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MODERN MESSIANIC LEADERSHIP:
A STUDY OF ISAAC M. WISE, THEODOR HERZL, AND ZEVI YEHUDA KOOK

Daniel Swartz

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Ordination

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Digest

This thesis examines whether or not messianic leadership has played an important role in the founding of modern Jewish religious and political movements. After defining what is meant by Messiah and messianic, it briefly reviews the history of the messianic idea and of several historical messianic movements, searching for some common characteristics of messianic leaders, as well as exploring theories about the etiology and development of social movements in general, with a focus on messianic movements. It then examines, in detail, three modern Jewish movement founders, Isaac Mayer Wise, Theodor Herzl and Zevi Yehuda Kook. The background of each leader is investigated, primarily using a psychobiographical approach, both in order to see what traits these leaders shared with each other and with previous messianic figures, and in order to see how these traits might explain their leadership abilities and motivations. After an exploration of each leader's ideology and use of symbols, particularly messianic symbols, this thesis examines whether or not these leaders viewed themselves or were viewed by their followers as the Messiah, and what role such views might have had in their success as movement founders. It concludes that, at least in the case of Wise and Kook and possibly in the case of Herzl, these leaders all viewed themselves as the Messiah. Also, each leader was viewed as a redemptive, if not messianic, figure

by a significant number of followers. Furthermore, the messianic ideology, leadership, and symbolism that these three leaders employed appears to have been critical to their success as movement founders. In an epilogue, I share some personal reflections on the nature and problematics of messianic leadership as a model for the rabbinate.

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Preface

Jewish messianic movements, led by individuals with explicit messianic aspirations, have arisen from the start of the Common Era through the eighteenth century, sometimes changing the course of Jewish history. A variety of scholars, with a diversity of viewpoints ranging from sociological to psycho-historical, have analyzed these movements and their leaders. Their conclusions have highlighted two important aspects of messianism: messianic movements serve to focus the antinomian impulses of society, and, especially with regard to their leadership, they also serve as a means to actualize belief in impending redemption brought about through direct Divine intervention.

If these characteristics are wholly determinative, one might be tempted to dismiss the existence of messianic thought or impulses in more recent times. For example, in contemporary society, halakhah no longer functions as nomos, an enforceable law, so that one might expect that antinomianism loses importance. Similarly, the spread of "enlightenment" might cause one to expect a diminished importance for leaders whose primary role was to signal and help bring about an eschatological, divinely initiated order. Indeed, none of those who have examined the role of the messianic idea in Judaism have argued for the continued significance of personal messianic leadership in the general Jewish community.

I believe, however, that such leadership, if understood as transformed from its earlier historical incarnations, continues to be of central importance in several significant segments of the Jewish world. One of these transformations has been from antinomian leaders to norm-changers. By norm-changers I mean individuals who, while no longer opposed directly to a system of law, desire to bring about a radical substitution of one set of norms for another. Thus, for example, focusing the energies of the Jewish community on the creation of a Jewish state and away from diaspora religion constitutes a revolution in norms. Such changes could come about either through the creation of a new movement designed to propagate such norms, or through radical change within an existing movement.

Belief in a leader's ability to help bring about or to signal impending, divinely directed redemption, while also transformed, continues to play a role in Jewish thought. Even those who argue against the presence of modern messianic leadership have seen a diffuse, depersonalized messianic eschatology as a component in the meliorative thought of the Reform movement, or in utopian elements in Zionist thought. Such utopian elements, however, do not arise in a vacuum. They become linked up with movements, and thus with society, through norm-changing leaders. Furthermore, in order for these leaders to make normative

such utopian thought, they must exhibit what Max Weber termed charismatic leadership.

Weber, in his work on charisma and institution building, examined leaders who changed societal norms. In order to effect such radical change, he wrote, leaders, whether political or religious, had to display charisma. Within the Jewish community, this general principle, I believe, becomes infused with the particular dimension of Jewish messianic leadership, where the leader exhibits not only personal charisma, but becomes enmeshed in the historical symbolism and attributes of the Jewish messiah. The hypothesis that this work explores, thus, is that even in modernity, Jewish leaders wishing to radically change norms within the Jewish community must display, at least to some degree, charismatic leadership of a messianic kind.

Several factors drew me to this topic. First and probably most important was the notion of societal change. It is obvious to anyone with a sense of history that the Jewish community has undergone tremendous changes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To the extent that such change was consciously directed, how was that done? This thesis examines one possible avenue of directed change and will try to evaluate its relative importance. This question is of both scholarly, sociological interest and personal interest -- for the answer should be relevant to future attempts at directed change.

Second, I was curious about the importance of traditional Jewish symbols in modern Jewish society. This thesis examines, in a fairly concrete fashion, the way one set of symbols, those dealing with the Messiah and the Messianic Era, have through various transformations, continued to play a central role in Jewish communal life. Again, this question has both scholarly and personal dimensions of interest -- for rabbis should certainly be interested in how traditional Jewish symbols can continue to carry weight through certain transformations.

Lastly, the role of the leader in these movements raises a variety of fascinating questions with both scholarly and personal dimensions. What is the relative importance of the person, versus the idea, of the leader? What are the advantages and disadvantages of charismatic leadership? What psychological attributes contribute to, or are at least associated with, a messianic leadership style? Is such a style relevant or useful to the modern rabbi? Since one of the important functions of American rabbis continues to be that of communal leader, these questions have direct bearing on my conceptions of rabbinical leadership.

As noted above, scholars have paid considerable attention to messianic movements up to and including that of Jacob Frank. Sociologists and psycho-historians have also examined the psychological characteristics of charismatic

leaders and the role of symbols in the building of social movements. I examine these theories in the first chapter, emphasizing their relevance to messianic leadership models. In addition, the first chapter sets out definitions for the various terms central to this study.

No one, however, has attempted in any systematic fashion to see how the dynamics of messianic and charismatic leadership have operated in the Jewish community in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Therefore, the bulk of this thesis is three case studies, each one dealing with a different leader, in an attempt to test my hypothesis on the importance of messianic leadership. I will examine three modern Jewish leaders, each of whom brought about significant normative change in at least one segment of the Jewish community, while founding movements: Isaac Mayer Wise (organized American Reform Judaism), Theodor Herzl (political Zionism), and Zevi Yehuda Kook (militant religious Zionism). These leaders were chosen because, after preliminary investigation, they seemed to exhibit traits of messianism, and because they cover such broad ground: political, religious, and religious-political leadership, Zionist, non-Zionist, and anti-Zionist thought, liberal and right-wing perspectives. It is my hope that these three provide sufficiently different cases to enable my conclusions to have some general validity.

In my conclusion I have tried to address the following questions:

1) About the movements as a whole:

a) How central was messianism to the successful creation of new norms?

b) Under what circumstances does messianism seem to be more crucial? For example, is it more important in religious or secular communities?

2) About the leaders:

a) What similarities in background or personality do these leaders exhibit? Do these traits seem connected to messianism?

b) How explicit are their messianic claims? Is there a pattern as to when they are or are not explicit?

3) About their messianism:

a) On what aspects of messianism do these men focus? Are these aspects traditional or modernized, based on biblical or later sources?

b) To what degree are these movements imbued with utopian and/or eschatological thought?

My research was conducted on the following basis. I examined primary and secondary sources about each of these three leaders, focusing on their concepts of leadership, messiahship, and their self-descriptions. Primarily, I was looking for three explicit types of evidence of messianism: public statements of messianic claims, private reflections

of messianic self-importance, and statements by followers which express messianic devotion to these leaders; with such data, I was able to address the above questions. I also examined the psychological background of these leaders, attempting to find characteristics which may have contributed to a messianic self-view.

In an epilogue, I try to shed light on some of the problematics of modern messianic leadership. These include pragmatic questions, such as how do movements survive the death of their leaders and how do norm-changing, messianic leaders interact with more typical institutional leadership, as well as some more personal reflections on whether these models of leadership are to any extent appropriate for the modern rabbinate. I believe that my conclusions and this epilogue will prove of value not only to scholarly curiosity but also to those interested in the practical dynamics of the Jewish community.

Chapter One

Messiahs, Messianism and Messianic Personalities: Background

I. Definitions

Hundreds of writers have explored what they described as "messianism," in cultures ranging from ancient Egypt to modern Malaysia. Unfortunately, many of these writers spent entire volumes discussing "messianism" without ever explicitly defining the term.¹ Some have defined "messianism" too narrowly, creating definitions that exclude obviously messianic movements, while others have cast definitions so broadly or vaguely as to include all revolutionary movements throughout history.²

¹ See, for example, J.L. Talmon, *Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase* (Boulder, CO., 1985), or Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*, trans. by Lisa Sergio (New York, 1963).

² Perhaps the narrowest definition is used by Jacob Neusner in a volume he edited with William S. Green and Ernest Frerichs, *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, 1987), xiii, where he limits "messianism" to movements that explicitly use the Hebrew term *mashiakh*, and only then when *mashiakh* is used with a particular meaning. Broad definitions abound; for example, Wilson D. Wallis, viewing messianism anthropologically, defines it as any "movement which emphasizes the bringing of salvation," in *Messiahs: Their Role in Civilization* (Washington, D.C., 1943), 13-15, while Talmon, though never explicitly defining "political messianism," implies that its two most characteristic features are its utopian and revolutionary nature, and that any movement with such features may be classified as "messianic"; see his *Political Messianism*, 16-20. Some broad definitions, even as they include too many movements, may exclude other, truly messianic movements. For example, the very notion of "salvation" is foreign to some Jewish messianic movements.

These writers do not fall into definitional sloppiness simply through lack of care. Rather, the "messianic idea," to use Scholem's terminology for a moment, has been the focus of active debate for at least 1900 years,³ leading to vastly differing understandings of the meaning of "messianism." As Werblowsky writes, "the notion of the Jewish Messiah is in itself far from simple or monolithic."⁴

Because of this, before examining modern messianic leadership, I believe it is critical to clearly define several key terms. In order to do so, I will first outline some previous definitions, both to utilize their strengths and to point out their weaknesses. Building upon these, I will then define the terminology used in this study.

While many have argued that the phenomenon of messianic leadership appears in a variety of cultures and religions, I prefer, for the sake of clarity and simplicity, to limit my study and my definitions to Jewish messianic figures.⁵ Even

³ Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971), 1. Certain theories about the origins of the messianic idea would push this debate back even earlier.

⁴ R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Messianism," in Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr, eds., *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought* (New York, 1987), 597.

⁵ This does not imply that non-Jewish messianic figures do not exist. See, for example, Wallis, *Messiahs*, for a thorough discussion of analogues to messianism in cultures around the globe. An example of the difficulties that arise in this sort of study may be found in Guenter Lewy, *Religion and Revolution* (New York, 1974), 28, 210, where, apparently because he has an implicitly Christian understanding of "messiah," he writes that messiahs exist in any cultures, from certain forms of Buddhism to African animist religions,

so, difficulties remain. Klausner, in his classic study, defines "messianic expectation" as "the prophetic hope for the end of this age, in which there will be political freedom, moral perfection, and earthly bliss for the people of Israel in its own land, and also for the entire human race."⁶ While perhaps an accurate reflection of early prophetic visions, this definition fails on a critical ground -- one could hold this "messianic expectation" without any belief whatsoever in a Messiah.

More commonly, "messianism" is linked or even equated with a revolutionary eschatology which views the present negatively.⁷ For example, Scholem argues that "the

which have had a religious leader that was supposedly resurrected.

⁶ Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (New York, 1955), 9.

⁷ "Eschatology," along with "apocalyptic" are frequently misused words. Properly speaking, eschatology is knowledge of the ultimate meaning of the world, which usually implies a belief in the "end of days," when history's highest purpose will be fulfilled. It is often assumed, incorrectly, that eschatology must be both imminent and revolutionary; in fact, through the ages, many explicitly eschatological groups have contemplated an "end" that is in the distant future, while others have seen a gradual, rather than revolutionary, transition into the final age. For examples, see Stephen Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic: A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements*, (Chapel Hill, 1982), 46f. "Apocalyptic" is frequently used to mean a cataclysmic end of history, leading to the final age; literally, however, it is a document that purports to relate a secret revelation and is not necessarily eschatological. "Millennialism" is also used as a synonym for eschatology; by derivation, however, it is a Christian concept and thus not appropriate for discussing non-Christian visions of the end of days, although even learned Jewish scholars have misused it in this fashion. Because of these difficulties, I will not use

messianic idea" is a "theory of catastrophe ... revolutionary, cataclysmic"; Schweid sees a "radical critique of the present, ... a belief that change is imminent, ... and a belief that redemption will be both revolutionary and complete" as the key characteristics of "messianism"; and Rabinbach writes that "messianism demands a complete repudiation of the world as it is, placing its hope in a future whose realization can only be brought about by the destruction of the old order."⁸ Not only does this definition have the liabilities of Klausner's definition, in that one can believe in an imminent, revolutionary eschatology without any reference whatsoever to a Messiah, as did Karl Marx, but, in fact, it is also inaccurate. As Scholem himself admits, many Jews believed that the messianic age would not arrive cataclysmically, that there would be no revolution in the world or change in the cosmos. This belief, expounded most thoroughly by Maimonides,

the terms "apocalyptic" or "millennial" in this study; when referring to eschatological beliefs, I will specify when they are or are not imminent or revolutionary.

⁸ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 7; Eliezer Schweid, "Jewish Messianism: Metamorphoses of an Idea," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 36 (1985): 70; Anson Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism," *New German Critique*, 34 (1985): 81. Werblowsky, "Messianism," 598, claims that "intrinsic to messianism is the negative evaluation of the present." Peter Berger, in a cross-cultural analysis, equates "messianism" with "millennialism," in *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, 1967), 68.

clearly existed already in the tannaitic sources.⁹ In fact, in all of the case studies this thesis examines, the messianic age is seen as a part of, rather than apart from, history, as the evolutionary culmination of ongoing processes rather than a radical break with the past.

In direct response to the deficiencies of such definitions, Horsley and Hanson, in a study limited to Palestine around the time of Jesus, propose a definition based solidly on the notion of the Messiah itself. They define "Messiah" as "an anointed king," where "anointing" signifies, they believe, "popular acclaim or election." The king did not have to be of the Davidic line and was often, they claim, from outside the gentry completely. A "messianic movement," according to their study, is a populist movement led by such a king, in some ways "democratic," since the king is anointed only so long as the people acclaim him as anointed.¹⁰

⁹ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 24-27.

¹⁰ Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis, 1985), 90-96, 114. While an interesting work, this book suffers from a rather common tendency among studies about messianic movements -- a strong ideological bias which sees such movements as either completely fulfilling or totally antithetical to the author's political views. Horsley and Hanson, supporters of an activist liberation theology in Central America, see messianic movements as precursors to "peasant revolutions," *ibid.*, 125, an assertion which seems, at best, strained when viewed in the light of documents from the Bar Kokhba revolt, for example. Lanternari, *Religions of the Oppressed*, 197, sees messianic movements as nationalist struggles against colonial imperialists, which parallels his own support of

While this definition provides greater clarity than those that focus on "messianism," it narrows the field too much in two different ways. First of all, through the ages, not all leaders of messianic movements have focused on the "kingship" aspect of their Messiahship. For example, Abraham Abulafia, as well as many mystical Messiahs that followed him, emphasized the notion of an "anointed prophet," not that of a king.¹¹ As will be seen, neither Wise nor Kook focused on this "kingship" aspect, although they clearly viewed themselves as Messiahs. Secondly, while it is true that a critical element of any messianic movement is the relationship between the Messiah and his followers,¹²

such struggles. Eugene H. Methvin, in *The Rise of Radicalism: The Social Psychology of Messianic Extremism* (New Rochelle, 1973) 13-24, writing from the standpoint of one who was involved in the Nixon Administration, views messianic movements as precursors to "New Left revolutionary radicals," labelling these movements as "delusional belief systems" which threaten a "malignant corruption" of society leading to an "apocalyptic bloodletting." While these cases are perhaps more obvious than others, they seem to be the rule, rather than the exception. This probably contributes to some of the definitional problems noted above; if one can define "messianism" in a vague or ideologically skewed fashion, one can cast it as an ancestor or analogue to one's political heroes or enemies.

¹¹ Jack Gratus, *The False Messiahs* (New York, 1975), 46.

¹² My apologies for the use of "his," but, to my knowledge, with the possible exception of late phases of Frankism, no females have led Jewish messianic movements. I do not believe that this can be explained solely on the basis of traditional expectations of a male descendant of David, for several Jewish messianic leaders, dating at least back to Bar Kokhba, have not claimed Davidic descent, while a variety (admittedly, still only a fraction of the whole) of female messiah-figures have led Christian messianic movements. (See Gratus, *False Messiahs*, 161-179). While I

the notion of "popular election" again does not cover all the cases of obviously messianic movements.

In this study, then, I too will focus on actual Messiah-figures,¹³ using my own definition of two parts. It is intended not as a general definition, but as one that will be useful in guiding and limiting this study. In order to qualify as a would-be Messiah of the Jews, one must:

- a) be a Jewish leader of an explicitly Jewish movement.¹⁴

have not formulated a satisfactory explanation for this phenomenon, I do discuss some of its implications in the epilogue below. I do want to emphasize, however, that "he" or "his," when used in this study to refer to Jewish messiahs in a generic sense, should not be construed to mean that female messiahs either could not exist or would not be worthy of study, but rather only that I am not aware of any and that the three leaders in this study are all male. .

¹³ This does not imply that it is theoretically impossible to believe in a messianic age without believing in the messiah. After all, this has been a commonly held position in the Reform movement for well over a century. Rather, for simplicity's sake, I am limiting this study to actual messiah-figures. I am convinced, however, that whenever one tries to discuss "messianism" without rooting it in a messiah, one runs into the sort of definitional difficulties and irreducible vagueness faced by Klausner, Scholem, and others.

¹⁴ Again, the focus on solely Jewish leaders, and, furthermore, on leaders of explicitly Jewish movements, should not be construed as an implication that no other leaders are messianic or that other types of movements cannot have messianic leaders. These are simply the types of cases I am limiting this study to, although I do believe that they constitute the most clearly and easily defined class of cases. For an interesting parallel study, which examine the role of messianic leadership, somewhat similarly defined, in the Black community in America, see Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth* (University Park, PA., 1982).

b) view oneself as the Messiah and/or be viewed by one's followers as the Messiah.

I will not use the term "messianism" in this study at all, because of the extreme variations in the interpretation of this concept noted above. "Messiah-figure" is simply equivalent to "would-be Messiah." The term "messianic" is used here as an adjective describing something relating to a Messiah. Thus "messianic leadership" is leadership exercised by a Messiah-figure, while a "messianic movement" is a movement led by such a figure.

"Messianic" is used with this meaning throughout the study, with three exceptions. First, while I use the term "messianic age" to designate the age when the Messiah will come, "Messianic Era" means something more. I will use "Messianic Era" specifically to designate a time when, not only will the Messiah be present, but a substantial number, if not all, of the traditional Talmudic predictions concerning the messianic age will be fulfilled.

The situation with "messianic personality" is somewhat more complex. Below, in this chapter, I will outline some of the character traits that the vast majority of Messiah-figures apparently held in common. I label these "messianic personality traits." It is certainly possible, however, that one could hold such traits and not actually believe oneself to be the Messiah; it is also theoretically possible to be a Messiah-figure without such traits. Nonetheless, in

my review of Messiah-figures and in the cases this thesis examines, this possibility never occurred. My use of these terms is further complicated by the fact that several psychological writers use the term "messianic personality traits" to mean something quite different from what I intend. When discussing these authors, I will first list their own definitions and then use the term "messianic" personality, with messianic in quotes; use of the term with my definition will be without quotation marks.

The final exception is the term "messianic people." By this, I mean a "group concept of Messiah," as discussed by Wilson Moses. He defines a "group Messiah" or "messianic people" as a group that either perceives itself or is perceived by others as having a God-given salvific mission which only this group can fulfill. Through this mission, the group will "assert the providential goals of history and ... bring about the kingdom of God on earth." This notion is both particularistic and universalistic, as only this group can bring about salvation and they bring it most directly to themselves -- but they also, in the end, bring salvation to the world as a whole.¹⁵

¹⁵ Moses, *Black Messiahs*, 2-4. Group concepts of messiahship are also discussed in several works on the role of "manifest destiny" in American history, such as in Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago, 1968), or Conrad Cherry, ed., *Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1981).

Before discussing the history of the idea of the Messiah, I need to define one more term: antinomianism. Many writers have discussed the antinomian tendencies of messianic movements, and, in fact, such tendencies can be well documented in a variety of such movements.¹⁶ While antinomianism often means a rejection of all law, it is, nonetheless, a very broad concept. For example, various writers have used "antinomianism" to mean anything from wanting to establish a new law, to purifying law, to ending law altogether; the antinomian impulse could be totally nihilistic, come out of a belief that holiness transcends law, or be seen not as a value in and of itself but as a means to some greater end.¹⁷ I will use antinomianism in two specific senses in this study: narrowly, the tendency to abrogate halakhah for ideological reasons, and more broadly, the desire to change one or several fundamental norms of the Jewish community, including the desire to establish new norms, ideally for the whole community, but at least for a substantial part of that community.

¹⁶ See, for example, Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 78-141.

¹⁷ For a discussion of some of the problems in writings dealing with antinomianism, see Louis Schneider, "Dialectical Orientation and the Sociology of Religion," in Henry M. Johnson, ed., *Religious Change and Continuity: Sociological Perspectives*, (San Francisco, 1979), 60. .

II. The Development of the Idea of the Messiah

Its Origins and History

When writers, such as Klausner, see "messianic expectations" in various biblical prophetic writings, they accept at face value Talmudic retrojections that have no basis in fact.¹⁸ Despite traditional interpretations, none of the prophetic writers did indeed expect the Messiah in terms of a personal, human redeemer of Israel, who would bring the nation into a golden age. Read in context, none of the "messianic" passages of Isaiah or any other biblical book refer to anything like a yet-to-come personal redeemer, and certainly none of the uses of the term *mashiakh* in the Bible refer to anything like the Talmudic concept of Messiah.

To completely dismiss rabbinic retrojections, however, is to miss the point. The prophets outlined a view of history and the meaning of the order of the cosmos that later messianic doctrines could find not only compatible but congenial. Thus, for example, Amos elucidated a series of travails that would later be incorporated into the "birth pangs of the Messiah."¹⁹ The prophetic books also yielded such concepts as a "Day of Judgement," the return of the prophet Elijah to announce the "end of days," the importance

¹⁸ Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 9. For a more thorough critique of such writings, see Neusner, *Judaisms*.

¹⁹ Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 41.

of repentance as a means toward a happier age, and, most critically, the concept of redemption itself, of an age of both material and spiritual prosperity, when Israel will no longer be subject to the other nations.²⁰ This notion of redemption, and particularly of God as an agent in history who can bring about redemption, is a prerequisite for any development of a concept of a redeemer.²¹ Several prophets, most notably Isaiah (11: 15-16) and Hosea (2: 16-17) also portrayed the exodus from Egypt as a paradigm for future redemption, a theme picked up by both the Talmud and the leaders examined in the case studies below.

The first use of the term "Messiah" with the meaning of an expected future redeemer comes in I Enoch, written between 94 and 64 BCE. A literature about the Messiah began to develop at that time, although even at the beginning of the Common Era, expectations of who the Messiah might be and what he might bring varied considerably. These ranged from notions of a war-hero to a teacher-king, sometimes of Davidic descent but not necessarily so.²²

During the Tannaitic era, the sages fleshed out basic messianic doctrines, although they never achieved anything resembling unanimity in their descriptions. Indeed, sages

²⁰ Ibid., 237-240.

²¹ Lewy, *Religion and Revolution*, 33.

²² Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 385. For a more in-depth description of the variety of beliefs at this time, see Neusner, *Judaisms*, or Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 90-106.

offered contradictory opinions on issues as central as how the messianic age would differ from the present one and whether one or two Messiahs would appear. These differences became the foundations for the wide range in opinions of medieval rabbis on the nature of the Messiah and the messianic age.

For example, while the "dawning of the light of the Messiah" was to become a standard symbol for the coming of the messianic age, some sages expected a gradual dawn, while others believed that the messianic light would break suddenly upon the world.²³ The Messiah was universally associated with the ingathering of the exiles, but what percentage of exiles would be gathered in was a matter of dispute.²⁴ Some described a messianic age of great material prosperity and "spiritual elevation," one with fundamental changes in nature, from the taming of wild beasts to self-harvesting crops, while others believed that "the only difference between the present and the messianic age is our present subjection to foreign powers."²⁵ In general, there is a constant tension between the political-national aspects of the messianic idea and its religious-spiritual aspects,

²³ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 10.

²⁴ Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 470-74.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 505-516. The key talmudic passage is B.T. Berakhot 34b.

themes which continue to echo in messianic movements up into the present, including these case studies.²⁶

How will the messianic age come about? Again, the sages expressed a wide range of opinions, most of which have had some supporters during the intervening years. One subset of causes are positive actions by Jews that will bring about the Messiah, including keeping two sabbaths in a row, *tz'dakkah*, and *t'shuvah*. Some sages taught that negative actions might also usher in the messianic age, including: forgetting the Law, destruction of schools of learning, and insolence to elders and the learned. Still others believed that the date of the coming of the Messiah is pre-ordained, or that a minimum or maximum has been set, and that Israel's actions can have only a limited effect.²⁷

Along with Messiah ben David, two other figures play a role in the descriptions of the coming of the Messiah. First comes Elijah, who, among other tasks, will restore the lost treasures that are to be the Messiah's, such as the flask of anointing oil used in Aaron's elevation to the priesthood, and Aaron's flowering almond staff. After him, but before Messiah ben David, comes Messiah ben Joseph, a purely political Messiah, a war-hero who will die during the war with Gog and Magog.²⁸

²⁶ Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 392.

²⁷ Ibid., 427-28, 441.

²⁸ Ibid., 454-56, 497-501.

The Messiah has at least three prototypes, as well as a wide variety of names. The most commonly known predecessor is, of course, David, but the Talmud makes at least as frequent reference to a different prototype, Moses, for the Messiah is to be a "Moses of the new aeon, a Moses redivivus."²⁹ Developing upon Isaiah's theme, the Talmud also depicted in great detail how the exodus from Egypt would serve as the model for the final redemption. Aaron, particularly in his role as High Priest, was also seen by some as a messianic prototype. The Qumran sect wrote extensively about an Aaronide Messiah, coexistent with and superior to Messiah ben David.³⁰ He is also mentioned in several pseudoepigraphal works of Jewish origin and at least hinted at in traditional rabbinic texts, such as *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 2:29 and B.T. *Sukkah* 52b, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews.³¹ As was noted above, the Davidic Messiah was also frequently pictured as adorned in Aaronide

²⁹ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 53; Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 17, Werblowsky, "Messianism," 599. Other cultures that have explicitly borrowed the Jewish concept of messiah have made use of the Moses prototype at least as often as the Davidic; one example is a Maori messianic sect, which reveres a leader who claimed to be a second Moses; Lanternari, *Religions of the Oppressed*, 258.

³⁰ Joseph Heinemann, "The Messiah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of Ephraim," in Leo Landman, ed., *Messianism in the Talmudic Era* (New York, 1979), 342; J. Liver, "The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs in Sectarian Literature in the Time of the Second Commonwealth," in Landman, 356-358.

³¹ Liver, "Two Messiahs," 368-69; 385.

accouterments. Hezekiah was also considered a prototype for the Messiah by several Talmudic sages, and indeed, Hezekiah is considered to be one of the names for the Messiah. Among the other names the Talmud lists for the Messiah are: son of David, David, Redeemer, Peace, Hadrakh, Shiloh, Hanina, and Menakhem.³²

The tannaitic sources do not go into great detail about the personality of the Messiah, other than through comparisons to other Jewish figures. A few details are listed, however, such as the Messiah's great ability in judging people, being able to judge them even by smell. Some sources emphasize his abilities as a mighty leader, while others focus on his moral superiority. A clear picture of the man who is to be the Messiah, however, does not emerge.³³

Messianic doctrine did not unify over time. Even in medieval writings, rabbis took positions at least as divergent as those of Talmudic sages, with views of the messianic age ranging from the "completely natural" to the "utterly fantastic."³⁴ In general, Ashkenazic rabbis focused on less messianic activism, and those who did so

³² Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 461-63.

³³ Ibid., 465-67. The reference to the messiah's sense of smell comes from Sanhedrin 93b. The messiah himself was also supposed to have a special fragrance.

³⁴ Joseph Sarachek, *The Doctrine of the Messiah in Medieval Jewish Literature* (New York, 1932), 300.

considered themselves to be "prophets" rather than "calculators of the end." In contrast, Sephardic rabbis often wrote about messianic doctrines, even discussing the military powers of the Messiah.³⁵

More specifically, several medieval rabbis developed their own fairly distinctive messianic doctrines. For example, Maimonides took the most naturalistic stance, agreeing with the Talmudic dictum that the messianic age will be like our own in all aspects except Israel's political freedom. To him, the Messiah was to be one who walks in the ways of God, leading all of Israel to do so, one who fights God's battles upon this earth.³⁶ He completely ignored, and seemed not to believe in, the concept of Messiah ben Joseph. Rashi expanded upon the notion of light symbolizing the Messiah, claiming that *boker* in Psalms 46, 90, and 92 stands for the dawning of the Messianic Era, while *or* in Psalm 98 symbolizes the Messiah. He also linked the Messiah with Moses, commenting (upon Exodus 4:20) that the Messiah will ride upon the same donkey as Moses.

Abravanel wrote about the Messiah more, and more thoroughly, than any other medieval commentator. He considered Psalms 42, 43, 46-48, 74-80, 117, 118, 126, and

³⁵ Gershon Cohen, "Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim, Prior to Sabbethai Zevi," *Leo Baeck Memorial Lectures*, 9, (1967): 16; 8.

³⁶ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 28.

129 as referring primarily to the Messiah, and a variety of other Psalms, according to his interpretation, at least referred to the Messiah in passing. He added the names Huliah, Hivrah, and Nehorah to the Talmudic list, and, like Rashi, discussed light as a messianic symbol. He wrote that the messianic redemption "will be modelled after the Exodus from Egypt in all its particulars," and that one of the chief signs of the messianic age will be that all the nations will become monotheistic.³⁷

The Lurianic kabbalists also expanded messianic doctrines in several important ways. Most critically, they cast all of redemption in the highly symbolic imagery of *tikkun*, the reparation of the cosmos. Redemption became not merely or even primarily a political-national event, nor even a traditionally religious one, but a cosmic union and unification, *achdut*, leading to *shlemut*, wholeness, the term for complete redemption. Redemption itself would not come about cataclysmically, but through a steady progression towards redemption, as the process of *tikkun* spread. Although not denying the coming of a personal Messiah, "the Messiah here becomes the entire people of Israel," due to the ongoing process of *tikkun*, which involves the whole community.³⁸

³⁷ Sarachek, *Doctrine*, 228-279.

³⁸ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 47-48.

Lurianic kabbalists also further developed the concepts of Moses as Messiah, Messiah ben Joseph, and perhaps even the Aaronide Messiah. According to Rabbi Solomon Turiel, a follower of Luria, Messiah ben David would come to rule over the "Talmudists," but as for the kabbalists, "their Messiah will be Moses," and they will not be subject to Messiah ben David.³⁹ Other Lurianic kabbalists saw Messiah ben Joseph not as a warrior figure, but rather as a holy sage, a soul that appeared in each generation in an attempt to bring about the *tikkun* that would cause Messiah ben David to appear. According to this tradition, the soul of Messiah ben Joseph contains that of Jeroboam, one of the worst sinners. Messiah ben Joseph's task is to heal the rift between the souls of Jeroboam and Messiah ben Joseph.⁴⁰ Kabbalistic commentaries on Zachariah 4: 1-5, 11-14 and 6:12-13 speak of a "priestly Messiah," perhaps referring to the Aaronide Messiah.

One concept, already discussed briefly in tannaitic sources, received prominence in Lurianic writings and dominated the Sabbatian movement: the notion of a changed Torah in the messianic age, the "Torah of the Messiah" or the "Torah of Redemption." Since, according to the school of Luria, the purpose of the Torah is *tikkun*, and since

³⁹ Discussed in Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, 1973), 59.

⁴⁰ Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav* (New York, 1979), 15, 197.

tikkun will have already been fully achieved in the days of the Messiah, Torah must be different in some fundamental way in the messianic age. Under the leadership of Shabbetai Zevi and Nathan of Gaza, this changed Torah became the doctrine of redemption through sin; acts that would appear "sinful" in most circumstances become redemptive when pursued in the context of the imminent Messianic Era. All of the Law becomes reinterpreted in this light.⁴¹

Sabbatian movements continued long after Shabbetai Zevi died, though with little doctrinal innovation after his death. Eventually, however, some of his hidden followers became rather respectable and cleansed the movement of orgiastic rituals. Scholem asserts that these "reformed" Sabbatians were instrumental in the founding of the Reform and Haskalah movements. While his general contention has not been borne out, it is interesting to note that the one instance where he does demonstrate that Sabbatian families were involved in the Jewish Enlightenment was in Prague, where Isaac Mayer Wise was trained. Also, in a will from Gottlieb Wehle, a Prague Sabbatian who emigrated to America, the Sabbatian doctrine is described as having an "ethical" focus that discarded the "outer shell" of outmoded ritual and preserved Judaism's "essence," in order to help with

⁴¹ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 65, 69.

Israel's "mission to redeem the world," all phrases similar to those used by the Reform movement of that time.⁴²

Messianic thought and speculation did not disappear in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the case studies below demonstrate.⁴³ Indeed, the historical development of the messianic idea proves to be significant to these case studies in a number of ways. First of all, it points out the broad spectrum of conceptualizations of the Messiah that at least significant segments of the Jewish community have accepted over time. Thus, in looking for modern messianic leaders, I have not restricted my search to merely the "kingship" of a Davidic Messiah, but rather looked for some echo of any of these varying conceptualizations, for, in fact, both Wise and Kook identified with a non-Davidic idea of the Messiah. Second, Wise and Kook were familiar with many of the rabbinic writings on the Messiah and often echoed their thoughts or even language. For example, Wise studied Abravanel's messianic writings and used both "morning" and "light" in ways similar to those of Rashi, while Kook used Lurianic images of unification and *shlemut*.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 167-70, 173.

⁴³ A variety of other nineteenth and twentieth century Jewish figures, such as Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, and Georg Lukacs, also expressed explicitly messianic hopes. See Michael Loewy, "Jewish Messianism and Libertarian Utopia in Central Europe, 1900-1933," in *New German Critique*, 20 (Spring/Summer, 1980): 111.

Even Herzl was at least familiar with Moses and the exodus, and he appears to have studied Shabbetai Zevi as well.

Theories about the Etiology of Messianic Movements

Messianic movements and expounders of messianic doctrines have not appeared with equal frequency in varying historical contexts and in different lands. Thus, a number of writers have theorized about what caused such movements to arise more often in some periods or areas and less so in others. Most of these theories, however, fail to account for a number of actual Jewish messianic movements.

The predominant theory explains messianic movements as responses to catastrophe, generally religious persecution, but also economic or social disasters. Klausner, for example, writes that "messianic hope ... was a product of the afflictions experienced by the Jewish people."⁴⁴ The worse the present got, the more the people hoped for the imminent arrival of the Messiah, according to this explanation. After all, the tannaitic sources describe in some detail the "birth-pangs" of the Messiah, and they even list various sins Israel might fall into which would signal the start of the messianic age.

⁴⁴ Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 400. Methvin, *Rise of Radicalism*, 35; Wallis, *Messiahs*, 10; Julius Greenstone, *The Messiah Idea in Jewish History* (Philadelphia, 1906), 23, 84; and Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel* (New York, 1927), x; are all examples of proponents of this theory.

While it has a certain logic, this theory simply fails to explain the facts. First of all, there is no linear correlation between the level of persecution and number or intensity of messianic movements. The very parts of Europe, for example, which suffered the most frequent persecutions, had the fewest messianic movements.⁴⁵ As Cohen writes, "the Crusades, the Almohade invasion, the expulsions from England and France, the blood libels, the Pastoureaux onslaughts, and the persecutions at the time of the Black Death, indeed, even the expulsion from Spain and the Chmelnitzki massacres did not generate a single messianic movement."⁴⁶

More directly, one can cite examples of messianic movements that did arise during times of increasing prosperity and freedom. Perhaps the clearest example is that of Moses of Crete, who was a Messiah-figure between 400 and 420 CE. During this time, Rome was getting weaker and was persecuting Jews with less vigor, while the Sassanian dynasty of Persia was favoring Jews greatly. In this environment of increasing hope, Moses of Crete founded a substantial messianic movement.⁴⁷ He was not the only case of a Messiah appearing during such times. Cohen writes that "all the messianic efforts made in Iraq and Persia, and

⁴⁵ See Sharot, *Messianism*, 61-62, for examples.

⁴⁶ Cohen, "Messianic Postures," 29.

⁴⁷ Greenstone, *Messiah*, 109-110. Lewy, in *Religion and Revolution*, 249, shows parallel examples of Christian millennarian movements which arose during times of hope.

above all in Spain and North Africa, were undertaken in areas and periods of relative stability."⁴⁸

Even Shabbetai Zevi's movement did not arise directly because of persecution, according to Scholem. Scholem points out that it did not start in 1648, during the Chmielnicki massacres, but almost generation later. Furthermore, it was most popular in areas not at all directly affected by the massacres, including Morocco, which "probably had heard little" about the massacres. The movement not only did not arise in Poland, where the massacres had taken place, but Poles were not at its forefront.⁴⁹

Schweid proposes a slightly different explanation: that messianic movements believe that the present world order is "rotten to the core." Thus, messianic movements would tend to arise during times of dissatisfaction with the world. The important determinant, according to this view, is not some measure of how bad the world really is, but rather a psychic measure of contentment.⁵⁰ One can find counter-examples to this theory as well, however, where writers expecting an imminent messianic age do so precisely because they see improvements in the world, such as is the

⁴⁸ Cohen, "Messianic Postures," 29.

⁴⁹ Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 2-3.

⁵⁰ Schweid, "Jewish Messianism," 64.

case with some early religious Zionists.⁵¹ The cases studies below also throw added doubt on both of these two theories.

A more persuasive explanation is that messianic movements tend to arise during times of change and upheaval, whether that change is for the good or the bad. According to this theory, people turn to messianic movements in order to derive a measure of psychological security during rather insecure times.⁵² While it may explain more than the above theories, this interpretation is problematic in two ways. First, a relative amount of societal change, particularly as reflected in levels of psychic stress, would be hard, if not impossible, to measure. Second, some movements, like that of Abraham Abulafia, seem to arise during times that, while not necessarily peaceful or stable, have no greater upheaval than the periods just before and after the movement. Nonetheless, this theory has far fewer exceptions than the ones above.

As I noted above, it is at least theoretically possible for a messianic movement, one that imminently expects the

⁵¹ Greenstone, *Messiah*, 265.

⁵² Talmon, *Political Messianism*, 518. Sharot, *Messianism*, 238-246, adopts, with some reservations, this theory, as well as indicating counter examples to a variety of other explanations, such as messianic movements arising out of class tensions, that I do not explore here. This notion of seeking security in a leader seems to be borne out in psychological analyses of leader/follower relationships. See below, pp. 40-42, 54-56.

arrival of the Messiah, to arise without being led by a specific individual who aspires to be that Messiah. Lanternari, however, asserts that a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for a messianic movement is a messianic figure to found the movement. In all the messianic movements he studied, a messianic founder played a critical role in the movement's development.⁵³ Of course, one cannot be certain that a movement did not give rise to a leader, rather than vice versa, but, in any case, this condition seems more basic to the start of a messianic movement than any of the above explanations, including levels of change and psychic stress. At least in these case studies, the "Messiah" seems to have preceded the expectations of a messianic redemption.

III. Messianic Figures -- A Brief Review

A large number of messianic figures have arisen during the course of Jewish history. While very few of them led well-documented movements, and while the lives of these leaders were often more obscure still, especially during their early years, there are a few would-be Messiahs on whom we have some biographical data. In this section, I first review several such figures, paying particular attention to two, Shabbetai Zevi and Nachman of Bratzlav, both because their lives and movements have been relatively well documented and

⁵³ Lanternari, *Religions of the Oppressed*, 302.

because they provide illuminating comparisons with the case studies. Following that, I outline some characteristics these figures share.

Some Examples of Leaders of Messianic Movements

Though neither as well-known today nor as popular during their own day as Shabbetai Zevi was, the careers and backgrounds of some of the various would-be Messiahs who have led Jewish messianic movements still provide several insights, primarily because they highlight some of the traits such leaders and their movements tend to have in common. For example, Serene was a Messiah-figure who led a movement in France and Spain around 720 CE. Originally from Syria, he was an outsider in the communities where he led his movement. He was known to have deleted certain prayers and abolished several holidays. The rabbinic authorities in the areas where he operated opposed him and alerted gentile governmental officials, who forced Serene to end his movement.⁵⁴

Abu-Isa Al Ispahani led a movement from about 740 CE until his death in 755. He lived during a time of upheaval in both the Jewish and non-Jewish world, during breakdowns in Islamic authority, with concomitant schisms forming in the Muslim world. He was a poor and supposedly illiterate tailor and was opposed by local rabbinic authorities. He changed a variety of laws, increasing asceticism in certain

⁵⁴ Gratus, *False Messiahs*, 56.

fasting practices, while eliminating other rabbinic restrictions. For a while, he was very popular in the non-Jewish world and had many Christian and Muslim followers.⁵⁵

David Alroy, who led his movement around 1147, lived a life surrounded by legends, and thus little is known for certain about him. He appears to have been rather handsome and a persuasive speaker, as well as a talented military leader. He lived during politically unstable times, under the rule of a weakened Caliphate. He was also opposed by local rabbinic authorities, and also had several prominent Muslim followers.⁵⁶

Abraham Abulafia declared himself to be the Messiah in 1284. He apparently suffered from fits of depression as well as times of manic activity. While not explicitly rejecting any halakhah, he wrote several diatribes against "talmudists," and he considered Talmudic knowledge inferior to mystical speculation. He was reputedly very intelligent, although primarily self-taught, as his family was only peripherally Jewish. He was familiar with Christian theology, spoke often to Christians and was popular with them, and many Christians became his followers.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Silver, *Messianic Speculation*, 55; Greenstone, *Messiah*, 121.

