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A STUDY OF AHAD HA'AM'S CONCEPT OF  
A NATIONAL SPIRITUAL CENTER

RONALD S. MASS

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirements for Ordination

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Referee: Professor Eugene B. Borowitz

To the memory of my grandfather,  
Samuel Krasnov, who taught me  
the value of unity among  
our people.

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## CHAPTER I: THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

I am a relative newcomer to the writings of Ahad Ha'am. In fact, it was only four years ago when I read him for the first time. The article which broke the ice for me was "Sacred and Profane," a brief philosophical essay, written in 1892, in which he exposed some of the deficiencies of the Reform movement in Europe. Although "Sacred and Profane" impressed me by the lucidness of its argument and by the author's concise prose, it was not until I read Ahad Ha'am's towering "Moses" that I realized I had stumbled onto someone very special. From that point on I read as many essays as I could, first with the aid of Leon Simon's English translations, and later in the original Hebrew.

In the course of my reading, I turned to other scholars who have studied Ahad Ha'am, in the hope that their wisdom would better help me to understand his ideas. To my amazement, I found that literally hundreds of English articles (and, I am sure, an equal number in Hebrew) have been written about Ahad Ha'am. Some of the articles were helpful but, to my dismay, very few of the studies broke new ground and none could claim to be a definitive treatment of his thinking. I was especially astonished to discover that no scholar writing in English had, to the best of my knowledge, undertaken a serious study of Ahad Ha'am's major contribution to the annals of Zionist thought--his concept of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine. The absence of an in-depth treatment of this idea was doubly odd because he had been universally identified as the "father of

spiritual Zionism" and because the notion of a spiritual center had been hotly debated in Zionist circles for years. Yet, no one had stopped to consider precisely what Ahad Ha'am meant by the puzzling term "National Spiritual Center."

Ahad Ha'am was aware that this idea, which he first introduced into print in an article called "Dr. Pinsker and His Pamphlet" (1892), was subject to ambiguity and misinterpretation. He made several attempts to clarify what he meant (the most far-reaching was an essay called "Words and Concepts" written in 1907), but he never fully elaborated on the deeper implications of the National Spiritual Center. Since his death in 1927, the meaning of this concept has not become any clearer. In fact, what Ahad Ha'am had in mind by the word "רוחני" (translated here as "spiritual") has become more and more cloudy with the passage of time.

Ahad Ha'am never produced a systematic exegesis of any aspect of his thought, including his concept of a National Spiritual Center. He earned his reputation as an essayist, periodically writing short articles in the Hebrew press. His essays, most of which were written over the span of two decades (1890-1910) and which were later collected in four small volumes entitled ב'צומת הנתיבים (At the Crossroads), covered a wide range of subjects-- from topical issues to brief philosophical discourses. Despite his intermittent and relatively sparse output, however, Ahad Ha'am was a consistent thinker and, taken as a whole, his writings reveal a uniform and holistic formulation of Jewish life that has come to be known as spiritual Zionism.

Even though Ahad Ha'am did not organize his thought systematically, I am convinced that a careful reading of his essays will disclose the inner logic of his ideas. It is the purpose of this study, therefore, to organize the random abstracts of his thinking into a coherent whole. My specific focus is to develop his concept of a National Spiritual Center in both its theoretical and practical aspects and to show how the idea took shape during the course of his lifetime. It is my hope that the reader will come away with a fuller appreciation of what Ahad Ha'am meant when he used the term "a spiritual center of our nationality in Palestine" than is currently available in other studies about his life and work. The main sources for this study are his collected writings-- פרקי אהרן -- and his six volumes of published letters-- פרקי אהרן.

This study is divided into six chapters following this introduction. The second chapter is a digest of Ahad Ha'am's life, specifically focusing on his intellectual development and his major contributions to Jewish affairs. Chapter three is a brief historical digression-- a survey of the process of Jewish emancipation in Western and Eastern Europe-- to illustrate the general social and political climate in which Ahad Ha'am lived and the forces which influenced his thinking. Chapter four begins Ahad Ha'am's analysis of the situation of Judaism in the modern world. It outlines four specific areas which he believed were symptomatic of a disease of the Jewish national spirit and it shows how he responded to the problems and possibilities created by emancipation. Chapter five examines the theoretical underpinnings of his unique view of Jewish history, delineates his negation

of other ideologies which addressed themselves to the "Jewish question," and sets the stage for a presentation of his own positive vision for the survival and restoration of Jewish life. Finally, we arrive at the heart of the study in chapter six-- a detailed discussion of the primary sources of the concept of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine. In particular, this chapter highlights the cultural and ethical components of the Hebrew spiritual revival. Chapter seven is a critical overview of Ahad Ha'am's thought. The views of several of his advocates and opponents are presented, aimed at pointing out the major strengths and weaknesses inherent in his conception of spiritual Zionism.

Even though his major essays were written four score years ago, and even though many of his ideas have been refuted, I believe that Ahad Ha'am still has something important to say to the Jew living in the latter part of the twentieth century. At his essence, he was a man who loved the Jewish people and who was deeply concerned with the qualitative development of Judaism in the face of dynamic change. He understood that the entrance of the Jew into Western society posed a problem for Jewish survival. Yet, he also realized that emancipation allowed for possibilities that were previously unattainable-- specifically, for the restoration of the Jewish nation to a healthy, normal, and productive way of life.

We are fortunate enough to live at a time when a Jewish State is an established fact. Yet, as much as it has enriched our world, the existence of the State of Israel has not solved the problems of Jews living at the interface of modernity, nor

has it guaranteed Jewish survival in the diaspora. Like the Jews living in Ahad Ha'am's day, we too live in an uncertain age and we too stand at a spiritual crossroads. Whether or not we agree with his conclusions, Ahad Ha'am's thinking compels us to ask hard questions of ourselves and to devise new ways to meet the challenges of our time. He is a thinker who is deserving of our attention. It is my hope that this study will bring his ideas to life and help concretize his vision of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine.

## CHAPTER II: AHAD HA'AM'S LIFE AND TIMES

The ideal of a National Spiritual Center in the Land of Israel, which was Ahad Ha'am's original contribution to the corpus of Zionist thought, was not the product of a split-second burst of ingenuity nor the result of romantic idealism. Rather, it was the result of prudent, rational thinking-- the creative harvest of a gradual process of thought and experience that germinated when he was a young man, bore fruit when he first took up his pen in his early thirties, and did not fully ripen until he was an accomplished essayist in his middle years.

Ahad Ha'am's ideas can in no way be separated from his particular life configuration. He was a man who can be understood only in relationship to the unique time and circumstances in which he lived. My purpose in this chapter is not to present a comprehensive biography of Ahad Ha'am. Leon Simon has already given us a detailed account of his mentor's life in his very readable biography published in 1960. It is merely my intent to concentrate on those aspects of his life which contributed to his intellectual maturity and which led him to formulate his unique conception of a spiritual nationalism.

In the last section of his "Reminiscences", dictated to his secretary late in life, Ahad Ha'am divided his life into five major periods:<sup>1</sup> (1) The period of his hometown, which lasted until he was twelve years old, during which he chiefly occupied himself in the study of Talmud and the Jewish commentators, with the aid of a tutor provided by his father; (2) The village period which began in 1868, when his family moved to a country estate



nearby the large village of Gopitshitza, and ended when he took his wife and small child to Odessa in the Spring of 1884. These were years of intense study, during which he broadened his intellectual foundations and sharpened his skills in Bible and Hebrew. (3) The Odessa period, which he dubbed the period of literature. During this span, which lasted until 1907, he established his place in "our national work and our literature." (4) London: 1907-1921. Ahad Ha'am spent his middle years in England, where he moved in 1907. During this period his lifestyle did not change much because he was little interested in the affairs of English Jewry. Most of his associates in London were Russian Zionist Maskilim, the same type of circle to which he belonged in Odessa. The London period, he said, was preoccupied with the First World War, which filled his heart with upheaval and left little time for matters other than Jewish national questions, which remained the focus of his attention. (5) The period of Eretz Yisrael. Ahad Ha'am spent his twilight years in his beloved Land of Israel, where he moved with his wife, son and daughter-in-law in January 1922. He died five years later in Tel Aviv.

#### I. THE PERIOD OF HIS HOMETOWN

Asher Zvi Ginzberg was born on August 18, 1856, in the town of Skvira, a Hasidic community in Western Russia. He was the eldest of five siblings, only three of whom survived childhood. Asher was descended from a long line of eminent Hasidim. His father Isaiah, who was a brilliant Talmud student, was one of the chief Sadagore Hasidim in Skvira, and determinedly raised



his son within the narrow fold of traditional Judaism. From a very young age, Asher was a devoted student. During the day he attended a cheder (elementary school) and in his free time he immersed himself in the study of Talmud and the Poskim, post-Talmudic Rabbinic authorities who decided matters of Jewish law. His father, who hoped Asher would become a rabbi, hired a tutor to ensure his son's rapid academic progress. In addition, every Sabbath after his mid-day nap, Isaiah would give Asher a rigorous examination. It was his custom, whether Asher succeeded in answering the questions or not, to end the exam by slapping his son across the face, a practice which horrified Asher's mother.

In another episode that took place when Asher was eleven, Isaiah found his son reading a book which he had borrowed from his father's library. "Do you know that the author was eighteen when he wrote this book?" his father asked. "I know," Asher replied. "When you're eighteen," his father retorted, "you won't even be able to understand what he's written in it." Asher, who already understood the finepoints of the author's argument, was annoyed at his father's constant browbeating. He did not understand why his father belittled him so. Nevertheless, he learned to accept the harsh criticism as his father's way of educating his oldest son.

Asher's hunger for knowledge could not be satisfied within the narrow intellectual world of the Hasidim. To the chagrin of his father and other "fanatics" in the community in which he lived, he indulged himself in the study of Hebrew grammar and Medieval Jewish philosophy. Drawing on his already substantial

well of knowledge, he would engage learned rabbis in fiery debates that would last until the early morning hours. When he wanted to learn Russian, he persuaded his fellow students in cheder to teach him the alphabet while the teacher was out of the room. These students, who came from poorer Hasidic families, were encouraged by their parents to learn Russian so that they would be able to sign documents in times of emergency. Asher practiced what he had learned by reading shop signs as he walked to and from school.

The seed of Asher's break with Hasidism was planted at age twelve, when his father took him to Sadagore to spend Succot with the Sadagore Rabbi and his family. Asher was appalled when, in the succah, an old man entertained the rabbi's children by telling them vulgar stories full of coarse language. Suddenly, the cantor began to sing and the entire throng burst into pious song. The juxtaposition between the crude stories and the fervent prayer made such a bad impression on Asher that he returned home a mitnaged, an opponent of the Hasidic movement. Isaiah, recognizing the sudden change in his son, tried to bring him back to the "right path" but did not succeed. He continued to live in the Hasidic environment for many years but paid little attention to his surroundings. Instead, he threw himself into his studies with even greater enthusiasm.

## II. GOPITSHITZA

In 1868, Isaiah moved his family to a large country estate near the village of Gopitshitza, which he leased from an aristocratic Russian family. The estate was in disrepair when the

Ginzbergs took it over, but Isaiah's capable administration soon turned it into a profitable enterprise. In Gopitshitza, the Ginzbergs lived in the lap of luxury, playing host to traveling government officials, eminent rabbis, and affluent gentile neighbors.

Asher had no friends in the village and spent his time absorbed in study. He had a large room all to himself that overflowed with books. He continued with a tutor until he was fifteen, at which point he asked his father if he could study on his own. Isaiah consented, and from this time onward Asher became responsible for the direction of his own education. At first, he concentrated on Bible, Talmud and other religious subjects, but his horizons quickly broadened. He began to read widely in the literature of the Haskalah, the movement for Hebrew enlightenment, and he attained a solid background in the philosophical writings of Western secular thinkers. His father was alarmed by his son's enchantment with "heretical" literature and he forbade him to buy any more Haskalah books. The temptation, however, was too great for Asher, and he described how, one day, he bought Isaac Erter's Hatzofeh L'Bet Israel, a volume of satirical stories directed mostly against the Hasidim, from an itinerant bookseller. That night after the family had retired, he read the book from cover to cover, and burned it in the fireplace before his father discovered what he was reading. Asher's conversion from Mitnaged to Maskil was soon complete. He could no longer be confined within the provincial world of his upbringing.

Asher was married at the age of sixteen to a girl from

an ultra-pious Hasidic family. The marriage was arranged by his parents in the hope that marrying into so saintly a family would bring him back into the fold. A visit to his wife's distinguished grandfather, however, the famous Wonder-Rabbi Jacob Israel of Tcherkossi, produced the opposite effect, exposing once more the ignorance and shallowness of the Hasidic world. The saintly rabbi, as Ahad Ha'am related the story in his "Reminiscences", was too old to take his designated place at the head of the public table on the Sabbath day, as was the custom. Normally, one of his grandsons who was visiting with him would take his place. On the Sabbath when the Ginzbergs were visiting, however, the grandson had injured his foot on a nail and was ordered by his doctor to stay in bed. With no one left to fill in, Asher was given the honor of sitting at the head of the table. "Fate so decreed," Ahad Ha'am remarked, noting the irony in the situation, "that I would take the place of the 'Tzaddik' at the head of the table and so I suddenly became a 'Tzaddik', in charge of the table, at a time when deep in my heart I already considered 'Hasidism' very defective. This was a known fact among the Hasidim but, nevertheless, it did not prevent them from grabbing the leftovers on my plate."<sup>2</sup>

Asher's response to this extraordinary affair was to broaden his excursion into secular literature and culture. Although he continued to live with his parents, he occupied almost all his free time in the pursuit of secular knowledge. He mastered Russian and German and devoured books on history, philosophy, psychology, sociology and other humanistic subjects, while ingesting whatever Haskalah books and periodicals he could get

his hands on. At the same time that he foraged in the wilderness of new ideas, Asher's critical mind engaged in an analysis of the question of religion. His world view, he said, was turned on its head and, although he did not explicitly state it, it seems clear that he became an agnostic:

But all this holiness into which my parents tried to immerse me did not amount to anything; and during the first years after my marriage, while I was still supported by my father on his village estate, free from every worry and far from the bustle of life, I examined and explored at great length all of the aspects of religion, and my natural inclination toward critical analysis awakened strong impulses within me which wrecked havoc on my spiritual world.<sup>3</sup>

Probably the greatest influence on the reformulation of his religious beliefs was Asher's exposure to Positivism through the writings of Dmitri Ivanovich Pisarev, the Russian literary critic and social philosopher. In his "Reminiscences", Ahad Ha'am recounted how he was introduced to Pisarev's thought:

In 1878 I was in Odessa for the first time (in order to visit my wife who took sick there suddenly) and I chanced to meet, at an inn, a young man well-versed in Russian literature. Of course, I estimated my knowledge to be much less than his, but apparently he felt differently, since after our first conversation, he came to me every day to talk about various subjects. He even brought with him the books of Pisarev, whose works were, in those days, thirstily consumed by the younger generation, and together we read in them a selection of critical essays. I believed then that my eyes saw the light, and that here was found the 'last word' on human enlightenment for which my soul thirsted.<sup>4</sup>

Reading Pisarev ignited Asher's interest in learning more about Positivism. It was not long, therefore, before he was well acquainted with the social Positivism of Auguste Comte



and John Stuart Mill and the evolutionary Positivism of Herbert Spencer. The ideas of the philosophers of the Enlightenment left an indelible impression on Asher. His rejection of the supernatural deity of his ancestors had left a theological void in his thinking. Now, however, the God of Sinai was replaced in his mind by a conception of a deity inherent in the biological impulse of a humanity which evolves through history in accordance with the laws of nature. Science, and in particular the sphere of biology, was the only medium, the Positivists believed, in which life could be measured and understood. The purpose of life, according to Spencer and other social theorists, was the evolution of the human species from primitive tribalism to a refined social order in which the inclination toward justice and morality was naturally implanted in the soul of every human being.

Ahad Ha'am was not a Positivist in the pure sense of the word. He reserved the right to reject those aspects of modern social philosophy which ran contrary to his moral constitution and national loyalties. Yet, the language and ideas of Positivism suffused his writings, and he looked to the developing social sciences as the principal medium by which Judaism could be brought into the modern world, while preserving the unity of the Jewish people.

Asher returned home from Odessa intent on entering a Russian university. Studying from the books that were used in secondary schools, he began to teach himself Latin, mathematics, and other subjects that were required for admission. Several obstacles stood in his way, however, and, despite his zeal, he

never succeeded in acquiring a higher education. His fully developed mind lusted for challenging ideas, and he became easily frustrated at having to fill his brain with useless facts and figures. Familial responsibilities also cut short his dream of advanced studies. In September, 1879, his eldest daughter Deborah Leah was born, and immediately afterwards his wife became seriously ill. In addition, he was in charge of the family business during his father's frequent trips abroad. Finally, his ambition was thwarted by a lack of confidence in his own abilities, a defect in his character which, Ahad Ha'am lamented, followed him throughout life. In 1882, at the age of twenty-six, he travelled to Vienna to take one last stab at entering a university there. He returned dejected, however, after two weeks, realizing that the opportunity for a formal education had passed him by. From that time on he resigned himself to being an autodidact, relying solely upon his intellectual instincts for the procurement of knowledge.

In March, 1884, Asher moved his wife and daughter to Odessa, although he was forced to return to the family estate shortly thereafter to help his father manage the business. His wife remained in Odessa, and in June, 1885, his second daughter Rachel was born in Kiev, where his wife had gone to receive special medical attention. In the winter of 1886 his father's lease on the estate expired. Unable to renew it because of the May Laws, passed by the Russian government in 1882 curtailing Jewish residence in the villages of the Pale, the entire Ginzberg family uprooted and migrated to Odessa. Thus, the period of rural life in Gopitshitza came to a decisive end.

Ahad Ha'am utterly loathed the village life and described the Gopitshitza years as a time of intense inner conflict and absolute despair. He bitterly complained that the years spent on the family estate had sucked him dry and consumed the best part of his youth. He felt exhausted, both mentally and spiritually, and he was only too glad to escape the suffocating environment of the countryside: "The hour arrived at last to break out of this furnace of iron where I spent eighteen years, the best portion of my youth, which consumed me and destroyed all the good which nature gave me when I came into this world. I came there as a twelve-year-old boy and left as a thirty-year-old man with a wife and children. I came with a pure soul and a heart filled with hope, and left with a diseased spirit and a torn and tired heart."<sup>5</sup>

The flight from Gopitshitza concluded the second major period in Ahad Ha'am's life. He had made the painful but enlightening journey from Hasid to Mitnaged to Maskil, and had, almost entirely by his own initiative, finely sharpened his considerable intellectual powers. He had made a decisive commitment to embrace the modern world and, with the newly emerging social sciences as his tool, he began to examine the age-old problems of existence. He stood on the threshold of change and yet, despite it all, Ahad Ha'am remained first and foremost a Jew. His rejection of the narrow sphere of Hasidism did not constitute a rejection of the Jewish people, and he retained a deep affection for everything Jewish-- Jewish history, language, literature, culture, morality, and even religion. He was the unique product of two worlds-- the visceral world of his



upbringing and the intellectual world of the Enlightenment. Both of these influences shaped his essential nature and would later become the basis of his fundamental life concern-- how to revitalize the Jewish spirit while preserving the national tapestry of Jewish life.

### III. ODESSA

After the interlude in Gopitshitza, in which he helped his father tie up his business affairs, Asher rejoined his wife and children in Odessa in June, 1886, where they now took up permanent residence. Asher viewed the move to Odessa as a new lease on life, and the Odessa years, which lasted until 1907, were the happiest and most productive of his life. Odessa was the cultural and literary center of the Jewish Enlightenment and the ideological heartland of the Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion), the movement of Eastern Zionists which campaigned for and organized the establishment of agricultural colonies in Palestine. It was in Odessa that Ahad Ha'am first made the acquaintance of the authors, scholars and activists who comprised the hub of the Eastern Jewish intelligensia in those days-- men who would later become his close friends or, in some cases, his bitter opponents. This group of luminaries included Leon Pinsker, Moshe Lilienblum, Chaim Nahman Bialik, Simon Dubnow, Menahem Ussishkin, Chaim Weizmann, Mendele Mokher Sefarim, Vladimir Jabotinsky, and Meir Dizengoff.

Asher wasted no time in availing himself of the opportunities in this hotbed of Jewish and secular learning. Books were plentiful and he delighted in the chance to complete his

education. He resumed his studies by mastering English and French until he was able to read books written in those languages. Spurred on by his interest in the question of Jewish nationalism, he joined the Hovevei Zion and immersed himself in the activities of every aspect of the group. His reputation in the movement quickly grew and, before long, he was elected to serve on the Central Committee, which met once a week in the home of Dr. Pinsker to discuss the problems of Palestinian colonization.

It was during the first years in Odessa that Ahad Ha'am began to carve out his career as a distinguished Hebrew essayist and man of letters. In his "Reminiscences" he told how it was only by accident that he became a Hebrew writer. During Succot, in the fall of 1889, a group of the Odessa Maskilim decided that they wanted to compose an address in honor of the noted scholar S.J. Fuenn on the occasion of his jubilee. A number of Hebraists tried their hand at the project, and Ahad Ha'am's version was selected as the best of the lot. The essay so impressed a correspondent of Hamelitz that he published it in that paper under the name Asher Ginzberg. The success of the first article prompted his friends in the Odessa circle to ask him to draft a reply to Alexander Zederbaum and Judah Leib Gordon who were involved, at the time, in a bitter exchange in the Hebrew press. The article, which was published in the Hebrew weekly Hamaggid, so enhanced his reputation that Zederbaum himself, who was the editor of Hamelitz, asked him to write an article for that paper. The result was "Lo Zeh Haderech" ("This Is Not the Way"), a loving but exacting critique of the settlement

policies of Hovevei Zion, and the essay which effectively launched his literary career. The article appeared under the pseudonym Ahad Ha'am ("One of the People") which, from that time forward, became his celebrated calling card. In his "Reminiscences" he reflected on how he chose his nom de plume: "By this pen-name I wanted to say that I am not a writer, that it was not my intention to become one in the future, and that I expressed my opinion in this matter only by accident, as One of the People ~~who~~ is concerned with the affairs of the people. Who would have imagined then that this step was only the first on a long literary journey; that the name 'Ahad Ha'am' would become more famous with our people than my own name; that I would become the editor of a Hebrew journal; and that literature would be my full-time occupation?"<sup>6</sup>

With the publication of "Lo Zeh Haderech" and with the taking of a new name, Ahad Ha'am moved, however reluctantly, into the spotlight of public affairs. Ahad Ha'am, by his own estimation, lacked the aggressiveness, stamina and self-assurance needed to sustain a career in the public eye. Yet, during the next two decades, he was embroiled in the major controversies of the newly emerging Zionist movement and, as the editor of a highly respected Hebrew journal, he exerted a profound influence on the stylistic development of the modern Hebrew language.

"Lo Zeh Haderich" made such a great impression upon his friends in Hovevei Zion, that they urged him to try to put his ideas into practice. The result was an organization called B'nei Moshe ("Sons of Moses") of which Ahad Ha'am was one of the principal founders and the reigning ideological spokesman.

The idea behind the society was to gather together the most talented, knowledgeable and devoted members of Hovevei Zion into an elite corps which would serve as the think tank and leadership branch of the national Jewish revival, which, he hoped, would soon blossom in Palestine. B'nei Moshe lasted only eight years and, even though it accomplished little in the way of tangible results, it provided Ahad Ha'am with a loyal group of followers who would bring his ideas to the attention of a wider audience, gave him a platform from which to speak, and provided him with an educated forum in which he could test and shape his ideas.

During his tenure as the spiritual guide to B'nei Moshe, Ahad Ha'am began a period of prodigious literary output. It should be pointed out that he earned his reputation as an essayist. Although he often spoke about writing the history of B'nei Moshe, a major book on Jewish ethics, and editing a Jewish encyclopedia, his total contribution to Hebrew literature was a collection of short articles, which originally appeared in Hebrew newspapers and journals, and which are bound today in one medium-sized volume. Nevertheless, his articles, which were written both about topical subjects and universal themes, made an impact which outlasted by far the paper on which they were printed. In his autobiography Trial and Error, Chaim Weizmann described how the publication of an essay by Ahad Ha'am was a significant event in the Eastern Zionist literary circle: "The appearance of one of Achad Ha'am's articles was always an event of prime importance. We read him, and read him again, and discussed him endlessly. He was, I might say, what Gandhi has been to many Indians,

what Mazzini was to Young Italy a century ago."<sup>7</sup> During the six years that followed the publication of "Lo Zeh Haderech", Ahad Ha'am's active pen turned out five or six articles a year, which he later compiled in one volume called Al Parashat Dera-chim ("At the Crossroads"), the first of four similar volumes which were published in one edition after his death in the Collected Writings of Ahad Ha'am.

Ahad Ha'am's essays were as important for their affect on the development of modern Hebrew prose style as they were for their trenchant criticism and original ideas. Writing in 1930, Shalom Spiegel remarked about Ahad Ha'am:

Though he did not outwardly break with tradition, his mode of employing the Hebrew language is epoch-making and revolutionary. He expanded the limits of expressibility in Hebrew to an incredible degree, and endowed the Orientaly exaggerated language with the most priceless of the Western conquests-- precision.

All who speak and write Hebrew today, though they may never have read him, are influenced in their speech and writing by Ahad Ha'am. He trained the Hebrew language into new paths. And though he himself went into a long silence, it went forward by the momentum which he gave it.<sup>8</sup>

Ahad Ha'am claimed that he was never capable of writing on assignment, as a professional journalist would, but would pick up his pen whenever driven by a creative impulse or when he felt compelled to jump into a significant debate. Writing did not come easy for him. He worked slowly and deliberately, like a sculptor chipping away at a block of fine marble-- a style which characterized his letters as well as his essays. His abundant literary production during the Odessa years, therefore, testifies that this was a dynamic and stimulating period in his



life, a time when his intellectual and creative faculties were in full gear.

