

ISRAEL

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel was set up in 1962 at Tel Aviv University through the initiative and with the assistance of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the aim of furthering the research and the teaching of the history of the Zionist idea, the Zionist movement and the Land of Israel in modern times.

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Special Issue **The Myth of the New Jew**

Editor

Dvora Hacoheh



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

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Summaries

Zohar Shavit

The Habitus of the “New Jew” of the Haskalah Movement

The article deals with the change in the habitus of the Jews that members of the Haskalah movement introduced into traditional Jewish society in the German-speaking lands at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. It focuses on the persons and historical processes that made this change possible and analyzes several of the components of daily practices, most of them quite trivial. The first part of the article describes the circumstances that made the constitution of a new habitus possible, namely, the coincidence between the interests and programs of two groups within Jewish society, a group of financial entrepreneurs and a group of cultural entrepreneurs, both of which were part of the Haskalah movement who shared, to some degree, a common vision of Jewish society that accorded with the policy and economic programs of the absolute monarchy in Prussia. The second part of the article deals with the maskilic programs that led to the creation of the new habitus, focusing on the concrete directives and instructions given to Jewish children and young adults through the maskilic texts. The children and young adults were expected to internalize them and to use them as guidelines for their everyday behavior and new daily practices regarding the organization of their lives.

Guy Miron

Between Two Worlds:

Modern Orthodoxy in Germany as a New Form of Jewish Identity

The article presents the main features of the German Jewish Modern Orthodox identity. Modern Orthodox Jews integrated as citizens in their European homeland – Germany – but aspired to separate themselves from the mainstream Liberal Jewish community. Their attitude towards German culture was quite open, and a new type of rabbi emerged, who was much more sensitive to the changing needs of the community. Modern Orthodox German Jews were particularly concerned with the challenge presented by the East European Jewish immigrants to Germany. The article argues that their identity, like other forms of modern Jewish identity, was at least partly influenced by the pressures that the German state and society exerted on the Jews to adapt themselves to the surrounding society.

Yitzhak Conforti

The New Jew in Zionist Thought: Nationalism, Ideology, and Historiography

This article discusses the connections between Zionist ideology and Zionist historiography in relation to one of the central concepts in Zionist thought – the “new Jew.” The idea of the new Jew was shared by all streams of the Zionist movement, but it was not a monolithic concept, since each stream emphasized different aspects of the desired character of the new Jew. Zionist historiography, sometimes understood as an integral part of Zionist ideology, challenged the radical version of the concept of the new Jew. This article distinguishes between activist Zionist historiography and professional historiography, demonstrating that the professional Zionist historians aspired to describe Jewish history in its continuity, contrary to the aspiration to educate a new Jew who would be detached from Jewish tradition. The conclusions arising from this discussion support the ethnic-cultural interpretation of Jewish nationalism, as opposed to the modernist understanding, which maintains that Zionism invented a nation that does not represent a premodern historical group.

Glenda Abramson

“The First of Those Who Return”: Incarnations of the New Jew in Modern Hebrew Literature

In seeking to establish a paradigm of a literary “new Jew” for the early twentieth century, we must view the cultural developments of the time on the background of European modernist culture. During this period the European “new Jew” underwent many incarnations, including Max Nordau’s muscular hero, Buber’s “Renaissance” Jew, Berdyczewsky’s Nietzschean “new man,” Herzl’s “authentic Jew” and the Hebrew literary *talush*. All the divergent ideas of Jewish renewal propounded in Europe were united in Shaul Tchernichowsky’s poetry, either through deliberate reference or as a result of the tenor of the time. This article examines Tchernichowsky’s implicit conception of the “new Jew” through two poems: *Lenokhah pesel Apollo* (Before the Statue of Apollo, 1899) and *Ani – li misheli en klum* (I have nothing of my own, 1937).

Arye Naor

“With Blood and Sweat/ Shall Arise a Race”: The “New Jew” according to Ze’ev Jabotinsky

The founder of Revisionist Zionism, Ze’ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky, believed that Zionism would create a new type of Jew. Educating and training that type of “new Jew” was the mission of the youth organization that he headed, Betar Youth. Betar

used a variety of means to train its members to realize the vision of the “new Jew,” from physical and para-military exercises to learning and using the Hebrew language, from adopting chivalry in conduct and life-style (“hadar”) to making every effort to immigrate to *Eretz Yisrael*. Jabotinsky presented three figures as models of the new Jewish character: Herzl, who had brought the nation back into history; Trumpeldor, who personified the pure idea of pioneering and serving the nation; and Shlomo Ben Yosef, who, when sentenced to death by the British Mandate authorities, demonstrated strength and honor while in prison and in his last minute, standing on the gallows, sang the Betar Song: “To die or conquer the hill.” These three men symbolize in their lives the idea of the new Jew” – the antithesis to the figure of the ghetto Jew.