⁵⁶ Silver, *Messianic Speculation*, 80; Greenstone, *Messiah*, 142.

⁵⁷ Silver, *Messianic Speculation*, 87; Gratus, *False Messiahs*, 47.

David Reubeni and Shlomo Molko were a pair of messianic figures who appeared in the early part of the sixteenth century. Reubeni at first claimed not to be the Messiah, although many of his followers believed that he was. Preaching in Europe, he purported to be from Arabia, trying to raise money for the Ten Tribes, of which his brother was King. Shlomo Molko, the son of a converso, circumcised himself and re-entered Judaism because of Reubeni. Many followed him as Messiah, as well. Both men were said to be persuasive speakers and very attractive. Both preached to Christians and Muslims as well as Jews and had followers of all faiths. Molko was a very quick learner and had a quick memory, enabling him to master many mystical texts. Eventually, Reubeni was imprisoned and Molko executed by the Inquisition.⁵⁸

Moses Hayyim Luzzato, who lived from 1707 to 1747, died fairly young, apparently burned out from manic exertion. He would frequently alternate between times of such exertion and bouts of rather severe depression. He, too, was known for his very quick memory.

Shabbetai Zevi

The Sabbatian movement was "the most important messianic movement in Judaism since the destruction of the

⁵⁸ Silver, *Messianic Speculation*, 145; Greenstone, *Messiah*, 191-199.

Second Temple," and it was the first such movement not "limited to a certain area."⁵⁹ It was a movement that "knew no class distinctions," and while the rabbinical establishment was initially opposed to it and would become the first to turn against it, even many prestigious rabbis supported the Sabbatian movement during its heyday.⁶⁰

While data from Shabbetai's childhood are limited, he clearly had a narcissistic and controlling mother who dominated a passive, submissive father. He was much more attached to his mother than his father and may even have had sexual fantasies about her.⁶¹ From his youth, he was noted for being quick-witted, with a good memory and a facility for languages.⁶²

At least by the age of twenty-two, and possibly much earlier, Shabbetai clearly manifested the symptoms of manic-depression, symptoms which continued until his death. During times of mania, he would regularly skip sleep -- and his followers noted that, at such times, he was extremely persuasive. When in a depressed state, he could not work or even read and was constantly anxious. His followers gave an explicitly theological interpretation to his cycles of

⁵⁹ Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, ix; 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶¹ Avner Falk, "The Messiah and the Qelippoth: On the Mental Illness of Sabbatai Sevi," *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*, 7 (1982): 17; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 109-110.

⁶² Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 112-12; 107, 451-452.

manic-depression. His manic states were called "illuminations," while his depressions were the "hiding of the face," times when he suffered on behalf of the Jewish people. Apparently, his manic states wore him out physically, perhaps causing his early death, which occurred just after a sustained period of manic activity.⁶³ He also exhibited sexual behavior often associated with manic-depression, alternating between strong sexual urges and being completely repulsed by sex.⁶⁴

Shabbetai Zevi was considered to be very attractive, and he was said to have been a spell-binding speaker.⁶⁵ A disciple wrote that looking into his eyes "was like looking into a fire." As noted above, he was charismatically persuasive in person, particularly during manic states.⁶⁶

Shabbetai was also an outsider, in many ways. His family had lived, but not originated, in Greece. When he was young, they moved to Smyrna, where they were one of the few non-Sephardic families in an overwhelmingly Sephardic area. While noted for his learning even as a youth, his strange behavior, a result of his manic-depression, caused him to be socially ostracized while in his early twenties. Many of his earliest followers were also "outsiders," and

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 126-27; 133; 129; 130; 917.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁵ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 49.

⁶⁶ Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 132.

though he depicted them as a spiritual vanguard, they were opposed at first by the rabbinical establishment.⁶⁷ In his heyday, he even attracted many Christian and Muslim followers.⁶⁸

According to the tales of his followers, Shabbetai experienced a moment of "consecration," when, in 1648, it was suddenly revealed to him that he was the Messiah. These tales go on to assert that from this time forward, he always acted as the Messiah, trying to promote his messianic movement, and that all his ideas were fully formed by this time. In reality, however, his messianic pretensions arose gradually, with long periods of doubt or inactivity. In fact, he did not publicly declare himself to be the Messiah until shortly before 1666, and his ideology evolved steadily over the years.⁶⁹

Probably the most notable feature of his ideology was its deeply antinomian nature. He declared that the "Torah of Redemption" permitted acts that were otherwise prohibited -- that, in fact, it not only permitted but required such acts for the completion of redemption.⁷⁰ For the most part, however, he was not an original thinker, and he formulated

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 106; 283.

⁶⁸ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 49.

⁶⁹ Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 141; 119.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

very few of the doctrines his own movement followed.⁷¹ On the other hand, he loved and was a master of elaborate ritual and powerful symbolic acts.⁷²

Not only did he consider himself to be the Messiah, but he was "fascinated" by other messianic figures such as Jesus and Bar Kokhba. He saw himself in the role of Aaron, as the future High Priest of the rebuilt temple. He also identified with Moses, claiming that he had the soul of Moses and even carrying a staff with a serpent on it so that he would look more like Moses. His followers also consistently portrayed him as a new Moses, who would lead an exodus "similar to the exodus from Egypt but incomparably more noble and pure," according to one of his followers.⁷³ As will be seen below, many of these traits were shared by Wise, Herzl, and Kook.

Nachman of Bratzlav

Many *tzaddikim*, from the very origins of the *Hasidic* movement, were, if not openly messianic, at least regarded as redeemers for their own communities.⁷⁴ As was the case

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 122-24.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 159-60.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 284; 639; 306, 918; 584-85.

⁷⁴ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 173-183. For a more detailed description of the origin and development of the concept of *tzaddik*, although one that often ignores its messianic overtones, see Samuel H. Dresner, *The Zaddik* (New York, 1960).

with Lurianic kabbalists, *tzaddikim* attempted to bring about cosmic unification that would hasten the coming of the messianic age.⁷⁵ The prototypes for the *tzaddikim* were also messianic, Moses and Hanina ben Dosa, a first century Tanna renowned for his miracle working and referred to in several aggadot as the son of God.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the *tzaddikim* borrowed from the Sabbatian movement the notion of the descent of the *tzaddik* to the rungs of the wicked, even through deliberate sin, for the sake of redemption.⁷⁷

While all *tzaddikim* may have been, at least in an attenuated sense, messianic, some later *tzaddikim*, most notably Nachman of Bratslav, emphasized a special category of *tzaddik* -- the *tzaddik ha-dor*, the single spiritual leader of a generation, whose nature is even more similar to that of the Messiah. The concept that "true charismatic leadership is to be found in but a single figure in each generation" dates back at least to Mishnaic times, while the term *tzaddik ha-dor* itself is kabbalistic in origin. Moses, once again, is seen as the paradigm for the *tzaddik ha-dor*, especially in the Kabbalah, where Moses' soul is said to have contained all the souls of Israel. According to certain Lurianic teachings, elaborated upon by the *hasidim*, this soul was passed on to Shimon Bar Yokhai, and later to

⁷⁵ Dresner, *The Zaddik*, 141.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 124-25, 142.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 176, 210, 199.

other *tzaddike ha-dor*, such as the Baal Shem Tov. It originated in the primordial light of creation and would eventually be the soul of the Messiah.⁷⁸

At least as early as 1802, Nachman of Bratzlav began making fairly explicit claims that he was the *tzaddik ha-dor*, and he may have hinted at this before 1800.⁷⁹ He then began to emphasize the messianic aspects of the *tzaddik ha-dor*. For example, he wrote that the chief function of the *tzaddik ha-dor* was to bring about redemption, as had Moses. He highlighted the tradition that this soul would become that of the Messiah, and then wrote that he was the last bearer of this soul before the appearance of Messiah ben David, whose coming was imminent.⁸⁰

By 1804, he began to make more explicitly messianic claims, which would become most pronounced in 1806. He claimed not to be Messiah ben David, however, but Messiah ben Joseph, as had Luria, following the Lurianic doctrine that Messiah ben Joseph can come more than once and that if the generation he comes in is worthy, Messiah ben David will follow. In a series of esoteric Bratslaver writings, Nachman increasingly linked himself with Joseph and Messiah ben Joseph. He then began instituting ritual changes

⁷⁸ Green, *Tormented Master*, 116-120. Emphasis in the quote is Green's.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 182-86.

signalling the imminence of the messianic age, until in 1806, a year with the numerical equivalent of Messiah ben Joseph, he apparently made an explicit claim to be Messiah ben Joseph, a claim which his followers seemed to believe.⁸¹ Nachman became a "messianic figure" who founded a "new movement."⁸²

Nachman's messianic aspirations, including his choice of Messiah ben Joseph, rather than Messiah ben David, seem rooted in his psychology.⁸³ As a child, Nachman was surrounded by famous, charismatic, and, fairly often, arrogant and critical *hasidic* leaders, such as Barukh of Medzibozh. He seems to have had an unhappy childhood, one where he was never satisfied with his achievements, especially as those around him always seemed to place great expectations upon him. As the heir-designate of Barukh's,

⁸¹ Ibid., 191-97. The Bratslaver writings have been censored by his faithful *hasidim*, which makes the task of establishing what Nachman did and did not claim more difficult; nonetheless, Green marshals a significant number of allusions and indirect statements that all point to a censored explicit claim of messiahship.

⁸² Ibid., 10.

⁸³ It is interesting to note that any "rewards" he received through his messianic claim also seem to have been psychological. Unlike many *tzaddikim*, he did not appropriate for himself riches or set up a quasi-royal court. This was obviously not due to any modesty on Nachman's part; he had no trouble asserting that he was better than any other *tzaddik*. Nor was it due to lack of devoted followers; his *hasidim* were perhaps the most devoted of all. Rather, it appears that he made a conscious decision to forgo material rewards. Ibid., 44.

and thus the Baal Shem Tov's, hasidim, people looked for great accomplishments from him even as a small child.

Already by late adolescence, he was beset by severe self-doubts, and his manic/depressive mood swings began to manifest themselves as he cycled repeatedly through depression and elation.⁸⁴ These cycles recurred throughout his life, and Nachman suffered bouts of severe depression up until his final days. Regularly, however, he would become convinced of final triumph over his internal conflict, certain that his self-doubt was conquered forever. Interestingly, not only did he persuade himself, but also many of his followers seemed convinced by these "triumphs," even though they continually witnessed depressions after each declared victory.⁸⁵ Like Shabbetai, Nachman exhibited some of the sexual behaviors associated with manic-depression. He married young, but never seemed very close to his wife and, from adolescence on, placed great emphasis on "the conquest of sexual desire," becoming completely obsessed with this task.

He also experienced a variety of grandiose delusions, many linked with feelings of persecution. For example, he saw persecution as a mark of greatness, making "vindication through persecution" one of the central ways to recognize

⁸⁴ Ibid., 25-37.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 48.

the *tzaddik ha-dor*.⁸⁶ Furthermore, he viewed the internal, psychological conflicts arising from his manic-depression as the reflection of the cosmic struggle for *tikkun* and redemption. Through his personal "triumphs," he showed his followers how they could triumph over any difficulties. He transformed the concept of the descent of the *tzaddik*, recasting it in psychological terms -- the *tzaddik* becomes depressed, in order to sink to the level of the miserable and be able to redeem them. He also transformed the Lurianic notion of the healing of the rift between the soul of Jeroboam and Messiah ben Joseph into an internal reparation of his torn psyche.⁸⁷

Common Characteristics of Messiah-Figures

Having reviewed a variety of would-be Messiahs, I want to highlight some of the characteristics many of them share. Then, in the following section, I will try to explicate the significance of these characteristics. Before doing so, however, it should be noted that, according to my definition of Messiah, these are neither necessary nor sufficient characteristics. Nonetheless, I believe that it is precisely these traits which lead people into messianic aspirations.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 116. According to Nachman, the more successful the *tzaddik ha-dor* became, the more persecuted he would become, as the forces of evil tried to prevent redemption.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 197.

First of all, many would-be Messiahs were "outsiders." Some were literally outsiders, in that they began their messianic mission, at least that which we have records of, in lands distant from their own. Others were social outsiders, poor, relatively uneducated, or even from peripherally Jewish families, as was the case with Abulafia and, to an even greater extent, with Shlomo Molko. Once their movements started, these figures usually opposed, and were opposed by, the established Jewish authorities, who wished to preserve the status quo.⁸⁸ In fact, the more imminent the messianic expectations, the more anti-establishment they were likely to be.⁸⁹ Even when the Messiah-figure did not start as an outsider, as was the case with Nachman, he was generally ostracized by the other established leaders. In some cases, as with David Alroy and Serene, the non-Jewish governing power enforced the opposition of Jewish leaders. Even in cases where establishment opposition was not so strong, messianic movements were primarily populist, lay movements, with little to no rabbinical support.⁹⁰ Many would-be Messiahs

⁸⁸ Cohen, "Messianic Postures," 4-5. Of course, the desire by leaders to preserve the status quo and to oppose revolutionary change is not restricted to Jewish communities reacting to messianic movements.

⁸⁹ Eli Lederhandler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics* (Oxford, 1989), 19.

⁹⁰ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 56. One exception to this was Shlomo Molko, who was a great favorite of Joseph Karo.

also appealed to outsiders, becoming popular with Jews on the periphery of Jewish society and even, in some cases, with Christians and Muslims.

Related to this, the majority of these movements were antinomian. Often, they explicitly advocated the deletion of prayers or rituals, with some, like Shabbetai Zevi, standing rituals completely on their head. In a few instances, such as that of Abu-Isa and Nachman, additional ascetic practices were started. Most of these movements, however, advocated the establishment of new norms, not simply nihilism. Furthermore, many of these movements portrayed their revolution as a fulfillment of the past; they often retrojected their entire belief system onto some aspect of past Jewish history. For example, their redemption was to be a second exodus.⁹¹

All these figures seem to have had charismatic⁹² personalities and most were described as being attractive, as well as being powerful orators. Their attractiveness often extended into the sexual realm, and apparently many of the early followers of messianic movements have been women.⁹³ Nonetheless, in each case where we have the

⁹¹ Loewy, "Jewish Messianism," 106. Loewy also points out that this is not a trait unique to Jewish messianic movements; even modern anarchists, such as Bakunin, retrojected their beliefs into the past.

⁹² See below for a definition and discussion of charisma.

⁹³ Gratus, *False Messiahs*, 102.

relevant psychological data,⁹⁴ these figures also seemed beset by self-doubts and severe mood-swings, to the point of being manic/depressive. They were fascinated by death, dreamed of drowning or almost drowning, and occasionally contemplated suicide -- and yet, would often "triumph" over depression, entering a state of supreme self-confidence.⁹⁵ In both Nachman's and Shabbetai Zevi's case, this internal triumph over depression was given cosmic spiritual significance, a sign of the Messiah's ability to triumph over the evils of the world and bring about *tikkun*.

Finally, these figures arose in a wide variety of milieus, over a wide area and throughout many ages. In the majority of cases, however, would-be Messiahs appeared during times of social upheaval and change. Sometimes the change was of a hopeful nature; in other instances, it was a renewal of persecution or the onset of economic crisis.

IV. The Etiology and Import of Messianic Personality Traits

Charisma

Many, if not all, Messiah-figures have been described as being "charismatic." But what is charisma, how does it

⁹⁴ In some instances, Nachman being an exception to this, the lack of data seems to have been purposeful. The youth of messiah-figures, like that of many mythic heroes, is shrouded in mystery, apart from occasional stories of adolescent brilliance, such as those recounted by Sabbatians or followers of Shlomo Molko. Gratus, *False Messiahs*, 217-18. This pattern recurs in some of the case studies.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

function, and what is its significance? Max Weber was the first to study charisma in depth, and many of his insights are still valuable today. Weber defined charisma as a "personal characteristic by virtue of which he [the charismatic person] is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are as such not available to the ordinary person."⁹⁶ A person cannot be charismatic in a vacuum, however. One properly can be called charismatic only if one's charisma is recognized by one's followers, if they become devoted followers.⁹⁷ Lewy outlines several secondary characteristics of the charismatic person: a high energy level, superior oratorical skills, and "extraordinary eyes."⁹⁸

Weber noted that charismatic leadership occurs in all spheres of life, "although often it is most clearly developed in the field of religion."⁹⁹ The charismatic may be an extremely emotional person or may be the "type of intellectual ... who is carried away with his own demagogic

⁹⁶ Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago, 1968) 48.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁹⁸ Lewy, *Religion and Revolution*, 241.

⁹⁹ Weber, *Charisma*, 19.

success."¹⁰⁰ Charisma is not, in and of itself, either a moral or immoral force; rather, it can be utilized for either evil or good purposes.

Since charisma must be recognized to truly exist, its manifestations change from culture to culture. For example, in some cultures, magic would constitute proof of one's charismatic power, while in another, moving oratory might be proof.¹⁰¹ In any case, charismatic leaders express their charisma within the culture of their followers, using the symbols of that culture. Thus, within a Jewish milieu, one might expect charisma to be linked with messianic symbols and expectations.

While charisma does not exist in a vacuum, charismatic leaders do not regard their authority as "dependent on the attitude of the masses." To the leader, the followers are simply recognizing the fact of his or her charisma. Thus, charismatic leaders' authority, at least in their own view, comes directly from their person and personal attributes. It is subject neither to validation by followers nor to limitations by abstract rules or principles. Charismatic leaders do not function within a well-ordered hierarchy or division of labor -- they may intervene in any decision at any point.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 49.

¹⁰¹ Lewy, *Religion and Revolution*, 260.

¹⁰² Weber, *Charisma*, 20-24, 49-50.

Like Nachman, most charismatic leaders "seem to have gone through a difficult period of gestation before coming to power." This difficulty may be "real or an imaginatively reconstructed portrait," but, most critically, they felt the difficulty and believed they triumphed over it. These initial difficulties may be shared with the movement in order to show how they have been conquered, as was the case with Nachman. The moment of triumph, in turn, is viewed by followers as a religious or quasi-religious "consecration."¹⁰³

What defines the relationship between the charismatic leader and the followers? Such a leader will have at least a small band of extremely devoted disciples, who not only think of the leader as charismatic, but follow every wish of the leader and give him or her emotional support. They will follow their leader even despite economic or social costs.¹⁰⁴

Why do people choose to follow charismatic leaders? At least two theories have been proposed, each of which seems to contain some elements of truth. Weber and Kets de Vries both find evidence that such leadership is particularly common "at periods of uncertainty and unpredictability," during times of "psychic, physical, economic, ethical,

¹⁰³ Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries, "Prisoners of Leadership," *Human Relations*, 41 (1988): 266.

¹⁰⁴ Weber, *Charisma*, 21; Kets de Vries, "Prisoners," 267.

religious, or political stress."¹⁰⁵ Especially at such times, people seem to require at least a minimum of security and certainty. When more typical sources of security, such as traditional authority structures, which do things in one set fashion because they were done so in the past, or bureaucracies, which follow set rules, break down, people may seek security in a relationship with a leader who, if not omnipotent, at least appears to be more in control than other humans. Eli Sagan asserts that this search for an omnipotent human leader may happen especially during times of reduced belief in divine omnipotence, with the followers of such leaders transferring their security needs from the divine to the human realm.¹⁰⁶

This theory, of security found in the very person of a charismatic leader, may also explain why such leaders frequently bring about great change in society.¹⁰⁷ Since their followers find security in the leaders' person, and not their policies, such leaders can change rules and norms without unduly upsetting their followers' security. Even in

¹⁰⁵ Kets de Vries, "Prisoners," 265; Weber, *Charisma*, 18-19. Of course, this would support the societal change/psychic stress theory of the cause of messianic movements.

¹⁰⁶ Eli Sagan, "Religion and Magic: A Developmental View," in Johnson, *Religious Change*, 110.

¹⁰⁷ See Edward Shils, "Charisma, Order, and Status," *American Sociological Review*, 30 (1965): 199-213 for an argument that charismatic leaders bring order rather than change. His reasoning, however, does not preclude the possibility that they bring about a new order, enabling both change and security.

the midst of revolution, these followers have something to hold onto.

A second theory, proposed by one of Weber's disciples, S. N. Eisenstadt, views the essence of charisma as being an attempt to connect one with "some very central feature of ... existence and the cosmos," the ability to create a social order with meaning and purpose for the individual.¹⁰⁸ One follows a charismatic leader, therefore, in order to instill such meaning into one's life. This may in fact tie in with the theory above, for it would be particularly during times of stress and change that ordinary answers about life's meaning would seem inadequate. In any case, this type of charisma does not have to be revolutionary; in order to create meaning, charismatic leaders may try to link their movement with traditional myths or symbols.

While charismatic movements tend to start off as anti-institutional, for the essence of charismatic authority comes from the person exercising it, and an institution would merely limit the scope of such authority, the very nature of movement building sets up a dynamic by which the revolution is limited and charisma becomes institutionalized. One reason for institutionalization is the precarious nature of charismatic authority. Leaders are charismatic only as long as they are recognized as such, and

¹⁰⁸ S. N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity* (Malabar, FL., 1983), 126.

so their authority may be constantly tested, constantly in need of proof. Because of this, leaders may find it desirable to trade some of the freedom charismatic authority grants them for the more secure power which institutions with set rules may provide.

As a charismatic movement grows, institutionalization becomes desirable for several other reasons, as well. The larger it grows, the more likely it is that some adherents will not be fanatical disciples, and thus may require more material rewards. As the movement grows, it also gets harder to manage, and so rules may evolve simply to take care of the logistics of growth. Finally, when the leader believes in ideals and not simply personal power, he or she may desire to make these values permanent societal norms by institutionalizing them. Thus, the movement may engender codes of morality or behavior, as well as set rituals.

One other problem that new movements face often leads to institutionalization -- or the end of the movement: the problem of succession. The leader may try to set up succession before death, although charismatic authority is difficult to transmit directly and the movement may choose not to follow the new leader. The uncertainty of succession may lead to doctrines that focus on legitimizing institutional processes of succession.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Charles L. Bosk, "The Routinization of Charisma: The Case of the Zaddik," in Johnson, *Religious Change*, 166.

Psychological Characteristics -- Manic/Depressive Syndrome

As noted above, several messianic figures showed symptoms of manic-depression.¹¹⁰ People suffering from manic-depression show severe and sudden mood swings, veering from "superactivity, manic elation, and grandiose schemes to periods of despondency, immobility, guilt and inability to experience pleasure or even think normally."¹¹¹ Such people may have sudden and frequent shifts from a manic episode to a depression, may stay in each phase for as long as several weeks, or may have prolonged periods of "normal" emotional response between manic/depressive episodes.¹¹²

During a depressive phase, those who suffer from this syndrome may be listless, indecisive, even slow moving. They may lose their appetite, have insomnia or be unable to stay awake, feel constantly fatigued, and suffer a decrease in sexual drive. They may feel self-doubts, anxiety, lack of self-esteem, and, in some instances, severe guilt. They will frequently dwell on failures, exaggerating their

¹¹⁰ Both here and in the cases studies, when I describe symptoms of manic-depression, I am not making a clinical diagnosis of bipolar affective disorder, the technical term for manic-depression, which I am obviously not qualified to do. For this reason, throughout this study I will refer to this syndrome as manic-depression, in order to make clear that I am not discussing clinical evidence.

¹¹¹ Demitri F. Papolos and Janice Papolos, *Overcoming Depression* (New York, 1987), 3.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 28-32.

severity. In some instances, depression may lead to suicide.¹¹³

The manic phase appears completely different. In fact, to the person actively in a manic phase, life may seem quite wonderful, better than normal rather than "abnormal." That person will tend to think more quickly, have surges of energy, and feel more creative. People in manic phases rarely feel as though they need any sleep, and they often embark on grandiose projects, confident of success, although, in fact, they will tend to make rash decisions and evaluate risks poorly. They will often free-associate, telling many jokes, especially word-plays and puns. Their sexual drive usually increases. During the manic phase, moods change extremely rapidly, with eruptions of anger common.¹¹⁴

Manic/depressives frequently suffer from delusions, which will be discussed in the next section. Most frequently, these are delusions of grandeur. In one study, 92% of those with grandiose delusions suffered from bipolar disorder, while 75-90% of those in manic phases had grandiose delusions.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 4-5, 29-30.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5, 15, 18, 19.

¹¹⁵ John M. Neale, "The Defensive Function of Manic Episodes," in Thomas Oltmanns and Brendan A. Maher, eds., *Delusional Beliefs* (New York, 1988), 140.

Frequently, manic/depressives have trouble sustaining long-term intimate relationships. Partially this is because manic episodes sometimes lead to sexual infidelity. Also, in many cases, the manic/depressive will idealize his or her partner, and then, when that ideal is not sustained, will change quickly from idealization to complete rejection.¹¹⁶

What causes manic/depressive syndrome? While the biochemical factors are becoming increasingly well-understood, they are not the most relevant to this study.¹¹⁷ Rather, I will examine the psychological factors involved in the etiology of manic/depressive behavior. The most important psychological predisposition for this syndrome is unstable, rather than low or high, self-esteem, an instability which precedes, and may eventually develop into, the mood swings of the manic/depressive. This instability may be due to intense narcissism or from having a predominantly or completely external source of self-esteem.¹¹⁸

Unstable self-esteem seems particularly likely to occur in two family situations: when there is a general lack of parental care during early childhood, leading to

¹¹⁶ Falk, "Messiah," 22. Shabbetai Zevi seems to have exhibited this behavior.

¹¹⁷ Obviously, I do not have the relevant biochemical data for any of the subjects of this study. In the cases in question, however, the manic/depressive episodes do seem to take on the defensive functions described below, which tends to support an at least partially psychological, rather than purely biological, etiology for their manic-depression.

¹¹⁸ Neale, "Defensive Function," 142.

feelings of abandonment, insecurity, and unreliable caring; or when there is a narcissistic, smothering care from one parent, typically the mother, which prevents identity separation from that parent.¹¹⁹ Any incident which then threatens this unstable self-esteem may trigger a manic or depressive phase.

A manic or depressive phase occurs as an ego defense mechanism against this threat to self-esteem. How does this defense work? While the exact mechanisms are not yet fully understood, it seems that the manic state is viewed internally as the triumph of the ego over the threat by conquering the fears of the super-ego. Thus, for example, one may be afraid about whether or not a speech will succeed. The manic phase may then set in, trying to convince the ego that of course the speech will succeed because of the truly superior oratorical skills that person possesses. The manic phase will continue until it ceases to be an effective defense, the threat vanishes, or until the energy required to sustain a manic phases simply wears a person out.¹²⁰

Depression may be a failed response, occurring when fears triumph over the ego. Alternatively, the depression may be the ego "going into hiding," seeking

¹¹⁹ Falk, "Messiah," 5-12.

¹²⁰ Neale, "Defensive Function," 151-52.

to avoid fears through a psychological equivalent to hibernation.¹²¹

How does this mechanism play itself out when the manic depressive is the leader of a new movement? As noted above, the leader can make a parallel between his or her psychic stress and societal stress, so that, when a manic phase "triumphs" over a psychic threat, the emotional reality of this personal healing becomes a visible symbol of the societal redemption the movement promises to bring about. Furthermore, the defensive nature of the syndrome, as well as the sheer energy of the manic state, give the leader the stamina and strength necessary for the founding of a movement.¹²² Also, the manic state itself may contribute to charisma, giving the appearance of an "inspired" state, as well as providing the leader with the tremendous amount of energy required to be charismatic.

Psychological Characteristics -- Delusions

In everyday language, a delusion is a false belief. Psychologists, less certain of our ability to always be able to distinguish truth from falsehood, define delusions more precisely. From a psychological point of view, a delusion is a belief:

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 152. The analogy to hibernation is my own.

¹²² Thomas Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma: The Sociology of New Religious Movements* (London, 1988), 102.

- a) that one's surrounding society finds completely incredible
- b) not held in common with any group
- c) held with firm convictions, even in the presence of what seems evidence to the contrary
- d) that preoccupies one's mind, to the extent that it may be difficult not to talk about it
- e) that involves some sort of personal reference
- f) that is not consciously resisted by oneself.¹²³

Beliefs should be regarded as being on a spectrum; some may fit all these characteristics and be clearly delusional, while others may or may not be delusional.

Delusions come in several forms, the most relevant to this study being grandiose delusions and delusions of persecution. Grandiose delusions involve beliefs of special abilities, a grandiose identity, such as believing oneself to be Napoleon or Jesus, or a special mission in life. Delusions of persecution may be linked with grandiose ones, since one may believe that the persecution comes because of one's grandiose identity, or even that the persecutions are proof of that identity, as was the case with Nachman.¹²⁴

¹²³ Thomas F. Oltmanns, "Approaches to the Definition and Study of Delusions," in Oltmanns and Maher, *Delusional Beliefs*, 5.

¹²⁴ Atwood D. Gaines, "Delusions: Culture, Psychosis, and the Problem of Meaning," in Oltmanns and Maher, *Delusional Beliefs*, 238. While the forms of delusions (paranoid, grandiose, etc.) appear cross-culturally, the content is culturally bound and, in fact, tends to come from

What sort of people tend to suffer from delusions? Jung noted as early as 1903 that grandiose delusions occurred most commonly in patients suffering from manic/depressive disorders. Frequently, these patients were intelligent, interested in politics, lively and amusing, neglected their families, had little business sense and would often give extravagant gifts, were hypochondriacs, and had a severe lack of self-criticism or realistic self-evaluation.¹²⁵ The family situations which commonly give rise to grandiose delusions are similar to those for manic-depression: inattentive parents, who do not mirror the developing self-esteem of the child, or narcissistic parents who place inflated, impossible expectations upon the child. They may also occur where the child feels the need to

the culture of one's childhood. Thus, for instance, someone who grew up in an orthodox Jewish household would be more likely to take on the grandiose identity of Messiah ben David than that of Jesus or Mohammed, while the opposite would be true for someone who grew up in a traditional Christian or Muslim household. For a further discussion of this phenomenon, see Joseph Westermeyer, "Some Cross-cultural Aspects of Delusion," in *ibid.*, 212, 216-18. Westermeyer argues, as well, that what is delusional in one culture may be acceptable eccentricity in another, a further argument against the popular definition of "delusion" as "false belief."

¹²⁵ Carl Jung, *Collected Works of Carl Jung*, 1 (2d edn., Princeton, 1970): 124-25; Warner L. Lowe, "Psychodynamics in Religious Delusions and Hallucinations," *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 7 (April, 1957): 456, 460-61.

"rescue" the family.¹²⁶ Delusions of persecution arise in a greater variety of situations, but they are particularly common during times of increased cultural change.¹²⁷

The etiology and function of grandiose delusions appear to be quite closely related to that of the manic phase of manic-depression. One major source of psychic distress is a perceived gap between the real and ideal self, which grandiose delusions can reduce. Grandiose delusions also tend to arise as a defensive mechanism particularly in individuals with unstable, rather than low, self-esteem.¹²⁸

The delusion of believing oneself to be the Messiah, sometimes referred as the "Jesus delusion" in psychological literature, is "perhaps the most common of all delusions." Once established, it has an inertia of its own, so that one "prophetic" experience may be the source of a lifelong delusion.¹²⁹ This type of delusion usually has a greater hold on the patient during times of anxiety, seclusion, and general instability, and it seems to be a manifestation of an attempt to merge the ego with the ego ideal.¹³⁰ It is a

¹²⁶ Falk, "Messiah," 26; John Strauss, "Delusional Processes: an Interactive Developmental Perspective," in Oltmanns and Maher, *Delusional Beliefs*, 329.

¹²⁷ Joseph Westermeyer, "Cross-cultural Aspects of Delusions," 227.

¹²⁸ Neale, "Defensive Function," 145-47.

¹²⁹ Lowe, "Religious Delusions," 471.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 457, 460.

particularly "effective" delusion from the standpoint of the person suffering from manic-depression because of the way it combines delusions of grandeur and persecution. It protects self-esteem not only during the manic phase, through participation in a grandiose identity, but during the depressive phase, when failures can be explained away due to the persecution the Messiah faces. The self can remain perfect, from the perspective of the person with the delusion, and all faults can either be projected onto the persecutors or explained by the "cosmic opposition" of those trying to prevent the success of the Messiah's mission.¹³¹

Psychological Characteristics -- "Helping Addictions"

Often, people with grandiose delusions can become addicted to helping others and cannot stop doing so, even when their health or well-being is threatened.¹³² The addictive helper takes on both a sense of grandiose responsibility and a grandiose identity and so feels compelled to help and "rescue" others. The two major

¹³¹ For a more detailed discussion of such delusions, see Alan Gettis, "The Jesus Delusion: A Theoretical and Phenomenological Look," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 26 (1987): 131-32.

¹³² The most extensive work about this behavioral addiction is, unfortunately, a somewhat sloppily written popular work: Carmen Renee Berry, *When Helping You is Hurting Me: Escaping the Messiah Trap* (San Francisco, 1988). She labels this addiction "the messiah trap." Calling it a "messiah" trap seems more confusing than helpful, however, so I will use the more accurate term, "helping addiction."

characteristics of such an addiction are that, when in a "helping" situation, a person feels "if I don't do it, it won't get done" and that "other's needs always take priority over mine."¹³³ Typically, such people develop almost purely external senses of self-esteem, usually leading to high, but unstable, levels of self-regard. They also tend to neglect their families, sublimating all their passions into their cause, and they may have difficulty establishing peer relationships, for they tend to relate to others in a hierarchical fashion.¹³⁴

Berry illustrates a variety of patterns of helping addictions. Two are relevant to this study. The first is a religious or political leader who goes on ceaseless speaking tours or missions, needing to feel that he or she is constantly helping large crowds in order to preserve fragile self-esteem, working often to the point of complete exhaustion and even ill-health. The second type is that of teacher or principal, particularly one who founds schools, who becomes personally involved in the lives of all or most students, "adopting" them as family members, even at the expense of the helper's own children.¹³⁵

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 110-15.

Psychological Characteristics -- Group/Leader Relations

Heinz Kohut discusses two different types of personalities that become leaders and engender intense group/leader relations, the "charismatic" and "messianic" personality types, each of which has a hypertrophied development of one element of the self. Both are closely associated with manic-depression, and each tends to arise from that same general family pattern: unreliable amounts of parental affection. The "charismatic" personality focuses almost entirely on the grandiose self, that is, personal ambition and sense of personal power. The "messianic" personality has merged the self into the idealized super ego, that is, one's ideals. In the most extreme cases, the "charismatic" personality believes him or herself to be omnipotent, while the "messianic" personality believes him or herself to be perfect, to perfectly meet the ideal.¹³⁶ While both types tend to show a seemingly unshakable self confidence, to think in terms of black and white and be very judgmental, to be narcissistic, and to use their followers to satisfy their narcissistic needs, their relationship with their followers does differ.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Heinz Kohut, *Self-Psychology and the Humanities* (New York, 1985), 196-200. Kohut writes that, as one might expect, these personalities can be mixed; that is, one could have elements of both the "charismatic" and "messianic;" one could also be partially "messianic" and partially "normal."

¹³⁷ Ibid. Kohut also notes that while neither will tend to have a self-deprecating sense of humor, either may be rather witty, and the "messianic" type may be able to be

According to this theory, for example, followers of "charismatic" leaders focus on the omnipotence of their leader, while followers of "messianic" leaders focus on the perfection of their leaders' ideology. Furthermore, "charismatic" leaders promote themselves and their own power first, while "messianic" leaders promote the cause they identify with. Nonetheless, neither type of leader relates to others as peers, although they may develop master/disciple relationships and seem to have a "heightened sensitivity to the anonymous group."¹³⁸

Followers of these types of leaders also seem to share certain psychological characteristics, sometimes called the "authoritarian personality." These followers also tend to view the world in black and white, both in personal and political affairs. They tend to like to function within a well-defined hierarchical structure. Usually, they have come from a family with a domineering male, to whom the whole family submits, and they recreate this situation within their own family.¹³⁹ By submitting themselves either to the superior power of the "charismatic" leader or to the grandiose ideal of the "messianic" leader, these followers

self-deprecating about areas of the self not tied up with the idealized superego.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 200, 56.

¹³⁹ T.W. Adorno, Else Frenkel Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York, 1950), 971-72.

escape their own problems and feel an increase in self-esteem.¹⁴⁰

The dynamics between such followers and leaders can establish strong, albeit often pathological, psychological bonds between the two as well as among group members. Furthermore, since groups, taken as a unit, can have psychological desires or problems, such as low self-esteem, a leader can win their approval and devotion by addressing such needs.¹⁴¹ This occurs when leaders "articulate the underlying issues of a society."¹⁴² Such "issues" may be purely psychological, such as residual low self-esteem from a military defeat, or both political and psychological, such as fear from environmental hazards. In addressing these problems, these leaders combine cultural and psychological symbols, giving greater meaning to both.

Followers often attach themselves to charismatic leaders through psychological transference. The followers may project onto the leader their desires, such as for a strong parent, and their hopes, such as for a return to the "perfection" of childhood, when the parental figure was

¹⁴⁰ Daniel Bell, "Notes on Authoritarian and Democratic Leadership," in Alvin W. Gouldner, ed., *Studies in Leadership and Democratic Action* (New York, 1950), 405. Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York, 1957), 111.

¹⁴¹ Kohut, *Self Psychology*, 55-57. This seems to be the underlying psychological basis for the leader/follower bond noted above, pp. 40-42.

¹⁴² Kets de Vries, "Prisoners of Leadership," 267.

regarded as omnipotent. In return, they provide unconditional support to the leader, always approving of the leader's ideas, whether or not they are reasonable, helping him or her to maintain self-esteem.

Such transference can also help bind the group together. The followers' unconscious fantasies of omnipotence do not only attach to the leader, but to the need for group unity. In particular, followers of a "charismatic" leader are held together through sharing an "archaic narcissistic conception of the world" and through their grandiose fantasies as embodied in their leader. Followers of a "messianic" leader may be held together through a convergence of their ego-ideal, through the shared values they hold, as embodied in their leader. This difference in group orientation may lead "charismatic" groups to define themselves more often in contrast to some "enemy," while "messianic" groups may have a more positively constructed sense of group identity.¹⁴³

Leadership from the Periphery

As was noted above, many of the leaders of messianic movements came from outside the established leadership of the Jewish community. One reason for this is obvious: those already in the elite have a stake in preserving the status quo, and, conversely, very few reasons to support a

¹⁴³ Kohut, *Self Psychology*, 54-55.

change in leadership structure that might threaten their position. However, another dynamic may cause communities to turn to "outsiders" for leadership.

Throughout much of history, Jews have been a minority group which was relatively disadvantaged when compared to broader society. When such is the case, and when one's Judaism is, or at least appears to be, enforced rather than chosen, in that one cannot, or at least not without major sacrifices, end one's Jewish identity, the phenomenon of "leadership from the periphery" may occur. Because one is forced to remain a member of a group that brings social disadvantages, one may become resentful of such disadvantages. Such resentment will often turn against not the surrounding society which enforces it, but rather the Jewish community itself. What is more identifiably "Jewish" becomes bad, what is "less" Jewish becomes more desirable.¹⁴⁴ Thus, leaders who seem "less" Jewish become preferred, especially if they have achieved success in the

¹⁴⁴ Kurt Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts* (New York, 1948), 191-93. Alan York, "American Jewish Leaders From the Periphery," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 23 (June, 1981): 33, argues against Lewin's hypothesis, particularly in today's Jewish communities, while Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (London, 1968), 27 claims that "outsider" status is inherent in being Jewish, for Jews are "on the borderline of various civilizations." He also claims that such status is a positive occurrence, for it makes Jews "natural pioneers"; *ibid.*, 40.

non-Jewish world.¹⁴⁵ In some cases, this may give rise to leadership which is ambivalent about the group being led, which seems clear, for example in some of the Frankist writings about Judaism. On the other hand, those who have succeeded in the non-Jewish world but voluntarily identify with the Jewish community, often become the most devoted of leaders, like Shlomo Molko.

V. Movement Building and Societal Change

Having examined the psychodynamics of Messiah-figures and of leadership in general, I now explore the social and religious dimensions of movement building. The interaction between leadership and movement building, as well as the way leaders use symbols in their movements, shed some insight on the dynamics of modern messianic movements.

The Dynamics of Social Movements

Wilkinson has defined a social movement as:

- a) "a deliberate collective endeavor to promote change in any direction and by any means ... including [in some but not all instances] violence"
- b) an endeavor that "must evince [at least] a minimal degree of organization"

¹⁴⁵ Such a phenomenon is not unique to the Jewish community. Moses, *Black Messiahs*, 13, argues that many black messianic leaders "established their prophetic credentials in the white world " before becoming successful leaders in the black community.

c) an endeavor whose "commitment to change ...
[is] founded upon conscious actions toward the
movement's beliefs."¹⁴⁶

Given these characteristics, why do some movements succeed and others fail?

