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AHAD HA-AM'S CONCEPTION OF JEWISH HISTORY

by

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## THESIS DIGEST

Asher Ginzberg (1856-1926), who is universally known by the pseudonym Ahad Ha-Am, was among the foremost Jewish nationalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Out of his conviction that there was "no exit" from the external difficulties that beset the Jewish world, he proceeded to create a rationale for Judaism which was in consonance with the needs and spirit of his time. Through what is basically a romantic, messianic restructuring of Jewish history, he sought justification from the past for his program of Spiritual Zionism. This program consisted of reawakening the national consciousness of the people and the creation of a Spiritual Center in Palestine where the elect of the people could retire to live a life in consonance with the "National Spirit". This solution for "the plight of Judaism" grew out of the realization that such movements as the Emancipation, assimilation, Orthodox Judaism, Political Zionism, Diaspora Nationalism, Reform Judaism, and Socialism were inadequate in solving "the Jewish Question".

In his conception of Jewish history, Ahad Ha-Am was greatly influenced by Darwinism in both its biological and social form. He made particular use of the "instinct theory" and such concepts as "the drive for self-preservation". He drew on the ideology of the Romantic School for such notions as "the Spirit of Judaism", and "the Spirit of the People". Ahad Ha-Am also utilized the psychological theories of Paulhan and Tarde in his formation of the concept of "the Spiritual Center". Ahad Ha-Am organized all of these currents of nineteenth century thought about Nationalism, which is the basic motif of his conception of Jewish history.

In terms of historiography, Ahad Ha-Am delineated between "archeological truth" and "historical truth". Consequently, objective facts do not determine his conception of history. In his periodization of general culture, Ahad Ha-Am follows Auguste Comte. Jewish history is periodized in national terms. Ahad Ha-Am does not adhere to a strictly determinist position as he admits "chance" as a factor in causation. Change is basically initiated through new "positivist" systems which are born in the minds of a few. These few are the elite of history who shape its course. Ahad Ha-Am considered "Spiritual Zionism" a new "positive system".. The true adherents of this ideology he considered "priests". For the elite priesthood of Spiritual Zionism, Ahad Ha-Am wanted to create a Spiritual Center in Palestine which was to be the source for the creation of a new kind of

Jew. The ultimate goal of the Spiritual Center was the creation of the moral Superman. This Ahad Ha-Am readily admits is "messianism". Just as "messianism" has always given hope to forlorn generations in the Jewish past, so it must serve a similar role in the future. This leads to our conclusion that Ahad Ha-Am's conception of Jewish history is a romantic nationalism couched in a messianic framework.

To  
JEANNIE

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## CHAPTER I

### THE TIME OF AHAD HA-AM

Among the foremost Jewish nationalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Asher Ginzberg (1856-1927), universally known by his pseudonym Ahad Ha-Am, has earned a place of unmistakable importance. As a prolific essayist and critic, his influence was primarily felt through the written word which he dominated with a reserved logic and clarity of style not common to the Jewish periodical literature of the time.<sup>1</sup> Despite the manifold testimony of literateurs who wax panegyric over his lucidity and consummate objectivity, Ahad Ha-Am often laments that he was grossly misunderstood; and consequently, it is rare to find a major essay of his which is not supplemented by one or more rejoinders to those who took serious issue with him. It was precisely because Ahad Ha-Am's style was so free from literary encumbrances that his ideas stood in clear relief. Of these we find no paucity, for he permitted his versatile mind to grapple with the unending flow of problems which emanated from the Jewish world of his time.

#### A. CURRENTS OF THOUGHT IN THE JEWISH WORLD

Ahad Ha-Am, although he considered himself a transient in the Pavilion of Literature and a guest in the community of



writers,<sup>2</sup> wrote prolifically on the nature of Judaism. He analyzed what he considered to be the essence of Judaism, its ethics and traditions. He attempted to bind the entire historical experience of a people together by the thread of Spiritual Zionism, of which he was the most competent exponent and unflinching defender. In the battle which raged for allegiance to the various Zionist banners, he evolved a program which was clearly rooted in the political, social and intellectual milieu of his time. Nationalism, the dominant political mode which enthroned the particularism and uniqueness of every nation, became his modus operandi in understanding the Jewish past. "The Love of Zion" he singled out as the passion which should motivate every true adherent of the national movement. This romantic notion, if actuated in the hearts of Zionists, would make them authentic participants in the creation of a new spiritual center which was to blossom in Palestine.

The doctrine and program of Cultural Zionism, with its emphasis on normal evolution of <sup>the</sup> National Spirit, Spiritual Center, National Ethic, and the revivication of the "national feeling", Hebrew language and culture forms, drew the fire of the divided Jewish camp. Herzlians scoffed at its Utopianism. The Young School of writers who followed the Nietzschean bent of Berdichevsky balked at what they considered Ahad Ha-Am's arid philosophical and provincial outlook. (He consistently refused to favor their undisguised European innovations in

Hebrew literature.)<sup>3</sup> Brenner and Borochoy feared that the emphasis on cultural forms would divert the Jewish masses from their economic plight and lead them to a useless romanticism. Dubnow's emphasis on "National-Cultural Autonomism", with its thesis that the Jewish people had outlived the stage of territorialism and should claim the right to live a national life in the countries of their residence, clearly challenged the "center nationalisms".<sup>4</sup> There was, however, another group, the orthodox contingent, which discerned in Ahad Ha-Am's views a basic heresy. They perceived that the Spirit of the Jewish people as delineated by Ahad Ha-Am was not to be identified with the God of the Jewish people; that whereas for them religion was the essence of Judaism, for Ahad Ha-Am it was merely a stage in the evolution of the nation, the garb of the National Spirit. While they considered observance essential, for him it was purely utilitarian, the vessel in which the Spirit was to be preserved until a more fitting vessel was to be found.<sup>5</sup> The religious tradition, though branded with orthodoxy, were nourishment for those Jews who still believed in their inherent validity. They served as the staple which would insure the inner cohesiveness of the group until such time as they would be supplanted by more modern forms of thought which would unrestrainedly blossom forth once Judaism was free to develop in accordance with the laws of its own Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

One would expect consistency from Ahad Ha-Am in sanction-

ing religious expressions of Judaism. One might even attempt to find words of praise for a more advanced and rational conception of Judaism with which Ahad Ha-Am had much in common. Yet the source from which such a view of Judaism emanated, the camp of Reform, draws much of Ahad Ha-Am's invective. The strangeness of such an attack disappears at once when it is realized that despite Ahad Ha-Am's concurrence with the method of the "Science of Judaism" of which he himself was a master, he strongly objected to its conclusions. His rejection of the entire Reform movement was not based upon a philosophical or theological refutation; rather, it was based upon the fact that their conception of Judaism was so universal in scope that it eliminated the national elements he considered basic to any revival of the National Spirit. Ahad Ha-Am accused the reformers and similar enlightened elements of being "slaves" in the midst of their supposed freedom.<sup>7</sup> They had surrendered what was for him the fundamental force leading to the rebirth of the people, its will to live and to survive as a national entity. In its place they substituted the "Mission of Israel" ideology which glories in the dispersion rather than the ingathering of the members of the national body.

#### B. THE GREAT DISENCHANTMENT

We shall bring under scrutiny in the course of this paper many of the above doctrines of Ahad Ha-Am as they

pertain to his understanding of the Jewish past. In this context, however, it seems imperative to point out that the intellectual superstructure of Ahad Ha-Am is rooted in the political and intellectual currents of his time. The many-faced polemics which we find in the writings of Ahad Ha-Am reflect a period of Jewish history in which a great disenchantment took place. The ferment, both intellectual and emotional, stemmed from the growing dissatisfaction with the status of the Jew in the modern world. The new solutions of nationalist stamp that were propounded reflect the disillusionment of a Jewry that in the west had found the doors of assimilation slammed before them.

The dominant note sounded in the nineteenth century was that of Nationalism. The nation had supplanted God as the recipient of loyalty and allegiance. Whereas in the medieval period the frame of reference for dealing with problems was of a religious nature and framed in religious and theological terminology, the nineteenth century spoke in secular and national terms. Whereas in the Age of Reason that which was common to all men received emphasis, the nineteenth century gloried in that which set men and nations apart, pitting one against the other, in a war of cultures and national forms. It was inevitable that Jews would be caught up in this struggle and that their problem was intricately intertwined with that of their environments. 87.

The problems of the nineteenth century were more complex because of the multi-class nature of society, each segment of which viewed the dominant motif of nationalism in terms of its own interests and goals.

In his attack on capitalism, Marx for example made the Jews an economic symbol by claiming them as the progenitors of capitalism and heaping upon them all the opprobrium of which he was capable. In aligning Judaism with capitalism he linked to them the worst aspects of an exploitative system of which they were a product and not the originators. Through this device the enmity of the working class was siphoned off and directed against the Jews, setting in motion one of the mighty forces of modern antisemitism.

Half a century later, Bismarck, when he broke with the National Liberal Party and realigned himself with the Conservatives and the Church, proceeded to champion a semi-nationalist industry, a nationalist economic policy, colonial expansion and militarism. All of these helped Germany to assume a dominant role in the economic life of Europe. To divert Germany from the rigors of the new policy (1878-1879), antisemitism was set in motion by the agitators Marr and Stöcker. Pandering to the upper classes, they worked the other horn of the antisemitic dilemma, attributing the revolt of the masses to those obvious Jews, Marx and Lassalle. Stöcker wrote:

The Jews are at one and the same time the pace setters of capitalism and of revolutionary socialism, thus working from both sides to destroy the present political and social order.<sup>8</sup>

The trap of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was set. To capture Jews, it could snap in either direction. In time the hatred of the Jew was formulated along those lines which were consummate with the expansion of the German Empire. A cult of race, taking as its creed the framework of the science of anthropology, propounded a theory of blood and soil. The new god was the golden haired Aryan. In his blood coursed the true character of Germany. The "Asiatic Jews" were clearly of a different racial origin. In 1872 an Austrian weekly carried an article which informed its readers that:

The Jews were not merely a separate religious community but - and this is the most important factor - an altogether different race. The European feels instinctively that the Jew is a stranger that migrated from Asia... and possesses a certain cleverness which makes him master of the honest Aryan.<sup>9</sup>

August Rohling, professor of theology and a viscious antisemite, revamped the medieval allegations in his Der Talmudjude, (1871): that Jewish laws permitted abuse of Christians.<sup>10</sup>

The attempt to separate Jews from the rest of the German population became a conscious effort; the attempt to divest Judaism of its "victory" over Germanicism a major task. Wilhelm Marr succeeded in further spreading the notion that the Jews were at the core inveterate materialists who had developed commerce to achieve world dominion. If Semiticism was not

curbed at the height of its triumph, it meant, for him at least, the end of Germany. All the malevolent qualities resided in the alien race and nation called the Jews. The crest of cultural and spiritual development was obviously the inborn trait of the Aryan peoples. To sum it up in the words of the racist Gobineau:

Everything great, noble, and fruitful in the works of man comes from a single starting point; it belongs to one family, the different branches of which have reigned in all civilized countries of the globe.<sup>12</sup>

That family was the Aryan family over which Germany presided as master of the house.

So primitive did the anti-Jewish sentiment become, that the weapons of the Middle Ages had to be revived as vehicles of expression. The blood libel allegations in particular did much to sharpen the view of the abject position of the Jew in the modern world. In Tisza-Eslar, a small Hungarian village, the scurrilous accusation of ritual murder (1882) was again made against the Jewish community.<sup>13</sup> Forty odd years after the Damascus Affair, the credulity of the masses in the small villages and the capitals of Central Europe could still be aroused to believe that Jews could commit such heinous crimes in the name of their faith. Ahad Ha-Am, alive to the implications of the new anti-Jewish sentiment, railed not so much against the objective factors which caused antisemitism, but against what he considered the docile and impotent reaction of Jews against the forces of antisemitism. In an essay

entitled, " אַהַד הָאֵם אַחַד Ha-Am examines the ritual murder accusation, which has haunted the Jewish people from the Middle Ages to the modern period.

If I say that this blood-accusation has profoundly agitated the spirit of the Jewish people, it is because the roots of this phenomenon lie, to my mind, not in any external cause, but in the innermost spirit of the Jew. If in medieval instances of the blood-accusation we find that the whole people used to regard itself as standing at the judgement bar together with the wretches whom fortune made the immediate victims of the scourge, we may explain this fact as the result of the physical danger to the whole people, which was involved in every local incident of this kind.<sup>13</sup>

Although the physical danger is not present to the same extent that it was in earlier times, still the pride of the people is hurt.

Clearly then, it is not a question of mere regard for personal safety or dignity : the spirit of the people has been stung to consciousness and activity by the sense of its shame.<sup>14</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am goes further and gives us a key to understanding his treatment of the contemporary period in which he lived. He writes in the same essay:

The great evil that we are concerned with is not without its useful lesson, which it were well we should learn. We are not masters of our fate: good and evil we accept from without, as perforce we must; so that it fitting that we should always look for the useful lesson hidden in the evil that comes upon us, and find thus at least some consolation.<sup>15</sup>

The useful lesson which is of "some consolation" is that the Jew must form an inner image of himself which cannot be shaken



by the impression into which the outside world molds him. More than that, he must emancipate himself "from the influences of conventional prejudices as to the characteristics and moral worth of the Jews." If this is not done, then Ahad Ha-Am fears that the self-contempt of the Jew may concretize itself in his own mind and he would become in reality that lowly form of man which he may now imagine himself to be.<sup>16</sup> Now it follows that if the Jew can form an independent image of himself other than what the world at large pictures him to be, he can create a totally new image by the sheer force of his will: a spiritual image which embodies all the hopes and aspirations of the future. This faculty, which Ahad Ha-Am elsewhere calls Imagination, is a handmaid of Reason and fulfills the deep emotional need which Reason cannot bridge nor adequately explain. Such power did Ahad Ha-Am ascribe to Imagination that it "has the power to open the gates of hell before man, to show him life and well-being even there under the earth."<sup>17</sup> Ahad Ha-Am, recognizing that the objective factors were too overbearing, appeals for a psychological re-orientation on the part of the Jews to the outside world. They could not change that world but they could attempt to surrender the illusion that they were an integral part, as assimilated element of the spiritual world of Europe.

C. "SLAVERY IN THE MIDST OF FREEDOM"

Ahad Ha-Am's analysis of the situation of the Jews in France yields both his definition of antisemitism and a further elaboration on the frustrating situation of the Jew in the Diaspora. The events pertaining to the Dreyfus Affair and the perversion of justice at Emile Zola's trial have in his words "dragged in the dust the proud names of the nineteenth century." The phrases "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" now ring quite hollow for the Jews. France in the hour of its trial was found wanting.<sup>18</sup> If France - the pinnacle of the civilized world - had so degenerated, what hope, Ahad Ha-Am asks, is there for the future of this century of "progress"? He argues that the recent failure of progress affords no ground for scepticism about the possibility of progress for humanity. It is only with regard to the Jews that the law of progress is in doubt. He writes:

The general rule of progress holds good; but like all other rules, it has its exception, and the exception is the Jewish question.<sup>19</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am proceeds to develop the thesis that when two antagonistic ideas such as progress and antisemitism evolve into open conflict, if they are of equal strength, then they shall continue to persist side by side despite the fact that they are mutually contradictory. He calls this a law of social psychology. We see Ahad Ha-Am viewing antisemitism not as a phenomenon which has its basic roots in social and economic factors and which is inextricably intertwined with

these factors, but rather as a separate entity, a quality which cannot be reduced to the material conditions of life. What he calls the state of "progress", whether that state be high or low, has no bearing whatsoever on the quantity of anti-Jewish sentiment.

Anti-Semitism is in fact a phenomenon sui generis, and no conclusions about the state of moral progress can be drawn from its existence.<sup>20</sup>

In another short exposition on the nature of antisemitism, Ahad Ha-Am states that one cannot reduce this phenomenon to an economic basis, as the materialist historians relish doing.

Economic reasons which have been propounded hundreds of times as explanatory factors of antisemitism certainly play a partial role in the reawakening of antisemitism in our time, but only a partial role. There is yet another factor even more important... which is psychological in its origin... and this is the reawakening among the best of Europe's men (particularly those of Germany) a desire to return to the morality of the Middle Ages...<sup>21</sup>

If antisemitism has a basic motif, it appears to Ahad Ha-Am as a psychological one. It is a mode of thought which can co-exist with other modes of thought. It is an individuated negative idea from which no good can stem. We shall see that Ahad Ha-Am bases much of his opposition to Herzl on the grounds that antisemitism is a negative force which cannot serve as the foundation for a positive spiritual force such as the Zionism he envisaged.

Ahad Ha-Am appears to be indebted for much of his

thinking on antisemitism to Pinsker, who was the leader of the Odessa Committee of the Chovevey Zion, of which Ahad Ha-Am was a member. Throughout his lifetime Ahad Ha-Am was a staunch defender of Pinsker. He translated Pinsker's Brochure "Autoemancipation" into Hebrew and commemorated the anniversaries of Pinsker's death with sagacious essays on his importance to the Zionist movement. He contended that Pinsker and not Herzl was the true founder of the movement which has been called "Political Zionism".<sup>22</sup> Pinsker, it must be recalled, labeled antisemitism or "Judeophobia", a psychosis which has as its source the very condition of the Jewish nation. The Jewish nation disembodied of land, political roots, common culture and language roams as a ghost among the nations. Ahad Ha-Am interprets Pinsker:

The cause of anti-Semitism is that we have no concrete national existence, and are therefore not recognized as having equal national status. It follows clearly that the more we assimilate - the more we whittle away our national distinctiveness - the less concrete and the more purely spiritual our national existence will become, and consequently the more the ghost-fear that begets anti-Semitism will grow in intensity.<sup>23</sup>

Both the reasoning of Pinsker and Ahad Ha-Am take as truth the description of the Jewish nation as a "ghost-nation," which the non-Jewish world has foisted upon it. Both attempt to rid the world of this apparition by creating a "normal" Jewish nation. Though they decry the assimilation of Jews into the non-Jewish world, they too are guilty of a

form of assimilation. They have digested and found good the national solution. The way to remove antisemitism is to fulfill the requirements of national attributes, the very same possessed by the other nations of the western world. Hence they advocate the assimilation of nationalism into Judaism. Ahad Ha-Am however asserted that nationalism was part of the very core of Hebraism, and consequently reads into his analysis of Jewish history the nationalist sentiment of the late nineteenth century.

#### D. THE MISSIONS OF ISRAEL

For the Jews of France caught in the malestrom of antisemitism, Ahad Ha-Am has harsh words. He quotes a book entitled La Gerbe (1890) issued by the Archives Israelites which recounts the Jewish experience in France. The editor is quoted as having written, "In the year 1840... fifty years after the promulgation of the principles of 1789, the Jews possessed rights on paper: But in practice their rights were non-existent." A parenthetical question is then asked, "Do they exist fully even in 1890?" The editor recounts the battles waged against prejudice and for the principle of "social assimilation (la fusion sociale) with all its corollaries." Despite these attempts, the editor laments that the hatred of the Jew has been revived and thrives in France. Ahad Ha-Am then proceeds to summarize the contributions of the rest of

the authors of the volume and discerns that "this accursed question fills their whole horizon". He further notes a desperate appeal by the writers to the French not to retrogress but rather to march forward with the banners of the rights of man unfurled.<sup>24</sup> This condition Ahad Ha-Am calls, "spiritual slavery under the veil of outward freedom."<sup>25</sup> ✓✓  
 Their temerity for him becomes all the more apparent when

they have to disclose the national connection between the Jews of France and other Jews, or between them and their ancestral land, a connection in which it is possible to find something inconsistent to a certain extent with the extreme and zealot patriotism which is in vogue in France, then we discover once more their moral slavery - a spiritual yoke which throttles them and reduces them to a condition of undisguised embarrassment.<sup>26</sup>

The denial of the national and the assertion that Judaism is merely a religion is, for Ahad Ha-Am, a form of intellectual slavery. He considers the assertion that Judaism is only a religion as the compromise worked out for the attainment of emancipation.

Having agreed for the sake of emancipation, to deny the existence of Jews as a people and regard Judaism merely as a religion, Western Jews have thereby pledged themselves and their posterity to guard with utmost care the religious unity of Israel.<sup>27</sup>

He then proceeds on a sharp tack of analysis to point out that the very nature of emancipation demanded certain religious accommodation and changes. Since this adaptation varied, Jewish sects developed. This has resulted in

smashing the religious bond of unity in the area of Jewish practice, and hence only the theoretical remains as unifier. This bond of abstract beliefs which is inherently weak is increasingly becoming weaker with the welling up of "the scientific heresy which bears the name of Darwin." With the practical tie of common religious practice broken and the theoretical tie ever loosening its hold, what bond exists that will link Jews to Judaism? This for Ahad Ha-Am, as for the modern Jewish world, still remains the crucial question. Emancipated Jews sought to solve the problem by emphasizing "the mission of Israel among the nations". For Ahad Ha-Am this is an antiquated idea

which is at variance with all the principles of modern science: as though every nation had been created at first for some particular purpose, and so had a mission which it must fulfill, living on against its will until its Heaven sent task is done.<sup>29</sup>

He heaps scorn upon this doctrine "which it is difficult in our day to treat seriously", and smiles a "bitter smile of irony" when he sees distinguished men engaging in the work of spreading its message. Ahad Ha-Am sums up his critique:

These men know and admit that the scientific heresy which bears the name of Darwin is gaining ground, that is to say, that the world is accepting gradually a scientific theory which does not admit the existence of purpose or end even where it seems most obvious - how can these men still cling to a doctrine which demands belief in the missions of nations generally, in the mission of Israel in particular, and above all in a mission as wonderful as this? There can be but one an-

answer. They are compelled to do so, because they can find no other way of reconciling Judaism with emancipation. In the first place, Israel has no right to be anything but a Church consecrated to Heaven; in the second place, this heavenly bond has become too weak; in the third place - and this is the most important thing - they feel in spite of it all, that Jews they are and Jews they want to be. And so in order to conceal the contradiction between these truths they are forced to take refuge in this antiquated theory.<sup>30</sup>

What he has in effect stated here is the assertion that religion, if not dead, will soon wither away. Hence in order to preserve Judaism, a new theoretical basis must be found which is in consonance with "the scientific heresy which bears the name of Darwin". If we ask Ahad Ha-Am why Judaism should be preserved he, unlike Herzl, would answer that Judaism has a spiritual mission which is national in character. Unlike the emancipated notion of "mission" which is dependent on the dispersion of Jewry, his own notion is dependent on the centralization of Jewry, or at least its most promising sons, in a Spiritual Center which will epitomize the absolute values which he finds in Judaism.<sup>31</sup> That which will save Judaism and Jews from assimilation is the awakening of the "instinctive national feeling" which, like one's blood type, is an inherited characteristic. Jewish practice, while important in the Diaspora to maintain the semblance of unity, will evolve naturally in the Spiritual Center and in time will come to replace the atrophied



forms of the Diaspora. Ahad Ha-Am accuses the emancipated Jews of holding to a "metaphysical" concept of "mission" which cannot be verified through experience. Yet we find him saying,

there still lives within us, though it be only in the form of an instinctive feeling, a belief in the moral fitness for which we were chosen from all the nations, and in that national mission which consists of living the highest type of moral life, in being the moral Supernation...<sup>33</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am, like the enlightened Jews of Europe whom he takes to task, was forced into the ideological framework of his age. His answers, as we shall find, are no less metaphysical nor less romantic than those of his predecessors. In his own words, Jews were at the "Crossroads" in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The avenues through which one might attempt to find solutions were clearly delineated by the objective situation in which Jews found themselves throughout Europe. In addition to the political and social factors which helped to shape the destiny of Jewry, there was, as Ahad Ha-Am so clearly perceived, an intellectual problem: namely, the advance of scientific inquiry. Any solution, if it were to capture the new generation, had to be in consonance with the new thinking. Towards the evolution of such a comprehensive outlook he bent his efforts.

# NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Spiegel, Shalom. Hebrew Reborn. New York, 1930. p.273.
2. כל כתבי אהרן העזר. "הקדמה למחזור ראשונה". ג.
3. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "צורך ויכולת". קבה-קבט.
4. Dubnow, S.M. History of the Jews in Russia and Poland. Philadelphia, 1920. III. pp.51-55.
5. In Ahad Ha-Am defends those Jews who while differing with tradition on the doctrine creatio ex nihilo are true "Lovers of Zion." The problem of "creation" is secondary to the problem of "survival".  
 "תחיה לא בריאה היא המטרה הרצויה לשניהם." (רצב)  
 In a letter (אח"כ) a reply to Ahad Ha-Am admits of the wide breach between the theoretical beliefs of the Rabbi and himself. (נ) He pleads however for unity in the realm of the practical work of settling Palestine. Ahad Ha-Am views the world through the looking glass of evolution. One does not believe ancient Jewish beliefs and practices, neither does one condemn them as do the reformers. One "analyzes" them.  
 Hence in Western Europe where most Jewish thinkers still regard Judaism solely as a religion, attempts are still made to reform the religious life of the Jews... by means of logical criticism which can only judge the value of early institutions by our standards and cannot examine the intrinsic qualities and their rise and development by the light of the ideas with which they are contemporary.  
 Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Essays, Ancestor Worship, trans. by Leon Simon, \*\*\* Philadelphia, 1912. p. 211.

כ"כ. עפ"ד. "נחלת אבות". רעא.  
 See also: כ"כ. עפ"ד. "שבת וציונות". רפ"ו-רפ"ז.  
 "כי יותר מישראל שמרו את השבת שמרה אחרת." (רפ"ו)  
 The Sabbath here is viewed as that which guards Israel.  
 It is a mighty utility for the preservation of the nation.

\*כ"כ is the abbreviation for כל כתבי אהרן העזר.

\*\* עפ"ד is the abbreviation for על פרשת דברים.

\*\*\* All translations from the Hebrew are by Leon Simon (translation authorized by Ahad Ha-Am) unless indicated as my own translation.

6. כ"כ. עפ"ד. א.מ.א. "מלים ומחשבות". שצב-שצד.  
 See also: כ"כ. עפ"ד. "ד.ר. פיוסר וספרות". מ.מ.מ.  
 Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism, "A Spiritual Center".  
 London, 1922. pp.120-129.
7. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "עבודת סחוך חרות". סד-סס.  
 Selected Essays. op.cit. Ancestor Worship. pp.171-194.
8. Lowenthal, Marvin, The Jews of Germany. Philadelphia,  
 1938. pp.304-305.
9. Lowenthal, Marvin, The Jews of Germany. op.cit. pp.292-  
 293. The article was written for the Austrian  
 weekly Ausland by Friedrich von Hellwald.
10. ibid. p.294.
11. ibid. p.295. Der Sieg des Judentums über das Germanentum.  
 by wilhelm Marr.
12. ibid. p.301. See also Elbogen, Ismar, A Century of Jewish  
Life. op.cit. pp.152-154.
13. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "חצי נחמה". ע.  
 Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Writings. "Some Consolation". pp.195-196.
14. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "חצי נחמה". ע.  
ibid. p.196.
15. ibid. p.196. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "חצי נחמה". ע.
16. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "חצי נחמה". עא.  
ibid. p.202.
17. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "חשבון הנפש". סא.  
 Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Writings. op.cit. "Many Inventions",  
 p.162.
18. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "הפרוורג וסנא ישראלערפן".  
 Ahad Ha-Am, Essays, Letters, Memoirs. Translated from the  
 Hebrew and edited by Leon Simon. (Oxford, 1946).  
 "Progress and Anti-Semitism". p.209.
19. כ"כ. עפ"ד. III. רפג.  
ibid. p.210.
20. כ"כ. עפ"ד. III. רפג.  
ibid. p.210.
21. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "לאומיות חדשה". רנב.  
 my translation.

22. Ahad Ha-Am writes:  
 "ואילו ניתנה רשות להסתמס פה בדמיון מעולם הדת הייתי אומר,  
 כי פינסקר הוא ה"מחוקק" של הציוניזם המדינית, הרצל  
 ה"אפוסטול" שלה." קעב.
23. כ"כ. עפ"ד II קסו.  
ibid. p.186.
24. כ"כ. עפ"ד I "עבודות בחור חרות". סר-סה.  
 Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Writings. op.cit. "Slavery in  
 Freedom". pp.174-176.
25. כ"כ. עפ"ד I סה.  
ibid. p.177.
26. כ"כ. עפ"ד I סה-סו.  
ibid. p.179.
27. כ"כ. עפ"ד I סו.  
ibid. p.183.
28. כ"כ. עפ"ד I סו-סז.  
ibid. pp.183-184.
29. כ"כ. עפ"ד I סז.  
ibid. p.185.
30. Ahad Ha-Am, Ten Essays in Zionism and Judaism. (London,  
 1922) "A Spiritual Center" pp.120-129:  
 כ"כ. עפ"ד IV שצב-שצד.
31. Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Essays. op.cit. "Slavery in Freedom".  
 p.183. כ"כ. עפ"ד I סו.
32. Ahad Ha-Am, Essays, Letters, Memoirs. op.cit. p.269.
33. כ"כ. עפ"ד II "שנוי הערכין". קנץ.  
Selected Writings of Ahad Ha-Am. op.cit. "The Transval-  
 uation of Values." p.230.
34. Ahad Ha-Am, Essays, Letters, Memoirs. op.cit. p.11.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE LIFE OF AHAD HA-AM

Asher Ginzberg was born August 18, 1856 in the small town of Skivre in South Russia, a year after the new tsar Alexander II (1855-1881) ascended the throne. Though Russia was caught up in the midst of the Crimean War, the ascension of Alexander was hailed as the beginning of a new era. The tsar, while he could not bring about political peace in Russia, did attempt far reaching social and administrative reforms.<sup>1</sup> For the Jews it meant a breath of relief after the horrors of Nicholas and his administration. The policy of juvenile conscription came to an end after thirty oppressive years. Schools and universities were again opened to Jews, though the reason behind this policy was to accelerate the assimilation of Jews into Russian life. The overall effect, however, was a sharpening of intellectual life through which the Jewish community benefitted. Hebrew, Yiddish and Jewish periodical literature was published, and hopes for a new age flickered on the horizon. However, the "liberal" adventure was short lived. Dissension within Russia manifested itself in revolutionary uprisings and assassinations. News came to the tsar that Jews were fomentors of revolution on the one hand, and oppressors of the peasantry on the other. Committees of investigation found the situation wanting and again

restrictive legislation followed.<sup>2</sup> As part of a larger pattern of restrictions against the revolutionary elements, Alexander's policy was bound to have serious repercussions. He was the object of a man hunt by the revolutionaries who finally succeeded in their attempts in the spring of 1881.<sup>3</sup>

#### A. THE EARLY YEARS

During these twenty-five years the character of Asher Ginzberg was in process of development. The source for our knowledge for these years are his *Pirkey Zikronot* פרקי זכרונות which were compiled in his later years. Ginzberg was born to a noted Hasidic family which was both affluent and distinguished for its scholarship. His father Isaiah was a merchant and a tax farmer, as well as a man rigorous in his piety. Though Asher himself could not recall his earliest schooling, his parents told him that he began his Hebrew studies at the age of three when he studied Pentateuch. Three years later he advanced to Rashi and by the time he had attained the ripe age of ten he had a special teacher for Talmud and Poskim. He tells the story of how he rose early in the morning while it was still dark to study Gemarrah and Shulchan Aruch, studying until the time for morning prayer arrived. Leaving home so early in the morning he had no opportunity to eat. He writes:

Though I was only a child my parents had no pity upon me. It was quite late when they

sent me hot drink from home, and the drink used to get cold on the way.<sup>4</sup>

Coupled with other events of a similar nature we can attempt to construct the picture of his youth which Asher Ginzberg carried with him thereafter. The image of his father which Asher describes is interesting. He depicts him as a man who in his youth was a great scholar and one of the important Hassidim of Sadagura. He married, settled in Skvira and there became a successful merchant, one of the rich men of the city. Both his father and mother Asher describes as being quick tempered, and often the family would suffer because of this; particularly he, for he was the oldest and his father expected the most from him. He writes:

In general life in our home was without pleasure and I was happy when I was able to pass time away from home.<sup>5</sup>

He writes dejectedly that while they were still living in Skvira he had no friends or companions of his own age nor any of the amusements of childhood. He immersed himself completely in his studies shutting out the world of people in which he had no stake.<sup>6</sup> He spent much of the early years of his childhood in a village where he could have partaken, if not from the joy of childhood companions, then certainly of the world of nature, yet he states that he never acquired a love of nature. Later, not even the nature poems which he read in the Haskalah period of his life could change his early patterns. Books and study, first religious then secular,

were all that appealed to him.<sup>7</sup> So gifted and intensive a scholar was he that at the age of sixteen he had a reputation as a Talmudist and an expert in ritual law. He had also by this time mastered grammar and studied some of the Spanish Jewish writers. The Hassidim did not relish his study of philosophy and considered him suspect of heretical tendencies. Ginzberg comments that his father's wealth and social position made them overlook his peculiar literary tastes.<sup>8</sup>

When Asher was eleven and still at heder he developed the habit of smoking. The doctor informed him that if he did not give it up he would die. Resolving to smoke no more, he nevertheless felt the need for a substitute for tobacco which, he relates, he found in a Hebrew volume which opened the doors of algebra and geometry to him. His grandfather, upon discovering him writing mathematical symbols on doors and windows, thought he was practicing witchcraft and quickly brought to an end his newest pleasure.

The family moved to Gapchitsa in 1868, where his father became the tax farmer. There Asher gave all his time to study and devoured the books in his father's study. Once his father chanced upon him when he was reading a book by Wessely who was regarded as a heretic by the Hassidim. His father threatened that if he saw him reading prohibited books again, he would forbid his library to him. On another occasion he bought a forbidden book from an itinerant book



seller, which he read all night and then cast in the fire as it was lit by a servant in the morning.<sup>9</sup> One can imagine the fear and desperate courage that such incidents create in a person. It is also possible to conceive of the burning resentment that Asher must have felt against his father and the narrow-minded Hassidim that peopled his life.

At the age of sixteen a match was made for him. His parents whom he called "vain and fond of display", were dazzled by the Hassidic pedigree of a certain girl, whom Asher duly married. He continued to live on with his family without any material cares and began to delve into Haskalah literature. He notes that the Haskalah was the stepping stone to European culture.

Thus it is not surprising that following as I did in the footsteps of those who made the stepping-stones, I finally found myself on the other side, and began to learn Russian and German.<sup>10</sup>

Ever since he had taught himself Russian at the age of eight from the shop signs of the stores in his village, he admits to a great desire to know how these letters combined to form words. At twenty he began his linguistic studies in earnest and had mastered enough to read light literature. The die had been cast and the intellectual lacunae that Ginzberg felt had to be filled. He seriously began to prepare himself to enter a university. The autodidact, however could not satisfy the examiners. He had mastered the general principles of the prerequisite subjects but had no patience with the

minutiae necessary to pass his examinations. Having given up the hope of entering a Russian university, he considered study abroad. After years of delay we arrive at the year 1881, the year the outbreaks began.

### B. THE POGROM YEARS

With 1881 and the ascendancy to power of Alexander III, an anti-liberal and pan-Slavic program was initiated. Pobedonostsev, a tried reactionary, despised liberal institutions and wanted to create an autocracy under the aegis of the Orthodox Church. He commenced a war on all minority groups and plagued Jews with a series of riots and pogroms which were not checked until 1882. In May of that year stringent laws were made which narrowed the Pale of settlement and practically prohibited Jews from moving out of their villages. The laws also forbade Jews to own mortgages and leases. Jews were evicted from their residences; communities disappeared overnight as police terror stalked.<sup>11</sup> The impetus of these acts shook the Jewish world. A mighty blow had been struck to Haskalah and to assimilation. The thousands of Jews milling at the borders in their attempt to flee Russia dramatized the fact that Jews had no land of their own where they could seek refuge. In response to the situation, societies of Hovevey Zion sprung up which attempted to direct Jews to Palestine. Men such as Leo Pinsker who had held out hope for emancipation became, as it were, nationalists over

night. In 1881 as a result of the pogroms he wrote his "Auto-emancipation" which became the new rallying point for the "Lovers of Zion".<sup>12</sup>

Ginzberg informs us that he, as the rest of the Jewish world, was dazed by the pogroms.<sup>13</sup> But "personal reasons" more than any other factor prevented him from penetrating the European world. Finally in 1882-83, he informed his family that he was leaving for Europe for six months to improve his knowledge of languages. "A white lie" to be sure, he tells us, but this was the only way he could escape the village which to him was in every respect a "prison".<sup>14</sup> Ginzberg went to Vienna and remained but a few weeks. The lad who had spent all his life among books, cloistered from people, dominated by a father who did not permit him to develop a normal healthy ego, was unable to master the confidence to carry through the task he had set for himself. He writes of this lack of confidence:

The real reason [why he returned] was a defect in my character which has stood in my way all my life - I mean a lack of confidence in my own capacity and abilities... I have no doubt that if my parents had had the sense to foster my self-confidence and encourage me to try my strength, or if I had the spur of poverty, or if there had been any sort of external stimulus to make me launch out and proceed until I found that I was getting somewhere I should have got rid of my skepticism and achieved some success. But as things were, I had nobody to stimulate me; on the contrary letters from home were full of reproaches and complaints, and I could see that I should be in a continuous state of war with those who were dear to me.<sup>15</sup>

When Ginzberg returned home he realized how much he "loathed" village life. "It sucked me dry; it consumed the best years of my young life; I could bear it no longer." During the following years he rationalized that his attitudes toward his stay abroad were caused by factors other than himself, and consequently he set out again for Vienna, Breslau and Berlin. The pattern once set was to be followed again. He returned home "tortured and broken hearted" for doubt had undermined his resolution. These years Asher considered the worst of his life.

The constant state of war internal and external... my intense hatred for my mode of life and my inability to carve out a path better suited for my character... all this embittered my life and cast me into the depths of depression.<sup>16</sup>

Amidst the plenty of his house Asher Ginzberg walked "like a shadow", lonely and miserable, with no one paying the slightest heed. We sense as we read these words the utter feeling of bewilderment and rejection, the deep feeling of inadequacy, frustration and the depression which is born out of disillusionment. Ginzberg, who had all his life been able to escape reality through his books, now needed a more viable solution to his pressing problems. This came about when he uprooted himself after another parental struggle and moved with his family to Odessa, in March-April, 1884. There he continued his education, studied foreign languages, and was drawn into communal work. He returned home again in 1885, and when his father's lease as tax farmer expired, (1886) it could not be renewed

due to the enforcement of the May Laws (1882). The sense of freedom which Ginzberg felt was not unlike that of a man given reprieve. No longer was he doomed to cater to his father's wishes nor was he any longer bound to him through economic ties.

...So at last I was able to leave the prison in which I had spent eighteen of the best years of my life, and which had eaten me up alive and ruined all the natural endowment I had. I entered it a lad of twelve; I left a man of thirty, with a wife and family. I entered it pure of soul and full of hope; I left it disillusioned and sick of heart.<sup>17</sup>

When Ginzberg moved to Odessa on the 18th of February, 1886, he was a man burdened with hopes unfulfilled. His bitter personal reminiscences of his attempt to partake of the cultural life of Europe, coupled with the outbreak of the pogroms of 1881 and the anti-Jewish legislation that followed upon their heels, made him seek a new world outlook and philosophy. The failure of the Enlightenment to solve the "Jewish problem" and the periods of reaction interspersed with liberal episodes in Europe and in Russia sharply focused the need for the development of a new orientation to the world and to Jewish life in particular. Odessa, at that time an important center of the Hibbat Zion movement, afforded Ginzberg the opportunity of coming to grips with many of the issues which faced the world Jewish community. He was invited to join the Central Committee of the Hovevey Zion of which Dr. Pinsker was president. When the first important Hovevey Zion Conference at

Kattowitz was planned (1884), Dr. Pinsker as president of the Conference attempted in his policy statement to stress the humanitarian aspect of colonization in Palestine at the expense of national considerations. Ginzberg took strong exception to this, and with others was able to work out a compromise platform. Clearly, his ideas on Palestine, nationalism and the program of colonization had begun to take form. At the request of Zederbaum, the editor of "Hamelitz", Ginzberg wrote his first major article which he entitled, "לא זה הדרך" which appeared March 15, 1889 over the signature, "Ahad Ha-Am".<sup>18</sup> This important essay inaugurated a new viewpoint of Jewish nationalism which in time came to be known by the name "Spiritual Zionism". It is both interesting and important to note that the first problems of the national question with which Ahad Ha-Am dealt were practical and not theoretical. The ideas which he developed in this essay revolved about the failure of the then current colonization program: Ahad Ha-Am claimed that the movement had taken giant strides when it should have been satisfied with small sure steps. As a result of the failure to adequately prepare the colonists spiritually, the whole program was falling into ill repute. Self-seeking rather than national welfare was the keynote of the day.<sup>19</sup>

#### C. AHAD HA-AM AND THE BENE MOSHE

The essay made quite an impression in Hovevey Zion

circles, and Ahad Ha-Am was asked by those who were influenced by the article to attempt to put his ideas into practice. A secret society called the Bene Moshe was formed. Most sources give Ahad Ha-Am as its founder and spiritual leader. Whereas he admits to being the latter, his Memoirs deny the former. The secret order was in reality founded in Palestine by a Messianist visionary called Barsilai.<sup>20</sup> Its purpose was to work secretly against the Turkish administration in Palestine and to aid in the acquisition and settlement of the land.<sup>21</sup> When Barsilai came to Odessa in order to develop similar units of the organization outside Palestine, Ahad Ha-Am was brought to an organizational meeting from which he emerged as leader of the group.<sup>22</sup>

The internal affairs of the Bene Moshe make fascinating reading. For a group that was ostensibly the elite in the national movement there was much intrigue, bickering and dissension.<sup>23</sup> There were several factions which worked at cross purposes and against the charter principles which Ahad Ha-Am drafted for the organization.<sup>24</sup> In Palestine in particular there was much disorganization and outright hand speculation. In the nineties of the last century, Jews poured into Palestine from Russia in great numbers. To accomodate them, numerous colonization agencies were formed to settle Jews on the land.

The Talmudic dictum 'Ein Onaha be' Karka'  
(There is no overpaying in regard to land)

seemed to justify any transaction, however unjustifiable it might be from a business point of view. Thus land speculation was introduced into Palestine.<sup>25</sup>

When Ahad Ha-Am returned from his visit to Palestine in 1891, he described the "contemptible and disgusting competition", the consequence of which was an increase in land prices resulting in a serious blow to the colonization effort.<sup>26</sup>

His impressions of Palestine he wrote in a stinging essay "אמת מארץ ישראל" which of course drew fire from the parties who had vested interests. Although no records exist, it appears from the above that he had no notion at the time that the Odessa branch of the Bene Moshe was founded, that land speculation and the bribing of government officials was an inevitable concomitant of the attempt to amass land for settlement. In his Memoirs he notes that he never really knew why Lubarsky and Barsilai wanted him as the leader of the Odessa section of the newly formed movement. He merely records that his first essay "לא זה הדרך" made a striking impression upon these men and that this appears to have been his qualification.<sup>27</sup> This essay attacks many of the colonization procedures in which he subsequently finds the members of his group participating. In the last analysis, Ahad Ha-Am did resign his formal position. Yet he permitted a compromise wherein he was to be the spiritual guide of the group without being directly linked to its practical affairs. He has also contributed to the false impression that he was its real



leader, for his resignation was not publicized to the members of the Bene Moshe.

My faith in the ethical standards of the group was weakened, and of my own ability to stand at its head. After much deliberation I decided that considering my feelings in the matter, I was no longer fitted to lead the group... However a compromise was worked out where the executive work should be in the hands of a central office, and that I was to be its spiritual head... It will however be understood that it was impossible to reveal this to my comrades since it would have slackened their hands.<sup>28</sup>

Only late in life, when the Bene Moshe had been long disbanded, did he reveal publicly that the founding of the group as well as its practical leadership had been in the hands of others. Ahad Ha-Am was always the severe internal critic of the activities of the Bene Moshe, though he defended it against onslaught from without. He urged upon the members the standards of dedicated "priests"<sup>29</sup> while they behaved for the most part like interested politicians. His concept of leadership, namely that the national movement must be led by the select, the aristocrats of the spirit, was the psychological drawing card which he supplied for the Bene Moshe. Ahad Ha-Am himself, however, was never able to lead, nor able to bring the group under the complete influence of his conception of nationalism. His letters during the Bene Moshe period lament what he considered a growing "decay" in the movement. Practically speaking, this means that they deviated from Ahad Ha-Am's policies. This is born out by the fact that the First Zionist Congress (1897) swept the

majority of the members of the Bene Moshe into its fold. In reality Herzl's program corresponded much more to the real desires of the group.