In 1896, after undergoing a personal misfortune in business, Ahad Ha'am agreed to assume the editorial chair of a new Hebrew monthly published by Ahiasaf, a Hebrew publishing house based in Warsaw, founded by Ahad Ha'am's friend Abraham Leib Shalkovich (better known by his pen-name Ben-Avigdor). Ahad Ha'am named his journal Hashiloah after the verse in Isaiah (8:6) which describes "the gently flowing waters of Shiloah." The title reflected his belief in the wisdom of gradual progress over radical change. Ahad Ha'am presided over Hashiloah with an iron fist, a policy which aroused the enmity of those who contributed to the journal. In letters written to friends, he railed incessantly about the sordid state of Hebrew literature. His purpose, he said, was to raise the standards of the Hebrew-reading public to a point where they would tolerate nothing less than excellence. To accomplish this, he complained, he was forced to submit articles by even the best writers to his meticulous scrutiny, because they fell far short of his expectations. He waged a one-man war against what he called "batlanut", the excessive tastelessness, slovenliness, and stupidity that had so corrupted Hebrew culture and literature. Ahad Ha'am's dictatorial hand produced a journal which was a landmark in Hebrew publishing and which was highly regarded among the Jewish intelligensia. His appeal to the elite, however, condemned Hashiloah to a precarious financial existence because it never amassed enough subscribers to put it on firm economic footing. When his publishers pleaded with him to liven it up

a bit to widen its attractiveness, he angrily replied that he would rather see it die an honorable death than compromise its integrity. Ahad Ha'am finally submitted his letter of resignation in 1902 when asked by Ahiasaf to take a cut in salary so the paper could regain solvency. Tired, bitter and disillusioned from his tenure as editor, he accepted a position with the Wissotzky Tea Company and handed over the editorship to his friend Joseph Klausner. He expressed his feelings of disappointment in a letter to Dr. Simon Bernfeld, an old friend and an accomplished rabbi and scholar in Berlin:

Now I would like to inform you that I am giving up the editorship of 'Hashiloah' as of the new year, and also literary work in general (of course, I mean work as 'earning a living'). I'm sick and tired of all the humiliation and inner pain that are connected with this job, and from now on I will once more be what I was six years ago: 'a simple man' who undertakes literary pursuits in his free time without expecting monetary reward. I have taken a decent position with the Wissotzky firm which will allow me to earn a respectable living, though it will not make me rich, and it will permit me to set my own time for study and writing.<sup>9</sup>

Ahad Ha'am lived in Odessa for five more years. Although he felt defeated and worn out by the experience with Hashiloah and decided no longer to depend on the Jewish literary world for his upkeep, he managed to write three of his most impressive essays during that time. These were "Flesh and Spirit", "Moses", and "The Supremacy of Reason". Outside of his family life (his only son Mordechai Zalman was born in 1889) and his commitment to Wissotzky, Ahad Ha'am devoted most of his time to Jewish national affairs. He remained active in the Zionist movement

and served on two principal committees: the "National Committee" which was primarily concerned with the local Jewish community and the "Society for the Spread of the Enlightenment" which was a national body dedicated to the spread of Jewish education and culture. His work on the former committee brought him into conflict with the political Zionists, which was a continuation of his battles with Theodor Herzl. Much of his energy on the latter committee was directed at fighting the assimilationists who favored the Russification of Jewish schools.

Although he complained that he had little time for study, his first love, Ahad Ha'am apparently turned down several offers to lure him into the world of scholarship. His friend Simon Dubnow could not understand how he could be content to work for a corporation and he tried to convince him to join the editorial staff of the Russian-language Jewish encyclopedia. An even more tempting offer was made by Dr. Solomon Schechter, the President of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, who invited him to become head of the newly opened Dropsie College in Philadelphia. Although he seriously considered the offer, he rejected it on the grounds that he did not have the requisite qualifications to head a large academic institution and that it was too late in his life for him to contemplate a major career change. Finally, he argued, he valued personal autonomy too much to be accountable to a board of governors who would undoubtedly make major policy decisions at the college.<sup>10</sup> Ahad Ha'am had still not given up his dream of pursuing a major project, but he had reconciled himself to a lifestyle which was less taxing and which afforded him a measure of security in



his old age.

Ahad Ha'am had arrived in Odessa an unknown. Twenty years later, he had guaranteed himself a prominent place in the history of Hebrew literature, and he was regarded as a leading voice in the Zionist movement. In particular, he was considered the founder and philosopher of that branch of Zionism which called for the spiritual revival of the Jewish people through the establishment of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine. The move to Odessa had boded well for Ahad Ha'am. Nevertheless, despite the accolades and celebrity, the years of being in the public eye had taken their toll. Fatigued and battle scarred, he realized that his life had reached a new crossroads. As fate would have it, just when he was in a state of inner vexation about his future, the Wissotzky firm offered him the opportunity to manage their recently opened London office. In October, 1907, Ahad Ha'am visited the British capital to explore the proposition. After weighing the pros and cons, he decided to accept the new appointment.

#### IV. LONDON

The decision to leave Odessa was not easy for Ahad Ha'am. He had spent his best years there and was surrounded by many close friends. Furthermore, he felt at home in Odessa, where the atmosphere was a pleasant blend of traditional Judaism and the intellectual ferment of the Haskalah. Nevertheless, Ahad Ha'am was intrigued by the possibility of living in London, which he regarded as one of the cultural centers of the West. He greatly admired the British empiricists, whose philosophy

had influenced his own thinking, and he was attracted by a society which tolerated free expression, unlike his native Russia where his articles were subjected to the oppressive hand of the government censor. Finally, Ahad Ha'am looked forward to resuming his studies and to undoing the years of intellectual stagnation that resulted from his preoccupation with Hashiloah. The lure of the British Museum Library was no small incentive for moving to London. Thus in May, 1908, accompanied by his wife, son, and youngest daughter (his eldest daughter had already settled in Palestine), Ahad Ha'am took up permanent residence in the British capital, where he remained for fourteen years.

It soon became clear that London was not the haven for which Ahad Ha'am hoped. There were several reasons for this. First, his work for Wissotzky and his steadily declining health left him little time or strength for his own projects. In a letter, written in 1909, to a friend in New York, he described his feelings after one year in his new surroundings:

...My life in London, about which you ask, is occupied with the trivial affairs of this world. My days are consumed by the 'city' and my nights are spent in light reading and letter writing, and only very infrequently do I have the strength and inclination to engage in more serious work. The bustle of the 'city' and the daily commuting by subway alarmingly weaken my nerves... In short, my dear, there is no comfort and, in the meantime, old age is creeping up on me.<sup>11</sup>

A second reason for his unhappiness was his inability to fit into British society and his alienation from the world of Anglo-Jewry. British Jews had so thoroughly assimilated that

he shared very little in common with them. His only friends were the few Russian-Jewish Zionists, like Chaim Weizmann, who like himself were living in England for one reason or another. On Friday evenings it was his practice to "hold court" for those few individuals with whom he felt a common bond or for kindred spirits who were visiting from abroad. Many fond recollections have been written about these special evenings in the Ginzberg household. As much as he longed for the Odessa circle, however, Ahad Ha'am felt secure to be in a country where democratic institutions prevailed. In a letter to Dubnow, he contrasted the freedom of Britain with the oppressiveness of Russia:

Life in our 'beloved' homeland is now hard and bitter. And I sometimes feel pangs of conscience that in these difficult times I do not participate in your troubles, that I sit securely in this free land, and that I have already grown used to a secure life where one is able to walk the streets knowing full well that all the monarchs of the East and West cannot block his path. I doubt if I could still endure all of the terrible humiliations that are nowadays an ongoing part of the life of Jews in Russia.<sup>12</sup>

Despite his depressed state, Ahad Ha'am did manage to devote some time to Jewish national work. In the summer of 1911, he attended the Tenth Zionist Congress held in Basle, Switzerland. It was only the second congress which he had attended (the first being the inaugural congress in 1897). As time went on, he became more tolerant of the position of the political Zionists, although he believed as strongly as ever in the need for a National Spiritual Center in Palestine. Ahad Ha'am softened his stance primarily because Zionist leaders finally began to see the importance of including cultural issues on their agenda.

After his journey to Basle, he embarked on a fact-finding mission to Palestine where he stayed almost two months.

Although he picked up his pen sparingly, Ahad Ha'am wrote several important essays during the early period in London. These included "Between Two Alternatives", a scathing critique of liberal Judaism in England, "The Negation of the Diaspora", in which he contrasted his version of "spiritual nationalism" with the "diaspora nationalism" of Dubnow, "Rival Tongues", a diatribe against the Yiddish Culture movement, and "Summation", a report on the Tenth Zionist Congress and his ensuing visit to Palestine. In addition to his writing, he edited the fourth and final volume of his collected essays, Al Parashat Derachim. Ahad Ha'am's last major contribution to organized Zionist activities came in 1917 when he was invited to become a member of a political committee chaired by Chaim Weizmann. The purpose of the committee was to draft a document which expressed the sympathies of the British government to the Jewish national cause. Ahad Ha'am was Weizmann's trusted advisor throughout the entire process of negotiation and was one of the editors of the famous Balfour Declaration, which was issued on November 2, 1917.

Two events, one the intermarriage of his beloved daughter Rachel and the other, the outbreak of World War I, effectively put an end to Ahad Ha'am's literary career and left him a shattered and broken man. In the fall of 1912, he learned of Rachel's marriage to a Russian writer. This crushing news sent him into an emotional tailspin and led him to question where he had failed in his children's education.<sup>13</sup> Although Rachel soon divorced and immigrated to Israel, where she became a successful lawyer,

Ahad Ha'am never fully recovered from this personal tragedy. The outbreak of the First World War and the terrible suffering of the Jews of Russia during the war caused him to doubt many of the progressive beliefs that he had once taken as axiomatic. The world was reeling into madness, he said, and he was horrified by the degeneration of Western civilization into moral chaos.<sup>14</sup> As a result of these two blows Ahad Ha'am's pen fell silent and his health began to rapidly deteriorate. His final years in London were lived in pain and loneliness:

Here I live in total isolation as if I am on a deserted island. The cause of this is, first of all, my daily work in the hell of London called the 'City', a job which consumes the better part of the day. And moreover, it disturbs and weakens the nerves, so much so that upon returning home I don't feel the need to socialize, but only to rest. In the last year, I didn't write anything and read very little. It seems to me that if I live this way for a few more years, I will be good for nothing.<sup>15</sup>

In December, 1921, because of poor health, Ahad Ha'am was ordered by his doctor to go to Palestine. He mentioned in a letter to Dr. Bernfeld that his doctor was a non-Jew. Thus on December 31, at the age of sixty-five, Ahad Ha'am finally went to live in his beloved Israel at the compulsion of a gentile doctor, one of the many ironies of his life!

#### V. TEL AVIV

Ahad Ha'am and his wife settled in Tel Aviv in a beautiful house provided by the municipal council on the street which bore his name. Immediately upon his arrival he took on the role as elder statesman to the yishuv (the Jewish community



in Palestine). Unfortunately, however, his health did not improve, and he had passed the point in his life where a new beginning in Palestine was cause for solace. In a letter written to Dubnow a year after he immigrated, he lamented that, having finally escaped the dungeon of galut, he was homesick for London's dreary streets:

In my sorrowful state, what can I tell you about myself? I am broken and depressed and my morale is low and does not improve. What has happened to me now I would have found hilarious if someone had predicted it long ago: I'm sitting among brothers and close friends, surrounded by love and respect, with my children nearby, and I am able to study without distraction; and all this in the Land of Israel, which I have dreamt about for days and years. And in the midst of all this goodness, I sit and long for London! Yes, for London, meaning not for the close friends that I left there-- maybe there are three or four such people-- but simply for London-- its streets, its crowded markets, the dark 'city' where I spent so many years without light or air, for the choking fog, etc. This yearning saddens me even more because it is a clear sign that I am suffering from a disease of the spirit, since if it weren't so, such a thing would not be possible.<sup>16</sup>

Although his body was deteriorating, his mind was still alert, and during his five years in Tel Aviv Ahad Ha'am took a keen interest in the affairs of the yishuv, and remained active to the extent that his health allowed. He was elected to the City Council of Tel Aviv and he served on the board of governors of the Gymnasia Herzlia (Tel Aviv High School) which, founded in 1907, earned the distinction of being the first Hebrew-language secondary school in the world. He enthusiastically followed the preparations for the creation of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus and, although he was unable to attend

the opening ceremony, he sent a letter of greetings to Dr. Judah Magnes, the first president of the University, in which he expressed his joy and hope that the Hebrew University would become a vanguard in the revitalization of Hebrew culture.<sup>17</sup>

Ahad Ha'am's literary career had all but come to an end in London, yet he contributed a short article to a book entitled Sefer Hacongress, published in 1923 in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the First Zionist Congress. In the article, called "The First Congress", he restated his conviction that the revival of the Hebrew national spirit was the first priority of Zionism. In addition to reading and keeping up with his voluminous correspondence, Ahad Ha'am's major project was to prepare his letters for publication. The result was six volumes of about 1,700 letters, all told, about one third of the letters of which he had retained copies. His criterion for deciding which letters would be included was twofold: on the one hand a letter had to be of historical value and on the other hand it could not cast aspersions on any person, either living or dead. After the last volume of letters was published in 1925, Ahad Ha'am occupied his time by dictating random memories of his early life to his secretary. Friends helped him to organize his thoughts by asking him specific questions to which he supplied answers.

Otherwise, Ahad Ha'am spent his last days visiting friends, receiving guests, and paying a daily visit to the Herzlia High School. During the afternoon when he napped and also at night, the street where he lived was roped off against traffic so it would not disturb his sleep. On Shabbat the Ginzberg household

was crowded with guests, a custom which began in the Odessa days. During the summer months, he vacationed on Mount Carmel, taking refuge from the intense heat of the city. In the winter of 1926 his health took a serious turn for the worse, and he was confined to his house. Ahad Ha'am died quietly in his sleep on the morning of January 2, 1927. He was laid to rest in the Old Cemetery of Tel Aviv, next to the grave of Dr. Max Nordau, Herzl's close associate, and his opponent in the early debates about the Jewish national question.



### CHAPTER III: EMANCIPATION: THE MODERN DILEMMA

In the foregoing chapter, I outlined the major stages in Ahad Ha'am's life, paying particular attention to those forces which shaped his intellectual development and which contributed to his unique formulation of a spiritual Zionism. Ahad Ha'am's life story, however, was not acted out in a vacuum. He lived, in fact, at a time when the political, psychological and ideological stage of Europe was undergoing a complete transformation. Thus, before I discuss his concept of a National Spiritual Center, I will describe, in brief, the wider historical context in which his ideas were fashioned. In the first part of the chapter, I will discuss the dynamic changes which were occurring in Western and Central Europe. I will then turn my sights Eastward, where I will focus on the plight of the Jews who lived under Russian rule. Finally, I will say a word about how the Age of Enlightenment created new choices and new opportunities, both positive and negative, for the Jews of nineteenth-century Europe.

#### I. THE WEST: A CENTURY OF UPHEAVAL AND CHANGE

The period of nearly one hundred years, beginning with the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 and culminating with the massive wave of pogroms that bludgeoned the Jewish communities of Russia in 1881-82, was a watershed in Jewish history. Jewish history, of course, was not bereft of periods of cataclysm. Volcanic eruptions such as the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, and the Chmielnitski massacres in 1648, forced Jews to

adapt to new life configurations. Jews living in the turbulent nineteenth century were swept up in the onslaught of modernity and, like their counterparts in other eras of upheaval, had to reorient themselves to a rapidly changing world.

The French Revolution ushered in the Age of Reason and popularized the notion that human behavior could be rationally explained. This radical new way of thinking led to a reevaluation of the place of Jews within French society. Jews, who were previously regarded as second-class citizens, were granted, on September 28, 1791, full rights of French citizenship. Although true emancipation was, for the time being, only an illusion, the redefinition of the legal status of the Jew caused fissures to appear in the walls of the ghetto, the physical and psychological barrier which, for centuries, had maintained the Jews as a distinct nation, although they dwelled on "foreign" soil. Until this point, the majority of Jews had carried on a separate corporate existence, in charge of their own communal affairs and buffered by the Halacha, the intricate network of Jewish law that regulated the internal workings of the Jewish community.

In 1799, Napoleon came to power and, until his final defeat in 1815, proceeded to alter the territorial and psychological map of Europe. Napoleon's brief but tempestuous reign brought the ghetto walls crashing down and forced the Jews to come to terms with both the perils and the prospects of emancipation. There would be no turning back. Admission into Western society compelled the Jews to grapple with a life situation which asked of them new questions and which demanded a new response.

Napoleon tested the Jews in the crucible of modernity when, in July 1806, he convened an Assembly of 112 Jewish Notables of France and Italy to establish their relationship with the state. Count Louis Mathieu Mole, who represented the Emperor, fired a series of twelve questions at the Jews, which brought Jewish religious tradition head to head with the secular values of the Enlightenment. These questions are instructional because many of them are still troublesome to Jews who live at the interface of secular culture today:

1. Are the Jews permitted to have more than one wife?
2. Does Judaism permit divorce?
3. Can Jews and Christians marry?
4. In the eyes of the Jews are the French brothers or strangers?
5. What behavior does Jewish law prescribe toward French Christians?
6. Do Jews born in France consider France their country? Are they willing to defend it and obey its law?
7. Who names the rabbis?
8. What police jurisdiction do the rabbis exercise over the Jews?
9. Are Jewish electoral forms and police jurisdictions prescribed by Jewish law or merely by custom?
10. Does Jewish law prohibit the Jews from entering the professions?
11. Does Jewish law encourage Jews to practice usury among their own community?
12. Among the Christians?

Although the questions raised the specter of assimilation and made the notables visibly uncomfortable, the Jews answered cautiously and managed to provide answers which satisfied Napoleon's demands for national loyalty. Pleased with his first official encounter with Jewish leaders, Napoleon decided to establish an authoritative institution which would represent the Jews who lived under his control. In February 1807 he summoned a Great Paris Sanhedrin of rabbis and Jewish lay leaders to confirm the answers of the Assembly of Notables. Napoleon

wanted assurances that the Jews no longer comprised a nation within a nation, that Jewish law would no longer conflict with the laws of the state, and that the Jews would live as responsible citizens of France. The Sanhedrin exceeded Napoleon's expectations. Its members renounced their status as a separate nation and pledged undying devotion to France. The pronouncements of the Sanhedrin signaled a turning-point for Jewry. In one stroke the rabbis and laymen abrogated the binding authority of Jewish law, dismantled the corporate structure of the Jewish community, and uprooted the age-old dream of returning to Palestine. The Jews of France bargained that emancipation was the most favorable course to follow.

The Napoleonic era ended with the emperor's crushing defeat at Waterloo in 1815. Under Napoleon, French Jews had made great strides in attaining equal rights before the law. Yet in the rest of Europe-- Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy and Switzerland-- it took a full fifty years before the process of emancipation was complete. European society was not about to change its attitude toward the Jews overnight.

After Napoleon's demise, a mood of conservatism fell upon Europe. The map of the continent was redrawn and rulers turned their attention to rebuilding their war-torn lands. The liberal ideals of the French Revolution were regarded with suspicion. The spirit of social democracy, representative government and similar Enlightenment innovations gave way to patriotic zeal and a sentiment for the traditional values and folk-ways of the pre-revolutionary epoch. The Jews of France continued to make headway in their struggle for equal opportunity, but their

co-religionists to the East had to bide their time until a new revolutionary tide reawakened the sleeping giant of liberalism.

The fire of revolution crested in 1848 when a fresh wave of insurrection spread throughout Central Europe. Many European monarchs were forced to extend civil and political rights to their inhabitants, including the Jews. The next two decades witnessed the unification of Germany, the unification of Italy, and the establishment of the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. By 1874, when Jews were granted full rights under the new Swiss constitution, Jewish emancipation had become an established fact in all of the countries in Central and Western Europe. The Jews of England were equally successful in attaining emancipation, and in 1858, witnessed the seating of the first Jewish representative, Lionel Rothschild, in the House of Commons.

Emancipation in Central and Western Europe had proceeded slowly and unevenly. By 1870, however, Jews had made deep inroads into European civilization. Jews were now attending universities, finding new opportunities in the arts, and engaged in widespread business activities. Legal emancipation, of course, did not put an end to discrimination, and Jews were still excluded from the highest levels of government and society. Nevertheless, the prospect of acceptance and upward mobility had never been greater for the Jew in Europe.

## II. THE EAST: WISPS OF HOPE IN A CAULDRON OF UNCERTAINTY

Ahad Ha'am was born in Skvira, a small Jewish village in Eastern Europe not far from Kiev. The situation of the Jews in Ahad Ha'am's world was uniquely different from that of the Jews



in Western Europe. Most of the Jews in Eastern Europe lived under Russian rule as a result of the partitions of Poland in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The Jews lived a pre-modern existence under the tsars, who were determined to maintain their authority and who ruled with an iron fist.

The majority of Jews lived in a confined area of Western Russia known as the Pale of Settlement. Life in the Pale was hard. There they worked in a variety of trades, eking out modest livings. Unlike their counterparts in the West, Russian Jews maintained their ethnic distinctiveness, spoke Yiddish as their native tongue, and were thoroughly immersed in traditional Jewish culture.

Russian rulers were at odds about what to do with this strange and vast people under their control. They tried different tactics, arbitrarily substituting one unsuccessful policy for another. Alexander I (1801-1825), for example, encouraged Jews to adopt Christianity by extending financial and legal rewards to baptized Jews. Few Jews acceded to this attempt at amalgamation. Alexander's brother Nicholas I (1825-1855) regarded the Jews as foreigners and treated them with severity. In 1827, he issued an edict which conscripted Jewish children (some were taken as early as the age of twelve) into the army for thirty-one years of military service. While in the army, these young recruits were forced to submit to baptism.

In the 1840's, Nicholas initiated a new plan to end Jewish separatism by liquidating the kehillot and by secularizing the traditional Jewish school system. The rationale behind the new scheme was to erode the powerful influence of the Talmud and to



gradually seduce Jews away from the orbit of Jewish culture and tradition. Nicholas' clever attempt to Russify the Jews was a total failure. Jews clung stubbornly to their tradition and the government quickly abandoned its program.

Nicholas died in 1855 during the Crimean War and was succeeded by Alexander II (1855-1881). The Crimean War (1853-1856) was a pivotal point in Russian history. Russia suffered a terrible drubbing in the war, which caused the Russian people to question the efficaciousness of an autocratic regime built on military prowess. The war produced a desire for change and had a liberalizing effect on the government as well as the people. Alexander took a decisive step in 1861 when he liberated Russia's forty-seven million serfs. Other significant reforms followed in the next decade which included a reduction in the length of military service from twenty-five to six years and the modernization of the judicial system.

Alexander's treatment of the Jews was inconsistent. During the early years of his reign, he granted the Jews concessions which forecast a more promising future. Beginning in 1859, the government allowed certain "useful" groups of Jews to live outside the Pale. These included medical professionals, merchants, discharged soldiers and university graduates. Another concession of significance was Alexander's abolition of the cantonment system that was begun by Nicholas. In addition, Jews were permitted to participate in local self-government and, in the southern provinces, some Jews were even appointed to public office.

The second half of Alexander's reign was marked by a retrench-

ment in the tsar's liberal policies. Poland revolted against Russian rule in 1863, and Alexander responded by halting all reforms in their tracks. The Jews were once again regarded with suspicion and were closely watched by the secret police and by paid government informers for signs of disloyalty. By the early 1870's it became apparent that the engines of hate were again beginning to churn. The devastating pogroms of 1881-82 exposed the hollowness of Alexander's earlier concessions and shattered any hope that emancipation could be achieved under the tsars.

### III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF EMANCIPATION: NEW IDEAS AND NEW CHOICES

The nineteenth century was an invigorating time. The world was in flux and no one, including the Jews, was immune to the impact of Western secular culture. Many new forces combined to shape the way of life of one born into the Age of Enlightenment. The nineteenth century witnessed the advent of scientific and industrial revolutions, the rise of investment capitalism, and the emergence of the modern nation state.

Jews in the West, where emancipation was most pronounced, were greatly influenced by the dynamic changes going on around them. Many chose to assimilate and some, desirous of the rewards of secular culture, converted to Christianity. Even those who elected to remain Jews grew more estranged from the tradition of their ancestors. Religion occupied a peripheral place in their lives and many exhibited feelings of Jewish self-hatred or ambivalence. Western Jews stopped speaking Yiddish, demonstrated fierce loyalty to the nations in which they dwelled, and eagerly adopted the customs and mores of the indigenous cultures to which they belonged.

The impact of modernity led to internal changes within Judaism as well. German-Jewish scholars, trained in secular universities, founded the "Wissenschaft des Judentums"-- the scientific study of Judaism-- and began to apply modern critical methods to the investigation of ancient Jewish texts. New branches of Judaism sprung up in Germany, and the most radical among them-- the Reform movement-- introduced bold innovations into the worship service and presented a serious challenge to the Orthodox status quo. In the West, Judaism was undergoing rapid changes both from within and from without. The Jew of Western and Central Europe straddled the fence between tradition and modernity. With one foot in the ghetto and one foot planted firmly in the secular world, a Jew had to ask himself hard questions and make significant choices. There was no refuge from the hypnotic attraction of the modern world.

Emancipation had less of an influence on the Jews of Eastern Europe who lived under the thumb of the tsar. Most Jews resided in shtetlach, tiny villages in the Pale of Settlement where life was organized around the synagogue and traditional Jewish values prevailed. The community, led by the rabbi, regulated every aspect in the life of the Jew, from birth to burial. Yiddish was the language of daily affairs. Jews felt little loyalty to the Russian nation and showed no ambivalence about their identities. In the West Judaism was largely a matter of individual choice. In the East, Judaism was a given and Jews were bonded together by a common destiny.

Nevertheless, despite their geographical isolation and their rootedness in the tradition, Eastern Jews were not devoid of

contact with the ferment of western ideas. The Haskalah, the movement which symbolized the synthesis of general culture and Judaism, caught fire primarily among the Jewish middle class in Eastern Europe. The center of the Jewish Enlightenment was Odessa. Many prominent Hebrew writers congregated in Odessa, where they exchanged ideas, wrote articles and edited journals which carried their views to the rest of the Jewish world. Most of the Maskilim grew up in traditional Jewish families but rejected the parochial religious moorings of their parents. Rather than assimilate, however, they worked to create an ideology which brought Jewish tradition in tandem with modernity.

Ahad Ha'am, who was born into a pious Hasidic family, rejected the cramped intellectual outlook of his upbringing and embraced the Haskalah. Like others in his generation, he stood at a spiritual crossroads and adopted a transitional ideology to sort out the many questions which resulted when traditional Judaism intersected with the values and ideas of the modern world. This was the legacy of emancipation, and Jews in both the East and the West had to struggle to find their individual and collective niche within the changing world order.

## CHAPTER IV: THE DISEASE OF THE SPIRIT

The problems and possibilities created by emancipation motivated many Jewish thinkers, in both the West and the East, to meditate upon the situation of the Jew in the modern world. Unlike many others, however, whose analysis was sophomoric, Ahad Ha'am was particularly well qualified to observe and comment upon the dilemma of the modern Jew. His intellectual acumen, literary virtuosity, and keen understanding of both the Rabbinic and Western minds, made him the perfect candidate to try to reconcile Jewish history and tradition with modern secular thought. As I mentioned in the chapter on biography, Ahad Ha'am never produced a systematic study of the condition of the Jew in modern times. He wrote only short essays, many devoted to topical issues and debates. Nevertheless, his penetrating analysis carried great weight among his readers-- Jews, like himself, who, having rejected a traditional religious perspective, stood at a spiritual and intellectual crossroads.

Although his essays were often flavored with pessimism, Ahad Ha'am did not look upon emancipation as a necessary evil. He was certainly aware of the pitfalls created by emancipation, yet he also believed that emancipation accorded the Jewish people new opportunities that were unavailable prior to the eighteenth century. Ahad Ha'am approached the problem of Jewish life in the modern world not out of a concern for the individual Jew, but out of a concern for the survival of the Jewish people as a whole and, in particular, for the development and perfection of the inner life force of Judaism, which he termed the Jewish national spirit.



Ahad Ha'am believed that the spirit of the Jewish people was diseased, but, he said, the disease did not originate with emancipation. Rather, he attributed the infirmity of the national spirit to the scourge of exile that had infected Jewish life for nearly two millennia. Emancipation, Ahad Ha'am argued, had given the Jewish people a new lease on life. The opportunity existed for the Jewish nation to revive its diseased spirit and set itself, once more, on the road of healthy and normal development. Ahad Ha'am concluded, after exploring the other solutions advocated by Jews in response to emancipation, that the only positive way to ameliorate the syndrome of exile and to restore the spirit of the nation to its healthy state was to establish a National Spiritual Center in Palestine.