A variety of factors contribute to the success of new movements and thus to their ability to bring about social change. First of all, they must address some unmet need or identify some group that feels unjustly left out.¹⁴⁷ New movements need to establish legitimacy for themselves and, in particular, for any changes in norms and institutions that they attempt to bring about. They can do this through charismatic authority, through leaders with broad emotional appeal. They may also attempt to establish legitimacy through some continuity with the past, particularly through the use of a culture's traditional symbols, as is noted below. New movements must be able to successfully distinguish themselves from already existing ones, to show how their mission is in some way unique. In order to continue over time, they need to appeal to a wide demographic group and to effectively socialize those who enter into the movement, to establish a lasting commitment

¹⁴⁶ Paul Wilkinson, *Social Movement* (New York, 1971), 27.

¹⁴⁷ Hoffer, *True Believer*, 109-110, Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1977), 255-56. Chirot, a socialist writer, focuses on movements which mobilize the economically peripheral, although his reasoning could be applied to other peripheral groups.

to that movement. Finally, if the government aids, or at least does not interfere with, the establishment of the movement, it has a greater chance at success.¹⁴⁸

Of course, when the above factors are not present, successful movement founding is less likely to occur. The dynamics of institution building also set limits on the likelihood of change. Just as the movement may have been created by feelings of disenfranchisement on the part of its followers, the institutions the movement itself may build, by the very nature of institutions, will set up some values as normative and distributes power and material goods to certain elements in society -- at the same time, disenfranchising other values and other elements in society.¹⁴⁹ These newly peripheral elements will then oppose the new institutions. Furthermore, since charismatic leaders often come from "outside" a society, institutional disenfranchisement continually creates new populations from which such leaders can and often do arise -- in opposition to existing movements. Finally, whenever any attempt at social change begins to succeed, some of its original motivation for action disappears. Thus, for example, once some settlements were established in Israel, some Zionists

¹⁴⁸ Robbins, *Cults*, 105-110, discusses such factors from the standpoint of new religious movements.

¹⁴⁹ Eisenstadt, *Tradition*, 148.

might have become satisfied and thus less motivated to work for further change.

As noted above, charismatic leaders can help bring about change, and it is precisely such leaders that are often involved in the founding of new movements. In addition, any movement which claims a "higher truth" than present society needs some arbiter of such truth, who usually becomes the leader of the movement.¹⁵⁰ It thus becomes understandable why messianic leadership can be critical to the success of a new movement.

Religious Movements

Religious movements differ from other social movements on a variety of grounds, occasionally leading to different dynamics. While a precise definition of "religious movement" becomes increasing problematic in modern times, such movements share certain characteristics. They have a "source of doctrinal authority which transcends the individual," they stake claims to primacy in truth and authority, and they try to find an overall meaning and order to life.¹⁵¹

Such movements may also focus on different sorts of changes than other social movements. For example, religious

¹⁵⁰ Talmon, *Political Messianism*, 20.

¹⁵¹ Wilkinson, *Social Movement*, 55; Talmon, *Political Messianism*, 506.

movements are not reducible to class conflicts, as they frequently transcend class boundaries.¹⁵² Religious leadership may also differ from other types of movement leaders, and may in fact be even more critical to a movement's success, for the leader, especially when messianic, may be viewed as God's anointed. Thus, what the leader says or does carries with it a naturally higher level of charismatic authority.

Religious movements may or may not work for broader social change. Once, the dominant view among sociologists of religion was that religion usually inspired political quietism, that "religion has been the historically most widespread and effective instrumentality of legitimation" for the existing governmental authority.¹⁵³ Increasingly, however, scholars have realized that religions may lead to revolutionary attitudes as easily as to quietistic ones, that religions have as often opposed existing power structures as supported them.¹⁵⁴ Typically, Jewish

¹⁵² See Wilkinson, *Social Movements*, 76-77, for several instances of this phenomenon.

¹⁵³ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 32. Berger has since modified his position in this area. Marx also wrote extensively about the supposed quietistic and legitimizing function of religions.

¹⁵⁴ Vatro Murvar, "The Integrative and Revolutionary Capability of Religion," in Johnson, *Religious Change*, 83. Lewy, *Religion and Revolution*, describes in great detail a wide variety of religious movements with at least some revolutionary political activities.

messianic movements fit this latter mold, for they seek to transform societal norms.

Symbols and Movement Building

A symbol, in its technical, sociological sense, is language or action which provokes an emotional response far greater than its surface meaning.¹⁵⁵ In the context of social and religious movements, symbols can have varying potencies, depending on some key characteristics. In general, symbols with a longer and richer historical background will carry more weight, although occasionally a symbol may become less relevant over time. For example, though "Torah" means much to many Jews precisely because of the long history of the concept, to some modern Jews, "Torah" is seen as outmoded and irrelevant. The closer the ties between a symbol and the issue to which it is attached, as well as those between that symbol and the group being addressed, the more potent that symbol will become. Thus, for example, the "return to Zion" will mean far less to a group of Japanese Zen Buddhists than to American Jews. Certain symbols are more potent when used by certain types of people; a religious leader, for example, may more persuasively use religious symbolism. Charismatic leaders

¹⁵⁵ See Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder, *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building*, 56-62, 130-49, for a more detailed discussion of the varieties and importance of symbols in movement building.

are often particularly adept at using symbols.¹⁵⁶ Some symbols convey greater urgency than others, either because of the nature of the symbol itself or because of the context it is used in. For example, "Peace Now" is a slogan designed to convey urgency through the symbolic weight of the word "now." Finally, a symbol may carry an emotive content far different from its literal meaning, as did "communism" during the McCarthy era.¹⁵⁷

Symbols can be used in a variety of ways to help build movements. Leaders commonly use symbols for "affirmation," to stress the unity and solidarity of their followers. Symbolic rewards can also be presented to devoted followers when more material rewards are not available.¹⁵⁸ Symbols can be used to try to garner new followers by appealing to values already held by those outside the movement. For example, early Zionists, in trying to win others over to their cause, used symbols of the exodus from Egypt, symbols valued by those not yet in the movement. Symbols can also be used to create or define an enemy, whether that be "medieval orthodoxy" or "assimilationist reformers." Symbols can convey the impression of progress even without concrete evidence of such progress. Finally, symbols can be used to gain legitimacy for a movement, often by

¹⁵⁶ Hoffer, *True Believers*, 112-14.

¹⁵⁷ Cobb and Elder, *Agenda Building*, 131.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

retrojecting some revolutionary change in norms into the past. For example, early reformers, such as Wise, retrojected the notion of "Reform Judaism" all the way back to Moses. In this context, well-established symbols may also be given new meaning, such as the use of the word "Temple" by the Reform movement.

Clearly, messianic symbols meet most if not all of the characteristics of potent symbols, and thus, can be used effectively in movement building. As Zweig wrote, "whenever anyone, prophet or deceiver, throughout the 2000 years of exile, plucked this string [messianic expectation], the entire soul of the people was brought into vibration."¹⁵⁹ Scholem went so far as to claim that the primary cause of the widespread success of the Sabbatian movement was its successful use of Lurianic messianic symbolism.¹⁶⁰ The symbol of the Messiah carries great weight not only because of the characteristics listed above, but because of some peculiar qualities of the notion itself. First of all, even more so than is the case with more symbols, the exact meaning of the "Messiah" is unclear. It is unclear not because of lack of detail, however, but because this one term covers a wide variety of notions. Thus, when the term "Messiah" is used, the listener can fill that term with

¹⁵⁹ S. Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (New York, 1943), 104.

¹⁶⁰ Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 8.

whatever meaning is most pleasing, adding to its symbolic weight.¹⁶¹ For example, it can appeal to both religious Jews, who might view it as a theological symbol, and to secular Jews, who might view it as a national, political symbol, one that can legitimize a secular government.

Second, "Messiah" is, by its very nature, a "bipolar" symbol. It can encourage either passive waiting or revolutionary activity and can be linked with an optimistic or pessimistic world view.¹⁶² It has both particularistic and universalistic values in it, as well as both the spiritual and the material. It looks both to restore an ideal past and to create a new future, and, on the individual level, it appeals to delusions of grandeur and of persecution. The symbol "Messiah" can have broad appeal not because it is a vague, middle-of-the-road value, but because it can appeal to two extremes at the same time.

Through discussing the evolution of the messianic idea, the etiology of messianic movements, traits shared by messianic leaders, and the dynamics of movement building, particularly through the use of symbols, I have set forth a theoretical framework for the operation and significance of modern messianic leadership. I turn now to my case studies, in order to see how well reality bears out this framework.

¹⁶¹ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 17.

¹⁶² Loewy, "Jewish Messianism," 114-115.

Chapter Two
Isaac M. Wise's Messianic Mission

Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900) lived through a period of rapid change, both in the world at large and in the Jewish community. Revolutions and counter-revolutions spread through Europe, nationalism became a major political force, and imminent eschatological thought, linked with what seemed to be the inevitable march of progress, filtered into both intellectual circles and populist movements. In 1846, Wise came to the United States, where change was proceeding at an even greater pace. Already, the notion of "manifest destiny," often labelled a type of "American messianism," had begun to affect much of American politics,¹ and within twenty years of Wise's arrival, the Civil War and its aftermath would radically change much of American life.

Before he arrived, at most two ordained rabbis lived in America, and only four American congregations had any Reform leanings whatsoever.² No associations of congregations or rabbis had been established, and no rabbinical seminaries yet existed. By the time of Wise's death, less than sixty years later, close to 75 rabbis had been ordained by Hebrew

¹ For an extended discussion of "American messianism" and its role in American politics, see Conrad Cherry, ed., *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971). "Messianism" in this work seems to mean something similar to what I am calling a "group messiah."

² James G. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work, and Thought* (New York, 1965), 104.

Union College (HUC), HUC possessed the largest Jewish library in the country, almost 100 congregations belonged to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), and a Conservative and an Orthodox seminary had been established.³ Directly or indirectly, Wise was involved with, if not the cause of, all of these changes.

Without a doubt, Wise was "the most influential of nineteenth century American Jewish Reformers,"⁴ "the American Jew who, more than any other person, was responsible for the development of organized Reform Judaism in the United States."⁵ Indeed, Wise's influence was felt far beyond the Reform community, beyond even the Jewish community, for he was regarded as one of the major nineteenth century religious figures in the country. His death made headline news in papers all across the America.

Why was he so well known? What did he accomplish? He introduced many reforms into Jewish life, such as the first instance of mixed seating in a synagogue,⁶ and his

³ Michael A. Meyer, "A Centennial History," in Samuel E. Karff, ed., *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion At One Hundred Years* (Cincinnati, 1976), 46, 25. For a brief discussion of the state of Reform Judaism in the United States at the time of Wise's death, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Oxford, 1988) 282-286.

⁴ Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 227.

⁵ Jacob R. Marcus, "Introduction," in Doris C. Sturzenberger, ed., *The Papers of Isaac Mayer Wise: A Guide to the Microfilm Edition* (Cincinnati, 1981), 3.

⁶ Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 242.

prayerbook, *Minhag America*, was the most widely used prayerbook in America, Reform or otherwise, until the introduction of the Union Prayer Book. Today, however, he is chiefly known for his role in founding the three institutions of American Reform Judaism: the UAHC, HUC, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). Indeed, historians discussing his significance usually note him as "the foremost organizer of American Jewry,"⁷ indicating that his chief genius lay in his organizational abilities.

I disagree with such an assessment for two reasons. First, as the evidence presented below will show, Wise was not an unqualified genius as an organizer. In fact, he often made rather obvious mistakes in his organizational activities, leading to occasional failures. More importantly, however, such an evaluation, which reduces Wise to an almost bureaucratic status, misses both his real goals and his real abilities. As I will try to show, Wise did not set out to build up institutions merely for their own sake. Rather, he saw them as the means to a glorious end: the bringing about of the messianic age in America by the end of the 19th century. In addition, he set out to instill radically different norms into the American Jewish community: a belief that Reform is the way to be Jewish, and a belief that America was the "promised land," that Jews

⁷ Joseph Gutmann, "Watchman on an American Rhine: New Light on Isaac M. Wise," offprint from *American Jewish Archives* (Cincinnati, 1958): 135.

should be both thoroughly Jewish and completely American. He felt inspired to accomplish such tasks, to bring about such transformations, because of an overwhelming sense of destiny, linked to his belief that he was the God-selected leader of the messianic people, Israel, if not in fact the Messiah himself.

In order to demonstrate this, the chapter is divided into several sections. In the first three, background factors that have been linked, either theoretically or historically, with messianic figures will be discussed from the point of view of Wise's life and background, focusing especially on psychobiography. The next sections focus on evidence of Wise's messianic self-view, including his general attitude about messianic issues, his messianic vision for American Israel, and his view of his own role in the bringing of the messianic age. Following this, I show how those around him reacted to his charisma and messianic qualities. The final section tries to demonstrate how these qualities played a critical role in Wise's successes.

I. Messianic Personality Factors -- Family and Friends

Childhood Family Relationships

As his biographers note, Wise, for the most part, "could not be induced to talk about his early years.... No authentic data are to be found in Wise's writings; and, ...

he never referred to his early years."⁸ More recent attempts to document the little Wise talked about have yielded almost no independent corroboration of any activities prior to his journey to America.⁹ Wise frequently asserted that his past was simply "too terrible to contemplate."¹⁰ His reticence in and of itself is interesting, though inconclusive.¹¹ Furthermore, while the

⁸ Max B. May, *Isaac Mayer Wise: the Founder of American Judaism* (New York, 1916) 22. May was Wise's grandson, and seems to have been a great favorite of Wise. Thus, Wise's reticence seems to have been rather strong and constant. Note the emphasis on authentic data, which seems to indicate that when Wise did write about his childhood, his writings should not necessarily be trusted.

⁹ To date, the most scholarly attempt to investigate Wise's early years is Sefton Temkin "Isaac Mayer Wise: A Biographical Sketch," in Sturzenberger, *The Papers of Isaac Mayer Wise*, 5-53.

¹⁰ May, *Wise*, 22.

¹¹ Several theories could explain his reticence. First, Wise may have been telling the truth -- he had bad memories and preferred not to examine them. He could well have grown up in rather severe poverty, as he had many brothers and sisters and his father does not appear to have been very wealthy. The death of several siblings during his childhood both reinforces this impression of poverty as well as perhaps being itself an additional source of sorrow. Perhaps he suffered some specific childhood trauma, such as physical abuse, that he never more than hinted at. When he did write about his childhood, however, he made no explicit mention that it was anything but generally pleasant, and he claimed that he did not come to America to flee great material poverty. His only complaint against Europe seems to have been the lack of religious and political freedom. One possibility that would fit with his later deep patriotism is that his "Americanization" was almost a "conversion" experience, and that he did not wish to think about his life before "conversion," as is often the case; this experience is discussed below. Another is that he was simply ashamed of his background, especially in contrast to other early Reformers, such as David Einhorn, or that he

tales he did relate remain almost completely uncorroborated, they provide, at the least some insights into his psychology, even if they prove to be less than factual at times.¹²

According to Wise's recounting, he had several doctors and lawyers among his ancestors. His great-grandfather, Leo, was considered so learned in both medicine and Jewish lore that he was called *khakham*, leading to the family name of Weis. Wise's father, also Leo, did not seem to have led a particularly successful life, especially with regard to his career. Leo settled in the small town of Steingrub, in Bohemia, under Austrian rule but near Saxony and Bavaria. There, with the even smaller Jewish community, he seems to have been a jack-of-all-trades -- *hazan*, religious school teacher, *mohel*, *shochet*. Out of thirteen children, Wise was one of only seven who survived, and the family was certainly not wealthy.¹³

actually had something to hide, and did not want close investigations of his background.

¹² Wise would certainly not be the first to have creatively reconstructed his or her childhood. In fact, such "reconstructions" on the part of leaders, especially leaders with grandiose delusions, are not uncommon. Once such example was Samson Raphael Hirsch, who, in an attempt to portray himself as Elijah reborn, deliberately distorted his "recollections" of his childhood; Robert Liberles, "Champion of Orthodoxy: the Emergence of Samson Raphael Hirsch as Religious Leader," *AJS Review*, 6 (1981): 56-57.

¹³ Heller, *Wise*, 50-55.

Wise does not seem to have been close to his father. While making several remarks about how learned his various ancestors were, Wise made no such mention with regard to his father, nor did he ever indicate any attachment to him. The one story he told of his father, from when Isaac was about eight, painted a rather testy relationship. A gentile butcher's son, Peter, was in the habit of bullying the neighborhood boys, especially the Jews. One day, young Isaac, always rather small, and "not robust as a child,"¹⁴ decided to fight back -- and ended up beating the older boy. His father scolded him, saying that Jews should not do such things while in "golus." Young Isaac, thinking that "golus" meant "being beaten up," replied, "I've been in golus long enough. Let Peter be in golus from now on." Leo began trying to prove to his son that the Talmud instructs Jews not to fight back, but Wise, already disputatious, argued with his father. Shortly thereafter, at age nine, Wise was sent to stay at his grandfather's. He never lived with his father again.¹⁵

It may be because of memories of his father, especially Leo's subservient attitude toward non-Jews, that Wise took such a strong dislike to *hazanim* in the United States. He wrote often, and bitingly, about the *hazan* who was "half

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁵ Isaac Mayer Wise, *The World of My Books*, translated by Albert Friedlander (Cincinnati, 1954), 29.

priest, half beggar, half oracle, half fool." Interestingly, the very trades Wise attributed to the foolish *hazan* in this passage -- *shochet*, *mohel*, religious school teacher, etc. -- are the ones his father pursued.¹⁶ Perhaps because Leo's various duties kept him away from home and caused him to neglect his children, or perhaps because he never achieved much success in any of these trades, remaining an unimportant, poor, and servile figure and condemning his family to poverty, Wise came to resent his father.

He seems to have been closer to his mother. He said that she was very beautiful, and very dutiful to her husband and children. When she came to the States to live, he would visit her on her trips to the West.¹⁷ Upon her death, he wrote, "Mother Regina was a queen in name and truth."¹⁸ Still, even his visits to her were infrequent, and no correspondence between the two has been found.

¹⁶ Isaac M. Wise, *Reminiscences*, translated by David Philipson (Cincinnati, 1901), 45. This is by no means an isolated reference. On page 223 of *Reminiscences*, for example, he writes again of this "butcher, cantor, idler" who "rendered no service worthy of the name." Another possible explanation of this rancor is memories of his own experience in Radnitz, where, according to Temkin, "Wise,"¹³ Wise himself served as a such a jack-of-all-trades in what Wise claimed was his first rabbinic pulpit. Temkin, however, offers no conclusive proof that Wise served in such a fashion, and his argument that Wise was trained as a *shochet* seems particularly strained.

¹⁷ Heller, *Wise*, 54.

¹⁸ *American Israelite*, Sept. 15, 1898, p. 4.

From nine to twelve, he lived with his grandfather, Isaiah, with whom he says he was "very close," a phrase he used with neither his father nor mother. During this time, according to Wise, he became a star pupil, noted for his quickness in learning.¹⁹ With the death of his grandfather, Wise began a life of wandering, not staying in one place for more than three years until he arrived in the United States. All these factors -- resentment against his father, greater, but still equivocal, attachment to his mother, instability due to frequent moves, the loss of the one "parental" figure he really loved and trusted, even his ability to learn quickly -- occur commonly in people with manic/depressive syndrome. Some of these, in particular this instability, may well have contributed to the development of such a syndrome in Wise's case.

One other incident from Wise's early years bears mentioning. He claimed that he learned about the "mission of the Jews" in the following manner. Sometime during his childhood (he does not relate if this was before or after he was sent from his father's house), he and a group of other Jewish boys were befriended by a Catholic priest, whose house they used to visit regularly.

One evening, a troop of naughty chaps, to the number of thirty or more, gave us such a terrible snowballing that one of our boys, on reaching the priest's house, fainted. The priest applied restorants and the boy recovered. The first words

¹⁹ Heller, *Wise*, 59 .

he spoke were, "why must I be a Jew?" The priest laid his hand upon the boy's head and said, very earnestly, "to civilize the barbarians."²⁰

Even if this story was fabricated, it provides insight into Wise. It shows the relationship, in his mind, between the Jew's mission and non-Jews, the connection between suffering and this mission.

While little else is known of his childhood, as a young man Wise seemed to have established two patterns he would continue throughout his life. The first is that he began to challenge non-Jewish authorities, despite the urgings of many, such as his father in the case of Peter, to be quiescent and submissive. For example, despite laws limiting the number of Jewish marriages, Wise openly performed marriages for any Jewish couples who approached him. When the Austrian authorities questioned him on this matter, he stood his ground, apparently without negative consequences to him or his community. In fact, according to Wise, his stand was instrumental in the liberalizing of this law which occurred shortly thereafter.²¹ Why didn't the government punish him? While speculative, two answers come to mind. Perhaps even as a young man, his charismatic authority, and consequently his great persuasive ability, had already begun to develop. On the other hand, the entire incident may be fictitious, or at least greatly exaggerated.

²⁰ *American Israelite*, Jan. 2, 1880, p. 4.

²¹ Heller, Wise, 89.

Indeed, the other pattern Wise established is that of grandiose recollection. While most of his claims can neither be corroborated nor disproved, a few have clear evidence against them, and others are so unlikely that it is more than probable Wise was exaggerating his importance. For example, he claimed to have studied at the prestigious University of Vienna. The University's records, however, do not show that he ever registered there as a student.²² He also claims to have studied Greek and Latin while preparing for entrance into the University.²³ In 1850, however, he admitted, when asked by a congregation in Charleston that desired a rabbi versed in the classics, that he knew neither Greek nor Latin, indicating either that he had a poor facility for languages and had forgotten what he knew or that he had, in reality, never studied classical languages.²⁴ Since he picked up English extremely quickly, the latter seems more likely. He also claimed to have studied music and violin with Solomon Sulzer at Sulzer's home every Sunday while in Vienna.²⁵ While he was somewhat talented musically, it seems unlikely that Sulzer would have

²² Temkin, "Wise," 12.

²³ Heller, *Wise*, 72.

²⁴ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 147.

²⁵ Heller, *Wise*, 74.

taken the time to tutor the young Bohemian, especially since Sulzer was not a violinist.²⁶

Relationship with Women and his Family

As with his childhood, Wise's family life is little discussed or documented. Here, however, the existing evidence provides a clear reason for the relative dearth of material: Family simply was not Isaac Mayer Wise's life focus. This does not mean that Wise did not love his wives; indeed, all the evidence points to his being a very passionate man who did love them. His work, his mission, however, simply meant more to him, to the distinct detriment of his family.

Wise could be a romantic, and he wrote often about love and beauty. In fact, he associated love with what he considered to be the pinnacle of human attributes, genius: "they [geniuses] feel keener, love profounder."²⁷ Many

²⁶ Another example of grandiose recollection is Wise's claim to have conferred with most of the great German reformers before coming to the United States, which Temkin believes was merely an attempt to find a job. Temkin, "Wise," 13.

²⁷ Isaac Mayer Wise, *The Cosmic God* (Cincinnati, 1876), 146. As will be discussed below, Wise considered himself to be a genius, and so the traits he associated with genius seem to be reflections of himself. This statement of his should not be taken to imply that Wise had a larger than average sexual appetite, however. In fact, he continued by noting that geniuses "find less pleasure in carnal enjoyment than the generality of people"; *ibid.* This drawing a distinction between romantic and sexual love is a common trait of manic/depressives, as will be seen with Herzl, below.

women, perhaps attracted to his ability to "love profounder," found Wise quite attractive. Indeed, starting almost upon his arrival in America, a group of women began to follow him around whenever he spoke, attempting to shower him with their affections. Though he seemed pleased by such demonstrations and did not seek to stop these women from following him, he apparently did not take advantage of their affections and remained faithful to his wives.²⁸

In addition to being both passionate and faithful, Wise felt that being a good husband was important, at least in theory. ²⁹ This becomes especially clear in connection with Wise's favorite hero, Moses. In a long sermon about why Moses was the greatest genius ever, Wise wrote:

The fact that Moses, setting out on a foreign mission, took his wife and children with him, although she was but a plain shepherdess, and returned with them to Egypt, is proof positive that he was a good husband and father.³⁰

²⁸ Personal interview with Jacob R. Marcus, August 20, 1989. The prime example of such "groupies" is the "Mrs. F" of the *Reminiscences*, whom Marcus identifies as a Mrs. Florance. Marcus also indicated that while Wise did not cheat on his wives, rumors about involvements between his wives were probably true.

²⁹ See, for example, Isaac Mayer Wise, *The Combat of the People, or, Hillel and Herod* (Cincinnati, 1859) 151, where he emphasized the importance of the role of husband.

³⁰ Wise, "Moses, the Man and the Statesman," in David Philipson and Louis Grossman, eds., *Selected Writings of Isaac M. Wise* (Cincinnati, 1900), 160. The "proof positive," however, shows that Wise's definition of "good husband and father" did not involve much effort. Wise's opinion of Moses is discussed below.

Despite this ideal of being "a good husband and father," however, Wise's family life remained relatively unimportant. His marriages, despite their romantic beginnings, ended in neglect. For example, he described his wooing of his first wife, Theresa Bloch, in fairly romantic terms. He related that he "fell in love" with this "beautiful, small" woman, while being boarded in her house because he was tutoring her brothers for her father.³¹ Wise returned to marry Theresa several years after he left the Bloch household at about age 20 when Theresa was 16.³² Wise also gave several other indications of his affection for Theresa. He wrote that she "fulfilled the wifely ideal of my youthful imagination so completely." Interestingly, the only "ideal" he explicitly expressed is that she was supportive of all his actions, urging him to greater accomplishments.³³ He wrote that she would become so cheerful when he was successful that "she made love to me,

³¹ Quoted in Heller, *Wise*, 81.

³² Temkin, "Wise," 10-12. If, as Temkin believes, one of Wise's early German novels, which appeared serialized in *Die Deborah, Er kann noch sein Glueck machen*, is somewhat autobiographical, we may have more information on Wise's wooing of his first wife. In the novel, a young yeshiva student, of about twenty, lives in a house where he tutors two sons, and he falls in love with the daughter. When they are discovered in an embrace the student is thrown out, but he later comes back and marries the daughter. *Ibid.* This would certainly fit in with Wise's passionate, often impulsive nature.

³³ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 29. Again, while this may not be a factual account of her behavior, at the least it reveals much about the way Wise related to her.

and ... she said that she had never doubted my energy... had felt sure I would not succumb."³⁴ During a long illness, from which she later died, Wise was crushed:

My wife, my dearly beloved companion in this eventful life... was prostrated with an incurable disease. For nearly two years, she lived the life of a shadow, without affection or clear consciousness, no more herself than the ruin is the castle. I prayed, I wept, I mourned, I despaired.³⁵

And yet, despite his evident devotion to her, Wise's work always came before his wife. For example, he recounted that, while in Albany, his wife counselled him to think of his family and to raise fewer controversies. Wise, writing sarcastically, replied "I promised to be good, proper, wise, orderly, domestic." The promise was broken the same day, when he decided that his causes mattered more than his family's security.³⁶ Wise also chose to keep his family separate from his professional life. As Temkin writes, "one has the impression that his wife [Theresa] played no direct part in his public career."³⁷ In fact, though he was distraught during her illness, Theresa's death did not seem to affect him professionally. "On the very evening of the day Wise buried his first wife, he met with Lilienthal and

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

³⁵ Wise, *Cosmic God*, 3. .

³⁶ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 118. Other examples of him choosing his work over his family occur on *ibid.*, 126; 171; 200 and Heller, *Wise*, 147.

³⁷ Temkin, "Wise," 15.

S. Wolfenstein to discuss the curriculum for [HUC].... Wise told his colleagues: 'You might be surprised that I am with you after this day of sorrow, busy with our work, but I have disciplined myself during the years of my public activity so as not to permit my personal affairs to interfere with my duties as minister.'³⁸ Furthermore, he closed a book which he dedicated to Theresa, shortly after her death, by speaking lovingly about his "bride." He did not have Theresa in mind, however.

When I was young, I chose a bride, the fairest of all maidens. She always loved cherished, encouraged and inspired me with confidence, boldness, and fortitude.... Often I have abandoned her, roamed thoughtlessly far, far away, until I fell in the wild chase, wounded, crushed, bleeding, moaning. Then I always returned home to her, and she always smiled again in holy sympathy... This immortal bride, this matchless angel, friends, is SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY.³⁹

Thus, even during a series of lectures dedicated to his wife's memory, he made it clear that his work came before her.

Wise made his love for his second wife even more evident. In a series of letters, which can only be described as torrid, written before their marriage, Wise showed his passionate side:

My sweet, there is no logic in love. It whirls and soars without rules and without law. I cannot love you according to rules, I love you from the

³⁸ Cited in Meyer, "Centennial History," 254, n. 103.

³⁹ Wise, *Cosmic God*, 180-81.

bottom of my heart, and so I feel your love which makes me more than happy...

I have read out of it [your letter] thousands and thousand of kisses and I am sending you in exchange my heart, full of love, totally crazy and mad.⁴⁰

Once married, however, work again took precedence. He travelled extremely often, usually without his wife.

This single-minded devotion to his work and his causes may have contributed to Wise's success, but how did it affect his family? When young, his children pleaded with him to spend more time with them, and as they grew, they became increasingly jealous of his relationship with his students and disciples.⁴¹

One historian, who has spoken with many of Wise's children and grandchildren, found that while they had great respect for him and did not seem to have open quarrels, they nonetheless felt no great closeness to Wise.⁴²

The consequences of his devotion to his work appear to have been rather more tragic for his first wife. Theresa Bloch Wise, as noted above, was frequently ill, particularly

⁴⁰ Letters from April 9 and April 12, 1876, cited in Heller, *Wise*, 427-28. He made similar statements in his "Western Journals." See William M. Kramer, "The Western Journal of Isaac Meyer Wise, Part II," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 4 (1972): 209.

⁴¹ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 120; David Philipson, "Personal Contacts with the Founder of the Hebrew Union College," in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 9 (1936): 6.

⁴² Personal interview with Jacob R. Marcus, August 21, 1989.

during the last decade of her life. While the sources are not entirely clear on the nature of her malady, the evidence seems to point to a psychological, rather than physical, illness. They say that "her mind was hopelessly clouded," that she wandered aimlessly about, rarely showing "clear consciousness." At one point, she seems to have attempted suicide. Since these bouts of depression, confusion, and even suicide attempts increased when Isaac Mayer Wise travelled or buried himself in work, it appears that the root cause of her syndrome was linked to Wise paying little attention to her.⁴³

Relationships with Friends and Students

Wise had few close friends. He seems not to have been able to relate to others as peers. One partial exception was Max Lilienthal, with whom Wise was especially close. Even though Lilienthal was an older, more experienced rabbi, however, he became a devoted follower of the younger Wise. Thus, even in this case, the relationship was as much that of leader-disciple as it was a peer relationship.

In general, Wise seems to have been much more comfortable with such leader-disciple relationships.⁴⁴ He particularly focused on such relationships with Jewish youth

⁴³ Heller, *Wise*, 425-26; Personal interview with Jacob R. Marcus, August 20, 1989.

⁴⁴ An inability to relate to others as peers is also commonly associated with manic-depression.

in America, stating, using the redemptive symbolism of the exodus from Egypt, that "a new generation needed to be born to be brought into the holy land," into the development of a truly American Jewry.⁴⁵ Thus, he started many of his reforms in the schools where he taught, focusing his energies on educating the young.⁴⁶ This was particularly evident in his relationships with students at Hebrew Union College, many of whom became his disciples. He personally recruited them, found them work, even paid for their tuition from his own pocket when necessary. As Philipson, one of his students and disciples wrote, "more than was the case with his home... the Hebrew Union College held a central place in his life. His son once said to me, 'I believe my father is more attached to you than to his own children.'⁴⁷

It seems clear that his disciples became his most important family, and that they regarded him as a father-figure. After his death, an unnamed HUC graduate wrote, "I loved him above all men. He was, indeed, a father to me.... He had many children who were not of his flesh and blood, spiritual children."⁴⁸ With these disciples, he was able

⁴⁵ Quoted in Philipson and Grossman, *Selected Writings*, 156. At the time Wise made this statement, he was only 29.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Wise, *Reminiscences*, 132, 148, 183, 260, 285, 288.

⁴⁷ Philipson, "Personal Contacts," 6.

⁴⁸ *Milwaukee Journal*, March 27, 1900, p. 1.

to express the care and concern that he sometimes withheld from his family. While his opponents describe Wise as a man with a vitriolic pen, his disciples invariably described him as "genial," "caring," "gentle."⁴⁹ A true charismatic bond developed between Wise and his disciples.

II. Messianic Personality Factors -- Psychological

Manic-Depression

Any thorough examination of Wise's writings shows that he suffered not only from deep depressions and manic exultation, but also from frequent, sudden, mood swings.⁵⁰ These began at least as early as his arrival in the States. For example, he wrote that, after first visiting Albany, "I again succumbed to a feeling of despondency." Within a week, he "painted the future in golden hues." Two days later, he was "thoroughly dissatisfied with myself." By the end of that same day, he wrote "I will preach to-morrow in

⁴⁹ Temkin, "Wise," 43. See also David Philipson and Louis Grossman, "A Biography," in Philipson and Grossman, *Selected Writings*, 119.

⁵⁰ I have limited myself to a small fraction of the number of times Wise wrote about deep depressions or manic states, trying to focus on those instances that seem to show most vividly his sudden mood swings. Many have noted that his manic bursts of energy stayed with him until almost the very end. At eighty, for example, he still usually worked 16 hours a day, not including breaks for meals, ran the day to day affairs of HUC, was president of the CCAR, ran services at his congregation, and travelled to raise funds for and increase membership in HUC and the UAHC. See Heller, *Wise*, 487ff. As I will point out in a few paragraphs, his depressions and mood swings continued until late in his life as well.

Albany with great success, and prove to you that the same old God watches over us also in America."⁵¹

Typically, he ended these sudden mood swings in a manic phase, usually accompanied by an obsessive desire to work with manic energy.⁵² Thus, after the failure of his very first attempt at forming a congregational union, in 1848, he wrote "I prowled about New York for several days, gloomy, indignant, and depressed." Yet, three days later, he wrote that he was going to "achieve the triumph of a new life by thought and struggle," and immediately set out on several ambitious projects, including several articles, the research for a book, and a lecture series in Albany, projects which helped him to become well-known in the American Jewish community.⁵³ In the fall of 1848, after suffering another depression, about which he wrote "I had a presentiment of death.... friendly physicians called my attention to my pallid countenance, the blue rings under my eyes, and my listless and tottering spirit," he again became possessed by a boundless energy:

The passion to improve the world had again taken possession of me. I struggled and strove, like

⁵¹ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 34, 37, 40, 41.

⁵² This may have been a technique he used in childhood to help him to ignore feelings of instability and neglect, as is sometimes the case with manic/depressives.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

one possessed ... rushed on like a runaway horse.⁵⁴

In 1855, again depressed to the point of appearing "to be consumptive," he went on a trip. "I had forgotten altogether during my trip that I had been sick. I lived in constant excitement for 22 days." During this burst of energy, he simultaneously organized Zion College, edited two newspapers, rededicated his Temple, organized the Cleveland Conference, another attempt at congregational union, wrote his first historical novel for the *Israelite*, attacked a new missionary attempt, and spoke out against the Know-nothings.⁵⁵

Several biographers or historians have noted both Wise's depressions and his states of manic energy. As was the case with Nachman of Bratzlav, however, Wise convinced himself, his followers, and even, to a slightly lesser extent, these later writers, that, at some given point of his career, he had completely "triumphed" over his depressive states. Obviously, such a triumph would have

⁵⁴ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 97, 115-16. Feelings of "possession" and "rushing" are classic symptoms of a manic phase. See *ibid.*, 124-126 for a similar passage from deep depression to manic energy.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 286, 292, 310-11. As noted above, many other examples of this type of behavior on Wise's part can be noted, such as on *ibid.*, 318-323. Wise's manic-depression may have been complicated by a recently described syndrome, Seasonal Affective Disorder, for he was frequently more depressed during winters or times of darkness, and he often came out of depressions when the sun was shining. See *ibid.*, 127-28, 141-42, 167, 196, 278.

been inspiring to his followers. This simply did not happen, however. The first time he made such an assertion was in 1850. He noted that "my illness had been imaginary... the depressing influence to which I had been exposed... must have misled my imagination," and he made a resolution, which he claimed to have kept, "to fetter and rule despotically this ape" of depression, to avoid psychosomatically induced illness from that point on.⁵⁶ Wise made a similar claim in the first issue of the *Israelite*.

The powerful impulse of the heart triumphed victoriously over fear and melancholy thought; and we re-appear before our friends as cheerful as ever, with an unchanged and immutable confidence in our cause, and with firm determination to defend it at any and every risk.⁵⁷

Heller seems to accept on face value Wise's assertion that, after his "resolution" of 1850, Wise never suffered from "psychogenic ill-health."⁵⁸ Meyer, while setting no particular date, writes that Wise "was able to overcome his debilitating self-doubts and assume a supreme, manic self-confidence that enabled him to face enemies and personal defeats with near equanimity, always certain that eventually he would succeed."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵⁷ *Israelite*, July 15, 1854, p. 4.

⁵⁸ Heller, *Wise*, 202.

⁵⁹ Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 237.

Indeed, it seems the manic phase of his cycle did dominate over the depressive phase in his later life. These depressions and self-doubts, however, continued to plague Wise until his death. For example, in 1876, he wrote

Ruthless attacks upon my character, of restless assailants, from the camp of implacable foes, embittered my joyless days. My energies failed. Insanity or suicide appeared inevitable. In this state of mind, the Satan of Doubt persecuted me with all his furious demons.⁶⁰

In 1891, in response to growing criticism of his teachings about the Decalogue, he wrote that "I was almost forced into despair. I was pushed to the very edge of the abyss of pessimism, of nihilism, from which suicide alone can free one."⁶¹ He faced another crisis of confidence before the World's Parliament of Religion in 1893, writing:

I was afraid to approach the task.... As I, in the silence of the night, alone in my room, reread what I had written the previous night, the painful thought came upon me: "You are not big enough to master this task."⁶²

What is the import of these mood swings? First of all, during his frequent manic states, Wise possessed the energy to accomplish work critical to the success of his movement, such as the endless process of bringing congregations into the UAHC. These manic triumphs over depression also gave

⁶⁰ Wise, *Cosmic God*, 4.

⁶¹ Wise, *World of my Books*, 37. It should be noted that, of course, Wise did not commit suicide, but rather immersed himself in more study and produced another book, *Pronaos to Holy Writ* (Cincinnati, 1891).

⁶² *Ibid.*, 39.

him the persistence to tackle tasks over and over again, certain that this time he would triumph. Furthermore, his confidence in these "triumphs," despite the very visible depressions which preceded them, may have inspired his followers into believing that he could, in the end, triumph over anything.

"Consecration"

As noted above, Shabbetai Zevi's followers claimed that he had a sudden moment of "consecration," after which he constantly and steadfastly worked to proclaim his messianic message. Such moments of "consecration," in which a person with a "self hitherto divided... becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy," during which he or she feels a "peak religious experience" and a commission to proclaim a divine mission, are commonly found in accounts of religious leaders.⁶³ In Shabbetai's case, however, this

⁶³ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York, 1936): 186. James wrote extensively about such experiences and their various forms; see *ibid.*, 186-253. Unfortunately, he lumped all these forms under the category "conversion," which, in usual usage, indicates conversion from one set of beliefs to another. James did not use conversion in this fashion; rather, he intended by this word to indicate a life-changing experience on the part of the "converted," the receiving of the divine call. Since his use of the term "conversion" may be confusing, I have chosen instead to use "consecration," a term particularly associated with the prophet's call, an association that I believe is appropriate in these cases. Actual conversion could, in some cases, be a special form of consecration. Neither James, nor, to my knowledge, anyone else has documented, let alone tried to explain, the phenomenon that I am calling attention to here: a supposed sudden

sudden "consecration" did not in fact take place. Rather, Shabbetai pursued messianic aspirations intermittently for an extended period of time, only becoming steadfastly committed to his "messianic mission" nearly twenty years after his initial "consecration."⁶⁴

Wise's case shows a very similar pattern -- a supposedly sudden consecration which actually was a slow evolutionary process. First, he had received a call to emigrate to America: "the message of Abraham [Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you (Gen. 12:1).] became to me a divine commandment."⁶⁵ Then, Wise claimed, and his followers believed, he experienced a "second birth" upon coming to America, complete with a highly symbolic dream which announced to him the significance of his arrival.⁶⁶ From this moment on, he asserted, he was constantly and deeply committed to the cause of building up American Jewry and promoting its messianic mission. And yet, his own *Reminiscences* show that he did no such thing. During his first few months in America, he did not even attempt to work

consecration which, in fact, was a long, evolutionary process.

⁶⁴ I believe that other supposedly sudden consecrations may not have been sudden, as well. This is discussed in my conclusion.

⁶⁵ From a sermon preached at the Plum St. Temple in 1894, cited in Heller, *Wise*, 94.