By 1905 Ahad Ha-Am was alone.<sup>30</sup> His influence in the Zionist movement percolated from the "spiritual" area only after it was realized that cultural nationalism combined with political nationalism was able to unify the Eastern and Western Zionist camps into a national movement.

#### D. HASHILOAH

In the year 1896 the business with which Ahad Ha-Am was associated failed. He was asked to become director of Ahisaf, a Hebrew Publishing Company in Warsaw. He held this post until he started the Hebrew periodical Hashiloah in Berlin, which he edited for six years.<sup>31</sup> This period yields significant glimpses of the man who ostensibly was interested in developing a significant Hebrew culture. In a word, Ahad Ha-Am hated his task as an editor. He writes:

... I am fully aware that I was a fool to accept the position of a hierarch in the wretched temple of Hebrew literature. You know that my life has always fallen into two distinct parts. After spending some hours a day in business, I used to retire to my study, my books and my desk, and there I became another man: I was, or fancied myself like the High Priest ministering in the Holy of Holies. My literary and public work was always invested for me with a kind of sanctity, and I tried my hardest to minister in holiness and purity of spirit.<sup>32</sup>

Having made a business of literature diminished its "holiness" for him. We note both in this and other letters a haughty and arrogant strain. He had little use for the "trash" that his position forced him to read. For him the articles and the writers "whose level of culture is deplorable", were worthless.<sup>33</sup> Here where he is personally involved, Ahad Ha-Am does not speak of working for the lofty ideal of Hebrew literature. Nor do we find him saying that despite the poor level of writing he will stay on to do willingly what for six years he did begrudgingly; that is, setting higher standards in style and content for Hebrew literature. Since he despised his work so, why does he continue? He answers, "Simply to earn a crust of bread for my family."<sup>34</sup> This, from the man who asked so much personal sacrifice of others and who ostensibly opposed all who were in the national movement for reasons of self interest, reflects a weakness which cannot be easily overlooked.

When Ahad Ha-Am resigned from Hashiloah (Jan. 1903) he accepted a position with the Wissotzky tea firm, which he writes, "will enable me to live in comfort, though not in luxury and which will leave me some time for study and writing."<sup>35</sup> When he left he hoped that Hashiloah would "cease altogether... rather than add a few numbers of a different character and so spoil its unity."<sup>36</sup> Klausner undertook the editorship of Hashiloah which continued to publish with some intermissions until 1927.<sup>37</sup>

E. AHAD HA-AM IN LONDON

Ahad Ha-Am traveled in Russia for three years as a representative of the Wissotzky firm. During this period he had little leisure for writing, though he did produce the major essays "Moses", "Judaism and Asceticism", and his study of Maimonides, "The Supremacy of Reason". In 1907 he was commissioned to set up and manage a branch of the firm in London. The London period, which lasted until 1925, was in general a bleak and depressive one for him. Separated from his friends and his children, worn out by the hectic type life he was forced to live, he was unable to write seriously in the few leisure hours that remained for him. His essays in 1913, one of which was based on Montefiore's "Synoptic Gospels" and summarized his attitudes on Zionism and its future, and others which treated the Diaspora nationalist orientation, were the only impressive literary productions of this time.<sup>38</sup> The state of English Judaism which he describes as a "cemetery with ornamental tombstones",<sup>39</sup> held no attraction for him. As a result of this, he grew ever more withdrawn. He writes:

... I live here in complete loneliness, as though I were on a desert island. The main reason is my daily work in the London hell which is called the City... it upsets and ruins my nerves, so that when I return home I want not company, but rest. This last year I have written nothing and read little. If I go on like this for some years longer I shall be fit for nothing...<sup>40</sup>

With the beginning of the World War, Ahad Ha-Am's depression grew ever more serious. He wrote to a friend:

I have no personal news. I am fearfully tired, and I should like to go and find rest somewhere far from 'civilization'. But where can I fly to? The man I envy most is Shackelton, who managed to get away in time to the South Pole - the only place to which the stench of 'humanity' certainly cannot reach.<sup>41</sup>

His desire to escape from the real world which was alien to the world he created in his mind manifested itself with such force that he was never able to regain his emotional balance. In Ginzberg's thinking there was always the schism between man as he is and man as Ginzberg thought he ought to be. He could never make peace with the man of flesh and bones because from his earliest childhood the ideal image of man which impressed itself upon him came from books and not from life. Those images which came from life were for the most part so negative that the only reality he could cling to was the one shaped by his own fancy, as it interpreted nineteenth century liberalism, with its belief in progress. If a man could not be a moral "superman", and Israel could not be a moral "supernation", then the adventure of the human and Jewish history was devoid of meaning. He writes:

Since the world went mad I have not written a single line (except a translation of Pinsker's "Autoemancipation"...). What should I write about? Unfortunately, I have always been deeply interested in ethical and social questions; and now that the moral world has reeled back into chaos, and humanity utterly vile, I am filled with loathing at the memory

of all the empty phrases which used to mean so much, and I simply cannot think, still less speak out my thoughts about all the questions connected with the life of the despicable creature called "man".<sup>42</sup>

Near the end of the war (1917) when some of his moroseness abated, Ahad Ha-Am, who during his London stay became closely associated with Chaim Weizmann, became active again in the national movement. Acting as an advisor to Weizmann, he participated in discussions which led to the Balfour Declaration. It is indeed strange that the man who so vociferously fought political Zionism should become enmeshed in political machinations with the British Empire. In a very keen analysis of the Balfour Declaration which is contained in the Introduction to the 1920-1921 edition of על פרשת דרכים Ahad Ha-Am is fully conscious of the fact that the future of <sup>the</sup> a national home which it promised was entirely dependent upon the good will of the "guardian": the British Empire.<sup>43</sup> When the "guardian" works for the interests of the national movement than all is well. When, however, it works against the movement as it did in 1924 when England made an alliance with the King of Arabia, then men such as Ahad Ha-Am threaten to leave Palestine rather than become Arabs in a political sense.<sup>44</sup>

#### F. "I LONG FOR LONDON"

In 1921, Ahad Ha-Am, broken in health and spirit, moved to Palestine, a place which he considered the home of

the Jewish Spirit. In these last years he completed his letters, and in the last months before his death he dictated his Memoirs which were published posthumously.

Would that it could be said that he died in the land which he considered sacred with feelings of serenity and accomplishment. However, this was not the case. In a letter to Dubnow three years prior to his death, he reveals his own disappointment.

What can I tell you about my wretched self? I am broken, shattered, utterly and incurably depressed. I should have laughed aloud if anybody had foretold years ago what has happened to me. I am surrounded by intimate and devoted friends; respect and admiration are shown me on every hand; my children live near me; and now I have time for study and rest. And all this in Palestine, which has been my dream for years and years, and in the midst of all these blessings I long for - London! Yes for London - not for the friends I left there (there may be three or four), but literally for London, for its busy streets and thoroughfares, for the dark City in which I spent so many hours without light or air, for the choking fog, and so forth. This longing is doubly painful because I regard it as a sure sign that I am suffering from some malady of the spirit - otherwise such a thing would be impossible.<sup>45</sup>

It is possible to characterize the personal life of Ahad Ha-Am as that of a man eternally in search. Hounded by insecurity, he was never satisfied either with his own achievements or those of others. As a mortal he attempted to embody the absolute in morality and ethics and of course found the absolute elusive and unattainable. Had Ahad Ha-Am been able to remain the recluse of his youth, he might have found a

truth and a reality which would have yielded him personal satisfaction. Once driven into the real world, he was forever to remain at odds with it, for from it he derived neither happiness nor fulfillment. People appeared to be the obstacles to the realization of his ideas. His antipathy towards the masses of men he voiced often and loud. History was in the hands of the select, the self-appointed priesthood of the Spirit, of which he had pictured himself as the High Priest.

Yet when he died January 2, 1927, it was the people that mourned him. Their respect and regard for the frail small man called Ahad Ha-Am swept over the wall which he so carefully constructed between himself and them.



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### CHAPTER THREE

#### SETTING THE STAGE FOR AN INTERPRETATION OF AHAD HA-AM'S CONCEPTION OF JEWISH HISTORY

##### **A. THE MANY AND THE FEW: A DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL ZIONISM**

The mind of man is not a tabula rasa which permits external stimuli to pour in upon it without interacting and structuring them in accordance with its own Gestalt. Consequently, that which the mind selects of these stimuli, it selects because of its particular configuration, needs and interests. The sum total of the knowledge of a particular individual is limited, therefore, to the extent that he has the ability to abstract from the many fragments absorbed by his mind and to the extent he is able to combine his abstractions into thought systems which correspond to reality. Though the nature of reality in its completeness is still far from our ken, we can nevertheless approximate whether a system of thought is able to cope with reality through the application of certain criteria: whether that system not only explains more than any previous system but also whether the knowledge yielded enables us to deal with reality in a more intelligent and significant way, and whether it has deepened our understanding of the world and its manifold problems.

Perhaps the greater part of the external stimuli which

impinge themselves upon our minds are social in nature. The very categories with which we approach the world as it is are derived through our experience as social beings. If the average person, interested in living significantly in the present, finds it difficult to divest his original thinking from his assimilated thought, how much more compounded is the problem of the historian who is not only interested in the present but also in the past yielding its truth for him. I think it cannot be denied that the historian approaches the data of the past with a constellation of a priori assumptions, attitudes, categories of classification, and perhaps prejudices. These may be carved out of the historian's "present" and his life experiences. In the words of Morris Cohen, "Our implicitly assumed principles determine the character of our interpretation."<sup>1</sup>

It appears that if we wish to understand Ahad Ha-Am's conception of Jewish history, we must first attempt to understand what his "implicitly assumed principles" concerning Jews and the nature of Judaism were. Since for Ahad Ha-Am general history was only significant as it affected Jewish history, our area of investigation must again take us to the plight of Jews and Judaism toward the end of the nineteenth century. I feel that herein lies the key for his treatment of that body of data which we call Jewish history, imbedded in the stream of time which reaches from the earliest period

of Jewish self-awareness to our own time.

First, what was Ahad Ha-Am's feeling with regard to the plight of Jews? One would imagine that his awareness of the failure of the Enlightenment movement to integrate Jews into the modern world and the dreadful pogroms and their aftermath would have aroused his feeling and concern for the future destiny of the individual Jew. We find, however, from the outset of his career, a decided hostility to individualism in Jewish life per se. The rise of individualism he claims, is due to the deterioration of national loyalty which resulted from the destruction of the Temple and the nation.<sup>2</sup> Individualism was not supreme when the nation was firmly rooted in its soil and when it was living according to Mosaic law.

All the laws and ordinances of Moses have but one unvarying object; the well-being of the nation as a whole in the land of its inheritance. The happiness of the individual is not regarded.<sup>3</sup>

In this period, the individual Israelite was regarded only as a limb in relation to the whole body. In another analogy, the individual is depicted as a minute particle of the body which changes daily but which does not affect the organic unity of the whole body. This type of national cohesion no longer exists, and as a result the individual and his welfare have unfortunately become the summum bonum to be desired in Jewish life.<sup>4</sup>

From this Ahad Ha-Am proceeds to apply his criticism to the early Zionists who erred in their premature attempt to colonize Palestine, before the national will had been regenerated

and the national ideal revived. The colonists who exhibited the Diaspora orientation of individualism, had brought the colonization scheme to near ruin, for the only lure they held out to new settlers was that of individual material welfare without any regard to the rebirth of the nation. The lure, however, had proved a failure for the land was not able to provide the produce which the colonists had been promised. Self-interest which originally had brought them to Palestine was now keeping them away from Palestine.<sup>5</sup> Colonization with only private interests in view was clearly "The Wrong Way".<sup>6</sup>

This was Ahad Ha-Am's first level of reaction to the problem of the plight of individuals in the absence of a dynamic nationalism which had the welfare of the group uppermost in its consideration. With the rise of Herzl and his proposal for the establishment of a political "Jewish State" as a solution to the Jewish problem, Ahad Ha-Am reveals to us another, much more serious objection to what he considers the evil of individualism. The entire Zionist adventure, Ahad Ha-Am maintains, was born not because Judaism is in straits, but because Jews are in straits. Consequently, what western Zionists want to do is to create a Jews' State so that they who now suffer disabilities because of antisemitism might find a place of refuge. Ahad Ha-Am takes strong objection to having a state built on negative grounds, namely to serve as a haven of refuge for the persecuted. Ahad Ha-Am, commenting on

Herzl's pamphlet, "Der Baseler Congress" (Wien 1897), states that it was antisemitism that gave birth to Herzl, and Herzl who gave birth to "Political Zionism" and Zionism to the Congress.<sup>7</sup> Western Jews who had their eyes opened to their Jewishness through antisemitism did not create Zionism for its own sake but rather to alleviate the ill effects of antisemitism. His sharpest barb is the observation that if antisemitism should suddenly disappear Herzl's Zionism would soon follow in its wake. He quotes Herzl as saying:

The nation is a collective of people whose relationship and unity is maintained by virtue of a common enemy.<sup>8</sup>

If the common enemy should disappear then it is clear that the nation would disintegrate. Herzl was not aware, according to Ahad Ha-Am, that historic Judaism derived its strength through the national culture which shapes its sons in its image and unites them by means of an overwhelming "spirit" whose existence is not dependent on any external foe.<sup>9</sup>

The real crux of Ahad Ha-Am's opposition to Herzlian Zionism lies in his belief that it really cannot solve the problems of Jews at all, that the whole scheme is utterly fantastic. The cry of the masses that the Messiah is at hand is a cry that will be silenced through consternation and disappointment.<sup>10</sup> Ahad Ha-Am, who was present at the First Zionist Congress and who described himself as a "mourner at a wedding feast", was utterly taken aback by the program proposed. Had



the Congress merely met to discuss a national solution to the Jewish problem and discussed ways of emancipating Jews from their inner slavery, strengthening national unity by joint action in all spheres of the national life "until we become capable and worthy of a life of dignity at some time in the future",<sup>11</sup> it would have been successful and praiseworthy. However the attempt to create a physical state "is a self-deceptive goal". Even if the Turks consented to the establishment of such a state it would still not solve the Jewish problem. In what follows, Ahad Ha-Am shows penetrating insight and a deep conviction that the actual establishment of a Jewish state belongs to the period of the millenium, the biblical "end of days".

One may even doubt whether the establishment of a "Jewish State" at the present time, even in its most complete form that we can imagine, having regard to the general international position, would give us the right to say that our problem had been completely solved, and our national ideal attained. 'Reward is proportionate to suffering'. After two thousand years of untold misery and suffering, the Jewish people cannot possibly be content with attaining at last to the position of a small insignificant nation, with a State tossed about like a ball between its powerful neighbors, and maintaining its existence only in diplomatic shifts and continual truckling to the favored of fortune. An ancient people, which was once beacon to the world, cannot possibly accept, as a satisfactory reward for all that it has endured, a thing so trifling, which many other peoples, unrenowned and uncultured, have won in a short time, without going through a hundredth part of the suffering. It was not for nothing that Israel had Prophets, whose vision saw righteousness ruling the world at the end of days. It was their nationalism, their love for their people and their land, that gave the Prophets that vision.

For in their days the Jewish State was always between two fires - Assyria or Babylon on one side, and Egypt on the other - and it never had any chance of a peaceful life and natural development. So "Zionism" in the minds of the Prophets expanded, and produced that great vision of the end of days, when the wolf should lie down with the lamb, and nation should not lift sword against nation - then Israel should too dwell securely in its land. And so this ideal for humanity has always been and will always be an essential part of the national ideal of the Jewish people; and a "Jewish State" will be able to give the people rest only when universal Righteousness is enthroned and holds sway over nations and States... The salvation of Israel will be achieved by Prophets not diplomats.<sup>12</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am has stated as clearly as he could the belief that "Political Zionism" is impossible, and even if possible, it is not desirable until the nations of the world reach a state of justice in their relationships with one another. It is only then that a Jewish State can survive. If we pursue the assumption that a Jewish State could be created, it follows, Ahad Ha-Am maintains, that it would not solve the material problems of the Jews for whom it is being created. With regard to the Ingathering of the Exiles: Since modern life is so complex, no nation - not even the strongest - could create an economy with such speed as

to absorb all the immigrants that Herzl's scheme entails. Hence only fantasy bordering on madness can believe that so soon as a Jewish State is established millions of Jews will flock to it, and the land will afford adequate sustenance.<sup>13</sup>

The major need which "Political Zionism" is to fulfill cannot, in the opinion of Ahad Ha-Am, be recognized. Such a

state, even if it could be created, would not solve the economic problems of the Jews still in the Diaspora. Both Pinsker and Herzl pointed out that one of the sources of anti-Jewish feeling is the Jew's keenness in the economic sphere. This, coupled with the accusation of "foreigner", leads to discrimination against him. How, asks Ahad Ha-Am, could a Jewish State diminish such hatred since its source, the Jew in commerce, has not been removed from the area of conflict? The mere fact that he now has a nationality will not abet his position in the slightest.<sup>14</sup>

✓ Ahad Ha-Am recognized that Zionism as depicted by Herzl could not solve the Jewish problem. He persisted in the idea that the Jewish people will continue to remain scattered amidst the nations and would continue to suffer their hatred.<sup>15</sup> If no objective solution could be found for the plight of Jews, what remained that could be done? To this question Ahad Ha-Am had a significant answer: Create a Messianism which is rooted in Judaism and yet in consonance with modern thought; a philosophy which would counter-act the assimilationist tendencies of Western Jewry, and yet not offend the sensibilities of the Maskilim in Russia; an orientation which while non-religious nevertheless can appeal to religious elements. The one motif and cardinal principle which will account for the logical inconsistencies in Ahad Ha-Am's point of view is his desire to keep Jews and Judaism distinct from the other national, cultural and religious

groupings, and through the deliberate and self-conscious creation of national cultural forms. He devised a nationalist viewpoint which is synthetic in nature and by his own admission cannot be verified logically, but must be felt and experienced.<sup>16</sup> "Spiritual Zionism" as opposed to "Political Zionism", is basically a psychological orientation, a state of mind or feeling which is to be developed not toward Jews and their situation in the Diaspora, but to Judaism whose future and problems he considers distinct.

Ahad Ha-Am holds that Galuth, which all Zionists agree is an evil, is really twofold in nature. There is the actual physical galuth which Zionism cannot show us how to escape, and spiritual galuth which he claims can be escaped. The latter cramps the people in its spiritual life by taking from it the possibility of safe-guarding its national individuality according to its own spirit.

This spiritual cramping which our ancestors called the ... 'the exile of the Divine Presence'... has become especially painful in our own time, since the overthrow of the artificial wall behind which the spirit of the people entrenched itself in past generations, in order to live their own life; and now we and our national life are enslaved to the spirit of the peoples around us, and we can no longer save our national individuality from being undermined as a consequence of the necessity of assimilating ourselves to the spirit of an alien life, which is too strong for us.<sup>17</sup> ...Now it is this problem of spiritual galuth which really finds its solution in a national refuge in Palestine: a refuge not for all Jews who need peace and bread, but for the spirit of the people, for that distinctive (unique) cultural form, the result of the historical development of a thousand

years which is still strong enough to live and to develop naturally in the future, if only the fetters of galuth are removed. And though the refuge contain only a tenth part of the people, this tenth part will be sacred to the whole people, which will see in it a picture of its national individuality, of what it is like when it lives its own life, without external restraint.<sup>18</sup>

This tenth part consists of those who really understand the spirit of the people, of which Ahad Ha-Am is the leading prophet or priest. He points out that when the plan to settle only the small minority was made public,

a shudder went through the Zionist camp, as though the presence of a destructive enemy had been detected. Nor was this instinct wholly mistaken. The movement was then just beginning to spread, and there was an attempt to give it a form which must not alienate the masses, who want above all things to escape from their national troubles.<sup>19</sup>

A purpose of the Spiritual Center was that it should be the haven of the elite who could solve their practical problem of the Diaspora by leaving it and going to Palestine, there to live the kind of unhampered life that Ahad Ha-Am depicts for them. One must be careful, however, not to clutter the wastes of Palestine with people who want to escape the misery of oppression; for belonging to the masses, they might be misfits in the rarified atmosphere of the spiritual aristocracy. Of Ahad Ha-Am's theory of power we will treat later. Suffice it to say that he was quite interested in presiding over "the coterie of priests" whom he had asked to dedicate

themselves to the task of reviving the spirit.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, we must still inquire as to the specific dimensions of the Spiritual Center. Ahad Ha-Am gives us an authoritative description:

A center of our nationality implies that there is a circumference, which like every circumference, is much larger than the center. That is to say, the speaker sees the majority of his people, in the future as in the past, scattered all over the world, but no longer broken up in disconnected parts, because one part - the one in Palestine - will be a center to them all, and will unite them into a single complete circumference. When all the scattered members of the national body feel the beating of the national heart, restored to life in the home of its vitality, they too will once again draw near to one another and welcome the inrush of living blood that will flow from the heart.<sup>21</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am again assures us ("A Spiritual Center", 1907) that outside the spiritual aspects of life, namely those of economic, political, and social relations, the spiritual center is of no avail. It cannot and will not affect the position of the Jews in the Diaspora in these areas.

'Spiritual' means that this relation of the center to the circumference between Palestine and the lands of the Diaspora will be limited of necessity to the spiritual side of life. The influence of the center will strengthen the national consciousness in the Diaspora, will wipe out the spiritual taint of galuth, and will fill our spiritual life with a national content which will be true and natural...<sup>22</sup>

The Spiritual Center has only one real function. It is to supply the Diaspora with an authoritative interpretation of Judaism as understood by the priests of the spirit. It is

to serve a function which is psychological in nature, offering to unify the dispersed Jewish communities of the globe around a distinctive national banner. It has undertaken the task executed by previous generations when Palestine was considered the center of authentic Jewish religious teaching for World Jewry. With this philosophy, Ahad Ha-Am hoped to fill the vacuum which the decline of Orthodoxy left in European Jewish life, and which Haskalah and Political Zionism failed to fill. Spiritual Zionism, like the earlier Messianic movements, was born out of desperation. The situation which Jewry faced in the latter part of the nineteenth century was one in which there was "No Exit". Ahad Ha-Am supplied a spiritual exit not for Jewry but for the few that would join him in his escape from reality into the world of the Spirit.