A discussion of Ahad Ha'am's remedy, however, must be preceded by a study of his diagnosis of the disease. Although emancipation had created the potential for a cure, Ahad Ha'am observed that it also exacerbated the epidemic of the spirit that plagued the Jewish nation since the dispersion. In particular, he pointed to four areas of concern which contributed to the spiritual plight of Judaism: (1) the continued dispersion of the Jewish people; (2) the fragmentation of the Jewish nation; (3) the weakening of the Jewish national consciousness; and (4) the spiritual decay of Judaism.

#### I. THE DIASPORA: AN UNPLEASANT REALITY THAT WON'T GO AWAY

Ever since the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth in 70 A.D., Jews had been living scattered among the other nations of the earth. For the next two thousand years,



the dream of returning to Zion was never absent from the prayers of Jews. The restoration of the Jewish homeland, however, remained a messianic yearning until the late nineteenth century when, with the creation of the Zionist movement, Jews began to actively campaign for the reestablishment of the Jewish state.

For Ahad Ha'am, the dispersion of the Jewish people, which was the starting point of his analysis, was an unmitigated fact of life. While the political Zionists talked of a complete ingathering of the Jewish masses to Zion, Ahad Ha'am never believed that the majority of the Jews would return to Palestine in the foreseeable future: "The diaspora is a thoroughly evil and bitter thing, but we must and can live in the diaspora, with all its evilness and bitterness. The exodus from the diaspora was and will always be an alluring national hope for 'the end of days'..."<sup>1</sup>

He further maintained that even if it were possible for all the Jews to return to Palestine, common economic sense taught that the land would not be able to sustain them: "And then," he said, "the Jews will again flee their state, running to escape the most terrible enemy-- that not even the concept 'volkerrechtlich'<sup>2</sup> can fight off-- the peril of hunger."<sup>3</sup>

Ahad Ha'am's conviction that most Jews would continue to live in the diaspora caused him no solace. He considered the experience of exile to be the source of the malady which, he believed, had blighted the inner spirit of the Jewish nation. The Jewish people, he insisted, could never have a completely natural existence in the diaspora. "... I did not believe in the possibility of the realization of a complete national program in the diaspora," he wrote in a letter to A. Druyanov,

"and if I thought that our national spirit could be freely developed in the diaspora-- I would not be a Zionist, since you know that the essence of 'my Zionism' is based only upon this assumption."<sup>4</sup> The conclusion that the diaspora was not a positive environment for the healthy development of Jewish culture and values was the primary impetus for Ahad Ha'am's advocacy of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine. It also put him at odds with the Diaspora Nationalists of whom his friend Simon Dubnow was the principal spokesman. The Jewish nation, Dubnow argued, had fared well in the diaspora and did not need the conventional attributes of nationhood-- land and language-- in order to survive and progress. As they had done in the past, the Jewish people would find the resources to preserve its unity and to develop its cultural life by establishing autonomous creative national centers wherever Jews dwelled.<sup>5</sup>

Ahad Ha'am disagreed with Dubnow that a "full and complete national life" could exist in the diaspora in the absence of a fertile, productive center in Palestine which would continue to pump fresh life into the anemic communities of the galut. He shifted the burden of proof to the Diaspora Nationalists. He was convinced that the diaspora would wither away, in the absence of a sustaining life force for the Jewish spirit emanating from Palestine, once the protective shield of the ghetto had broken down. The temptations of secular culture were too strong to guarantee the independent survival of the Jewish nation in exile:

In conclusion, national autonomy as a complete and satisfactory solution has to promise to return our people-- which is dwelling among many different nations, scattered in cities, some here and some

there, like small drops in a big sea-- to its normal condition of development; to give the Jewish people the ability and also the will-power to fully develop its creative powers and to realize its potential in the creation of a unique national culture. In addition, to educate the individual members of the people, from the lowest to the highest ends of the social scale, in its culture and to give them when they reach maturity, sufficient spiritual nourishment and ample opportunity for creative work within the full spectrum of national life, in order that they will neither have the need nor the desire to look elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

Ahad Ha'am harbored an implicit distrust of the diaspora. The terrible pogroms of 1881-82 had hardened his suspicion of the Gentile world and taught him that Jews would always be vulnerable to the whims of the mob. The condition of permanent exile meant that Jews would always "... be dependent upon the good will of the nations among which they dwell as a tiny minority, and the ruling peoples will even then be wary of the development of this 'strange people' living in their midst if it will dare to rise in status beyond a tolerable limit..."<sup>7</sup>

Even more than the danger of physical assault, Ahad Ha'am was alarmed that continued dispersion threatened the national individuality of the Jewish people. He feared that Jewish national distinctiveness, which, up to that point, had been artificially preserved by the defensive structure of the ghetto, would no longer be immune to the lure of alien life.<sup>8</sup>

Ahad Ha'am viewed the diaspora from a dual perspective. From a subjective point of view he held a negative opinion of the diaspora. Life in exile could only mean physical and spiritual deprivation. Anyone who regarded life in dispersion

as a blessing, he wrote, was simply a blind optimist.<sup>9</sup> Yet, in an objective sense, Ahad Ha'am believed that, for a long time to come, Jews were destined to remain scattered in strange lands. The reality of dispersion, which he viewed as a necessary evil, urged him to search for a way to mitigate the cultural isolation of the Jew in exile, and to sustain the unity of the national body, even when its limbs were scattered around the world.

## II. FRAGMENTATION

A second item of fundamental concern to Ahad Ha'am was the atomization of the Jewish people and the dissipation of its creative powers. Ahad Ha'am maintained that a people developed most naturally and that its productive capacity was greatest when the members of a national community were united in form and purpose. He cited the period of the early monarchy, when the tribes of Judah coalesced around strong leaders like David and Solomon, as an example of a time when the forces of the nation were fused into a collective whole, and the people lived a healthy and normal existence.<sup>10</sup> He was convinced that if destiny had not dispersed the Jewish people to the far reaches of the earth, the national culture of the Jews would have attained a high degree of intellectual and moral perfection: "There is no doubt, therefore, that if all these scattered forces would have coalesced and worked together for the cause of our national culture, as in the past, it would now be one of the richest and most unique in the whole world."<sup>11</sup>

Ahad Ha'am was dismayed that so many gifted Jews were devoting their unique talents and skills to the enrichment of other

national cultures. Other Jews, perhaps, swelled with pride when a Jew of genius excelled in the Gentile world or contributed to the cultures of "foreign" nations. "But this 'consolation,'" Ahad Ha'am wrote, "can only increase our heartache, when we see our people exporting and not importing, scattering the sparks of its spirit in every direction, in order to enhance the wealth and glory of its enemies and persecutors, while doing nothing for itself; and its national treasury is not enriched by the many accomplishments of its most talented members."<sup>12</sup>

Ahad Ha'am believed that emancipation had accentuated the problem of fragmentation. Up until the French Revolution, the national solidarity of the Jews was not threatened in the diaspora because Jews lived in spiritual isolation, sheltered by the protective barrier of the ghetto. They developed their own institutions, maintained their contact with Jewish tradition, and lived in strict accordance with Jewish law. The obliteration of the ghetto made the Jews particularly susceptible to the onslaught of foreign culture. With its defenses down, the national characteristics and traditions of the Jewish people would gradually dissipate into the surrounding cultures until the very existence of the people would be at stake.

In the past, Ahad Ha'am argued, the Jewish people had been successful, by means of what he called "competitive imitation", at absorbing the best aspects of foreign cultures with which it came into contact, without disturbing its own essential spirit. Emancipation, however, had placed the Jewish people at a competitive disadvantage. The fragmentation of the nation had so weakened the national spirit that contact with an alien spiritual



force would eventually lead to self-effacement, spiritual enslavement and assimilation:

This cultural current, when it comes in contact with Judaism, destroys Judaism's inner defenses, so that Judaism can no longer live a detached separate existence. The spirit of our people strives for development, seeking to absorb the foundations of the external culture, digest and internalize them, as it has done before in other periods of history. But the conditions of life in the diaspora are not suitable. In our time culture wears the garb, in every place, of the national spirit of the land in which it dwells, and the stranger who approaches it must renounce his identity and assimilate within the dominant spirit. Therefore, Judaism will not be able to develop its identity in the diaspora according to its nature, and when it leaves the walls of the ghetto it will be in danger of losing its independent life, or-- at best-- its national unity: of separating into many Jewish sects, each with a different character and life, as there are countries in which the people of Israel are dispersed.<sup>13</sup>

Ahad Ha'am believed that the individuality of the Jewish people could be perfected solely in Eretz Yisrael, the historic Jewish homeland. Yet, he affirmed Jewish life wherever it existed and was not prepared to abandon the diaspora to extinction. The survival and cultural enrichment of the entire Jewish nation was his concern. Since it was unavoidable, he felt, that most Jews would continue to live in exile, he concluded that only one force could weld the scattered communities of Jewry into a single whole, safeguard Jewish cultural autonomy, and mobilize the continued development of the Jewish spirit. This force was a National Spiritual Center in Palestine. Without it, Ahad Ha'am reasoned, Jewish creative energy would be devoured by the jackal of foreign cultures, and Jewish



communities in the diaspora would become isolated and eventually break away from the national tree.

### III. WITHERING OF THE JEWISH NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

A third area of concern to Ahad Ha'am, related to the problem of fragmentation, was the weakening of the Jewish national consciousness. Ahad Ha'am claimed that a nation's creative power was greatest when the "spice of individualism" was subordinate to the general welfare of the community. The sentiment of national loyalty reached its zenith, he said, in Biblical times, before the destruction of the First Temple, when a collective spirit prevailed over individual self-interest. Biblical man was concerned with the survival of the community in which he lived, not with personal salvation: "What do I live for? For the existence and the perpetuation of the community to which I belong. What do I die for? To make room for new individuals who will renew the community and will not allow it to stagnate and remain forever in one position."<sup>14</sup>

The destruction of the First Temple, Ahad Ha'am argued, eroded the people's faith in the corporate enterprise and sent them looking for a way to explain their suffering. A new ideology emerged which elevated the status of the individual and which spoke of personal reward for individual acts of righteousness. Whereas before, the individual saw himself as an extension of the social body, he now cared about the common good only in so far as he himself participated in it. An ethos of national salvation was replaced by a theology of ego-centrism whose reward was compensation in the next world: "The members

of the present generation were no longer comforted by the goodness which would befall their nation in the end of days, which their eyes would not see. Instead, every individual demanded a personal share of the anticipated general happiness. And religion did not deny them this wish, by making redemption secondary to the resurrection of the dead."<sup>15</sup>

The deep-rooted national consciousness which pervaded Biblical society was further weakened when the political life of the people began to decline. Self-love and personal ambition became the dominant impulse in the national life as it passed through each successive period of migration and persecution. Finally, with the onset of emancipation, Jews had become so individualistic that "... their hearts did not allow them to preserve the fig tree so that others might eat its fruit after they themselves were dead and gone."<sup>16</sup>

The absence of national feeling, said Ahad Ha'am, was especially acute in the West where the demon of narcissism went unbridled. He chided his fellow Jews for misplaced priorities. Whereas others called for the immediate colonization of Palestine or for diplomatic activity aimed at procuring a Jewish state, Ahad Ha'am advocated that Zionists devote their limited resources to arousing the national consciousness of the Jewish people: "It follows from what I said above that our immediate goal should be to revive the hearts, to strengthen the love for the life of the nation, and to intensify the desire for its well-being, until the will of individuals will be awakened, and each will faithfully do his share..."<sup>17</sup> The first step in the national revival, he believed, was not the reclamation of the land, but

the strengthening of the national consciousness through a gradual process of education. Although Ahad Ha'am did not offer a detailed syllabus or curriculum which explained his program of national education, it is clear from his writings that he was proposing a serious, multi-faceted course of study, with the Hebrew language at its core, on the level of a secular Jewish day-school.

#### IV. SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY

A fourth area of vital concern to Ahad Ha'am was the increasing impoverishment of Jewish culture. The desiccation of the national creative well represented a paradox to Ahad Ha'am because, as individuals, Jews excelled in every walk of life and displayed exceptional intellectual and creative genius. Jews were contributing to the cultural store-houses of other nations while letting their own depository run dry:

Among all the civilized nations, our nation is the only one without its own unique 'tools' that are needed for the creation of its cultural 'treasures' and, therefore, it is compelled to use the 'tools' of other nations: their languages, their libraries, houses of study, and so on-- and to enrich the owners of these 'tools' by the fruit of its labor.<sup>18</sup>

The disease of spiritual deprivation cast a pall over the entire Jewish nation. In both the East and the West, Ahad Ha'am asserted, "Everyone sees that the 'threefold basis' of our national life is gradually unravelling: religion is losing its strength, the Hebrew language is becoming extinct, and Hebrew literature has been abandoned; and therefore what is left of the 'national capital' is slowly wasting away..."<sup>19</sup> Although

Jews everywhere were spiritually starved, Jews in the West experienced a different type of undernourishment than Jews in the East. Riding the wave of emancipation, the Jews in Western and Central Europe had succeeded in attaining a wide measure of political freedom. Yet their victory was not without cost. They paid for their ticket of admission into Western society by giving up their spiritual and intellectual freedom. On a spiritual or moral plane, Western Jews, Ahad Ha'am contended, had severed their link with the Jewish people. Intellectually, their subservience to the god of emancipation had prompted the Jewish thinkers of Western Europe to invent an ideology which, in Ahad Ha'am's opinion, was a gross misinterpretation of the ancient Jewish concept of the "Chosen People".

This "alien" gospel which Ahad Ha'am so detested was termed "the mission of Israel among the nations." Its adherents claimed that Judaism, in the modern world, was a religion and that Jews no longer comprised a separate nation. Dispersion, according to this theory, was a normal and desirable condition. The Jewish people were no longer in exile, and the task of Judaism was to enlighten the nations of the world according to the moral precepts of this new messianism.<sup>20</sup> Ahad Ha'am believed that Western Jews had sold their souls for emancipation. He dubbed their condition of moral and intellectual servitude as "inner slavery hiding under the guise of outward freedom."<sup>21</sup>

The Jews of Eastern Europe did not suffer, Ahad Ha'am claimed, from the moral debility endemic to their co-religionists in the West. They were loyal to the Jewish nation and were faithful to the tradition. Their immediate problem was economic

depression and political persecution. Yet, even the Jews of the East were susceptible to spiritual starvation. The old orthodoxy, which at one time had been an expression of the dynamic life force of the people, had become ossified. The written word, which had reached its meridian in the Shulhan Aruch, no longer responded to the demands of life. The literature had long ago lost its purpose and the people which had deemed itself the "people of the book" had become a "slave to the book."<sup>22</sup>

Judaism, Ahad Ha'am concluded, was undergoing a profound spiritual crisis. The permanence of the diaspora, the fragmentation of the Jewish national soul, the weakening of the national sentiment, and the export of Jewish creativity resulted in the sickness and paralysis of the Jewish national spirit, which Ahad Ha'am believed was the inner life force of the Jewish nation. If the national spirit perished the people would die with it. The galut, in Ahad Ha'am's mind, was the overarching symbol of Jewish national decay. The problem of galut is twofold, Ahad Ha'am wrote:

... it is physical and spiritual. On the one hand it restrains the physical life of individual Jews, depriving them of the ability to fight for their existence, in accordance with their strength and in complete freedom, like all other human beings; and on the other hand it stifles, no less, the spiritual life of our entire people, preventing it from safeguarding and developing its national individuality according to its spirit, in complete freedom, like all other peoples.<sup>23</sup>

Ahad Ha'am was determined that the Jewish people would live-- that it would return to the stage of world history and continue

to perfect its national spirit. He believed, however, that the creative power of the Jewish people would only bear fruit in the Land of Israel, where it would recover from the spiritual contamination of the diaspora and lead a healthy existence. "The question of questions in our national life," Ahad Ha'am wrote, "is, therefore: is it possible to find a cure for this ancient disease? Will the Hebrew heart awaken from its depraved state, to once again regain direct contact with the actualities of life, and still remain a Hebrew heart?"<sup>24</sup> Ahad Ha'am believed that the establishment of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine was the elixir that would heal the diseased national spirit.



CHAPTER V: FROM DIAGNOSIS TO CURE: AHAD HA'AM'S  
PATH TO A NATIONAL SPIRITUAL CENTER

The problems generated by emancipation led Ahad Ha'am to an analysis of the situation of the modern Jew in the diaspora, an analysis which resulted in his idea of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine. Before considering exactly what Ahad Ha'am meant by a National Spiritual Center and why he believed it would nurse the Jewish people back to health, however, one must understand his view of Jewish history and inquire into why he eliminated other solutions to what he called "our national problem."

The intellectual tools which Ahad Ha'am brought to his analysis were borrowed from the newly developing fields of biology and social psychology which captured the imagination of Europe in the late 1800's. Ahad Ha'am was not an adherent of one particular school of thought. Nevertheless, his writings are suffused with the scientific jargon of the age and with the revolutionary ideas of thinkers such as Spencer, Darwin, Comte, Renan, and Mill. By applying the theories of nineteenth-century empiricism to the Jewish question, he evolved a secular nationalistic reinterpretation of Jewish history. While his detractors accused him of breaking with Jewish tradition, Ahad Ha'am saw his ideas as the logical outgrowth of the natural evolution of the spirit of the Jewish people. Judaism, he believed, stood at a cross-roads and could react to the rapidly changing times in one of two ways. It could either admit that it had no place in the changing world order and die a contemptible death or it could capitalize on the opportunities produced by emancipation, revive

its creative power, and contribute to the cultural quarry of humankind, as it had done in the past.

# I. THE NATIONAL WILL-TO-LIVE

Ahad Ha'am centered his analysis on the Jewish nation. He conceived of a nation as a distinct biological organism, endowed with its own essential character, which he termed the national spirit. Like a person, a nation is motivated by an instinct of self-preservation, an organic will-to-live, which compels it to preserve and develop its particular identity, to actualize its inner spirit, and to rise to the limits of its potential: "This powerful force dresses and undresses in thousands of different forms in order to disguise itself, but the discerning eye will be able to recognize it through all this, since it is the desire to live and be happy, that nature implanted into every creature's heart, and compels one to always pursue everything that brings life and enjoyment, and to eschew anything which causes destruction or sorrow."<sup>1</sup>

Ahad Ha'am maintained that the national ego follows a prescribed, almost genetic, pattern of development. A nation cannot be diverted from this predetermined biological path, which has its foundation in the nation's past, is regulated and driven on by the nation's will-to-live, and which has its fulfillment in the future. The natural continuum of a nation's growth parallels the three stages in the life of an individual. A nation's childhood is a period of hope for a bright future. Middle age is a time when past and future (experience and expectation) are united in equal proportion. In old age, a time of

decline, a nation remembers its glorious past. Whereas old age is followed by the death of the individual, however, a nation may renew itself and enter once more into the cycle of life and development.<sup>2</sup>

In every stage of a nation's life, Ahad Ha'am argued, the instinct for self-preservation arms a nation with necessary weapons to insure its survival against shifting world currents and with resources to cultivate its distinctiveness. Ahad Ha'am placed great emphasis on a nation's obligation to till its own soil and to work for the perfection of its cultural crop. Each nation is an autonomous unit whose first priority is to create conditions necessary for its complete moral, cultural, and intellectual development. Concomitant to this, a nation must not infringe on the autonomous rights of other nations. Judaism teaches, he said, that:

... an entire nation can also fulfill the commandment 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' in its relationship to other nations, since this commandment does not demand of it to sacrifice its life and its honor for the benefit of other nations. The duty of every nation, like the duty of the individual, is the opposite: to live and develop to its full potential, but this nation is obligated to recognize also the right of other nations to fulfill this duty without interference, and 'patriotism', meaning national egoism, will not allow it to surpass the limits of justice and to fulfill its aspirations through the destruction of other nations.<sup>3</sup>

The will-to-live, according to Ahad Ha'am, is a vital force which serves two primary functions in the life of a nation. First, it impels a nation to employ every means at its disposal to fight against extinction and to guarantee its continued survival in the future. The uncompromising desire of a people

to survive makes it impossible for it to accept half-measures or conditional solutions where extinction is a conceivable alternative. Second, when a people's existence is not under siege, the will-to-live activates a nation's creative energies. Motivated by this life force which emanates from the collective unconscious, a nation adjusts to a healthy normal rhythm of life, seeks to perfect its national identity, and strives for the optimum development of its creative potential.

## II. THE UNFOLDING OF THE JEWISH NATIONAL SPIRIT IN HISTORY

Throughout Jewish history, Ahad Ha'am said, the indelible instinct of survival created the conditions needed for the physical perpetuation of the Jewish nation and for the proliferation of the national spirit. Although the nation's existence was periodically threatened both from without and from within, the will-to-live never failed to manufacture a new rampart which refortified the nation's capacity to survive in each successive period of national crisis. Whereas the physical survival of the nation always charted a steady course, however, the nation's inner creative life fluctuated between periods of vigorous health, stagnation and decay.

Ahad Ha'am divided the history of the Jewish nation into three periods, each characterized by a shift in the nation's political fortunes and by the development of new mechanisms to keep the nation's creative fires burning. The nation experienced its healthiest most productive years during the period of the early monarchy, reaching its apex during the reigns of David and Solomon. Spontaneity and self-reliance were the hall-

mark of the nation during this brief but golden era of inner calm, prosperity, and growth:

Israel, in its youth, when its strength was still vigorous, and many disasters had not yet befallen it, had a healthy and natural national will-to-live, which the people followed without questioning wherever it took them. With wisdom and knowledge, the nation fought for its existence against its external enemies; and at home the Prophets gave it incentive to strengthen its heart and urged it to act, by painting in brilliant and pleasant colors the national happiness which it longed for. This happiness is not in heaven or outside nature, but very close to each person's heart, a happiness which they seek in the present and fight for every day.<sup>4</sup>

The halcyon days of ancient Israel, when the nation occupied itself with the immediate problems of existence and found satisfaction and nourishment in its primal contact with the land, came to an abrupt end with the destruction of the First Temple. The cataclysm of the Babylonian conquest forced the nation to seek a new solution to the problem of existence.

Had Ha'am credited the Pharisees with inventing a strategy which allowed the national spirit to flourish even after the political body had been destroyed. The Pharisees, Ahad Ha'am claimed, were the heirs of the Prophetic tradition. Like the Hebrew Prophets, they realized that the state existed only to provide a framework for the expression of the national spirit. When it became apparent that the walls of Jerusalem might some day be overtaken, the Pharisees began to search for a temporary means to preserve the nation and its spirit after it had been uprooted from its native soil. While the political materialists,



for whom the state was everything, died a bloody death at the hands of the Romans, the Pharisees, led by Yohanan ben Zakkai, moved the scroll of the Law to Yavneh, and made the necessary arrangements to keep the spark of Judaism ignited, despite the demise of the Jewish state:<sup>5</sup>

The religious center gradually shifted from the Temple to synagogues and houses of learning; the 'Song of Songs' and 'Ruth' were replaced by halachic and aggadic collections, and Hebrew became less and less a living language and more and more a scholarly tongue. Thus, the remnant of the 'national capital' was made ready to accompany the people on its way and to nurture its national life in the dark days of the long exile.<sup>6</sup>

The Pharisaic revolution and the destruction of the Second Temple, said Ahad Ha'am, marked the beginning of the second major period of Jewish history. The Pharisees intended the exile to last only for a short time, and created their artificial scaffold in the hope of sustaining the people until the political body would be reconstituted in Palestine. The institution of the ghetto, however, with its superb organizational structure, united the scattered fragments of the nation into a symbolic bond and kept the hopes of the people alive for nearly two thousand years, until emancipation disintegrated the walls of this protective edifice.

The third period of Jewish history-- the crisis of modern life-- resulted in the radical transformation of the life of the nation and the self-effacement of the Jewish people. The conditions of the modern world, Ahad Ha'am claimed, precipitated a national crisis of enormous proportion:



... the last remnant of our 'national capital' is withering away and headed for extinction, and what will be our end? Surely, we want to believe that the will-to-live still breathes in the nation's heart, and that it will eventually find the right answer to this bitter question. Until now, a complete and satisfactory solution has not been found, and although there are many suggestions and many experiments, we are not yet comforted.

Despite bouts of disillusion, however, Ahad Ha'am believed that emancipation equally generated new opportunities for the revival of the creative powers of the nation, which had been torpid for countless generations. "The wheel of life," he wrote in a moment of unflinching optimism, "has transported the spirit of our people through many different points, until it again begins to approach the same healthy and natural condition that it had thousands of years ago."<sup>8</sup>

Ahad Ha'am had faith that if the right conditions prevailed, a new national foundation would be formed out of the molten lava of emancipation. The will-to-live would re-ignite the scattered ashes of the nation, and a Judaism would emerge "... which would have as its aim a center that would aspire toward the unity of the nation and its revival and free development, according to its spirit, founded on universal human values."<sup>9</sup>

### III. NATURAL PROCESS, EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE, AND HISTORIC CONTINUITY

Ahad Ha'am's approach to Jewish history was developmental. He believed that history unfolds according to a grand scheme which proceeds through the instrument of the national will-to-live. His focus was on the behavior and interactions of nations and, therefore, he studied the history of individuals only in-

so-far as they participated in the national drama.

Ahad Ha'am maintained that the will-to-live propelled a nation along a steady and natural course. If conditions were ripe for its development, the national tree would flourish and produce vigorous fruit. But if the tree were planted in alien soil or if it received nutrients which were not conducive to its optimal development, its growth would be stunted and its fruit would wither.

The Jewish national tree, he said, bore its healthiest fruit in ancient times when it lived unfettered in its natural environment, free from internal disease and untroubled by changes in the external climate. During the exilic period the tree continued to live and it occasionally produced magnificent fruit. For the most part, however, growth was retarded and the creative harvest was meager.

Ahad Ha'am listed three specific conditions which must be met if the Jewish national tree were to burgeon once again. First, he believed that development must proceed in graduated steps, synchronous with the natural cycles and progression of life. Therefore, he counseled his disciples to be patient and not to expect miracles: "Do not push too quickly toward the goal as long as the actual conditions for its fulfillment have not been created, and do not belittle the work which is possible at any time, in agreement with prevailing realities, even if it will not bring the Messiah today or tomorrow."<sup>10</sup>

Second, he argued that Jews must affirm their connection with the past. He denied the validity of any changes that were not grounded in the ancient heritage of the Jewish people.

Judaism, he said, had a great history whose values would guide the nation into the future. Therefore, he did not accept a national ideology that viewed the past with shame. Nationalists who had an historical perspective, he said, would agree that "... the future of our nation is... a continuation of the past, and they date the beginning of our national history with the Exodus from Egypt..."<sup>11</sup>

Finally, Ahad Ha'am distrusted anything that was not genuine. "... I hate anything whose life-spirit is not natural," he wrote, "and which exists and sustains itself artificially."<sup>12</sup> Ahad Ha'am's belief in natural progress, historic continuity, and authenticity was consistent with the prevailing scientific spirit of his time. The experience of the Jewish people in the diaspora was, in his mind, unnatural and ahistorical. The return of the heart of the nation to Palestine was the only way, he felt, to reverse the abnormal condition of galut and reintroduce the Jewish nation into the vital current of world history.

#### IV. COMPETING IDEOLOGIES

Ahad Ha'am's idea of a National Spiritual Center was an attempt at a positive solution to the negative problems brought on and exacerbated by the incursion of modernity. He believed wholeheartedly that a center in Palestine was the only way to ensure the survival and growth of the Jewish nation without sacrificing its inner moral and creative force, which he took to be the essence of Judaism. Although Ahad Ha'am's position won many adherents, he was constantly challenged to defend his view of Jewish history against other ideologies, both secular and religious, which offered compelling alternatives to the

demands of the modern world. His critiques of political Zionism, National Autonomy, Assimilationism, religious orthodoxy, and Reform Judaism filled many of his essays and represented an impressive display of his powers of disputation.

