

ISRAEL

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

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism 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.

ISRAEL

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

No. 1, 2002



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
THE CHAIM ROSENBERG SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES
THE CHAIM WEIZMANN INSTITUTE FOR THE
STUDY OF ZIONISM

Editor: Shalom Ratzabi

Editorial Board: Avi Bareli, Nurith Gertz, Avner Horowitz,
Hannah Naveh, David Tal

Style Editing: Shlomo Avayou
English Editing: Philippa Shimrat
Editorial Assistant: Meir Chazan

© 2002

All Rights Reserved

Tel Aviv University

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism

Graphic Editing: Michal Semo, TAU's Graphic Design Studio

Printed in Israel at Rozmarin-Katz Ltd.

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Between History and Narrative	1
Eliezer Schweid	
Truth from the Land of Israel and from the Path Leading to Zion	13
Ziva Shamir	
‘Ha-Shomer ha-Tza’ir’s Ideal of Redemption of the World	33
Yael Weiler	
The “Women Question” and the Voices of Pioneering Women: A Reading of <i>Sefer ha-Kvutzah</i> – A Group’s Collective Journal	65
Aviva Ufaz	
Israeil Housewives and the Austerity Policy	81
Orit Rozin	
The Age of Innocence: “My Glorious Brothers” at Kibbutz Givat Brenner, Sept. 1953	119
Shula Keshet	

BOOK REVIEWS

<i>Lo and Behold, Zionist Icons and Visual Symbols in Israeli Culture</i> by Alec Mishory; <i>Photography in Palestine in the 1930s – 1940s</i> by Rona Sela.....	133
Maoz Azaryahu	
<i>Palestine under the British Mandate</i> by Tom Segev.....	143
Benny Morris	
<i>The Watchman Fell Asleep: The Surprise of Yom Kippur and its Sources</i> by Uri Bar-Joseph.....	149
David Tal	

DISCUSSION

On the Teaching of History	155
Participants: Esther Yogev, Orit Rozin, Gilat Gofer, Avi Picard, Michael Feige, Danny Jacoby, Yael Dar, Itsik Dahan, Avi Bareli, Daniel Gutwein	
List of Contributors	192
English Summaries	VII

Summaries

Eliezer Schweid

Between History and Narrative

This essay surveys the history of explicating and evaluating the meaning of myth in modern Western philosophy. It argues that the continuous oscillation between the “mythologization” of historiography and its “de-mythologization,” which has now terminated in an attempt to minimize the use of myth by transforming it into a subjective “narrative,” betrays the main cultural task of historiography as a means of storing cultural memory for future generations.

Ziva Shamir

Truth from the Land of Israel and from the Path Leading to Zion

The article explores Brenner’s short story “By the Way,” which can be viewed as a literary realization of a number of Zionist ideas expounded by Ahad Ha’am. This story depicts the unsuccessful efforts of a group of young pioneers in 1909, most of them ex-Yeshiva students, to become “New Jews” and to change their life style overnight. The story follows their experiences on their sea journey to the Land of Israel – a malaria-stricken corner of the decadent Ottoman Empire. Brenner, whose writings are always based on “the poetics of experience,” exposes their unrealistic notions based on imaginary descriptions of the “Promised Land” and ridicules their scholarly conversations which instantly reveal the rabbinical background that makes them unfit for the hard conditions awaiting them in the Orient. Nevertheless, Brenner, who had himself experienced the hard work of Jewish youth in the sweatshops of Whitechapel in London, is also convinced that there is no other place for a Jew, despite all difficulties. Among the pioneers is a penniless Russian youth (a reflection of Brenner himself) who helps the sick and the poor like a modern Jesus. When the ship passes through the Egyptian port of Alexandria, a couple of English tourists is denied the opportunity to photograph the Jewish pioneers. Brenner’s story offers the reader a substitute for this untaken photograph, presenting an unglorified and realistic depiction of the pioneer experience at the time of the Second Aliyah.

Yael Weiler

Ha-Shomer ha-Tza’ir’s Ideal of Redemption of the World

Members of the youth movement “Ha-Shomer ha-Tza’ir,” which was established in Vienna in the middle of the First World War, started arriving in *Eretz Yisrael* from 1919. These youngsters were driven by messianic aspirations of redemption and the

desire to reform the world. However, the ideas they developed cannot be regarded as merely utopian, since they emerged from and were designed for a life of work in the Land of Israel. For these early members of the movement, creativity and culture had the highest priority in the new society they wished to build. They saw themselves as the elite of an entire generation who had been chosen to leap over the years of exile of the Jewish People and to continue the independent, national, free and cultural life described in the Bible and later Jewish literature. They believed that the new Jewish society should constantly re-examine its values in light of the primordial components of ancient Jewish civilization. They conceived the return to ancient values as being in accord with certain European thinkers of the time who influenced their advocacy of anarchy and a free future society.