#### B. DIASPORA NATIONALISM AND SPIRITUAL ZIONISM

In the previous discussion on the difference in outlook with regard to the plight of Jews in the latter part of the nineteenth century as evidenced by Herzl and Ahad Ha-Am, the thesis was argued that Ahad Ha-Am, because he saw no way out of the predicament in which Jews found themselves, constructed a theory of "Spiritual Zionism" wherein Palestine was to be the Spiritual Center which would bind the Diaspora together in a bond of spiritual unity. While it was to be the haven of refuge for the spiritual elect, it was not the place where the masses of Jews could seek refuge from the persecution which

beset them on all sides in the lands in which they dwelt. The "Center", it was obvious to Ahad Ha-Am, would not be able to affect the material or political status of Jews in the Diaspora. Its contribution would be a psychological one: it would attempt to cement the National Spirit of the people so that its spiritual decay would cease.<sup>23</sup>

This thesis can be further illustrated by Ahad Ha-Am's attitude toward Diaspora Nationalism, which, as his own thinking, accepted the continued existence of the Diaspora as a fact of Jewish life. Dubnow, in his Letters on Ancient and Modern Judaism, argued that Jews should not seek to concentrate themselves in a country of their own. It is incumbent upon them to seek the right to live their distinctive national life in the countries where they have been residents for generations. The program of Diaspora Nationalism had as its goal the establishment of such conditions as would favor the preservation of what Dubnow called the national individuality of Jewish communities, without the limitations of a ghetto existence on the one hand and the threat of assimilation on the other.<sup>24</sup> The point of controversy between Dubnow and Ahad Ha-Am is the attitude toward Diaspora existence and the extent to which it can create a full national life. Ahad Ha-Am's own position, which he characterizes as the one to which most Jews adhere, is that

... diaspora is subjectively negative, but objectively positive... Dispersion is a thoroughly evil and unpleasant thing, but we can and must live in dispersion, for all its evils and all its unpleasantness. Exodus from the dispersion will



always be as it has always been, an inspiring hope for the distant future; but the date of that consummation is the secret of a higher power, and our survival as a people is not dependent upon it.<sup>25</sup>

It is not that Jews have to live in the Diaspora that gives the question its urgency; rather is it the attitude which is to be taken toward such an existence. Again it must be noted that Ahad Ha-Am is at a loss to solve the material problems of the Jew. What he urges is the need to develop a framework which is both rational and psychological in scope which will make the burden of Diaspora life seem lighter by giving Jews a national ideal toward which they should strive. Thus he argues that the "will to live", a dark force which is resident in the very marrow of the Jewish people, persuades it that it is possible to live in the dispersion. This same force also impels the Jewish people to find appropriate means to preserve themselves and their national identity.<sup>26</sup> Ahad Ha-Am deviates from the Diaspora Nationalists in that he does not make the Diaspora a subjectively desirable goal, to which he looks for the solution to the Jewish Question. He does not believe that the nations of the world will be induced to let Jews have "national rights" in territories which are clearly under the sovereignty of another nation,<sup>27</sup> nor is he convinced that it is possible to create a complete national life outside Palestine.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless there is much that can be done to enrich the national life of Diaspora Judaism and much that must be done in the struggle for national rights.<sup>29</sup>

What is required, therefore, is a sweeping new orientation to modern day Jewish life which will form a new rampart that is to make secure the existence of the Jewish people in dispersion and will replace the old rampart "which is tottering before our eyes".<sup>30</sup>

The essential problem for Ahad Ha-Am was not so much the plight of Jews, whose position by his own admission could not readily be changed, but the plight of Judaism: the emotional, intellectual and religious non-tangible super-structure which reflected generalizations about the Jewish situation. This could be remolded to meet the needs of the time. Judaism needed a new psychology that would supply lofty aspirations for the national psyche and which appeared to be realizeable in the modern world.

In a relatively late essay, " כ"א לשנוי " (1910), Ahad Ha-Am focuses on the problem which gave rise to his theoretical solution for the problems that beset Judaism at the end of the nineteenth century. He reasons that when the Jews during the period of the second Temple became aware that the territorial basis of their "national existence" was slipping from their grasp and were fearful of losing their religion and culture with their country, "they made a shift to turn what may be called their national capital into liquid portable assets".

Since that time the scattered fragments and the successive generations of the Jewish people have

been held together and unified by the triple bond of religion, literature and (as the foundation of both) language. These were all originally rooted in the land of Palestine, and could be made portable only at the expense of shedding such of their roots as could not be separated from their native soil. Religion had to give up the Temple and all the rites and ceremonies that could be observed only in Palestine: literature had to forgo the inspiration of contact with nature in its native land; and Hebrew had to cease to be the language of every day speech.<sup>31</sup>

The nation, "as though guided by some premonitory instinct", made the necessary adjustments to exile in advance. This was achieved by shifting the religious center from Temple to Synagogue, by converting the literature into compilations of legal codes and folklore, and by converting Hebrew from the spoken to the literary idiom.

Thus the remnants of the national capital were put into a form in which they could accompany the people on its wanderings and to serve to maintain national existence through the long dark years of exile.<sup>32</sup>

Although the existence in the Diaspora was meagre, the "capital" was kept intact until the modern period. Then a crisis developed in western Europe. There the Jewish nation was pronounced dead but Judaism was presumed to live on through a primarily religious expression. To achieve this, the old religion was transformed so that its national characteristics would be hidden. All this was done by the Jews of the west in their battle for self-preservation. Ahad Ha-Am keenly observes:

The western Jews have lost what they gave up; they have not been able to save what they thought they could save; they have not been able to conceal what they wanted to conceal.<sup>33</sup>

At a later time, the same symptoms began to appear in Eastern Europe; but because political conditions were different there, the attempt at Enlightenment was aborted. After this experience, East-European Jewry looked for a different solution for its crisis.

It has become obvious to everybody that the old three-fold basis of our national life is crumbling. Religion is more or less spent as a force; the Hebrew language is falling into oblivion; Hebrew literature is neglected. The last residue of our national capital being thus dissipated, what is going to happen to us? We like to believe that the national will to live is still there, and that in the end an answer to this ominous question will be found.<sup>34</sup>

To those who answer the question by stating that religion will save Jewry as it has in the past, there is the rejoinder that

...religion depends upon faith, and faith depends upon the spirit of the age, which we cannot control.<sup>35</sup>

The problem from Ahad Ha-Am's perspective would appear to be how to link the Judaism of the present with that of the past without coming into conflict with the spirit of the age, and yet without having the spirit of the age eclipse the Judaism which he plans to bring into harmony. To this task Ahad Ha-Am devoted himself. He digested much of the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, culling from it what he could use and synthesizing points of view which served his purpose. He assumed the role of a modern apologist

who addressed himself to the specific issues which confronted the Jewish community of both Eastern and Western Europe. Ahad Ha-Am, an eclectic, never developed a philosophic system. His purpose in writing was not to present an abstract dissertation on Jewish experience in history, for its own sake; rather was it an attempt to present a program for the revival of Judaism as conceived by him. If we take this as his personal motivation, his attempts at structuring the facts of Jewish history will fall into proper perspective. For the justification of his thinking he drew upon the intellectual streams of the nineteenth century. The important schools of thought which he used were Biological-Evolutionism, Positivism, French Psychology, Romanticism, and Nationalism. These streams emptied into the reservoir of "Spiritual Zionism" where they intermingled with one another. These were the broad categories with which Ahad Ha-Am approached the data of Jewish history. These categories, combined with his own personality, form the functional a priori which mirror Ahad Ha-Am's conception of Jewish History.

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NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Cohen, Morris, The Meaning of Human History. Illinois, 1947. p.5.
2. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "לא זה הדרך". מאמר א.י.ו.
3. כ"כ. ibid. י.ב.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism. op.cit. p.9.
4. כ"כ.. ibid. י.ב.
5. כ"כ. ibid. יג-יד.
6. כ"כ. הקדמה למהדורה ראשונה.ג.
7. כ"כ. עפ"ד. III "הקונגרס ויצרו". רעו.
8. כ"כ. ibid. רעו.  
My translation.
9. כ"כ. ibid. רעו.
10. כ"כ. עפ"ד. IV "הקונגרס הציוני הראשון". רעו.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism. op.cit. p.30.
11. כ"כ. ibid. רעה.  
ibid. p.26.
12. כ"כ. ibid. רעה-רעו.  
ibid. pp. 26-27.
13. כ"כ. עפ"ד. II "מדינת היהודים ו"צרת היהדות". קלו.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism, p.36.
14. כ"כ. עפ"ד. V "החזרה והעבודה". קסז-קסח.
15. כ"כ. "הקדמה למהדורה שניה". ז.
16. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "לא זה הדרך". מאמר ראשונה. יב-יג.
17. כ"כ. עפ"ד. IV "הנויעה השעה" שפ.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism, op.cit. pp.97-98.
18. כ"כ. ibid. שפ.  
see also: כ"כ. עפ"ד. II מדינת היהודים, וצרת יהודה. קלט.
19. כ"כ. עפ"ד. IV "הנויעה השעה". שפא.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism. op.cit. pp.98-99.

20. כ"כ. עפ"ד I "הכהנים והעם". ית. 20.
21. כ"כ. עפ"ד II מלים ומושגים. שצג.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism. p.122.
22. כ"כ. ibid. שצג.  
ibid. pp.123-124.
23. Note also:  
It is clear that "צרה היהדות" that is the loss of the spiritual national ideal is not a separate matter but an essential part of "צרה היהודים" and whoever says "of what worth is the issue of Judaism at a time when the problem of Jews per se demands solution knows not whereof he speaks. The proper solution to the Problem of Judaism contains certainly half the answers to the Jewish Problem. It is this half for which we must search out an answer - and can find such an answer in Zion. The solution to the other half of the question is neither in our power, nor does it be in Zion. (my emphasis)  
כ"כ. הקדמה למתורגמה שניה. I.  
My translation.
24. Ahad Ha-Am, Essays, Letters, Memoirs. op.cit. p.212.
25. כ"כ. עפ"ד III "שליח הולוח". שצג.  
ibid. p.215.
26. ibid. שצג-ה.  
ibid. p.216.
27. ibid. חא, ח.  
ibid.  
ibid. p.219.
28. ibid. חא-ח.  
ibid. pp.217-218.
29. ibid. חא.  
ibid. p.219.
30. ibid. חא-חב.  
ibid. p.220.
31. כ"כ. עפ"ד IV "ריב לשונות" חג.  
ibid. p.222.
32. ibid. חג.  
ibid. p.222.

33. .in ibid.  
ibid. p.223.
34. .in ibid.  
ibid. p.223.
35. .in-in ;in ibid.  
ibid. p.223.



### A. EVOLUTION AND THE "PLIGHT OF JUDAISM"

The essential question that the Jewish intellectual asked himself in the nineteenth century was why he should remain an adherent of Judaism. This question embodies more than the query as to why one should remain a Jew. Remaining a Jew, a member of the Jewish people, was a status conditioned as much by external factors as by volition. One's Jewishness was a social fact which European society never permitted anyone to forget. It was possible to be a Jew in this sense without any commitment to a philosophy of Judaism either in the religious or the secular sense. This was not the case with adherents of Judaism who looked for a vigorous formulation of religious, philosophic or psychological reasons as to why they should want to continue as Jews on a fully conscious level; they eagerly sought a justification for their status as Jews.

The problem of seeking a solution to the plight of Judaism was complicated by several factors. One factor was the decline of religion, orthodoxy in particular, to which Ahad Ha-Am has already alluded; another was the "failure" of the revolutionary approach of Reform Judaism which weeded out of Judaism all that was not in consonance with Reason. Whereas orthodoxy could no longer command faith, Reform, it appeared to Ahad Ha-Am, could never command the universal assent of Reason to its beliefs. The basic solution to this dilemma

Ahad Ha-Am found in the great idea of the nineteenth century - Evolution. If Judaism could somehow be viewed as being in evolution, it would then be possible to view its religious manifestation as a passing phase, a vestige of an earlier time which was a necessity in its development, but was no longer binding. This would obviate the need of resuscitating orthodoxy. If evolution is the keynote of Judaism, then the revolutionary uprooting of Reform is an abortion of the evolutionary process and must fail. The crest of the evolutionary development was, of course, Ahad Ha-Am's own time. It would follow, then, for Ahad Ha-Am to believe that the dominant motif, nationalism, current in his day, was the most acceptable answer to the problem of Judaism. It appeared to him as the most developed idea of the evolutionary process and *he* read it back into the historical part as an inherent element in Judaism from the earliest dawn of the Hebraic conscience.

#### B. THE "HERESY" OF DARWINISM

Ahad Ha-Am states that he could adopt that "scientific heresy which bears the name of Darwin" without any danger to his Judaism.<sup>4</sup> For if one accepts evolution, he argues, one cannot pass judgement on the past. Those who use evolution use it as a basis for their analysis and treat all fruits of the human tree as natural phenomena, "the inevitable result of certain causes ..."<sup>5</sup>

And just as the natural scientist is not concerned to pronounce judgement on the objects which he examines, to say, "this is good, but that is bad; this is sweet, that bitter..." just as he knows no distinction between the most exquisite bird and the most repulsive insect, but examines all alike with the minutest attention, doing his best to penetrate into the mystery of their lives and the process of their evolution; so too the student of the spiritual life of mankind has no concern with good and evil, wisdom or folly. For him it is all the fruit of the human tree.<sup>6</sup>

Since the analogy of man to nature has been made, Ahad Ha-Am sees within such an analysis the possibility of truly understanding the past. If all men are subject to "the eternal laws" which make for change and development, then all men in all ages will "produce such fruit as is determined by their condition and their environment."<sup>7</sup>

It should follow that all human institutions are but transients which pass through the corridor of human history. They are called into being by objective conditions and fall into desuetude when these conditions no longer exist. Ancient beliefs and customs fall squarely into this area.

...our outlook differs from that of our ancestors, not because we are essentially better than they were, but simply because our mental condition has changed, and our environment is different; that there is nothing so barbarous, so evil, that the human mind cannot accept it and foster it, given suitable conditions; and that consequently many of the sacred truths of every generation must become falsehoods in the next, and they who judge today will not escape scot free from the tribunal of tomorrow.<sup>8</sup>

The conceptual framework of evolution has created a spirit of historical criticism which has freed the human mind from

its subservience to the past, "more than all the incisive reasoning of heretics of past generations".

Every thinking man who examines the past in this spirit becomes, as it were a reincarnation of the souls of all ages. Understanding the mental life of past generations, and entering sympathetically into their ideals, he does not regard it as a defect in them that their opinions and customs do not in every respect come up to the standards of our ideas and demands of the present day. Consequently, the feeling of respect for the men of the past does not compel him to follow them in practice; he recognizes that every generation has its ideals, every generation its truths.

Ahad Ha-Am maintains that this attitude of accepting the past on its own terms and not judging it by contemporary standards of logic was then the norm in the general history of culture but not the Jewish. In the world of Jewish historical thought, the attempt is still made to evaluate historical experience by the criteria of logic,

which can only judge the value of early institutions by our standards, and cannot examine their intrinsic qualities and their rise and development by the light of ideas with which they were contemporary.<sup>10</sup>

Implied in Ahad Ha-Am's use of the evolutionary theory is the notion that the data of history are framed by particular circumstances. It follows that beliefs, institutions, traditions, and the remainder of the cultural and historical baggage have no transcendent qualities which could plead for allegiance in an age other than their own. Ahad Ha-Am illustrates this for us in an essay entitled "נחלה אבות" (1897), in which he

NAHALAT AVOT

comments on an article which attacked the contemporary authority of the Shulchan Aruch. He writes:

Undoubtedly the article is right in the main. All the sections and paragraphs from the Shulchan Aruch which the author [Rabbi A. Lolli] quotes are certainly quite foreign to our spirit at the present day: "certainly there is not a single Jew of modern education who can believe in them." But the inference which he draws, that "we must proclaim aloud, in season and out of season, that this is not our Law" is wrong.<sup>11</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am reasons that the Shulchan Aruch is not "the book that we have chosen for our guide", but the book "that has been made our guide whether we would or not by the force of historical development". This book with its "uncouth" sections, "best suited the spirit of our people, their conditions and needs in those generations in which they accepted it as binding upon themselves." The pronouncement by Lolli that "this is not our Law" is false. "It is our Law", Ahad Ha-Am maintains, expressed in the only form possible in the Middle Ages. He continues:

... just as the Talmud is our Law in the form of our Law which it took in the last days of the ancient world, and just as the Bible is our Law in the form which it took while the Jews still lived as a nation on their own land. The three books are but three milestones on the road of a single development, that of the spirit of the Jewish nation. Each corresponds to the nation's condition and need in a different period.<sup>12</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am, as we note in the last section of this quotation, could accept the implications of historical relativism in many areas, but not concerning the spirit as a phenomena purely

conditioned by time and place. If he would have accepted only the empirical consequences of his understanding of evolution, he would have had difficulty in giving a tone of authority to his historical analysis. Since "the wall of tradition" could easily be toppled, Ahad Ha-Am could not invoke the God of history who gave direction to the course of events. He found a valuable substitute in the idea that every nation, as every biological organism, had a Spirit which acted as its historical guide. This Spirit, as we shall see, is the substratum about which the data of Jewish history are organized. As Ahad Ha-Am pointed to what he considered the fallacy of the Reformers, in that they applied to the historical materials of the past the notions of eighteenth century thought, so we feel impelled to call attention to the fact that Ahad Ha-Am cannot escape a similar accusation with regard to his imposition of nineteenth century thought on Jewish history.

We expect and shall find in Ahad Ha-Am the Utopian and Messianic hope that a Judaism in process has a glorious future.<sup>13</sup> One cannot rush the ideal to a premature conclusion but must proceed with "small sure steps" to the ultimate goal. Time is requisite for the proper evolution of national forms and the national ideal.<sup>14</sup> What assurance do we have that such hopes are realizeable even in the distant future? Toward the answer to this question Ahad Ha-Am brings the biological notions of the drive for self-preservation, and the struggle for survival

and development.

C. THE "DRIVE FOR SELF-PRESERVATION"

AVLOOT BETOH HERDOT

In his essay "ענין בחי' חיות" (1891), Ahad Ha-Am propounded the idea that the reason why Jews do not break away completely from Judaism was not due to an external force, but rather to the internal drive for self-preservation; this was a conclusion arrived at a year earlier in the feuilleton "חשבון הנפש". The human mind, although it may appear to be guided by reason alone, is really controlled by a force which works beneath the conscious level and which assumes control of the mind's movements. It directs these movements "whither it will, giving to its commands the semblance of reason and truth." Though this force, which is all-powerful, takes on many guises, it can be discerned by the knowing eye as the desire for life and well being.

This desire which is implanted in us by nature, forces every living thing to pursue at all times that which brings life and pleasure, and to shun at all times that which leads to destruction and pain. For every living thing this desire is the motive and the goal of every action.<sup>15</sup>

Illustrating the will to live, Ahad Ha-Am notes that in earliest times when man's contact with the world was painful, an inner force, Imagination,

could lead the way to rest, by refashioning the chain of cause and effect, and could shed a cheerful light on every circumstance and event...<sup>16</sup>

That which gave birth to Imagination in the hour of man's trial and made it possible for him to go on living was the drive for self-preservation. Ahad Ha-Am then goes on to make his point from Jewish history. Methodologically he always proceeds from the general to the particular. He applies his conclusions derived from the general history of culture to Judaism.

The course of human thought on life generally, as applied to the individual, is paralleled by that of Hebrew thought on the life of the Hebrew nation; and the one process may fitly serve to illustrate the other.<sup>17</sup>

✓ Ahad Ha-Am divides Jewish historical experiences into three major periods. The earliest is the natural period when the people was full of vigor. This is the age of the prophets when the national will to live was healthy. This idyllic period came to an end when the nation was destroyed by the successive conquests of the great empires. It was then that Imagination, at the bidding of the will-to-live, transposed the national hopes into the supernatural aspirations of religion.

As the actual position of the nation sunk lower and lower, so its spirit soared heavenwards leaving the concrete, present life of will and action for a visionary life of boundless future. The nation soon became a slave to this spiritual disease which was an inevitable outcome of its condition and history.<sup>18</sup>

The third period was initiated when the spirit of critical inquiry "laid waste the castles of Imagination".



The Jewish castle was not spared. This development gave rise to a new generation which believed no more than their fathers did in "the possibility of achieving the national well-being by natural means", but has forsaken, in conformity to the spirit of the age, the power of Imagination. Yet Ahad Ha-Am maintains that despite this development their national-will-to-live cannot be crushed.<sup>19</sup>

It would appear from all points of logic and criteria which Ahad Ha-Am set up in this essay that if there can be no natural existence for a people, and if it has lost the power of Imagination to create the unreal world of ideals as a substitute incentive for life, then the will-to-live in that people is dead. Ahad Ha-Am, however, approaches this question in a doctrinaire manner. Darwinism stated that every organism had a will-to-live. It further maintained that every organism was engaged in a "struggle for existence" and that there would be a survival only for the fittest.<sup>20</sup> Ahad Ha-Am, like Herbert Spencer, believed that there was an analogy between the individual and society.<sup>21</sup> Since biology was the reigning science, analogies to it extended into historical fields. Spencer believed that a general law of evolution could be formulated so that it would apply to society. He reasoned that the principles of social structure and change must be the same as that of the universe at large. Consequently, there must be a struggle for existence among societies as there is among organisms.<sup>22</sup>

Nations like organisms must pass through the normal course of evolution. Like organisms who die, so it appears that nations who have run their full span of development must also die. To this analogy Ahad Ha-Am takes vociferous exception. He writes:

But at this stage there is an important difference between the individual and the nation. The individual dies: die he must: all his hopes for the future cannot save him from death. But the nation has a spiritual thread of life, and physical laws do not set a limit to its years of strength. And so let it but make the future an integral part of itself, though it be only in the form of a fanciful hope, it has found the spring of life, the proper spiritual food which will preserve and sustain it for many a long year despite its ailments and diseases.<sup>25</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am will not bind himself to evolution where the expansion of the idea to its logical conclusion will toll the death knell of the Jewish nation or of Judaism. He is willing to attach himself to the ever rising star of the evolutionary process if this will promise Judaism a will-to-live and give it a faith in the inevitability of progress. Even if this faith is objectively groundless, as long as it is resident in the power of Imagination, there is hope that at some future point a more liveable solution can be attained. One of the remarkable attributes of the will-to-live is that it creates history. History is conceived as the vehicle through which the "instinct for self-preservation" expresses itself.