Ahad Ha'am took aim at many opponents, but his most bitter and well-publicized battles were fought with Theodor Herzl and later with the political Zionists. On the surface, the differences between Ahad Ha'am and Herzl were subtle, falling into the categories of timing and nuance. Yet, on a deeper level, the gulf separating their two schools of thought was as wide as the chasm between the Eastern and Western Jew. At variance were two entirely different views about Jewish history, religion, culture, and what it meant to be a Zionist.

Political Zionism, Ahad Ha'am argued, was essentially a product of the mind of the Western Jew, who lived at the margin of two cultures-- Jewish and European. Emancipated but not fully accepted into Western society, the Jew of Western and Central Europe lived in a state of spiritual angst:

In the West, in the lands of emancipation, where the material condition is not so bad, but their moral trouble is severe, they want to enjoy their rights in full, and they cannot; they desire to be accepted by the people of the country where they live and to participate in its social life-- but they are kept at arm's length; they wish for love and friendship-- and meet with scornful and hateful stares from all sides...<sup>13</sup>

The Western Jew, however, having been reared in an assimilated home, was not cognizant of his disease. He knew little of the Jewish religion, did not speak Hebrew, was devoid of Jewish national consciousness and had forsaken his attachment

to Zion. The significant problem of his existence was anti-Semitism and, consequently, His Zionism was built upon a desire to end the material suffering of the Jews by establishing a political place of refuge:

'The political Zionists', most of whom were drawn to the camp not out of a deep yearning for the existence and development of Jewish nationality, but out of a desire to rid themselves of external troubles by the establishment of a secure 'place of refuge' for our people-- their Zionism is linked solely to that objective and without it, it is nothing but an empty phrase.<sup>14</sup>

Herzl came to Zionism, Ahad Ha'am claimed, for negative reasons. For Herzl, political normalcy was the chief ideal-- the Jews must have a state like other states. He was not concerned with the moral development of Judaism, but rather with the physical anguish of individual Jews. The revival of Hebrew culture was of little import to him, and Ahad Ha'am reprimanded him for paying scant attention to matters of language, literature, and education at the first Zionist Congress in 1897.<sup>15</sup>

Political Zionism was distasteful to Ahad Ha'am, not because he opposed the idea of statehood (that, he said, was a legitimate goal for the distant future), but because he believed that the Jewish state must rest upon Jewish values, consonant with our ancient heritage. Zion, he said, must first be a seedbed for the proliferation of our national culture. The principles of evolution indicated that this would take a long time. A new cultural framework would be built layer upon layer, the result of slow, painstaking work. A state would come later, a natural product of the process of national resuscitation.



For Ahad Ha'am, the true values of Zionism were embodied in the program of Hibbat Zion (Lovers of Zion), a movement which had its chrysalis in the East and for whom Ahad Ha'am was the dominant ideological voice. In an article written in the aftermath of the Basle congress, Ahad Ha'am outlined the pertinent differences between the two strains of Zionist thought:

In sum, 'Hibbat Zion' no less than 'Zionism', wants a Jewish state, and believes in the possibility of its creation in the future; but while 'Zionism' looks to it to be a remedy for poverty, complete tranquility and national glory, 'Hibbat Zion' knows that the state cannot fulfill these expectations until 'universal righteousness will govern the lives of the peoples and states,' and only desires that the state will be 'a secure place of refuge' for Judaism and the cultural bond of national unity. Zionism begins its task with political propaganda, and Hibbat Zion with national culture, which is the only vehicle by which the state will be able to be established in a way which is desirable and beneficial for the people's spirit.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to differing with Herzl on philosophy and goals, Ahad Ha'am accused the political Zionists of impracticality, false messianism, and self-delusion. Herzl's analysis, he charged, lacked sophistication and realism. He particularly scoffed at Herzl's promise to carry out his mission in a short time. Furthermore, it was an illusion to believe, as Herzl did, that, once a state was established, millions of Jews would come flocking back to it. Palestine was simply not equipped to support mass immigration. Finally, a Jewish state not fortified by the values of national culture, would be nothing but a plaything in the hands of larger nations:

This tiny state, which would be like a 'toy in the hands of its powerful neighbors and which



would exist only by diplomatic schemes and constant submission to the favored of fortune,' would not be able to fill its soul with national pride; and the national culture, which is the source of its glory, would not be implanted in the state and be the motive force of its life.<sup>17</sup>

Although he disagreed with Herzl's policies, Ahad Ha'am conceded that Herzl was a born leader whose charisma aroused even the heartbeats of many followers of Hibbat Zion. Nevertheless, he ultimately believed that the vision of the political Zionists was misguided and, if allowed to persist, would eventually lead the Jewish people astray from the slow nurturing of its inner spirit which, he said, was the best way to preserve the distinctiveness of the national body and guarantee its survival in the future.

Ahad Ha'am's opposition to the Diaspora Nationalists was treated in the last chapter. To briefly reiterate, a fine line separated Dubnow and Ahad Ha'am but, on matters of principle, neither one was willing to compromise. In theory, both Ahad Ha'am and Dubnow were concerned with the future survival and qualitative development of Jewish life in the diaspora, and both listed cultural work as their highest priority. Whereas Dubnow believed, however, that the Jewish people could develop their national individuality in the diaspora, Ahad Ha'am argued that the possibilities of a full national life for Jews in the diaspora were limited. The Jewish spirit would not live a healthy life in the diaspora, he said, without the establishment of a national center in Palestine. Anything less would be a Sisyphean task.<sup>18</sup> A second point of contention between Ahad

Ha'am and Dubnow was the issue of the place of Yiddish in the Jewish cultural revival. Dubnow believed that, although Hebrew was the natural Jewish language, there was no realistic hope that it could ever become the living and daily spoken language in the diaspora. Furthermore, Yiddish had won a fond place in the heart of the Jewish nation and had become a legitimate medium of Jewish cultural expression. Because Yiddish was already used by millions of Jews in their daily affairs, and because it was a distinctive creation of the Jewish national spirit, it had become a formidable vehicle for Jewish survival in exile. To abandon Yiddish at such an uncertain juncture in Jewish history would lead to the instantaneous disintegration of Jewish national life in the diaspora, with or without the influence of a spiritual center in Palestine. Ahad Ha'am, who was an ardent Hebraist, regarded Yiddish as an ignoble language, not worthy of the great cultural heritage of the Jewish people. "I won't deny," he wrote, "that I see in the victory of Yiddish the greatest danger to our Judaism. If, indeed, the existence of our people is dependent on this victory, then-- forgive me for what I am about to say-- I am ready to relinquish its existence."<sup>19</sup> Ahad Ha'am would not yield on the question of language. Yiddish, he believed, was an impoverished tongue and was of no consequence in the national revival.

Ahad Ha'am had no patience with those Jews who espoused an ideology of assimilation. Assimilation was not an intellectual option for him from either an objective or subjective standpoint. Objectively, he believed that even those Jews who actively pursued assimilation would meet resistance from chauvinistic

nationalists in their host countries who feared the contamination of their race and culture by foreign "toxins" in their midst. Nevertheless, he understood that some Jews would make every effort to lose their identity and, in typical sardonic fashion, he wished them well. If "there is no longer any hope for Israel," he wrote, "and its destruction is imminent, it is better that we accelerate its end by our own hands than sit and wait until it will come of its own accord, after a slow and agonizing death. The one who is able to assimilate immediately-- good for him, and whoever cannot will do all he can so that his children will assimilate."<sup>20</sup> Subjectively, Ahad Ha'am would not countenance assimilation because he did not understand how one could alter one's essential nature. In regard to the individual, Ahad Ha'am never openly stated that Judaism was genetically ordained, perhaps because the scientific terminology (especially in Hebrew) had not yet been invented to express this idea, but in the case of the national organism, he believed that Judaism was a function of biological destiny, not of personal choice. The assimilationists or any other ideology, he said, which endangered the existence of the national body would come into conflict with a much more stubborn and unrelenting force: "In the depths of the national spirit both met with tremendous opposition from 'the guardian of Israel,' which 'neither sleeps nor slumbers': the national will-to-live which acts instinctively."<sup>21</sup>

Ahad Ha'am used the same methodology to critique religious ideologies which contested his theory of natural nationalism as he did to dispose of rival secular ideologies; that is, he

first repudiated the extremes, and then claimed the middle ground, which he believed was in harmony with the laws of nature and the pulse of the Jewish nation. Ahad Ha'am found fault with both the Orthodox and Reform communities, and rejected both religious options as adequate solutions for the revival of Jewish life.

In general, Ahad Ha'am argued that religion had outlived its purpose as an instrument of Jewish creative expression. Religion was created at a time when the Jewish nation had lost its geographical and political basis as a temporary means to sustain the people in exile. Ahad Ha'am emphasized that religion was a product of the Hebrew national spirit. The reverse, he said, was not true.<sup>22</sup> For nearly two thousand years, the religious terrain yielded rich harvests, while other fields of Jewish cultural genius lay fallow. The religious crop produced monumental literary works such as the Talmud and the Shulhan Aruch. Ahad Ha'am praised these books as being testimony to the national creative power in times of adversity, and said that they were well-suited to the conditions and needs of the generations which produced them. Nonetheless, Ahad Ha'am claimed that the Shulhan Aruch was outmoded, and he stressed that his generation would not have produced it if it did not already exist.<sup>23</sup>

As fruit of our national culture, Ahad Ha'am believed that the Bible, Talmud and Shulhan Aruch must be studied and treasured. Religion, however, was only one form of culture. In the past, the national creative power had expressed itself in a primarily religious culture but, with the advent of emancipation, the line of spiritual development had reached a new pla-

teau.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Ahad Ha'am's positivist orientation, which taught him to rely on systematic experience rather than metaphysical speculation, induced him to minimize the role that religion would play in the future life of the Jewish nation. Traditional Judaism, he charged, was a spent force, no longer suited to the spirit of the age. Ahad Ha'am's positivism and his rejection of supernaturalism led him to conclude that the will-to-live would, of necessity, express itself in a new, as yet undetermined form in the future.

Ahad Ha'am similarly castigated the religious reformers of Western Europe for trying to change the spirit of Judaism, undermine its historical foundation, and sever the connection with the Jewish nation. He firmly believed in the natural development of religion, and was opposed to artificial innovation:

התקן הוא דבר

מלאכותי הנעשה לעיתים קרובות בזמן מוגבל על ידי אנשים פרטיים  
ברצונם הטוב להפחית רצויה להם והתפתחות היא דבר  
הנעשה באופן בלתי מודע לאט לאט על ידי מהלך  
החיים הכלליים בלי כוונת מקור רק מסבות מניחות.

Reform is an artificial thing, done outwardly, within a prescribed time, by certain individuals of their own initiative, for an end which is beneficial to them; but development is a natural thing, done unconsciously, gradually, in the course of life's normal progression, only by reason of necessity, without someone directing it.<sup>25</sup>

Ahad Ha'am was especially critical of the Wissenschaft des Judentums, the scientific study of Jewish history and literature. The movement, he felt, was lacking in originality and devoid of national sentiment. "'Jewish Science' was not created," he said, "by a national need, but by other incidental and temporary im-



pulses, most of which were aimed at the severing of the national bond, not only between the past and the future, but also between the scattered units of the nation in the present."<sup>26</sup> Ahad Ha'am believed that Wissenschaft des Judentums was an example of the mistaken priorities of Reform. It would fail to free the Jewish spirit from its moral enslavement, he said, and would become nothing more than "a memorial tablet to our dead spiritual activity."

Ahad Ha'am maintained that both Orthodoxy and Reform were guilty of accentuating religion at a time when religion was losing ground. He was particularly bothered by the shift of the center of Judaism from the house of study to the synagogue.

Prayer was made the essence and the study of Torah subordinate to it, but the heart of the nation was always in the house of study, and from there it drew the vital strength which stood it in good stead to overcome all obstacles and persecutions. And if we wish to exist also in the future we have to return the 'center' to its former place-- to the house of study-- to which will stream all who are thirsty for the words of Judaism and will be able to quench their thirst.<sup>27</sup>

The first phase of the national revival, Ahad Ha'am submitted, must be a complete program of national education. Religion, in all its varieties, would have little affect on the heart of the modern Jew, and could not be counted on to provide answers to the challenging questions of modernity.

None of the ideologies, Ahad Ha'am asserted, which had taken shape in the diaspora would be able "to restore the power of free development to the Hebrew heart." Assimilation was synonymous with national extinction, political Zionism was narrow in



its vision and unrealistic in its expectations, and National  
Autonomy was incapable of succeeding without a lifeline to  
Zion. Traditional Judaism had run out of steam and become cal-  
cified, and Reform was artificial and separatist. The national  
ethic, the prime constituent of Jewish history and tradition,  
was the only authentic solution, he contended, to the formida-  
ble problems of modernity. Only when the will-to-live was re-  
rooted in Palestine would the withered buds of Hebrew culture  
blossom once more.

## CHAPTER VI: THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL CENTER: THE CURE

## I. INTRODUCTION

The forces which shaped Ahad Ha'am's thinking-- his positivism, his deep attachment to Jewish tradition and values, his love of the Jewish people and his strong nationalist instinct-- led him to formulate, in response to the changing conditions of modern life, perhaps the most original idea to emanate from the well-spring of Zionist thinking: the creation of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine. Even though Ahad Ha'am was the principal exponent of this idea, he himself credited Dr. Leon Pinsker, the leader of the Hibbat Zion movement and the author of Auto-Emancipation, with being the first to coin the expression "National Spiritual Center". In an essay written just after Pinsker's death ("Dr. Pinsker and His Pamphlet", 1892), Ahad Ha'am explained that Pinsker conceived the idea late in life, although he never committed it to paper. Ahad Ha'am, however, introduced the idea in print by quoting Pinsker:

In his last days, he (Pinsker) came to the conclusion, and even said so explicitly to some of his acquaintances (the author among them), that the Land of Israel is not 'a land fit to be for us a safe place of refuge', because the political situation and the policies of the other nations of the world will always stand in the way of this objective. Nevertheless, his eight years of work for the settlement of the Land of Israel were not in vain. And even though he concluded that it would not succeed in being a safe shelter, he did not advise, as he did in the past, to totally abandon it and take our 'holy of holies' with us to some new chosen country. 'Despite all of this,' said the departed, 'we have to support and enlarge, as much as possible, the settlement in the Land of Israel. In Eretz Yisrael we can and should build for ourselves a National Spiritual Center.'"<sup>1</sup>

Pinsker, of course, did not live to develop this idea, and one can only speculate if he would have elaborated on it further had he lived longer. The true proponent of a National Spiritual Center was Ahad Ha'am. Whether or not he coined the phrase is academic. He was the one who gave the idea substance and who was justly credited as the architect of the movement for a spiritual Zionism.

Ahad Ha'am concluded early in his career that neither the ghetto nor the road of emancipation were viable solutions to the problem of modernity. Any plan which did not account for the healthy revival of the Hebrew spirit would lead the Jewish people down the path of extinction. His proposal, he believed, was the only means to reverse the moral and cultural malaise that had stifled the development of the Jewish nation in exile. The National Spiritual Center would reestablish the conditions for the national heart to beat freely without artificial stimulant. In the article "Dr. Pinsker and His Pamphlet", Ahad Ha'am provided an idealized glimpse of what the future center might look like:

עד שלבסוף נעמוד דורות אחדים.  
השיגה את תכלית הנצח: בראש בראי. ברכו לארץ ודברים  
לחיות דורות ואנשים חמים על כל העם ומאחד ומקשר את כל  
העם: ברכו על תורה ומצוות על לשון וספר על עבודת התורה  
והדעות הנכונות. במועצות אלה על עם ישראל כמו שהיה  
צריך להיות.

Until, at last, after a few generations it (Hove-vei Zion) achieved its sought after objective: it created in the Land of Israel a 'National Spiritual Center' for Judaism, loved by the whole people and the cementing force of the people; a center of Torah and learning, of language and literature, of physical work and spiritual purification-- a true 'miniature' of the people of Israel as it should have been...<sup>2</sup>

The term "National Spiritual Center", or variations of it, appeared frequently in Ahad Ha'am's essays throughout his literary career. Yet, nowhere did he ever give a systematic treatise in which he explained this concept in all its shades of meaning. Taken individually, every essay, in which he explored the issue or some aspect of it, seems disappointingly incomplete. The reader, frustrated by his often enigmatic prose, yearns to know more. What exactly, for example, did he mean by the word "ru-ach"? What would the center look like? Precisely how would he implement the Hebrew revival about which he spoke with such passion? What would be the relationship between the Spiritual Center and the Jewish State? Were they one and the same?

Questions like these puzzled his readers at the turn of the century and are no less puzzling today. Yet, even though he never presented a coherent dissertation on the National Spiritual Center, I believe that it is possible to reconstruct this idea, with some degree of success, from his diverse body of writings. Even if one can satisfactorily piece together Ahad Ha'am's concept of a National Spiritual Center, however, the question still remains: Why didn't Ahad Ha'am himself ever present a full and cohesive analysis of this idea? One answer is that the idea was self-evident and that it simply never occurred to him that further illumination was needed. This explanation, though, is not adequate when one considers that Ahad Ha'am was especially sensitive when his ideas were jarred out of context or misinterpreted.

Another explanation, and one toward which I incline, is that Ahad Ha'am was being purposefully ambiguous. His writings were,

in a sense, a "Guide for the Perplexed" of his time. He wrote for the Jew who, like himself, was a product of two worlds-- the world of the yeshiva and the world of modern secular culture. His articles tried to supply an answer to those who wished to be both modern and Jewish, but who could no longer believe in the power of traditional religion.

By all accounts, Ahad Ha'am was an agnostic, although he never admitted as much. In the world in which he lived, outright skepticism about the traditional God of Sinai would have been construed as heresy. Ahad Ha'am was not willing to go this far, so he cloaked his agnosticism in codewords and symbolic language. Yet the evidence for his agnosticism is clear: his break with Hasidism, the marked positivist leanings of his essays, and the testimony of those who knew him (Leon Simon states in his biography that Ahad Ha'am became an agnostic)<sup>3</sup> reveal that he no longer believed in the God of his father.

In his effort to steer the middle course-- to find a way to embrace modernity without severing his roots to his heritage-- Ahad Ha'am had to find a way to synthesize the two words. The result was a secular reinterpretation of Jewish history, a spiritual nationalism in which the God of Sinai was supplanted by an historical force-- a force which gave rise to a generative impulse which he called the national spirit, which, implanted within the national soul, guided the Jewish people on its journey throughout history.<sup>4</sup>

Ahad Ha'am, therefore, postulated a positive solution (the revitalization of the Jewish national spirit in Palestine) to a negative problem (the degeneration of the Jewish nation in the

diaspora). Zionism, he believed, must develop from the inner Jewish life, which he termed the life of the spirit, not in response to external pressures such as anti-Semitism or economic calamity. The Jewish people would survive only if it redeveloped its national life in its historic homeland: "... true national life and true inner resolve will be created only by an awakening from within, by the total development of the national consciousness in the heart of the people: the recognition of its historical identity and its past development, the awareness of its unity, despite its dispersion in the present, by one spirit that gives it life, and an awareness of its future mission..."<sup>5</sup>

My purpose in the remainder of this chapter is to present a detailed discussion of Ahad Ha'am's concept of a National Spiritual Center in a way which reveals the consistency and coherence of his thinking. As I stated above, Ahad Ha'am refrained, deliberately or otherwise, from giving his readers a systematic account of this idea. Nevertheless, I believe that it is possible to reconstruct a more fully developed picture of Ahad Ha'am's vision of a National Spiritual Center from his letters and writings. My discussion is organized into three major sections, each exploring one layer of his three-tiered epithet. The first part will discuss the "National" aspect of the center, the second will focus on the word "Center", and the third will examine the meaning of the nebulous term "Ruach" (which I have rendered as spirit) and its two primary components in Ahad Ha'am's eyes-- the cultural component of spirit and the ethical component of spirit. The chapter ends with a section



describing Ahad Ha'am's estimation of the status of the National Spiritual Center shortly before his death.

## II. THE "NATIONAL" ASPECT OF THE CENTER

Ahad Ha'am conceived of the Jewish people as a single organism which, in a biological sense, was carried from generation to generation by its will-to-live-- that primal mechanism of survival which both sustained the nation and created new opportunities for the development of its spirit. In Biblical times, he said, when the Jewish people lived in its healthiest, most natural state, the individual Jew subordinated his personal ambitions to the greater goals of the nation. Judaism, he believed, was synonymous with the inner life of the nation and, therefore, it was the survival and development of the national body, and not of the individual, with which he was primarily concerned. The entire purpose of the National Spiritual Center was to insure the continued survival of the Jewish people as a whole and to counter the alarming trend toward atomization that threatened to break the national organism into isolated fragments. For this reason, Ahad Ha'am emphasized time and again that a spiritual center could be established only in Palestine, the birthplace of the Jewish nation. Palestine, he maintained, was the only land which was an organic link to ancient Israel and, in turn, was the only land which could provide the sustenance for the revival of the Hebrew spirit. Palestine was the physical and spiritual meeting-point between the Jewish past and the Jewish future. The new national structure must rest both literally and symbolically on the foundation of the past,

from which it will draw nourishment for its continued growth and development into the future.

The decision of the Sixth Zionist Congress (Basle, 1903) to explore the possibility of setting up an autonomous Jewish settlement in East Africa was anathema to Ahad Ha'am. He took issue with the territorialists who maintained that the essential work of Zionism was to found a place of refuge, wherever it may be, for starving and oppressed Jews. Ahad Ha'am did not discount the necessity of relieving the material misery of Jews. Yet, in his mind, the purpose of the resettlement of Palestine and the central goal of Zionism was the spiritual revitalization of the Jewish nation.<sup>6</sup> Palestine, he said, was never intended as a remedy for the material woes of individual Jews. Any movement which concentrated its energies on finding a haven for distressed Jews had forfeited the right to call itself Zionist: "Go you to Africa with brave words, with Congresses, and paeans of victory," he wrote to those who supported the Uganda scheme, "but lay down the flag of Zionism, because it is no longer yours. We will take it up and carry it forward with what strength is left to us, quietly and unostentatiously, without trumpets and decorations; and in the fulness of time we shall see who has brought lasting salvation to our people."<sup>7</sup> (Emphasis in the original).

In contrast to other nationalisms which emphasized the acquisition of wealth, power, and territory, Ahad Ha'am preached a nationalism of the spirit. The national idea, as Ahad Ha'am understood it, had its source in the Bible and, in particular, in the teachings of the Hebrew Prophets. Like the Prophets,

Ahad Ha'am stressed the pre-eminence of a nation's spiritual life over physical force. His idea of a National Spiritual Center was not intended as an antithesis to the principles of political Zionism, but rather as a foundation to the political ideal. In contrast to Herzl who underlined the establishment of a political state as the main objective of Zionism, Ahad Ha'am maintained that political sovereignty was a desirable goal only if the state were supported by the internal skeleton of national culture, which must logically precede the state in the order of development. A Jewish state must reflect the national character of the Jewish People. The political Zionists, Ahad Ha'am argued, were concerned only with the narrow goal of finding a political shelter where individual Jews would be protected from the torment of anti-Semitism. He was most concerned with recasting Zion as a haven for the creative revival of Judaism. A state which rested on the national ideal would follow in due course.

The Jewish nation had persisted, he reasoned, because in its infancy, the Prophets taught the people to venerate spiritual power and not to worship physical strength. Nations which chose the high road of conquest and dominion had long ago passed from the stage of History. Judaism would continue to survive, Ahad Ha'am argued, if the spiritual ideal remained the governing principle of its national life. "But a political ideal," he wrote, "which does not rest on the national culture is apt to seduce us from our loyalty to spiritual greatness, and to beget in us a tendency to find the path of glory in the attainment of material power and political dominion, thus breaking the thread

that unites us with the past, and undermining our historical basis."<sup>8</sup>

Even in his later years, when the rift between himself and the political Zionists had been reduced, Ahad Ha'am still emphasized that statehood must be undergirded by the national spirit:

When I look back now at that whole period which began with the First Congress, I don't find a reason to renounce what I said then and have repeated countless times. I know, of course, that many among us, perhaps the majority, honestly believe, that the stream of thought against which I fought has been victorious in the end, and they point to known external incidents that happened in the last few years, which seem to confirm this belief. It still seems to me that the truth is the opposite: that the political victories which Zionism won in the last few years attest to the view that neither a 'charter' nor a 'declaration' (or whatever other name you will call those paper victories) will bring us the 'redemption' unless it has a deep foundation in the spirit of the people.<sup>9</sup>

Ahad Ha'am believed that the national idea, in its widest sense, must buttress the political infrastructure. The nation would face almost certain destruction if the political experiment failed without a revitalized national spirit to take its place. Even if the political ideal succeeded, he warned, Judaism would remain in grave danger because no force would exist to unify the scattered members of the nation who were rapidly assimilating into foreign cultures.<sup>10</sup> A state which was not steeped in the national spirit would be of little help in the war against the alien forces which were consuming Jewish life in the diaspora.

### III. CENTER AND CIRCUMFERENCE

Fifteen years after he first posited the idea of a National Spiritual Center in the article "Dr. Pinsker and His Pamphlet", Ahad Ha'am wrote an essay called "Words and Concepts" in which he was determined to clear up any misunderstanding about his use of the words "center" and "spiritual". Apparently, his expression "Merkaz Haruchani" had been the subject of a great deal of controversy, and he wanted to set the record straight. Ahad Ha'am was both amused and annoyed that "Merkaz Haruchani", which he had taken to be easily understood was the source of so much confusion and debate among his readers. After pondering the psychological reasons why his words were often misinterpreted, Ahad Ha'am addressed himself to the phrase in question.

He first took up the meaning of "center". In his conception, a center had relevance only in relation to its circumference. Palestine, therefore, was important only in relation to the dispersed Jewish communities in the diaspora which, like the earth in relation to the sun, looked to it for guidance, inspiration and spiritual sustenance. Ahad Ha'am specified that a circumference may have many centers, each of which exerts a specific influence on the periphery. For example, he said, the circumference may look to one center for artistic nourishment, another center for its economic well-being, and yet a third center for its spiritual vitality. A national center in Palestine, he stressed, would concern itself only with the spiritual needs of Jews living in the diaspora. It would sustain the national sentiment by infusing the scattered atoms of Jewry with a continuous flow of creative energy. Thus the primary purpose



of the center, he claimed, would be to engender a common feeling of identity among Jews dispersed throughout the countries of the world:

„מרכז לאימ" — שמע מינה, שיש היקף לאומי, אשר, ככל היקף, גדול הוא הריבה מן המרכז. כלומר, שבעל הדברים רואה את עמו גם לעתיד מסוור רובו בכל הארצות, אך לא עוד מסורד לנקודות נקודות בלי קשר ביניהן, לפי ש אחת הנקודות — זו שבארץ ישראל — עתידה להיות מרכז לכולן ולחברן יחד להיקף אחד שלם. כל האברים המפורדים של גוף האומה, כשירגישו בדפיקת ה„לב" הלאומי, שטב לחייה במקום חיותו, ישובו גם הם להתקרב אחד אל אחד מסביב ללב ולקבל לתוכם ברצון את ה„דם" החי השוטף ממנו.