Dov Schwartz

Religious Zionism and the Idea of the New Person

The article seeks to define the characteristics of the “new person” in the perception of Religious Zionists on the basis of both textual and sociological evidence. The “New Person” in Religious Zionism has unique theological and cultural features, which are manifested with regard to issues such as messianism, gender and the value of labor. Thus the article presents a phenomenological survey of the various dimensions of the Religious Zionists’ ideology.

Arieh Saposnik

A Secularized Zionist Sacred and the Making of the New Jew

This article examines the role of holiness – competing notions of the holy, the shaping of holy sites and sacred symbols, and the contestation of the holiness of the Land and of holiness itself – in the making of the “new Jew” in pre-state Palestine. In contrast with the accepted picture of Zionism’s “new Jews” and the Hebrew culture they both created and embodied as unproblematically secular, the article argues that in fact notions of holiness (albeit often dramatically recast) played central roles in the making of the new Jew and of Zionist culture. In the final analysis, the article argues that Hebrew culture and the new Jew were products of a complex relationship between tradition and innovation that was characterized by internal Jewish struggles between modernizing Zionists and their traditionalist and Orthodox rivals in the *Yishuv*, as well as dialogue and conflict with both Christian and Muslim conceptions of, and claims to, the holy. Integral to the character of the Hebrew individual and collective was the formulation and enactment of a new, secularized and nationalized sacrality that was deeply rooted in the relationship to a newly sacralized Land.

Bat-Sheva Margalit Stern

“He Walked through the Fields” – But What Did She Do?

The “Hebrew Woman” in Her Own Eyes and in the Eyes of Her Contemporaries

The metamorphosis undergone by Jewish women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the result of modernization, secularization and education. Similarly, the offspring of the new Jewish woman, the “new Hebrew woman” was the embodiment of various schools of thought, in particular the liberal and the socialist, which were prevalent at that time. The new Hebrew woman offered a feminist interpretation of the malaise of the Jewish people in general, and of Jewish women in particular, challenging the roles designated to her by her male peers and offering her own alternative interpretation. She chose *Eretz Yisrael* and Zionism, to “auto-emancipate” herself rather than waiting passively for her emancipation by others. In this sense, the new Hebrew woman collaborated with and reflected the hegemonic Zionist ideals and priorities. This article aims to analyze the discourse of the new Hebrew woman, as manifested in Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century in order to shed light on the link between gender and nationalism in the Zionist context. In particular, it considers how men and women envisioned the new Hebrew woman; how class, political affiliation and gender shaped their interpretation; and how the new Hebrew woman differed from her counterpart, the new Jewish woman.

Ofer Shiff

Abba Hillel Silver’s Construction of the “New Jew”
in the Aftermath of Israel’s Independence

This article examines the doctrine of Diaspora Zionism and its attempt to reconstruct the concept of the “new Jew” in the immediate years after Israel’s foundation. Rather than understanding that concept from the traditional Zionist perspective of “negation of Exile,” and rather than concentrating on Jewish immigration to Israel as a precondition to the creation of the “new Jew” according to Zionist ideology, the doctrine of Diaspora Zionism is concerned with building Jewish life in the Diaspora. The article focuses on the American Jewish proponents of this Zionist doctrine, with a special emphasis on Abba Hillel Silver, who was one of the group’s most outspoken political leaders during the Zionist political campaign before the establishment of Israel, and who subsequently struggled to prove the feasibility and necessity of Diaspora Zionism as an independent and viable modern Jewish option. This new Diaspora Jew was expected to use his empowered Jewish personality and his healthier Jewish perspective to build a thriving Jewish world while, at the same time, serving as an integral part of his non-Jewish surroundings. Tracing Silver’s struggles within the Zionist ideological arena, this article attempts to depict the various attempts of reconstructing a Diaspora new Jew in the aftermath of Israel’s independence, and to understand

the complicated place of this concept within the Zionist discourse, especially vis-à-vis the dominant Israeli Zionist perceptions of that period.

Ariel Feldestein

Rebirth of the “Other” in the 1948 War:

A Cinematic Expression

The heavy losses suffered by the Israelis in the 1948 war, in which over six thousand died, gave rise to questions about the necessity for this sacrifice. One of the ways to cope with these questions was to portray the war and its casualties as the “silver platter” on which victory had been delivered, saving the nation from destruction by the Arab armies. The native-born Sabras were not the only ones to rally to the war effort – the Holocaust survivors and new immigrants who arrived from Europe, the Middle East and North Africa fought shoulder to shoulder with them. Did comradeship and the fighting spirit blur the differences between them? Did the war provide them with an opportunity to shed their “exilic” identity and be born anew, to adopt the ways of the “Sabra” and prove that they were valid members of society? This article discusses these issues as portrayed in films about the 1948 war produced in the first decade of statehood. Focusing in particular on three films, it analyzes the cinematic, narrative and ideological codes and compares the modes of representing the Sabra with those representing the “Other” – the Holocaust survivor and the new immigrant.