torah’s commandments as expressing absolute values. He claims explains that this mass divorce was a superb moral sacrifice. Once again, his idea of prophecy is closely related to election and segregation. Ahad Ha’am does not emphasize these motifs. While he did not address the issue of intermarriage publicly, he did react strongly when his daughter Rachel married a non-Jewish man, going as far as to temporarily sever ties with her.

¹²⁸ Friedlaender, “Political Ideal,” 32-33.

In the article's conclusion, Friedlaender returns to modern Jewish politics. he claims that in his own time, there are once again those who want to assimilate, just as some called for it in Babylon. But there are also forces that did not exist in the days of the prophets: one group – political Zionism - that views Zion as a political center, but does not address Jewish spirituality. Another group – Reform Judaism, which Friedlaender claims is influenced by materialistic science – views Judaism as a spirit without a body, seeking to keep its place dispersed among the nations. Opposite these groups he presents, of course, spiritual Zionism as the true heir of prophetic spirit:

But those of us who still cherish the memory of the prophets and pin their faith to their ideals see in Zion above all the consummation of our *spiritual* strivings. To them Zion does not spell great numbers and vast territories, big armies and large navies. To them Zion is dear as the *spiritual* center of our people, where, independent of numbers and dimensions, the Jewish *spirit* – the *Jewish* spirit – can develop free and unhampered, where the “holy remnant,” conscious of its mission, lives as a model and a blessing to the rest of Israel and mankind, where the ancient ideal is realized in a modern form: “For out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”¹²⁹

In this last passage, Friedlaender abandons the thin veneer of Biblical exegesis and turns explicitly to his contemporary Jewish politics. He is evoking his own political faction, as well as his opposition.

* * *

¹²⁹ Ibid., 34.

In this chapter we saw how Israel Friedlaender interpreted some of Ahad Ha'am's ideas in an American context. We saw how these ideas are transformed slightly both by Friedlaender's own viewpoint and by the American context. Friedlaender added an emphasis on medieval Judaism which was largely from Ahad Ha'am. More importantly, Friedlaender added references to his and his reader's American context. He speaks of the unique cultural and political environment in America, that can allow Judaism to thrive alongside other contexts. The previous chapter showed that Ahad Ha'am was skeptical as to the idea of diasporic Jewish culture, accepting it only as a necessary evil. This chapter shows how his close disciple has started to move on from this idea, viewing the American context as a potential Jewish center, while not eliminating the importance of Palestine.

Reverberations of Ahad Ha'am in early American Zionism

Ahad Ha'am dedicated his life to the promotion of his ideas on Jewish nationhood. He was deeply troubled by the condition of the Jewish people. The title of his collected essays, "At the Crossroads," suggests the precarious state of disarray for world Jewry at the time. He believed that in addition to their physical troubles, Jews also suffered from far greater spiritual problems. Judaism was struggling to regain its cohesion after the fall of the Ghetto, alongside the rise, and arguable failure, of emancipation.

The reality of exile was seen by him as a deeply tragic condition. He rejected various ideologies that suggested diasporic solutions to the Jewish Question. Assimilation, to him, was not only not an answer but a problem in itself, the loss of

Jewish values and Jewish culture. Autonomism was bound to fail since it relied on goodwill from the dominant non-Jewish cultures. And the notion of rebuilding the Jewish world somewhere in the diaspora, such as in America, was also impossible, since a cultural rebuilding would require a historical connection of the kind that can only exist at the nation's birthplace, the Land of Israel.

On the other hand, he also rejected political Zionism's notion of mass immigration to Palestine and the formation of a Jewish state. He argued that Herzl's messianic dream was unrealistic. Mass immigration waves were unlikely, the economic conditions were not ripe, and the diplomatic charter hoped for by Herzl was not forthcoming. Political Zionism, in his eyes, was to remain a fairytale.

But his objection to Herzl was much deeper than mere logistics. Political Zionism had the wrong emphasis in mind, focusing on the problems of the Jews rather than the much more crucial problem of Judaism. The New Society as described in *Altneuland* was, in Ahad Ha'am's view, not Jewish enough. The dismissal of Jewish cultural issues made Herzl's Zionism into a dangerous kind of false messianism.

It is for these reasons that he formulated his ideology. He believed his movement, the Zionist movement, should concern itself with instilling sentiments of nationhood among the dispersed Jewish world. His prescription for that was the establishment of a Jewish cultural center in Palestine. Such a center would develop Jewish culture and provide an example to the diaspora of a truly Jewish lifestyle.

Israel Friedlaender was very concerned with the physical and economic living conditions of Jewish communities, as evidenced by his relief efforts. However, like

Ahad Ha'am, he thought their spiritual problems are much more important. was deeply influenced by Ahad Ha'am's ideas. He, too, was concerned with the future of Judaism. He, too believed that Jewish culture was in crisis following the disestablishment of the Ghetto. And he, too, believed in a cultural center in Palestine.