⁶⁶ *Wise, Reminiscences*, 1, 14-16. This dream is discussed more fully below.

as a rabbi. Even after that, up until his arrival in Cincinnati, he often had doubts as to whether he would remain in the rabbinical profession, and he certainly did not always focus on promoting American Jewry's messianic mission.⁶⁷

If such is the case, why did he claim to have a sudden consecration and why wasn't this claim seen through by his followers? Wise seemed to believe that people came to lead great causes through divine revelation, an experience that, like that of Moses at the burning bush, would suddenly and completely change one's life. Speaking of Jesus' decision to strive for the messianic redemption of Israel, he wrote that "a great desire, once conceived and embraced, changes the entire character of the man."⁶⁸ Similarly, for his followers, the notion of a divinely inspired, completely committed leader who had experienced a revelation similar to that of Moses at the burning bush was certainly more inspiring than the reality that Wise, like anyone else, had moments of doubt and weakness, that he had less than prophetic certainty in his cause.

⁶⁷ See Wise, *Reminiscences*, 1-167, especially 1-34.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Samuel Sandmel, *Isaac Mayer Wise's "Jesus Himself"* (Cincinnati, 1958), 340. According to Wise, it was this "consecration" that Jesus' disciples witnessed as the "transfiguration."

Grandiose Delusions

Wise, like many manic/depressives, suffered from grandiose delusions. He demonstrated three types of such delusions: feelings of extraordinary abilities; a sense of a divinely destined and urgent mission; and the taking on of grandiose roles. These delusions not only inspired him to pursue his messianic visions, but they could, on occasion, also inspire his followers.

Wise clearly thought his powers of oration were extraordinary. For example, during his first Rosh HaShanah in Albany, he described his sermon as an "incredible success" and noted that he was "mobbed by the crowds afterwards"; it even brought people to tears. Furthermore, "on the following day, a policeman had to be placed before the doors of the synagogue for fear lest the great mass of people [eager to hear his sermon] would break down the old house."⁶⁹ Later, he described his powers as growing even greater. Just before speaking to an extremely large crowd

⁶⁹ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 43-44. The researcher trying to find evidence of grandiosity from Wise's own writings faces two difficulties. First, he clearly did have fairly extraordinary abilities, as his success itself testifies. Thus, care must be taken to try to find which accounts describe merely a grand success, and which show grandiosity. The second problem, no less difficult, is Wise's well-developed sense of humor. At times, what appears to be grandiosity may indeed have been irony; at other times, he obviously takes his "greatness" quite seriously; and sometimes, of course, it is rather difficult to tell the difference. See *ibid.*, 150 for such an example. I have tried to use only cases where Wise seems to have written without any irony at all.

in Charleston, Wise began to panic. The longer he waited, "the more terrified I grew.... [but then] the old feeling of pride and the consciousness of power reawoke in me.... [I had] the self-conscious feeling 'I am your teacher and master, I speak and you listen.'"⁷⁰ After this speech, Wise was surrounded by "many beautiful ladies" who all vied for his attention. Even his occasional failures at speaking he attributed to grandiose causes. For example, after his very first sermon in Albany, a sermon which Wise felt was not a success, he wrote that the president of the congregation came up to him and said, "your language is too lofty and your thoughts too deep for these people."⁷¹

Wise was also very impressed with his writing ability. In addition to generally praising the quality of his writing, the scholarship of his books, and the power of his historical novels to increase "Jewish patriotism," he made a few more extraordinary claims. For example, on the manuscript copy of his *Essence of Judaism*, he noted, in a fashion reminiscent of Herzl at Basle in 1897, that "with this book, the popularization of Biblical Judaism began."⁷² He further claimed that because of his writings in the

⁷⁰ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 144-45. See *ibid.*, 179; 139-40 for similar examples.

⁷¹ Cited in Heller, *Wise*, 117. This seems to be describing a manic triumph over fear and doubt.

⁷² Cited in Heller, *Wise*, 678.

Israelite, no American Jews converted to Christianity while he was editor.⁷³

Some of his statements about his writing ability simply ring false. As a young man, for example, he believed that he would be a great writer of fiction, and even as an old man, he, like Herzl, was quite convinced of the literary merits of his prose. Read today, this assessment does not stand.⁷⁴ Also, despite his boasting about his command of the English language, his manuscripts and letters show frequent spelling errors. Wise also often misused words, particularly longer words which he seems to have used to impress. For example, he confused "supersede" with "succeed."⁷⁵

A most peculiar ability that Wise seemed to imply that he had is the power to cause the early death of his enemies.⁷⁶ Wise related several anecdotes with regard to this power, all taking place in Albany. For example, on one

⁷³ Wise, *World of my Books*, 32.

⁷⁴ Heller, *Wise*, 76. Heller also notes here that "later in his life, he was to toss off some secular, light-hearted German plays in a style then quite conventional, not unlike those Theodore Herzl wrote for the Viennese stage."

⁷⁵ See, for example, Michael Meyer, "Letters of Isaac Mayer Wise to Joseph Stolz," *Michael* (Tel Aviv, 1976): 51, 53, 57. Despite such errors, however, and the rather over-heated language of his novels, most of Wise's writing is interesting and enjoyable to read. For example, it is difficult to come away from having read his *Reminiscences* without feeling some affection for its author.

⁷⁶ Perhaps this is linked to notions of the "evil eye."

occasion, several of his congregants had committed perjury. Wise sermonized about the importance of oaths, but felt that the perjurers mocked him.

I grew more and more excited, until I was finally so carried away that I opened the ark, took out the Torah, and said: "I swear by this Torah that the perjurers who disgrace the name of Israel will not live their full quota of years." ... the congregation sat in their places deathly pale, not a breath was audible. I placed the Torah in the ark, and fell back fainting into my chair. Two men led me home from the synagogue.⁷⁷

In this same passage, he noted that, in fact, they did die early, implying, though not stating directly, that his prophecy had come to pass.⁷⁸

In addition to his belief in grandiose abilities, a sense of destiny and mission is an overriding theme in Wise's writings. He wrote often of a compulsion toward achievement which forced him to pursue this destiny. "Early in life there awakened within me an unutterable instinct to achieve something in the end."⁷⁹ Sometimes, he wrote about how he knew Providence was on his side. Once, for example, when he triumphed after having already despaired of success, he wrote "I had forgotten to take into account the chief factor, Providence."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 76-77.

⁷⁸ See also *ibid.*, 166, 206, for similar anecdotes.

⁷⁹ Wise, *World of my Books*, 5. See also Wise, *Reminiscences*, 30, 72, 78, 257 for similar examples.

⁸⁰ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 326.

Most often, however, he wrote about his destiny in much more specific terms -- in conjunction with the mission of Israel in America. According to Wise, this mission first called to him while he was yet in Europe and he had been "consecrated" into it upon his arrival in America, as noted above. Once in America, his mission began to compel him to heed its call:

With improvement in my health, I awake again to the consciousness of my duty and my mission.... I am under a compulsion to uplift this Judaism and gain recognition for it, or to succumb in the struggle....⁸¹

Furthermore, his was a sacred mission:

"Where are thy resolutions, the holy vows that God alone heard! Where is thy zeal, thy enthusiasm... " Thus the voice sounded within me until fantasy had me in its power completely. I jumped up from my chair and cried aloud, "no, no I shall not prove false to my holy mission!"⁸²

Wise not only tended to exaggerate his abilities, he tended to aggrandize his personal history. Due to the hagiographic nature of most of Wise's biographies, few of these grandiose assertions have been examined closely. One of the only attempts to do so found a few inaccuracies in his statements, but attributed them merely to a mistaken

⁸¹ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 115-16.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 170. I am not sure what the "holy vows that only God heard" refers to, although it seems to add a rather mystical quality to the statement. A similar statement can be found on *ibid.*, 174, where Wise wrote of a "temptation" from "Mephistopheles." While Wise read Goethe, this sounds much more like the temptation of Jesus than that of Faust. The actual content of his mission will be discussed below.

memory. These "mistakes," however, show a clear pattern of grandiosity.⁸³

First of all, Wise's memory was rather remarkable, making inadvertent mistakes somewhat unlikely. For example, Wise, to amuse friends, was in the habit of repeating long strings of numbers from memory, both backwards and forwards.⁸⁴ He would not only deliver long sermons, sometimes upwards of an hour, from memory, but he could afterwards write them out, almost word for word, for publication in Jewish newspapers.⁸⁵

Despite his memory, however, inaccuracies occurred-- but not randomly or inadvertently. An examination of just a few of the many examples should suffice to prove this point. It has already been noted that, his claims to the contrary notwithstanding, Wise was never enrolled at the University of Vienna, nor did he learn Greek and Latin. After a trip to Washington in 1850, Wise told of several visits with famous people, including Daniel Webster, John Calhoun, and President Taylor.⁸⁶ He also claimed to have met with Senator Benjamin. Benjamin, however, was not a senator at

⁸³ I believe that Wise embellished his life on numerous occasions. Many of his assertions, however, either have not or can not be corroborated. Thus, I have limited myself to the several cases where documentation either proves Wise to have exaggerated, or casts a substantial doubt on his account.

⁸⁴ *American Israelite*, Nov. 22, 1872, p. 8.

⁸⁵ Heller, *Wise*, 116.

⁸⁶ *Wise, Reminiscences*, 139-40.

that time, and records indicate that, in fact, he was not in Washington during Wise's stay.⁸⁷ Furthermore, Wise claimed that during this trip, all the Washington papers carried stories about his visit with the President, running headlines about "First Rabbi to Visit President." While no thorough examination of all Washington papers has been conducted, it appears that this claim is also false.⁸⁸ Wise also wrote that, during a later visit to Washington, Millard Fillmore offered Wise a position at the Library of Congress. No such offer is recorded in the histories of the Library.⁸⁹ He attempted to give his memoirs an imprimatur of greater accuracy and immediacy by referring constantly to his diary. No diary was found among his papers, nor did any of his children or grandchildren recall having seen him ever writing in one, so that it appears that no diary ever

⁸⁷ Bertram Wallace Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth Century American Jewish History* (Cincinnati, 1954), 85-86. Korn is the historian who noted Wise's "inaccuracies" but did not notice their pattern.

⁸⁸ I examined the February, 1850 issues of the two major papers of that time in Washington, *The National Era* and *The National Intelligencer*. Neither carried any headline about Wise's visit.

⁸⁹ From a conversation with a reference librarian at the Library of Congress, August 20, 1989. He said, however, that the histories might not have recorded the offer, and suggested that to be sure, Fillmore's papers, also held by the Library, should be examined. Other examples of demonstrably false grandiose assertions about his personal history can be found in Wise, *Reminiscences*, 217-19; Korn, *Eventful Years*, 199-200, and Kramer, "Western Journal," 207. This last example could not have been due to an inaccuracy in memory as it was a contemporary account by Wise.

existed.⁹⁰ Even his rabbinical ordination itself is also somewhat doubtful, though the evidence is not conclusive.⁹¹

Wise also took on a grandiose identity by viewing himself as fulfilling a variety of grandiose roles. Two of these, Wise's extreme identification with Moses and his messianic self-view, will be explored below. In addition to these identities, he also saw himself as a high priest: "I appeared to myself as the high priest on the Day of Atonement, who fearfully and tremblingly enters the holy of holies;"⁹² and as a prophet: (in describing the purpose for his new paper, *The American Israelite*) And I heard the voice of the Lord saying: whom shall I send and who shall go for us? And I said: behold, here I am, send me."⁹³

⁹⁰ David Philipson, "Introduction," in Wise, *Reminiscences*, 6. The other possible explanation for the "missing" diary is that Wise kept it secret during his whole life, never showing it to another family member, and burned it as he grew older. Since his death was rather sudden, this does not seem likely, but, in any case, it would raise some interesting questions about what Wise feared others would discover.

⁹¹ For arguments supporting Wise's ordination, see Heller, *Wise*, 701-702. For arguments against, see Temkin, "Wise," 12-13.

⁹² Wise, *World of my Books*, 39. The scene for this description is his preparation for speaking at the World's Parliament of Religions, in 1893. Again, this grandiose delusion appears to have been a manic triumph over fear.

⁹³ *Israelite*, July 15, 1854, p. 4. The quote is from Isaiah's call to prophecy, and appears in Wise's first editorial in his paper.

Delusions of Persecution

Wise had a variety of delusions of persecution, all of which seemed to stem from his grandiose delusions. For example, Wise believed that the true "genius" is usually persecuted. In his memoirs, he noted that a friend told him, "the more you are persecuted, the greater you will become. Had it not been for Saul's persecution, David would not have become king of Israel."⁹⁴ Later, he declared in *The American Israelite*, "persecute a good man, as Saul did David, and you make him great; crucify him, and you make him a god."⁹⁵ In an essay focusing on the nature of genius, Wise wrote movingly of the sufferings geniuses must face:

The history of genius... is another cry of woe.... men of genius [are] condemned to be the beggars of society, ill fated, and badly paid servants of Providence.... An ungrateful world puts him on the poorhouse list.⁹⁶

As one might expect from a man of his grandiosity, if Wise believed that great people are persecuted, he must have thought of himself as being the most persecuted of all.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 206.

⁹⁵ *American Israelite*, Jan. 5, 1883, p. 4. It is interesting to note that the example common to both these statements is King David, the progenitor of the messianic line. As will be seen below, Wise seems to believe that his enemies are out to crucify him, which makes this statement most revealing.

⁹⁶ Isaac Mayer Wise, "Genius in History and the History of Genius," in *Sermons by American Rabbis* (Chicago, 1896) 211, 216. A similar statement can be found on Wise, *Reminiscences*, 115.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Heller, *Wise*, 263-64.

In particular, Wise had a habit of transforming any conflict with anyone or anything into a personal conflict, even when, most clearly, doctrinal or ideological elements played as large or larger a part than personal ones. The conflict in Albany, for example, portrayed by Wise as a matter of personal revenge and Spanier's inflated ego as *parnas*,⁹⁸ clearly involved elements other than the personal. For example, the conflict came to a head after Wise's open statement that he did not believe in bodily resurrection or the Davidic messiah, and, after his supporters left Beth El, that congregation got rid of the various reforms he had introduced and returned to orthodox practices.⁹⁹

On occasion, Wise's sense of persecution ventured into the truly paranoid. Just before an "inspirational oration" at Temple Rodef Shalom in Philadelphia, Wise surveyed the large crowd and thought: "What if these people have come to raise a disturbance A feeling of horror took possession of me."¹⁰⁰ After a fairly triumphant trip through the Midwest, during which Wise got much news coverage and spoke to large, enthusiastic crowds, he wrote:

⁹⁸ Wise even went so far as to write that Spanier changed suddenly from "close friend" to an enemy "without out my being able to discern the reason for his change of heart.. the secret springs of that agitation have never been brought to light." See Wise, *Reminiscences*, 155-56.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 180-95. Similar examples can be found on *ibid.*, 229-230; 325; *American Israelite*, August 5, 1887, p. 4; and May, Wise, 373-74.

¹⁰⁰ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 179.

I thought the people were going too far [with praise]. In the meantime, I was preparing myself for the contingency of a change; for I thought it might happen that the dear public would trample its idol into the mire.¹⁰¹

Wise also frequently wrote that his "enemies" were trying to sabotage his papers, although this never appears to have happened or even to have been considered.¹⁰²

Wise also had the self-image, through this imagined persecution, not only of being a martyr, but of being a long-suffering martyr. Repeatedly, he wrote "I will pay no attention" to this or that "undignified attack" -- and yet, of course, he always managed to respond.¹⁰³ Once, in a letter to Max Heller, one of early graduates of HUC, he went so far as to write, "you have no idea perhaps of the perfect indifference I feel toward everything written or said about me."¹⁰⁴ Those on the receiving end of his scathing retorts to real or imagined attacks, however, must have disagreed with this assertion of "indifference."

"Charismatic" vs. "Messianic" Personality Type

Did Wise, according to Kohut's terminology,¹⁰⁵ have a "messianic" personality, focusing on his ego-ideal, his

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 304-305.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 326; Heller, *Wise*, 272.

¹⁰³ Heller, *Wise*, 297.

¹⁰⁴ Dated June 7, 1886; cited in Heller, *Wise*, 664.

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter One, p. 58.

cause, or did have a "charismatic" one, focusing primarily on himself?¹⁰⁶ Clearly, Wise had a large ego and needed to be in the center of many of his movement's activities. His enemies certainly believed that Wise's chief aim in life was personal aggrandizement. One wrote that Wise had "unbounded energy" but that it was harnessed to "help spread his name and fame" in the hope of "being made the Jewish Archbishop of America."¹⁰⁷ Certain of Wise's behaviors back up this assertion. For example, while he was in a position to know which of his graduates was the most talented, he chose uniformly mediocre assistants at B'nai Yeshurun.¹⁰⁸ Once, in 1873, just after the formation of the UAHC and with growing support for HUC, when Wise's fortune in Cincinnati seemed to be rapidly rising, Wise almost left to take a position in New York at Anshe Chesed. It seems that he wanted to leave because he was upset with his congregation president, Moritz Loth, for having taken too prominent a role in forming the UAHC, and not letting Wise take center stage.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Actual instances of Wise's charisma and its effects on his followers and the success of his movement are discussed below. This section only tries to examine his personality type.

¹⁰⁷ *New York Jewish Times*, July 25, 1873, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Personal interview with Jacob R. Marcus, August 20, 1989.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

On many other occasions, however, Wise's behavior shows that the cause came before the man. He attended, without rancor, both the 1869 Philadelphia conference, convened by his rival Einhorn, and the 1885 Pittsburgh conference, convened by Einhorn's disciple, Kaufmann Kohler, without trying to usurp power on either occasion. He brought the Board of Delegates into the UAHC, even though the Board had once tried to rival the Union, once it showed flexibility on dogma.¹¹⁰ He certainly did not take monetary advantage of his authority. Over the entire 25 years that he was president of HUC, Wise drew only a total of \$12,000 in salary, all of which was supposed to compensate him for various expenses. Furthermore, he donated almost all of this expense reimbursement to students who needed more financial aid.¹¹¹ Also, his students described him as a "good listener" and "a man who could be approached, ... to

¹¹⁰ Temkin, "Wise," 38. Temkin himself writes that Wise had earlier refused to join the UAHC with the Board simply because he hadn't helped to create the Board. Since, however, he did invite them to join with the UAHC as soon as they promised flexibility on dogma, it appears that Temkin's explanation is incorrect.

¹¹¹ Heller, *Wise*, 420. This is not to imply that Wise was an ascetic; after all, he drew a nice salary from his congregation. A number of other rabbis across the country, however, had salaries larger than his, and he could easily have demanded more money if that had been his primary motive.

whom you could go and talk over your troubles," traits not often associated with self-centered people.¹¹²

Even some attacks which others ascribed to Wise's personal jealousy and sensitive ego seem, in reality, to have stemmed from his devotion to certain principles. For example, David Philipson, in public a most devoted Wise disciple, claimed in his diary that Wise had begun a personal vendetta against him due to envy. The two areas where Wise clashed with Philipson, however, Sunday services and using the term "Jew" instead of "Israelite," were stands which Wise had already opposed, for purely ideological reasons, long before Philipson had even entered HUC.¹¹³ On balance, Wise seemed at least as concerned with the overall success of his cause as with his own success. He simply thought his career would bring about the success of his cause. In essence, he merged his ego and ego-ideal almost completely.

¹¹² Louis Grossman, "Introductory Address: Wise Centenary," *CCAR Yearbook* (1919): 177; Abraham Cronbach, "The Rabbi as a Communal Worker," *HUC Monthly* (April, 1915): 4.

¹¹³ Stanley Chyet, "Isaac Mayer Wise: Portraits by David Philipson," in Bertram W. Korn, ed., *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus* (New York, 1976), 86-87. Philipson also had his own ego problems and delusions of persecution. For example, he would not write for the *American Israelite* unless his name was put on the masthead. Furthermore, he interpreted a remark by Wise about rabbis who took too long vacations, a remark that Wise had been making for years, as a personal attack against him. *Ibid.*

III. Other Background Messianic Factors

Positive/Negative World View

While, as noted above, many writers have claimed that messianic movements and their adherents had negative world views, Wise, living in a generally optimistic age, believed even more than society in general in the inevitable progress of humanity toward a future golden age. Though a harsh critic of what he believed to be the ills of his age, he was thoroughly optimistic. Thus, even though he held before him an ideal which often made the present look dim by comparison, he noted signs of progress which no one else saw, and he believed that these signs implied that the messianic age was already dawning.

For example, while he saw that a "dark night still brooded over Austria," and wrote that he left Europe to "get away from disgusting Judeophobia," he did not merely flee from, but went to America, holding in his heart "so exalted an idea of the Land of Freedom."¹¹⁴ While he was depressed by the dismal state of Jewish education which greeted him in America, where "no one could read unpunctuated Hebrew" and the *hazan* "wore a Christian robe," he saw in America an opportunity for Jews to find "a second Garden of Eden."¹¹⁵ In general, he saw that there would be a great struggle, but believed it could be won. He wrote, "it was perfectly

¹¹⁴ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 13, 16, 18.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 24, 30.

evident to me that Judaism had no future in America, unless mighty upheavals, accompanied by constructive action, would arouse the better element into action," and then he proceeded to try to take such actions.¹¹⁶ Similarly, he wrote, in his first national call for union, that "the House of the Lord will be desolate, or nearly so, in less than ten years"; but he concluded, "nor is it too late; everything can be done, if we are all united before God."¹¹⁷

His optimism, inextricably linked with his idea of the inevitably successful mission of Israel, was reinforced by two notions. First, he saw any incidents contrary to progress as mere temporary aberrations. Writing of the European situation in 1894, he said, "the present anti-Semitic craze will be overcome, which will take but a few years.... It is all a momentary furor."¹¹⁸ In contrast, he saw even the smallest triumphs as being symbols of the imminent victory of progress. Thus, after the Cleveland Conference, which accomplished nothing concrete, Wise wrote, "in my soaring imagination, I saw American Judaism, which only 10 years before had been so unpromising, proceed to a glorious future and become a mighty intellectual and moral influence in this country."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

¹¹⁷ *Occident*, Dec. 1848, 431-35.

¹¹⁸ *American Israelite*, Feb. 22, 1894, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 316.

Use of Symbols and Symbolic Victories

Wise tried to convince others to join in his optimism through the use of several powerful symbols, and he kept giving evidence of his progress by producing symbolic victories. Wise seemed intuitively aware of the importance of symbols for uniting a group and for claiming victories when nothing of consequence had, in fact, happened. For example, he wrote that "we idealists see light and hope, victory and triumph, where cold reason perceives no noticeable change."¹²⁰ He knew, however, that, in order to effect real change, he had to convince others of the victories he saw, even if he knew they were but idealistic dreams. In one of his novels, for example, he told a story of how Judah Maccabee inspired his army. Judah told them, though he did not actually believe it, that an angel of God was on their side; consequently, his army followed him devotedly, fought well, and won.¹²¹

In his life, Wise followed the example he depicted in his fiction, declaring symbolic victories and devising grand ceremonies in order to attribute significance to what might otherwise had seemed insignificant events. After the Cleveland conference, for example, he declared to all that "this conference is a moment of historical importance.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹²¹ Isaac Mayer Wise, *The First of the Maccabees: A Historical Novel* (Cincinnati, 1858), 162.

Every name of the men assembled in Cleveland will be inscribed in the records of history," even though, by the time he wrote this, the "victory" of the conference was already under attack.¹²² Occasionally, he presented the public a castle entirely floating in the air in the hope that this vision would inspire some matching reality, as was the case in 1860, when he announced the opening of a "Hebrew College" whose "faculty consists of the very best professors. Their names will be published in due time."¹²³ Sometimes, grand ceremonies made great victories out of small occasions. Both when HUC opened and when it managed to ordain its first four students, the occasion was celebrated by ceremonies proclaiming "the dawning of a new age" and the "rebuilding of Yavneh," ceremonies which not only linked the College with messianic symbols but which also managed to obscure, for the time being, the fact that the College could have gone under at any moment. If Wise had revealed the sorry reality of HUC in those days, it is unlikely that he could have continued either to recruit students or to raise funds.¹²⁴

¹²² *Israelite*, Oct. 26, 1855, p. 132. See Isaac Mayer Wise, "President's Message," *CCAR Yearbook* (1899): 28, for a similar example.

¹²³ *Israelite*, Nov. 2, 1860, p. 140. In fact, of course, no faculty had been selected, and the attempt came to naught.

¹²⁴ Temkin, "Wise," 46-48.

Many of Wise's symbols and symbolic ceremonies were implicitly or explicitly messianic. For example, "peace and union," together and separately, were catchwords of Wise's writings from his first days in America and came to be two of his most commonly used messianic symbols.¹²⁵ In his earliest known writing from America, he noted that "'Union' is the significant word which has given the Western Continent such an important significance in world history."¹²⁶ In announcing the Cleveland conference, he called in the *Israelite* for "peace and union."¹²⁷ In 1861, writing about the growing conflict between North and South, Wise again called for "peace and union."¹²⁸ He wrote that *Minhag America* was important because it was associated with "union and progress."¹²⁹ In justifying a call for a Synod, in 1885, he wrote that it "means unification, union, and

¹²⁵ I will cite but a fraction of the examples that I have found. Even though I did not read much of what Wise wrote, particularly *Israelite* editorials, I found over 100 uses of "union" and close to 20 of "peace and union." The phrase and its variations occur with enough frequency, and Wise was a prolific enough writer, that it might be interesting to do a statistical analysis of his writing, to see if there were phases of his life when the phrase is more or less frequent, and if that can be correlated to messianic activity on his part.

¹²⁶ Isaac Mayer Wise, "The New American Jew," translated by Sefton Temkin (Albany, 1977), 4. This was originally a letter to a German-Jewish magazine, and was dated September 1847.

¹²⁷ *American Israelite*, Nov. 9, 1855, p. 148.

¹²⁸ *American Israelite*, Jan. 11, 1861, p. 221.

¹²⁹ *American Israelite*, July 18, 1873, p. 4.

rejuvenation."¹³⁰ And, of course, there is the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew Union College, and the Union Prayerbook.

While Wise often used "union" in a pragmatic, organizational sense, on other occasions his calls for union with peace meant not merely an ending of strife in the Jewish community, but rather came to symbolize the Messianic Era itself. Union was inevitable: "the principle of unification advances. It has taken hold upon the heart of the public. It has taken root in the convictions of the intelligent. It will prevail."¹³¹ Union came from God: "God is a unity, wherefore all mankind will one day be united for one great end --to worship in truth the Most High.... Then also will be fulfilled 'God's name will be one.'"¹³² Furthermore, union lay at the root of Israel's messianic mission: "Moses' messianic idea ... was to unite this people [Israel] and all other peoples This united people must be the vessel to contain this idea, until the world shall have adopted it."¹³³ Most importantly, the "chief feature of the messianic age is unity, as in the

¹³⁰ Cited in Heller, *Wise*, 449.

¹³¹ *American Israelite*, Sept. 17, 1886, p. 4.

¹³² *Occident*, Nov. 1848, pp. 432-33. This came in Wise's first public call for a union of congregations. This phrase is usually interpreted to signal the start of the messianic age.

¹³³ *American Israelite*, Dec. 16, 1881, p. 196 "Vessel" could be a kabbalistic term; see below.

great day when one shepherd and one flock will unite the human family in truth, justice, and love."¹³⁴ In these and many other instances, when Wise called for union, it was not the call of a bureaucrat for building an organization, but of a man with a dream of messianic times, times symbolized by the term union.¹³⁵

Wise used light as another symbol of the messianic age, as had earlier supporters of the enlightenment. Thus, the phrase "let there be light" served both as the motto for the *American Israelite* and as the chief inscription at Plum St. Temple.¹³⁶ In the course of dedicating the Plum St. Temple, Wise stated "Judaism welcomes the new light and decks itself with becoming pride"¹³⁷ and wrote a special hymn which drew on the messianic symbolism of light:

'Let there be light' a second time
The Lord of Hosts proclaimed
Let error yield to truth sublime
And justice reign supreme!
The Sun then rose on Sinai's heights,

¹³⁴ Wise, "Reformed Judaism," in Philipson and Grossman, *Selected Writings*, p. 261-2. See also Wise, "The Congregation," in *ibid.*, 384.

¹³⁵ This is not to claim that every use of the term union is messianic; as noted above, he also used the term in a purely pragmatic fashion. It seems clear, however, that those who have seen his fascination with union as stemming entirely from a bureaucratic, organizational view have missed his more-than-organizational purposes, have missed the messianic overtones of his vision of union.

¹³⁶ See also Abram Simon, "Isaac M. Wise, the Man: Memorial Services," held in Omaha, Neb., April 6, 1900, p. 12; *American Israelite*, May 19, 1865, p. 373.

¹³⁷ Philipson and Grossman, 104.

And poured on thee a flood of light.¹³⁸

Wise also used other messianic symbols or phrases in a variety of ceremonies or "victory" statements. By using such potent symbols, and using them with sincere conviction, Wise added a dimension of grandeur to what might otherwise have been relatively inauspicious occasions. For example, in trying to build up support for a rabbinical seminary and a seminary for women,¹³⁹ he would use phrases such as "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord," traditionally interpreted as being messianic.¹⁴⁰ In convening the Cleveland conference, he used Psalm 125, traditionally taken to refer to the coming of the messiah, while after the conference, he wrote "triumphal hymns," which, while not published immediately following the conference, later found their way into a serialized novel, *The Conflagration*, about a revolution which leads to the messianic age.¹⁴¹ The most thoroughly messianic symbolism he used was in the aforementioned dedication ceremony for the Plum St. Temple. In addition to light, the potentially messianic symbols he used include:

libations of wine, oil, and grain

¹³⁸ Cited in Heller, *Wise*, 380.

¹³⁹ Wise was concerned with college-level Judaic education for women from the start; at least by 1890, he made statements supporting the ordination of women.

¹⁴⁰ *Israelite*, Dec. 1, 1854, p. 164.

¹⁴¹ *Wise, Reminiscences*, 316-320.

constant references to Plum St. as *The Temple* (italics his)
 "The Harp of Judah shall resound again"
 Temple's motto: "This is My resting place forevermore;
 here will I dwell, for I have desired it."
 We do not pray for a home, for we have a home. Nor do
 we pray for a Messiah. [for we have one?]¹⁴²

Thus, through the highlighting of messianic symbols, Wise gave added significance to a variety of his acts and institutions, linking them with the coming of the messianic age and, he must have hoped, inspiring his followers with the greatness of their mission.

Antinomianism

Though Reform, by denying the sole validity of Orthodox interpretations of Jewish law, is inherently antinomian, Wise did not evince any exceptionally antinomian tendencies. In fact, far from being nihilistic, he wanted to create a new law. Over and over again, he called for a synod, in order to create a forum for a new body of law, one suitable to the conditions Jews faced in America.¹⁴³ This synod, far from destroying the law, is meant to be the most legitimate source of authority. Thus, in 1896, Wise could write that his movement "represents the genuine orthodox Judaism."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Cited in Heller, *Wise*, 378-81.

¹⁴³ Heller, *Wise*, 471. The messianic significance of convening a synod is discussed below.

¹⁴⁴ Cited in *ibid.*, 567.

Therefore, Wise was far from being a radical antinomian like Shabbetai Zevi. Nonetheless, he strove to change several norms in the American Jewish community. First, he wanted to make Reform, specifically his version of Reform, normative for American Jews. Second, he wanted Jews to be devoted both to Judaism and to America, to refuse to assimilate but to be patriotic, to leave the ghetto but not the faith. Finally, he wanted to instill pride in American Jews, to make them believe that they were not only the best of America, having a messianic mission to spread to their fellow countrymen, but also the best of Jews, a community that no longer needed to look to Europe or to be ashamed in comparison to anyone.

Being an Outsider

Wise, in a variety of ways, fit the pattern of a "leader from the periphery," even though he was not famous in the non-Jewish world before assuming leadership in the Jewish community. From Bohemia, rather than Germany, not speaking German as his first language, coming from a small, poor family, and educated at yeshivas rather than major universities, he lay outside the realm of the Jewish elite. Despite pressure from the radical reformers, the elite of the Reform rabbinate, he constantly spoke against "germanizing the synagogues."¹⁴⁵ In fact, he had more

¹⁴⁵ Heller, *Wise*, 305.

trouble uniting the elite, the rabbis, into an organization than any other segment of the Jewish community. It was not until he had ordained a sufficient number of disciples from HUC, to whom he was not an "outsider," that he was able to form the CCAR, at last exercising some power over fellow rabbis.

Wise also spent a great deal of energy dealing with other outsiders, both within and outside of the Jewish community. For example, in Albany, the Hungarians and the Poles, rather than the predominant Germans, were his staunchest supporters.¹⁴⁶ He also made close friends among the Christian clergy both in Albany and in Cincinnati.¹⁴⁷ He raised consciousness about the Islamic, as well as the Jewish, contributions to civilization.¹⁴⁸ He was even accused of being too friendly with non-Jews.¹⁴⁹

Not all of Wise's motives for such activities are abundantly clear, as was also the case with historical false messiahs. One can speculate, however, that he had at least three motivations. First, popularity among non-Jews increased his standing among Jews, standing that he sorely needed, since he was not accepted among the elite. Second,

¹⁴⁶ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 192.

¹⁴⁷ Heller, *Wise*, 666.

¹⁴⁸ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 203. Note also the architecture of the Plum St. Temple.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

some of his "friendly" relations with non-Jews were an attempt to prevent missionary activity. Though the Jewish community, like Wise's father after his childhood fight, often worried about "rishes" (antisemitism), he boldly counter-attacked missionary efforts, often causing them to shut down.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps most importantly of all, Wise believed that Judaism, specifically his variety of Reform, would soon be accepted by all thinking Americans as their religion. Thus, some of his countering of missionary efforts was in fact an attempt at missionizing in reverse.¹⁵¹

IV. Supporting Evidence for Wise's Messianic Aspirations

Wise and Kabbalah

Despite his engaging in fairly typical Reform diatribes against mysticism,¹⁵² and despite his deletion of many kabbalistic prayers from his prayerbook, Wise was not only fairly knowledgeable about kabbalah, but, in some respects, sympathetic to it. Since kabbalah is often associated with

¹⁵⁰ Heller, *Wise*, 144.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 625. See Benny Kraut, "Judaism Triumphant: Isaac Mayer Wise on Unitarians and Liberal Christianity," *AJS Review*, 7-8 (1982-83): 179-230 for a thorough discussion of Wise's triumphalism. Below, in the section on the messianic mission of Israel, I will examine this issue briefly from the standpoint of its relation to Wise's messianic ideology.

¹⁵² See, for example, Wise, "Reformed Judaism," in Philipson and Grossman, *Selected Writings*, 315.

attempts to hasten the Messianic Era and has served as the basis for a number of messianic movements, such as Shabbetai Zevi's, these kabbalistic tendencies lend support to Wise's messianic aspirations. Furthermore, they may give additional significance to some of the statements he made about "peace and union" and his use of light imagery.

Wise began his contact with Kabbalah at an early age. His grandfather Isaiah, his favorite relative, was a "closet" kabbalist, and Wise hinted that, after having discovered his grandfather's cache of secret mystical writings, he began studying them himself, somewhere between the age of nine and twelve.¹⁵³ When he came to Prague, he became acquainted with the legends of the Maharal and the Golem, for he studied at a shul where, according the legend, the Golem still lay in the attic.¹⁵⁴ He also explicitly mentioned studying kabbalistic texts while he was in Prague: "We remember distinctly that we had formed a secret club for the study of Cabalah, as we met for this purpose three times a week from 9pm till twelve."¹⁵⁵ This practice of kabbalistic study did not end in Europe -- the very first Jewish book Wise bought in the states was *Reshit Khokhma*, an anthology of kabbalistic writings.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Heller, *Wise*, 60.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁵⁵ *Asmonean*, March 17, 1854, pp. 176-7.

¹⁵⁶ Heller, *Wise*, 130.

In America, despite the frequent derisive comments about mysticism from other Reform rabbis, Wise continued to cast kabbalistic works and involvement with kabbalah in a positive light. For example, in a rebuttal to a missionizing Presbyterian minister in Albany, Wise not only used his avowed hero, Maimonides, but he also quoted extensively from the Zohar, which he referred to in a quite positive fashion.¹⁵⁷ Once, when calling for a rabbinical synod, he claimed that if Jews throw off "cabalistic literature we cease altogether to be a community."¹⁵⁸ He also noted that "kabbalistic Jews ... understood quite well" the aspect of God Wise called the "Logos of History."¹⁵⁹ He even entitled one of his serialized novels Romance, Philosophy, and Cabalah.

Wise did more than make positive references to kabbalah, however. He also used a variety of concepts that may have stemmed from kabbalistic lore, occasionally even using what seems to be kabbalistic language. For example, he wrote that he idealized Moses as "the embodiment of national morality" and Joseph as the "embodiment of individual morality," which exactly parallels the descriptions of these two characters in kabbalistic works on

¹⁵⁷ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 78-80.

¹⁵⁸ *American Israelite*, March 2, 1855, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Wise, *Cosmic God*, 153. .

the precursors to Messiah ben David and Messiah ben Joseph.¹⁶⁰ In his theology, he proposed three series of seven as being critical: seven holy names, seven attributes of revelation, and seven doctrines. Not only is the overall schema reminiscent of kabbalistic works, but three of the seven holy names, *khokhma*, *netzach*, and *khesed*, are close to or identical with sefirotic names; one, *hanina*, is considered a messianic name, and one, *achdut*, or unification, is considered to be the highest mystical concept.¹⁶¹ He claimed that creation was preceded by a "contraction," a "compression [which] united elementary matter and imbued it with force," a notion which seems related to the Lurianic concept of *tzimtzum*.¹⁶² He wrote about breaking through "crystallized forms" in order to "recognize causes and the cause of causes," language strikingly similar to the kabbalistic notion of *klippot*.¹⁶³ Finally, he seems to have written about what Lurianic kabbalists referred to as *tikkun olam*, "the natural impulse to cooperate with the Deity in bringing about the triumphs

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁶¹ Isaac M. Wise, "An Introduction to the Theology of Judaism," in *Judaism at the World's Parliament of Religions* (Cincinnati, 1894), 10-20.

¹⁶² Wise, *Cosmic God*, 154-57.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 145, 174. His reference to "vessels," noted above, may also be related to this.

of mind over matter,... in the steady progress of morality and freedom."¹⁶⁴

He even described his study of philosophy in a somewhat mystical fashion. For example, he noted that Jewish philosophical texts "had a magic effect upon my inflammable fantasy, and I felt wondrously moved. The cold calculating intellect receded ever further into the dark background, and the imagination exerted its powers."¹⁶⁵ He depicted the journey to philosophical knowledge in terms reminiscent of Merkaba mysticism.

Mind reaches its loftiest and most lustrous power when ... it breaks through the narrow compass of self, soars aloft from truth to truth, through the dark regions of the phenomenal world ... to the regions of eternal light, life, love, and wisdom, where all which is, was, or will be meets at the crystal fountainhead, dissonances vanish, and all elements and forms of existence melt into one grand harmony.¹⁶⁶

On occasion, Wise would immerse himself in philosophical study in order to stave off depression. In one such instance, he wrote, "I plunged headlong into the whirlpool of philosophy, and had come out of it unharmed and

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁶⁵ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 170. Note that he contrasts philosophy with intellect, not what one would expect from a man who claimed to value rationalism above all else.

¹⁶⁶ Wise, *Cosmic God*, 41. For a similar passage see *ibid.*, 164, where Wise wrote about ascending "heavenward unto His very throne," again a phrase common in Merkaba mysticism.

invigorated,"¹⁶⁷ a phrase reminiscent of the journey of the four sages into the *Pardes*.

I noted above that Wise frequently used union, peace, and light as symbols of the coming messianic age. It is also possible, though by no means certain, that these terms may have had kabbalistic overtones. As has already been noted, union and unification is perhaps the single most important concept in Lurianic kabbalah, and Wise used the term Lurianic kabbalists employed to describe the unification of God, *achdut*. And what of peace? *Shalem* or *Shlemut*, taken from the same root as Shalom and meaning wholeness or perfection is a concept closely associated with both union and the coming of the Messianic Era, for once union is achieved, *shlemut* will be the state of the world. Wise may have linked shalom with *shlemut*. For example, in 1885, he pleaded for congregations to join the UAHC to "perfect the unity of American Israel,"¹⁶⁸ and in 1860, he wrote explicitly that "peace and union" means "ONE nation, perfectly a national unit."¹⁶⁹

Thus, while the evidence is far from univocal, given Wise's knowledge of kabbalistic works, his often positive attitude toward them, and his use of what appear to be

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶⁸ *American Israelite*, March 20, 1885, p. 4.

¹⁶⁹ Cited in Dena Wilansky, *Sinai to Cincinnati* (New York, 1937), 33.

kabbalistic concepts, it is possible that Wise used union and peace in a kabbalistic sense, adding to their messianic import. Furthermore, in one instance, he did use union in a fashion that, on the face of it, seems mystical. He wrote that "the principle underlying the social problem is the perpetual re-union of all personalities, however distant from one another in time or space, into the one great self-consciousness of the human family."¹⁷⁰ Even here, however, Wise may simply be attempting to interpret Spinoza, whom he greatly admired.

Light is also a popular kabbalistic symbol. Again, however, Wise almost never used light in a fashion that made apparent any distinctly kabbalistic overtones. One passage describing the creation of the world, however, is very reminiscent of the kabbalistic notion of the primordial light of creation.

The obscure gloom has passed away and the age of light has commenced on earth. The primary force materialized in the earth is reunited with the cosmic light, has liberated itself from the state of gloomy obscurity.¹⁷¹

Even this passage, however, is far from unequivocally kabbalistic. Nevertheless, even if Wise did not use these three symbols in a kabbalistic fashion, his general familiarity with, and positive attitude toward, kabbalah may have influenced his messianic aspirations.