'A centre of our nationality' implies that there is a national circumference, which, like every circumference, is much larger than the centre. 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 into a number of dis-connected parts, because one part-- the one in Palestine-- will be a centre for them all and make them all into a single, complete circumference. When all the scattered limbs of the national body feel the beating of the national 'heart', restored to life in its 'native home', they too will once again draw near to one another and welcome the inrush of living 'blood' that flows from the heart.<sup>11</sup> (Emphasis in the original)

The Jewish national tree, according to Ahad Ha'am, would continue to have branches in the diaspora. The roots, however, would be planted in Palestine. From the center would flow the sap of the national culture, revitalized by the soil of the ancient homeland, to the outer limbs of the tree, preserving their unity and renewing their Jewishness. Ahad Ha'am admitted that it would take time before Palestine became the center which he envisaged. In a letter to an anonymous source, he wrote:

The Land of Israel will become our spiritual center only then, when the Jews will comprise a majority of its inhabitants, and most of the land will be in their possession. Then, obviously, they will control all the cultural institutions



in the land; and while imprinting their national spirit upon all streams of life, they will create that new form of our national being which we thirst for so much, and which we search for in vain in the diaspora. One cannot doubt the influence of such a center on the Jewish dispersion: this is made certain because of the reverence that the people in every generation have had for everything emanating from the Land of Israel.<sup>12</sup>

#### IV. RUACH

In the same article in which Ahad Ha'am expounded on the meaning of the word "center", he ventured to lend clarity to the meaning of the epithet "spiritual". Ahad Ha'am confessed that when he first used the phrase "a spiritual center of our nationality," he expected a storm to break out among the ranks of Hoveve Zion over his use of the word "center". Implicit in the term "center" was the notion that the majority of Jews would continue to reside in lands outside of Palestine, a thought which, he reasoned, would arouse the anger of those who campaigned for a complete ingathering of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. Ahad Ha'am was surprised, therefore, when most of the attention was drawn to "spiritual", a word whose meaning he took for granted.

Writing in "Words and Concepts", Ahad Ha'am explained that three years earlier, after he had published an article (he did not mention the name) criticizing the favorable propaganda that was then circulating about the condition of the Palestinian colonies, he was attacked in a long article, written by a political Zionist, which appeared serially in the same journal.<sup>13</sup> His critic said that, by placing all the emphasis on "spiritual", Ahad Ha'am had lost touch with reality, and had ignored the more

concrete material concerns of the life of the center, such as commerce, industry, agriculture, education and the like. A settlement, his opponent argued, could not attend to spiritual needs alone to the neglect of food, shelter, clothing and life's other necessities. Material factors are of utmost importance and, therefore, what we must establish in Palestine is both an economic and spiritual center.

Ahad Ha'am wasted little time in dismantling his detractor's argument. It is one of life's axioms, he quipped, that each geographic locale must attend to its own practical affairs, and that one center cannot provide the economic maintenance for communities outside of its territorial sphere of influence. For example, he said, Warsaw cannot be an economic center for the millions of Poles scattered around the world. They must look to their immediate environment for their material welfare. Furthermore, he argued, his use of the word "spiritual" did not negate the establishment of a healthy economic system in Palestine. It is patently obvious that a people must concern itself with bread-and-butter issues, and he assumed that in Palestine this would be the case as well. Consequently, he said, he had no reason to append the word "economic" onto "National Spiritual Center" because the material apparatus in Eretz Yisrael would grow naturally in response to the dictates of life.<sup>14</sup>

Ahad Ha'am claimed that he specifically chose the word "spiritual" to characterize the relationship between Palestine and the diaspora. Whereas in the economic sphere diaspora communities would have to fend for themselves, Ahad Ha'am believed

that a revitalized national center in Palestine would provide spiritual sustenance to Jews living in foreign lands, both as an example and as an exporter of Jewish culture and enlightenment:

„רוחני“ — ללמדן, שהיחס הזה של מרכז והיקף בין ארץ ישראל וארצות הגולה יהיה מוגבל בהכרח רק בחיי-הרוח: ההשפעה של ה„מרכז“ תחזק את ההכרה הלאומית בגולה, תטהר את הרוחות משפלות הגלות ותקלא את החיים הרוחניים תוכן לאומי אמתי וטבעי, לא כאותו התוכן המלאכותי, שאנו ממלאים בו את הריקות עכשיו, אבל מעבר לגבול הרוח, בכל אותם היחסים האיקונומיים והמדיניים, התלויים קודם כל בתנאי המקום וההסביבה הקרובה, שהיא היוצרת אותם „בצלמה“.

וכל כמה שיתלהב דמיונו לא נוכל לצייר לנו, איך תצא השפעה איקונומית ומדינית מארץ-ישראל לכל היקף הגולה, שכדור הארץ מדרו, בכמות ואיכות הדרושות בשביל שנהיה רשאים לאמור, מבלי לחטוא למירוש המלות: — הרי זו „מרכז“ לזה גם בדברים אלה.

'Spiritual' means that this relation of centre and circumference between Palestine and the lands of the diaspora will of necessity be limited to the spiritual side of life. The influence of the centre will strengthen the Jewish national consciousness in the diaspora; it will restore our independence of mind and self-respect; it will give to our Judaism a national content which will be genuine and natural, unlike the substitutes with which we now try to fill the void. But all this cannot apply outside the spiritual side of life, in all those economic and political relations which depend first and foremost upon the conditions of the 'immediate' environment, being created by that environment and reflecting 'its character'.... For it is absolutely inconceivable that Palestine could radiate economic and political influence throughout the length and breadth of the diaspora, which is co-extensive with the globe, in such a way and to such an extent as would entitle us to say, without inexact use of language, that Palestine was the 'centre' of our national life in these departments also.<sup>15</sup> (Emphasis in the original)

In "Words and Concepts" Ahad Ha'am took pains to point out to his readers that although he stressed the spiritual dimension of the national revival, he did not ignore the practical side of life. Ironically, it was he who castigated Herzl and the

political Zionists for disregarding realities and falling prey to messianic delusion. If anything, he believed that his program was more in tune with the objective realities of modern life than any other movement which sought an answer to the Jewish question. Ahad Ha'am emphasized spiritual matters because he felt that the national spirit stood at the core of Judaism, and that it must be the basis of Jewish life in the future as it had been in the past.

In none of his essays did Ahad Ha'am endeavor to give a more thorough definition of "ruach". Perhaps he took it for granted that his readers, who were well-versed in the language and philosophy of nineteenth-century thought, understood exactly what he meant by the term. Yet for the modern student, who is not acquainted with the technical idioms and thought patterns of the nineteenth century, the meaning of "ruach" is uncertain, especially when, in a modern context, the word "ruach" is loosely interpreted. Scholars who have translated Ahad Ha'am have rendered "ruach" as both "spirit" and "culture". Since there is a significant distinction between these two constructions, I will argue that the English word "spirit" is closer to Ahad Ha'am's original intent than is "culture". Nevertheless, whichever translation one prefers, it still remains for one to arrive at a concrete definition of "ruach" according to the writings of Ahad Ha'am.

A logical starting point is to establish what Ahad Ha'am did not mean by "ruach". A people's true inner spirit, he said, is manifest when a people lives naturally and spontaneously in its native land, unburdened by artificial obstacles.

The spirit of the Jewish people, therefore, reached its highest and most natural point of development in the Biblical period when the inner life of the nation did not have to contend with external enemies. In modern times, however, two extreme views, which he labeled "imagination" and "reason" had taken hold of Jewish life, and posed a grave threat to the independent existence of the nation. Imagination corresponded to the ultra-religious element within the Jewish nation which, he said, by emphasizing life after death, had sought life in death. Reason corresponded to the assimilationist element within the Jewish nation which, he said, promised death in life. Life's complexities, he wrote:

וילידו ככה שתי  
 השקפות חדשות על מהות החיים ותעודתם: השקפות אשר  
 יסודתן אמנם גם הן בחפץ הקיום והאושר, אך האושר הזה  
 אשר הן נותנות — מה נורא מראהו! והקיום — מה שונה הוא  
 מן הקיום הבריא, הטבעי, הרוצה ופועל ומשיג... מן ההשקפות  
 האלה, האחת תתרומם על כנפי הדמיון מעל לגבול הטבע ומעל  
 לחיים האנושיים ותעביר את בעליה לעולם אחר, עליון ונשלא.  
 ולחיים אחרים, רוחניים ונצחיים.  
 (ההשקפה הזאת, בעברה גבול הטבע,  
 תעזוב מאחריה גם את ההגיון והנסיון, לא תשען עליהם  
 ואף לא תירא מפניהם, כי דבר אין לה עמהם. על כן מספיקה  
 היא לאלה, אשר כנפירות להם להתנשא אל על בלי כל  
 מעצור. אך יש אנשים הקשורים בעבותות השכל, השופט רק  
 למראה עינים, ולא יוכלו להגביה עוף, ובבקשם שתרוגם  
 לשאלת החיים והביטו על ימין ועל שמאל, ואין עוזר ואין תומך  
 וזלה ההגיון הקר עם משפטיו ומופתיו המבטיחים הרבה  
 ונותנים מעט.)

... gave birth to two new views on the essence and meaning of life; views which are rooted in the desire for existence and happiness, but the happiness which they provide is terrible! And the existence-- how different it is from the healthy natural existence which wills, acts, and achieves! The first of these views rises on the wings of imagination beyond the boundaries of nature and human life and transports its owner to a different world, lofty and wondrous, and to a different life, spiritual and eternal.... This view, which transcends nature's boundaries leaves behind it logic and experience, neither relying on them nor fearing



them, because it is completely detached from them. Therefore, it is sufficient for those whose wings of spirit allow them to rise aloft without impediment. But there are people who are bound by the chains of reason, which judges only what it sees, and they are not able to soar skyward. Seeking solutions to life's question, they look right and left, but find no help and support except for cold logic, with its judgements and its proofs, that promise much and give little.<sup>16</sup>

Both extremes, Ahad Ha'am asserted-- one which was other-worldly and outside time and space and the other which would result in national extinction-- turned the Jewish people away from its natural destiny, to seek life in life itself, through the unfolding of the nation's spirit in human history. The religious and assimilationist views, therefore, gave rise to a disease of the spirit, diverting the nation from the straight path of natural development. A nation's spirit, he believed, was a product of a people's interaction with the corporeal, workaday world, and he rejected any philosophy which did not allow for the healthy development of a nation's inner life force.

Knowing what Ahad Ha'am did not mean by "ruach" is helpful, but it still does not allow one to arrive at a positive definition of the term. This must be done by seeing how Ahad Ha'am used the word or idea in context, by examining what he considered to be the inherent characteristics of "ruach", and by piecing together the fragments into a comprehensive whole.

"Ruach", said Ahad Ha'am, is indigenous to every nation and is the source of a people's distinctiveness:



הרי אנו מודים

ורוצים שיודו גם אחרים. כי אמנם עם אנחנו, ולא אך צבור של מתפללים. ואם עם אנחנו, הרי איראפשר לנו בלי רוח לאומי, שבו אנו נבדלים מיתר העמים, אותו אנו "חייבים" להוקיר ולשמור, כאשר יעשה כל עם זולתנו לרוחו הלאומי.

... we admit and want others also to admit that we are, indeed, a nation, and not only a religious congregation. And if we are a nation, then we cannot be without national spirit, which distinguishes us from other nations, which we must value and protect as every other nation would do with its national spirit.<sup>17</sup>

The aim of life is the perfection of the spirit:

שתכלית החיים היא

השתלמות הרוח, אלא שהרוח זקוק לגוף, שיהיה כלי למעשהו.

... life's aim is the perfection of the spirit, but the spirit needs a body, that will serve as its tool.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, one may reason, a nation's spirit exists in imperfect form, and is capable of being acted upon and perfected.

"The spirit of our people strives for development,"<sup>19</sup> רוח עמנו שואף להתפתחות.

but needs a "body" to serve as its instrument. The spirit lives most naturally when it occupies a single, complete, and free political body:

ועל כן חשבו הפרושים אז, כי עד שיוכל העם לשוב ולהשכין רוחו בגוף מדיני אחד שלם וחפשי, צריך לקלאות חסרונו באופן מלאכותי, על ידי התרכזות רוחו בגופים חברתיים קטנים ומסודרים, שכולם נבראו בצלמו. וי"ם בדרך אחת ומאוחדים. למרות פזורם, על ידי הכרה אחת משותפת לכולם: הכרה אחדותם במקורם ושאיפתם לתכלית אחת ואחדות שלמה לעתיד.

And therefore, the Pharisees thought then, that until the people will be able again to house its spirit in a single, complete and free political body, it will need to fill the void artificially by concentrating its spirit in small, scattered social bodies, which were all created in its image, and are united, despite their dispersion, by one common awareness: the recognition of their shared origin, their wish for a common goal, and for total unity in the future.<sup>20</sup>

A political state, however, is not essential for the healthy development of a nation's spirit. What is essential is a settlement in a people's native land where the people are engaged in every branch of national work:

ואינה צריכה לממשלה  
מדינית, כי אם רק — לברוא לה בארץ מולדתה תנאים נאותים  
להתפתחותה: קבוץ הגון של אנשים עברים העובדים, באין  
מפריע, בכל ענפי הקולטורא, מן עבודת אדמה ואומנות  
עד עבודת החכמה והספרות.

... and it does not need a political state, but only-- to create in its homeland suitable conditions for its development: a good-sized settlement of Hebrew individuals working without disturbance in all branches of culture-- from agriculture and handicraft to educational work and literature.<sup>21</sup>

As the spirit moves through history, it is guided by the national will-to-live, which compels a nation to look for a new body or instrument for the development of its spirit when the old body is no longer useful:

ובראותה כי לא תוכל עוד לשאת „כלי הגולה“, אשר הלביש  
אותה חפץ הקיום בצאתה מארצה, וכי בלעדיהם חיה בסכנה. —  
מבקשת היא, היהדות, לשוב למרכז ההיסטורי, בשביל  
לחיות שם חיים של התפתחות טבעית, להעביר כוחותיה בכל  
מקצועות הקולטורא האנושית, לפתח ולהשלים את קניניה  
הלאומיים אשר רכשה לה עד כה, ולהכניס ככה גם לעתיד  
לאוצרו של המין האנושי קולטורא לאומית גדולה, פרי עבודה  
חפשיה של עם חי ברוחו, כמו שהכניסה לשעבר.

And when it saw that it could no longer bear the burden of the 'diaspora form' which it was compelled to take on by its will-to-live when it went into exile, but realized that without it, its life was in danger; Judaism seeks to return to its historic center, in order to live there a life of natural development, to concentrate its powers on all human cultural endeavors, to develop and perfect its national possessions, which it acquired until now, and to contribute in the future to the treasure of humanity a great national culture, the fruit of a people laboring freely in accordance to the life of its spirit, as it did in the past.<sup>22</sup>

Spirit, as we have said, is tied to nationality. It is grounded in the daily patterns and conditions of a people's life, and is an expression of the communal life of a nation:

— מצוה היהדות את „החיים הנצחיים“

בארץ מתחת, בהגבירה את הרגש החברתי בלב האיש  
היחיד, שיראה את עצמו לא כמצוי נפרד, שמציאותו מתחלת  
בלידתו ופוסקת במיתתו, אלא כחלק ממצוי יותר גדול ונכבד,  
כאבר מן הגוף החברתי שהוא מתחם אליו.

... Judaism found 'the eternal life' in this world, by strengthening the social feeling in the heart of the individual, so that he would see himself not as a separate entity, whose existence begins with birth and ends with death, but as part of a greater and more substantial reality, a limb of the social body to which he belongs.<sup>23</sup>

A nation's spirit is composed of many aspects, all of which are capable of developing to the highest degree of perfection:

הקבוצ הוזה, אשר יתלקט מעט מעט.

יהיה כרבות הימים למרכז האומה, בו יתגשם רוחה בטהרתו,  
יתפתח לכל צדדיו ויגיע עד השלמות האפשרית לו.

This settlement, which will gradually grow, will become in time the center of the nation, in which its spiritual potential will be realized, and will develop in all its aspects and reach the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable.<sup>24</sup>

Sometimes, one element of a nation's spirit can gain ascendancy over other constituent parts. This was the case in Judaism, for example, when, after the destruction of the Second Temple, the religious idea reigned supreme. Yet religion is only one aspect of a nation's spiritual life, and a nation's spirit is healthiest when all of its components are in equilibrium:

דתנו היא לאומית, כלומר יצירת

רוחנו הלאומי, אבל לא להפך.

Our religion is national, meaning it is the creation of the national spirit, but not vice versa.<sup>25</sup>

Although Ahad Ha'am never gave us a definitive list of the manifold aspects of a nation's spirit, it is clear from his writings that a nation's spirit is the complete expression of every area of a nation's inner life. It becomes manifest when a nation lives a complete and independent existence on its own soil and when it speaks its own language. Land and language, said Ahad Ha'am, are the two main pillars of a people's national life-- the bedrock upon which the spirit rests and the medium through which it develops:

כי אם מצב עמנו בכלל מביאנו  
עכשיו לידי הכרת הצורך. לחזור ולחבר את הדברים  
שנפרדו. את שני עמודי התווך של חיינו הלאומיים. ששניהם  
קרובים לנו כל כך ורחוקים מאתנו כל כך: — את ארצנו  
ולשוננו —

... if the condition of our people in general  
brings us now to recognize the need to again  
unite the integral parts which were separated--  
the two central columns of our national life,  
both of which are so near to us and yet so  
far-- our Land and our language...26

In the case of the Jewish nation, its native land is Israel and its national language is Hebrew.

In Ahad Ha'am's vision, the spirit of the nation would express itself primarily in secular terms although, as I stated above, he was not anti-religious and believed that a nation's religious life was one aspect of a nation's spiritual life. The two principal components of a nation's spirit, he said, were culture and ethics, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Yet, even though he chose to emphasize culture and ethics as paramount, he included within the rubric of spirit, every aspect of a nation's natural and normal life in its own land. In a letter to Meir Dizengoff,

he pointed out that both agricultural work and physical labor, though they perhaps appeared mundane when compared with more lofty concerns, were, in fact, integral aspects of a nation's spiritual life:

[כנראה, גם אתה חושדני]  
 שרואה אני את "המרכז הרוחני" רק כמוסדות "רוחניים",  
 ובאמת אין הדבר כן. גם המושבות וכל שאר העבודה הגשמית  
 הן בעיני חלק עצמי מן "המרכז הרוחני" (כמו שיוצא ברור  
 ממאמרי האחרון). בהיותן גם הן מקור השפעה על רוח העם  
 בכלל.

Apparently, you also suspect that I see the 'Spiritual Center' as comprised of only spiritual institutions, and truly it is not so. Both the agricultural settlements and all the rest of the physical labor are in my eyes an integral part of the 'Spiritual Center' (as I made clear in my last article), because they are also sources of influence on the spirit of the people.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, if one were to draw up a list of those areas of human life which, in Ahad Ha'am's view, were aspects of a nation's spirit, one would include: culture, ethics, education and scholarship, religion, art, agriculture, handicraft, physical labor, fashion-- in short, a nation's entire mode of thinking and manner of living. The question arises today whether or not Ahad Ha'am would have included popular culture, slang, sports, and even pornography under the rubric of spirit. I believe that he would have argued that these lesser elements were, indeed, aspects of a nation's spiritual life. Yet he would have added the caveat that these forms of spirit were expressions of a people's development in its unrefined form and that, ultimately, the perfection of a nation's spirit would result in the elimination of what he termed "batlanut", or a nation's spiritual rubbish!

Ahad Ha'am maintained that, ever since the destruction of the Second Temple, the Hebrew spirit had been living in exile, where it had been kept alive by the artificial resuscitator of the ghetto:

בזמננו  
הקולטורא מתלבשת בכל מקום ברוח הלאומי של עם הארץ.  
וכל חור הקרב אליה צריך לבטל את עצמותו ולהתבלע ברוח  
השליט. על כן לא תוכל היהדות בגולה לפתח את עצמותה על  
פי דרכה, וכשעוזבת היא חומות הגטו, הרי היא בסכנה לאבד  
את חייה העצמיים, או — באופן היותר טוב — את אחדותה  
הלאומית:

In our time culture wears the garb, in every place, of the national spirit of the land in which it dwells, and the stranger who approaches it must renounce his identity and assimilate within the dominant spirit. Therefore, Judaism will not be able to develop its identity in the diaspora according to its nature, and when it leaves the walls of the ghetto it will be in danger of losing its independent life, or-- at best-- its national unity.<sup>28</sup>

In the diaspora, he said, even in the best of circumstances, the Hebrew spirit never developed to its full potential:

לא האמנתי באפשרות התגשמותה של  
פרוגרמא לאומית שלמה בגולה, ואילו חשבתי שיש מקום  
בגולה להתפתחות חפשית של רוחנו הלאומי — לא  
הייתי ציוני. שהרי ידעת, כי כל עיקר "ציוניותי" מיוסדת רק  
על הנחה זו:

... I did not believe in the possibility of the realization of a complete national program in the diaspora, and if I thought that our national spirit could be freely developed in the diaspora-- I would not be a Zionist, since you know that the essence of 'my Zionism' is based only upon this assumption...<sup>29</sup>

Although diseased, it was still capable of normal growth in the future, once the conditions were created to foster its natural development:

ושאלת הגלות הרוחנית — היא מוצאה באמת את  
השובתה בבנין. מקלט לאומי בארץ ישראל: מקלט לא לכל  
בני העם המבקשים מנוחה ולחם, כי אם לרוח העם. לאותה  
צורה קולטורית מיוחדת, מרי ההתפתחות היסטורית של אלפי  
שנה, שעדיין כוחה עמה לחיות ולהתפתח לפי טבעה גם בעתיד.  
אם אך יוסרו מעליה כבלי הגלות:



And the question of spiritual exile-- finds, indeed, its answer in the building of a national 'place of refuge' in the Land of Israel: a place of refuge not for those who are looking for rest and bread, but for the spirit of the people, for that unique cultural form, the fruit of the historical development of thousands of years, which still has strength to live and develop according to its nature also in the future, if only the shackles of exile be removed...30

In order to regain its health, Ahad Ha'am said, the national spirit must return to its historic center. Once replanted in Palestine, the spirit would again grow naturally and freely, and it would breathe new life into the scattered communities of the nation and preserve the nation's unity:

וכן המרכז  
יבוא אז רוח היהדות אל כל ההוקף הגדול, אל כל קהלות  
הגולה, להתחיות ולשמור על אחדותן הכללית.

And from the center the spirit of Judaism will emanate to the great 'circumference', to all the communities of the diaspora, to revitalize them and to safeguard their unity.31

A phrase used by Ahad Ha'am which best communicated his sense of the word "ruach" was "כוח היצירה הלאומית", which is roughly translated as the "national creative power":

כוח היצירה שבנפשו לא מת אישוא, לא נחלק ולא חדל  
מעשות פרי על פי דרכו בכל הזמנים, אלא שפריו נשתנה  
במשך שנים לפי השתנות תנאי החיים.

The national creative power is not dead, did not change and never stopped bearing fruit in its own way, but the change in the conditions of life gave the fruit a different taste.32

Taking the lead from this very potent expression and incorporating the ideas outlined in the foregoing analysis, it is now possible to offer this definition of "ruach": a creative force,

emanating from the inner recesses of a people's soul, which is the basis of its distinctiveness and the habitation and generative power of its vital impulses. Acting in tandem with the national will-to-live and operating within the corporate body, the spirit unfolds in accordance with the natural forces of history, always striving toward a higher degree of development.

A final word should be said about my decision to translate "ruach" as "spirit" rather than "culture". Ahad Ha'am, through his use of the word spirit, meant to convey the inner life force of the Jewish nation. In the English language, spirit is a richer, more penetrating word than culture. When translating "ruach" as "culture", I believe that one restricts the semantic range of this pithy concept and attenuates the full scope of its meaning. Culture is an aspect of a nation's spirit, but I do not think the reverse obtains. In a letter to Dr. Israel Abrahams, Ahad Ha'am made a careful distinction between the terms "Judaism", "religion", and "culture". In his view, religion was merely an aspect of culture, and he specified that "culture" and "Judaism" were not interchangeable terms. Judaism was, in fact, synonymous with the "national creative power" of the Jewish people-- the inner life force or spirit of the nation-- whereas culture was only one component of a people's spiritual life:

ובנוגע להשאלה על דבר הכונת היהדות, הנה זה, כמוכן, תלוי במובנים שאנו נוטים להכניס לתוך השמות הבלתי מוגבלים כל צרכם: יהדות, דת וקולטורא. לפי מה שאני מבין את השמות הללו, הייתי אומר, כי הדת עצמה אינה אלא צורה ידועה של "קולטורא", וכי "יהדות" אינה לא זו ולא זו. אלא כוח-היצירה הלאומי, שבעבר נתגלה בצורה של קולטורא שהיתה בעיקרה דתית. באיזו צורה יתגלה כוח היצירה הזה בעתיד — אי אפשר לראות מראש.

In regard to the question of the character of Judaism: Here, of course, it depends on the meaning we tend to give to such vague terms as Judaism, religion and culture. According to my understanding of these terms, I would say that religion is nothing but a form of 'culture', and that 'Judaism' is neither religion nor culture but the national creative power, which in the past took on that form of culture which was primarily religious. Which form this creative force will assume in the future, it is impossible to foresee.<sup>33</sup>

## V. THE HEBREW SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

Ahad Ha'am maintained that, once it had attended to its immediate needs of survival, the primary task of the National Spiritual Center in Palestine would be to catalyze, engineer and direct a program for the revitalization of the Hebrew national spirit both in Palestine and in the Jewish communities of the diaspora. As I have indicated above, he believed that the revival would take place in every area of the nation's life and would be primarily secular in form. Although the revival would have many aspects, Ahad Ha'am paid greatest attention to the rebirth of Hebrew culture, which included the resuscitation of the Hebrew language, and to the revitalization of Jewish ethics.

Ahad Ha'am laid the groundwork for his discussion of the Hebrew spiritual revival in an article, published in 1889 in Hamelitz ("The Advocate"), a Hebrew daily circulated in St. Petersburg. The title of the article, which launched his literary career, was "Lo Zeh Haderech"-- "This is Not the Way"! In this article, which appeared in two installments, Ahad Ha'am introduced his conception of a spiritual nationalism and criticized the program of Hibbat Zion, the movement which had

pioneered colonization work in Palestine. The article reverberated throughout the ranks of Hibbat Zion and aroused the enmity of many of Ahad Ha'am's friends. Nevertheless, it established his reputation as a responsible voice and brought his ideas to the attention of a wider audience.

In the first paragraph of "Lo Zeh Haderech", Ahad Ha'am described how, in his generation, an idea had arisen which substituted land and peoplehood, instead of religion, as the new foundation for the survival and continuity of Judaism. This idea, he said, found a practical basis in the work of Palestinian colonization. The settlements, however, which had generated so much optimism in their inception, had fallen on hard times. The idea had ceased to win new adherents, and its old supporters had lost their verve.

Ahad Ha'am cited two reasons why the idea of national rebirth had failed to take root in the hearts of those Jews who felt an intuitive connection to Zion and the Jewish people. First, he said, "in their eagerness to obtain great results before the time was ripe, they have deserted the long road of natural development, and by artificial means have forced into the arena of practical life an idea which was still young and tender, neither fully ripened nor sufficiently developed; and thanks to this excessive haste their strength has failed them, and their labour has been in vain."<sup>34</sup> (Emphasis in the original).