However, his world view differed from Ahad Ha'am in several ways. Ahad Ha'am viewed America as an extension of the exile both he and Friedlaender knew in Europe. Friedlaender, however, found new value in his adopted country. The pluralistic society was, in his opinion, a breeding ground for the development of Judaism. He also emphasized medieval Jewish culture as a model for modern Judaism. Such a model is not found in Ahad Ha'am. This model depends on an accommodating host culture, which Ahad Ha'am did not think possible in the exile. And this model was not reliant on a Jewish center in Palestine. And Friedlaender was much more open to religious and theological sentiments.

Despite these significant differences, Friedlaender's influence from Ahad Ha'am remains clear. Teaching from this perspective, he no doubt exposed JTS's rabbinical students to these notions. And his work with the Jewish community allowed him to come into contact with leading Jewish and Zionist leaders. The full extent of Ahad Ha'am's – and Friedlaender's – influence in the United States is yet to be explored. This thesis attempted to provide an example of a detailed comparison between the two thinkers, that might help illuminate their respective theoretical frameworks. Further comparisons between different thinkers can help construct a genealogy of cultural Zionism in America.

However, an even wider lens is needed. This thesis is a study in the history of ideas. However, history is composed of much more than the thoughts of intellectuals. Further research is needed as to the relationship of intellectualism and public perception. Support for the Zionist movement included many members of the Jewish community. Only few of them took part in the intellectual discussions around political and cultural Zionism. Like most intellectual histories, this thesis focused on men, thus excluding half of the population from its picture of history. It also excluded people who were less educated, or less focused on the intellectual debates around Zionism. How did these people understand their own Jewishness and their own Zionism? Are these perceptions at all influenced by the intellectual discussions, and vice versa? Further research would hopefully look both at the ways Ahad Ha'am continued to be influential in America, and at the ways in which such an influence may have been wider than intellectual circles.

Contemporary American culture proved and disproved some of the ideas promoted by both Ahad Haam and Friedlaender. As was noted in part one, Ahad Haam's skepticism of the feasibility of a Jewish state has been proven wrong. However, the existence of this state gives us an opportunity to look at the relationship between American Jewry and the Jewish state.

Dov Waxman, in tracing the history of American Jewish engagement with Israel, notes that the level of such engagement – though not necessarily of unquestioning support – has been steadily high since the 1967 war.¹³⁰ He also

¹³⁰ Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe : the American Jewish Conflict over Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 52.

characterizes Jewish American engagement with Israel as consisting of the "five pillars of pro-Israelism:" Familism, or the notion that all Jews are related and inter-dependent; Fear of a second Holocaust; Functionality, or the functional use of Israel as a Jewish cultural focal point; Faith in the Land of Israel as the Holy Land; and Fantasy of the country as an ideal place, though the nature of that ideal changed over the years.¹³¹

How do these pillars compare with Ahad Haam and Friedlander's ideas? As for Familism, though they no doubt have agreed with the description of the Jewish nation as an extended family, this will not be a sufficient reason to relate to the Jewish state. This perspective looks at Israel no differently than any other large Jewish community. As Waxman points out,

Just as many American Jews felt obliged to help other less fortunate American Jews (or, in the past, Soviet Jews, for example), they have also felt obliged to help Jews in Israel, and thus, by extension, the State of Israel.¹³²

In both Ahad Haam and Friedlaender's writing, the Land of Israel and its Cultural Center fill a unique role, qualitatively different than any other Jewish community. As such, this pillar is not compatible with their predictions.

The second pillar, fear, is equally inconsistent with either of their ideas. As Waxman ties this fear deeply with the Holocaust, which happened after both of their deaths, that is not surprising.¹³³ However, both emphasized that Palestine is not the ideal place to solve the physical problem of the Jews. In fact, American Jews

¹³¹ Waxman, 23-33.

¹³² Waxman, 22.

¹³³ Waxman, 24.

paradoxically feel more secure than Jews in Israel while viewing the state as guard against antisemitism and "even another Holocaust."¹³⁴ It is remarkable, though, that Waxman mentions only the fear of physical violence, while the physical problem as reflected in Ahad Haam, Friedlaender, and even Herzl, is mostly about economic factors and restrictive living conditions. It appears then, that at least some of the Jewish problem itself has been reframed over the years.

Waxman's discussion of functionality, however, comes much closer to Ahad Haam and Friedlaender's ideas. Waxman claims that in the American Jewish consciousness, "Assimilation is a bigger problem than anti-Semitism," a sentiment to which Ahad Haam and Friedlaender would no doubt agree.¹³⁵ That this is still a concern even seven decades after the birth of the Jewish state suggests that such a state would indeed not be in and of itself a solution to all the problems of Jews, just as Ahad Haam suggested. Israel functions as a guard against that fear as well. Waxman claims that the best example of that functionality is the Taglit-Birthright project, which has been taking young Diaspora Jews on tours of Israel since the mid-1990s. that the goal of the Taglit project is not to encourage Aliyah but to strengthen Jewish identity among Diaspora Jews¹³⁶ speaks to its Cultural Zionist affiliation. Indeed, Yossi Beilin – who, as deputy foreign minister, help ensure the Israeli government's support for the project, explicitly framed it as an Ahad Ha'amist project.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Waxman, 24.