¹⁷⁰ Wise, *Cosmic God*, 179.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 161.

Wise and False Messiahs

Wise was fascinated by messianic beliefs and movements, and he wrote as many articles about these as about any other subject, with the exception of Christianity. He wrote several series of articles about the messianic idea for the *Asmonean*, the *Occident*, and the *Israelite*, the last of which was based on lectures given at B'nai Yeshurun. His first historical novel was *The Last Struggle of the Nation*,¹⁷² which had Bar Kokhba as its central character and which portrayed him in a sympathetic, heroic light. He also sketched out a novel about Menasseh ben Israel and his messianic schemes, which again he portrayed in a positive light, although he never finished this work.¹⁷³ This fascination with messianic figures seems far from incidental.

In fact, one article he wrote about a variety of Jewish false messiahs shows how positively he viewed them, how strongly he identified with them. In this article, he portrayed Bar Kokhba as a sincere patriot, Serene¹⁷⁴ as a brave warrior who "fell with sword in hand," David Alroy as "a most wonderful man... of distinguishing personal charms, profound learning and culture, brave and prudent both as a warrior and as a statesman," and Shlomo Molko as a patriot

¹⁷² Serialized in the *American Israelite* in 1855.

¹⁷³ Wise, *World of my Books*, 20.

¹⁷⁴ Wise referred to him as Sarenus.

with "numerous personal charms and a high degree of mental culture." Even Shabbetai Zevi is portrayed fairly positively, as the "most successful imposter, surely an imposter, but a wonderful person of energy, brain, learning, organizing and governing talent."¹⁷⁵ He stated that he believed the root of these messianic movements was "unparalleled patriotism," and that such patriotism is unique to the Jews and "appears to be a sufficient demonstration for the divine origin of the Mosaic code," which implies an extremely positive evaluation of the phenomenon of messianic movements. Interestingly, throughout the article, he stated that these messiahs only became false when they died.¹⁷⁶ Wise even went so far, in another series of articles, to depict Jesus as a false messiah who nonetheless "was wise, sublime, thoroughly Jewish," a "religious reformer" who considered his reforms to be a "main feature in the messianic scheme of redemption."¹⁷⁷ Thus, he not only described false messiahs positively, certainly not a common attitude in his day, but he even seems to have identified with them, since they were "reformers" and "patriots" like he was.

¹⁷⁵ It should be noted that Wise completely ignored Jacob Frank in this article, even though, being from Bohemia, he must have been familiar with the Frankist movement.

¹⁷⁶ *American Israelite*, Nov. 3, 1892, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷ Cited in Sandmel, "Wise's 'Jesus Himself'," 352, 346.

Wise and Moses

While Wise may have identified to a certain extent with false messiahs, he identified extremely strongly with Moses, another important messianic prototype. Shortly after his death, one of his colleagues remarked that "the ancient dictum that no prophet arose like unto Moses he assented to without qualification or reservation," making almost a "cult of Mosaism."¹⁷⁸ Wise was more than simply obsessed with Moses, however. He actively identified with him and tried to portray himself as a new Moses. For example, when speaking, Wise would sometimes introduce himself as "a man of uncircumcised lips."¹⁷⁹ He saw his initial failures in America as paralleling those of Moses, in that he needed "the generation of the desert" to die off and an American generation to be born.¹⁸⁰ Several times, Wise placed himself before the burning bush: "I stood before the burning thornbush and struggled with myself. Conviction, conscience, duty, were ranged against policy." [hesitating

¹⁷⁸ L. Mayer, "Dr. Wise as Theologian," *CCAR Yearbook* (1900): 88. Andrew Key, "The Theology of Isaac Mayer Wise," in Sturzenberger, *Papers of Isaac Mayer Wise*, 80-81, also noted this obsession with Moses.

¹⁷⁹ Isaac Mayer Wise, *The End of Popes, Nobles, and Kings* (New York, 1852), 3.

¹⁸⁰ Heller, *Wise*, 156.

before a decision] "there I stood, like Moses at the burning bush."¹⁸¹

Similarly, Wise portrayed Moses as a retrojection of himself. Like Wise, Moses at the burning bush became a man unsure whether or not to follow his convictions:

[the compulsion of genius] is most strikingly illustrated ... by Moses at the burning bush. He felt the necessity, and yet he wavered, for the task was too great, the enterprise too gigantic, the work itself too enormous. He struggles, wrestles, he excuses himself with this or that. But, in vain, he must. Genius must.¹⁸²

Like Wise, Moses was beset by "faultfinders," who quibbled with his every decision; he "lived for a cause," even when it was not "policy," as did Wise, and he was "passionate, rash, impetuous," as was Wise. Most of all, like Wise, "Moses was a reformer."¹⁸³

What is the import of this close identification with Moses? First, Wise saw Moses as "the greatest genius of all history,"¹⁸⁴ the chosen leader of his time -- thus implying that Wise, too, was a genius and a chosen leader, since he was a latter-day Moses. He also wrote that Moses "was commissioned by the one and true God,"¹⁸⁵ implying the Wise,

¹⁸¹ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 266; Wise, *World of my Books*, 33.

¹⁸² Wise, "Genius in History," 205.

¹⁸³ Wise, "Moses, the Man and the Statesman," 159-169.

¹⁸⁴ Wise, "Genius in History," 216.

¹⁸⁵ Wise, "Moses," 166-167.

too, was divinely consecrated, as he had claimed. Furthermore, Moses could doubt his abilities -- as did Wise when in a depressive phase -- and still succeed, thus providing an inspiring model for Wise.

But, to Wise's mind, Moses was more than even God's commissioned leader. For him, Moses was the true messianic prototype, following the Talmudic tradition which saw Moses in such a fashion.¹⁸⁶ Thus, Wise gave Moses several titles that seem to attribute messianic qualities to him: "the messenger of the Most High, the man of destiny, the apostle of Providence," "the herald of God's own day," even "the redeemer of Israel."¹⁸⁷ When discussing the messiah, Wise, in a rather peculiar statement, wrote that "the messiah himself [will be seen] riding upon that identical ass upon which... Moses rode."¹⁸⁸ Perhaps most telling of all is a messianic vision he had of Moses, strikingly similar to a dream of his own which will be discussed below.

Sometimes it appears to me as if Moses were still standing upon Mount Sinai, above the mists of this earth, within the benign light of divine truth, among the seraphs of purity, pointing heavenwards and looking forward, and he appears to me to be inviting the nations to ascend toward the glory-crowned heights of righteousness.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Klausner, *The Messiah Idea*, 16-17.

¹⁸⁷ Wise, "Moses," 167, 178, 156.

¹⁸⁸ *American Israelite*, Jan. 4. 1879, p. 4. This may be based on a similar comment by Rashi, who also saw Moses as a messianic prototype.

¹⁸⁹ Wise, "Moses," 178.

Why, if one wants a messianic figure to identify with, would one choose Moses, rather than David? Wise had such a profound hatred of monarchy, from his experiences in Europe, that he detested any symbol of any monarchy, even the Davidic line.¹⁹⁰ Moses, however, he praised for never taking royal prerogative and never founding a dynasty.¹⁹¹ Rather than a symbol of monarchy, Wise viewed Moses as a great democratic leader, rising to a natural election by his people because of his talents.¹⁹² He even went so far as to write that "had he [Moses] ever abandoned that object [the cause of righteousness vs. a life of wealth and ease in the royal court in Egypt] he would never have beheld the burning bush."¹⁹³ Thus, it is clear that Wise wanted to be and saw himself as a latter day Moses, and it seems likely that he viewed Moses in a distinctly messianic light.

V. Direct Evidence of Wise's Messianic Aspirations

In addition to the indirect evidence discussed above, Wise's various writings, when carefully examined, provide more direct evidence for his messianic self-view. This line of

¹⁹⁰ On the subject of monarchy, Wise once went so far as to suggest that the U.S. should have no dealings whatsoever with any monarchies, for they are "our outspoken enemies." *American Israelite*, Oct. 21, 1870.

¹⁹¹ Wise, "Moses," 161.

¹⁹² Heller, *Wise*, 565.

¹⁹³ Wise, "Moses," 166.

reasoning proceeds in six basic steps. First, Wise subscribed to the "great men" theory of history, believing that genius plays the major role in shaping history -- and that he himself was a genius. Second, Israel, particularly Israel in America, is a collective genius. In fact, Israel is a collective messiah, whose redemptive work will begin in America, leading to a United States whose faith will be Reform Judaism, as defined by Wise. Third, certain messianic institutions, created by Wise, will actualize Israel's redemptive mission. Fourth, the progress of Israel's messianic mission is basically inevitable, and should take place before the close of the nineteenth century. Thus, Wise was living during the dawning of the Messianic Era. Fifth, the leader of Israel, the messianic people, at the time of the beginning of the messianic age is the true Messiah. And lastly, Wise himself is that true, chosen leader of American Israel, and thus is the Messiah.

The Role of Genius

Wise subscribed to Carlyle's "great men" theory of history.¹⁹⁴ According to him, the "moving factor behind history is genius." "It is genius, God sent genius, and not blind causality, which makes and shapes the history of man."¹⁹⁵ Not only does genius shape history, but it is a

¹⁹⁴ Wise, "Genius," 202.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 204, 211.

talent derived directly from God, revelation rather than invention, a modern term for prophecy.

All this [genius] comes like a flash of lightning, unaware and not expected, in words, symbols, visions or finished thought. The ancient Hebrews called it Ruach ha-Kodesh, a "holy spirit," and modern language names it genius.¹⁹⁶

Furthermore, it is God who ensures that "every great time begets its great men, every great cause its inspired apostles," the prime example being Moses himself.¹⁹⁷

If geniuses control history, and if, in fact, they are God-chosen leaders, with a destiny from Providence, the next question is whether or not Wise considered himself a genius. As was noted above, Wise classified Moses as a genius, and he identified strongly with Moses. He also linked himself with genius in statements such as: "there is room left for genius to carve out new methods of cognition. Do I not know this a priori?"¹⁹⁸

Further proof for his self-view as a genius can be found in the way he defined genius. Genius, according to Wise, exhibits two primary characteristics: "The original conception of supersensuous truisms, and the impulse or inner necessity to promulgate them," that is, a compulsion

¹⁹⁶ Wise, *Cosmic God*, 145. See also Wise, "Genius," 207-209, for similar quotes.

¹⁹⁷ Wise, *Cosmic God*, 147.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 150. Emphasis in the original.

to express one's genius.¹⁹⁹ By defining compulsion as part of genius, by saying over and over again that "Genius must," Wise clearly showed his identification with genius, for as noted above, he often felt compelled to pursue his causes, "possessed" by a higher destiny that he cannot deny.²⁰⁰ Also, since he so strongly identified with Moses at the burning bush, it is interesting to note that he called this the classic example of the compulsion of genius.²⁰¹ Wise also clearly regarded himself as divinely inspired, as possessing supersensuous knowledge. Writing about a the process of delivering a sermon, he proclaimed:

When the spirits arise aloft, when feeling masters the heart, words are spoken or written for which the orator is really not responsible ... In such moments I have spoken and written thoughts which I scarcely recognize as my own in calmer moments ... the strophes flow from my pen as though a higher Being guided my hand.²⁰²

Furthermore, as noted above, he defined geniuses as people who are unjustly persecuted, as, according to his opinion, he was. Thus, not only did geniuses have a critical role to play in the world, being divinely chosen and divinely endowed leaders, but Wise himself was one of these geniuses.

¹⁹⁹ Wise, "Genius," 204.

²⁰⁰ See, for example, Wise, *World of my Books*, 5.

²⁰¹ See, for example, Wise, *Cosmic God*, 146; Wise, "Genius," 205.

²⁰² Wise, *Reminiscences*, 213.

The Mission of Israel in America

The notion of a "mission of Israel" is not, of course, new with Wise. It was expounded in Europe by an ideological spectrum ranging from Samson Raphael Hirsch to Graetz to the leading lights of German Reform.²⁰³ Even the notion of other religions needing to acknowledge the truth of Judaism as a prerequisite to the coming of the Messiah was at least prefigured by Yehuda Halevi.²⁰⁴ Nonetheless, Wise's conception of the mission of Israel was significantly different from any that had come before. Wise saw not only a mission based on Israel's "collective genius," but a specifically American and Reform messianic destiny for Israel. In America, according to Wise, Reform Judaism would grow until it became the religion of all the world, thus ushering in the messianic age.

In his writings about the nature of genius, Wise claimed that the people of Israel are a collective genius. "The spirit of those lofty geniuses [the prophets] was incarnated in the body of the congregation of Israel. Gradually the whole nation became the representative reality of its sublime geniuses, genius itself in the state of actualization." He called all of Israel messiahs, quoting

²⁰³ Arnold Eisen, *The Chosen People in America: A study in Jewish Religious Ideology* (Bloomington, 1987), 20.

²⁰⁴ See Yehuda Halevi, *Kuzari, the Book of Proof and Argument* (Oxford, 1947), 121, cited in Eisen, *The Chosen People*, 20.

from the psalms, "Touch not my Messiahs." He also applied messianic phrases to the people of Israel as a whole. "Sleep not, slumber not, worry not, gifted sons of God, chosen messengers of heaven, blessed vision of genius; announce thy glorious messages." And this collective genius, like other geniuses, is driven to express its destiny. Israel "has no will of its own, it bears a commission from on high which compels it to go and do the will of the higher authority."²⁰⁵

Wise also saw a special destiny for America. Wise wrote that when he first came to the United States:

I saw in this country the spread and triumph of the Mosaic principle, the morning dawn of all good men's hopes. I believed and declared that my Messiah had come with the Constitution of the United States and the growth of this people in power, wealth and happiness.²⁰⁶

Nor did Wise stop with calling the Constitution the Messiah. "Whenever political oppression is totally removed, as in the United States, the Messiah has come, and so he will come to all nations. Washington was no less a Messiah than Cyrus."²⁰⁷ In a lecture in 1872, he spoke of America as the

²⁰⁵ Wise, "Genius," 213, 215. Note that the wording "the spirit .. incarnated in the body" may be deliberately Christological; Israel is the Christ, the Messiah.

²⁰⁶ *American Israelite*, Dec. 23, 1881, p. 204. This article is one in a long series on the Messiah. The phrase "the morning dawn" may be an echo of HUC's motto; see below.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, July 29, 1859, p. 28.

"redeemer of the nations," and said that Jews do not have to pray for redemption in America, for it has come.²⁰⁸

Wise often made rather general references to what he called the "Messianic duty of Israel,... the elevation of human nature, the redemption of mankind."²⁰⁹ He especially emphasized, however, the unique mission of Israel in America. "Judaism is a universal religion. Israel itself is the Messiah; and America is THE COUNTRY where universal religion will celebrate its first and glorious triumphs."²¹⁰ He started the *American Israelite's* publication year on July 4th and faced his temples West because he believed "the religion of the future will be Judaism ... [and] here in American the salvation of mankind will originate."²¹¹

What, then, was the nature of this American Judaism? "American Judaism is identical with reformatory Judaism."²¹² And what is Reform? Reform, of course, is Wise's definition of Reform:

²⁰⁸ "Our Country's Place in History," *American Israelite*, Feb. 16, 1872, p. 8.

²⁰⁹ Wise, "The Congregation," 386. See also, for example, *American Israelite*, April 17, 1868, p. 4.

²¹⁰ *Israelite*, Jan. 11, 1867, p. 4 (capitals Wise's).

²¹¹ Cited in Wilansky, *Sinai to Cincinnati*, 29.

²¹² Isaac Mayer Wise, "President's Address," *CCAR Yearbook* (Milwaukee, 1896): 12. He, of course, meant "reform" by reformatory; this is another example of Wise using long words to impress. See also James Heller, *As Yesterday When it is Past: A History of the Isaac M. Wise Temple* (Cincinnati, 1942), 3.

To me, Reform was never an end in itself; I considered it only as a necessary means to clarify the teachings of Judaism and to transfigure, exalt and spread these teachings.²¹³

Wise's notion of Reform Judaism, a religion of universal reason, exalted and clarified, was to be not only the religion of all Jews in America, or even all Jews in the world, but the religion of the entire world. Eventually, Reform Judaism would triumph over all other religions and appeal to the reason of all. "Judaism ... is not alone the religion of the Jews, but of all intelligent men in the world who have the moral courage to make themselves independent of inherited superstitions."²¹⁴ In order to accomplish this triumph of Judaism, Wise held it to be of "special importance that the Hebrew Conception of religion" be spread to Christians, "for the sake of the world and the Messianic duty of Israel."²¹⁵ Once the world recognized and

²¹³ Wise, *World of my Books*, 20.

²¹⁴ *Israelite*, Dec. 29, 1854, p. 196. Other examples of Wise's triumphalistic view of Reform Judaism can be found in Wise, "Letter to a Gentleman who with his Family Wishes to Embrace Judaism," in Philipson and Grossman, *Selected Writings*, 405; *American Israelite*, March 7, 1873, p. 4; June 14, 1878, p. 4; January 13, 1879, p. 4; October 24, 1879, p. 4; and October 17, 1889, p. 4. Also see Kraut, "Judaism Triumphant," 179-230, for a more thorough discussion of Wise's interactions with liberal Christianity. Kraut asserts that "Wise's religious triumphalism was no doubt buttressed by his somewhat glorified self-image," *ibid.*, 184. Thus, his ideology of a messianic mission for American Israel seems to have been linked to his grandiose delusions.

²¹⁵ *American Israelite*, April 17, 1868, p. 4. For similar reasons, Wise wanted to encourage conversion, even by accepting converts without *milah*, often justifying such acceptance with the phrase "on that day the Lord shall be

accepted the truth of Judaism, it would be redeemed. Thus, the collective group-messiah of a united, Reform American Jewry would bring about the messianic age.

Wise's Messianic Institutions

This messianic age was to be brought about through three institutions, a congregational union, for the purpose of unity in Israel, a college, to train truly American rabbis, and a synod, to legislate new codes. The union, whose symbolic importance was discussed above, must come first. "The establishment of the universal Judaism from within has as its first prerequisite the union of all Jewry."²¹⁶ As the Union started growing, he hoped this vision of a united, and consequently messianic, American Jewry, would come about. He wrote that the UAHC is "Israel's new glory ... [and] is destined to bind all the Israelites of this great country into one great union, under

one," a reminder of the Messianic Era and of union. (See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 257.) He frequently held large celebrations to welcome converts into the community, and always extended invitations to non-Jews to hear his lectures. One example of a missionizing study of Christianity is his *Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth: A Historical--Critical Treatise* (Cincinnati, 1880). On p. 134, he wrote about the impossibility of believing in orthodox Christianity and of the coming triumph of "one universal religion," by which he meant Reform Judaism. See also Wilansky, *Sinai to Cincinnati*, 63, for a similar statement.

²¹⁶ *American Israelite*, Oct. 10, 1879, p. 4. The Union, and Reform, were to include all Jews, rather than being a subset of American Jewry, since, if the whole world is to become Reform, Wise should first be able to convince other Jews of the wisdom of his stance.

whose auspices the greatest glories that Israel has ever achieved will be accomplished."²¹⁷

The College, with its messianic motto of "the morning dawns," was also messianic in function. In fact, as it was first conceived, it was to be on a much grander scale, including a general university and a women's seminary. At the very least, Wise wanted clergy of other faiths to study there, most likely because they would thus be convinced of the "universal reason" of an Americanized Judaism. Wise wrote that the "spirit of the age" required such a "Jewish seat of higher learning."²¹⁸

Probably the most explicitly messianic institution was the synod, which came into being as the CCAR. In Wise's original conception, the synod was supposed to be a renewed Sanhedrin, able to formulate new *halakhah*. By 1890, Wise went so far as to declare that the CCAR, just a year old, should in fact become the "Great Sanhedrin."²¹⁹ The Conference debated becoming a synod for many years, but shortly after Wise died, the talk of synod died out as well. Some of this debate explicitly recognized that the establishment of a new Sanhedrin constituted a messianic act. Rabbi Enelow, in the CCAR Convention just shortly after Wise's death, noted the case of Jacob Berab (1474-

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Aug. 27, 1875, p. 5.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Oct. 13, 1854, p. 110.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, March 20, 1890, p. 4.

1546), who tried to establish a new Sanhedrin for the purpose of "the unification of Israel" which "must precede the advent of the Messiah."²²⁰

Wise, therefore, did not build institutions merely for their own sake. Rather, he built up institutions which had clearly messianic foci. Through these institutions, he would help Israel fulfill its messianic mission; in fact, by bringing these institutions into being, he would help bring about the messianic age itself.

Wise's Imminent Eschatology

Wise believed that the messianic age would inevitably dawn, for "the Logos of History [an aspect of God] turns the course of world events in favor of progression."²²¹ Furthermore, he saw its coming as imminent; indeed, he saw the messianic dawn breaking on the horizon, as HUC's motto indicated. Wise firmly believed, and explicitly stated, that the messianic age would arrive at or soon after the close of the nineteenth century.

For example, he wrote: "When the nineteenth century will close, the enemies of liberty will be totally routed," and "before this century will close, ... Judaism will be THE religion of the great majority of intelligent men in this

²²⁰ H. G. Enelow, "The Synod in the Past and its Feasibility in the Future," *CCAR Yearbook* (1900): 122.

²²¹ Wise, *Cosmic God*, 138-39.

country."²²² Several of his other prophecies are more specific in messianic content, but less so about the date: "Before our very eyes, the world moves onward into the golden age of redeemed humanity and the fraternal union of nations, as our prophets thousands of years ago have predicted."²²³ "The night is spent, the morning dawns ... the time of redemption rapidly approaches.... Soon, very soon, all mankind will celebrate one Passover before the Lord."²²⁴ In several places, he made predictions that come very close to stating that the messianic age itself will dawn with the twentieth century. For example, several of his students recall that, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, Wise predicted that Judaism would be the world's religion in a few years and that the complete fulfillment of the messianic prophecies would take less than fifty years.²²⁵ Clearly then, Wise expected the messianic age at any moment. The mission of Israel was at a critical stage.

²²² Wise, "End of Popes," 20; *American Israelite*, August 15, 1858, p. 44. Emphasis his.

²²³ *American Israelite*, May 14, 1875, p. 4.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, March 30, 1866, p. 308. Note once again the reference to what would become HUC's motto.

²²⁵ See, for example, Louis Grossman, "Centenary Address," 174. Similar statements can be found in the *American Israelite*, August 31, 1866, p. 5; May 14, 1875, p. 4.

The Leader of Israel

Up to this point, this line of reasoning has been missing one crucial element. Since Wise believed in the "great men" theory of history, believed that "genius" was the prime mover of world events, who or what was to lead Israel into the new age? He was aware on a practical level of the need for leadership in the Jewish community, for he saw the difference he made for the cause of Reform wherever he went.²²⁶ But what about leadership in relation to Israel's mission?

He certainly believed that a great leader arises in every generation, a notion similar to Nachman's *tzaddik ha-dor*. "Every period is to have a prophet, who shall teach the people the development and progress of the sacred word consonantly with the just and reasonable demands of the time."²²⁷ He even went so far as to write that each of these leaders of a generation are part of the "tens of thousands of personal Messiahs that have come and will continue to come until it [the Messianic Era] shall be accomplished," perhaps agreeing with Nachman's teaching that each "tzaddik ha-dor" is a potential Messiah ben-Joseph,

²²⁶ See, for example, Wise, *Reminiscences*, 180, where Wise, speaking about the potential growth for Reform in Philadelphia, writes, "All that was necessary was a leader, an advocate."

²²⁷ *Occident*, Aug., 1859, p. 235. Note that the description of the function of this prophet seems to be a self-description by Wise.

depending on the worthiness of that generation.²²⁸ One of these leaders, the last of the "thousand of Messiahs," has a special role, according to Wise: he will usher in the dawning of the Messianic Era itself. This leader will come "when the age will be enlightened enough, sufficiently prepared to receive the Messiah." At that time,

At last their [Israel's] cause should be triumphant all over the world; all nations should acknowledge their truths; should appreciate the doctrines which Israel brought them.... He that will finally move mankind to accept, acknowledge, and appreciate this eternal truth, he that will make an end to the bitter opposition which has been for thirty centuries the source of horrible events for the house of Israel, will therefore be the redeemer of Israel, the true Messiah, the anointed of the Lord.²²⁹

Thus, the leader of Israel during the age when all humankind accepts Israel's truth is the Messiah. Since, according to his imminent eschatology, the age he lived in was the age of that acceptance, the leader of Wise's generation, according to this view, should be the Messiah himself.

Wise as Messiah

Did Wise consider himself to be the Messiah, as he defined that term? He never publicly made such a claim. Nevertheless, the evidence shows that, in his view, he met all the criteria for being the Messiah, that, indeed, he

²²⁸ *American Israelite*, March 10, 1892, p. 292.

²²⁹ *Occident*, Aug. 1849, 243-44. As will be explored below, these are activities that, at least to his own mind, Wise had undertaken and was accomplishing.

viewed himself as the Messiah. As noted above, Wise thought the messiah should satisfy the following requirements: be the leader of Israel, lead Israel specifically in its messianic mission, and do so during the age when that messianic mission is fulfilled. Did Wise meet these?

First of all, he considered geniuses to be humanity's leaders -- and he believed himself to be a genius and thus a leader. In fact, he often directly claimed to be Judaism's, and especially Reform Judaism's, leader. For example, during a trip to the West he wrote:

The fiercely burning flame which was kindled and burned within me also made me a fiery, unbridled, and reckless, but at the same time, very effective, speaker. This made me very popular, not only in Cincinnati, but throughout the West, and the cause of reform came to be especially connected with my personality.²³⁰

Thus, he was the leader of Israel. But did he lead Israel on its messianic mission? As noted above, he believed that its mission would be fulfilled specifically in America and specifically by Reform Judaism, his version of Reform, a Reform which would appeal to all of humanity. Since he was the leader of Reform in America, a fact not questioned even by most of his opponents, and since he constantly worked to spread the message of Reform to all of humanity, since, most of all, he specifically called upon Israel to live up to its "Messianic duty," he was leading Israel in its messianic mission, as the Messiah should. He

²³⁰ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 273.

proved how capable he was in this sort of messianic leadership by building the three messianic institutions he believed were necessary for ushering in the messianic age.

Finally, according to his imminent eschatology, he was the leader of Israel's messianic mission in the critical generation, the generation when all of the world would come to see the truth of American Reform Judaism. This, the critical event signalling the dawning of the messianic age, would happen at any moment, certainly by the start of the twentieth century. Thus, he met all three of his criteria for being the messiah. Therefore, in his eyes, he was the messiah.

Two additional pieces of evidence are worth considering in connection to Wise's messianic self-view. The first is that Wise, in the *Reminiscences*, stated that he dated his ~~life~~ from his arrival in the States -- and he arrived on Tisha B'av, according to his account. Of course, the traditional birth-date for the Messiah is Tisha B'av.

The final datum to consider is a highly symbolic dream Wise recounted. He told it with such vivid details that it is hard to imagine that it is truly a memory and not a backward projection. In either case, however, it seems quite revealing about his personality and his aspirations. The end of the dream, in particular, should be compared to his vision of Moses in heaven. According to Wise, the dream took place three days before their ship landed.

I dreamed that a great storm which drove the ship towards the land had arisen. Everyone swayed, trembled, feared, prayed, the inky waves rose mountain high.... It then appeared to me as though a high, steep, rocky mountain²³¹ was hurrying toward us and threatened to crush us²³² ... the ribs of the ship, which had been hurled on the rock, cracked. I took a daring leap, and stood on the rock with wife and child. The ocean still roared; a wave seized the ship and cast it far... into the night....²³³ At our feet the waters, agitated by the wave storm, roared, above us and about us were forbidding rocks.... Finally, after a long interval, morning dawned,²³⁴ and revealed the dangerous situation. "However steep this mountain appears, we must ascend it," said I to my wife. I took my child on one arm; tremblingly, my wife clung to the other, and then forward, in God's name. It seemed to as though an inner voice called, "Up above there is help." With difficulty we clambered from rock to rock, higher and higher.... Then, as though the measure of woes was not yet full, hollow eyed, ghostly, grinning dwarfs ... came towards us on the narrow path, opposed our further progress, and mocked me mercilessly.²³⁵ I brushed them aside; but for every ten that I pushed away a hundred arose from out the bare rock.... They placed themselves, like stupid blocks, in my path; in short, they did everything to harass me and prevent my further progress. My wife at my side wept bitterly, the child in my arms cried for fright, but my courage, strength and confidence grew. I begged, implored, avoided, circumvented them, all to no avail. Then I marched straight through the crowd of dwarfs, paid no attention to their ravings, dashed them aside to the right and the left, until, finally,

²³¹ I believe this mountain symbolized Mount Sinai, linking Wise with Moses and revelation.

²³² As noted above, other messianic leaders have had dreams of drowning or almost drowning. Such dreams may also be associated with moments of "consecration."

²³³ Symbolizing Wise cutting his ties to the Old World.

²³⁴ Again, a possible reference to HUC's motto.

²³⁵ Related to delusions of persecution; note that he is being persecuted by "dwarfs."

weary and perspiring, we reached the summit of the mountain.²³⁶ Arriving there, I saw the most beautiful and glorious landscape, the richest most fertile meadows.... I have often thought of that dream.²³⁷

Here, in capsule form, is Wise's family life, his psychology -- and his self-view as conqueror, as a Moses ascending Sinai, as the receiver and bringer of light. Here is a dream worthy of a would-be messiah.

VI. Response of Others to Wise's Messianic Personality

Charisma does not operate in a vacuum, nor can a leader create a messianic movement without having followers. Having closely examined Wise's self-view and messianic attitudes, this section now explores the reaction of those around him to his personality. I will do so in three sections. The first focuses directly on his charisma and its attributes, including the discipleship of his followers. The next section examines some of the rather extravagant claims his followers made concerning Wise, while the last section looks at a subset of these claims -- ones that are implicitly or explicitly messianic. While these divisions are occasionally artificial, I believe that, on the whole,

²³⁶ This could indicate a manic triumph over fear and doubts. If this dream is real, or at least parts of it are, it may have been that Wise did undergo some sort of "consecration" experience just before his arrival in America, a "consecration" born out of a manic triumph over his fears of the unknown country and future waiting for him.

²³⁷ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 14-17.

they help to illustrate the different levels of attachment those around him had to Wise.²³⁸

Wise's Charisma

Wise exhibited a variety of traits commonly associated with charisma, including: fiery powers of oration; eyes or a stare noted for its intensity; a belief by his followers that he had an "undefinable something" that made him superior and that this "something" was a divine gift; and, perhaps most emblematic of all, a band of intensely devoted disciples, who had a "parent/child" relationship with him. Furthermore, his charisma not only affected his disciples, it enabled him to win new followers and even to convert former enemies into devoted disciples.

Above, I noted Wise's belief in his oratorical powers, including his feeling that his inspiration, or revelation, flowed not from within himself but from on high. Because he was such a charismatic speaker, his sermonic power seemed to create the same impression upon much of his audience. Thus, for example, not only did crowds flock to hear him, but they also praised him extravagantly. For example, one disciple said that his "voice was of such a quality that old men wept

²³⁸ In attempting to find how others responded to Wise and his charisma, I have made use of a variety of sources, including some eulogies and memorial services. Since eulogies and memorial speeches often extravagantly praise the deceased, I have selected out only those statements which seem truly extraordinary, even in the context of a eulogy or memorial service.

before its music and little children dried their tears,"²³⁹ while a fellow rabbi wrote: "when he finished his sermon, the whole congregation felt that they had stood again at the foot of Sinai."²⁴⁰ Some of the listeners felt the "inspired" nature of his oratory, as this comment by a disciple of his shows:

[While giving a sermon] when his moments of inspiration came, there gleamed a light from his countenance, and upon his tongue there burned a flame so that we, who were privileged to sit before him, could but marvel at his power.²⁴¹

Pictures of Wise were sold across the country and were popular items at least in part because of the intensity of his eyes.²⁴² One of his pupils and disciples wrote that a person could not forget "that eye of his that looked into yours," while another spoke of his eyes "shooting fire and

²³⁹ Leo Franklin, "Isaac M. Wise -- The Man and His Message," in Leo Franklin, *The Rabbi: the Man and His Message* (New York, 1938), 109. See also Kramer, "Western Journal," 150-154; Heller, *Wise*, 114; 249, for similar examples.

²⁴⁰ Charles S. Levi, "Wise as Preacher," *CCAR Yearbook* (1919): 199. Note the implicit comparison to Moses. See also Robert V. Friedenberg, *Hear O Israel: The History of American Jewish Preaching, 1654-1970* (Tuscaloosa, 1989), 72-74, who considers Wise to have been one of American Jewry's finest preachers ever.

²⁴¹ Solomon Foster, "Isaac Mayer Wise as Preacher," in *Memorial Service in Commemoration of the Fourth Anniversary of the Death of the Rev. Isaac M. Wise* (Philadelphia, 1904), 8. Again, note the implicit comparison to Moses, whose face shone after he returned from Mount Sinai.

²⁴² Wilansky, *Sinai to Cincinnati*, 15.

determination."²⁴³ Even the young Wise was reported to have "luminous" eyes.²⁴⁴

Many described his almost magical "charm." "No man who ever came into personal contact with him could help admiring him for his many personal charms."²⁴⁵ "He compelled, by the sheer force of his personality, whole multitudes to follow him."²⁴⁶ Even his enemies acknowledged this power. Einhorn wrote that people "cannot withstand his magnetic influence. We confess there must be a charm about him, irresistible to those who come within its radius."²⁴⁷ This was true to such an extent that Wise and his rivals would sometimes elaborately maneuver to get someone into, or keep someone away from personal contact with him.

His supporters attributed this power and charm to some divine source.

²⁴³ Louis Grossman, "Wise Centenary," 172; Abram Simon, "Isaac M. Wise -- The Man," 7.

²⁴⁴ Grossman, "Wise Centenary," 173.

²⁴⁵ *Denver Colorado Post*, March 27, 1900, p. 1.

²⁴⁶ Leo Franklin, "Isaac M. Wise -- The Man and His Message," 109. It should be noted that his personality was strong enough to exert itself even through his writings. For example, Heller notes that he felt a "steadily increasing admiration" for his "robust personality" when doing research for his biography; Heller, *Wise*, ix-x.

²⁴⁷ Cited in Temkin, "Wise," 45. An example of the truly extraordinary effects that his "charm" could have on people was that Charles Greve, Cincinnati's historian, described Wise as being of the "blond type" and standing 5'10"! (Charles Greve, *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens* (Chicago, 1904)).

Among the myriads of men who dwell on this earth, here and there one is uplifted above the rest through the mysterious endowment of the Creator, which we cannot explain, but which we name genius.... Such a one is our lamented master, Dr. Isaac M. Wise.²⁴⁸

Kohler, in an essay where he tried to explain Wise's success, said that it was because he was a "God-chosen leader," and then explained why such leaders triumph:

There can be but one answer. The divine idea that took possession of their soul, the conviction, the principle upon which they staked their life made them irresistible.²⁴⁹

Wise's power to charm, as well as other aspects of his charisma, won him different circles of disciples, each of whom helped him and his cause in different ways. As was noted earlier, he was very popular with women and even had "groupies" who would travel from city to city to hear him speak. Not only did these women promote him and help make him more popular, they often donated large sums of money to him and his causes, sometimes without solicitation. On at least one occasion, such a donation kept the *Israelite* afloat during a financial crisis.²⁵⁰ A second circle of disciples was the lay leaders of congregations who often

²⁴⁸ Henry Berkowitz, "Dr. Isaac M. Wise: Founder of the CCAR," in *Memorial Service in Commemoration of the Fourth Anniversary of the Death*, 1.

²⁴⁹ Kaufmann Kohler, "Isaac M. Wise, or the Heroic Quality of the God-Chosen Leader," in Kaufmann Kohler, *Hebrew Union College and Other Addresses* (Cincinnati, 1916) 52, 56.

²⁵⁰ Heller, *Wise*, 271. See Temkin, "Wise," 44, for another example of a woman devoted to Wise.

played a larger role than rabbis (at least before HUC graduates became numerous) in bringing more members into the UAHC. It was, in fact, the devoted lay leaders of his own congregation in Cincinnati who were the main organizing force behind the first UAHC convention.

The most devoted, and in many ways most important, circle of disciples, however, was that of his students. As was noted earlier, Wise established a sort of parent/child relationship with many of the early HUC graduates. Sometimes, their devotion to him began when they were quite young. Indeed, some of his earliest HUC enrollees came from his students at the Talmud Yelodim Institute, the religious school he ran in Cincinnati.²⁵¹ It was with this core group of disciples that Wise was finally able to establish the CCAR. Under Wise's tutelage, these students planned, in secret, the establishment of the Conference, and they formed the bulk of the first CCAR convention, held in conjunction with the 1889 UAHC convention.²⁵² The students viewed themselves as his "faithful disciples, the upholders and defenders of the banner he had created."²⁵³ Speaking at Wise's graveside on his relationship with his students, one of them, Rabbi Friedman exclaimed, "he was our inspirer, the

²⁵¹ Heller, *Wise*, 418.

²⁵² Philipson, "Intimate Sketches," 12; Heller, *Wise*, 472.

²⁵³ Max Raisin, "Dr. Wise in the Classroom," in *Memorial Service Commemorating the Fifth Anniversary of the Death of the Rev. Dr. Isaac M. Wise* (Philadelphia, 1905), 7.

Shechinah whose presence enhaloed the classroom, radiated from the pulpit, and kindled in us responsive ardor,"²⁵⁴ an ardor that enabled these disciples to serve Wise and his cause. These disciples also extolled him both during his life and after his death, as will be seen more fully below.

Wise's charisma did not only affect those already devoted to him, however. It also enabled him to persuade even those previously indifferent or even antagonistic to his cause to join with him and his movement. Thus, not only did he personally recruit HUC's students through his persuasive abilities, but a large number of congregations joined the Union only after, and as a direct result of, Wise visiting them and speaking personally with their leadership.²⁵⁵ For example, just as the Union was forming, while it still faced a very uncertain future, Wise went on a series of lectures and extended trips to increase its membership -- with great success. Thus, in the summer of 1874, he travelled to Pittsburgh, and Rodeph Shalom joined. On April 8th, 1875, immediately after speaking there, Washington Hebrew Congregation joined the UAHC. On May 20th and 21st of the same year, Wise spoke at Richmond and

²⁵⁴ William Friedman, "Address Delivered at the Grave of Isaac M. Wise," *CCAR Yearbook* (1919): 259.

²⁵⁵ Joseph Krauskopf, "Achievements by Disciples of I.M. Wise," in *Memorial Service in Commemoration of the Fourth Anniversary of the Death*, 19; Temkin, "Wise," 43.

Petersburg in Virginia, and those congregations joined.²⁵⁶ On his trip to the West, shortly after his second marriage, he spoke at a variety of pulpits and had congregations in a number of states join after he spoke there. It should be noted that on this trip, the sermon he gave most frequently was "The Wandering Jew," which focused on the Jews' messianic mission to the nations.²⁵⁷

Wise even managed to bring in East Coast congregations, the weakest spot in the early UAHC, through personal persuasion. The leaders of Temple Emanu-El, then the largest Reform congregation in New York, had refused to even talk to Wise, perhaps fearing his well-known charm, even though, through the *Israelite* and in private letters, he had tried for five years to persuade them to join the UAHC and support HUC. By chance running into several Emanu-El board members at a resort, he managed, in one day, to persuade them to bring their congregation into the UAHC. These board members soon became so devoted to Wise that they in turn persuaded other New York congregations to enter the UAHC.²⁵⁸

Extravagant Praise

A variety of people, from disciples to former enemies, praised Wise in a fashion that illustrates the effect his

²⁵⁶ Temkin, "Wise," 41.

²⁵⁷ Kramer, "Western Journal," 150-167.

²⁵⁸ Heller, *Wise*, 440.

charismatic authority had on them. Some compared Wise to this or that biblical personage, while others extolled him as a charismatic leader. One of the biblical characters Wise was frequently compared to, especially by his disciples, was Elijah, a notably messianic figure. Some wrote, at Wise's death, that they felt like Elisha at Elijah's departure, wishing to receive "a double portion of Wise's spirit." They frequently quoted what Elisha exclaimed when he saw Elijah ascend in the fiery chariot: "Oh father, father, Israel's chariots and horsemen!"²⁵⁹

Even more frequent than comparisons with Elijah were those with Moses. Not only his disciples or supporters, but even the *New York Times* called him "the Moses of America."²⁶⁰ Leo Franklin wrote that he had "courage as great as Moses," Samuel Sale said that he was like Moses in that he "had a larger measure of unselfishness than any man in his profession," and H.W. Leyens wrote that "the whole

²⁵⁹ These quotes may also have messianic significance, because Elijah is the forerunner of the Messiah and because it is specifically this account of Elijah's ascent that became the source of the legends that he still lives. Statements comparing Wise to Elijah can be found in, for example, Max Schlesinger, "Isaac M. Wise as Organizer," *CCAR Yearbook*, (1900): 98, 100, 103; William Friedman, "Address at the Grave," 264; Joseph Silverman, "Isaac M. Wise," 9.

²⁶⁰ *New York Times*, March 27, 1900, p. 1.