For an idea to succeed, Ahad Ha'am instructed, it must be undertaken slowly, with great deliberation and care. The first task in the national revival, therefore, was to win devotion to

the ideal, before the first orchard has been planted or the first field has been ploughed. The history of ideas has taught, he argued, that a new idea bears fruit only when the goal falls within the realm of possibility and when all the conditions for the attainment of the idea are in place. Undue haste and false expectation result in the unraveling of an idea and causes its adherents to fall prey to exhaustion and despair.

The second reason why colonization efforts had floundered, Ahad Ha'am said, was because the national determination of the settlers had been undermined by excessive self-interest. An endeavor as great as the revival of the Jewish spirit in Palestine could not succeed, he emphasized, unless the spice of individualism, which had proliferated in Judaism for nearly two thousand years, was supplanted by a willingness of the people "to surrender their love of self and their ambition, their worldly goods or their family interests to the needs of the nation."<sup>35</sup> The revival of the national spirit, he said, must model itself after the Biblical ideal where the devotion to the national enterprise superceded individualistic motives and where the members of the nation were prepared to forego personal gain for the good of the nation. The first object, Ahad Ha'am said, in bringing about a national revival was not to charge ahead blindly, but rather to restore the national sentiment and to train Jews to work for their people. The national ideal could not take root without preparation of the heart. Therefore, he reasoned, a systematic program of national education must take place before practical results could be obtained.

Ahad Ha'am never deviated from the thesis which he outlined



in "Lo Zeh Haderech". In subsequent essays, he defended his ideas against his critics and gave greater expression to the content and program of the spiritual revival. The aim of Zionism, Ahad Ha'am argued, was to establish a secular Jewish culture in Palestine through the medium of the Hebrew language. "The revival of the spirit is, indeed," he wrote, "the objective which we strive for, consciously or unconsciously, and the settlement in the Land of Israel will be established only to serve as a basis for this."<sup>36</sup> Other than a return to the Land of Israel, which was a precondition for the restoration of the national spirit, the Hebrew revival had two essential components: (1) the rebirth of Hebrew language and culture, and (2) the revitalization of Jewish ethics.

#### V-A. THE CULTURAL COMPONENT OF THE HEBREW NATIONAL SPIRIT

Ahad Ha'am emphasized that the Hebrew spirit could live and develop only through the medium of the Hebrew language. Jews, he said, have adopted many different spoken languages in their wanderings, but only Hebrew was rooted in their being. There is no greater connection, he said, than between a nation and its native tongue, the language of its childhood. He was particularly troubled by the movement to promote Yiddish, which he considered a bastard jargon, as the national language of the Jews, and he vehemently argued against the inclusion of any literature written in a foreign tongue, even works written by Jews, within the corpus of our national literature: "The national literature of any nation is only that which is written in its own national language. When an individual member of that



nation writes in a foreign language, what he writes may, indeed, reveal traces of his own national spirit,... But national literature it is not: it belongs wholly to the general body of literature of that nation in whose language it is written."<sup>37</sup> (Emphasis in the original). Ahad Ha'am predicted that Yiddish would die out in a few generations. Anything of worth, he said, that was originally written in Yiddish, would survive only if it were translated into Hebrew.

Ahad Ha'am believed that Hebrew must be freed from the liturgical boundaries of the synagogue, and used as the primary mode of expression and communication in every aspect of the nation's life. "Therefore, instead of liturgical books," he wrote to a colleague, "we now need books of wisdom and knowledge on Jewish subjects, so that our language will be a storehouse of information about Judaism, and anyone thirsting for this knowledge will find it in abundance."<sup>38</sup> Ahad Ha'am dreamed of editing a Hebrew Encyclopedia of Judaism and discussed the idea with the directors of Ahiasaf, the Hebrew publishing company which published his journal Hashiloah, but the project never got off the ground.

Ahad Ha'am hoped that the revival of Hebrew as a modern spoken language and literary idiom would catalyze a Jewish national renaissance. Hebrew culture would flower in every area of life-- literature, the arts, science, education and scholarship. He pointed out time and again that cultural work was the essence of Zionism, and that the proliferation of Hebrew culture would preserve Jewish nationalism from narrowness and decay.

Culture, Ahad Ha'am asserted, has both an objective and

subjective aspect. Objectively, he maintained, a nation's culture is "the concrete expression of the best minds of the nation in every period of its existence. The nation expresses itself in certain definite forms, which remain for all time, and are no longer dependent on those who created them..."<sup>39</sup> A nation's great works of art, its literary masterpieces, and its great scientific discoveries, for example, are all products of its objective culture, and eventually, through the agency of cultural exchange between nations, become the province of world culture. The subjective aspect of a nation's culture is "the degree to which culture is diffused among the individual members of the nation, and the extent to which its influence is visible in their private and public life."<sup>40</sup> (Emphasis in the original). For example, the subjective state of a nation's culture is reflected in the general level of education among its citizens. Ahad Ha'am observed that the objective and subjective aspects of a nation's culture need not follow parallel lines of development. In one generation, for example, a nation may produce a large body of creative geniuses, while the general level of culture is quite low.

Ahad Ha'am's bifurcation of culture led him to conclude that the Zionist program devote itself to two tasks:

In the first place-- to perfect the cultural possessions that our nation created up until now and to awaken its creative power for renewed work of the spirit; and in the second place-- to elevate the cultural status of the nation as a whole and to make its objective culture the subjective possession of all its individual members.<sup>41</sup>

On the one hand, the literary treasures of Judaism-- the Bible, Talmud, Shulhan Aruch-- must be read and studied, and the conditions must be created to allow the best minds of the nation to develop freely and to contribute to the nation's cultural reservoir. On the other hand, the general level of the nation's culture and education must be raised to the highest standards possible.

On a practical scale, Ahad Ha'am called for the establishment of a Hebrew University in Palestine. In a letter to Chaim Weizmann, written seven years before The Hebrew University opened its doors in Jerusalem, Ahad Ha'am described the glory that an institution of this kind would bring to the nation. A Hebrew University, he declared, would not be a "mere imitation of a European University, with Hebrew as the dominant language, but a University which, from the very beginning, will endeavour to become the true embodiment of the Hebrew spirit of old, and to shake off the mental and moral servitude to which our people has been so long subjected in the diaspora. Only so can we be justified in our ambitious hopes as to the future universal influence of the 'Teaching' that 'will go forth out of Zion.'"<sup>42</sup> Ahad Ha'am placed a higher priority on the establishment of educational and cultural institutions in Palestine than on the building of more agricultural colonies. One great school of art or learning, he said, would be of infinitely greater value than a hundred new colonies, both to the revival of Hebrew culture in Palestine and to the rejuvenation of the Jewish national spirit in the diaspora.

# V-B. THE ETHICAL COMPONENT OF THE HEBREW NATIONAL SPIRIT

The primary vocation of the national revival, claimed Ahad Ha'am, was the revitalization of Jewish ethics. Without diminishing the significance of other aspects of the spiritual revival, Ahad Ha'am singled out the moral object as an item of supreme importance. Language and literature, he said, were essential components of the Hebrew national spirit; ethics, however, was its quintessence:

אין ספק איפוא  
כי בהראותנו על הלשון כעל אמצעי להתקרב אל הרוח הלאומי.  
אנו סומכים על ההיקש הזה: הלשון נוצרה ונתפתחה על ידי  
רוח העם, ומאחר שכל יוצר משפיע מעצמותו על יצירתו, או כמו  
ש"החסידות" אומרת: "כוח הפועל בנפעל" — הגה בהכרח  
שיש בכל לשון מסגולות הרוח הלאומי שעל ידו נוצרה, ועל  
כן, אע"פ שאין בדינו להראות, איזו הן הסגולות האלה בלשון.  
ברור לנו בכל זאת, שהשמוש בלשון הלאומית מקרבת את  
הלבבות אל הרוח הלאומי, ואם הלשון כן, המוסר על אחת כמה  
וכמה. סוף סוף אין הלשון אלא בבואה של החיים והלך-הרוח.  
בעוד אשר המוסר הוא היחס הישר בין הרוח הפנימי ובין  
החיים החיצוניים.

There is no doubt, therefore, that when we view language as a means to get closer to the national spirit we depend on this observation: the language was created and developed by the spirit of the people, and since every creator influences its creation, or, like 'Hasidism' says: 'the active principle is discernible through its effect'-- it is evident that every language expresses the quality of the national spirit by which it was created; therefore, although we cannot specify which of these qualities are in the language, it is still clear to us that using the national language brings the hearts closer to the national spirit. And if the language is thus, ethics even more so. In the final analysis, language is nothing but a reflection of life and the mood of the spirit, whereas ethics is a direct link between the inner spirit and the external life...43

Ahad Ha'am believed that every nation is endowed with a "unique ethics, in agreement with the character of its national

spirit, and the progression of its historical life."<sup>44</sup> Unlike other enlightened nations, however, whose moral development was undistinguished, "the Jews have 'a genius' for morality, and in this respect are 'superior' to all other nations."<sup>45</sup> Ahad Ha'am retained the traditional messianic ideal of Jews being a "light to the nations," but instead of faith, he substituted a national ideal of ethical perfection. He argued vigorously that ethics was not a sub-category of religion, that ethics entered the world for different reasons than religion and developed independently of it, and that, in fact, the two were "separate trees of life, each one having a special root in the nature of the human spirit..."<sup>46</sup>

Ahad Ha'am's distinction between ethics and religion led him to refute the claim of the Reformers who argued that the situation of dispersion, where Judaism had broken the mold of nationhood and recast itself as a religion, was the healthiest and most natural context for Jews to carry out their appointed task of achieving the ethical perfection of humanity. Ahad Ha'am agreed that the ultimate aim of Judaism was to elevate the other nations of the world, but he emphasized that the universal moral mission was a far and distant goal which could only be attained by, first of all, reestablishing ourselves as a nation in our own land:

In spite of the fact that the Prophets of Israel conceived this great ideal of 'government of justice', and although 'this human ideal was and will always be inextricably bound to the national ideal of the People of Israel,' both the Prophets and the people saw this ideal only in connection with the revival of Israel in its Land. Deep manifold faith, although not always clear, was in the heart of the nation in every generation: that



only by its national revival in its Land-- and not by its dispersion and assimilation among the people-- will the moral 'mission' with which the Prophets, in their vision, charged the people be achieved. Only by the fulfillment of this moral task-- and not by political conceit and physical force-- will the objective of the national revival be attained.<sup>47</sup>

Israel's immediate task, therefore, was not to concern itself with the moral uplift of the rest of the world, but to devote its energies exclusively to the reformulation of its national spirit. Only by reconstituting the soul of the nation in the Land of Israel would the Hebrew national genius return to its path of normal development and produce a culture and ethics that would, in due course, radiate out of Zion and exalt humanity.

Borrowing the terminology of Friedrich Nietzsche, Ahad Ha'am claimed that Israel was a kind of moral "Supernation", in the sense that its national character was endowed with a particular moral genius and that it was elected by God, whom Ahad Ha'am viewed as the ideal of ethical perfection,<sup>48</sup> to refine and purify its inner moral content. The consciousness of its chosenness had inhered in the Jewish psyche throughout its history. Emancipation, however, had not only forestalled Israel's ability to fulfill its mission as a supernation, it had called into question the entire notion of Israel's moral superiority:

For the profound tragedy of our spiritual life in the present day is perhaps only a result of our failure to justify in practice the potentialities of our election. On the one hand, there still lives within us, though it be only in the form of an instinctive feeling, a belief in that moral fitness for which we were chosen from all the nations, and in that national mission which consists in living the highest type of moral life, in being the moral Super-



nation. But, on the other hand, since the day when we left the Ghetto, and started to partake of the world's life and its civilization, we cannot help seeing that our superiority is potential merely.<sup>49</sup>

Ahad Ha'am was convinced that the Jewish nation could, once more, actualize its ethical potential and regain its position as moral standard-bearer. The ethical kernel of Judaism however, would not germinate in exile where conditions were not ripe for its free development. The ethical revival of Judaism could only be accomplished in the Land of Israel where the moral genius of the nation, which had languished for some time, would recover its faculty for self-development.

Jewish moral development, Ahad Ha'am argued, had reached its apex in the teaching of the Hebrew Prophets. Consequently, he said, Prophetic Judaism must serve as the model for the revival of Jewish ethics. In his view, the Prophet was the ideal ethical type, the man who embodied the truest expression of the Jewish national spirit. The Prophet, he said, possessed two fundamental qualities that set him apart from the rest of mankind. First, he was an extremist. He harbored a vision of what the world ought to be, and he devoted his entire life toward the pursuit of that ideal. He lived in complete accordance with his inner convictions and, as such, he could never consent to compromise. Second, the Prophet was a man of truth. His passion for truth was an intrinsic part of his being, a particular genius which enabled him to view life with objective clarity. His judgement never fell prey to subjective bias.

As a consequence of these two characteristics, the Prophet

stood for a society whose hallmark was absolute justice. Jewish morality, Ahad Ha'am observed, is based on justice, in contradistinction to the Christian Gospels, whose morality is based on love. He emphasized that the difference between the two moral scales is not simply one of degree. Rather, he said, Jewish ethics is based on an abstract objective foundation which judges the deed and not the doer, which rises above sentiment, and which judges all human life as equal in value. Christian ethics, on the other hand, governed by the subjective principle of mercy, places greater weight on the character of the doer than it does on the deed. Mercy, Ahad Ha'am said, is a sign of moral progress in a system undergirded by justice. A system which relies solely on mercy, however, would result in moral chaos because it would allow judgements to be made in the absence of any absolute standard of justice. Only Jewish ethics, he reasoned, which affirmed the centrality of justice, would be capable of the highest possible development. In fact, he said, Judaism:

... anticipates the development of morality to a point at which justice will become an instinct with good men, so that they will not need long reflection to enable them to decide between different courses of action according to the standard of absolute justice, but will feel as in a flash, and with the certainty of instinct, even the slightest deviation from the straight line. Human relations and social grades will not affect them in the least, because the 'true judge' within them will pronounce justly on each deed, swayed by no human relation to the doer or the sufferer,...50

In addition to a society organized around the principle of absolute justice, the Prophets believed with equal fervor in the ethic of collective salvation. The true moral ideal, they

maintained, was embodied in the prosperity and perfection of the community, not in the salvation of the individual. Although the Prophets lived in pursuit of universal truths, they maintained that the quest was best achieved through the framework of the corporate body. Thus, they were ardent nationalists who believed that Jewish morality would be perfected only if the Jewish people remain a distinct and separate nation, imbued with a collective consciousness, living in its own land, in conditions which engender the complete development of its essential character. Ahad Ha'am's understanding of the Prophetic ideal led him to conclude that Judaism would enhance the ethical development of humanity only after it had reestablished its national position and built a society which was a model of absolute righteousness.<sup>51</sup>

The Hebrew Prophet, Ahad Ha'am pointed out, in his steadfast pursuit of the ideal, was unable to adjust to the complex realities of the real world. The necessities of life, therefore, produced in the Jewish community a figure whose task was to mediate between the ideal of ethical perfection and the muddle of human existence. This man of expedience was the priest. The priest was a problem solver, a man of action and a man of compromise and, although he was not of the moral stature of the Prophets, he was instrumental in synchronizing the subjective demands of life with the objective, utopian vision of the Prophets. An idea, therefore, having been conceived in the abstract realm of the Prophetic imagination, is in need of a practical man of affairs to implement it and to carry it through to the end. "Every new idea," Ahad Ha'am wrote, "whether religious, moral, or social will not come to fruition without a group of

'priests' who will devote their lives to it and will work for it with all their mind and all their being, who will be ever watchful to protect it from every evil turn, and at every danger will be the first to give their life for it."<sup>52</sup> Both Prophet and priest, said Ahad Ha'am, were essential to the creation of an ethical society-- the Prophet to exhort the people to the service of the ideal and the priest to reconcile the ideal with the actualities of life.

The spirit of the Prophets found its fullest expression, Ahad Ha'am claimed, in the Judaism of the Pharisees. Unlike the Sadducees, who worshipped the god of political materialism, and the Essenes, who withdrew to a life of extreme asceticism, the Pharisees steered a middle course, knowing full well that "spirit without flesh is but an unsubstantial shade, and that the spirit of Judaism could not develop and attain its end without a political body, in which it could find concrete expression."<sup>53</sup> When the state was threatened with external destruction, the Pharisees fought valiantly on the front lines of battle. Only when it became apparent that the political structure would fall did they move the Torah to Yavneh and set up an artificial religious framework to sustain the national spirit in exile. This protective device, which was institutionalized in the organization of the ghetto, served its purpose until modern times, when emancipation ruptured the protective shield of religious life, and exposed the national spirit to the corrosive forces of modernity.

What remained to be done, Ahad Ha'am reasoned, was to return the national spirit to its native land, where the ethical

tradition of the prophets would resume its natural development and restore the Jewish nation to its rightful place as moral beacon to the world. The national spiritual revival, he argued, must be carried out in accordance with the Prophetic belief in the predominance of the power of the spirit over the power of the sword. Thus, the first order of business was to establish a material settlement in Palestine whose energies would be exclusively devoted to the resuscitation of the vital spark of Jewish creativity. The political state would follow in due course, when the cultural and ethical pillars of the national edifice was stable enough to support a political storey.

In his own time, Ahad Ha'am hoped that the ethical tradition of the Prophets would be revitalized by the creation of an elite who would emigrate to Palestine and lay the foundation of the spiritual revival. These "modern Prophets", who would be selected from among the best and the brightest of the Jewish nation, would have to exemplify the highest standards of ethical behavior, be willing to give up personal privilege, and be ready to submerge their individual egos in the common welfare of the group. In 1889, Ahad Ha'am founded an organization called "B'nei Moshe" ("The Society of the Sons of Moses"), which embodied the philosophy of Hibbath Zion and which was to be a breeding ground for the spiritual elite. In his initial draft of the organization's charter, Ahad Ha'am spelled out how B'nei Moshe would spearhead the national revival:

Like all other national organizations which were founded before it, the supreme and final objective of B'nei Moshe was the 'revival of our people in the Land of our ancestors'. In the view



of B'nei Moshe, however, there is no hope for our redemption through isolated deeds done in the Land of Israel by private individuals or separate organizations, which have little connection to one another, except for the scant funds which they share. To achieve the national objective, we need also national work by uniting the best national, material, and intellectual forces along with an inner moral discipline. We need consistent work for generations, that will be conducted gradually, without disorder, not noisily or hastily, but 'cautiously, deliberately', and patiently, according to fixed rules and laws; which will gather from every part of the nation its forgotten and dispersed forces and, from generation to generation, grow in quantity and quality, and get closer to the objective, in small but sure steps. Therefore, in order to unite the national powers and in order to organize the national work for the attainment of the national objective-- for this, B'nei Moshe was created.<sup>54</sup>

B'nei Moshe disbanded in 1897, less than a decade after its inception, when many of its members shifted their allegiance to Theodor Herzl's Zionist organization. Later in life, Ahad Ha'am was very critical of B'nei Moshe, which he described as "an experiment which did not succeed." Perhaps he was disheartened because the organization did not live up to his impeccable standards and high expectations. Yet, despite its shortcomings, B'nei Moshe was a thoughtful statement of how the ideals of the Hebrew Prophets could be given renewed vitality in the modern world.

Ahad Ha'am realized that his treatment of the subject of Jewish ethics needed further study. In his article "The National Ethics", which was his most extensive analysis of the matter, he was content to set ethics on a separate foundation than religion and pave the way for a more serious exploration of Jewish



morality, both on a scholarly level and in a form accessible to those less educated. In the closing paragraph of this essay he encouraged other Jewish intellectuals to engage in a study of ethics:

I know, indeed, that all that is said here is still not enough to sufficiently clarify the matter for the general readership. Also, the concept itself of "National Ethics" cannot easily be entirely understood by one who is not used to these matters. And it will be still harder for the masses to recognize the greatness of the practical value of this concept, being the cornerstone in our national building .... But this time it was not my intention to attract to this matter the heart of the larger audience. A movement like this needs to make its way from above to below. First, our intellectuals need to understand its value, and stand as its leaders. And through their leadership it will spread also among the people. I said, therefore, that I would try to concisely outline the subject so that the intellectuals would understand. And if, as it seems to me, the time is ripe, many of them will wake up and explore the roots of the issue-- and learning will lead to action.<sup>55</sup>

Ahad Ha'am wrote in a letter to a friend that one of his most cherished dreams was to, someday, write a book on Jewish ethics.<sup>56</sup> The book, unfortunately, was never started. Ahad Ha'am blamed his frail health for his inability, in his later years, to take on any large-scale projects. Critics argue that, perhaps, he never formulated a thesis which would stand as the focus of a major study. Whatever the reason, without defining ethics in precise terms, Ahad Ha'am demonstrated that the ultimate purpose of Spiritual Zionism was the revival of Jewish ethics, which was rooted in the social consciousness of the Prophets and which would be perfected when the national work,

once again, began to bear fruit in Palestine.

Ahad Ha'am never drew up a detailed blueprint which described, in ordered fashion, a specific program for the Hebrew national revival. Most of his life, he stayed away from the mainstream of Zionist activities, preferring, instead, to remain on the sidelines, assuming the role of critic and theoretician. He developed his ideas not merely as an alternative to the narrow focus of political Zionism, but, rather, as an original vision of how Judaism would come to terms with the challenges and changes of modernity.

His entire conception was based upon the regeneration of Israel as a nation. He believed that the only way that the Jewish people would survive in the modern world was by the welding of the scattered fragments of the national body into a unified whole. Since he was certain that the majority of Jews would continue to reside in the diaspora, he proposed that the only way to reconstitute the Jewish nation was by the establishment of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine. Ahad Ha'am recognized that this would be a long and arduous task, but he believed that anything of lasting value was achieved only by slow, persistent work.

The center would serve several purposes. It would be the foundation for the renewed development of the Hebrew national spirit, the inner life force of the Jewish people that embraced every aspect of the people's existence. By creating the conditions necessary for the rebirth of a free, natural and independent national life, the center would eventually restore the Jewish people to its former position of greatness in the comity

of nations. Finally, the center would be the cultural and ethical garden in which the creative genius of the Jewish people would take root and flourish, producing a rich harvest which would contribute to the enlightenment and perfection of humankind. The Jewish people, he said, had once made a lasting contribution to human history. With the revitalization of its inner spirit, the Jewish nation would continue to be an exemplar of human progress.

#### VI. THE CENTER TAKING SHAPE

Ahad Ha'am was generally not regarded as an optimist, and by his own admission was frequently given to bouts of despair. After his first and second trips to Palestine in 1891 and 1893, he wrote a series of articles in Hamelitz under the title "Truth from Eretz Yisrael." In these articles he wrote of his extreme disappointment in the colonization work that was then going on in the Land. Much to the chagrin of the Jewish press, which painted a faultless, rose-colored portrait of the Palestinian colonization, Ahad Ha'am exposed the agricultural settlements for what they were-- object lessons in poor planning and misguided management.

Twenty years later, after a two-month stay in Palestine, he published a full report of his impressions, entitled "Summation", in the Hebrew journal Hashiloah. Although he was not uncritical, Ahad Ha'am sounded a much more optimistic note than in his earlier survey, detailing vast improvement in almost every area of national work. The national will-to-live, he observed, was, indeed, creating the conditions necessary for the revitalization of the Jewish spirit. He delighted at the beautiful handicrafts

being produced at the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem, and he took great pleasure in visiting schools where instruction was "in the Hebrew spirit and the Hebrew language." Even in its infancy, he cheerfully announced, the center was beginning to exert a measurable influence on the diaspora. "Therefore, one does not need to believe in miracles," he wrote, "in order to see in his mind's eye this center growing in size and improving in quality; and its influence on the spirit of the people is increasing, until it will finally achieve the objective set for itself by the national instinct for survival: to renew our national unity throughout the world by reviving our national culture in its historic center. Even then, this center will not be a 'safe place of refuge' for our people, but it surely will be a house of healing for its spirit."<sup>57</sup>

Although he had fought many hard battles in the arena of Zionist affairs and suffered considerable personal misfortune, Ahad Ha'am managed to sustain his optimism into old age when he finally realized his life-long dream of settling in Palestine. Writing to Leon Simon, a friend and disciple, on the occasion of the opening of the Hebrew University, just a year-and-a-half before his death, he remarked:

... There is something to be seen here, though of course it is only a small beginning. I am sorry that you did not come for the opening of the University. So magnificent a spectacle is not to be seen every day even in one of the great countries of the world. Of course I do not want to suggest that everything is perfect and that there is no ground for complaint. Certainly there is ground enough and to spare; but when I remember conditions here thirty years ago, or twenty, or even five years ago,

I am compelled to admit that all our work has not been wasted and that the next generation will have a better inheritance than we could have hoped years ago.58



## CHAPTER VII: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF AHAD HA'AM'S IDEAS

The following chapter is not intended to be a complete and systematic critique of Ahad Ha'am's thinking. That is a project which is worthy of a major study. Rather, it is my purpose to summarize some of the merits and shortcomings of Ahad Ha'am's ideas, focusing on his concept of a National Spiritual Center.

I will divide this presentation into three sections. The first part will survey the critical thrust of a few of his more respected supporters and detractors before the creation of the modern State of Israel in 1948. The second section will consider his ideas in the light of the existence of the Jewish State. Finally, I will consider how Ahad Ha'am can help the modern Jew to understand the events which are taking place in the Land of Israel today.

Before I begin, however, I must add one important caveat. Despite the remarkable durability of his ideas, Ahad Ha'am was a man of his own time and, hence, must be judged accordingly. Although I believe that Ahad Ha'am was aware that his ideas would probably outlive him, it is only fair to evaluate him in the context of the emerging Zionist movement in which he played a unique role. When he wrote, he could not have anticipated the terrible cataclysm that would befall the Jewish people during World War II and the emergence of the Jewish State in 1948. There is no doubt that the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel would have had a dramatic impact upon his thinking, perhaps causing him to alter his views about several key issues. Therefore, any critique of Ahad Ha'am must be offered

with the knowledge that his prescription for the Jewish problem was drawn up in the singular historical climate which prevailed at the turn of the century when he lived and wrote.