History does not trouble about our program; it creates what it creates at the bidding of our 'instinct of self-preservation'. Whether we understand the true import and purpose of our work, or whether we prefer not to understand - in either case history works through us, and will reach its goal by our agency.<sup>24</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am conceives of the nation as a living organism with a thriving instinct of self-preservation which has kept the nation alive throughout its history. This "instinct" cannot be separated from the national culture nor from the rest of the nation's life. All conditioning to the environment in order to survive is dominated by this basic drive, and serves it in the battle for existence. Since everything in man is concentrated on the single desire for life, he saw but two forces in nature: those which would destroy and those which would abet life. Since destruction is the ominous evil to be avoided, man gave all his thoughts to methods whereby he could circumvent destruction. With Hume, Ahad Ha-Am holds that this fear aroused in man the idea that every natural phenomenon had a deity which, through appeasement by words or gift, would protect man from harm. To protect himself from other men, early man conceived of a tribal deity to which he looked for protection from his enemies. When these tribal units grew into nations, their gods became national and their task was to protect or avenge the nation from those who threatened its survival.

D. MONOTHEISM - A DERIVATIVE OF THE INSTINCT  
OF SELF-PRESERVATION

In ancient Israel, although a few gifted prophets had the concept of the Unity of God, the masses of men still believed in polytheism. It was not until the destruction of the first Temple that the spirit of the exiled people changed to admit that there was only One God. That which made the people's spirit change was not conscious assent to a new truth but the working of the instinct for self-preservation. This instinct devised the concept of a different kind of God whose power extended across national boundaries so that he could save his people on foreign soil. Such a God had to be a World God, a Cosmic Force that could bid the king of Babylon as well as all emperors to do His Will.<sup>25</sup> The national instinct to survive compelled the people to turn to the monotheism of the prophets and it is in this manner that monotheism was born. We might add a postscript to this hypothesis and note Ahad Ha-Am's consistency of approach, for when the "national instinct" in the nineteenth century bade Jews to turn to from monotheism and embrace Positivism they could will to do nothing else.

On the basis of this instinct, Ahad Ha-Am proceeds to analyze the whole body of Jewish experience since the destruction of the illyllic natural setting at the time of the prophets. From then on, all was compromise with the national ideal (a

concept we shall deal with in the discussion of Nationalism) and an inauthentic national existence emerged. Until the founding of Spiritual Zionism, which attempted to recapture the national life of the nation some two thousand years after it existed, if it existed at all, Jews did not live in the spirit of Hebraism but in its watered down religious expression, Judaism.<sup>26</sup>

Israel's pristine purity was shattered. After the destruction of the first Temple, religion was to be

only a foundation and a support for the national hope, which grew and developed in the period of the second Temple, until it became the whole content of the nation's spiritual life, and rose superior even to the national ideal from which it drew its beginning.<sup>27</sup>

All the aspects of religious life which stressed the needs of the individual encroached upon the national ideal. All which made Judaism look heavenward, though determined by the instinct for survival, really prevented the realization of the great vision which the prophets held for the future.<sup>28</sup> Whereas from the vantage point of historical distance Ahad Ha-Am observes the deterioration of national hopes as they become overlaid by religion, his tone changes when he deals with the need to preserve, for a time at least, the religious forms devised in the ghetto and Diaspora existence. This attitude emerges when Ahad Ha-Am attacks the Haskalah movement which had urged the breaking down of the ghetto and its fence of religious prescriptions. The

Haskalah Jews did not realize, Ahad Ha-Am maintains, that analogous to an ox's horns which nature bequeathed him so that he could protect himself are the religious institutions and values which Jews have developed in Diaspora living. It is as foolish to denounce these implements in the battle for survival as it is to praise them, for Jews are not responsible for them.

For they evolve in themselves as necessary developments flowing from our life situation. We derived both the good and the bad qualities in our struggle for existence.<sup>29</sup>

The national instinct for survival had suddenly taken on new strength in Ahad Ha-Am's own time. When the nation had deviated too much from its national ideal, it suddenly burst forth and directed all eyes to Zion as the solution for its spiritual problem. The instinct directed the work of the Hibbath Zion movement whether it so wills or not.

Throughout our discussion it has become apparent that this instinct has a consciousness which is phenomenal. It decides proper theologies and how Jews may conduct their lives outside Palestine. It is beyond reason and no one can chart its way. Ahad Ha-Am observed this particular propensity of the instinct when he saw that conscious direction of Zionism was at variance with the actual work accomplished. He notes:

...The workers have had one goal in view, and have been unconsciously approaching another. This dualism is the surest sign that the

driving force is not reasoning reflection, but something much deeper: one of those natural instincts which work in darkness and makes man do their will whether he likes it or not, while he believes that his action is directed to the object which his reason has set before him. This driving force is the instinct of national self-preservation. By it we are compelled to achieve what must be achieved for the perpetuation of our national existence; and we follow it albeit without clear consciousness, and by crooked paths - because we must follow it if we would live.<sup>30</sup>

This instinct to which Ahad Ha-Am assigns such tremendous importance defies clear definition. That it defies reason he himself has willingly admitted. It seems from all indications to be a grossly metaphysical notion possessing attributes which in the pre-positivist period might have been ascribed to God or the Devil as directors of history. It is, however, closest to the notion of Fate found in ancient literature which presses man forward to his destiny despite his own volition. Ahad Ha-Am, if he were pressed, might well have admitted that the notion of the dark instinct that lurks beneath the surface of man's consciousness belongs to his category of "Imagination", and that its usage in explaining Jewish history flows from his own attempt to preserve Judaism. For his age and time, the instinct theory projected on a national basis brought home to Jews the idea that they could not succeed in their attempt to stray from the fold. That their very instincts would not permit them to surrender their Jewish heritage was the hope which Ahad Ha-Am constructed the foundations of Spiritual Zionism.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I סו-סח; ענ; I קנח. II רעד. II שעד.
2. כ"כ. פרקי זכרונות. חצו; חצה. כ"כ. מבוא. II-III פרקי זכרונות. חצה..
3. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "עבדות בחוך חרות" סט.
- 5.. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "נחלה אבות" רעא. Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Essays. op.cit. p.207.
6. ibid. רעא. ibid. p.208.
7. ibid. רעא. ibid. p.208.
8. ibid. רעא-רעב. ibid. p.209.
9. ibid. רעב. ibid. p.209.
- 10.. ibid. רעב. ibid. p.211.
- 11.. ibid. רעב. ibid. p.212.
12. ibid. רעב. ibid. p.212.
13. כ"כ. הקדמה למהדורה ראשונה. א.
14. כ"כ. הקדמה למהדורה ב. ו.
15. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "חשבון הנפש". סא. Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Essays. op.cit. p.160.
- 16.. ibid. סא. ibid. p.162.
17. ibid. סב-סג. ibid. p.167.
18. ibid. סג. ibid. p.168.



19. .ס.ג. ibid.  
ibid. p.169.
20. Hofstadter, Richard, Social Darwinism in American Thought. Boston, 1955. p.6.
21. נ"כ. עפ"ד. א "עבר ועתיד".  
Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Essays. op.cit. p.84.
22. Hofstadter, Richard, Social Darwinism in American Thought. op.cit. p.42.
23. נ"כ. עפ"ד. א "עבר ועתיד". פא-פב.  
Ahad Ha-Am. Selected Essays. op.cit. p.84.
24. נ"כ. עפ"ד. א "סך הכל". חכא.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism. op.cit. p.132.
25. עפ"ד. א "חקי והחבוללות" פו.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Essays. op.cit. pp.67-75.
26. נ"כ. עפ"ד. א "חשבון הנפש". ס.ג.
27. נ"כ. עפ"ד. א "מוקדם ומוחר בחיים". פ.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Essays. op.cit. p.76.
28. נ"כ. עפ"ד. א "בשר ורוח". שנ-שנא.  
ibid. pp.148-150.  
See also: נ"כ. עפ"ד. א "לא זה הדרך". מאמר א. יו.
29. נ"כ. עפ"ד. א "פצעי אוהב". כ.  
My translation.
30. נ"כ. עפ"ד. א "סך הכל". חכא.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism. op.cit. pp.131-132.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### AHAD HA-AM'S CONCEPTION OF JEWISH HISTORY

#### The Influence of the Romantic Movement on Ahad Ha-Am

The application of the theory of evolution to the Jewish past yielded the idea of an ongoing process of which Judaism was an integral part. Like all organisms which are caught in the stream of evolution, the Jewish nation, which is a social organism, is possessed of "the instinct of self-preservation". Though it goes through the phases of infancy, maturity and old age like any other organism, the Jewish nation need not die. By the exercise of the power of its "instinct", it can will itself life until a more natural existence becomes possible at some future time. This skeletal evolutionary frame was sufficient to insure for its adherents the continued existence of the Jewish nation and Judaism. However, it lacked a messianic zeal, a glowing goal to be realized in the future. Such a goal of course had to be couched in terms of the needs of the present to have appeal, and yet transcend the present to be meaningful for the future. That man must have such a goal to survive the despair of the present Ahad Ha-Am states in unmistakeable terms.

The laws of knowledge which govern our reason, require absolutely that every fact shall have a cause; anything without a precedent cause is inconceivable. We might, however, conceive the whole world as simply the inevitable result of

certain causes, without reference to any particular end, were it not that our moral sense is up in arms against this conception, and a world without any end is in our view mere vanity and emptiness, as though it had reeled back into chaos.<sup>1</sup>

The goal that Ahad Ha-Am posits for the "end of days" in the evolution of Judaism is the enthronement of truth and absolute justice.<sup>2</sup> These aspirations are not to be realized initially through the dispersion of Jews and Judaism among the nations, but rather by their centralization in the Spiritual Center in Palestine.<sup>3</sup>

#### A. THE SPIRIT OF ROMANTICISM

When Ahad Ha-Am imposed the evolutionary hypothesis as a category for the explanation of the Jewish past, he was of necessity confronted with a basic question. The very phenomenon of evolution assumes that there must be matter or some other essence through which the evolutionary process works. Since Ahad Ha-Am, as Spencer,<sup>4</sup> assumed that development proceeds lineally ever upward, and that consequently progress is a built-in law of evolution, the underlying substance had to have a constancy which clearly identified that which was progressing and changing. This essence Ahad Ha-Am located in the stream of thought called Romanticism.

The movement of Romanticism in its ideological tone was a revolt against the Age of Reason with its attempt to construe all of experience in terms of rationality alone.<sup>5</sup>

Romanticism was the result of the political failure of the French Revolution and its aftermath to grant to every man his "natural rights". If the armies of Napoleon, the purported defender of the Revolution, had crushed its enemies abroad, they did nothing to establish its principles in the French state.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, when Napoleon was defeated, the emperors of Russia and Austria and the kings of England and Prussia undertook to wipe out the Revolution along with the principles of the Age of Reason which gave it birth. A period of reaction set in which tried to restore the status quo prior to the Revolution. One of the notions of this period was that the Revolution was responsible for the breakdown in society of which the savageness of the Reign of Terror as well as Napoleon's reign were the prime examples. The period of reaction encouraged a return to the past as the model for the future.<sup>7</sup>

The Age of Reason, which tried to single out those aspects which were the same to all men, was offset by Romanticism which tried to perceive that which was unique and different in all men. Romantic science, for example, became the science of the individual, whether person, object or quality. In order to be adequate, science had to describe the individual in terms of its relationship to the larger whole of which it was a part.

Nothing exists in and by itself, but only  
as part of a total world of interrelated

individuals into which it must be set  
and from which it must be distinguished.<sup>8</sup>

This approach to human history carried with it the implication that in order to penetrate the past, to understand its ideals and traditions, one must examine its heritage not through logical categories but in terms of development and growth.

The test of any institution was no longer its reasonableness and its utility, but its origin and history.<sup>9</sup>

In transmuting the rational into the traditional, "history", in the words of Schiller "is the final court of appeal". Ahad Ha-Am had read the Romantics,<sup>10</sup> and apparently found within this movement the approach to the past which yielded him the essence which he viewed as being in constant process ~~and process~~ and evolution. Since every nation, religion, and institution was considered the result of some Spirit or Ideal which unfolds itself according to its own laws of development through time,<sup>11</sup> Judaism too must be possessed of such a guiding Spirit, Ideal, or Self. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, who were the founders of the school of "Absolute Idealism", assumed that there was an Absolute Self of which individual selves were but finite expressions. Theirs were three major attempts to deal with the problems raised by the concept of the self.

That of Fichte is an attempt to solve the problem of the self and its objects in terms of moral experience; Schelling deals with it from the point of view of aesthetic or artistic experience; and most fundamental of all, Hegel deals with it in terms of logical experience, the experience of thought.<sup>12</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am absorbed much of Hegel's and Herder's thought through the first modern philosopher of Jewish history,

Nachman Krochmal.<sup>13</sup> Like Herder, Krochmal viewed the history of nations in biological categories. Every nation, including Israel, goes through three stages: the periods of budding, maturity, and decay. There were three such three-fold phases in Jewish history. The first began with Abraham and ended with Gedaliah after the destruction of the First Temple; the second extended from the prophets of the Exile to the death of Bar-Kochbah; and the third stage began with Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi and terminated with the expulsion from Spain (Schechter)<sup>14</sup>, or the eighteenth century. (Agus)<sup>15</sup> Each of the crests and troughs of the triple process correspond to Israel's attachment to God. The seeking after God, the Ideal of Ideals, was Israel's distinct heritage and mission. When Israel departed from this mission by lapsing into either the idolatry of ceremonialism and superstition or materialism and moral degeneracy, it descended into a trough. When it truly understood the Spirit or Will of God, it reached great heights.<sup>16</sup> Because the Jewish people has a unique national soul which, despite its failings, is attached to the Absolute Spirit, a revival of the nation is possible. Once a revival has taken place, the nation proceeds again on the next triple course of development.<sup>17</sup>

Although there are similarities in the thinking of Krochmal and Ahad Ha-Am, for example, in the analogy of the nation to a biological organism and the concept of the national revival, there is one basic difference: Krochmal's time still

permitted him to speak of God as the Ideal of Ideals.<sup>18</sup> Ahad Ha-Am, in his time, could no longer accept such a concept and substitutes for the realization of the Absolute Idea in history, the Spiritual Center and the enthronement of absolute justice as the national aspiration of the Spirit of Judaism.

### B. "THE SPIRIT OF JUDAISM"

To solve "the plight of Judaism" for his own day, Ahad Ha-Am's Spirit of Judaism had to be couched in nationalistic and particularistic terms. He had to equate the Spirit of Judaism with the National Spirit, and the latter with true Hibbath Zion which was Spiritual Zionism.

The first order then is to create conditions which will permit the free evolution of the Spirit of the People. Accompanying this will be an inner transformation which will create a natural love of Zion... the necessary preparation for the concentration of the Jewish people in Zion is the concentration of the Spirit of the People about the "Love of Zion".<sup>19</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am writes that "the concentration of the Spirit" is a well known psychological phenomenon, and its meaning is that the spiritual force in the very depths of the soul predominates over all else within the soul. Further, this spirit groups around itself all the other components of the soul and makes them subordinate to its own uses, and gives them its own characteristics.<sup>20</sup> This conception of Paulhan,<sup>21</sup> Ahad Ha-Am makes the basis for the Spiritual

Center; for if "the Love of Zion" would strike root in the hearts of all Jewish factions, they would come to realize that a normal existence for Judaism is impossible until the Spirit has the opportunity to develop according to its own bent and own potentiality.<sup>22</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am was, however, faced with another problem. If the first objective of the Spirit, Hibbath Zion, was to be attained, and some sort of natural existence for the Jewish people in its ancestral land was to be possible, what further justification would there be for the Spiritual Center? Its purpose for existence was, it will be recalled, not to save Jews from the throes of antisemitism, but to save Judaism from extinction. Ahad Ha-Am achieved this justification for the future by making the attainment of absolute justice, which is a universal value and is a thoroughly Utopian goal, the aim towards which the Spiritual Center was to strive. Though the particularism of Hibbath Zion is logically inconsistent with the universal idea of absolute justice, Ahad Ha-Am required both concepts for his system: the one addressed to the needs of the present, the other transcending the present to be the goal of the future.

### C. THE PROPHETS, ABSOLUTE JUSTICE AND THE SPIRIT OF JUDAISM

The concept of the development of the Spirit according to its own laws implies that there was a beginning for the



Spirit in the historical past and that it has a built-in dynamic which gives it direction. To know something of the Spirit's laws, we would have to find a period in which its true essence was revealed. By Ahad Ha-Am's own admission, we have learned that since the destruction of the first Temple the Spirit has been weakened in adjusting to the environment of other National Spirits in the diaspora. Hence, to learn what the true nature of the Hebrew Spirit was, we must go back to the pre-destruction era, to the Age of the Prophets. Ahad Ha-Am chooses the prophetic period because "absolute justice" was the ideal of the Hebrew prophets and has since become the very basis of Jewish ethics.<sup>23</sup> He never makes clear which prophets other than Moses typify the idea of "absolute justice", and consequently we are led to assume that there was no difference in this idea, let us say, between Amos and Nachum. This loose way of dealing with the past because of the "hypnos" that it exerts on the present,<sup>24</sup> makes of Ahad Ha-Am a Romantic, a description which he readily accepts.<sup>25</sup>

KOHEN VENAYEEV

In his essay "כהן ונביא" (1893), Ahad Ha-Am defines the basic role of the prophet and the prophetic community. He again draws on Paulhan for the framework which he imposes on ancient Judaism. Paulhan regards the human soul as a community containing many individual propensities; i.e., impressions, ideas, feelings, etc. Each of these individual qualities has a "life" of its own and tries to widen its

sphere of influence, striving to set its own impress on the whole life of the soul. These forces within the soul are constantly at war with one another and are ever on the alert to best a competing force.

And it is just through this action of the individual members of the spiritual community, with their mutual hatred and envy, that human life attains complexity<sup>26</sup> and breadth, many-sidedness and variety.

In the course of time the soul may reach a point of equilibrium where the spiritual life takes a definite middle course from which it cannot be diverted; this is the "moral harmony" of which the Greek philosophers speak. The struggle of primal forces within the soul, Ahad Ha-Am accepts as a principle of intellectual and social life.

There are men in society, particularly those who give birth to a monumental idea, who are analogous to the mighty forces in the soul which try to mold the soul in their single image. They make their idea a "primal force" which seeks to drive the current of life in its own exclusive direction. Once the idea has achieved dominance, it is protected by those whose loyalty it has won. Since these guardians want the primal idea to spread, they are forced to compromise it with reality. These two ways of doing service to an idea can be compared to that which in ancient days distinguished the prophet from the priest. The prophet is the man of single purpose who strives to make his truth accepted by the world about him. Since

he is only concerned with what ought to be and not with what can be, the prophet requires the priest to accomodate his idea to society. In the process of accomodation, the idea loses its full force as the priests attempt to harmonize it with "the complex harmony" which has resulted from the inter-action of this idea with other societal forces.

The living, Absolute Idea, which strove to make itself all-powerful and changed the external form of life while remaining itself unchanged - this elemental Idea has died and passed away together with the Prophets. Nothing remains but its effects - the superficial impress that it has been able to leave on the complex form of life, already outworn, that the Priests try to perpetuate, for the sake of the Prophetic impress that it bears.<sup>27</sup>

Although there are other nations which had their prophets, it is pre-eminently among the ancient Hebrews that this phenomenon is to be found. Ahad Ha-Am notes:

Phrophecy is as it were the hall-mark of the hebrew national spirit. The fundamental idea of the hebrew Prophets was the universal dominion of absolute justice.<sup>28</sup>

The Prophets, Ahad Ha-Am goes on to show, transcended political and national boundaries through their teachings of righteousness,

...and preached the gospel of justice and charity for the whole human race.<sup>29</sup>

The Prophets, realizing that their vision for the world was one to be realized "in the end of days", also knew that this task could not be done by scattered

individuals. Ahad Ha-Am now reads into the prophetic mentality the idea that a whole community was required as the bearer of the force of Righteousness throughout history which would assume of its own volition the task of defending this idea against all competing streams of ideology in the world, asserting that it must dominate the soul of the world. The prophet's national ideal was not a "kingdom of Priests", but "would<sup>1</sup> all the people of the Lord were prophets".

They wished the whole people to be a primal force making for Righteousness, in the general life of humanity, just as they were themselves in its own particular national life.<sup>31</sup>

No sooner has Ahad Ha-Am stated this thought, when he finds it necessary to admit that the prophets, when they saw the Idea adjusted to the social organism which was to bear it, "saw a kind of barrier between it, the Idea, and the people".<sup>32</sup> Here Ahad Ha-Am is forced by his own reasoning to concur with Paulhan's observation that a prophetic community, although a great Ideal, can never become actualized except through the mediation of priests who must temper it to the needs of the times. Since this temperization took place before Israel's dispersion, Ahad Ha-Am's contention that its adaptation by priests in the Diaspora made the Idea lose its "pristine purity"<sup>33</sup> is quite weak. This weakness persists throughout Ahad Ha-Am's plea for the reconstitution of the national center so that the prophet's mission could

there be brought to fruition, and the Spirit of Judaism, which is Prophetic Judaism, could again develop in accordance with its own character in its natural setting.