Jewish world mourns the death of its grandest figure since Moses."²⁶¹

Many paid tribute to Wise's qualities as charismatic leader. Max Schlesinger wrote that each generation is provided with leaders and that Wise was one such "God-appointed leader." Because the times when Wise came to America were to bring "Israel to new and untraced paths, on which it is to lead humanity to the realization of its divine ideals," this age was given Wise, an "especially great leader."²⁶² Kohler said that Wise will "stand forth unique in greatness among the great masters of American Israel,"²⁶³ while Philipson simply called him "American Judaism's greatest leader."²⁶⁴ In one memorial telegram, Rabbi Moses Jacobson wrote that Wise's leadership was so

²⁶¹ Leo Franklin, "Isaac M. Wise -- The Man and His Message," 109; Samuel Sale, "Isaac M. Wise as a Citizen," 96; from a telegram cited in the *Ohio Tribune*, March 29, p. 1. While others may not have placed the same messianic significance on Moses that Wise did, it is clear that many others identified him with Moses almost as much as he did himself. Some other examples of comparisons with Moses include: Solomon Foster, "Isaac M. Wise as Preacher," 8; Joseph Krauskopf, "Our Debt and Duty to the Rev. Dr. Isaac M. Wise," (Philadelphia, 1903), 2; Henry Berkowitz, "Isaac M. Wise: Pioneer Leader of American Israel," *CCAR Yearbook* (1919): 182; Kaufmann Kohler, "Isaac M. Wise, or the Heroic Quality of the God-Chosen Leader," 58.

²⁶² Max Schlesinger, "Isaac M. Wise as Organizer," 99-100. This passage, it should be noted, links Wise with the fulfillment of Israel's mission to the nations.

²⁶³ Kaufmann Kohler, "Dr. Wise, Master Builder of American Judaism," *HUC Monthly* (April, 1915): 1.

²⁶⁴ Philipson, "Intimate Sketches," 15.

valuable that he was akin to the ark of the covenant. According to Jacobson: "Mortals and angels wrestled for the ark of the covenant. The angels conquered. From earth the ark has vanished."²⁶⁵ Such praise came close to claiming messianic significance for Wise's career.

Others' Responses to Wise's Messianic Self-View

Some of the statements where others attribute messianic qualities to Wise, or actually seem to acknowledge him as the Messiah, come to us from Wise's own writings and thus may not be entirely truthful. Even if this is the case, however, they still provide added evidence for his messianic self-view. For example, Wise wrote after a trip to the West:

Reports crowded in from everywhere of what I had accomplished on the trip. I was hailed on the one hand and demonized on the other as a Jewish apostle, Messiah, banner-bearer, announcer of salvation, pope, and great mogul.²⁶⁶

He claimed to frequently receive, as editor of the *Israelite*, letters where he was "called by this one the Messiah, by that one a Satan." Close friends also seem to have been aware of Wise's messianic aspirations, sometimes in support, sometimes opposed. Mrs. Florance appears to

²⁶⁵ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 27, 1900, p. 1; *New York Times*, March 27, 1900, p. 1; *Ohio Tribune*, March 29, 1900; p. 1ff.

²⁶⁶ Wise, *Reminiscences*, 304. The case of others who viewed Wise in a messianic light will be explored further in the next section.

have been the strongest supporter, even writing Wise a hymn which proclaimed him to be the "morning star" who will "spread salvation and light." Lilienthal seems to have opposed, or at least have been cautious about, Wise's messianic aspirations, telling Wise that "if you want to be the Christ, you must expect to get crucified." When dedicating Anshe Emeth's new synagogue building in Albany, Wise claimed that he received telegrams with biblical phrases traditionally considered to refer to the Messiah, such as "a new star has arisen in Jacob," and "arise, arise, for thy light has come." In his first reception in Cincinnati, he was toasted as "the Star of the East" and the "Prince of God."²⁶⁷

Such phrases, however, do not all come from Wise himself, for they are repeated by other writers. In particular, several others called him the "morning star" or a "star over Jacob."²⁶⁸ Some made references that come even closer to directly acknowledging Wise's messiahship. For example, Rabbi Max Heller called him "our anointed leader," and Rabbi Anspacher, "our Saviour in America."²⁶⁹ A few use

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 207, 191, 134, 212, 246. Mrs. Florance's hymn also contains a line with HUC's motto-to-be, and she linked this phrase with Wise's messianic mission.

²⁶⁸ For example, Kohler, "Dr. Wise, Master Builder," 2; Schlesinger, "Isaac M. Wise as Organizer," 103.

²⁶⁹ *Ohio Tribune*, March 29, p. 1; A. S. Anspacher, "Dr. Wise as Organizer," in *Memorial Service in Commemoration of the Fourth Anniversary of the Death*, 7.

messianic biblical phrases, or slight alterations of such phrases, in connection with Wise. Kohler wrote that Wise was a "God-Chosen leader" like those in Psalm 89, probably the Psalm used most often as a messianic proof-text, and referred specifically to verses twenty and twenty-one, which mention the anointing of David. Rabbi Charles Levi altered David's statement about Abner that "a prince... in Israel has fallen" (II Sam. 3:38) and added a line of his own, writing, "The Prince of Israel is fallen, Judah's Light is extinguished."²⁷⁰ Rabbi Franklin went so far as to say that "the spot whereon he stood and preached is consecrated ground."²⁷¹

A few writers went even farther than Wise himself and imbued him with God-like qualities. Raisin wrote that, in the classroom, Wise's students "beheld his face as that of a god."²⁷² Krauskopf remarked that "had he lived earlier ... and among other peoples, he might have been venerated as a demi-god during his life-time and worshipped as a god after his death."²⁷³ Rabbi Abram Simon compared Wise's creative powers to God in a passage where he parallels Genesis:

²⁷⁰ Kohler, "Isaac M. Wise, or the Heroic Qualities of the God-Chosen Leader," 51; *Ohio Tribune*, March 29, 1900, p. 1.

²⁷¹ Franklin, "Isaac M. Wise, The Man and His Message," 110. Krauskopf, "Our Debt and Duty," 1-2, wrote a similar statement.

²⁷² Raisin, "Dr. Wise in the Classroom," 8.

²⁷³ Krauskopf, "Our Debt and Duty," 3.

When Dr. Wise came upon the scene and his fiat went forth, "Let there be light," immediately o'er the world of chaos and confusion the spirit of a new master was brooding. Soon order sprang into being; new formations began to arrange themselves.²⁷⁴

Wise, therefore, was not the only one who had a grand impression of himself, nor even the only one who thought that he had messianic qualities. Indeed, many of his disciples acknowledged his messianic leadership, at least to some extent, which may, in part, explain their devotion to him and his cause.

VI. The Messianic Leadership Hypothesis and Alternatives

Having documented both Wise's messianic self-view and the impact this had on his followers, the question still remains: did this cause, or at least make a significant contribution to, his success as a leader? As with any historical event, exact causality is impossible to prove definitively. In order try to establish causality as much as possible, however, this section proceeds in two steps. First, it examines alternative hypotheses to Wise's success as the builder of American Reform Judaism. Following this, it attempts to show the logic behind the hypothesis of messianic leadership, to try to show why such leadership should have contributed to his success.

²⁷⁴ Abram Simon, *Isaac M. Wise*, 14.

Wise's Brilliance and Learnedness

One possible reason for Wise's success was that he was simply more brilliant and/or more learned than any other American Jewish leader. As Leeser wrote,

The learned stand at such an elevation above the people that they can lead the congregations as they please. We have in our mind especially Dr. Isaac M. Wise, who seems to have obtained almost unlimited control over an entire district.²⁷⁵

Leeser, however, gave Wise too much credit. Already by 1867, there were several rabbis more brilliant than Wise, or, at the least, more learned, especially considering the basically auto-didactic nature of Wise's education. Certainly, other American rabbis wrote more profoundly on a variety of theological and ideological issues.

Both his supporters and his detractors realized that Wise's success could not be caused simply by his brilliance, that if such were the case, many others would have been more successful yet. As Kaufmann Kohler, a follower of Einhorn, Wise's rival, wrote, Wise's great success is initially puzzling, because others were "indisputably greater in scholarship and universal culture than he."²⁷⁶ Even one of Wise's most loyal disciples, Rabbi Max Heller, wrote that Wise stood on "a pedestal above all who might be his superiors in talent, but who had to bow down before his

²⁷⁵ *Occident*, May, 1867, pp. 422-23.

²⁷⁶ Kohler, "Dr. Wise, Master Builder," 1; for a similar view, see Schlesinger, "Dr. Wise as Organizer," 102.

singlemindedness and elevation of aim."²⁷⁷ Thus, it seems clear that some other explanation for Wise's success must be found, an explanation which accounts for that very "singlemindedness and elevation of aim."

Wise's Organizing Genius

Frequently, those who look back on Wise's achievements attribute his success to his "organizing genius."²⁷⁸ Because of this genius, they claim, he was able to create and build the three organizations which are his major claim to success and fame. Others go even farther, and state that simply creating organizations was the sum of his vision, that "organizational goals drew him forward rather than religious principle."²⁷⁹ Earlier, I have shown that Wise's motives for creating institutions were distinctly messianic. Nonetheless, perhaps he succeeded in building these messianic institutions simply because of his organizational talents.

He certainly did not succeed, however, because of good technical skills at organization. The *Israelite* frequently stood on shaky financial ground because of his notable lack

²⁷⁷ *American Israelite*, April 5, 1900, p. 1.

²⁷⁸ See, for example, Anspacher, "Wise as Organizer," 6-7.

²⁷⁹ Temkin, "Wise," 32.

of talent with money matters.²⁸⁰ He lacked several other characteristics of a good manager. He seemed poor at delegating responsibility: in the early years, none of the UAHC's projects that he delegated to others, such as setting up a publications society, succeeded.²⁸¹ He failed at both anticipating crises and knowing how to resolve them, as his experience in Albany shows.

Perhaps, then, he was a superb strategist, rather than an accomplished manager. Again, the evidence seems to contradict this. None of the organizations Wise finally managed to build succeeded on his first try. In fact, he failed at least twice with a College, three times with a rabbinical conference, and four times with a congregational union.²⁸² Two illustrations should show that, at least on some occasions, these attempts failed due to basic strategic errors on Wise's part. First, in the Cleveland conference, Wise failed both to get a promise from Leiser to protect the conference's accomplishments from the Orthodox and to make peace within his own camp. Because of this, the conference's results were attacked by both extremes within a week, and its momentum was quickly lost. Second, before undertaking Zion College, Wise had learned, through earlier

²⁸⁰ Heller, *Wise*, 430.

²⁸¹ Temkin, "Wise," 48.

²⁸² These are minimum numbers; depending on what one calls a separate effort, one could come up with much higher figures.

aborted efforts, that he needed support from outside of Cincinnati. Thus, he went through the effort of establishing Zion College Associations in New York. Because he did not consult with them during his formulation of the curriculum and during the actual establishment of the college, however, he quickly lost their support and the project failed.²⁸³ All in all, Wise seemed to have succeeded despite his organizational abilities, rather than because of them.

Wise's Ideology

Perhaps Wise succeeded because of his ideological position, which somehow set him apart from other Jewish leaders of his time. How did he differ, however? He certainly wasn't more orthodox than others, nor was he, by any stretch of the imagination, the most radical reformer. Conceivably, he was the most moderate leader, a leader who became popular because he compromised more readily than any other, because he followed the winds of public opinion. Another notable rabbi from the time, one who was not always a Wise supporter, Isaac Moses, attributed his success primarily to his ability as a "populizer,"²⁸⁴ and, quite

²⁸³ For a lengthier discussion of Wise's strategic errors in relation to Zion College, see Korn, *Eventful Years*, 156-58.

²⁸⁴ Isaac S. Moses, "Isaac M. Wise as Journalist and Author," *CCAR Yearbook* (1900): 93.

often, his enemies described him as a panderer to the masses.

Such charges simply do not fit. Not only was Wise occasionally more radical than his colleagues, on such issues as women's rights and the "personal God" question,²⁸⁵ he certainly was not one to avoid controversy. One who is always compromising and trying to please simply could not have created either such devoted followers or such bitter enemies as Wise had. When Wise did compromise, it was frequently not out of a desire to "pander," but rather because of Wise's ideological commitment to union, to bringing the entire American Jewish community together so that it could fulfill its messianic mission.

Cincinnati and B'nai Jeshurun

A rather interesting theory was put forward in a thesis entitled "Wise and Cincinnati, the Heart and Heartbeat of Reform Judaism." This work argues that a major, if not the decisive, reason that Wise was successful was because of the support he received from B'nai Jeshurun, which it calls the "Mother of Reform Judaism." According to this hypothesis, had Wise worked anywhere else, he could not have built up

²⁸⁵ For a brief discussion of this issue, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 259.

the Reform movement.²⁸⁶ Heller, at least in part, agrees, citing the loyal support and almost free rein B'nai Jeshurun gave Wise.²⁸⁷

This hypothesis, however, fails on two grounds. First, before Wise came, B'nai Jeshurun was anything but a model congregation, especially in how it treated rabbis. Having begun as a splinter congregation of B'nai Israel, it proceeded to undertake "frequent meetings where little business of major significance was transacted." The congregation spent almost five years just becoming organized enough to find someone to lead the it. Then, from 1847 to 1853, it went through three rabbis, two of whom resigned and then were rehired before finally departing. Before Wise came, the position of rabbi was vacant for almost one and a half years.²⁸⁸

Furthermore, relations between Wise and the congregation, while obviously much healthier than those he had at Beth El in Albany, were not always idyllic. He had frequent disputes with the board of the religious school; he also often had arguments with the Temple board, once causing nine members to resign before a compromise could be worked out. Nor did he always have free rein: his congregation

²⁸⁶ Linda Glassman, "Wise and Cincinnati: The Heart and Heartbeat of Reform Judaism" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1965), 95.

²⁸⁷ Heller, *Wise*, 247.

²⁸⁸ Glassman, "Wise and Cincinnati," 43-56.

not only restricted his activities at B'nai Israel and at a congregation in Louisville, but they forbade him to accept a nomination for State Senator.²⁸⁹ It is difficult to see how this relationship could have been so much better than that enjoyed by any other rabbi that it became the major cause of Wise's success.

Wise's Persistence

A more plausible hypothesis was that Wise succeeded primarily because of his persistence and energy. He was often noted for his "gigantic capacity for restless, tireless, and agitating work, and a gigantic endurance,"²⁹⁰ for having "a psyche that endowed him with boundless energy."²⁹¹ If he had not possessed this endurance and energy, if he had not kept trying after the first, or even second or third, failure, he would never have succeeded in building the Reform movement in America. Nonetheless, this does not contradict the messianic hypothesis, because, as will be shown below, his messianic aspirations, together with certain of his messianic personality traits, such as his manic states, gave him this boundless energy.

Even persistence by itself, however, would not have been enough. Isaac Leeser, for example, was also very

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 80-95.

²⁹⁰ Schlesinger, "Isaac M. Wise as Organizer," 102.

²⁹¹ Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 239.

persistent, having engaged in two failed attempts at congregational union before Wise even came to the United States, and participating in several other attempts later on, occasionally in partnership with Wise. In contrast to Wise, however, Leiser seems to "have suffered from an inferiority complex: he was over-diffident as to his intellectual attainments... and awkward in manner."²⁹² This diffidence and general lack of leadership ability seemed to be the primary cause of the failure of Maimonides College, Leiser's most nearly successful attempt at establishing a rabbinical seminary.²⁹³ He failed to persuade either enough students to join or enough donors to contribute for the college to stay viable.²⁹⁴ Surely, if success was simply a matter of persistence and energy, Leiser would have left behind a more triumphant record. Instead, what was needed was a combination of persistence and leadership, a combination that Wise could fulfill because of his messianic self-view.

The Spirit of the Age

Finally, one could hypothesize that Wise's success had nothing to do with him personally, that he simply happened

²⁹² Temkin, "Wise," 17.

²⁹³ Korn, *Eventful Years*, 190-91.

²⁹⁴ On Leiser's behalf, however, it should be noted that he died after the College's first year of operation.

to be in America when the time was right for the founding of Jewish communal institutions. It is true that the Jewish community of the 1870's was wealthier, larger, and more secure than that of the 1840's, when Wise began working for "Union." But, even then, success was far from inevitable.

At roughly the same time that Wise succeeded in building both the UAHC and HUC, Leeser failed in similar efforts. Einhorn, who suffered from none of Leeser's diffidence, was involved in an attempt to establish a union and a seminary in New York, but he also failed.²⁹⁵ Even Wise's own efforts stood on fairly shaky ground in their early years, and only with constant attention from Wise did they manage to grow. Furthermore, to whatever extent the age may have been "ready" for his institutions, Wise may have been the one to make it so, through his earlier failed efforts and his constant propagandizing in the *Israelite*. Nonetheless, it is certainly possible that one reason Wise was popular was that his optimistic world view fit in with the general optimism of his age.

The Logic of the Messianic Leadership Hypothesis

Why should Wise's messianic self-image and ideology, as well as the acceptance of this image and ideology by his followers, contribute to or cause his success? The most direct part of the argument deals with Wise's persistence.

²⁹⁵ Korn, *Eventful Years*, 193-95.

As noted above, his tremendous energy and persistence in the face of defeat seems to have been one of the elements of his success. From whence did all his stamina come?

At least in part, it came from two elements in his messianic personality, his grandiosity and his manic/depressive cycles. His grandiosity convinced him that he was capable of triumph. Furthermore, these delusions caused him to believe not only that the very well-being of the universe, the process of redemption itself, hung upon the success of the projects he was involved with, but also that his efforts in these projects was critical to their success or failure. Thus, he had to persist. It is as if he took to heart the rabbinic dictum to regard each and every act as if the world hung in the balance upon it.

When in a manic phase, he also had apparently boundless energy. As with most manic/depressives, success fed the manic phase, so that with each triumph, he strove even harder. Since his grandiosity helped him to regard even minuscule gains as triumphs, his manic phases dominated much of his life. Furthermore, while Wise, like most depressives, would often grow lethargic when depressed, he began very early to turn to work as an escape from depression. Once absorbed at work, he could often enter a manic phase again, staying up all night studying or writing, or travelling across the country for his cause. In other words, he could bring a tremendous amount of energy to

almost any situation, whether a triumph or an apparent failure, which gave him the strength and stamina to persist. Thus, a great deal of his persistence, of his "boundless energy," can be explained by the grandiosity and manic/depressive syndrome which lay at the root of his messianic aspirations.

His charisma, and the important effects it had upon his followers and disciples, were also rooted in his messianic self-view and grandiose delusions. These caused him to feel that he was both unique and uniquely important. Through this belief, he acquired the "strength of personality" that his followers found so intriguing and appealing. Furthermore, since he believed that, like any "genius," he was divinely inspired and on a divine mission, he became capable of convincing his followers of his divine grace, that "mysterious something" or "charm" which they felt. Obviously, self-confidence or even a messianic self-image does not guarantee that one will be regarded as charismatic, but it certainly constitutes a necessary ingredient of charisma. Even his manic-depression contributed to his charisma, for, while in a manic state, he could inspire others simply through the tremendous energy he exuded, and when he moved from a depressive to a manic state, his triumph became so apparent that he could convince others that he was invincible.

The importance of his charisma to his success as an institution builder cannot be overestimated. First, as noted above, it attracted to him his devoted disciples, whose efforts were critical to the establishment of the CCAR and played a major role in the building of the UAHC and HUC. Second, it gave him tremendous personal persuasive power. When he was one on one, he could convince almost anyone of almost anything -- a helpful trait for one who wants to build a broad base of support.

Wise's focus on a unifying messianic mission also helped to insure success, for it enabled him to bring together the moderate Reformers of the West and South with the Radical Reformers of the East, at least as conditional allies, if not as trusting comrades. Furthermore, through the imminent eschatology of his messianic vision, he was able to justify and legitimize what is often so difficult to defend -- change. Not only did he change norms, but he institutionalized these new norms, the norms of a proud American and Reform Jewish community. He legitimized these changes by proving both need and urgency. According to his views, Jews needed to be both Reform and American, because only in America and only as Reform Jews could they fulfill their messianic mission and bring redemption to the world. Thus, they needed a strong, and strongly American rabbinate, a rabbinate that could be built only through Wise's three institutions. Furthermore, since the messianic age was

about to dawn, Wise could point to the urgent need to create institutions to help with the rapid spread of such norms. Without resorting to a complex ideology that might narrow his support, he could legitimize the creation of new institutions.

Finally, his messianic views made it inspiring to follow him and become part of his movement. How much more grand it is to support the messiah than a self-taught former yeshiva student from Bohemia, after all. The grandiosity of his movement's goals also became a motivation for participation in the movement itself. As a disciple of his would note later, belief in a mission, and a grand, world saving mission at that, gave Jews something to be proud of and became a barrier to assimilation.²⁹⁶ For those already involved with the Jewish community, the enlarged importance he gave to his institutions made one proud to help out. It provided an answer to the question, for example, which had prevented the success of any earlier attempts at establishing a seminary: "Why should I, a Jew in state X, give money to a seminary in state Y?" Because, Wise could answer, this seminary will help bring the messianic age to all of America. Why devote time to building a union with congregations thousands of miles away? Because such a union

²⁹⁶ Friedman, "Address Delivered at the Grave," 262. Friedman went so far as to assert that, through Wise's conception of mission, he "saved Judaism for us and for future generations in America."

will spread our faith not only to all Jews, but to all enlightened people. Because he created institutions with messianic goals, he could help create allegiance to these institutions which would transcend his own lifetime, ensuring his success in future generations. Because he viewed himself as Moses, he found the strength to help his people find a home in a new promised land. And finally, because he viewed himself as the messiah, because he could dream messianic dreams, he could build a movement which, even if it has not brought about the messianic age, still takes its, and Wise's, messianic mission very seriously.

Chapter Three
Theodor Herzl: Messiah of Stage and Electron

Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) founded modern political Zionism. Consequently, most historians of Zionism credit him as "the father of modern Israel." At the least, his activities at the turn of the century built the Zionist movement into one of political and social consequence, in some instances laying down the groundwork for the actual founding of the state. While the state of Israel was not founded until over forty years and two world wars after his death, and while many others worked for its founding during that time, it seems clear that Herzl's title as father of the state is well deserved. Typically, his talents as writer, propagandist, organizer, and diplomat, are brought forth as explanations for his success.

Herzl's contribution to Jewish society, however, runs deeper and broader than the founding of a political entity; furthermore, his success -- and his motivation to strive for success -- seem to spring from a source different than his surface talents. For Herzl brought about a lasting psychological change in large segments of the Jewish community -- and he was motivated and able to do so because of his own psychological makeup. Herzl needed to be viewed as a redeeming leader, perhaps even as the Messiah, and, in turn, this self-view gave him the strength to "redeem" a segment of the Jewish community.

What sort of deeper changes did he bring about? The most obvious was the Jewish community's relationship with its national identity, indeed with the whole idea of nation or peoplehood. Before his founding of the Zionist movement, many Jewish communities of his day, ranging from the Orthodox to the Reform, considered Judaism to be a religion and nothing else. Herzl made a new form of Jewish identity -- national -- acceptable and valid, a norm that, if anything, has increased in acceptance from his day to ours. He also gave this national identity a focus -- Israel, the nation's homeland. Today, this focus cannot be denied, even by those Jews at odds with Israeli policies.

Equally important, however, he brought about fundamental changes in Jewish self-view, in Jewish self-esteem, for most of the non-American Jewish community.¹ He tried to create a "new Jew," a Jew who was proud and full of honor, a Jew who was independent and strong. Due, in large measure, to his own pride and strength, he often succeeded in this attempt.

This chapter will examine Herzl's success, as well as some of the underlying psychological motivations for his efforts. First, it will examine some of the factors correlated with messianic personalities, which, in Herzl's

¹ One could argue that Wise had already served a similar function for American Jews. At the least, many American Jews of Herzl's time already felt the self-esteem that he tried to bring to European Jews.

case, go a long way toward explaining both his motivations and his successes. Then, evidence for Herzl's various redemptive roles, including his messianic self-view, will be presented, followed by a discussion of the relationship of his followers to his messianic personality. Finally, I will try to demonstrate that this personality, and the symbolism associated with it, were critical to Herzl's success, particularly in changing Jewish communal norms.

I. Messianic Personality Factors -- Family and Friends

Childhood and Relationship to Parents

Like Wise, Herzl often dismissed his childhood and, with a modesty that was rare for him, he would even, on occasion, criticize his accomplishments as a youth. For example, he wrote: "In 1885, I was a callow dreamer who saw only the surface of things."² At other times, also like Wise, "the adult Herzl's references to his childhood bear the mark of creative touches."³ Unlike Wise, however, biographers have amassed a considerable amount of material from Herzl's childhood, enough to draw rather significant conclusions about how he was raised and his relationship with his parents.

² Theodor Herzl, *The Complete Diaries*, ed. Raphael Patai, trans. Harry Zohn, 5 vols. (New York, 1960), II: 674.

³ Ernst Pawel, *The Labyrinth of Exile: A Life of Theodor Herzl* (New York, 1989), 13.

Herzl's parents, especially his mother Jeanette, doted upon him from birth. His father, Jacob, described by contemporaries as overly solemn, was often away from home on business. Self-taught and independent from age 15, Jacob was only sporadically successful in his businesses and suffered several downturns. While, for the most part, his business fortunes improved after his marriage -- his wife seemed more ambitious than he⁴ -- he lost almost all the family's money in 1873, and thereafter needed to dedicate long hours to making ends meet. Herzl may well have felt abandoned by his father during this time, or at least insecure about his family and home.⁵ Thus, it was not surprising that Theodor's mother dominated his life, a domination which extended even into his own marriage.⁶

His parents continued to play a major role throughout his life, usually supporting and doting upon him. For example, until he was 25, he was supported by his parents' income -- he only started making money after that date, a

⁴ In general, she seemed to dominate her husband. Even in social gatherings, she was much more outgoing, as well as "strikingly beautiful" in her youth, during which she had posed as the model for several paintings, including one as the Madonna. Joseph Patai, *Star Over Jordan: The Life of Theodor Herzl*, trans. Francis Magyar (New York, 1946), v.

⁵ Amos Elon, *Herzl* (New York, 1975), 18.

⁶ Peter Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl: A Psychoanalytic Study in Charismatic Political Leadership," in Benjamin B. Wolman, ed., *The Psychoanalytic Interpretation of History* (New York, 1971), 151; Ludwig Lewisohn, *Theodor Herzl: A Portrait for this Age* (Cleveland, 1955), 36.

fairly late age for his era. He still lived with his parents up until the time of his marriage, at 29, and when he went on trips, he would bring their pictures along and write often, sometimes twice a day.⁷ His parents enthusiastically supported his Zionist work, becoming his first supporters after the publication of The Jewish State.⁸ His mother frequently accompanied him to the Zionist congresses, while his father copied his notes into the first volume of his diary.⁹ In turn, Herzl was the most devoted of sons, dedicating books and plays, especially Zionist writings such as his newspaper Die Welt, to them.¹⁰

Despite, or perhaps because of, this close, almost suffocating relationship with his parents, with no open, conscious conflicts between them, Herzl did seem to express unconscious resentment about some aspects of their lives. For example, on several occasions, both in articles and in his diaries, he would criticize Jews who earned their living in the stock market. In his diaries, these outbursts would invariably be followed by remarks such as, "my dear father

⁷ Elon, *Herzl*, 76-78.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II: 556. He also planned to give them a prominent role in Palestine, placing them on the flagship of the planned exodus and making his father the first Senator in the government. *Ibid.*, I: 42.

... was obliged to earn his bread as a stock agent."¹¹ He also apparently resented that his parents were some 15 years older than the norm when they gave birth to him, writing that in the "Promised Land," "we shall have sturdy offspring -- not those delicate children of fathers who have married late, having already spent their energies in life's struggles."¹² He seems to have felt rather guilty at his father's death, writing "I believe that at all times I have been a devoted, grateful, and respectful son to my father, who has done infinitely much for me.... How greatly I remain in his debt, although I have not been a bad son."¹³ Perhaps some of Herzl's need for success came from these feelings of being an inadequate son, or, at the least, from a desire to attract his absent father's attention.

Because of this overly close, unconsciously tense relationship, filled with both doting attention and guilt, the Herzl household manifested many of the narcissistic tendencies that may lead to the development of manic/depressive personalities. Such tendencies appeared most obviously in two ways. First, his mother placed high expectations on him from birth, starting him with tutors at

¹¹ See, for example, *Elon, Herzl*, 58; *Herzl, Diaries*, I: 54.

¹² *Herzl, Diaries*, I: 152.

¹³ *Ibid.*, III: 1285-86. Similar statements with regard to his mother can be found in the closing of his utopian novel; Theodor Herzl, *Old-New Land*, trans. Lotta Levensohn, (New York, 1941), 294.

a very early age.¹⁴ She told him as a child that he was of "royal Jewish blood," descended through some brave *Marranos* who, despite having "risen high in the hierarchy of their [monastic] order," forsook the Church, fled to Hungary, and returned to Judaism. She, and later Herzl himself, began spreading these tales as rumors at the congresses, although the family, in fact, could not trace its ancestry back past 1751.¹⁵

Even more importantly, his mother actively discouraged Herzl from making friends, trying to keep all childhood acquaintances out of their home and not allowing him to play at other's homes. At least in part because of this, Herzl never developed the ability to make close friends. He also ended up playing almost entirely with his sister, Pauline. In this cloistered atmosphere, Pauline's sudden death at 19 became even more traumatic, leading Herzl to muse on her often in his diaries and to make her, in a highly idealized

¹⁴ *Elon, Herzl*, 17. As is often the case with manic/depressives, he was a precocious learner as a child, particularly with regard to memory and language skills. *Elon, Herzl*, 18; Joseph Patai, "Herzl's School Years," *Herzl Year Book*, 3 (1960): 53. .

¹⁵ Jacob de Haas, *Theodor Herzl: A Biographical Study*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1927), I: 31; *Elon, Herzl*, 14-15; 111. Descent from *Marranos* would have given Herzl Sephardic ancestry, which, from the 1800's up through the early twentieth century, had a certain mystique, especially among "enlightened" German Jews, who, for a variety of reasons, considered the Sephardic culture to be superior. For a thorough examination of this mystique, see Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 34 (1989): 47-66.

form, the heroine of Altneuland.¹⁶ Her death may also have led Herzl to feel that life was somehow unstable, causing him to search for stability in a grandiose identity.

Biographers have debated about the exact nature of Herzl's religious and cultural upbringing, with opinions ranging from him receiving a thorough Jewish education from the "most knowledgeable and education oriented" rabbis of Budapest, to those that emphasize how little he knew, making his "conversion" to Judaism as dramatic and miraculous as that of Paul, Buddha, or Mohammed.¹⁷ Actual documents and first-hand accounts from his childhood seem to support a middle view. For example, while Herzl's paternal grandfather was an observant Jew, his two paternal great-uncles converted to Christianity.¹⁸

Herzl's parents took him to synagogue regularly while he was a child, but he had ceased attending already by the time of his confirmation.¹⁹ His first schools were Jewish

¹⁶ Elon, *Herzl*, 19, 30.

¹⁷ Andrew Handler, *Dori: The Life and Times of Theodor Herzl in Budapest (1860-1878)* (Birmingham, AL, 1983), 40-57; Desmond Stewart, *Theodor Herzl* (Garden City, NY, 1974), 161-168. Elon and de Haas fall somewhat in-between, although they each note Herzl's alienation from things Jewish at the time he began his journey to Zionism. Herzl's "conversion" will be discussed below, in the section on "consecration."

¹⁸ Elon, *Herzl*, 16.

¹⁹ Patai, *Star Over Jordan*, 59. While, as an adult, Herzl recalled his childhood visits fondly, he never attended synagogue regularly even at the height of his Zionist career.

ones where, at first, he excelled in religion and Jewish History, though religious subjects were not emphasized in the curriculum. By the time he reached his teens, however, these subjects no longer interested him, and he received his worst marks in them.²⁰

Herzl may have had two other early influences that could have contributed to both his Zionism and his messianic aspirations; neither of these possibilities, however, can either be proven or disproved. His paternal grandfather, Simon, was a follower of Rabbi Alkalai, a proto-Zionist; Simon Herzl was also reputedly an ardent kabbalist.²¹ Simon did visit regularly with his grandson; we have no evidence, however, as to whether or not he ever spoke about Alkalai, Zionism, or Kabbalah. Moreover, Jacob Herzl was a close friend of Jozsef Natonek, who was not only a proto-Zionist, but wrote a fairly well-known book on the Messiah and his role in the return of the Jews to Israel. While Herzl never mentions Natonek in any of his writings, and no evidence of their actually meeting has been found, he may have read

²⁰ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I: 131; Elon, *Herzl*, 22-23; Joseph Adler, "Religion and Herzl: Fact and Fable", *Herzl Year Book*, 4 (1961-62), 272. For a contrary view, that Herzl was well-educated Jewishly and continued to be interested in Judaism throughout his teen years, see Handler, *Dori*, 42-45; the best documentary evidence, presented in Patai, "Herzl's School Years," 53-75, however, backs up the view of de Haas, Elon, and Adler, particularly with regard to the curriculum of the schools Herzl attended.

²¹ Israel Cohen, *Theodor Herzl: Founder of Political Zionism* (New York, 1959), 25; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 5.

Natonek's The Messiah; in any case, he did read some book with messianic legends as a twelve or thirteen year old.²²

Whatever the true extent of his Jewish education, it is possible that Herzl retained a store of Jewish legends and stories from his childhood. He certainly did know a variety of such legends, but it is impossible to state unequivocally just when he learned them. For example, he demonstrated a familiarity with biblical stories but without a clear provenance for this knowledge.²³ Thus, he wrote of Saul's selection as King,²⁴ Samson's breaking of the pillars,²⁵ the gardens of the Song of Songs,²⁶ and quoted from I Kings.²⁷ He wrote particularly often about Moses and the Exodus from

²² Handler, *Dori*, 32-34. Zvi Zehavi, in *Mi-Khatam Sofer 'Ad Herzl* (Jerusalem, 1965), 264, argues that Herzl read Natonek's book. Reuben Brainin, *Hayye Herzl* (New York, 1919), 17-18, has Herzl's first-hand account about reading some German-language book about the Messiah as a youth; I discuss this further, below.

²³ Similarly, he knew a variety of other sorts of legends, such as Aesop's Fables, Greek myths, and tales from the Arabian Nights, but these, too, may not have been learned during his childhood. For examples, see Josef Fraenkel, *Theodor Herzl: A Biography* (2d edn., London, 1941), 128-129; Herzl, *Diaries*, III: 1113. Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 11; III: 1326.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I:73.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I: 264.

²⁶ Herzl, *Old-New Land*, 125.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 284. The quote is from I Kings 5:5, "Judea and Israel shall dwell securely, each man under his own vine and fig tree, from Dan to Beersheva."

Egypt.²⁸ On the other hand, he quoted Genesis in Latin,²⁹ which might indicate that he learned the Bible later on in school, during Latin classes, rather than from rabbis when he was a child. His familiarity with the New Testament (he mentions several parables and uses phrases such as "Jairus's daughter" and "thirty pieces of silver")³⁰ seems to support this explanation.

Whether or not he learned them as a child, by the time Herzl began his journey to Zionism, he had accumulated, through his literary love for the dramatic, romantic, and fantastic, quite a number of legends and stories, including some Jewish ones. Most significantly, he had absorbed stories about Moses's role in the exodus from Egypt and about the Messiah, both the Jewish Messiah and New Testament stories about Jesus. These legends would serve as a backdrop to his Zionist dreams.

Relationship with Women

Male manic/depressives often react to women in one of two extreme ways, either as idealized, desensualized "pure" women or as purely "sexual objects." Indeed, both Shabbetai Zevi and Nachman of Bratzlav seemed alternately fascinated and repulsed by sexuality. This is because many

²⁸ This is discussed fully below.

²⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 231.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, III: 874; II: 762.

manic/depressives, among them Herzl, are never able to fuse the "tender, affectionate feelings" that develop in childhood with the "sensual erotic elements" from adolescence into adult love.³¹ Herzl reserved tenderness for his mother, sister, and other highly idealized, romanticized women, to whom he related only at a distance. On the other hand, he related in an erotic fashion to women whom he treated only as "sexual objects." This split prevented Herzl from ever achieving true "libidinal satisfaction" in any relationship with a woman, and it caused a variety of problems in his highly problematic relationship with his wife.³² It also prevented him from ever truly separating from his mother or from memories of his dead sister, Pauline; it may even have caused a latent homosexuality. Furthermore, this inability to find satisfaction in love relationships may have led Herzl to search for satisfaction in the adulation which a leader receives.

This split between the "romantic" and the "erotic" reveals itself quite clearly in Herzl's short stories and plays, inhabited by only two types of women: blond, blue-eyed virgins, and sensual prostitutes, women of "easy virtue."³³ It reveals itself more directly, however, in

³¹ Loewenberg, "Herzl," 152.

³² *Ibid.*, 154.

³³ Elon, *Herzl*, 48.

Herzl's own relationships. Herzl, at least until his marriage, had a series of crushes on young girls, the "desensualized" part of the split. At 17, he developed a severe crush on a thirteen-year old named Madeleine Kurz, writing repeatedly, in later years, that she was his "one real love," even though there is no evidence that he even spoke with her.³⁴ From that time at least until his marriage, he had a series of crushes on girls of Madeleine's age or younger.³⁵

Herzl did not limit himself to "romantic" relationships with young girls, however. The nature of his erotic relationships comes out most explicitly in his letters to his college friend, Heinrich Kana. In some of these, Herzl boasted repeatedly and narcissistically about his "young knight," as he referred to his penis.³⁶ He also wrote about his alternating attraction to and repulsion from prostitutes, from whom, apparently, he caught gonorrhea in 1880.³⁷ In a December, 1883 letter to Kana, he noted that

³⁴ Alex Bein, *Theodor Herzl: A Biography*, trans. Maurice Samuel (Philadelphia, 1962), 19; *Elon, Herzl*, 28. .

³⁵ See his *Travel-Diary*, July, 1883, quoted in *Elon, Herzl*, 48; Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 62-63 for some examples.

³⁶ Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 77.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71-72; *Elon, Herzl*, 49. The disease may have passed without aftereffects, but it is also possible that some of his later mental and physical ailments stemmed from this infection. Herzl's often vague descriptions of his symptoms, as well as the state of medical knowledge at the time, prevent a less equivocal analysis. As I note below, however, it seems more likely that many of Herzl's

he had taken a mistress (he was not yet married). While, on the one hand, he wrote that she was "created for love," he also called her "an ignominious low woman."³⁸ In 1883, he also wrote to Kana about a young woman whom he met at a dance. After exchanging a series a slaps and kisses upon the dance floor, they retreated to a chair in a corner, where the kisses became more passionate and the young woman began kicking Herzl. He wrote, "Have I ever told you that I only love women who kick me?"³⁹

During this same period, Herzl, like many writers, discussed his writing in explicitly sexual terms. For example, in his Youth Diary, in February, 1882, he wrote, after losing in a literary competition,

Impotence! Impotence! To be defeated is infamous because victory is an honor ... the only thing to do is crawl away and hide a tear of pain like a man. But the tear is not shed for a lost victory, but for one's own feeling of impotence; for not being able. *Castratis off!*... It is in writing that I feel how false I am. Not to be able to! Another *impedimentum matrimonii* with the muse.⁴⁰

From this time onward, he would often link his success in the world, whether as a writer or as a Zionist leader, with feelings of potency or impotency.

"physical" ailments were psychosomatic, psychogenic, or, at least, brought on through the stress and exhaustion caused by his manic episodes.

³⁸ Elon, Herzl, 74-75.

³⁹ Quoted in Stewart, Theodor Herzl, 75.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Elon, Herzl, 47.

Many women, both before and after his marriage, found Herzl attractive, pursued him and "sometimes worshipped him."⁴¹ Leon Kellner, an associate throughout the Zionist years, wrote that many women were attracted to Herzl, especially "by the deep bell-like tone of his voice."⁴² A group of women would typically follow "at the heels" of Herzl during each Congress."⁴³ After the First Congress, he wrote, "Mrs. Sonneschein of the American Jewess said to me ... 'They will crucify you yet -- and I will be your Magdalene.'"⁴⁴ Apparently, however, he remained faithful to his wife.⁴⁵

Given this history of relationships with women, it should not surprise that he and his wife, Julie, who was a decade younger than Herzl, related to each other in a less than perfect fashion. He met her "on the rebound" from one of his crushes on a teenager, an unusually persistent one

⁴¹ *Elon, Herzl*, 48.

⁴² Quoted in Patai, *Star Over Jordan*, 26.

⁴³ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I: 176.

⁴⁴ Herzl, *Diaries*, II: 585. Magdalene, besides being the follower of a Messiah-figure, was, according to Christian tradition, a prostitute.

⁴⁵ *Elon, Herzl*, 106. Elon goes further than this, stating that after the birth of his third child, Herzl spent the rest of his life practically in a "state of celibacy,"; *ibid.* Perhaps his sexual energies were sublimated into his cause or his relationships with his disciples.

that had lasted over a month.⁴⁶ He seemed to transfer some of the emotions of this relationship to Julie, and he treated her as a child for the whole course of the marriage, usually addressing letters to her as "dear child," and signing them "your loving Papa."⁴⁷ The relationship also seems to have been highly narcissistic. Herzl noted in his Youth Diary that he loved her because she so doted on and adored him, while Julie seems to have been carried away by his dashing good looks and his rising popularity as a writer.⁴⁸

They began fighting almost immediately after the wedding.⁴⁹ The details of their fights remain hidden; most of the correspondence between the two has been lost or destroyed.⁵⁰ Several causes, however, seem fairly obvious. First of all, Herzl seemed to tire rather quickly of the

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 82. This young girl was actually a cousin of the late Madeleine.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 91, 201, 224.