Aviva Ufaz

The “Women Question” and the Voices of Pioneering Women: A Reading of *Sefer ha-Kvutzah* – A Group’s Collective Journal

The emancipation of women and gender equality are linked with the myth of the *halutz* (pioneer) in Israeli consciousness. Recent historical and feminist studies have raised doubts about the validity of this myth, and the discovery of primary sources written by women – essays, journals, memoirs and letters – have provided support for such doubts. Among these sources are the collective journals of the “intimate settlement groups” (*kvutzot*) typical of the Third Aliyah during their initial formative period. These journals, which were one of the channels of expression used by the pioneering women to break out of their silence, are a valuable source for the investigation of gender issues in the pioneering society, containing a multi-voiced dialogue of men and women regarding the “women question”.

Sefer ha-Kvutzah, the journal of the “Sharon Group”, was written in 1923-1931 when the group was moving from one place to another in *Eretz Yisrael*. Although at first glance the journal does not seem to contain any expression of gender tension or subversive feminist overtones, a close reading of the essays reveals unease with the gap between the utopia aspired to and its realization in the pioneering reality. Thus, for example, “forbidden” longings for the worlds they had left behind can be detected in the women’s comments, along with protests against social discrimination and, mainly, against the shunting of women away from productive work towards services associated with stereotyped gender perceptions. Listening to these women’s voices in these journals, which reveal cracks in the myth of equal gender rights that the pioneering revolution seemed to profess, can contribute not only to correcting gender discrimination in historical consciousness but also to constructing a more balanced and credible picture of the pioneering period in general.

Orit Rozin

Israeli Housewives and the Austerity Policy

An important component of the economic policy published by the newly elected Government of Israel on April 1949 was the austerity regime, which was introduced to supply the general public with basic food supplies at reasonable prices at a time when Israel was ending a bloody war and absorbing hundreds of thousand of Jewish refugees from different parts of the world. Although in the first 9 months, from April 1949 to January 1950, most Israeli consumers complied with the strict regulations, after this period and through 1950-1951 a growing black market appeared.

This article analyzes the reaction of Israeli housewives to the austerity policy against the historical background of the shortage of food and other basic supplies, the outbreak of the polio epidemic, and the public and political issues of the period. The article focuses on the status of the Israeli housewife and portrays the efforts of the different women's organizations to influence both their government and their families' well-being. It also considers the moral dilemma faced by Israeli housewives: whether they should be loyal citizens to their infant state and avoid the black market in order to protect the daily supplies to the new immigrants, or whether, as caring mothers and wives, they should use the black market for the sake of their families.

Shula Keshet

The Age of Innocence: "My Glorious Brothers" at Kibbutz Givat Brenner, Sept. 1953

As part of its 25th anniversary celebrations, in September 1953, Kibbutz Givat Brenner staged a play adapted from the novel, *My Glorious Brothers*, by the American-Jewish writer Howard Fast, whose plot is based on the story of the Maccabean revolt against the Greek Empire in the year 166 BC. The play was directed and produced by Shulamit Bat-Dori, a pupil and follower of Reinhardt and Piscator. An "ancient" village was actually constructed on one of the hills near the kibbutz, thus creating a natural amphitheater. Hundreds of kibbutz members, actors, builders, carpenters, electricians, stage designers, and dressmakers participated enthusiastically in the "happening". The whole community was drafted.

This event can be studied as a paradigm. It contains some of the most important elements of kibbutz communal culture and demonstrates the ability of the kibbutz of that time to enact a mass social manipulation. Communal theater has the power to move people and influence their state of mind, directly or manipulatively. Shulamit Bat-Dori was very much aware of the mythical power of the ancient tale: the Jewish revolt against the mighty Greek Empire, the heroic fight for freedom and independence of the few against the many. However, this seemingly "successful" project raises numerous problems. The attempt to blur the borderline between life and art, to adopt dramatic mythical roles as a therapeutic process, and as a means of creating a "new" Jewish identity at the heavy price of rejection and repression of integral parts of a former ego, created dilemmas that erupt time and again in our collective as well as our individual lives in Israel today.