#### D. RELIGION, THE CAPSULE FOR MORALITY

Despite the plentiful evidence in the Old Testament that it was God who set the Prophet on his mission through His Voice and visions, thereby charging him to preach his doctrine of morality, Ahad Ha-Am chooses to follow another line of explanation which clearly controverts biblical evidence. Rather than religion being the source of morality, it is merely the capsule through which morality is preserved.<sup>34</sup> In an essay entitled "המסור הלאומי" (1899), Ahad Ha-Am sets forth the hypothesis that it is an error to hold that morality developed from religion. The case is that both emerged independently of each other from man's nature. It is only after they have both evolved that they become intertwined and enter into each other's provinces, at times for better, at times for worse, as far as the evolution of morality is concerned. It is the constant unfolding of morality which transforms the concept of the deity in religion, as well as the other religious dogmas which concern themselves with human behavior.<sup>35</sup> *יוג' סופרומי-סוס*

In an essay published a year earlier "אינו ופרומי-סוס" (1898), Ahad Ha-Am had already asserted that the moral sense<sup>36</sup> is present in all peoples. The state of its perfection

depends upon the spiritual condition of the society under discussion.

The moral sense, for example, develops among different people in such diverse ways that at first glance it appears as if there were no relationship between peoples in this respect. A more penetrating look will discern that beneath the external phenomena in the life of two peoples there is a concealed universal force striving to reveal itself in keeping with the spiritual level of the people in general.<sup>37</sup>

This moral sense par excellence is, however, the heritage of the Hebrew spirit.

From the time that nationalism grew in strength among us, we have publicized the well known fact which Samuel David Luzzatto so diligently expounded: that the Hebrew moral sense is a thing in itself whose likeness is not to be found among the rest of the ancient cultured peoples before it manifested itself in Judaism.<sup>38</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am goes on to assert that the Greeks were also possessed of a moral spirit but that their polytheistic culture did not permit its full development. The moral sense of Israel, in all its glory, was preserved by the elevated monotheism of the prophets through which it was uniquely fashioned, and through which it reached its greatest perfection.<sup>39</sup> The Hebrew Spirit, the guardian of Jewish history, was also the director of the moral sense and fashioned it into the concept of absolute justice.

If one were to ask Ahad Ha-Am how so many diverse kinds of natural instincts, senses, and spirits could all co-exist simultaneously and in harmony with one another,

he would answer us with Paulhan's image of the soul in which compatible and diverse tendencies are grouped about the soul's primal force. As long as the dominant motifs of the Hebrew soul are the National Spirit, the Spirit of Judaism, the Spirit of Hebraism, and the Spirit of the People, Ahad Ha-Am appears sure he will be understood.

In a supplement to the famous essay (1910) which argued that there could be no compromise between the Spirit of Christianity which is altruism, and the Spirit of Judaism which is absolute justice,<sup>40</sup> Ahad Ha-Am further maintains that Judaism cannot be lured out of its corner to amalgamate its thought with that of the rest of the world. Although we cannot scientifically discover what element in Judaism's spirit turned it from the course that other nations pursued, we know that such an element is present. Every authentic Jew feels that a basic difference between Judaism and other religions exists. Ahad Ha-Am specifically says "feels" and not "perceives" because this awareness is one of instinctual cognition. If there are Jews who no longer experience such a unique feeling for Judaism, Ahad Ha-Am asks these elements to leave their religion without trying to force Judaism into an intellectual compromise with Christianity which will mean the end of its distinctiveness.<sup>41</sup>

### E. SUPERMAN AND SUPERNATION

Ahad Ha-Am guards his conception of the distinctive Jewish Spirit not only against intellectual encroachments from without but from within as well. When the revolutionary voice of Berdichevsky demanded "The Transvaluation of Values", Ahad Ha-Am rose to the defense of tradition. The Nietzschean school of Jewish writers argued that the mistake of Judaism was the exaltation of the spiritual over the physical, of the book over the sword.

Now therefore that the desire for a national rebirth has been aroused in us, it behooves us first of all to trans-value the moral values which are accepted among us at present; to overthrow, mercilessly and at a single blow, the historic edifice which our ancestors have left us, seeing that it is built upon this dangerously mistaken idea of the superiority of spirit over matter, and of the subordination<sup>2</sup> of the individual life to abstract moral laws.

These writers maintained that to restore the power of self-perfection to the human type, we must revert back to the idea of good as it appeared before Jewish morality overthrew Greek and Roman culture.

"Good" is to be applied to the strong man who has both the power to expand and complete his life, and the will to master his world (Der wille zur Macht) without considering at all how much the great mob of inferior beings may lose in the process. For only he, the "Superman" (Übermensch), is the fine flower and the goal of the human race; the rest were created only to subserve his end, to be the ladder on which he can climb up to his proper level.<sup>43</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am finds a moral strain in the Superman



despite the anti-moral persuasions of the Nietzscheans. The superman is not to be regarded "as a sort of darling child of nature".

No, what is honored in him is the human type, which in him progresses and approaches nearer to perfection. For this reason the development of his powers and the mastery of the world are not only a privilege for the world they are also a high and arduous duty, to which he must sacrifice his personal happiness as he sacrifices the happiness of others; for the sake of which he must be unsparing of himself as of others. "Deem ye that I take thought for my happiness?" says the Superman (Zarathustra); "it is for my work that I take thought."<sup>44</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am has no argument nor "fault" to find with this hypothesis even though it supervenes the old moral standard which maintained that an act was to be judged moral or immoral through its effects on the welfare of the mass of men.<sup>45</sup> What Ahad Ha-Am takes exception to is the failure of the writers to weed out the aryan element, the idea of the "blond beast" in the Superman and replace it with the Hebraic element. It is important to note that Ahad Ha-Am does not oppose the basic inequality of setting up two categories of human beings of which one is to be used by the other; his sole objection is that the Superman type has not been molded in the Hebraic image and in accordance with the Hebraic Spirit. Ahad Ha-Am proceeds to rectify this shortcoming by separating the "aryan" from the "universal" elements in Nietzsche's thought. The racial type of the Superman does not follow logically from the concept of the Superman; it is

merely a matter of taste. Hence if Nietzsche's taste had been Hebraic, he might have made the Superman in accordance with the Hebrew Spirit,

... but would in that case have attributed to his Superman quite different characteristics - the expansion of moral power, the subjugation of the bestial instincts, the striving after truth and righteousness in thought and deed, the eternal warfare against flasehood and wickedness: in a word that moral ideal which Judaism has impressed upon us.<sup>46</sup>

If Nietzsche can come to mean what Ahad Ha-Am said he could mean, there is no need for a Jewish Nietzscheism. This kind of Superman, one who has never been subordinate to the masses of men, and who was an end in himself, has always existed. The Zaddik in the Talmud, Midrash, and Hasidism has always played this role.

Judaism has never based itself on mercy alone, and has never made its Superman subordinate to the masses of men, as though the whole aim and object of its existence were simply to increase happiness of the multitude... we know that far from his having been created for others, "the whole world was only created for his sake".<sup>47</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am interpreted the philosophy of the Superman in yet a far more significant way. The Superman had to serve the national ideal in unmistakable terms. This Ahad Ha-Am accomplished by making use of the racial doctrine in the service of Judaism.

If we agree, then, that the Superman is the goal of all things, we must needs agree also that an essential condition of the attainment of this goal is the Supernation: that is to say, there must be a single nation, better adapted than other nations by virtue of its

inherent characteristics, to moral development and ordering its whole life in accordance with moral law which stands higher than the common type. This nation will then as the soil be essentially and supremely fitted to produce the fairest of all fruits - the Superman.<sup>48</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am appeals to the ad hominem argument that it is universally accepted that Jews have a genius for morality. He is, however, at a loss to explain how this happened, or in what manner this trait developed. We do know that the Jewish people in earliest times became conscious of this fact, and in accordance with the spirit of the age, deduced that God must have chosen Israel to be His peculiar nation, the bearer of morality to the world.<sup>49</sup> Although the Prophets were the bearers of absolute justice, it appears rather strange that Ahad Ha-Am's definition of this concept is drawn not from the biblical text but from the teachings of Immanuel Kant.

Absolute justice, "as a value in and of itself", is the final aspiration of the Superman. It is not for the masses. Justice means truthful action which implies the objectivity of man over all private inclinations and propensities to act out of utilitarian motives, whether for benefit to himself or for others. It is rather the treasuring of justice in itself as the highest ethical entity, even if this means incurring the displeasure of the masses. (Kant concerned himself with this problem.)<sup>50</sup>

### F. THE SUPERNATION AS UTOPIA

We began our discussion of the influence of the Romantic Movement on Ahad Ha-Am by noting that he required an essential quality which, while constant as an abstraction, could nevertheless be viewed from the vantage point of history as being in process and subject to evolution. Ahad Ha-Am chose absolute justice as that essential quality. Although he located this quality in the prophetic period of Judaism and identified it as the basic characteristic of the Jewish Spirit, he proceeded to define absolute justice in Kantian terms. Although all nations have a moral sense, it is the Jewish nation which brought morality to consummate perfection. The greatest exponents of this view, the Hebrew prophets, the moral Supermen, required the Jewish community for the actualization of their ideal. Even though theirs was a message which transcended national borders, they were primarily interested in making Israel the embodiment of their great Ideal. This is what is meant by "the Mission of Israel." Ahad Ha-Am believed that if Israel could once again live in this tradition it could become the moral Supernation. Then the nations of the world would become to the "mountain of the Lord's house", saying, "Come let us walk in the light of the Lord."

This Utopian picture, not always consistent, nor free of contradiction, is the great hope for the future of Judaism. The propagation of the Supernation which is to give birth to the moral Superman is the reason for the

continued existence of the Spiritual Center. While the true "Love of Zion" was to be the spiritual impetus for the creation of the Center, the great abstract ideal of absolute justice as the goal for the future was the justification for its continued existence.

To attempt an extended refutation of Ahad Ha-Am's mixture of romantic notions would be a fruitless task. All his major historiographical concepts can neither be proved nor disproved. His assumptions with regard to the existence of a national instinct for survival, a National Spirit, the Spirit of Judaism, and the Spirit of the People, are not logically verifiable. Ahad Ha-Am himself has told us that these must be intuitively felt, that they are spiritual qualities.<sup>51</sup> Beginning with his very first essay, Ahad Ha-Am maintained that his program

... cannot prove the adequacy of its methods so conclusively as to compel reason to assent to the truth of its judgements. What is needed therefore is to make of the desire which is felt for its ideal an instrument for the strengthening of faith and the sharpening of resolution.<sup>52</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am had no solution for the "plight of Jews". What he attempted was to supply a messianic type of Judaism, rooted in the intellectual currents of his time. Like prophetic Judaism with its hope in "the end of days", he attempted to soothe the pain of the present with the prospect of a glowing future. Because he attempted to invest his ideas with the authority of the past we call him a Romantic.

Of Romanticism Ahed Ha-Am says,

... it is the crown of life and the source of man's superiority over the brute. They will also understand too, that this very anti-romantic doctrine has its attraction principally because of its romantic element - because it offers scope for devoted service in the cause of a distant ideal. But if there ever comes a day when that ideal is realized, and romanticism disappears entirely, then there will arise a new generation, which will curse that day for the hunger it has brought - a hunger not for bread, but for romanticism, for some ideal striving which can once more give scope for exaltation, for sacrifice, and so fill the emptiness of a life of peace and plenty.<sup>53</sup>

If the lack of romanticism is to be bemoaned in days of surfeit and plenty, how much more is it required as a beacon toward the future in times of darkness.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. כ"כ. עפ"ר. אחד-אמ, Selected Essays. op.cit. p.143.
2. כ"כ. עפ"ר. אחד-אמ, Selected Essays. op.cit. pp.137-138.
3. Hofstadter, Richard, Social Darwinism in American Thought. op.cit. pp.36-37.
4. Randall, John H., Jr., The Making of the Modern Mind. (Boston, 1940) p.399.
5. Mead, George Herbert, Movement in Nineteenth Century Thought. (Chicago 1936) p.51.
6. ibid. p.56-57.
7. Randall, John H., Jr. The Making of the Modern Mind. op.cit. p.421.
8. ibid. p.422.
9. כ"כ. פרקי זכרונות. חצה.
10. Randall, John H. Jr., The Making of the Modern Mind. op.cit. p.422-425.
11. Mead, George H., Movements in Nineteenth Century Thought. op.cit. p.87.
12. כ"כ. חנוא. אחד-אמ, Selected Essays. op.cit. p.143.
13. Schechter, Solomon, Studies in Judaism First Series. (Philadelphia, 1938) pp.62-63.
14. Agus, Jacob B., "Nationalistic Philosophies of Jewish History". Judaism. Vol.5, no.3. Summer 1956. pp.256-258.
15. Schechter, S., Studies in Judaism, First Series. op.cit. p.61. See also: Sokolow, Nahum, Hibbath Zion. (Jerusalem, 1954) pp.43-50; Slouschz, N., The Renaissance of Hebrew Literature. (Philadelphia, 1909); Spiegel Shalom, S., Hebrew Reborn. (New York, 1930) pp.95-118.
16. פ.לחובר. תולדות הספרות העברית החדשה. 195-197.

17. Schechter, S., Studies in Judaism, First Series. op.cit. p.63.
18. Agus, Jacob B., "Nationalistic Philosophies", Judaism. op.cit. p.258.
19. כ"כ. "חקמה למהדורה ראשונה". ב.  
My translation.
20. כ"כ. ibid. ב.
21. כ"כ. ibid. ב.  
Ahad ha-Am drew on the "French Psychology" school which made the "Spirit" into a psychological phenomenon. He draws on Paulhan's book, L'Activite Mentale. pp. 433-504.
22. כ"כ. ibid. ב-ג.
23. כ"כ. עפ"ד. II "על סחי הסעיפים". שעי.  
Ahad ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism. op.cit. p.236.  
See also: כ"כ. עפ"ד. III "איוב ופרומיתיוס". רפ-רפא.
24. כ"כ. עפ"ד. IV "חורת מציון". תת.  
"Whoever is not bound to the national past either through faith or feeling, what is left for him that he should still be called a Jewish nationalist? The Hebrew language? Remove from it the hypnos of the past, and what is left of it and us." (תת) My translation.
25. כ"כ. עפ"ד. IV "הגיעה השעה". שפד.
26. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "כהן ונביא". צ.  
Ahad ha-Am, Selected Essays. p.128.
27. ibid. צא.  
ibid. p.132.
28. ibid. צא.  
ibid. pp.132-133.
29. ibid. צא.  
ibid. p.134.
30. ibid. צב.  
ibid. p.134.
31. ibid. צב.  
ibid. p.135.
32. ibid. צב.  
ibid. pp.135-136.



33. צב. ibid.  
ibid. p.136.
34. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "המוסר הלאומי". קסא.
35. קסא ibid.
36. The idea of "a moral sense", Ahad Ha-Am appears to have taken from the English thinkers Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. A statement on their views is found in Windelband, W., A History of Philosophy. (New York, 1931) pp.508-509.
37. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "איון ופרומיםיו". רפא.  
My translation.
38. רפא. ibid.  
My translation.
39. רפא. ibid.
40. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "על שחי הסעיפים". שעז.
41. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "הוספה למאמר הקודם". שעח.  
ibid. The essay "על שחי הסעיפים" and its supplements were the result of the publication of a five volume commentary on the Gospels by Moses Montefiore called "The Synoptic Gospels" (1909). It was construed by Ahad Ha-Am as a work which minimized the uniqueness of Judaism and a sign of the decadency of English Reform Jewry in its attempt at assimilation.
42. כ"כ. עפ"ד. "שנוי הערכין". קנר.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Essays. op.cit. p.219.  
See also: Nietzsche, F.W., Thus Spake Zarathustra. (Everyman, London, 1946). pp.VII-XVII.
43. קנר-קנה. ibid.  
ibid. pp.220-221.
44. קנה. ibid.  
ibid. p.221.
45. קנה. ibid.  
ibid. p.221.
46. קנו. ibid.  
ibid. p.226.
47. קנו. ibid.  
ibid. pp.226-227.

48. .קנו. ibid.  
ibid. p.228.
49. .קנו. ibid.  
ibid. p.229.
50. כ"כ. ע"פ III. הוסיפה ל'אמור הקידוש " קנט  
My translation.
51. כ"כ. ע"פ IV. ה'א'ה הערה " ע"פ  
Ahad Ha-Am. Zionism and Judaism op. cit. p. 109
52. כ"כ. ע"פ V. לא זה הדיוק " י  
ibid. p. 8
53. כ"כ. ע"פ IV. "ה'א'ה השעה". שפר.  
Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism. op.cit. p.113.

## CHAPTER SIX

### AHAD HA-AM'S VIEW OF NATIONALISM

#### A. NATIONALISM AS A FRAGMENTED UNIVERSALISM

In the history of modern Jewish nationalism, Ahad Ha-Am is considered as having made the first and foremost attempt at a theory of Jewish nationalism which sought to fuse modern nationalism with traditional Zionism<sup>1</sup> and with the whole of the Jewish past.<sup>2</sup> Though in our previous discussion Nationalism was an omnipresent factor in Ahad Ha-Am's conception of Jewish history, we have yet to consider his understanding of the nature of nationalism, and its relevance to Judaism.

Ahad Ha-Am notes that in his own day a battle was raging between the "nationalists" and the "universalists". Though it appears that an unbridgeable abyss yawns between these two positions, he is of the opinion that the whole dispute is an unfortunate misunderstanding. In his own thought, Ahad Ha-Am has concluded that these two ideologies are not mutually contradictory. Universalism and nationalism must be distinguished from one another as the whole is from its component parts. Ahad Ha-Am maintains that in our thinking process we abstract from a given set of phenomena that which is common to all of them, and take cognizance only

of the essentially common elements. Hence only the "common core" is noted and the varied forms of the particular tend to be overlooked. Universalism in its societal aspect is analogous to the "common core" through which we recognize the oneness of humanity. Nationalism is one of the components of the "common core" of universalism and consequently helps to shape its definition. Since universalism, as the whole, is an abstraction of the many forms of nationalism which compose it, it has no concrete reality. It is the spiritual essence of which nationalism is the external form.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, Ahad Ha-Am argues, we find since earliest times two means through which social life can be improved. The way of amelioration is through both universalism and nationalism. Universalism is exemplified in history by the writers who pierce through the national form into the depth of the soul of humanity for their solution to the problems of their people. These men who resort to power so that they might quickly repair the damage do so without penetrating into the Spirit. They do not seek the source of the difficulty as it is reflected in the universal substrata. Ahad Ha-Am holds that any repair to the external form without confrontation with the Spirit is at best makeshift and can be maintained only through force. The men of action should be aware of the fact that the Spirit will not long be yoked to a form which is alien to it. It is the task of the writers to begin from within to correct first those elements, moral

and social, which Ahad Ha-Am considers the universals. These elements are the moral breakdown of the people, their lack of unity and solidarity and the absence of strong social bonds, their stubbornness, self love and the egotism of their leaders who lack logical thought.

The modern writers have forsaken the calling of serving the Spirit. They exalted the new national form of the people but ignored the universal elements. Ahad Ha-Am would reverse the process and attempt to create a Jewish society consisting of "universal" directed Jews who would not become enslaved to the new nationalist ideology but would withstand the temptation until the old nationalist orientation can evolve a new form.<sup>4</sup>

ADAM BA-D-HEL

This summary of the essay "אדם בא-הל" (1892) focuses on Ahad Ha-Am's attempt to make of nationalism a fragmented universalism. Upon closer analysis we shall find that his very conception of universalism in this context is nothing more than a veiled Spiritual Zionism. The core problems which Ahad Ha-Am describes as being universal are the moral breakdown of the people, its lack of solidarity and unity, the absence of strong social bonds, and the egotism of its leaders. Now these may very well be moral failings which can be perceived as existing in the Jewish community of his time, but they are hardly universal in scope, unless the term "universal", as Ahad Ha-Am uses it, connotes something other than its usual definition. As commonly

understood, let us say in the eighteenth century, the word "universal", when applied to man, referred to that which was common to all men regardless of their nationality. As Ahad Ha-Am uses the word in the later<sup>t</sup> part of the nineteenth century, the word seems to mean that which is common to all nations.

Ahad Ha-Am's censure of Jewish life takes on meaning only if we understand the term "universal" in this sense.<sup>5</sup> The failings of Jewish life exist because Jews lack the social bonds and solidarity which are characteristic of other national groups who have a full national existence. The Jews have a national existence of a sort, but this is promised upon older national forms which no longer can move the heart to allegiance. Ahad Ha-Am nevertheless asks Jews to be loyal to the old nationalist orientation until it will evolve a new form. The new form will undoubtedly rectify the "universal" shortcomings of the people. That Ahad Ha-Am attempted to supply the new national form became apparent in our discussion of the Spiritual Center. It appears that he was under the impression that Spiritual Zionism, with its emphasis upon the National Spirit, was to be the "universal" substrata upon which the new Jewish nationalism of the future was to be built.

B. THREE STEPS IN THE AWAKENING OF JEWISH NATIONALISM

SHALOM MADREGOT

In Ahad Ha-Am's essay "שלש מדרגות" (1898), he cites three significant stages in the development of the national consciousness of the people. The first stage is being achieved, for there is a real transformation of the Jewish soul taking place in both Eastern and Western Europe. There appears to be "a natural development" in the folk movement of the Jewish people which is motivated by the outright rejection and denial of assimilation.<sup>6</sup> Though many of these Jews were previously affiliated with the Enlightenment movement, the national feeling still lived within them. As long as the external forces of emancipation were encouraging their integration into the non-Jewish world, these Jews deluded themselves into thinking that such a process was possible.<sup>7</sup> Ahad Ha-Am defines the whole assimilationist movement as a deception. The Gentile world deceived the Jews into thinking that they were not a nation and on that basis welcomed them into their fold. Jews also deceived themselves into thinking that they were not a nation and that they would achieve equal status in the non-Jewish world if they would surrender their claim to Jewish nationhood. Now, Ahad Ha-Am maintains, the non-Jewish world has changed its mind. Realizing that it has erred, it has pronounced the verdict that Jews are a nation.<sup>8</sup> This verdict has jarred the erroneous perspective of the assimilationist Jews, and has dissolved their false psychology.

Although many Jews still rebel against the truth that

is being revealed in their hearts, Ahad Ha-Am notes that the elite of this group is coming to recognize that a distinctive Jewish nationality exists and that it will not avail them to conceal it any longer. In the course of time, the masses will follow in the footsteps of these elite and this will lead them to the second stage of national awareness.<sup>9</sup> Because the diaspora cannot be eradicated, Jews should work for the recognition of their national rights, as they have for their citizenship rights, in the lands of their dispersion.<sup>10</sup> There seems to be a great deal of overlapping in viewpoint between Ahad Ha-Am and Simon Dubnow on this particular question. Ahad Ha-Am, however, pulls away from Diaspora Nationalists in his assertion that Jewish nationality in the diaspora is only a waystation in the process of full national development. The way of life that Jews, by their very situation, must live in the non-Jewish world, can never be conducive to a natural ~~national~~ existence.