⁴⁸ Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 112.

⁴⁹ Because of some confusion about the actual wedding date, it is not clear whether or not their first child, Pauline, named after Herzl's dead sister, was conceived in or out of wedlock: Loewenberg, for example, believes Pauline was a "love-child" while Stewart, setting a different wedding date, believes Pauline was conceived during their honeymoon. See Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl," 158; Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 373-375.

⁵⁰ Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 341, believes the letters were deliberately suppressed by Herzl's children, although he is not sure by which child or for what reason. The Herzls' marriage difficulties, however, were widely known to his associates and commented upon even in early biographies.

child-like nature of his wife which may have attracted him to her in the first place. In a play written just six weeks after their marriage, a play noticeably anti-marriage, Herzl had his hero, modelled, as usual, after himself, say about his wife, "she is a child; she'll always be one. How could she know what slumbers deep in a manly soul?"⁵¹ Perhaps because of her child-like nature, Julie disliked the nature of his Zionist work, which was both more serious and less Vienna high-society than his job as a feuilletonist. She must have bruised Herzl's ego by making him play at society columnist whenever he was at home, refusing to acknowledge his political fame. A variety of visitors to his home noticed how he chafed while playing this role around his wife.⁵² Furthermore, in addition to Herzl's own mental instability, which will be explored below, Julie had a history of psychiatric problems which predated her relationship with Herzl. During their marriage, she threatened suicide on many occasions, and attempted it at least twice. She was also hospitalized for psychiatric reasons in 1903.⁵³ This could not have made their marriage any easier.

Perhaps the most critical problem their marriage faced went back to Herzl's childhood -- he never managed to

⁵¹ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 40.

⁵² Elon, *Herzl*, 224; Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl," 159.

⁵³ Elon, *Herzl*, 90, 371.

separate from his mother, while she was too narcissistically involved with his life to tolerate competition. Jeanette was very jealous of his wife and made that clear to her. She actively interfered in their household, and she frequently brought Theodor back home. He also regularly went to his parents, sometimes for weeks, when he fought with his wife. On at least one of these occasions, his mother intercepted letters from Julie which were attempting to produce a reconciliation.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Herzl, with encouragement from his mother, also frequently compared his wife unfavorably with his deceased sister.⁵⁵

To sum up, Herzl's relationships with women⁵⁶ reveal

⁵⁴ Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 64; Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl," 158; Elon, *Herzl*, 91, 100-102.

⁵⁵ For examples of such comparisons, see Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 199, 234; Elon, *Herzl*, 220. It is also possible that Herzl harbored incestuous fantasies about his sister. Not only do photographs show a marked similarity between his wife and Pauline, but in *Altneuland*, Herzl had the character based on himself marry the character based on his sister, after the character based on their mother brought them together. de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, illustration 2; I. Klinov, *Herzl: Seer of the State* (Tel Aviv, 1950) 19, 32, 44; Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland*, trans. Paula Arnold (Haifa, 1964), 216. [n. b.: I am using two different translations of Herzl's *Zionist Utopia*; Arnold's I refer to as *Altneuland*, while the earlier translation by Levensohn I refer to as *Old-New Land*.]

⁵⁶ It is also possible that Herzl had latent homosexual tendencies, tendencies not uncommon in the type of family situation Herzl grew up with, and ones that might help to explain not only Herzl's ambivalent relationship with women but also the close bond between him and his all-male disciples. One possible piece of evidence for such a latency was Herzl's close relationship with Count Philip of Eulenberg, who was forced to retire from public life in 1909 because his homosexuality was revealed. In *Altneuland*,

his somewhat deviant psychological tendencies, as well as providing justification for his search, outside of his family, for personal success and fulfillment, a search which led him to Zionism. Equally important, they act as a sort of synecdoche for his relationships in general, whether with his followers, with Jews as a whole or even with the land of Palestine. Herzl loved the ideal, the grand fantasy -- but this love could survive only as long as the ideal remained remote. He could not relate to, and was inevitably disappointed in, the real. He could remain devoted to a cause, however, because Zionism was for him an ideal, an ideal that, during his lifetime, was not realized, and so could not disappoint him, even though, during its pursuit, he often became disappointed in those for whom he pursued his cause.

Herzl's Work and his Family

As noted above, Herzl, due to his split of the emotional from the erotic, could not receive full "libidinal

Eulenberg appears as a major character, Kingscourt, and this character has a relationship with the Herzl-character that may have homosexual overtones. For example, at the beginning of the novel, these two retreat to a desert island, spending the next twenty years alone together. As they leave their island, Kingscourt remarks, "you know very well... that I couldn't live without you." They then tour through Palestine, usually walking arm in arm, until they meet Miriam, based on Pauline, of whom Kingscourt is clearly jealous. Herzl, *Altneuland*, 43, 173. Nonetheless, no evidence for active homosexuality on Herzl's part has been found to date.

satisfaction" from any relationship with a woman. Due to the actual situation of his marriage, he probably received little to no satisfaction from it at all. At least in part because of this, he turned to his work, first his writing and later his Zionist activity, as a source of satisfaction and self-esteem, devoting much of the energy to the movement that might otherwise have gone into a love relationship. Herzl seemed quite conscious of this diversion of energy. In a pre-Zionist feuilleton, he wrote about a man who, because of an unhappy marriage, became a great African explorer and benefitted science and humanity. In a note inserted in his diary, he explicitly linked his Zionist energies with his unhappiness at home, closing with the wry line, "tragicomedy: the woman who causes the discovery of America by tormenting."⁵⁷

Nonetheless, Herzl had grandiose fantasies that his Zionist work brought, and in the future would bring, great honor to his parents and family.⁵⁸ These fantasies, however, reflected less upon his love for his family than they did on his grandiose self-view. For example, in one particularly grand fantasy, he imagined, in great detail, the coronation of his son, Hans, as the first Doge, the

⁵⁷ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 146. The note is inserted note #95; none of the inserted notes appear in the *Complete Diaries*.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Herzl, *Diaries*, II: 640, where he gave his son Hans a Zionist flag for his birthday. .

country's ruler, in the re-established Jewish state. The coronation would take place in the rebuilt Temple, led by the high priest, amid much pomp and ceremony. The climactic moment would be his crowning of his own son with these words, "Your Highness, my Beloved son."⁵⁹ Thus, while he imagined that he was serving his family through his devotion to the cause, even in this "serving," he was fulfilling, or trying to fulfill, personal fantasies and grandiose delusions, rather than actually trying to meet his family's needs or desires.

While Herzl may have claimed to turn to the cause in order to escape a failed marriage, he, like most "addictive helpers," also used his work as an excuse to avoid investing his energy into making his family life any better, perhaps duplicating the pattern of his own, often absent, father. This behavior began before he turned to Zionism, when he was still working merely as the Paris correspondent of the Neue Freie Presse. Whenever he had problems at home, he would work long hours, often from 7:30 a.m. till midnight.⁶⁰ Once he turned to Zionism, this problem increased, to the point

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I: 57. In a rather obscure passage, entered a few days after this, he wrote, "today is Hansi's birthday. He is four years old. I sent him a telegram to Vienna. 'Love and kisses to my father-king.' That is what my mother calls him. And I think of my dream [about the coronation]." *Ibid.*, I: 66. The reference to father-king is not explained elsewhere. See also *ibid.*, I: 102, for a similar example in relation to his parents. At least in his diaries, he recorded no fantasies about bringing fame or glory to his wife.

⁶⁰ *Elon, Herzl*, 102-103.

that even de Haas, a devoted disciple of Herzl's, wrote that "Zionism was a home destroyer."⁶¹ As his Zionist activities grew, he began to have less and less time for his children. He noted in his diary how little he saw "my lovely children, whose rosiest childhood is passing without my enjoying it."⁶² He also kept risking his career for his Zionist endeavors, against his wife's protest, in scenes reminiscent of Wise's arguments with his first wife. For example, when he decided to found Die Welt, she argued against it, stating that he might lose his job with the Neue Freie Presse, but he overruled her objection.⁶³

Given this background, it is not too surprising that his children grew up neither happy nor mentally stable.⁶⁴

⁶¹ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I: 86. This is not to imply that his marriage would have been fine if he had not taken up the Zionist cause, for it faced many difficulties. Once he became totally invested in the cause, however, he did not have the time, energy, or desire to try to overcome those difficulties, and thus, whatever chance the marriage might have had, it lost.

⁶² Herzl, *Diaries*, II: 709-710; *Elon, Herzl*, 214. Note that, first, he idealizes their childhood, which, in reality, may have been far from rosy, and second, that his regret is entirely self-focused; never do we find any evidence that he thought he was at all lacking in his role as parent, even though he was so removed from his children that on one occasion, he noted the wrong birthday down for Hans, the same son he had earlier dreamed of crowning; Herzl, *Diaries*, II: 560.

⁶³ *Elon, Herzl*, 232.

⁶⁴ Since it is possible that both Herzl and his wife had biologically caused or aggravated psychological illnesses, it may be that their children's psychological problems were genetic. Recent research has shown that certain biological factors may exacerbate the

Hans converted to several different forms of Christianity before committing suicide. Both Pauline and Trude, his two daughters, spent much time in mental institutions, where Trude was clinically diagnosed as manic-depressive, with grandiose delusions. Pauline died of a morphine overdose, while Trude died in Theresienstadt, where there is some evidence she starved herself to death after her own husband's death. Her son, Herzl's only grandson, also committed suicide, ending the line of his descendants for whom Herzl had had such glorious hopes.⁶⁵

Herzl and Friendship

Already in high school, Herzl was described as "acting superior ... even sarcastic," as having no close friends, though not unpopular. One of his few "social" activities was to found a literary club, for which he drew up elaborate rules and which he dominated so thoroughly that the other

manic/depressive's condition, although there is still wide dispute about what exactly those factors are, how they function, and the exact method of genetic transmission. See, for example, J. R. Kelso, et al., "Re-evaluation of the linkage relationship between chromosome 11p loci and the gene for bipolar affective disorder in the Old Order Amish," *Nature*, 348 (1989): 238-242. The timing of many of Herzl's mood swings, as well as the psychologically defensive mode of his delusions, however, seems to indicate that at least a significant component of Herzl's manic/depressive syndrome was psychological, rather than biological. Without tests that could only have been performed during his life, the exact relationship between biological and psychological elements cannot be determined either for Herzl or for his offspring.

⁶⁵ Elon, *Herzl*, 405-406; Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 340-41.

members eventually quit. This inability to relate to people as peers, to become close to them as friends, a trait common in manic/depressives, especially those with grandiose delusions, remained with him his whole life.⁶⁶ As Leon Kellner, one of his earliest and most constant disciples noted:

you take advice with difficulty and criticism even harder. You are a very, very great man, but you look down on the rest of the world. You are also very suspicious.... To serve this man, to help him, is pure joy. To be his true, sincere friend is difficult.⁶⁷

Given such a disposition, it is not surprising that Herzl related to people as a leader to a disciple, rather than as a one peer to another. Furthermore, as a leader, he was quite authoritarian, a trait noted by even his most devoted disciples, though they usually found some excuse for it. De Haas, for example, felt that Herzl was simply more decisive than average people, and so simply appeared to be authoritarian.⁶⁸ Herzl demanded complete devotion and

⁶⁶ Elon, *Herzl*, 23-24, 229. The one exception to this rule, Heinrich Kana, with whom he shared intimacies and from whom he accepted criticism, committed suicide in 1891. By this time, they had already begun to drift apart, and Herzl was growing increasingly sensitive to even Kana's criticisms. *Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 252. Dr. Adolf Friedman, "The Cage Eagle: Herzl Breaks the Bars of his Comfortable Middle-Class World," in Meyer Weisgal, ed., *Theodor Herzl: A Memorial* (New York, 1929), 44, who was another disciple of Herzl, noted that he "had no very intimate friends."

⁶⁸ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I: 211, II: 251.

loyalty from his disciples, often telling them, "don't call me chief, but obey me."⁶⁹

Consequently, he only tolerated yes-men around him and took a patronizing, possessive attitude toward his followers. He doted upon them, but it was the doting of a father upon children or a superior upon his inferiors.⁷⁰ For example, David Wolffson became one of his favorites because he imitated Herzl down to the voice and posture. This patronizing, possessive attitude extended even to Max Nordau on occasion. Like Lilienthal with Wise, Nordau was the older, initially more famous of the two, but he bowed to his younger colleague to the point where Herzl usually referred to him as "my Nordau." Herzl clearly liked Nordau more the more he acceded to Herzl's wishes, as he wrote, "this time Nordau was very nice, not only outwardly, but inwardly as well, and submitted to my leadership."⁷¹ Furthermore, as was the case with his relationships with women, Herzl tended to idealize each of his disciples upon first meeting them, becoming disappointed as reality set in. Sometimes, as is discussed below, he would feel that they betrayed him even though they had simply failed to live up to his unrealistic expectations.

⁶⁹ Quoted in de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II: 269.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Herzl, *Diaries*, II: 636, where he referred to his disciples as "good boys."

⁷¹ Elon, *Herzl*, 252; Herzl, *Diaries*, III: 936.

One gets an interesting perspective on Herzl's relationship with people by reading his plays. They give one the impression that their chief flaw stems from this very inability to relate to people closely and as peers. The characters are usually flat and stock, and Herzl rather obviously manipulates them into presenting whatever philosophy he espoused at that moment, making them into schematic puppets instead of people the audience can relate to and enjoy. This failure in characterization does not seem to stem from shortcomings in Herzl's writing ability; after all, he was quite gifted as a feuilletonist. Rather, as Ernst Hartmann, an actor and critic wrote to him, he had all the talents that a "gifted playwright needs" except a "somewhat more respectful attitude toward humanity."⁷² Thus, the very same characteristics -- a reserved nature, a grandiose self-appraisal and, consequently, a tendency to look down on others, an inability to relate to others except as a master to disciples -- that kept him from finding satisfaction in friendship may have contributed to his failure as playwright. This failure, in turn, may have helped push him to a political career -- where these very same features that made him a failure as a friend and playwright helped to create his charismatic mystique, and thus, to ensure his success.

⁷² Quoted in Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 65.

II. Messianic Personality Factors -- Psychological

Manic-Depression

Many of Herzl's personality traits, such as his relationship with disciples and with women or his tendency to have grandiose fantasies, seem to have a common origin: manic-depression. In turn, his manic/depressive syndrome seems to have begun because of his skewed family relationships with his parents, a fairly common root cause for the syndrome.⁷³ The narcissistic relationship his mother had with him, as well as the feelings of abandonment and insecurity which stemmed from his father's business troubles, probably played a particularly large role in the origin of this syndrome. The characteristic symptoms of the manic/depressive syndrome appeared already during Herzl's childhood, and he continued to undergo severe mood and energy swings throughout his life. In fact, while the medical evidence is not completely clear, his manic-depression at the least contributed to his early death, by elevating his stress levels, while it may have led much more directly to his death.

Herzl exhibited most of the secondary characteristics commonly associated with manic-depressive syndrome. For example, he "lacked the quality of genuine humor.... he took

⁷³ As noted above, it is also possible that Herzl's psychological problems had a biological component, as well.

himself too seriously."⁷⁴ Like many manic/depressives, however, Herzl loved to pun, often in more than one language, especially punning during manic phases.⁷⁵ He was facile with languages in general, speaking Hungarian, German, Italian, English, Latin and Greek, as well as being able to read quickly with almost total recall, a trait that would not only serve him well as the leader of a mass movement but had already served him in his capacity as journalist and playwright.⁷⁶

Herzl also demonstrated one of the classic symptoms of the unconscious controlling one's mental activity, another trait associated with manic-depression: obsession with an idea, in conjunction with a feeling that the idea is controlling oneself, rather than the other way around.⁷⁷ He noted that he could not avoid thinking about it: "At night it burns within me when my eyes are closed; I cannot hide

⁷⁴ Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 66. In particular, he had no ability in self-deprecating humor; he was almost wholly unable to be self-critical. He could, however, write highly ironic feuilletons, as long as his own ego was not at issue.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 212; III, 862. He most frequently punned on names, occasionally referring to his boss at the Neue Freie Presse, Benedikt, as Maledikt.

⁷⁶ Elon, *Herzl*, 29, 56; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II: 263. Interestingly, the only language Herzl ever seemed to have difficulty with was his grade-school study of Hebrew.

⁷⁷ Loewenberg, "Herzl," 152. Herzl's description of being "forced" to work for Zionism, of the idea controlling him, are strongly reminiscent of Wise's descriptions of how his vision compelled him to work.

from it."⁷⁸ Not only could he not help but think about it, the idea controlled his life:

Am I working it out? No, it is working itself out in me. It would be an obsession if it were not so rational from beginning to end. An earlier term for such a condition was "inspiration."⁷⁹

In addition to showing a variety of traits associated with manic-depression, Herzl's diaries provide abundant direct evidence of his manic and depressive states. His manic activities took on truly gigantic proportions. As his secretary noted, Herzl had a "rare capacity for work," although, contrary to this secretary's remark, he did not work "incessantly," but tended to do so in manic spurts, which often lasted for several weeks at a time.⁸⁰ During his first well-documented manic phase,⁸¹ Herzl devised his Zionist plan and wrote the notes that would become The

⁷⁸ Quoted in Meyer Weisgal, ed., *Theodor Herzl: A Memorial* (New York, 1929), 69. This feeling that he cannot escape from thinking about Zionism appeared very early on in his diaries; see, for example Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 33. Nor did it disappear with time. Well after the First Congress, for example, he wrote, "A young man sees his beloved under every woman's hat. In the same way, to me everything is now an allusion to, and a memory of, my idea." *Ibid.*, II, 674.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 95-96. Another example can be found on *ibid.*, I, 19; such references are not uncommon in the diaries.

⁸⁰ A. H. Reich, "In Memoriam," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 122.

⁸¹ This will be discussed further in the section on "consecration." While it is his first well-documented manic phase, it appears that his manic-depression started fairly early in his life; at least by his college years there is some evidence of severe alterations in mood.

Jewish State. His friend, Dr. Schiff, described his encounter with Herzl during this time:

[Herzl to Schiff] Listen, my good friend, during the past two weeks I have ... hardly slept or eaten.... I am almost sick from exertion and excitement.

[Schiff's reaction] The look in his face frightened me. In the few days I had not seen him, his face changed into that of a sick man... [his] pulse was not normal. [it raced] as in a state of delirium.⁸²

Such phases continued throughout his life. For example, during one period in 1898, he worked full time with the Neue Freie Presse, edited all and wrote most of Die Welt, the weekly Zionist paper, as well as soliciting most of the subscribers and advertisers for the paper, headed the Zionist organization, conducted diplomatic interviews, and planned the next Zionist congress. During a similar period in 1899, he not only continued all of the above activities, with the exception of the interviews, but wrote a play for production, was establishing the Zionist bank, and set up a new syndicate in Istanbul.⁸³ He usually entered a manic phase just before and during important events in the movement. Before the First Congress, for example, he wrote so many letters that his hands became painfully cramped, so

⁸² Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 150. Herzl described his impressions of this manic state through the first notebook of his diaries. See Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 3-129. In particular, he detailed his emotions in *ibid.*, I, 24. Reflecting back on that time, in *ibid.*, I, 217, he described this phase as a feverish child-bearing period.

⁸³ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 616; III, 858.

cramped that he had to cut down work at the Neue Freie Presse.⁸⁴ During these phases not only would he work tremendously long hours, but with tremendous speed. For example, after a long period of financial difficulties for the Zionist movement, Herzl raised 40,000 francs within 48 hours, working in what he described as a "complete daze," in order to facilitate a meeting with the Sultan.⁸⁵

During his manic phases, ideas as well as actions flowed from Herzl. For example, on August 23, 1896, he came up with the idea for the Jewish National Fund, including the planting of trees, the possibility for chemical plants at the Dead Sea, and the Dead-Med canal. Within one week, he had hatched seven different schemes for starting up his own newspaper.⁸⁶ On occasion, the hatching of new schemes clearly served an ego-defensive function. It prevented damage to self-esteem and the eruption of depression in two ways. First, instead of concentrating on a past failure, Herzl could fantasize about a new grandiose possibility. Second, the manic activity associated with attempting to

⁸⁴ Elon, *Herzl*, 229. For similar examples, see *ibid.*, 241-243; Erwin Rosenberger, *Herzl as I Remember Him*, trans. Louis Jay Herman, (New York, 1959), 115-121. During important meetings, Herzl rarely slept more than a few hours. For example, he recorded that he did not sleep at all during two days of meetings with Count Eulenberg and the Grand Duke of Baden; Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 696.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 326. For similar examples, see Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 11, II: 546.

⁸⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 838.

bring the scheme to fruition could serve as a distraction, keeping away the self-doubts that might plague Herzl during inaction.

Though Herzl's manic phases were not without their negative consequences, such as "the habit of writing imprudent letters,"⁸⁷ he generally felt inspired by them. Once, as he began to enter a manic state, he wrote: "I feel a gigantic strength for the glorious task gathering in me."⁸⁸ He claimed that such times did not increase tension, but rather gave him a release: "Zionism was the Sabbath of my life."⁸⁹ It was an uncontrollable force in his soul, one that could lead either to greatness or to madness.

For me these notes are not work, but only relief. I am writing myself free of the ideas which rise like bubbles in a retort [a kind of chemist's flask] and would finally burst the container if they found no outlet. My God, after this confession, Lombroso might consider me mad.⁹⁰

Usually, Herzl felt confident that he was on the side of greatness. This was because his manic states caused him to feel triumphant, a personal triumph that, like Nachman of Bratzlav, he turned into a triumph for the cause. This sense of triumph, along with the energy and conviction he

⁸⁷ Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 187, 421.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 114, 102.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, III: 1202.

⁹⁰ Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 93. Lombroso, interestingly enough, was an early psychiatric researcher who believed that madness and genius were closely linked together.

felt due to the manic state itself, helped endow Herzl with the charisma he needed to attract followers and persuade opponents.

Herzl suffered from depressions every bit as severe as his manic states. These were so deep and powerful that, while under their influence, Herzl viewed the whole world in shades of black, seeing all actions as futile. "The wind blows through the stubble. I feel the autumn of my life approaching. I am in danger of leaving no work to the world and no property to my children."⁹¹ Associated with this pessimistic view, as is often the case with depression, Herzl suffered from bouts of severe lethargy. As he wrote, "these days, I am often so listless and lacking in energy," and "I feel myself getting tired. More frequently than ever I now believe that my movement is at an end."⁹² While depressed, he also had difficulty making decisions. As he wrote in 1883, when depressed he felt he was visited by "an evil guest calling himself Mr. Uncertainty."⁹³

⁹¹ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 1062. See also *ibid.*, I, 302, IV, 1584; Elon, *Herzl*, 42, 219, for similar statements.

⁹² Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 979; II, 504. For similar quotes, see *ibid.*, I, 229, 245-46, 429; II, 492, 505, III, 842; Elon, *Herzl*, 254, 305, 319. As is typical with such lethargy, Herzl alternated between insomnia and long periods of sleep, see Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 1158; IV, 1592.

⁹³ Quoted in Loewenberg, "Herzl," 155. Note the similarity to Wise's statement that, while depressed, he was assailed by the "Satan of Doubt."

As was the case with Wise, Herzl's depression also brought on bouts of psychosomatic illness.⁹⁴ He fainted or felt dizzy on several occasions after receiving bad news or having an argument that depressed him.⁹⁵ On other occasions, he suffered from severe headaches. For example, because he was afraid of the Russians, he started having headaches as soon as he boarded the train to Russia; these headaches ended as soon as he began to journey away from there.⁹⁶ He also suffered from chest pains, both during times of depression and when he felt anxious. Usually, these pains were associated with receiving bad news, such as negative reviews for The New Ghetto.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ More than was the case with Wise, it is somewhat difficult to separate psychosomatic from real illnesses with Herzl. Some of the "illnesses" he was diagnosed as having, such as "brain anemia" or "heart palpitations," are so vague that they may have indeed been psychosomatic, especially since these symptoms tended to arise during Herzl's depressions. As noted earlier, however, it seems likely that he had contracted gonorrhea during his college years, and he may have had a malarial infection, both of which can cause lingering health problems for years after the initial disease. Finally, the cause of the heart failure that led to his death was, again, vague enough that it could have been simply exhaustion, as a result of the gonorrhea or malaria, or from something else entirely. His cardiologist, however, Dr. Asch, the most notable heart doctor in Hamburg at that time, was convinced that his heart problems were primarily psychogenic; cited in Pawel, *Theodor Herzl*, 526-527.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 968, 1155; Elon, Herzl, 321; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 165.

⁹⁶ Elon, Herzl, 377. For similar examples, see Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 100; Elon, Herzl, 84.

⁹⁷ Elon, Herzl, 254. For similar examples see *ibid.*, 176, 184; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 192; Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 618, 721.

Because of his often morbid, or at least tragic, sense of the dramatic, Herzl seemed to derive a sort of satisfaction from his "tragic" depressions and illnesses. For example, he named his Youth Diary, "The Chronicles of my Sufferings."⁹⁸ Furthermore, Herzl, especially during bouts of depression, was always fascinated with death, even, in his diaries, going into great detail about what to do with those who would die during the mass journey into Palestine.⁹⁹ Moreover, he was particularly fascinated with his own death, often, for example, fantasizing about his funeral: "I shall be mourned ... by the entire Jewish people. A beautiful funeral procession: the tragic, the lovely, and the exalted."¹⁰⁰ He even contemplated a grand suicide for the sake of the Zionist cause, either by dueling with famous antisemites or by killing himself in order to publicize The Jewish State.¹⁰¹

Because such a notion would have appealed to his playwright's sense of the dramatic and tragic, it is even possible that Herzl deliberately worked himself to death for

⁹⁸ Pawel, *Theodor Herzl*, 91.

⁹⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 189.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, III: 1206-207. For similar thoughts, including a passage where he noted that "death itself may be a relief," see *ibid.*, II: 590; I: 328.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, I: 12-13, 153-54. He also contemplated suicide, or at least had premonitions of death, after major setbacks for the movement. See *ibid.*, I: 406, IV: 1547, 1606. In this last example, he dreamt of drowning, as had Wise.

the sake of the cause, trying to become, rather ironically, a sort of latter-day Wagnerian hero.¹⁰² On at least one occasion toward the end, he said: "I will work, until I kill myself,"¹⁰³ and he often ignored doctor's orders to rest. Furthermore, death at the particular time he died might have been especially appealing. Not only did the movement face a bleak future in the short-term, but, by dying, Herzl could give it a tragic hero before his image could be tarnished by further fights over Uganda. Ahad Ha-Am noted this, writing that Herzl's death could not have come at a better time for Zionism if it had been planned, that, in fact, only his death could have stopped the movement from splintering.¹⁰⁴ Herzl, with his fine-tuned artistic and dramatic sense, could not have missed what Ahad Ha-Am saw.

Herzl frequently alternated between highly elated and severely depressed states, usually remaining in one or the other for several weeks, but occasionally switching

¹⁰² He had already begun to identify with tragic heroes as a school boy, and by the time he came to Zionism, he had developed quite a fascination with Wagnerian heroes. Patai, "Herzl's School Years," 70; Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 115; Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 518.

¹⁰³ G. Sil-Vara, "At Herzl's Grave," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 21; Elon, *Herzl*, 392. Furthermore, when his "secret agent" Newlinsky worked himself to death in order to secure a financial future for his family, Herzl noted it with great approval, calling a "proof of courage" that "transcends all that riffraff"; cited in Pawel, *Theodor Herzl*, 404.

¹⁰⁴ In the *Complete Works of Ahad Ha-Am* (Tel Aviv, 1954), 250.

extremely rapidly between the two.¹⁰⁵ For example, in 1879, in a letter to Kana, he wrote.

I have much to complain about the changes in my moods: to exult to heaven, to be deathly depressed, soon to delude myself with hope, ... again to die, to be rejected unto death.¹⁰⁶

After the First Congress, Herzl spent several months alternating between fits of energy and elation, and those of depression and fatigue.¹⁰⁷ Upon learning that the Kaiser, at long last, would arrange to receive him, Herzl's first reaction, somewhat surprisingly, was depression, mixed with fear that he would lose his Neue Freie Presse job. Within a few hours, he became so elated that he felt "bowled over," and he could not sit still. For the next several hours, he rode his bicycle for miles back and forth across town,

¹⁰⁵ Loewenberg, "Herzl," 185, speaks of Herzl's "recovery from depression" through involvement in Zionism, claiming that Herzl found a complete triumph over earlier depressive cycles through the cause and his identification with it. Clearly, however, his manic-depressive cycles continued throughout his life. This is reminiscent of statements by followers of Nachman and biographers of Wise, reflecting the beliefs of Nachman and Wise themselves, that they had achieved some ultimate triumph, when, in fact, each "ultimate triumph" was followed by another bout of depression. Nonetheless, they, including Herzl, each believed that they had in fact achieved such a triumph each and every time they entered a manic phase, and they managed to convince not only devoted followers, but, in Herzl's case, a psycho-historian. Of course, such a belief in their own personal triumph, inextricably bound up with their promises for the ultimate triumph of their cause, must have had tremendous psychological power among, and appeal to, their followers, which may, in part, explain why their followers were so eager to believe in their triumphs.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Loewenberg, "Herzl," 155.

¹⁰⁷ Elon, *Herzl*, 250.

trying to control his excitement, noting that he saw the world with "special vividness," a common description of visual impressions during a manic phase. By the next day, however, he was severely depressed again, worried about a possible negative outcome of the audience.¹⁰⁸

This constant shifting between extremes of moods affected Herzl's entire worldview. His feelings about individuals, ideas, and Jews as a whole swung wildly up and down, switching rapidly from adulation to disgust and, sometimes, back again. For example, on July 15, 1895, he disparaged both Rabbi Moritz Guedemann and Jews in general, stating that to put Zionism in the hands of the "Jews would be to jeopardize it," while on July 21, he wrote that "I have faith in the Jews," and that he was glad to be associated with Guedemann's "Jewish, manly heart."¹⁰⁹ Similarly, within a ten-day period, he changed his mind eleven times about whether leaving the Neue Freie Presse was a good or bad idea.¹¹⁰ Undoubtedly, some of his black or white attitude toward women stemmed from this type of thinking. Typically, he would start with some impossibly high idealization of a woman (or a disciple) and when that

¹⁰⁸ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 675; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 236. See Elon, *Herzl*, 337-38, for a description of similar mood swings surrounding his meeting with the Sultan.

¹⁰⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 201, 203.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 206-248. See also *ibid.*, II, 604, for similar vacillations about an idea involving a new proposal for Turkey.

person, quite naturally, did not live up to the ideal, Herzl became severely disappointed. For example, while Leo Greenberg was meeting with success in the El Arish negotiations, Herzl wrote, "of all my collaborators no one has hitherto accomplished anything like ... Greenberg. He truly is my right hand man now." A few weeks later, when progress slowed down, he wrote that Greenberg's report "is the masterpiece of a not completely loyal agent."¹¹¹ On the other hand, the more abstract an idea was, the less likely it was that it would disappoint Herzl. Thus, over time, he invested more and more emotional energy in Zionism, rather than personal relationships. His manic-depression, therefore, not only provided the energy and charisma, along with the sense of personal triumph and a driving need for success, that Herzl required to build his movement, it also provided a motive for him to invest all his energy, talent, charisma, perhaps his very life, into the ideal of Zionism.

"Consecration"

Many of Herzl's followers viewed him as a prophet. In particular, they felt that his vision of the Zionist state was nigh unto a prophetic revelation.¹¹² They did not credit to Herzl only a prophetic "consecration," however,

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 1372; 1428.

¹¹² This is evident even in the titles of some works about Herzl, such as Klinov, *Seer of the State*, and Ephraim Tzoraf, *Khoze Medinat Yisrael* (Tel Aviv, 1960).

but claimed, with encouragement from Herzl himself,¹¹³ that he had undergone "a radical conversion similar to Moses, Paul, Buddha and Mohammed,"¹¹⁴ a conversion from a self-hating Jew to a proud lover and leader of the Jewish people. In particular, this "conversion" was supposed to have taken place during, and because of, the Dreyfus Affair.¹¹⁵ In reality, however, Herzl became aware of the problem of antisemitism well before the Dreyfus Affair began. Furthermore, his journey back to Judaism took place over a number of years, even after he had started his Zionist activities.

Herzl began proposing "solutions to the Jewish problem" at least as early as 1892, when he described a plan for a mass conversion of all Jews to Christianity."¹¹⁶ By the spring of 1893, he had hit upon another plan -- a series of grandiose duels with leading antisemites.¹¹⁷ In October, 1894, still several months before Dreyfus's arrest, he

¹¹³ See, for example, Pawel, *Theodor Herzl*, 209.

¹¹⁴ Jehuda Reinharz and Shulamit Reinharz, "Leadership and Charisma: The Case of Theodor Herzl," in Jehuda Reinharz and Daniel Swetschinski, eds., *Mystics, Philosophers, and Politicians* (Durham, NC, 1982), 287. In his case, the term "conversion" does seem appropriate. Herzl's "consecration" will be compared to Wise's and Kook's in the conclusion.

¹¹⁵ See Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 161-68, for a discussion of this.

¹¹⁶ Cited in Pawel, *Theodor Herzl*, 182.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

conceived the idea of presenting the plight of the Jews in a grand play, The New Ghetto, both winning for them the sympathy of the world and encouraging them to further moral development.¹¹⁸ Only after these attempts did Herzl come to the Zionist solution. Even this does not seem to have been closely linked to Dreyfus, as he nowhere in any of his notes mentioned the trial.¹¹⁹ Even as a Zionist, however, his spiritual journey back to Judaism was not over. It took him several years of working for the Zionist cause before he actually began to identify with the very Jews he was leading.¹²⁰ Thus, Herzl clearly did not undergo some sudden "consecration," let alone a dramatic conversion to Judaism.

What each of these "solutions" had in common, however, was that Herzl conceived them during manic states. In each case, he spoke of the "suddenness" which the entire scheme developed, including an "inability to avoid" thinking about the scheme. Furthermore, in each case, Herzl immediately started a variety of activities to promote the scheme, including writing letters, travelling to speak with various friends, and even writing a whole play in less than three weeks.¹²¹ In particular, his conception of the Zionist

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 201-203.

¹¹⁹ Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 161-68.

¹²⁰ This is discussed below in the section on "Outsider -- Leadership from the Periphery."

¹²¹ Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 161-68; Pawel, *Theodor Herzl*, 200-204.

solution took place during an especially prolonged and severe manic state, during which Herzl wrote a great deal, slept little, and was diagnosed as insane by one of his closest friends at that time, Dr. Schiff, as noted above. The exaltation of the manic state may have made Herzl feel as though he were undergoing some sort of consecration; indeed, it may have appeared so to others witnessing his manic state. Nonetheless, this was neither a sudden ideological change nor a unique occurrence during his life. Not only did he have three previous "revelatory" solutions, but, as documented above, Herzl's cycles of manic-depression continued until his death.

Why, then, did he portray this time as a conversion and consecration, and why did his followers accept this portrayal? His supposed conversion not only excused his previous lack of interest in things Jewish, it imbued him with a sense of divine inspiration and mission. Furthermore, it made Herzl appear as if he had undergone a unique, life-changing triumph that would remain with him throughout his life, surely a more inspiring sort of leader to follow than one who has had regular cycles of highs and lows and would continue to do so.

Grandiose Delusions

Herzl's grandiose delusions, as is commonly the case, were rooted in his manic-depressive syndrome. His manic

elation justified, and in turn was often sustained by, the ego-inflation of these delusions; furthermore, they acted as an ego-defense during times of depression, often working to support his self-esteem or serving to deflect the blame: if I am great, this failure must be caused by someone other than myself. These delusions took many forms over the course of Herzl's Zionist activities, and they appear to have become stronger over time.¹²²

One of the most straightforward forms of these delusions was inflated self-importance, a self-importance not directly linked to his cause or his accomplishments. Statements such as "I shall associate with the mighty of this earth as their equal," "I shall be among the great benefactors of mankind," or "I shall move the heavens [in Latin in the original]," all reflect such self-importance.¹²³ Similarly, he also inflated his importance to others, often in an ego-defensive fashion. For example, after receiving a letter for Baron Hirsch two weeks later than he had hoped -- and then receiving only a four sentence

¹²² With someone who truly did achieve fame, it is sometimes difficult to separate a grandiose delusion from a merely immodest statement that reflects reality. Before the publication of The Jewish State, the delusions stand out more sharply, simply because Herzl had yet to accomplish anything in relation to the Zionist cause. Even once he became famous, however, many of his statements were so evidently unconnected with reality that their delusional quality can be ascertained. In fact, as I will show below, these later delusions seem to have had an even stronger influence over Herzl than earlier ones.

¹²³ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 42; I, 11; I, 251.

response -- he wrote, "He instructed his secretary to write me after exactly two weeks -- so that the matter would not appear urgent. Actually I have been much on his mind."¹²⁴ He inflated the importance of his political chats with the Grand Duke of Baden, writing that if published, they "would cause the greatest sensation throughout the whole world."¹²⁵

Related to this, he constructed a grandiose identity for himself. As a young man, well before his Zionist activities, Herzl had fantasized about secretly being of noble blood. For example, in an early novel, Hagenau, published in 1882, he wrote about a hero, based on himself, who was a "scion of an ancient line fallen from power, and a shy artist."¹²⁶ Once his Zionist activities began, such fantasies, in Herzl's mind, changed more and more into realities. Thus, he referred to his trip to Palestine as "a Pretender's journey," obviously meaning a Pretender to the throne.¹²⁷ At other times, he thought of himself as a nobleman working on behalf of the poor, "the Parnell of the Jews."¹²⁸ He took on a grandiose identity from his various roles, as well. As Journalist: "At present, the

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 197.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, II: 660. For similar examples, see *ibid.*, I: 48-49, 68.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 1735.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 763. For a similar quote, see *Elon, Herzl*, 277.

¹²⁸ *Herzl, Diaries*, I, 248.

journalists are the only Jews who know anything about politics. I am the best proof of this"; or as Artist, referring on several occasions how his "peers, the artists," would understand the greatness of his vision.¹²⁹ The most extreme cases of his grandiose identity, as I will discuss below, are the roles he took on as Redeemer.

Like Wise, Herzl often had a greatly inflated view of his talents.¹³⁰ In particular, he thought much more highly of his wit and his literary talents than anyone else did, believing that recognition of his "true genius" as a writer would "grow after my death."¹³¹ He even inflated the success of his plays during his lifetime, noting in his diary that The New Ghetto was a "great theatrical success," while in fact, it received poor reviews and mediocre attendance.¹³² He also clearly took complete credit for everything good that happened at any of the Zionist Congresses. For example, in an oft-quoted passage, he did not write "the state was founded in Basel," but, careful

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 84; I, 94.

¹³⁰ Again, as was the case with Wise, Herzl did have many genuine talents, and so the distinction between reality and fantasy is not always clear. I have selected only examples that I believe make that distinction obvious. For some remarks that may be delusional, but less clearly so than the ones presented here, see Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 298 and III, 848.

¹³¹ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 219. See also Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 584, for delusions about his wit and literary talent.

¹³² Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 610. Elon, *Herzl*, 254, describes the relative lack of success of the play.

writer that he was, "I founded the Jewish state," he alone, through another attribute that he considered great -- his will.¹³³

Linked with his grandiose identity and talents was his belief that his cause was of "infinite grandeur."¹³⁴ While, of course, Herzl did accomplish much, he nonetheless made quite extravagant claims -- especially when one notes that many of them were phrased in the past tense even though they had yet to come to pass. For example, near the very beginning of his Zionist activities, he wrote:

Stanley interested the world with his little travel book, How I Found Livingstone. The world was enthralled -- the entire civilized world. Yet how petty are such exploits when compared to mine.¹³⁵

Still before the publication of The Jewish State, he also wrote, "I believe for me life has ended and world history has begun."¹³⁶ Even once he had begun actually working for the Zionist cause, he felt that its greatness transcended its connection with reality.

Great things need no solid foundation. An apple must be put on a table so that it will not fall. The earth floats in mid-air. Similarly, I may be able to found and stabilize the Jewish state

¹³³ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 247. Herzl's notion of will is discussed below.

¹³⁴ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 1.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 3.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 105.

without any firm support. The secret lies in motion.¹³⁷

These beliefs provided important psychological motivations for Herzl. On the one hand, in order to continue to feel as though his life was "world history," he had to attempt to make it so. Thus, in order to sustain the exaltation his grandiose delusions brought him, he needed to bring success to the Zionist movement. On the other, the belief that he already was important, that his cause was already grand, gave him the confidence to attempt what would have otherwise been seen as presumptuous, helping him to succeed as he so desperately needed to.

His grandiosity changed over time in two significant ways. First, he became less and less self-conscious about his grandiose identity. While early on in his Zionist diaries, he worried about whether or not something he said "smacks of megalomania,"¹³⁸ such worries disappear long before the publication of The Jewish State.¹³⁹ In the beginning, he also made various protestations of modesty, devising, ironically enough in a grandiose fashion, elaborate ways for him to refuse the leadership of the Zionist state that he was sure would be offered to him.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 348.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, I: 104.

¹³⁹ See, for example, *ibid.*, I, 80.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 68, 193.