¹³⁵ Waxman, 25.

¹³⁶ And, unofficially, serve as a meeting ground for young, single Jews.

¹³⁷ Yossi Beilin, *Ahad Haam pinat Hertsl : bikur hozer beErets Yisrael : beiqvot maamaro shel Ahad Haam "Emet me-Erets Yiśr'ael"* [Truth From the Land of Israel Revisited] (Tel-Aviv: ha-Ḳibuts ha-me'uḥad, 2002), 130.

Physical travel to Israel is not the only way in which the state serves as a cultural focal point for American Jews. As Waxman points out, "For most American Jews, supporting Israel is part of what it means to be a good Jew. This is especially true for more secular American Jews who rarely observe Jewish religious practices or perform traditional Jewish custom."¹³⁸ Support of Israel, then, has replaced traditional religion for some American Jews. This seems similar to Ahad Ha'am's assertions that the national ethic, which previously manifested itself in religious form, must be replaced by a cultural ethic, enforced by a cultural center in the Land of Israel. Though unlike Ahad Ha'am's vision, there may not have been a conscious effort to construct such a cultural center, it effectively became one to an extent.

A more complex case study can be found in Waxman's fourth pillar, faith. All major streams in American Judaism – Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Modern Orthodox – accorded religious significance to Israel and included references to it in their liturgy.¹³⁹ This integration is ambivalent to Ahad Ha'am's ideas. Ahad Ha'am was a secularist. He believed that the national ethic once took religious form but should turn into a secular form. Friedlaender is a more complicated figure in that regard. Educated in one rabbinical seminary and teaching in another one, he had more sympathy for religion than his mentor. However, religion still did not play a major role in his thought. This made him stand out from his American colleagues, for whom religion was an important part of Zionism.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Waxman, 26.

¹³⁹ Waxman, 27.

¹⁴⁰ Friesel, 138.

The fifth and final point in Waxman's list is fantasy. American Jews developed their own conception of Israel, from which they draw inspiration and strength. In

Waxman's words:

For most American Jews, Israel has been more of a mythic land than an actual place. It functions, therefore, as a kind of screen on which American Jews may project their hopes, fantasies and fears.¹⁴¹

In other words, American Jews' conception of Israel is based more on their own needs than on the reality of the state. On the one hand, Ahad Ha'am was clearly opposed to fantasy regarding the Land of Israel. In his early article, *Truth from the Land of Israel*, he took pains to expose uncomfortable truths as to the hardships faced by Jewish pioneers there.¹⁴² In another article he criticizes some of his fellow proto-Zionists for their limited knowledge about the Land of Israel.¹⁴³ However, despite the tenuous connection to the reality of the State of Israel, this aspect does still reveal how a version of the Jewish state as a major component of American Jewish identity. While this is not quite the relationship Ahad Ha'am envisioned, American Jews still view their relationship with Israel in ways similar to his ideal model. The relation between the phantastical Israel and Ahad Ha'am's model was demonstrated by Noam Pianko, when he described a classroom experiment he often performs for his adult Jewish education classes. Pianko gave his students several quotes related to the Israel – diaspora relationship. According to Pianko, a significant number of students favor Ahad Ha'am's conception that Israel should be a center while the diaspora is in the

¹⁴¹ Waxman, 28.

¹⁴² See above, 14.

¹⁴³ Ahad Ha'am, *Al Parshat Derakhim*, Vol. 3, 16-17.

periphery. However, he notes, these students rarely show deep insight into Israeli culture.¹⁴⁴ This experiment, though anecdotal, suggest that American Jews do view a version of Israel as their cultural center – although the relation of this Israel to the actual middle eastern country is up for debate. As for Friedlaender, though he viewed the Jewish community of Palestine with favor, his writings are much more concerned with the cultural significance of the Land of Israel than the on its actual status, as his mentor did. In this way Friedlaender represented an early version of what would evolve into the American Jewish fantasy of Israel.

This brief survey of Waxman's five pillars suggests the complex ways in which Ahad Ha'am and Friedlander's ideas relate to later Jewish diasporic and American feelings toward diasporic Zionism. While some of their ideas stood the test of time, others challenged by an evolving historical reality. This brief view, however, deserves to be expanded with further research on both of its historical ends. A further exploration of the views of early American Cltural Zionism is needed in order to map out the ideological evolution. And a further exploration of the views of American Jewry – such as a more scientific version of Pianko's classroom experiment – should be conducted to complete the historical comparison of American Zionism in view of Ahad Ha'am's ideas.

¹⁴⁴ Noam Pianko: *Zionism and the Roads not take: Rawidowicz, Kaplan, Kohn* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 201-202.

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