## I. CRITICISM PRIOR TO 1948

### A. THOSE WHO KNEW HIM: DISCIPLES AND DETRACTORS

Among those who knew him or crossed swords with him, Ahad Ha'am was either the object of excessive vitriol or lavish praise. His detractors were probably too numerous to count. His disciples included some of the most gifted and acclaimed Jews of the twentieth century-- among them Chaim Nachman Bialik, Mordecai Kaplan, Gershom Scholem, and Chaim Weizmann. There is no doubt that Ahad Ha'am made a deep and lasting impression on people. Even those who met him for the first time often described the encounter in words of encomium. Writing in The Maccabaeon in 1914, Joseph L. Cohen told of a Friday evening visit to the Ginzberg household in London: "To meet a Jewish leader or an able speaker, a great writer, a profound scholar, a cultured business man, or a widely traveled student would have been a privilege... When, however, one was to meet a man who embodied the characteristics not of one or two of such personalities, but of them all, it was indeed sufficient to make one quake."<sup>1</sup>

Ahad Ha'am's greatest supporters were those who established personal relationships with him. He demanded a lot of his friends, but their loyalty was amply rewarded. In his own quiet but forceful way, he played a decisive role in the lives of his colleagues and adherents. Bialik wrote that:

Ahad Ha'am influenced us more by his personality than by his writings. Even his essays and books are effective primarily because they are so expressive of his personality, despite the fact that he tried to hide it... We could not say what it was that captivated us, but our hearts told us that with Ahad Ha'am we were entering upon a new era. Many of us hoped for a literary career and here in Ahad Ha'am we found the guide who could lead us. He was not just a writer in the accepted sense of the word but a teacher, a path-finder and a trailblazer.<sup>2</sup>

The very same qualities that rankled his critics, endeared him to his friends. He was a man of uncompromising integrity. Truth and honesty were his watchwords. He was guided by an undying passion for the truth and would not shy away from speaking his mind, even if the truth were painful. Writing in The New Palestine shortly after Ahad Ha'am's death, Chaim Weizmann called him "The Uncompromising Searcher of Truth": "... he was the most honest man, intellectually, that I have ever known. He would never permit you to pass off a sham for a real thing. Always he was too critical, too clear-sighted, to allow any sort of pretentiousness, any sort of unfounded claim to pass by without a challenge."<sup>3</sup> In that same article, Weizmann related how Ahad Ha'am was a source of strength and inspiration to him in the crucial days before the signing of the Balfour Declaration: "In the days of the Balfour Declaration he was probably at his best. There the philosopher, the practical man (many forgot that Ahad Ha'am was an eminently able business man) and the sage were fused into one. His advice, his guidance, his criticism, his caution, were tremendously valuable, and tremendously constructive. I did not take a single major step without consulting him first..."<sup>4</sup>

Not all of Ahad Ha'am's friends, however, trumpeted his praise. In fact, some of his greatest jousts were fought against his closest friends. A prime example was Simon Dubnow, the renowned Jewish historian whose controversy with Ahad Ha'am extended over many years. In actuality, Dubnow and Ahad Ha'am shared a similar national ideology, but it was precisely because their views were so close that they engaged in hair-splitting polemics. In an article entitled "The Affirmation of the Diaspora (A Reply to Ahad Ha'am's 'Negation of the Diaspora')"<sup>5</sup>, Dubnow attempted to clarify the differences between them.

Dubnow agreed with Ahad Ha'am that national culture in the diaspora would never be as full and pure as the cultural development that would occur in an autonomous Jewish center in Palestine. He further agreed that the establishment of a National Spiritual Center in Palestine would play a vital role in the life of the Jewish nation. Nevertheless, since he believed that historical necessity dictated the continued presence of the majority of the Jewish nation in the diaspora, he was not content that the diaspora would be a mere receptacle for the cultural vitality spewing forth from Palestine. Jews, he believed, should develop healthy autonomous centers of their national culture wherever they lived. The spiritual center in the Land of Israel would certainly exert a positive influence on Jewish life in the diaspora, but it would be only one of many factors which would contribute to the strengthening of the life of the nation. Ahad Ha'am, in contrast, maintained that the center in Palestine would be the predominant source of nourishment for the entire nation. Dubnow, who placed greater emphasis and respon-

sibility on the communities of the diaspora, envisioned a relationship of mutual interdependence between the Land of Israel and the diaspora, where the two great poles of Jewish life were in equilibrium. The diaspora, he asserted, would recoup in quantity what it lacked in quality. "The reciprocal influence of the two centers," he declared, "will create the mean for the national development of Judaism."<sup>6</sup>

A more sizeable point of contention between the two friends was the question of the Yiddish language. Dubnow agreed with Ahad Ha'am that Hebrew was the natural tongue of the Jewish people. Unlike Ahad Ha'am, however, who had no place for Yiddish in the national revival, Dubnow argued that it would be national suicide to destroy the language which, for several generations, had been one of the principal foundations of national unity in the diaspora and a defensive bulwark against assimilation:

The Hebrew language is our natural leg, but it is only one leg, not two: the second was cut off by the exile which removed the language from living use by the masses of the people and confined it to the fields of literature, religion, and, in some measure, to education. In place of the missing leg came an artificial leg, Yiddish. On these two legs our people has stood and survived for many generations, just as in former years it stood on the linguistic dualism of Hebrew and Aramaic. Do those nationalists who affirm the Diaspora wish to remove the artificial leg, which, for some time now, has gained the strength of a natural leg, and not to use it to get a firm foothold in national life? This would mean to pronounce a verdict of instantaneous disintegration on the people if they were so unwise as to listen to such a dangerous suggestion.<sup>7</sup>

In a related article written five years later (1914), called "Negation and Affirmation of the Diaspora in Ahad Ha'am's Thought,"<sup>8</sup>



Dubnow underlined his commitment to national autonomy in the diaspora. He summarized the differences between himself and Ahad Ha'am and concluded that on questions of basic principle there would be no compromise. Yet despite his differences with his friend, Dubnow believed that Ahad Ha'am would strike a new synthesis and be the mediating influence between the two extremes of the Jewish nationalist camp-- those building a spiritual center in Zion and those creating an independent life for the Jewish spirit in the diaspora:

The Hebrew community has the right to expect new creative ideas from Ahad Ha'am's pen, ideas concerning the great questions that move the Jewish world, the theory of the evolution of faith and knowledge, of ethics, and of the idea of nationalism. When Ahad Ha'am ascends to the 'summit', I trust that he will create there the nationalist synthesis, which will follow logically from his earlier teaching and will at the same time strike out on a path branching off from his Parashat derakhim.<sup>9</sup>

Another adversary of Ahad Ha'am's, from the inner Odessa circle, was Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843-1910), one of the leaders of Hibbat Zion, and an avid proponent of colonization work in Palestine. Lilienblum was born in Kaidan, a small town in Lithuania, and, like Ahad Ha'am, was reared in a traditional Jewish household. At a young age, Lilienblum rebelled against his upbringing, began reading the Russian positivists, and became a Maskil. His first inclination in regard to the "Jewish problem" was to advocate far-reaching reforms in Jewish religious life and a program of cooperation with the Christian community, based on mutual tolerance and understanding. The 1881 pogroms, however, changed his mind about the ability of



Jews to successfully integrate into the Christian world. He rejected assimilation as an alternative and became an ardent nationalist.<sup>10</sup>

Lilienblum argued aggressively that the Jews must devote all of their energy and resources to buying and developing land in Israel:

We must work for the development of our land, and we have no right to shirk this divine task ... Let those with a minimum of one thousand rubles go to Eretz Israel now and buy land for themselves. All these people will be followed by masses who have nothing, and by numerous artisans and craftsmen. In due course, when conditions will have improved through agriculture, trade, and industry, prosperity will make it possible for the rest of our destitute to come there. So let us begin our labor. Our God, Who has sustained us and has not left us to the mercy of the lions among whom we have dwelt these thousands of years, will give us strength for our efforts to find rest.<sup>11</sup>

Lilienblum had no understanding of Ahad Ha'am's call for a spiritual Zionism, and he was the chief spokesman for that branch of Hibbat Zion which accused Ahad Ha'am of neglecting the immediate, practical tasks that must be attended to if the dream of rebuilding Zion were to be realized. Whereas Ahad Ha'am called for a program of gradualism, national education, and preparation of the heart, Lilienblum argued for expediency. When Ahad Ha'am exposed the weaknesses of the colonization program in "This Is Not the Way," Lilienblum responded in the same paper with an article which took Ahad Ha'am to task for his lack of "practical" vision. When B'nei Moshe was founded in 1889, Lilienblum agreed to join, but he showed little interest in the society and left after a year, when it became clear that

Ahad Ha'am's philosophy of gradualism would be the guiding principle of the organization. Although Lilienblum and Ahad Ha'am never shared a common viewpoint about the best way to bring about a national renaissance in Palestine, the two remained friends until Lilienblum's death in 1910.

Ahad Ha'am also came under fire from the religious wing of Hibbat Zion, which was threatened by his thinly veiled agnosticism. Pious critics often angrily accused him of being a heretic and an enemy of religion. There were those who even charged him with being a reformer, which struck him as ironic since he was an outspoken critic of the Reform movement in Europe. In most instances, Ahad Ha'am did not deem it worth his while to respond to "fanatic abuse" from the orthodox camp, yet in one article entitled "Divre Shalom" ("Words of Peace"), written in 1895 in reply to Rabbi Jonathan Eliasberg, who was a devoted member of Hibbat Zion, he took pains to point out that he did not want to undermine or reform religious law. Nevertheless, despite his attempt to reconcile his differences with the orthodox, Ahad Ha'am could not disguise his indifference to traditional Judaism, and he would not renounce his belief that religion was a lifeless shell whose organic core had been dead for generations.

Ahad Ha'am's battles with the political Zionists are well documented, and I have already discussed their fundamental differences in earlier chapters. In his many skirmishes with the political Zionists, Ahad Ha'am was careful not to allow personal affront to color his methodically reasoned arguments. As much as he avoided character assassination, however, he did

not refrain from making stinging assaults and from spicing his articles with parody, wit, and biting sarcasm whenever he wanted to illustrate a point. When he wrote a lacerating review of Herzl's Altneuland, a utopian novel which depicted the Zionist leader's vision of the future Jewish state, Herzl's lieutenant Max Nordau responded with an over-zealous attack on Ahad Ha'am's character. Ahad Ha'am would not be provoked, however, and his rejoinder to Nordau remained on the level of issues. As the years passed, the chasm between the two camps narrowed, though Ahad Ha'am never relented on his belief that statehood was a secondary objective to the revival of Judaism's inner spirit.

Chaim Nachman Bialik and Martin Buber, two respected thinkers who knew Ahad Ha'am during his lifetime, came to his defense on a number of the issues recounted above. Bialik pointed out that, although other thinkers such as Krochmal, Luzzatto, and Smolenskin were greater than Ahad Ha'am, none gave the program of action that he offered.<sup>12</sup> Ahad Ha'am forced his adherents to confront the vicissitudes of modernity without relinquishing their contact with Jewish history. Furthermore, by forging a synthesis between the past and the future, Bialik claimed, Ahad Ha'am did not do damage to the nation's religious life. On the contrary, by freeing the national ideal from its obligation to religion, he merely brought religion "into the national domain as one of the forms of Israel's survival. Ascribing religious sanctity to the national idea, he elevated it to the level of the loftiest holiness encompassing everything, religion included. All elements contributing to the nation's survival-- the land, the book, the language-- he raised to the level of religious

sanctity. He made the profane sacred."<sup>13</sup>

Buber defended Ahad Ha'am's critique of political Zionism. Ahad Ha'am, he argued, was fundamentally realistic and made no demands which were beyond the realm of the possible. Unlike the political Zionists who were content to struggle for the attainment of life's necessities, Ahad Ha'am was concerned with the question of life's essence. "Ahad Ha'am's Zionism," Buber wrote, "is not 'smaller' than the political brand but greater. He demands not less, but more."<sup>14</sup> Ahad Ha'am, he said, was a true Zionist, but his Zionism was much more than the struggle for territorial sovereignty. He lived at the service of the ideal. Zion was not merely a piece of land or a political foundation. It was a comprehensive program that called for no less than the transformation and perfection of the inner spirit of the Jewish nation. "For political Zionism," Buber wrote, "the state is the goal and Zion a 'myth' which merely fires the masses; for the lover of Zion like Ahad Ha'am the state is merely the way to a goal called Zion."<sup>15</sup> Ahad Ha'am's prescription, Buber said, was to love Zion. Once the love of Zion had fired the heart of the nation and once the people had completely surrendered their individuality to the national ideal, the goal of Zion would become a concrete reality.

#### B. YEHEZKEL KAUFMANN AND MORDECAI KAPLAN: A LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE OF AHAD HA'AM'S THOUGHT

During his most fruitful and creative years when he was producing five or six articles a year, most of the criticism directed at Ahad Ha'am was born in the heat of Zionist polemics. He was accused of not being realistic, of being an enemy of

religion, and of understating the vital potential of autonomous Jewish life in the diaspora. No one took the initiative to examine the substratum of his ideas with any seriousness, probably because his detractors were too much a part of the same social and intellectual milieu as Ahad Ha'am to gain a critical perspective on his thinking. Toward the end of his life and soon after his death, however, two Jewish scholars-- Yehezkel Kaufmann and Mordecai Kaplan-- took a closer look at the underlying premise of Ahad Ha'am's ideas.

In 1920, Yehezkel Kaufmann, who was one of the most esteemed Biblical scholars of his generation, wrote an article in the periodical Maklet which examined the scientific basis of what he called Ahad Ha'am's "natural naturalism." To this day, Kaufmann's critique remains one of the most thorough and sophisticated estimates of Ahad Ha'am's work.

Kaufmann took issue with Ahad Ha'am on two crucial points. First, he disagreed with Ahad Ha'am that the national will-to-live is an instinct implanted in man by nature and, second, he argued that a program of national survival that was based on secular-nationalism, and that did not rest on religious culture, would lead the nation down the road of extinction.

In a metaphorical sense, Kaufmann agreed that the national will-to-live was the unique impulse which preserved the Jewish nation from annihilation. Yet, whereas Ahad Ha'am maintained that the national feeling has a biological or hereditary basis, Kaufmann asserted that there is no scientific evidence that national feeling is an instinctive trait imprinted in man at birth. "Even the most extreme Nativism," he wrote, "will not



assume that so complex an idea is implanted in man by nature."<sup>16</sup> Kaufmann argued, in contradistinction to Ahad Ha'am, that national feeling is an acquired trait which is the fruit of the interaction between the social instinct of man and the natural forces of history: "The nation is a group that was created historically. The members of the nation have a common past and are united by a more or less recognized association of birth."<sup>17</sup> There is no basis to the belief, he said, that a person's attachment to a particular land, language or culture is biologically determined. Even the concept of racial affinity or blood-ties is not a product of instinct but, rather, is the outgrowth of intimate social ties that have been given the appearance of hereditary bonds through their continuous association for countless generations. "The national will to survive," he concluded, "is simply the desire common to certain persons to live together amid conditions of existence that were acquired and created by them as a result of their national association."<sup>18</sup>

Having undercut the biological basis of Ahad Ha'am's thinking, Kaufmann proceeded to dismantle the notions that: (1) religion is a product of the national will, and (2) a secular-national existence is possible in the diaspora. He began the second stage of his analysis by attempting to explain the secret of the survival of Jewish national consciousness in the diaspora, after two thousand years of exile, in the absence of land, language, or statehood. History teaches, Kaufmann argued, that the same socio-historical forces that allow for the creation of a nation also bring about its extinction. Reality dictates that, once the bonds of national unity are severed, a nation

will naturally and voluntarily assimilate into other national groups. Many nations have met their demise in this way, yet, the continued, unnatural existence of the Jewish nation in dispersion is proof that some unique factor has been at work in its struggle for survival. There is no doubt, Kaufmann maintained, that the religious element in our spiritual culture is the force that, contrary to the nature of reality, has preserved the nation in exile.

Ahad Ha'am insisted that religion was only one of many elements that contributed to the self-segregation of the Jewish nation in the diaspora and, furthermore, that religion was a product of the national will. Kaufmann asserted that religion, which he defined as the "national monotheistic belief," was "the first and only cause of Israel's self-isolation in the Diaspora"<sup>19</sup> and the sole source of its national will. Had it not been for the Jewish people's stubborn adherence to its faith, Judaism would have taken the natural course of assimilation. "The national existence of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, then," Kaufmann stated, "is not to be explained by the force of some biological or psychological quality (there is no such basis for any national existence), or by the force of the nature of the social reality (as is the case with the existence of other nations), but by the force of religion, which is the source of its national will."<sup>20</sup> Kaufmann concluded, therefore, that if Ahad Ha'am's "natural nationalism," which he believed to be a misnomer, were allowed to prevail, the Jewish nation would go the way of all other nations which no longer had a basis for their continued existence. The Jewish national renaissance,

he maintained, could only be predicated on religious faith.

Mordecai Kaplan, a devoted student of Ahad Ha'am and the founder of the Reconstructionist movement, was one of those responsible for introducing Ahad Ha'am's ideas into the mainstream of American Jewish life and thought. Although he was deeply influenced by Ahad Ha'am, Kaplan departed from him in, at least, one crucial area-- the question of the relationship of the individual to the community.

Ahad Ha'am's insistence on maintaining autonomy and freedom of action in his private life revealed a certain obscurity in his thinking about the matter, yet his essays are unequivocal in their belief that the life of the individual is subordinate to the life of the nation. He was clearly opposed to any theology which entertained the notion of the primacy of the individual. Kaplan, on the other hand, believed that self-realization was the goal of community life and the ultimate reason for its existence:

With all due deference to Ahad Ha-Am, one cannot but regard as chimerical and unpsychologic his effort to bring about the renaissance of the Jewish people by urging the substitution of loyalty and devotion to the Jewish national being in place of the individualistic yearning for personal salvation. He contends that such complete identification of the individual with the group existed before other-worldly motivation was introduced into Judaism, and could therefore again become the characteristic of Jewish consciousness. This contention overlooks the progressive self-assertion of the individual which may almost be formulated into a law of human history. Once men have learned to reckon with the individual as an end rather than as a means in appraising the value of any social ideal or program, it is reactionary to ask the individual to sink back into his former subservience.<sup>21</sup>

Kaplan believed that it was a mistake to construct a modern nationalism which did not account for the centrality of the individual. The nation exists to serve the individual, and any program which aims at the spiritual regeneration of Judaism must not deny that fact.

## II. CRITICISM AFTER 1948: SPIRITUAL ZIONISM ON THE DEFENSIVE

In the aftermath of World War II, when the Jewish world was coming to terms with the incomprehensible events of the Holocaust, the elitist, high-minded concerns of Ahad Ha'am seemed irrelevant and inappropriate. Jewish leadership in both the diaspora and the Yishuv was preoccupied with the immediate task of finding a safe refuge for the survivors of the death camps. In addition, feverish diplomatic activity was under way to convince the world to allow for the rebirth of a Jewish State in Palestine. Finally, the Jewish community in Palestine was gearing up for the possibility of an all-out invasion from the surrounding Arab countries which were opposed to the creation of a Jewish State in their midst. In the face of these more pressing concerns, "Ahad Ha'amism" was on the defensive. Even Leon Simon, one of Ahad Ha'am's most loyal and enduring disciples, admitted that events had proven "that Herzl's diagnosis of the Jewish problem over fifty years ago was correct, and that the paramount need of the Jewish people was for an independent home of refuge in which the victims of anti-Semitism could live as free men."<sup>22</sup>

After the Israeli War of Independence, when Israel was a firm reality and Jews turned to the difficult task of rebuilding their country, scholars began, once again, to examine the ideas

of Ahad Ha'am. Twenty-one years had passed since Ahad Ha'am's death, and nearly six decades had elapsed since Ahad Ha'am broached the idea of a National Spiritual Center. The thunderous events of the 1930's and 40's and the passage of time had provided scholars with a sense of perspective on Ahad Ha'am's work, and they began to evaluate his thought against a new backdrop. His ideas were critiqued on several different fronts, by both religious and secular authorities.

The religious assault which had begun during Ahad Ha'am's lifetime was even more virulent after 1948. Baruch Kurzweil, an Israeli literary critic and cultural historian, led the attack against what he called Ahad Ha'am's secularization of Jewish history. In a stinging article written in 1955, Kurzweil spoke about the "quiet demonism" of Ahad Ha'am and indicted him for the destruction of the religious faith of Israeli youth. Kurzweil branded Ahad Ha'am an atheist and accused him of intellectual mediocrity, yet he was less troubled by Ahad Ha'am's personal religious conviction than by the "deceptive and insidious" tone of Ahad Ha'am's writings. Ahad Ha'am's doctrine is dangerous, Kurzweil warned, because he is so easily misunderstood:

What evokes concern in all these ideas is not the lack of a religious faith but the attempt to create a theology without God. What is most dangerous and deceptive in this way of thinking which pervades all of Achad Ha-am's writings, becomes obvious in his constant concern with the values of the religious world, and his facile reworking of them into the foundation stones of a world reared on the ruin of religious faith. The pretense of continuity is deceptive and misleading for actually this 'continuity' tacitly assumes the final destruction of faith. A soft temperateness conceals the total destruction of religious faith that is taking place. This is the



demonism of Achad Ha'am, that mild reasonableness within which heresy appears as the legitimate heir and extension of religion.<sup>23</sup>

Kurzweil argued that Ahad Ha'am's secular nationalism was ill-conceived because a spiritual center not built on faith would be lacking in substance and authority. Despite his animosity, however, Kurzweil conceded that Ahad Ha'am was a man of considerable ethical stature. Yet, he said, the humanistic elements of Ahad Ha'am's thought had been forgotten. All that remained was a negative and erroneous philosophy of Jewish history which had ominous implications for the future of Jewish life in Israel.

Kurzweil was, perhaps, the most venomous among those who argued that Ahad Ha'am's secular nationalism had set a dangerous precedent, but many others agreed with the main part of his critique. Eliezer Berkovits, who divulged that Ahad Ha'am was the ideological hero of his youth, and for whom the idea of the spiritual center held great sway, remarked that he did not accept Ahad Ha'am's secularism.<sup>24</sup> Leon Roth, who was the former Ahad Ha'am Professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, stated in an article about Ahad Ha'am that any account of Judaism which denies or neglects the idea of God as creator must not be accepted "without rigid and searching examination."<sup>25</sup> Jacob Agus warned that a shifting away from a God-centered Judaism to a landed ethnic-political Judaism would "end in a tragic reversion to the primitive pagan ethos of the prebiblical world."<sup>26</sup> Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, who have written extensively on the development of civil religion in Israel, dubbed Ahad Ha'am "the unacknowledged father of Israeli

civil religion." "Anticipating civil religion," they wrote, "Ahad Ha'am transformed references to God to the Jewish people themselves. He utilized such categories as 'sanctification' or 'holy spirit' or 'prophecy' but his terms were this-worldly in origin and this-worldly in their referent."<sup>27</sup>

Ahad Ha'am was not only critiqued for his secularism. Echoing Yehezkel Kaufmann, and bolstering their arguments with modern scientific theory, critics discredited his notion of biological nationalism. Jacob Agus pointed out the fallacy in the belief that a nation, like an individual, is endowed with an unconscious sense of self-preservation that was implanted by nature. The instinctual desire of a nation to survive, he said, is a myth, but, he observed, it is a myth of considerable potency:

The concept of a national will to live, dwelling in the hidden recesses of the unconscious and projecting various ideas into public life, is certainly a myth. With equal certainty, however, we can affirm that people will battle more zealously for the myths that minister to their pride than for the beliefs that appeal to their intelligence. In an age of nationalistic rivalries it is difficult to resist the pressure to clothe one's true being in the panoply of pleasing myths and radiant fantasies.<sup>28</sup>

A further critique of Ahad Ha'am centered on his belief in the superiority of Jewish ethics. Jacob Golub argued that there is no basis that Jews throughout history have been exemplars of just practices in their daily affairs. In addition, he observed, the only difference between Ahad Ha'am's concept of the ethical mission of the Jewish nation and the Reform belief that Jews should be "a light to the nations" was that the Reformers championed dispersion, whereas Ahad Ha'am believed that a national

return was essential.<sup>29</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, in his introductory essay to The Zionist Idea, concurred that Ahad Ha'am's argument for the superiority of Jewish over Christian morality is a weak one. Rather than put forth a theory of Jewish racial supremacy which, Hertzberg asserted, Ahad Ha'am found repugnant, he preferred to leave his theory of Jewish moral ascendancy unexplained. This was, perhaps, the reason why Ahad Ha'am never wrote his anticipated book on Jewish ethics.<sup>30</sup>

Many scholars asserted that Ahad Ha'am's concept of nationalism was too narrowly conceived. On the one hand, Josef Fraenkel argued, any cultural achievement of the Jewish people that did not take place within the arena of Hebraism was excluded from the category of national culture. "According to Ahad Ha'am's theory," he wrote, "all Jewish philosophers and scholars-- including Nobel Prize Winners, who wrote on subjects such as medicine, mathematics, or physics, in any language other than Hebrew, would also have to be excluded."<sup>31</sup> Hayim Greenberg accused Ahad Ha'am of elevating nationalism to an absolute value. Nationalism, said Greenberg, was a relative and temporal value, not an absolute one, and by placing his entire emphasis on the survival of the nation, Ahad Ha'am revealed his narrow-mindedness.

On the question of Israel as a spiritual center to the Jewish nation, scholars are in agreement that Israel cannot fulfill that role in the way that Ahad Ha'am intended. Writing in 1959, Arthur Hertzberg wondered how Ahad Ha'am could be certain that the diaspora would relegate unquestioned authority to the center. Moreover, he asked, why was he so sure "that a revived 'center' would inevitably produce a new formulation of first-rate moral

ideas? Perhaps it would be a 'normal' small community and, hence, give birth to second-- and even third-rate ideas-- or to no ideas at all?"<sup>32</sup> Fourteen years later, in his book Israel at the Crossroads, Eliezer Schweid, a professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University, concluded that Israel can, in many ways, play a vital role in the preservation of the Jewish people, but that it cannot be a spiritual center of world Jewry. Culture, he argued, cannot be exported. If Jews in the diaspora decline to take an active responsibility in the creation of their own Jewish universe and, instead, depend exclusively on Israel for cultural nourishment, they would soon assimilate into the dominant culture. As provocative as the idea of a spiritual center was, a sober look at reality teaches that it was never more than a romantic myth:

The State of Israel was not and could never have been made into such a spiritual center. In principle it must be set forth that no individual or community ever takes part in a culture in a passive manner, as if receiving a gift from someone else. Participation in a culture means active involvement in the process of creativity. For this reason, a Jewish group which has no active focus of Jewish community life or independent Jewish creative culture of its own can never take part in the cultural creativity of another Jewish center.

At the very most a Diaspora Jew might pick out some colorful aspects of an exotic way of life for himself along with some bits of marginal culture. These might serve as a plaything for the young and offer a little nostalgia to senior citizens. But such things would and could give people nothing with which to stand up against the influence of a culture within which they were actually creating living values. The superficiality of Jewish culture among the vast majority of the Jews of Europe and America is irrefutable proof of the validity of this assertion. Ahad Ha'am's concept of a spiritual center was, from this point of view, devoid of all substance from the beginning.<sup>33</sup>

### III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AHAD HA'AM FOR THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL

If one accepts Eliezer Schweid's conclusion that the National Spiritual Center was not and never will be a workable idea, should one also conclude that spiritual Zionism is a spent force and that Ahad Ha'am has nothing of value to offer a Jew living in the 1980's? I will argue that this is not the case. In fact, I believe that, despite his limitations, Ahad Ha'am is as significant today as he was eighty years ago, during the height of his influence.

Although Israel, on the eve of its thirty-fifth birthday has not become the spiritual center (in relationship to the diaspora) of which Ahad Ha'am dreamed, it has become a cultural center of remarkable vitality. If Ahad Ha'am were alive today, he would undoubtedly express great joy at the changes which have occurred in the half-century since his death.

He would observe a thriving democracy of nearly four million inhabitants. Hebrew is, once again, the natural and living language of the land. Hebrew culture is blossoming in every area of life. Literature, art, theater, and music and dance of the highest quality are found in abundance. Many native-born Israeli authors, poets, artists, and musicians have gained international recognition. Nearly one hundred museums-- devoted to archaeology, art, history, nature, anthropology, and science and technology-- are spread throughout the country. Over 750 libraries, overflowing with Hebrew books, cater to the unquenchable thirsts of Israel's book-loving public.

Advanced scholarship is rife at Israel's five universities in nearly every major academic discipline. Scientists working



at The Weizmann Institute and The Technion have already made far-reaching contributions to the progress of civilization. Israel is among the world leaders, for example, in the fields of agriculture and water conservation.

There is no doubt that, in its short lifetime, the national enterprise in Israel has become a source of pride to Jews all over the world. Yet, despite its enormous achievements, Israel is presently in the throes of a painful crisis of conscience, a crisis which has shaken the country to its roots, and whose outcome may well determine the moral direction that the nation will follow into the future.