The third and last stage, which is yet to be realized, is the full national life in Palestine. There Jews will be free to develop their potentialities as a people free of the dominating spirit of another nationality, a situation which is inevitable outside the "land of the fathers".<sup>11</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am's assertion that it was the non-Jewish world which insisted upon pinning the label of "nationality" to the Jewish group, is reminiscent of a statement made by Theodore Herzl.



We are one people - our enemies have made us one in our despite, as repeatedly happens in our history. Distress binds us together, and, thus united, we suddenly discover our strength. Yes, we are strong enough to form a state and a model state. We possess all human and material resources necessary for the purpose.<sup>12</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am, unlike Herzl, adds the element of the Jewish National Spirit which exists a priori in the heart of all Jews. It is only a matter of time and circumstance until this feeling forges its way into Jewish consciousness. The National Spirit, Ahad Ha-Am maintains, is the source of Jewish existence.

Our hearts, however full of sorrow and pain, cannot be comforted through the knowledge of this factor alone. It seeks to know the purpose of our existence under such forbidding circumstances. To endure suffering and not scorn life is only possible when the sufferer is aware that he is suffering not only because he cannot die, but rather because he must live.<sup>13</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am, who attempted to devise the ideology to which the suffering Jew of the late nineteenth century could adhere, knew that the Jewish world, in the midst of its suffering, needed a glowing goal, a vision of "the end of days", when the Jewish nation would be reconstituted on its own land and when it would be free to live an unhampered existence. Ahad Ha-Am, like Mill and Renan, believed that there was a "national self" which was the fusion of the historic memories of the past with the hopes and desires of the future.<sup>14</sup> "According to the suffering shall be the reward", Ahad Ha-Am concluded.<sup>15</sup> The past was to take on a

new significance in the terms of the future. The idea of the future must become an integral part of the national self, "...though it be only in the form of a fanciful hope".<sup>16</sup> This hope shall be the elixir of life for the people and will nourish it until more favorable times make the reconstruction of the nation possible.

Nationalism, for Ahad Ha-Am, is, as we have seen, a fragmented universalism. Universalism is the spiritual substratum of which nationalism is the external form. Since Ahad Ha-Am identified Spiritual Zionism with universalism, it appears that he considered it the universal which underpinned the Jewish nationalist form. Since essentially Jewish nationalism is a spiritual quality, which lives in the heart of every Jew, it could be reactivated. For this process, a goal impressed in the future was required. This goal was the Spiritual Center and the Jewish people living a full national existence in its own land. This, then, was the formula which contained "the elixir of life" which Ahad Ha-Am proffered as the solution to "the plight of Judaism" for his generation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. Kohn, Hans, Revolutions and Dictatorships. (Cambridge, 1939) pp.308-309.
2. Simon, Leon, Studies in Jewish Nationalism. (London, 1920) p.87.
3.                    נ"כ. עפ"ד. "אדם באהל". מט.  
See also:            "איון ופרומיתיוס". רפ-רפא.   נ"כ. עפ"ד.
4. ibid. מט.
5. On the changing usage and value of the term "universals"  
see: Mead, George H., Movements of Nineteenth Century Thought. op.cit. pp.135-136; 450-454.
6.                    נ"כ. עפ"ד. "שלש מדרגות". קנ.
7. ibid. קנא.
8. ibid. קנא.
9. ibid. קנא.
10. ibid. קנב.
11. ibid. קנב.
12. Baron, Salo W., Modern Nationalism and Religion.  
(New York 1947) p.229.
13.                    נ"כ. "הקדמה למחזור שניה". ו.  
My translation.
14.                    נ"כ. עפ"ד. "עבר ועתיד". פא  
see also:            נ"כ. עפ"ד. "עזה טובה". קלב.  
M. Ehrenpreiss, "Achad Haam", Encyclopaedia Judaica.  
Vol.1, p.637.
15.                    נ"כ. עפ"ד. "עבר ועתיד". פא.  
לפום צערא אגרא.
16. ibid. פא.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SOME HISTORICGRAPHICAL PROBLEMS AS THEY PERTAIN TO AHAD HA-AM'S CONCEPTION OF JEWISH HISTORY

#### A. WHAT ARE THE FACTS OF HISTORY?

MOSHEH

In the essay "משה" (1904), Ahad Ha-Am summarizes his views as they pertain to the nature of historical truth. The subject matter which he uses for illustrative purposes is the career and life of Moses. Commenting on the general problem of using the "great man" as a category of historical analysis, Ahad Ha-Am states that it is "obvious" that the really great men of history, those who have become real forces in the life of humanity, are not "actual, concrete persons who existed in a certain age."

There is not a single great man in history of whom the popular fancy has not drawn a picture entirely different from the actual man; and it is this imaginary conception, created by the masses to suit their needs and their inclinations, that is the real great man, exerting an influence which in some cases abides for thousands of years - this, and not the concrete original, who lived a short space in the actual world, and was never seen by the masses in his true likeness.<sup>1</sup>

Those who attempt to view Moses as he actually was do not understand the fact that every archeological truth is not necessarily an historical truth.

Historical truth is that and that alone which reveals the forces that go to mould the social life of mankind. Every man who

leaves a perceptible mark on that life, though he may be a purely imaginary figure, is a real historical force; his existence is an historical truth. And on the other hand, every man who has left no impress on the general course of life, be his concrete existence at a particular time never so indisputable, is only one of the million: and the truth contained in the statement that such an one existed is merely a literal truth, which makes absolutely no difference, and is therefore in the historic sense no truth at all.<sup>2</sup>

Through this formulation of the nature of historical truth, Ahad Ha-Am has in fact negated the value of objective data of the past. That body of material which he calls "archeological truth", he has sharply separated from "historical truth". By defining "historical truth" as that which molds history, Ahad Ha-Am has revealed his entire method of dealing with the events of the past. If bare facts do not create our synthesis of history, and determine what our conclusions are to be, then it is clear that the facts of the past can take on meaning only if a philosophy of history is imposed upon them. No historian approaches the past without some a priori hypothesis. This is quite different from foisting an outlook on the data of the past which comes wholly from without and is not necessarily derived from the facts themselves. Ahad Ha-Am states this position in its most extreme form when he comments that it matters not all to him when some historians prove, "by the most convincing evidence", that some national hero never existed. Only the picture of the hero in the mind

of the people really matters:

... real history has no concern with so-and-so who is dead, and who was never seen in that form by the nation at large, but only by antiquarians; its concern is only with the living hero, whose image is graven in the hearts of men, who has become a force in human life.<sup>5</sup>

If scholars should conclude, for example, that Moses never lived, it would really be of no consequence. Ahad Ha-Am is not all concerned what the implications might be if it was proven that Moses had no historical reality. The questions that historians would ask: how and under what circumstances did this myth then arise? Who created it and what purpose did it serve? - all such questions would be totally irrelevant for him. They would not change our conception of history in any real sense.

I care not whether this man Moses really existed; whether his life and his activity really corresponded to our traditional account of him; whether he really was the saviour of Israel and gave his people the Law in the form that it is preserved among us; and so forth. I have one short and simple answer for all these conundrums. This Moses, I say, this man of old time, whose existence and character you are trying to elucidate, matters to nobody but scholars like you. We have another Moses of our own, whose image has been enshrined in the hearts of the Jewish people for generations, and whose influence on our national life has never ceased from ancient times till the present day. The existence of this Moses, as a historical fact, depends in no way on your investigations. For even if you succeeded in demonstrating conclusively that the man Moses never existed, or that he was not such a man as we supposed, you would not thereby detract one jot from the historical reality of the ideal Moses - the Moses who has been our leader not only for forty years in the wilderness

of Sinai, but for thousands of years in all the wildernesses in which we have wandered since the Exodus.

And it is not only the existence of this Moses that is clear and indisputable to me. His character is equally plain, and is not liable to be altered by any archeological discovery. This ideal - I reason - has been created in the spirit of the Jewish people; and the creator creates in his own image.<sup>4</sup>

The creator certainly does create in his own image.

Perhaps this particular method of analysis will shed some light on Ahad Ha-Am's understanding and use of Moses.

If our understanding of this great hero of the Jewish past is not bound by "archeological fact" but by tradition, legend, fable, and fancy, then indeed we can create any image of Moses that we choose. What was Ahad Ha-Am's image of Moses? On close inspection we shall find that it varies with both the biblical and the traditional account. Ahad Ha-Am denies that Moses was a military hero; though he admits that Moses was on the battlefield against Amalek. Moses was merely an interested observer who helped the Israelites through his moral strength. Was he a statesman? Again the answer is "No," because Moses was an inept politician who had to depend on Aaron for guidance in such mundane matters. Moses, unlike the common image that tradition has of him, was not a lawgiver, because a lawgiver, Ahad Ha-Am holds, legislates only for his own time and not for the future.

For Ahad Ha-Am, Moses is the prophet par excellence,<sup>4</sup>

archetype of Hebrew prophecy. The characteristics of the prophet are extremism and truth-telling. He knows no compromise with the desire for absolute righteousness that burns within him. But as the prophet will not yield to the world, so the world will not yield to him. His teachings are made the heritage of society by lesser men, who do not believe in extremism and are the mediators between the prophetic teachings and the people.<sup>5</sup> These priests of the prophetic word

transmit his influence through devious ways, adapting their methods to the needs of the particular time, and not insisting that the message shall descend to the workaday world in all its pristine purity.<sup>6</sup>

Aaron performed this role of mediator in the time of Moses. He translated the eternal prophetic word into the historic framework. Israel, freed, wanders in the wilderness and comes to Sinai. Ahad Ha-Am has the prophet reveal the grandeur of God to the people. Though the biblical account has all the people participate in the theophany, Ahad Ha-Am has Moses telling the people about a new kind of God, a God who is the ruler of the whole earth and over all nations. Of course<sup>one</sup> would be hard put to find this particular God concept expressed in the Exodus narrative. Ahad Ha-Am, after the theophany, has Moses repair to the top of the mountain to complete the law in solitude. When he descends and sees the people worshipping



the gods which the priests, the men of the hour, have made to appease the people, the tablets of the Law "fall" from his hands. The prophet, realizing how impossible the task of molding this rabble into a chosen people is, "no longer believes in revolution". What is required is education and training, "slow sure steps" to prepare the people for its great destiny.<sup>7</sup>

The terminology used by Ahad ha-Am in this particular paragraph is that which he constantly uses to refer to the methods and program of Spiritual Zionism. The interesting hypothesis, that Ahad Ha-Am saw himself in the guise of Moses,<sup>8</sup> is worth mentioning and is particularly attractive because he remolds so much of the biblical account in terms of his own imagination.

Ahad Ha-Am resumes the narrative of Moses with the wilderness wandering in which the prophet teaches and hopes that his goals shall be realized at some point in the future. He tears from his heart the hope that he shall live to see his people's mission fulfilled. This, the heroism of the Superman, was the greatness of Moses. Another man leads the people to its destiny. This is the way it must be, for the prophet could not stand to see his lofty idealism compromised with reality. The prophet "... shall see the land before him but he shall not go thither."<sup>9</sup> The greatness of the prophet was his vision of a glorious national future. This hope is emblazoned in the Prayerbook and has kept the

Jewish soul alive in the midst of horrible oppression.

Ahad Ha-Am proceeds to make a remarkable reflection, one which tends to substantiate our contention that he saw no hope in the present for the alleviation of the misery that Jews were then exercising.

Israel has never lived in the present. The present, with its evil and its wickedness, has always filled us with anguish, indignation and bitterness. But just as constantly as we have been inspired with brilliant hopes for the future, and an ineradicable faith in the coming of good and right; and for these hopes and faith we have always sought and found support in the history of our past whereon imagination has brooded, weaving all manner of fair dreams, so as to make the past a kind of mirror of the future.<sup>10</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am admits to us that the past has no other purpose but to supply aspirations for the future. If this is our basic frame of reference, then facts per se have no value except as they further this goal. If the "archeological truths" of history deny the practicability of these goals, then these "truths" must be declared as useless. Hope, not truth, is the lesson that Ahad Ha-Am wishes to derive from Jewish history for the beleaguered generation of his time. Hard, cruel, omnipresent reality was the crucible in which Ahad Ha-Am compounded his views of Jewish history.

#### B. PERIODIZATION OF GENERAL CULTURE

Like Auguste Comte, Ahad Ha-Am conceived of the evolution of culture in terms of a three stage development.

Though there is no direct reference to Comte in the essays where this type of analysis is pursued, we know from the Memoirs<sup>11</sup> and secondary literature that Ahad Ha-am was conversant with this French exponent of Positivism.<sup>12</sup> Comte, in the Introduction to his Positive Philosophy, outlines his thesis: that from a study of the development of human intelligence in all of its manifestations, a great fundamental law can be discerned. This law which "has a solid foundation of proof both in the facts of our organization and in our historical experience" states:

-that each of our leading conceptions - each branch of our knowledge passes successively through three different theoretical conditions: the Theological or fictitious; the Metaphysical or abstract; and the scientific or positive.<sup>13</sup>

The human mind in its progress employs these three "general systems of conceptions on the aggregate of phenomena".

Each of these systems includes the others. The first is the "necessary point of departure of the human understanding, the third is its fixed and definite state. The second is merely a state of transition."<sup>14</sup>

In the theological stage, the human mind seeking the essential nature of beings, the first and final causes (the origin and purpose) of all effects - in short, Absolute knowledge - supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings.<sup>15</sup>

Ahad Ha-am, in his discussion of primitive society, expresses a view which closely corresponds to that of Comte. He pictures early man as wandering about in search of food

and shelter, a prey to the world of nature in all of its harshness. Man seeks protection from the cruel world about him by creating the idea that all natural phenomena are governed by gods who can be appeased through word and sacrifice.

Thus all the common phenomena of nature became gods, in more or less close contact with human life and happiness; the earth became as full of deities as nature of good things and evil.<sup>16</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am adds to this notion the idea that at a subsequent time within this early period, these gods were augmented by family deities which later, as the family grew into national units, developed into national deities. Consequently, from the very outset, Ahad Ha-Am conceives of a double polytheism which was both natural and national.<sup>17</sup> Another characteristic in the consciousness of the human race in this first period was that man's life was directed by his natural impulses, making him react spontaneously and without undue cerebration to his world.<sup>18</sup>

Comte's second stage:

In the metaphysical state, which is only a modification of the first, the mind supposes, instead of supernatural beings, abstract forces, veritable entities (that is personified abstractions) inherent in all beings, and capable of producing all phenomena. What is called the explanation of phenomena is, in this stage, a mere reference of each to its proper entity.<sup>19</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am pictures this stage as one in which society develops and grows more complex. Because of the complexity of life, the more intelligent of the people begin to do some sober

reflection. "the simple dreams of childhood no longer satisfy developed intellects";<sup>20</sup> new views of nature and life are produced. One view, developing from Imagination, leaves the bounds of Reason and constructs mental worlds for which the present is merely the ante-chamber for the world to come. Reality, which is too harsh to deal with, is left behind for the fanciful life which soaring Imagination creates. Those, however, who are bound to Reason, create a philosophical view of life. Man is conceived of as possessing pure Reason; human happiness is viewed as contemplation; and life is regarded as valuable only if it is crowned by the pursuit of wisdom. The basic framework from which both Reason and Imagination emerge is the realization by man of the complexity and seeming vanity of life.<sup>21</sup> The epitome of the attempt to convert the early theological beliefs into a philosophic system within Judaism was that of Moses Maimonides. Whereas Maimonides' predecessors held Judaism secure because it was beyond reason, Maimonides argued that Judaism has value because it is reason.<sup>22</sup>

#### Comte's Third Stage:

In the final, positive stage, the mind has given over the vain search after Absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws - that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observations, duly combined are the means of this knowledge. What we now mean when we speak of an explanation of facts is simply

the establishment of a connection between single phenomena and some general facts, the number of which continually diminishes with the progress of science.<sup>23</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am recognized himself as living in this last positive stage. The entire orientation toward orthodoxy which he evidences, and his attitude toward religion in general, reveal that he had given up the "vain search for absolute notions" in this area. His attempt to view useful areas of Jewish history, such as prophecy in naturalist terms, by denying the real existence of God, and in effect making the prophets messengers without a divine sender,<sup>24</sup> reveal to what extent Ahad Ha-Am was under the influence of the positivist school. Ahad Ha-Am believed that his secularized Spiritual Zionism and the Hovevey Zion movement was a positive system, "capable of restoring equilibrium between the old and the new by clothing both in a single new form".<sup>25</sup> By attempting to make Zionism "scientific", or at least compatible with the scientific spirit, Ahad Ha-Am hoped to win the Jewish intellectual to his system.

### C. PERIODIZATION OF JEWISH HISTORY

Ahad Ha-Am attempted to periodize Jewish history into three main sections which were to correspond to the three fold development of general culture. We find, however, that his three divisions of the Jewish past are national in character, corresponding to the political fortunes of

Israel and Judah. The first period, when the Jewish nation was full of vigor and "when its will-to-live was healthy and natural," was the time when prophecy, with its bright hope for the national future, reigned in the land.<sup>26</sup> It was a time when Judaism had not yet turned heavenward for its salvation and there was a strong social feeling in the individual which recognized that he was a member of a deathless group.

When the individual thus values the community as his own life, and strives after its happiness as though it were his individual well-being, he finds satisfaction, and no longer feels so keenly the bitterness of his individual existence, because he sees the end for which he lives and suffers. But this can only be so when the life of the community has an end of such importance as to outweigh in the judgement of the individual, all possible hardships.<sup>27</sup>

The national hope with its great vision of the future was smashed by the great empires which used Israel as a stepping stone in their conquests in that part of the world. This period embraces the long span from Judah's spoliation by Babylonia to the dawn of the Zionist idea. This second period of the exile of the Jewish people, which was interrupted only by a short span of Hasmonean rule, broke the national spirit. The national hopes of an earlier time were recast into supernatural molds.

The nation soon became enslaved to this spiritual disease which was an inevitable outcome of its condition and history.<sup>28</sup>

When, after the destruction of the First Temple, the loyalty

to the national group was weakened, a rampant individualism arose which has since then been part of Jewish life. The welfare of the individual, his reward and punishment, became the preoccupation of religious thought. His happiness and desire for reward for his righteousness came to supplant the striving for the welfare of the corporate body.

Thus the national ideal was completely changed. No longer is patriotism a pure, unselfish devotion; no longer is the common good the highest of all aims, overriding the personal aims of each individual. On the contrary; henceforward the summum bonum is for each individual his well being, in time or in eternity, and the individual cares about the common good only in<sub>280</sub> so far as he himself participates in it.

This state of affairs Ahad Ha-am considered deplorable . To prevent the decline of Judaism, the group will to survive had to be revived. The birth of Zionism sounded the clarion call for such national revival.<sup>30</sup> The third period of Jewish history was to begin with the establishment of the Spiritual Center. The national life was there to be reconstituted and the old group feeling restored. This new era, with its great hopes for the redemption of Jew and greater humanity, was to complete the prophetic vision which was redely interrupted by the exile of Israel from its own land.

The stratification of the Jewish past into these three layers was the result of a nationalist a priori hypothesis. We see no attempt to recognize, for example,



the fact that there were periods of Renaissance in the Diaspora, in which great contributions to Judaism were made. The Gaonic Period, the Golden Age of Spain, and the Crusades were all one whole cloth called Diaspora. The true spirit of Judaism ceased with the destruction of the Temple, and all creativity of the Jewish soul thereafter was the result of compromise with Galuth.

#### D. A BRIEF STATEMENT ON CAUSE AND EFFECT; ON CHANGE

In an explanatory note in one of his last essays, "חכמה" (1912), Ahad Ha-Am opined on the nature of cause and effect. He maintained that there must be some "natural connection" between cause and effect, "between an object and the means by which its attainment is sought." One must also be able to demonstrate how a given object is to be attained through the means which are chosen. So long as the means cannot be logically demonstrated to lead to the result, one cannot formulate a systematic plan for the realization of the goal. One can, in such a case, speak of a cherished hope but not of a plan of action.

For every systematic plan of work must be based on a clear conception (whether intellectual or imaginative) of the chain of cause and effect which connects various activities with one another and all of them with an object.<sup>31</sup>

Commenting on the Balfour Declaration, which had come about unexpectedly, Ahad Ha-Am decries those who shout that a miracle has taken place. Those who have

always waited for miracles to deliver them, rather than following a logical plan of procedure, now claim that if a miracle has come to pass once, it certainly can happen again. That one can merrily continue to construct one's own world without regard to realities, Ahad Ha-Am holds to be a mistake. "A mistake which succeeds is nonetheless a mistake." Similarly, a plan of work which turns its back on the real world and relies on the possibility that something out of the ordinary may happen "is a mistaken plan, even if for once it succeeds."

And if it goes on banking on the element of chance which does in fact interfere occasionally with the normal course of events and act accordingly, it will end in disaster despite its initial success.<sup>52</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am appears to be a determinist who reserves himself the right to be an indeterminist. If the element of chance is admitted as the exception to a determinist mode of thought, then there is no logical necessity with regard to every effect having a cause. Consequently, Ahad Ha-Am falls prey, though to a lesser degree, to the same type of thinking he so strongly criticizes.

#### E. CHANGE AND PERMANENCY,

LE-TOL-DOT HAHI-YPOV VEHA-SHLI-LAH

In the essay "לחולות החיוב והשלילה" (1891),

Ahad Ha-Am presents his thesis with regard to those factors which create change and permanency in society. Ahad Ha-Am maintains that under the smooth veneer of peace and

placidity in the natural and social worlds, an incessant struggle for existence is taking place. In the arena of society, different ideas do battle with one another to become the chief trends of human thought. It is only after the sum total of all changes resulting from this struggle has become considerable, that we recognize that what we call "change" has taken place.

The character of change depends upon the nature of the new system of thought which emerged victorious from the battle of ideas. Changes vary to the extent that they are the result of "wholly positive", "wholly negative" or "partly positive and partly negative" systems. Ahad Ha-am explains this process as follows:

A new positive system comes into existence when the process of continuous development produces in the minds of a select few some new positive concept. This may either be a belief in some new truth not hitherto felt by society; generally the two go together. This new conception, in accordance with a well-known psychological law, gives rise to other conceptions of a like nature, all of which tend to strengthen one another, and become knit together, till at last they form a complete system. The center-point of the system is the new positive principle; feelings, impulses, needs, and so forth, which depend on it and derive their unity from it.<sup>55</sup>

A wholly positive system in terms of its origin cannot help including some negative element. This happens because it cannot help but touch and overlap the existing system in some area. A wholly new system may not destroy at one fell stroke the essential core of the older ideology,

but it will weaken it in some respect. When the new system is put into practice, it arouses the opposition of those who are dedicated to the old ideas and forms. A battle to the finish ensues. The adherents of the established ideology accuse the fomentors of the new system of revolutionary aspirations in that they appear to want to overthrow the existing structure. The followers of the positive system deny such aspirations and protest that they merely wish to add a new truth to the culture of mankind. In their eagerness, the positivists overlook the negative elements which must follow from their system once it holds sway. When the opposition points out the negative elements which will flow from the new ideology, the positivists deny the validity of such reasoning and will attempt to conceal the points made by the opposition. The opposition, recognizing the danger that the new system poses, will try to pluck it up while it is still in its infancy. Because conditions are ripe, the new ideology will find its place in society.

...gradually the two systems, the new and the old, lose some of their more sharply opposed characteristics, share the forces of society between them in proportion to their relative strength, and ultimately come to terms to live in peace.<sup>34</sup>

Permanency is thus achieved until a new positive system makes its presence felt and tries to penetrate society. Ahad Ha-Am ignores economic, political and social factors

in his concept of change. The ideas which are to impinge themselves on society are wholly psychological in nature. It appears that Ahad Ha-Am considered the intangible world of ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc. as the basic substratum in man and hence in society.

Ahad Ha-Am gives some interesting examples from Jewish history to illustrate his concept of change. In the Middle Ages philosophy penetrated Jewish thinking because this positive idea came to birth in a few gifted minds. These minds needed to understand natural phenomena and the world which surrounded them. The means they chose was the framework of Arabic philosophy. There was great opposition by the rabbis to this new system of thought which resulted in its diffusion. The rabbis were adherents of an older positive ideology which had at its center Jewish Law and religious observance. In time, a compromise was worked out between these two systems which resulted in a "rationalized faith" on the one hand, and "religious philosophy" on the other.<sup>35</sup>

Hassidism is another example of a positive system. Its ideology consisted of the need for "spiritual exaltation" and the belief in its attainment through the joyful service of God and the performance of duty. As the new system spread, it was attacked by the Talmudists. In time a reconciliation took place which resulted in Hassidim studying Talmud and the Talmudists adopting Hassidism.<sup>36</sup>

The continuous process of development which gives birth to new positive elements also proceeds to destroy the older positive systems. In the battle for survival the negative elements group themselves about a fundamental and "universal" negative which becomes the center-point. This is the way sects are born, an example of which are the Karaites who felt a "burning hatred for the Talmud, and a boundless love for the Bible".<sup>37</sup> The tragedy of sects, as parties of negation, lies in their self-separation from the new positive stream which eventually results in their death.

There are, however, many men who are caught in the clash of the old and the new. Embedded in the old, they cannot fully shed its garments though they see value in the new. Ahad Ha-Am calls these "the moderates of the parties of negation"<sup>38</sup> or, in our language, the conservatives.

They stand and wait... until some new positive belief comes their way, capable of filling up this void, and of becoming a new centered for all those feelings, impulses, and so forth, hitherto centered on the old positive concept which they wish to destroy.<sup>39</sup>

Society, Ahad Ha-Am contends, needs a third system which is to be the intermediate between the radical new and the fading old. He argues for a synthesis which will appeal to the conservative elements who are trying to straddle two world views. The Jewish world, as far as Ahad Ha-Am was concerned, also needed a middle of the road position which would embrace the cautious conservatives who, while

discontented with the status quo, were not ready to kick over all traces of tradition. The new ideology in the Jewish world, the dynamic positive force, was Haskalah, whose program was based on the need for achieving equal citizenship rights for Jews in Europe.<sup>40</sup> The forces of negation for Ahad Ha-Am are not the orthodox group who opposed the Haskalah movement, but a group within the Enlightenment who, dating from the time of Moses Mendelssohn, "overthrew the stronghold of the nation". Many disgruntled conservatives left the ranks of the Haskalah and were suspended in limbo. These elements can be saved by an ideology which in spirit is essentially the same as the Enlightenment, but which, while not accepting the past as an authority, nevertheless renders it reverence. This movement which grew up in Eastern Europe is alluded to by Ahad Ha-Am, though not explicitly named. It is so well known, that he feels no need to name it. Ahad Ha-Am can only refer to Hibbath Zion which in its most rarified form was none other than Spiritual Zionism.<sup>41</sup>

It is of interest to note that Ahad Ha-Am's concept of change follows Hegel's dialectic pattern. The old positive system is the thesis. The new positive system which develops out of the old becomes the antithesis. The result of the clash between thesis and antithesis creates the new synthesis which for a time remains stable until the negative elements inherent within it make for its dissolution, to start the cycle of change anew. Ahad Ha-Am pictured his time as one at

the "crossroads"; that is, one in which the old thesis was thoroughly being challenged by the new ideology but from which a workable synthesis had not yet emerged.

... society needs some third system, intermediate between the other two, which shall stand in between the new and the old, uprooting from the new that which needs uprooting, and restoring to the old that which has been uprooted in ignorance.<sup>42</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am, in seeking the middle course, followed the conservative pattern. Distrustful of revolution, he adhered to the notion that all sound development must be slow and unhurried. Change had to be paced so that ancient forms could take their place. Ahad Ha-Am shifts his ground, in terms of the analysis of change, to agree with the French thinker Gabriel Tarde, "that all history is but the fruit of Imitation"...<sup>43</sup> Tarde, who had an additive view of society, believed that the source of social order as well as social change was the result of individual action.<sup>44</sup> Ahad Ha-Am's notion was that a positive idea originates in the minds of a few gifted men, then spreading<sup>2</sup> to the broad mass base. The process of the diffusion of such an idea lies in the dynamic of Imitation.

If society is to be moulded into a single form, there must be some center towards which all the forces of Imitation are attracted, directly or indirectly, and thus become the single or chief object of universal imitation.<sup>45</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am maintains that such a center was existent in every society. Whereas that which welded together the many elements in early society was basically a "physical



force", in the modern period this force may be of a "spiritual character".<sup>46</sup> Ahad Ha-Am distinguishes between Imitation and Assimilation. Through Imitation, the individual or community attempts to internalize a culture or idea from outside itself, without surrendering its individuality to the dominant culture and is accompanied by the desire to be wholly engulfed by that culture and its spirit.<sup>47</sup>

Commenting on his own time, Ahad Ha-Am senses a strong movement toward assimilation. There is a desire to dissolve the bonds which have kept the Jewish people an entity throughout its exile. There are those who "wish to emancipate the community by means of complete assimilation with a foreign body".<sup>48</sup> From this situation Ahad Ha-Am seeks deliverance. He writes:

...there is one escape - and one only - from this danger. Just as in the stage of growth the members of the community are welded into a single whole despite their different individual characteristics, through the agency of one central individual; so also in the stage of dissipation the different sections of the people can be welded together, in spite of their different local characteristics, through the agency of a local center which will possess a strong attraction for them... Such a center will claim a certain allegiance from each scattered section of the people. Each section will develop its own individuality along lines determined by imitation of its own surroundings; but will find in this center a purifying fire and a connecting link.<sup>49</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am uses all his erudition in discussing the nature of change and stability to drive home the central hypothesis of his solution to the plight of Judaism: the Spiritual Center.

Because Ahad Ha-Am was interested in this problem above all others, history, psychology, and sociology were merely the bricks for his theoretical edifice. Ahad Ha-Am was a skilled apologist and a journalist of note. He never claimed nor deserved the mantle of philosopher.

#### F. THE ROLE OF THE ELITE AS CREATORS OF HISTORY

It has been our thesis that Ahad Ha-Am saw no way out of the objective material conditions which harrassed the Jewish life of his time. The external forces which overwhelmed the Jewish world could not be coped with in any realistic sense. For this reason, Ahad Ha-Am was not willing to commit himself to a thoroughgoing determinism which would have brought this point home in unmistakeable terms. There had to be a way whereby an exit could be hewn through the maze of reality which unambiguously declared that there was "no exit". Ahad Ha-Am ostensibly created a way out - not for the masses - but for the elite. Throughout his essays a distinctive role is assigned to the elect of history. The Superman, who is the prophet, sets forth his idea of morality as a "primal force". The priest, a man of lesser stature, dedicates himself to the prophet's teaching. He is still distinct from the mass of men who are incapable of creating such an idea or defending it against its enemies. The masses are merely ideological followers who are fickle in their loyalties and upon whom idealists cannot depend.

Though one cannot reduce all the content of history to the creativity of prophet, priest, or hero, yet these are the personages who found the strength in times of turmoil to support some tottering structure or who, when the world was in darkness, gave birth to a new concept. Ahad Ha-Am notes that one ought not, for example, to attribute to the hero the qualities of master builder or master destroyer without taking other circumstances into consideration.<sup>50</sup> By this Ahad Ha-Am means to say that the hero is not a capricious historical phenomenon who operates as if no historical context existed. He does work through the conditions which gave him birth, but he is not bound by them. He is the originator of some "positive system" or "positive idea" which transcends his immediate time-place circumstance.

For Ahad Ha-Am there were basically two classes of men in the Jewish world: the elite and the masses. For this distinction, he seems to have had as his prototype Maimonides' conception of the role of humanity and its relationship to "the perfect being".. It is always difficult to state precisely the influence that a thinker has had upon an individual to whom great indebtedness is expressed. If such expression has any significance at all, we must take heed of it in the above connection; for Ahad Ha-Am considered Maimonides one of the great intellectual guides in his life.<sup>51</sup>

In the essay "שלטון, השכל" (1904), Ahad Ha-Am analyzes

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Maimonides' notion of humanity. The human race consists of two species: "potential man" and "actual man". The second species does not initially come into existence as an independent species but is produced out of the first. This development, however, is a lengthy and difficult one so that only a few men, sometimes "one in a generation" are able to make this transition. The question arises as to what is the purpose of the existence of the great mass of men "who cannot picture the Idea in their souls". Since everything in nature has a purpose, we must assume

...that nature in her progress towards the production of the most perfect being, has formed all other things for the benefit of that most perfect being, whether food or "for his advantage otherwise than by food", in such a way that the sum-total of things in the inferior world is not merely a ladder by which to ascend to the production of man, but also a means to secure the permanence of man when once he has been produced.<sup>52</sup>

In the human sphere there must be a similar analogy.

"Potential man", like other earthly things, exist without a doubt for the benefit of "the most perfect being, of actual man". In conformity with this view Maimonides lays it down that "these men exist for two reasons. First to serve the one man (the 'perfect'): for man has many wants, and Methuselah's life was not long to learn all the crafts whereof a man has absolute need for his living: and when should he find ~~himself~~ to learn and acquire wisdom? The rest of mankind, therefore, exists to set right those things that are necessary to them in the commonwealth, to the end that the Wise Man may find his needs provided for and that his wisdom may spread. And secondly, the man without wisdom exists because the Wise are very few, and therefore the masses were created to make a society for

the Wise, that they be not lonely."<sup>53</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am, explaining Maimonide's intent, recognizes that the majority of mankind exists for a different purpose than does the minority. He keenly observes that the majority does not exist for its own purpose; rather is its task to create the conditions which make the production of the most perfect being possible. Recoiling from the implications of this view, Ahad Ha-Am attempts to make Maimonides into a social philosopher by arguing that this role of the majority is really a social one.

All that helps toward the perfection of society in the manner required for the fulfillment of its function is morally good; all that retards this development is morally evil. This moral criterion is binding for the minority and majority alike. The majority, whose existence has no purpose beyond their participation in the work of society, can obviously have no other moral criterion than the social. But even the minority, though they are capable of attaining the supreme end, and have therefore an individualistic moral criterion, are none the less bound to subordinate themselves to the social criterion where the two are in conflict.<sup>54</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am is really not able to soften Maimonide's views since even in the modifications that Ahad Ha-Am would make, the mass of men still exist for the select few; the moral standard would therefore be determined by the few to suit their own particular needs. The welfare of society under such a system would actually mean the welfare of the few and their freedom to pursue "wisdom".

HA-KO-HANEEM YEHA-AM

In the essay "הכהנים והעם" (1890), we see how Ahad Ha-Am utilizes the notion of a divided humanity in a specifically Jewish context. We shall detect an elite priesthood on the one hand and the masses on the other. Ahad Ha-Am reasons that every idea, whether it be religious, moral, or social, cannot exist without a coterie of priests who will dedicate their lives to it, working for its realization with all their might and guarding it from any mishap. In time of crisis, they will lay down their lives in its behalf. The masses, however, who only desire life, will make no such sacrifice to pave the way for a new idea. This is distinctively the task of the priest who has the prerequisite moral power. In due time when the danger is past, the masses will follow in the priests' footsteps when all is prepared for them. The genuine "Lovers of Zion" constitute such a band of priests. Their numbers are few, however, and Ahad Ha-Am does not know whether there is one "Lover of Zion" in a hundred who qualifies for this lofty title. The task of the priest shall be to become the moral symbol of the movement. He shall educate the coming generation in the true Spirit of the People, and in the true "love of Zion".<sup>55</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am is very clear, in the passage which is to follow, that the "Love of Zion" has no relationship to the masses of Jews. In rebuttal to an opponent, Ahad Ha-Am wrote:

The honored author weeps bitterly, and we weep with him over the plight of thousands of Jews that are perishing in their struggle for survival. If there be among us, as the author states, that call to those who cry for bread, "Be a Lover of Zion", they are fools... on the contrary, we say to all those who are perishing in their poverty and seek the help of the "Lovers of Zion," "Don't become Hovevey Zion! For the Hovevey Zion do not concern themselves with the sorrow of the individual ...<sup>56</sup>

The Hovevey Zion movement, as envisioned by Ahad Ha-Am, existed primarily for spiritual reasons. Its task was to awaken the dormant national consciousness of the people. This was to be accomplished in a deliberate and highly structured manner through the work of the priests of this idea. With the organization and program of the Bene Moshe of which Ahad Ha-Am was "the spiritual head", we detect the idea of the elite being transformed into a theory of power. In the initiation rites to the Bene Moshe, we find direct reference to its members as "priests" who, dedicated to the idea of "the revitilization of the people in the land of the Fathers", will teach and defend it to the last ounce of their strength.<sup>57</sup> They are clearly referred to as "the chosen of the people" who are to be the exemplars of the national ideal, teaching it to the people.<sup>58</sup> As a secret organization within the Hovevey Zion, they were to be a disciplined group, moral in their behavior, obedient to their superiors, and loyal to their organization by guarding its secrecy.<sup>59</sup> The membership was divided into cells of a minimum of five members to be under the

supervision of a central committee. Each cell of five could select its own leader who could, together with the cell members, modify the program of the group to their particular environment.<sup>60</sup> One of the larger cells was to be chosen as the central headquarters from which all orders to the group would emanate.<sup>61</sup> The task of the leader of the Bene Moshe was to be a supervisory one, and in case of disputes between cells, he was to be the chief arbitrator.<sup>62</sup>

Norman Bentwich, a contemporary disciple of Ahad Ha-Am, compares him to Mazzini in terms of his conception of nationalism.<sup>63</sup> An even more telling similarity lies in the Initiation rites of Mazzini's Young Italy<sup>64</sup> and Ahad Ha-Am's Bene Moshe. Both documents are couched in quasi-religious terminology, and they appeal for their authority to the romanticized national ideal which they find embedded in history.

In an analysis as to why the Zionist movement has not been successful in its appeal to the masses, Ahad Ha-Am gives us another glimpse of his theory of power, this time couched in Marxian terms. Commenting on Sombart's Socialismus und sociale Bewegung (1905), Ahad Ha-Am notes that one of the principal causes why Marx's doctrine had more success than previous theory was because Marx appealed to a definite section of society- the proletariat - which had common needs and common economic interests. His socialist forebears erred in that their appeal was vague



and much too general when they addressed themselves to "the people", "the poor", "and similar undefined entities".<sup>65</sup> The failure of the Zionist attempt in spreading their doctrine stems from the same error made by the early socialists. The Zionists have not succeeded in recognizing and defining their "proletariate". Zionism, from its very origin, has appealed to the "people", but they do not recognize that the "people" is not its natural support.

... The only want of which the majority of people is sufficiently conscious - the want which alone, therefore, can form the basis of common national work is freedom from material pressure. So soon as we leave this common ground, we find the people divided into parties and classes whose conscious demands differ in each case and whose relation to our national life, therefore, in each case takes on different form. If then, Zionism could really point the way to our material regeneration it would doubtless unite under its banner the whole people, without distinction of party or class...<sup>66</sup>

The "unsophisticated masses", Ahad Ha-Am contends, have a sense of reality, and only under extreme duress will they give in to vague promises of redemption. As soon as conditions become more favorable, they will leave Zionism for more practical pursuits. Ahad Ha-Am explains that it is folly to build a movement on the shifting sand of the masses. Zionism needs to be redefined in terms of its true nature, and consequently its appeal cannot be directed to the amorphous mass group in Judaism.

I think then, that the course of events will compel Zionism to come gradually to understand itself and its supporters: To understand itself as a national movement of a spiritual character,

whose aim is to satisfy the demand for a true and free national life in accordance with our distinctive spirit; and to find supporters in that nationalist section which is sufficiently conscious in all its individual members, of this demand, and which in a certain sense may be called a "spiritual proletariat."<sup>67</sup>

In an interesting aside, Ahad Ha-Am notes that the Jews have no decent sized proletariat aside from the potential "spiritual proletariat". I think that he means hereby to answer those Jewish socialists who hoped to solve the "Jewish Problem" through socialism.

The mission of the proletariat is to hasten the Socialist solution by the concentration of wealth; and this mission can be fulfilled only by those who work in large industrial undertakings. The work of the master-workman and his assistants is not proletariat work, because so far from hastening, it hinders that solution. Now the working-class Jew has practically no place in the large industrial undertakings; generally speaking, the so-called proletariat section of the Jews belongs to the class of master-workmen. But on the other hand there is among the Jews and only among them, a proletariat in another sense - in the sense indicated by the combination of "national" and "spiritual". The position and needs of this proletariat, which are common to all its individual members, compel it to feel a deep-rooted and powerful desire for a change in the established order; but the change desired in this case is not a concentration of the means of production, but just the opposite. What is needed is a new means of production, wherewith to create a product of a special character...<sup>68</sup>

The "spiritual proletariat", the elect of the spirit, are to create a new product for their exclusive use. Their role is to be both producer and consumer of the new national output. Ahad Ha-Am has assigned to this elite the task of being creators of history. The masses of Jews appear

to Ahad Ha-Am as they did to Maimonides as the means through which the elite were to achieve their goal. The masses were the mortar through which the elect hoped to build the national structure. Never did Ahad Ha-Am see value in the masses of men because of their inherent value as human beings. Their task was to be the raw material from which the Jewish Superman was to emerge.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. כ"כ. עפ"ד. א "משה". שמו.  
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5. שמו. ibid.  
ibid. pp.312-314.
6. שמו. ibid.  
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7. שמו-שמה. ibid.  
ibid. p.314-323.
8. אריה סימון ויוסף אליהו הלר. אחד העם האיש פעלו וחורו.  
(ירושלים, חש"ז) ע' 31-30.
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25. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "לחולדות החיוב והשלילה". עה.  
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27. ש. ibid.  
ibid. p.147.
28. ס. ibid.  
ibid. p.167.
29. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "לא זה הדרך" מאמר א. יו.  
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30. כ"כ. עפ"ד. IV "הויקה השעה". מכחב ראשון. שעט.
31. כ"כ. "הקדמה להוצאה חדשה". ח.  
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33. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "לחולדות החיוב והשלילה". עו.  
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35. יו. ibid.  
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36. יו. ibid.  
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37. .עז-עז ibid.  
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38. .עז ibid.  
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39. .עז ibid.  
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Ahad Ha-Am, Selected Essays. op.cit. p.64.
41. .עז ibid.  
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42. .עז ibid.  
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53. .שנט. ibid.  
ibid. p.177.
54. .שנט. ibid.  
ibid. p.178.

55. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "הכהנים והעם". י"ט.  
 With regard to "priests" as the creators of history see also:  
 גרשון א. הורוין. "תכונת מחשבתו של אחד העם".  
 בצרון. אב-אלול תש"ז. חוברת ט' (93) ע' 236-239.  
 For Ahad Ha-Am's theory of selective colonization see:  
 כ"כ. "הקדמה למחזור ראשונה". ג.  
 note: "In the early twenties, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, a genuine disciple of Ahad Ha-Am refused to allow mass-immigration into Palestine for fear of turning Tel Aviv into another "Nalevke" (the Jewish section of Warsaw)" (quoted from "Nationalistic Philosophies of Jewish History" Judaism vol.5. no.3 summer 1956. p.260)
56. כ"כ. עפ"ד. I "פצעי אוהב". כב.  
 My translation.
57. דרך החיים, יסודי אודות בני משה וחקונותיו".  
 ע"כ. op.cit.
58. כב-ל. ibid.
59. כב-כא. ibid.
60. ל-לא. ibid.
61. לא. ibid.
62. An edited version of "דרך החיים" is to be found in the essay, "נסיון שלא הצליח". כ"כ. חלה-חלם.
63. Bentwich, Norman, Ahad Ha-Am and His Philosophy. (Jerusalem 1927) pp.6;24.
64. Baron, Salo W. Modern Nationalism and Religion. op.cit. p.50.
65. כ"כ. עפ"ד. II "הוי"עה השעה". שפב.  
 Ahad Ha-Am, Zionism and Judaism. op.cit. pp.102-103.
66. שפב. ibid.  
ibid. p.103-104.
67. שפב. ibid.  
ibid. pp.104-105.
68. שפב. ibid.  
ibid. p.105.

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