The immediate source of the problem was Israel's invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982. For the first time in its history, Israel was involved in a war in which its survival was not at stake, and as the conflict widened, the country became divided about the morality of the war. The crisis reached a tragic climax when, in mid-September, a Lebanese Christian unit of Phalangist militiamen entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila and brutally murdered hundreds of Palestinian men, women and children.

A public outcry in Israel demanded an immediate inquiry into the killings. A commission chaired by Supreme Court Justice Yitzhak Kahan was formed to conduct an investigation. The Kahan Commission Report, released to the public in February, 1983, determined that Israel, which was the occupying military force in the area of the refugee camps at the time of the massacre, was in no way directly responsible for the killings. Nevertheless, the commission concluded that certain individuals

(among them, Israel's Minister of Defense) "who, when they received the first reports of what was happening in the camps, did not rush to prevent the continuation of the Phalangists' action and did not do everything within their power to stop them"<sup>34</sup> were indirectly responsible for the murders. In defending its decision to assign indirect responsibility, the commission cited the "ethical rules" which govern the behavior of civilized people and reached back into Jewish history for moral guidance:

When we are dealing with the issue of indirect responsibility, it should also not be forgotten that the Jews in various lands of exile and also in the Land of Israel when it was under foreign rule suffered greatly from pogroms perpetrated by various hooligans; and the danger of disturbances against Jews in various lands, it seems evident, has not yet passed.

The Jewish public's stand has always been that the responsibility for such deeds falls not only on those who rioted and committed the atrocities but also on those who were responsible for safety and public order, who could have prevented the disturbances and did not fulfill their obligations in this respect.<sup>35</sup>

The Kahan Commission Report was hailed by Jews and non-Jews around the world as testimony to Israel's moral strength. Never before had a nation judged itself so quickly and so decisively. "The truth about Sabra and Shatila," wrote The New Republic, "has been given in Hebrew. And the truth about Israel's part in the perfidy, too. Israel has not merely investigated others, which is the most common method of inquiry in international affairs; it has investigated itself."<sup>36</sup>

Ahad Ha'am would undoubtedly have applauded the findings of the commission, but his moral anguish would not have been

relieved by the publication of its report. The controversy over the war in Lebanon uncovered a deep rift in Israeli society. The division was tragically illustrated by the murder of Emil Grunzweig, a supporter of Peace Now, who was killed by a hand grenade, when he marched in protest against the government in front of Prime Minister Begin's office in Jerusalem. In all probability, the grenade that killed Grunzweig and wounded nine others was thrown by a fellow Jew.

His entire life, Ahad Ha'am warned that a Jewish State not built upon the ethical principles of Judaism would become the victim of its own inner failings. "The specific thing," wrote Leon Roth, "is Ahad Ha'am's insistence on the overriding character of moral action. In Judaism the moral requirement is supreme. The great sin of today is the 'politicization' of our Judaism, the great need, the 'Judaization' of our politics."<sup>37</sup> Like the Prophets of old, Ahad Ha'am believed that the inner moral voice stood at the core of Judaism. Even if one rejects his biological determinism and even if one is uncomfortable with his thinly masked secularism, one may still look to Ahad Ha'am for moral guidance. Ahad Ha'am believed in the sanctity of the nation, but the nation was not, for him, an end in itself. Rather, the nation and its spirit were the means to achieving a more perfect world-- a world which is governed by the principles of truth, righteousness, and absolute justice.

Donniel Hartman, a tank commander in the war in Lebanon, derived meaning from the war in this way: "The battle has just begun," he said. "The real battle now is in the hands of the educators, and people like ourselves who are dedicating their

lives to educate the people of Israel. The real battle has to start now, not fighting the Arabs, but a battle inside the state of Israel to decide not what the borders of the state will be, but what type of state it will be. We can't waste this war. It's very important not to waste this war."<sup>38</sup>

If Ahad Ha'am were alive today, he would tell us that the Jewish people, once again, stands at a crossroads. We have two choices. We can either follow the path of militarism or we can follow the path of morality. Ahad Ha'am was many things, but mostly he was an educator. He taught us that Jewish ethics must be the basis for all that we do as individuals and as a nation. We must read him and read him again so we do not forget his message.

## FOOTNOTES

The footnotes below are organized by chapter. Passages from Ahad Ha'am's letters and collected writings were translated by the author unless otherwise indicated.

## CHAPTER II: AHAD HA'AM'S LIFE AND TIMES

<sup>1</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Pirkei Zichronot," Kol Kitvei Ahad Ha'am, Second Edition (Tel Aviv: Dvir; and Jerusalem: Ivrit, 1949), p. 496.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 486. This custom called Shiraim (remains) is a ritual practiced by the Hasidim when the Rebbe has finished eating. Although the origin of the custom is not known, the Hasidim believe that the Rebbe has made the food holy by his touch and that by tasting it they imbibe its spiritual content.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 466.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 467.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 469.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 469.

<sup>7</sup>Chaim Weizmann, Trial and Error (New York: Harper, 1949), p. 37.

<sup>8</sup>Shalom Spiegel, Hebrew Reborn (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1930), pp. 282-283.

<sup>9</sup>Letter to Dr. S. Bernfeld, 12 December 1902, Igrot Ahad Ha'am, 6 Volumes, Second Edition, Edited by Aryeh (Leon) Simon with Yohanan Pograbsky (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1956-1960), vol. 3, p. 203.

<sup>10</sup>Letter to A. Lubarski, 30 April 1906, Igrot, vol. 4, pp. 30-32.

<sup>11</sup>Letter to E. Lewin-Epstein, 16 May 1909, Igrot, vol. 4, pp. 206-207.

<sup>12</sup>Letter to S. Dubnow, 26 December 1911, Igrot, vol. 4, p. 408.

<sup>13</sup>Letter to S. Dubnow, 3 September 1912, Igrot, vol. 5, p. 45. "Ah, my dear friend, the most terrible curse has descended upon us all: 'Your sons and daughters have been given over to another people', as if the diaspora wants to play with us and to show us the extent of its power... I don't have the strength to write about it in detail, but even from this inkling you'll understand what I mean. And also my emotional state you will understand more than others."



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Letter to J.H. Ravnitzki, 10 December 1912, Igrot, vol. 5, p. 58. "I do not know now if my method of educating my children, the method of complete freedom, is well-suited to the objective which I had intended-- to make them Jews out of love and free will and not by force or out of deference to a father. I didn't achieve my objective, and I don't know if another method would have succeeded."

Letter to Moshe Smilanski, 7 January 1913, Igrot, vol. 5, p. 69. "The main reason for my long silence is because you have touched the deep wound in my heart, and it was hard for me to respond to this part of your letter. Also now, this is difficult for me, because even the slightest touch awakens the pain which is as strong as it was in the first hour, although I succeeded in overcoming my grief enough to be able to live and work and not be like a broken clay pot, as I was in the beginning..." (and p. 70): "We are obligated to resist this enemy in the name of national existence and to be cruel on ourselves and our offspring without mercy. There is no place for compassion when our national existence is in danger."

<sup>14</sup>Letter to S. Maximon, 12 April 1916, Igrot, vol. 6, p. 18. "I haven't written a single line since the world went mad (except for my translation of Pinsker's Auto-Emancipation, which I finished last winter). What can I write about? To my misfortune, all my life I have been consumed by moral and social questions, and now when the moral world retreats into chaos and civilization becomes utterly evil, I am filled with disgust when I remember all those empty words which enticed the heart in bygone days. And I don't have the power to formulate ideas, much less to voice my opinion about all those questions dealing with the life of this despicable creature called 'man'."

<sup>15</sup>Letter to Dr. S. Bernfeld, 30 June 1914, Igrot, vol. 5, p. 299.

<sup>16</sup>Letter to S. Dubnow, 28 March 1923, Igrot, vol. 6, p. 252.

<sup>17</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Liftichat 'Hamachon L'madaei Hayahadut' Biru-shalayim," (On the Opening of the Institute for Jewish Knowledge in Jerusalem; a letter in the name of Dr. J.L. Magnes), Kol Kitvei, p. 464. "Despite our humble place among the nations, our people never stopped hoping for the fulfillment of the prophetic promise: 'For out of Zion shall go forth Torah.' Now the day has come when this promise is beginning to be realized, and our hope will no longer be merely a dream for the end of days, outside of time and place. In this institute of knowledge and other institutes surrounding it in this place, we are laying the foundation upon which our people will build its cultural palace from generation to generation."

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## CHAPTER III: EMANCIPATION: THE MODERN DILEMMA

<sup>1</sup>Howard Morley Sachar, The Course of Modern Jewish History, (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), p. 60.

## CHAPTER IV: THE DISEASE OF THE SPIRIT

<sup>1</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Shlilat Hagalut," Kol Kitvei, p. 400.

<sup>2</sup>Volkerrechtlich: The confidence on the part of the political Zionists that the other nations of the world would exercise propriety and act in a civilized and just manner when dealing with the Jews. This expression, which was part of the rhetoric of political Zionism, is here parodied by Ahad Ha'am.

<sup>3</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup>Letter to A. Druyanov, 16 September 1906, Igrot, vol. 4, pp. 54-55.

<sup>5</sup>Simon Dubnow, Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism, Edited by Koppel S. Pinson (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958).

<sup>6</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Shlilat Hagalut," Kol Kitvei, p. 401.

<sup>7</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Higiah Hashaah," Kol Kitvei, p. 380.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 380. "This spiritual pressure, which our ancestors used to call 'the exile of the Shechinah' and over which they shed no fewer tears than they shed over the exile of the people-- this pressure became especially severe in our time, when conditions destroyed the artificial 'wall', which acted as a fortress for the spirit of our people in past generations, enabling it to lead an independent life; but now we and our national life are enslaved to the spirit of the peoples surrounding us and we can no longer prevent the decay of our national individuality, which results from being forced to adapt to the alien spirit of life which engulfs us."

<sup>9</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Shlilat Hagalut," Kol Kitvei, pp. 399-400. "The majority recognize the serious predicament of being 'sheep among wolves' and all of them would like to put an end to this situation, if it were only possible. Even those who usually praise the diaspora always saying: 'God did justly with the people of Israel by dispersing them among the nations,'-- say so only because it is in their nature to be 'blindly optimistic,' and because they are too weak and afraid to confront the evil reality..."

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<sup>10</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Chikui V'hitbolelut," Kol Kitvei, p. 89. "In the early days of our people, when it existed as a confederation of separate tribes, the military prowess of David together with the wisdom of Solomon were sufficient to create for it a center such as this,..."

<sup>11</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "T'chiyat Haruach," Kol Kitvei, p. 176.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>13</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 137.

<sup>14</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Basar V'ruach," Kol Kitvei, p. 350.

<sup>15</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Lo Zeh Haderech," Kol Kitvei, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>18</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Higiah Hashaah," Kol Kitvei, p. 382.

<sup>19</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Riv L'shonot," Kol Kitvei, p. 404.

<sup>20</sup>W. Gunther Plaut, The Rise of Reform Judaism: A Sourcebook of its European Origins (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd., 1963), pp. 133-142.

<sup>21</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Avdut B'toch Cherut," Kol Kitvei, p. 65. "This situation which others view as a means to a more promising future, is, in reality, just the opposite, and its proper name is: inner slavery hiding under the guise of external freedom."

<sup>22</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Torah Shebalev," Kol Kitvei, p. 52. "But 'the people or the book' is a slave to the book, since its soul became detached from its heart and became enslaved to the written word. The purpose of the book is no longer to enrich the heart with renewed strength, but, instead, to weaken and debase it, until it will no longer dare to act and to be acted upon by 'its own power and according to its own needs,' but only through the written word. Every natural or moral phenomenon which is capable of stimulating the heart must first be accompanied by a written agreement that it is allowed to do so. And even then this awakening is not simple and natural, but the contrivance of a special artificial plan, fixed and limited beforehand; therefore, both the people and its book become frozen in time..."

<sup>23</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Higiah Hashaah," Kol Kitvei, p. 380.

<sup>24</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Torah Shebalev," Kol Kitvei, p. 53.

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## CHAPTER V: FROM DIAGNOSIS TO CURE: AHAD HA'AM'S PATH TO A NATIONAL SPIRITUAL CENTER

- <sup>1</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Cheshbon Hanefesh," Kol Kitvei, p. 61.
- <sup>2</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Avar V'atid," Kol Kitvei, pp. 81-82.
- <sup>3</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Al Shtei Haseipim," Kol Kitvei, p. 375.
- <sup>4</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Cheshbon Hanefesh," Kol Kitvei, p. 63.
- <sup>5</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Basar V'ruach," Kol Kitvei, p. 351.
- <sup>6</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Riv L'shonot," Kol Kitvei, p. 403.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 404.
- <sup>8</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Mukdam U'm'uchar Bachayim," Kol Kitvei, p. 80.
- <sup>9</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Torah Shebalev," Kol Kitvei, p. 53.
- <sup>10</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Hakdamah Lamahadurah Hachadashah," Kol Kitvei, p. 10.
- <sup>11</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Shlilat Hagalut," Kol Kitvei, p. 401.
- <sup>12</sup>Letter to Dr. J. Tchlenow, 31 October 1898, Igrot, vol. 2, p. 157.
- <sup>13</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 135.
- <sup>14</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Sach Hakol," Kol Kitvei, p. 422.
- <sup>15</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 139.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 138.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 138.
- <sup>18</sup>Letter to S. Dubnow, 29 May 1907, Igrot, vol. 4, pp. 90-92.  
Letter to S. Dubnow, 22 September 1907, Igrot, vol. 4, pp. 94-96.
- <sup>19</sup>Letter to S. Dubnow, 27 September 1909, Igrot, vol. 4, p. 225.
- <sup>20</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Shlilat Hagalut," Kol Kitvei, p. 400.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 400.



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<sup>22</sup>Letter to Dr. J.L. Magnes, 18 September 1910, Igrot, vol. 4, p. 285.

<sup>23</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Nachalat Avot," Kol Kitvei, p. 273.

<sup>24</sup>Letter to Dr. I. Abrahams, 30 March 1913, Igrot, vol. 5, p. 104.

<sup>25</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Dvire Shalom," Kol Kitvei, pp. 58-59.

<sup>26</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "T'chiyat Haruach," Kol Kitvei, p. 178.

<sup>27</sup>Letter to B. Benas and I. Raffalowich, 26 October 1916, Igrot, vol. 6, p. 44.

## CHAPTER VI: THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL CENTER: THE CURE

<sup>1</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Doktor Pinsker Umachbarto," Kol Kitvei, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Leon Simon, Ahad Ha'am: Asher Ginzberg, A Biography (New York: Herzl Press, 1960), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Torah Metzion," Kol Kitvei, p. 408. "... also one who does not believe in the existence of the divinity itself, cannot deny its existence as a real historical force, and a national Jew, even a heretic, cannot say: I have no connection to the God of Israel, that historical power that gave life to our people and influenced the character of its spirit in the course of its life for thousands of years. The one who truly has no connection with the God of Israel, the one who does not feel in his soul any spiritual bond with that 'divine world', to which our ancestors devoted their hearts and minds in every generation and from which they replenished their moral strength-- this type of person can be an honest man but a national Jew he is not, even if he 'dwells in the Land of Israel and speaks the holy tongue.'"

<sup>5</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Mizrach U'maarav," Kol Kitvei, p. 334.

<sup>6</sup>Letter to Dr. D. Neumark, 14 April 1901, Igrot, vol. 3, p. 43. "I surely understand your concern about those who are starving in the diaspora, but as you know, the settlement in the Land of Israel in my eyes does not relate to the question of bread. We had among us in every generation the hungry and oppressed, but it did not prevent our ancestors from devoting a great deal of their energy to spiritual needs. And that is our task as well."

<sup>7</sup>Ahad Ha'am, Letter to A.L. (Beatenberg), 31 August 1903, in Essays, Letters, Memoirs, Translated and Edited by Leon Simon (Oxford, England: The East and West Library, Phaidon Press, 1946), pp. 286-287.



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<sup>8</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem," in Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic: Basic Writings of Ahad Ha'am. Edited by Hans Kohn. Translated by Leon Simon (New York: Herzl Press, 1962), pp. 79-80.

<sup>9</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Hakongres Harishon," Kol Kitvei, p. 460.

<sup>10</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 138. "Needless to say, if the idea would not be realized, the results would be very sad, since the people would be robbed of both alternatives (this last idiom is confusing in the Hebrew; Simon interprets it to mean 'because we shall have lost the old basis without finding a new one.'). But even if the ideal would come to fruition, our present moral condition, in which the people and its spirit are scattered and disunited, would leave Judaism in great danger."

<sup>11</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "A Spiritual Centre," in Essays, Letters, Memoirs. Translated by Leon Simon, p. 204.

<sup>12</sup>Letter to D.S., 27 July 1903, Igrot, vol. 3, p. 256.

<sup>13</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Milim Unusagim," Kol Kitvei, p. 394.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 392-394.

<sup>15</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "A Spiritual Centre," in Essays, Letters, Memoirs. Translated by Leon Simon, p. 204.

<sup>16</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Cheshbon Hanefesh," Kol Kitvei, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Higia Hashaah," Kol Kitvei, p. 380.

<sup>18</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Basar V'ruach," Kol Kitvei, p. 352.

<sup>19</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 137.

<sup>20</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Basar V'ruach," Kol Kitvei, p. 352.

<sup>21</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 138.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>23</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Basar V'ruach," Kol Kitvei, p. 350.

<sup>24</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 138.

<sup>25</sup>Letter to Dr. J.L. Magnes, 18 September 1910, Igrot, vol. 4, p. 285.

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- <sup>26</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Higiah Hashaah," Kol Kitvei, p. 379.
- <sup>27</sup>Letter to M. Dizengoff, 25 July 1912, Igrot, vol. 5, p. 38.
- <sup>28</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 137.
- <sup>29</sup>Letter to A. Druyanov, 16 September 1906, Igrot, vol. 4, pp. 54-55.
- <sup>30</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Higiah Hashaah," Kol Kitvei, p. 380.
- <sup>31</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Medinat Hayehudim V'tzarat Hayehudim," Kol Kitvei, p. 138.
- <sup>32</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "T'chiyat Haruach," Kol Kitvei, p. 176.
- <sup>33</sup>Letter to Dr. Israel Abrahams, 30 March 1913, Igrot, vol. 5, p. 104.
- <sup>34</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "The Wrong Way," in Ten Essays on Zionism and Judaism, Translated by Leon Simon (London, England: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1922), p. 4.
- <sup>35</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Lo Zeh Haderech," Kol Kitvei, p. 13.
- <sup>36</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Higiah Hashaah," Kol Kitvei, p. 380.
- <sup>37</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "The Spiritual Revival," in Selected Essays of Ahad Ha'am, Edited and Translated by Leon Simon (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 277.
- <sup>38</sup>Letter to Dr. S. Bernfeld, 8 March 1899, Igrot, vol. 2, p. 251.
- <sup>39</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "The Spiritual Revival," in Selected Essays, Translated by Leon Simon, p. 259.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 259.
- <sup>41</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "T'chiyat Haruach," Kol Kitvei, p. 175.
- <sup>42</sup>Ahad Ha'am, Letter to Chaim Weizmann, 12 August 1918, in Essays, Letters, Memoirs, Translated by Leon Simon, p. 295.
- <sup>43</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Hamusar Haleumi," Kol Kitvei, p. 162.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 162.
- <sup>45</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "The Transvaluation of Values," Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic, Translated by Leon Simon, p. 175.

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<sup>46</sup> Ahad Ha'am, "Hamusar Haleumi," Kol Kitvei, p. 161. "And this (e.g. the recognition that ethics is not an appendage of religion) made them aware that these two-- religion and ethics-- are two separate trees of life, each having unique roots in the nature of the human spirit, and only after they sprouted and grew, each independently, they became interwoven and interlocked, to the benefit of the moral development, on the one hand, and to its detriment on the other hand."

<sup>47</sup> Ahad Ha'am, "Michtavei Yehudi Polani," Kol Kitvei, p. 281.

<sup>48</sup> Ahad Ha'am believed that the inner moral spark or consciousness of a people receives its inspiration from the people's interaction with life and nature. When it lives a natural and normal life in its own land, the moral force of the people continues to evolve to ever higher degrees of perfection. The moral self-development of the Jewish nation, he said, had been arrested by the people's life in exile. Therefore, the central task of the National Spiritual Revival was to create the necessary conditions for Judaism's moral development to continue anew.

Ahad Ha'am did not state explicitly that God is the ideal of ethical perfection. Yet it is clear from his essays, especially those which reveal the influence of Positivism on his thinking, that he no longer believed in the God of Sinai. Rather, he believed in a force-- the spirit of the nation-- which seeks to develop in every generation to a higher plateau of ethical perfection. The following passage from his essay "The Transformation of Values" sheds light on this issue: "I am not saddened by the existence of the Book in itself, but by its fossilization, because its development came to a halt, and the inner moral feeling no longer governs it as it used to in past generations, in a time when 'the voice of God within the heart of man' used to receive its inspiration directly from the phenomena of life and nature, and the Book was forced to change its content gradually and unconsciously in order to adapt itself to the moral awareness in the heart of the people. I did not advocate the rule of the sword over the Book, but I favored the dominion of the moral force which has been implanted in our people since ancient days, which gave birth to 'the Book' and which renewed the spirit of the Book in every generation according to its needs. And only after a long period of exile, the heart became numb from so much suffering and the moral feeling stopped developing, and therefore it also stopped giving birth to new changes in the content of the Book and the life of the people totally surrendered to dead letters. And in agreement to this view-- and not in contradiction to it, I said also in that article and I always maintain, that there is no need to radically destroy and transform values, but rather to bring into the hearts 'a new current of life', in the image of 'a living desire in the heart for the unity of the nation, for its revival and its free development, according to its spirit founded on general human principles.' This new current will renew the

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heart of the nation and will restore its ability to develop its moral powers, and will once more develop then also the Book, as a result of the requirement of the spirit of the people and its true needs, and not as a result of the screaming of some youth with imagination who ate sour grapes on the vines of strangers and want the teeth of the nation to be set on edge." "Shinui Haarachin," Kol Kitvei, pp. 157-158.

<sup>49</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "The Transvaluation of Values," Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic, Translated by Leon Simon, p. 178.

<sup>50</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Judaism and the Gospels," Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic, Translated by Leon Simon, pp. 305-306.

<sup>51</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Kohen V'navi," Kol Kitvei, pp. 90-92; and "Basar V'ruach," Kol Kitvei, pp. 348-352.

<sup>52</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Hakohenim V'haam," Kol Kitvei, p. 19.

<sup>53</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Flesh and Spirit," Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic, Translated by Leon Simon, p. 202.

<sup>54</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Nisayon Shelo Hitzliach," Kol Kitvei, p. 440.

<sup>55</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Hamusar Haleumi," Kol Kitvei, p. 164.

<sup>56</sup>Letter to A. Lubarski, 30 April 1906, Igrot, vol. 4, p. 32. "The branch closest to my heart of all the branches of Jewish wisdom is Jewish ethics, not in a dogmatic sense, but in the sense of its historical development, and one of my most cherished dreams, which I still hope to see materialize, is to write a book about this subject or some aspect of it."

<sup>57</sup>Ahad Ha'am, "Sach Hakol," Kol Kitvei, p. 428.

<sup>58</sup>Ahad Ha'am, Letter to Leon Simon, 10 July 1925, in Essays, Letters, Memoirs, Translated by Leon Simon, pp. 296-297.

## CHAPTER VII: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF AHAD HA'AM'S IDEAS

<sup>1</sup>Joseph L. Cohen, "An Evening With Achad Ha'am," in The Maccabean Magazine, vol. XXV, No. 5, November-December, 1914, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>Haim Nahman Bialik, "Ahad Ha'am," Jewish Spectator, Vol. XVII, No. 1, January 1952, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Chaim Weizmann, "The Uncompromising Searcher of Truth," The New Palestine, Vol. XII, No. 1, January 7, 1927, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.6.



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<sup>5</sup>Simon Dubnow, "The Affirmation of the Diaspora (A Reply to Ahad Ha'am's 'Negation of the Diaspora')," Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism, Edited by Koppel S. Pinson (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958), pp. 182-191.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 190-191.

<sup>8</sup>Simon Dubnow, "Negation and Affirmation of the Diaspora in Ahad Ha'am's Thought," Nationalism and History, pp. 242-249.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 248-249.

<sup>10</sup>David Vital, The Origins of Zionism (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 111-122.

Shlomo Avineri, "Lilienblum: The Crisis of Jewish Enlightenment in Russia," The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 65-72.

<sup>11</sup>Moshe Leib Lilienblum, "Let Us Not Confuse the Issues," The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader, Edited by Arthur Hertzberg (New York: Atheneum, 1959), p. 172.

<sup>12</sup>Chaim Nachman Bialik, "On Ahad Ha-Am," Jewish Frontier, Vol. XXXI, No. 10, November 1964, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>14</sup>Martin Buber, Israel and Palestine: The History of An Idea, Translated by Stanley Godman (London: The East and West Library, 1952), p. 143.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>16</sup>Yehezkel Kaufmann, "The National Will to Survive," Sources: Anthology of Contemporary Jewish Thought (II), Edited by David Hardan (Jerusalem: The World Zionist Organization, 1971), p. 93.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 117-118.

<sup>21</sup>Mordecai M. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American Jewish Life (Philadelphia and New York: The Jewish Publication Society and Reconstructionist Press,



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1981), p. 282.

<sup>22</sup>Leon Simon, "Ahad Ha'am After 25 Years," Zion, Vol. II, Nos. 10-11, Jan.-Feb. 1952, p. 59.

<sup>23</sup>Baruch Kurzweil, "Judaism-- The Group Will-To-Survive? A Critique of Achad Ha'Amism," Judaism, Vol. 4, No. 3, Summer 1955, p. 218.

<sup>24</sup>Eliezer Berkovits, Crisis and Faith (New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1976), p. 132.

<sup>25</sup>Leon Roth, "Back to, Forward From, Ahad Ha'am?" Conservative Judaism, XVII, Fall 1962, Winter 1963, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup>Jacob B. Agus, Jewish Identity in an Age of Ideologies (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1978), p. 229.

<sup>27</sup>Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Israel's Civil Religion," The Jerusalem Quarterly, No. 23, Spring 1982, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup>Jacob B. Agus, Jewish Identity, pp. 228-229.

<sup>29</sup>Jacob S. Golub, "Ahad Ha-Am Nationalist", Zionist Education Series No. 10 (New York: Zionist Organization of America, 1939), pp. 22-23.

<sup>30</sup>Arthur Hertzberg, Introduction to The Zionist Idea, pp. 63-64.

<sup>31</sup>Josef Fraenkel, Dubnow, Herzl and Ahad Ha'am: Political and Cultural Zionism (London: Ararat Publishing Society Limited, 1963), p. 30.

<sup>32</sup>Arthur Hertzberg, Introduction to The Zionist Idea, p. 70.

<sup>33</sup>Eliezer Schweid, Israel at the Crossroads, Translated by Alton Meyer Winters (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), p. 205.

<sup>34</sup>"Kahan Commission Report," New York Times, 9 February 1983, sec. 1, p. A-18.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. A-18.

<sup>36</sup>"Judgement In Jerusalem," The New Republic, 7 March 1983, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup>Leon Roth, "Back To, Forward From," p. 30.

<sup>38</sup>Donniel Hartman, quoted in David Shipler, "Israel: Voices of Moral Anguish," New York Times Magazine, 27 February 1983, p. 84.

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