Over time, however, even this false modesty disappeared. Rather, he began to resent anything that did not reinforce his sense of importance.¹⁴¹ Toward the end of his life, this type of statement was much more typical than worries about megalomania:

As far as the diplomats of my fatherland are concerned, I don't exist. They treat me as though I were air, these idiots of whose existence not a soul will any longer have an idea when my name will still shine through the ages like a star.¹⁴²

If no one else, by this time Herzl had convinced himself of his own greatness.

Similarly, he changed from being self-conscious around the famous to belittling them more and more, thus increasing his relative importance. When first embarking upon the Zionist enterprise, Herzl felt that he "often made myself ridiculous by my self-consciousness" around the famous or powerful.¹⁴³ When he met with the Kaiser, several years into the cause, he still felt somewhat self-conscious and overawed,¹⁴⁴ but he quickly began to revise downward his estimation of the Kaiser, thus increasing his relative worth. Upon hearing some gossip against the Kaiser, he wrote "it shows me the small side of the big people. And

¹⁴¹ See, for example, *ibid.*, II, 790, where he complains about how the Neue Freie Presse makes him feel inferior.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, IV, 1461.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, I, 17. He expressed similar feelings in many other places, such as *ibid.*, I, 38, and *Elon, Herzl*, 193.

¹⁴⁴ *Elon, Herzl*, 282.

this is necessary if one is not to be confused by the outward glamor of the tinsel surrounding them without self-consciousness."¹⁴⁵ He then went on to focus on the Kaiser's crippled arm, even noting that many of the Kaiser's accomplishments must have come because "he wishes to hide the fact that he has only one hand."¹⁴⁶ Not long before his death, he treated Lord Rothschild condescendingly, remarking that his "intellectual mediocrity is distressing."¹⁴⁷ With the great made small, not only could Herzl view himself as becoming increasingly grand, but also such a view undoubtedly helped him remain confident during his dealings with diplomats and nobility. Furthermore, his grandiose delusions in general must have given confidence not only to Herzl himself but also to his followers. He was so convinced of his greatness that they, too, came to believe he was great and therefore could believe in his cause.

Delusions of Persecution

Herzl, like Wise, saw persecution as a sign of greatness. As he wrote, "a man who is to carry the day in thirty years must be considered crazy for the first two

¹⁴⁵ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 462.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 464. He made similar observations about the Sultan; see Elon, *Herzl*, 205. He seems to have instinctively understood the psychology of over-compensation, perhaps through personal experience.

¹⁴⁷ Herzl, *Diaries*, IV, 1467. See also *ibid.*, IV, 1335, for similar comments about a Belgian ambassador.

weeks," and "I shall be called mad more than once -- until the truth of what I am saying is recognized in all its shattering force."¹⁴⁸ Thus, while not obviously paranoid, he did have delusions of persecution linked to his grandiosity.

For example, while anxiously awaiting news about his latest attempt to found a paper, he ruminated on several possible reasons for the delay, finally reaching the following conclusion:

Perhaps there is a wire-tap on the German Embassy, and it was learned that I was called to it yesterday and from there made two telephone calls to the cottage section. Maybe they [Austrian government officials] are taking me for a German agent and harboring suspicions because of that.¹⁴⁹

It is much more likely that Herzl was kept waiting simply because his project was of little consequence to the governmental officials with whom he was dealing. Similarly, he wrote about elaborate conspiracy theories involving the Rothschilds, who he believed were sabotaging his attempts to found the Jewish Colonial Bank, long before the Rothschilds would even have taken him or his movement seriously.¹⁵⁰

How were these delusions of persecution related to Herzl's messianic personality traits and what effects did

¹⁴⁸ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 300; Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 139-40. A similar statement can be found in Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 103.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 1033.

¹⁵⁰ Elon, *Herzl*, 325.

they have on the Zionist movement? Not only were such delusions probably rooted in this manic-depression syndrome, particularly the depressive states, but in fact they fit in with grandiose delusions of being a great redeemer in two ways. First of all, as noted above, he felt that persecution was a proof of greatness. Equally important, such persecution gave him an excuse for his failures -- he would have won a charter, would have raised the money for the Jewish Colonial Bank, and so on, except for those who undeservedly and fanatically opposed him. These feelings of persecution must also have made psychological sense to Herzl's followers, for they themselves were persecuted. Here was a leader who truly recognized their trials and tribulations, a leader who, because of his grandiose delusions, promised a noble, courageous way to end these persecutions, a way for them all to become as proud and majestic as he was.

On occasions, however, these delusions of persecution may have damaged his cause. For example, such feelings probably sabotaged his initial conversations with Baron de Hirsch and Edmond Rothschild.¹⁵¹ They also may have hampered his negotiations with the British over Sinai; according to Virginia Hein, it may have cost him the Sinai altogether. Because of suspicions about a disciple,

¹⁵¹ Elon, *Herzl*, 139, 210-12. See also Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 25-30, 163-64.

Greenberg, Herzl recalled him from Egypt at a critical juncture in the negotiations.¹⁵² While Hein probably overstates the case, Herzl, in any case, certainly did not help his cause through his overly suspicious reactions. Even if these did not cost him the Sinai, he assuredly lost some devoted followers because of his tendency to regard everyone as a potential enemy.

"Charismatic" and "Messianic" Personality Characteristics

As was the case with Wise, Herzl's personality does not fit neatly into either the "charismatic" or "messianic" personality type, using Kohut's terminology. Rather, again like Wise, the ego and ego-ideal have themselves merged, so that, in Buber's words, Herzl became "a man consumed with passionate zeal for his faith: his faith in his cause and in himself, the two inextricably bound together."¹⁵³ On the one hand, Herzl referred to Zionism as the "Eternal Ideal ... the striving for moral and spiritual perfection."¹⁵⁴ On the other, since he himself fulfilled that ideal, since he

¹⁵² Virginia H. Hein, *The British Followers of Theodor Herzl: English Zionist Leaders, 1896-1904* (NY, 1987), 180-84. Elon, *Herzl*, 360-373, flatly contradicts this view, contending that the proposal was doomed from the start because of lack of water. Hein also completely ignores Herzl's claims that Wolffson found concrete evidence that Greenberg had embezzled funds; Herzl, *Diaries*, IV, 1484-85.

¹⁵³ Martin Buber, "The Man and the Cause," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 23.

¹⁵⁴ From a speech three months before Herzl's death, quoted in Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 518.

caused it to become the ideal of others, "did he not deserve to be loved for becoming the grand rescuer of his people? Thus love of Zionism ... and love of self were mutually reinforcing. This is why he was able to invest so much energy in the cause."¹⁵⁵ This made him a highly attractive leader, for he himself became a symbol of everything Zionism stood for.

Nonetheless, Kohut's theory does shed some light on Herzl's situation. Herzl, for example, was far from a crassly self-serving "charismatic" leader as might be typified by Jim Bakker. Herzl truly believed that what he did was best for the cause, and certainly did not try to gain financial advantage from his Zionist activities. Not only did he refuse to accept a salary from the movement, even when his health began to fail, calling the notion of getting paid by the Zionists "the most ridiculous idea," he, on several occasions, actually used his own money to subsidize the movement's ventures, donating some \$2000 to cover one visit to Turkey, for example.¹⁵⁶ On one occasion, he even turned down a 200,000 franc inheritance because he

¹⁵⁵ Jay Y. Gonen, *A Psychohistory of Zionism* (New York, 1975), 51. Elon, *Herzl*, 210, agrees with this assessment. Gonen further asserts that through this process of identification of the man with the cause, "messianism and the Messiah became one." *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁵⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, IV, 1587; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 214; Elon, *Herzl*, 315, 205.

did not want to besmirch his reputation of not having benefitted from Zionism at all.¹⁵⁷

He even protested several time that he did not want to become a leader, that he did not enjoy leadership or the fame or power associated with it. For example, he wrote in his diary that "it really depends only on myself whether I shall become the leader of the masses, but I don't want to be."¹⁵⁸ Such protestations, however, ring false when examined in the context of Herzl's statements and actions in general. After all, Herzl did become a leader of the masses, and, furthermore, he seems to have derived much enjoyment from doing so. He wrote about "the intoxication of popularity ... [which is] very nice," "the intoxication of the Congress," "intoxication of power," even "the self-intoxication of speech."¹⁵⁹ While not actually promoting himself as a prophet, as the Reverend Hechler, his loyal Christian supporter and promoter, proclaimed him to be, he

¹⁵⁷ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 1071, V, 1893. On some occasions, however, his protestations of indifference to financial gain seem a little forced, as when he wrote "the idea of keeping these 5000 francs [donated to him by the Sultan] which by rights are my personal property, in so much as they are an honorarium for my effort, never occurred to me even for a moment." *Ibid.*, III, 1231.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I: 419. For similar examples, see also Elon, Herzl, 145, 208, 221.

¹⁵⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 491; II, 651; II, 618; I, 333.

never discouraged those, like Hechler, who wanted to make such announcements for him.¹⁶⁰

One incident demonstrates both how he loved the adulation of crowds and that he wanted to keep this love covert. Before passing through Sofia, Herzl telegraphed ahead, so that he could be met by the Zionists there.

In Sofia, a touching scene awaited me. Beside the track on which our train pulled in there was a crowd of people -- who had come on my account. I had completely forgotten that I was actually responsible for this myself.... I stood there completely dumbfounded, and the passengers on the Orient Express stared at the odd spectacle in astonishment.... Newlinsky and Ziad were less struck with the demonstration than I had expected them to be.¹⁶¹

This passage is interesting in several respects. Herzl found the scene "touching" and it left him "dumbfounded," but he had arranged for the apparently spontaneous demonstration himself. In fact, he seemed rather disappointed that his travelling companions were not as impressed as other passengers, leaving the impression that he had arranged the demonstration precisely to impress them with his popularity.

This also indicates how difficult it is, on occasion, to tell when Herzl is trying to manipulate others and when he is being straightforward, when he is conscious of his actions and when he is self-deluded. The demonstration in

¹⁶⁰ Elon, *Herzl*, 190-91.

¹⁶¹ Herzl, *Diaries*, 368-69.

question was clearly for the sake of these companions -- but Herzl, despite having arranged for it, also enjoyed and perhaps was moved by the adulation. His modesty may have also been a show -- or perhaps Herzl did not want to admit to himself how much he enjoyed, subconsciously, being a leader.

Through his merging of ego and ego-ideal, Herzl's self-worth, his sense of personal pride, became inextricably bound up with his movement. Because of both his pride in particular and his grandiose delusions in general, he had a great deal of trouble blaming himself -- and so since, before coming to the Zionist movement, he was not achieving the kind of success he wanted, even needed, he had to find some cause outside of himself that was holding him back.¹⁶² In antisemitism, he found such a cause. In some cases, it seems that he used antisemitism as a post-facto excuse, such as his claim as an adult that he left technical school because of antisemitism. While indeed there was antisemitism at his technical school, it seems more likely that he left because of his increasingly bad grades.¹⁶³ In other cases, however, he truly may have been held back by

¹⁶² Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness* (New York, 1987), 29-31, discusses a similar view of "wounded pride" as one of Herzl's motivations.

¹⁶³ Elon, *Herzl*, 21.

antisemitism, as when he stated, "I would have been a minister [in the government] long ago, were I not a Jew."¹⁶⁴

Antisemitism had not only held him back in the past, and might prevent his success in the future, but, in Herzl's view, it was an affront to him in the present, a personal insult to his honor and pride. As Nordau noted in a speech to the Seventh Congress, with the rise of antisemitism, "one of the most sensitive parts of his being -- his pride -- was struck a rude blow."¹⁶⁵ To remove this affront, he wanted to find a "dignified," not "cowardly" solution to antisemitism, one that he could undertake proudly.¹⁶⁶ Thus, individual conversion under pressure was not an acceptable solution to him. Furthermore, since racial antisemitism had, against his will,¹⁶⁷ associated him with other Jews, of whom he was most assuredly not proud, he wanted to find a way to restore Jewish pride -- so that he himself could have his honor restored. For all these reasons, from personal success to a sense of honor, Herzl's ego became bound up with the ego-ideal of Zionism, which he must have seen as the solution not only to "the Jewish problem," but to all these personal problems as well. Because of this, Zionism,

¹⁶⁴ Quoted by Sil-Vara, "At Herzl's Grave," 2.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 326.

¹⁶⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 9-10.

¹⁶⁷ The extent to which Herzl felt that his return to the Jewish people was against his will and in some ways negative, is discussed below.

through Herzl, became a movement which instilled pride in Jews -- and Zionism could seem a feasible solution to potential followers in part because the charismatic, elegant Herzl was someone in whom they could take pride.

It should be noted, however, that his pride, though bound up in the cause, did not always serve Zionism well. Because "I would never bring myself to ask anyone for money that would look as though it were given to me," he failed to start up a paper several times.¹⁶⁸ He also may have offended the Pope because of pride, thus failing to win a potential ally. "He received me standing and held out his hand, which I did not kiss. Lippay had told me I had to do it, but I didn't. I believe that I incurred his displeasure by this."¹⁶⁹ His pride may have hampered him in several negotiations, particularly with the Sultan, because he found it difficult to engage in protracted bargaining, feeling it was an insult to his honor. Finally, pride in not receiving money from the Zionist cause was one of Herzl's stated reasons for staying on at the Neue Freie Presse, a job that at times interfered with his Zionist work and which may have contributed to the exhaustion that led to his death.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 474.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, 1602.

¹⁷⁰ The exact motivations for Herzl remaining at his journalist's job, despite the almost constant traumas and intrigues he records in his diaries, are never fully explained by Herzl and seem to have been rather complex. Besides the issue of pride, Herzl probably had several other

Thus, despite the linking of his ego to the ego-ideal of the movement, he occasionally acted in ways that he knew were detrimental to the movement because of his personal pride.

III. Other Background Messianic Factors

Positive/Negative World View

Did Herzl have the negative world view often attributed to messianic movements? Certainly, Herzl saw some aspects of the world negatively. Most importantly, he was sensitive to antisemitism and saw it as a great danger. It was something that "I must constantly fear," a force that led him to believe that "things must get worse, they will get worse," where "getting worse" might mean the expulsion of Jews from countries or even the death of some.¹⁷¹ In 1899, he wrote that incidents such as the Dreyfus Affair had led him to believe that even nations that were otherwise progressive could become antisemitic.¹⁷² This sense of

reasons for staying with the Neue Freie Presse. First of all, it was his association with the paper that, at least early on in the movement, gave him the status that won him entrance to the rich and powerful, that made him someone to listen to. Herzl clearly feared that if he left the paper, he would become a nobody rather quickly, which would have been a blow both to his personal pride and to the movement. The position also gave him a steady salary, a little security amidst the Zionist turmoil. On the other hand, he may have seen the constant battles with the publishers, his constant fears of being fired, as an exciting gamble, an added challenge.

¹⁷¹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 5; II, 529-30; I, 131. .

¹⁷² Quoted in Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 116.

impending tragedy lent an urgency to the Zionist cause which not only motivated Herzl but impelled his followers.

Like Wise, however, Herzl did not view the world, or even antisemitism, entirely negatively. Rather, he believed in the inexorable march of progress, again like Wise. "The entire process of mankind's development ... is ever upwards, despite everything and anything, higher and higher, always and ever higher."¹⁷³ He called the century about to end "this century of inventions," to which Zionism would be a "crowning achievement," rather than a revolutionary deviation from the norm.¹⁷⁴ He was not only optimistic about the chances for the establishment of a Jewish state, he saw the state as so inevitable that even when a particular venture failed, he often viewed it in a positive light. "The fact that the Kaiser did not assume the protectorate in Jerusalem is, of course, an advantage for the future development of our cause."¹⁷⁵ Even antisemitism could be viewed positively. Thus, for example, he wrote "antisemitism, which is a strong and unconscious force among the masses, will not harm the Jews. I consider it to be a

¹⁷³ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 26.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 165.

¹⁷⁵ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 768. Such statements may have been an ego-defense against depression and, in fact, were usually accompanied by manic states.

movement useful to the Jewish character."¹⁷⁶ As will be discussed below, Herzl even considered antisemitism to be part of the will of God, which would eventually lead to the good.

Herzl, thus, was not a pessimist, nor did he negate the present value of the world. While he wanted to bring about a profound change in the world order, he believed he could do so precisely because he believed in progress, because he had faith in the leaders and technology of his age. Through these, inevitably, his vision would be achieved, which is hardly the belief of one with a thoroughly negative worldview. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated below, this positive worldview not only inspired his followers and filled them with hopes for redemption, but it was itself rooted in Herzl's redemptive ideology, in his belief that the redemption of the Jews was inevitable and that he himself would be the agent of this redemption.

Antinomianism

Was Herzl antinomian? As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Herzl set out to change, and, to a large extent, succeeded in changing, the norms of a significant section of the Jewish community. In particular, he made a national identity a norm for many Jews, instilling them with

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 10. This too was written during a manic phase.

pride along the way. But did he consider himself to be an agent of revolutionary change? Furthermore, did he set out to be antinomian in the more limited sense of abolishing religious law?

From reading his negative comments about subjects such as socialist movements and his obvious fascination with monarchs and aristocracies, one can conclude without difficulty that Herzl regarded himself as a social conservative. He had a distaste for movements that he considered revolutionary. And as for religious law, Herzl went out of his way to keep discussions of religious reform or religious debate in any fashion from coming up at the Zionist congresses, trying hard to reassure the Orthodox. At the very least, religious change was not a priority for Herzl, if he consciously considered it at all.

And yet, Herzl's opponents, particularly among the Orthodox, saw him as a dangerous revolutionary. For despite Herzl's self-view, he was trying to bring about a revolutionary redefinition of what it meant to be a Jew, of what a Jew should have loyalties to, of fundamental Jewish norms. His redefinition threatened the status quo and thus those who, because of their power or institutional responsibility, were invested in the status quo.

Furthermore, Herzl was not quite the social and religious conservative that he portrayed himself to be. He was no devotee of dogmatic traditionalism in either politics

or religion. Rather, he took what might be called an artistic view of the past. He never envisioned a historically accurate recreation of the Venetian aristocracy, for example, but rather his romanticized version of it, combined with modern technology (again, romanticized) and certain aspects of democracies and freedom of the press. In Altneuland, he proposed an economic system, a sort of artist's view of community-based mutualism, that could in no way be considered socially conservative. His views on religious tradition, though not fully explained, seem to parallel this "artistic" rendering of the past. For example, in the essay "The Menorah," he promoted an artistic reinterpretation of tradition, one guided by beauty though it "still observed ... tradition" in some form.¹⁷⁷ While such a reinterpretation would not necessarily be radical, it does give justification for some level of change.

Outsider -- Leadership from the Periphery

Herzl presents a classic case of an outsider coming into power, of a leader from the periphery of the Jewish community. He was an outsider in a wide variety of ways. Whatever his childhood Jewish experiences had been, he had basically lost touch with Judaism before antisemitism arose,

¹⁷⁷ Theodor Herzl, *Zionist Writings*, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York, 1973), 206. The essay original appeared in Die Welt, Dec. 31, 1897. .

and so when it did, he, like many others, felt stranded, alienated from the Judaism he had left, rejected by the German *Kultur* he had tried to take on. Also, Herzl's social status, before his Zionist activities, came entirely from his success in the non-Jewish world, as a writer for a (nominally) non-Jewish paper.

Not only was Herzl an outsider in these ways, however, but, as Elon writes, he stood between Eastern and Western Europe, "Hungarian by birth, Jewish by religion, Austrian by naturalization, German by culture."¹⁷⁸ While Elon emphasizes how Viennese Herzl was, the extent to which his Hungarian background alienated him from Vienna should not be underestimated. For example, Benedikt, criticizing Herzl, said, "you are not really an Austrian at all, but a Hungarian."¹⁷⁹ Many of Herzl's closest associates were of Hungarian origin, including his wife, Nordau, Vambery and Dirsztly, two of his go-betweens with the Turks, and Lippay, who obtained an audience with the Pope for Herzl.¹⁸⁰

At least at the beginning of his Zionist activities, Herzl was so alienated from Jewish life, had such a negative opinion of Jews, that his writings sometimes appear

¹⁷⁸ Elon, *Herzl*, 5.

¹⁷⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 293.

¹⁸⁰ Handler, *Dori*, 3-5. In general, Handler rather overstates the case for Herzl's devotion to things Hungarian, but his work does serve as a counterbalance to the many other texts which ignore Herzl's Hungarian background altogether.

antisemitic -- which is about as far out on the periphery as one can go and still, in any sense, remain Jewish. At least by the age of 22, he began a lifelong habit of calling Jews "they," showing the degree of his alienation from Jews, and on one occasion he wrote that "they" were "deformed" and had a "retarded growth."¹⁸¹ He subscribed to many of the money-related antisemitic slurs, labelling, for example, poor Jews as socialists and rich ones as "bribers" who controlled critical amounts of world money.¹⁸² He also called Jews "cowardly," and contended that they were ungrateful.¹⁸³ While he fantasized about Palestine in the abstract, he had no love for what he saw in actuality during his trip there. As he wrote:

When I remember thee in days to come, O Jerusalem, it will not be with pleasure.... We have been to the Wailing Wall. A deeper emotion refuses to come, because that place is pervaded by a hideous, wretched ... beggary.¹⁸⁴

In contrast, he generally had a good opinion of Christians and Christian customs. Not only did he have a Christmas tree and not have Hans circumcised, but he made

¹⁸¹ From his Youth Diary, quoted in Almog, *Zionism and History*, 93-94.

¹⁸² Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 121. Similar expressions can be found in *ibid.*, I, 147, 194; Elon, *Herzl*, 58, 123.

¹⁸³ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 106-107; II, 439; III, 942; Elon, *Herzl*, 303.

¹⁸⁴ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 745-46; this may also have been related to his tendency to first idealize and then be disappointed.

statements such as "if there is one thing I should like to be, it is a member of the old Prussian nobility," or, as while in college, "nowadays one must be blond."¹⁸⁵ He also had a higher opinion of Christian than Jewish clergy: "These simple Christian hearts [two Christian ministers] are much better than our Jewish clerics who think of their wedding fees from the rich Jews."¹⁸⁶

Like many would-be messiahs, Herzl also sometimes was more successful among non-Jews than with Jews.¹⁸⁷ In particular, his "gifts of persuasion often worked better with powerful gentiles than with powerful Jews."¹⁸⁸ His very alienation from things Jewish may have helped him in this regard. For example, Eulenberg seems to have despised Jews in general, and he liked Herzl particularly because Herzl did not seem "very Jewish" to him.

In some instances, being an outsider helped him with Jews as well as gentiles. First of all, because he was not "very Jewish," he was able to appeal to others who, like himself, had been alienated from Judaism, such as Nordau. He was often seen as a sort of new Moses, with a foot in Pharaoh's camp and one in the camp of the Israelites, which

¹⁸⁵ Elon, *Herzl*, 93; Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 288; I, 196; Elon, *Herzl*, 54.

¹⁸⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 1161.

¹⁸⁷ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 7.

¹⁸⁸ Elon, *Herzl*, 267. de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 227, makes a similar point.

added to his "magical appeal."¹⁸⁹ Weizmann noted that "the very fact that this Westerner came to us unencumbered by our preoccupations had its appeal," while Ussishkin wrote that "his greatest deficiency will be his most useful asset. He does not know the first thing about Jews. Therefore he believes there are only external obstacles to Zionism, no internal ones. *We should not open his eyes to the facts of life so that his faith remains potent.*"¹⁹⁰

Herzl did not remain entirely an outsider, however. Over time, he identified more and more with Jews. Even early on, he noted that he had problems with those who converted to Christianity.¹⁹¹ As his diary progressed, he began to sprinkle more and more Yiddish phrases into it.¹⁹² He even began to compliment Jews, saying "we have the most wonderful human material that can be imagined."¹⁹³ In 1897, he switched from a Christmas tree to lighting a menorah.¹⁹⁴ De Haas noted that Herzl considered his two profiles to be different, the right "Aryan" and the left "Semitic." Before publication of The Jewish State, he posed with the Aryan

¹⁸⁹ Elon, *Herzl*, 183.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 184, 186; emphasis in the original.

¹⁹¹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 188; perhaps this was due to issues of pride.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, I, 208, for example.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, I, 243. Note the use of we.

¹⁹⁴ Elon, *Herzl*, 252-53.

profile; afterwards, with the Semitic one.¹⁹⁵ By the time he journeyed through Russia, he identified completely with the pain of his fellow Jews, noting "if you only had some inkling of the boundless distress of our honest poor people."¹⁹⁶ This voluntary identification with the Jewish people must have been emotionally powerful for his followers, evoking a response such as "if this man, who is successful in the gentile world, chooses to identify himself as a Jew, why, he must be dedicated to the cause -- and I, too should be proud of being a Jew."

Symbols and Stagecraft

Herzl, perhaps because of his experience as a playwright, used symbols adroitly and powerfully. He often explicitly noted the importance of symbols and ideals for motivating people. He first began to note the power of political symbols in a series of feuilletons in 1893, where he wrote how the masses could have "their feeling whipped up" through clever use of symbols.¹⁹⁷ He spoke both lovingly and cynically about the power of symbols and ideals. "The ideal ennobles us.... What bread and water are for the individual, the ideal is for the community." "With

¹⁹⁵ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 255.

¹⁹⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, IV, 1346.

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 118.

nations, one must speak in childish language: a house, a flag, a song are the symbols of communication."¹⁹⁸

He not only wrote about symbols in theory, however, but used them and used them well in practice. He used symbols to attract people to his cause. "To make them comprehensible to the people, ideas of this kind must be presented in the simple and moving form of symbols."¹⁹⁹ Symbols moved people to action. "With a flag, one can lead men wherever one wants to, even into the Promised Land."²⁰⁰ And, of course, symbols could be used to manipulate, to control the crowd as dramatist controls characters on stage.

In all this I am still the dramatist. I pick poor people in rags off the streets, put gorgeous costumes on them, and have them perform for the world in a wonderful pageant of my composition. I no longer operate with individuals, but with masses.²⁰¹

What sort of symbols did Herzl use to motivate the Zionist masses? True to his word, one of the first things he did, once he decided to mobilize the masses, was to design a flag.²⁰² He even planned a ceremony for it: "The

¹⁹⁸ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 211; Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 645. Similar sentiments are expressed on *ibid.*, I, 331; II, 633.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 165.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 27.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, I, 67. Elon, *Herzl*, 236-237, describes how Herzl used the tricks of stagecraft in directing the Zionist congresses, paying great attention to details of "props, lighting, costume." See also Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 581.

²⁰² Elon, *Herzl*, 215.

first man ashore [in the journey to Palestine] will carry a cheap, shoddy flag in his hand. It will later be preserved in the National Museum."²⁰³ He made sure that he met with many famous people and that this was noted in the press.²⁰⁴ During his visit to Palestine, he organized an elaborate tree-planting ceremony.²⁰⁵ Palestine itself was used as perhaps the most important symbol of all. Herzl realized that "its very name would constitute a program, and it would powerfully attract the lower masses."²⁰⁶ For this reason, the Zionist headquarters in Vienna was called simply "Zion," evoking the messianic resonances of that word.²⁰⁷

He used symbolic actions as rewards to placate those whom he could not reward otherwise. For example, after the Uganda proposal passed in the Sixth Congress, amidst heated debate, Herzl took the podium and recited "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its cunning," in Hebrew. Similarly, he used different styles, even different

²⁰³ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 91. Herzl planned many grand ceremonies for the state-to-be, including the elaborate coronation for his son, mentioned above, the commissioning of popular hymns, award ceremonies for national heroes, and elaborate national games. *Ibid.*, I, 40, 39, 64.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 612.

²⁰⁵ Sulamith Ish-Kishor, *How Theodor Herzl Created The Jewish National Fund* (New York, 1960), 42-43. The tree became an object of reverence for later Zionists, and seeds from it were planted all around Israel.

²⁰⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 133.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 536.

signatures, to different people, in order to make them feel that Herzl was especially on their side. For example, he signed "Dori" and used Hungarian and Yiddish phrases with Vambery, while signing, often in Hebrew, Benjamin, to the Russian Zionists.²⁰⁸

Herzl knew that symbols with religious, and especially messianic, overtones could strike particularly deep chords. For this reason, he tried especially hard to win over rabbis, who in and of themselves could function as symbols, and he even prompted Nordau to request the recitation of Birkat Hamazon at a dinner with potential donors.²⁰⁹ He frequently emphasized the number seven, as in his seven-starred design for the Zionist flag and his emphasis on Palestine as the "Land of the Seven Hours," referring to his scheme for a seven-hour work day, a scheme he linked up with seven explicitly because "it is connected with age-old associations of the Jewish people."²¹⁰ He even wanted to schedule the Seventh Congress just before Passover, for it was to mark the "Great Passover," a messianic term.²¹¹ He wrote movingly in Altneuland about the main character's first view of the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 1075, 1081, 1082.

²⁰⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 151; I, 131; I, 1158.

²¹⁰ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 131.

²¹¹ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 183.

Suddenly, ... the significance of the Temple flashed upon him.... They [the Jews] could not have mourned merely for ruined masonry.... No, they sighed for an invisible something of which the stones had been a symbol... The invisible God, the Omnipresent, must have been equally near to them everywhere. Yet only here was the true Temple. Why? Because only here had the Jews built up a free commonwealth in which they could strive for the loftiest human aims.... Only then could the Jews erect a House to the Almighty God Whom children envision thus, and wise men so, but who is everywhere present as the Will-to-Good.²¹²

Herzl realized that his movement possessed little in terms of money or power. Until it did, he had to sustain it with symbols, the most powerful of which were messianic. Thus, he wrote that the purpose of the Zionist governing committee was "a committee that is supposed to create illusions for the public, and itself has no illusions."²¹³ And Herzl knew most of all that he himself, with his ego fused with the ego-ideal of the movement, with all his delusions of grandeur, was the most central symbol of the movement, the linchpin that held it all together, by giving it a status that it had not yet earned. "My chief service to the movement is that I am giving it prestige."²¹⁴ It is this service that made it both natural and important for Herzl to tap into messianic symbolism, to take on the identity of Redeemer.

²¹² Herzl, *Old-New Land*, 253-54. This is another example of his "artistic rendering" of religious tradition.

²¹³ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 541.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 618.

His successful use of symbols again raises the dilemma noted above -- to what extent did he believe in the pomp and grandeur he strove to create and to what extent was he, as the disinterested playwright, using these illusions to manipulate others? While an unequivocal answer cannot be given, I believe the truth lies somewhere between these extremes. Herzl sincerely believed in the Zionist cause. On the other hand, at times he clearly used symbols to manipulate others. What I believe to be critical, however, is that, much more than was the case with his all-too-lifeless plays, Herzl became caught up in the real-life drama of the Zionist cause. Whatever his original intent, he came to believe in the redemptive scheme he outlined-- and he believed that he would be the prime agent of redemption.

IV. Herzl's Redemptive Roles

Over the course of the Zionist movement, Herzl pictured himself as fulfilling several roles, roles undoubtedly tied in to his grandiose identity. While his taking on of these roles does not in and of itself prove his messianic aspirations, these roles provide a background for and an understanding of Herzl's messianic drives. In particular, these roles, as Herzl defined them, cast him as an agent both of redemption and of the divine will. I will discuss three of the most important of these roles from this

standpoint: Herzl as Artist, Herzl as Bringer of Technology, and Herzl as Leader.

Herzl as Artist

Having failed to find the success he craved, the success he felt he deserved, upon the stage, Herzl turned to making his very life his greatest work of art. He acknowledged this in several places in his diary, writing about the "serial novel of my life."²¹⁵ What is the significance of this role? First of all, it is the source of Herzl's ability to use religious traditions without being bound by them. This not only lay at the root of his antinomianism, to the extent that he was antinomian, but it enabled him to bridge the gap between the secular Zionists, who rejected the religious tradition entirely, and the religious Zionists, who followed it completely, to build a united Zionist movement through his "artistic" use of Jewish symbols, especially messianic ones. It also contributed to his sense of the dramatic, which may have led him to artistically render himself a tragic hero by working himself to death.

Furthermore, the role of artist fed his grandiose delusions in two ways. Because only "artists will understand" his scheme itself, realize that it was genius and not madness,²¹⁶ and because, after all, "there are so

²¹⁵ See, for example, Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 644.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 76.

few artists,"²¹⁷ Herzl could dismiss those who did not accept his ideas, or those who thought he was a megalomaniac, as simply not being artistic, or visionary, enough. According to Herzl, artists were persecuted, and the more persecuted they were, the more it proved that they were true visionaries. Furthermore, again because of the scarcity of artists, this role showed Herzl's true worth as a rare visionary, a trait he believed was necessary to be a true leader. Only artists have the ability, he claimed, to dream of a better society, to envision redemption, for "they cannot leave the world as they found it."²¹⁸ And only a truly great artist, such as Herzl himself, would have sufficient vision to realize a messianic dream.

Herzl as Bringer of Technology

Herzl was more than an artist, however. Unlike those who would separate the two, Herzl saw both art and technology as redeemers, and he believed that he himself, a Prometheus of electricity, could help bring about the technological redemption. For while all technology fascinated Herzl, it was electricity that especially captivated him.

As anyone reading his diaries, feuilletons, or Altneuland would quickly realize, Herzl thought and wrote

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 76.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I: 127-28.

about technology in general, and specifically electricity, all the time. He "spoke at length" with the Sultan about the benefits of electrification and electric lights.²¹⁹ In an attempt to convince Bismark to back Zionism, Herzl sent him an article he wrote about technology and public works.²²⁰ In Altneuland, Herzl portrayed electric boats, tractors, and trains.²²¹ He promised the Rothschilds that, through Zionism, he would protect the "tower" of their fortune. "I shall make it into the highest and safest Tower, an Eiffel Tower with a magnificent electric lantern."²²² He even supported one settlement plan simply because it involved an electric railroad.²²³

Why did Herzl find technology so fascinating? One reason, not uncommon in his era, was his view that all social problems could be solved through electricity. He wrote, "my view is that socialism is a purely technical problem. The distribution of Nature's Forces through electricity will eliminate it."²²⁴ He believed that the "exploitation of electricity will disperse them [the workers] again to happier places of work," bringing about

²¹⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 1117.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 126-129.

²²¹ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 234.

²²² Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 131.

²²³ *Ibid.*, III, 1203.

²²⁴ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 45.

social and economic contentment.²²⁵ He declared to the Sultan that he could solve all of the Turkish Empire's problems through "electrification on a large scale," and he even compared the founding of the Jewish state to the solving of a technical problem.²²⁶ While some might not comprehend the true function of technology, for "they came to Rothschild with the electric light, too... [but] he did not understand what it was all about,"²²⁷ those who viewed technology properly understood that its prime function was to solve society's problems, especially those of the Jews. "The electric light was not invented in order to illuminate the drawing room of a few rich snobs. It was invented so that with its aid we might solve the Jewish question."²²⁸

One should not imagine, however, that Herzl related to electricity purely as an intellectual, rational realist. In fact, he viewed technology romantically and artistically, even religiously. For example, he wrote, "the Suez canal ... impressed me much more than the Acropolis."²²⁹ He felt that technology could not only solve societal problems, but that it could achieve the "miraculous," that "the word impossible already seems to have ceased to exist in the

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 143-44.

²²⁶ *Elon, Herzl*, 334; *Herzl, Diaries*, I, 108, 358. .

²²⁷ *Herzl, Diaries*, I, 71.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 267.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 738; *Elon, Herzl*, 285.

vocabulary of the technical services."²³⁰ De Haas described this romantic view in a revealing fashion:

He [Herzl] had abiding faith in man's ingenuity, and in the power created by modern mechanical forces, to rebuild a world, bring water where it was lacking, grade hills, pierce mountains, and turn the desert into a garden.... He could be absorbed in watching machinery whir, or in men engaged in engineering construction ... [though] he had no mechanical ability or understanding.²³¹

Herzl even associated technology with religion, at least indirectly, stating that "the worth of my plan lies in the fact that I ... use the progress of technology and hold tradition sacred,"²³² while also noting in Altneuland that a person seeing rebuilt Jerusalem would primarily recall "the Temple and the new electric machinery."²³³

From this religious viewpoint, it is but a small step to regard electricity not only as a technical solution, but as a quasi-religious redeemer, as Herzl seems to have done from an early age. Herzl recalled that at around age 12, he read a book that said that "electricity will be the Messiah, the redeemer of mankind," a notion that he took so seriously that, because of it, he "decided to become a great engineer" and to enter technical school, a rare choice for Jewish

²³⁰ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 946; Herzl, *The Jewish State*, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York, 1970), 142.

²³¹ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 261. Note how Herzl's positive world view was rooted in this faith in technology.

²³² Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 72; of course, his idea of holding "tradition sacred" was artistic and not literal.

²³³ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 192.

boys.²³⁴ He portrayed this concept of electricity as the redeemer quite vividly in Altneuland.

The wild natural power, now tamed, was conducted into electric generators, whence it flashed through wires all over the land the Old-New Land, making it blossom into a garden and a homeland for people who had formerly been poor and weak, hopeless and homeless. This great force ... has lifted us up and made us whole.²³⁵

Obviously, if electricity is the Redeemer, those who serve it are the bringers of redemption. As Herzl wrote in Altneuland, "the true creators of our Old-New Land ... were the hydraulic engineers.... They used water for electric power, and that was the foundation of everything."²³⁶ Furthermore, with electricity as Redeemer, the prerequisite for the messianic era is technology, rather than repentance or some other traditional notion. Herzl explicitly wrote that the Jewish state could not have been founded "as recently as a hundred years ago," but could now, because of electricity, for "steam power and electricity have altered the face of the earth."²³⁷ He directly linked technology to the possibility of "another happy exodus," writing that "it could not have been different -- and it could not have been

²³⁴ Quoted in Patai, "Herzl's School Years," 77. Herzl made these remarks in 1902.

²³⁵ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 179.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

²³⁷ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 134; II, 720.

earlier. The technological age had to arrive first."²³⁸ In one place, he gave this technological redemption a messianic flavor, through a reference to a would-be Messiah:

Schiff says: It [the establishment of the Jewish State] is something that a man tried to do in the last century. Sabbatai! Well, in the last century it was impossible. Now it is possible-- because we have machines.²³⁹

Even his dreams of an Israel redeemed, as recorded in both his diaries and in Altneuland, reflect a vision of redemption which focused not on lions lying down with lambs, but on technology contributing to the artistic. He romantically described Haifa bathed in electric lights, and was more impressed with the possibilities of a "pretty, elegant," technologically sophisticated New Jerusalem outside of the city walls than with the actual old city.²⁴⁰

What does the role of Bringer of Technology reveal about Herzl? First, despite his protestations to the contrary, it shows the even in the patently scientific realm of technology, Herzl thought and wrote as a romantic, not as a realist. More importantly, it demonstrates Herzl's relation to messianic ideas and ideals. At least according to his own accounts, thoughts of electricity as Messiah not

²³⁸ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 144. In private conversations, Herzl would repeatedly assert that the "New Exodus will be superior to the old because of modern technology." See Rosenberger, *Herzl*, 15.

²³⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 114.

²⁴⁰ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 75; Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 747.

only inflamed his imagination, but moved him to want to be an engineer and to begin study in a technical school. Thus, a messianic dream not only appealed to Herzl, but it also caused him to re-arrange his life so that he could fulfill a messianic mission. This makes it more plausible to argue that he might have been doing so again when he took up the mission of the Zionist cause. Finally, this role demonstrates that Herzl thought of the establishment of the Zionist state in explicitly redemptive terms, and that he thought of himself as at least an agent of that redemption, if not its chief cause.

God, Will, and the Leader

The most important of these redemptive roles, both in terms of his movement and in terms of establishing his messianic self-view, was that of Leader. Herzl, however, had a particular definition of a true leader: one who expresses the will of God in this world. In order to demonstrate that this was his definition, as well as to show that Herzl felt himself to be that true leader, I must first explore his views on religion in general, and specifically, his view of God and God's way of acting in this world.

As has already been noted, Herzl tended toward the romantic in many aspects of his life.²⁴¹ This romanticism

²⁴¹ Alex Bein, for example, wrote that Herzl's stories reveal that he was a "thoroughgoing romanticist," in "Herzl's Short Stories," *Herzl Year Book*, 3 (1960), 156.

extended also to the realm of religion. He made a variety of notations in his diary that seem to indicate the value he placed on the non-rational, whether linked explicitly to religion or not. For example, he wrote that the true worth of the Zionist solution lay in the fact "that it cannot be explained rationally,"²⁴² and also that "visions alone grip the souls of men."²⁴³ What complicates the issue, however, is that Herzl also viewed organized religion instrumentally, and he was prepared to exploit it as a means to win Jews over to Zionism, so that, once again, it becomes difficult to determine exactly what Herzl believed and what he said for the sake of others.²⁴⁴

Thus, for example, Herzl wanted to turn to the rabbis as motivators for his cause, for "they will arouse the people."²⁴⁵ He especially wanted "wonder-rabbis" on his side, and remarked a number of times about the value of the Sadagora rabbi, hoping that the "wonder rabbi of Sadagora" would serve "as chief rabbi" in the Jewish state.²⁴⁶ He

²⁴² Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 122.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, I, 28.

²⁴⁴ Of course, this does not contradict his essentially romantic view of life in general and religion in particular. Rather, it shows that he was cognizant of the powerful, romantic symbolic value of religion -- and as a playwright, he was able and willing to turn this symbolic value to his own use.

²⁴⁵ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 104.

²⁴⁶ See, for example, *ibid.*, I, 34, 105-107, 155.

sent several missions to notable "wonder rabbis" to try to win them over, succeeding in Sofia.²⁴⁷ Such remarks show that he was willing to use religion and religious symbols for his cause, even when he apparently did not believe in such symbols himself.²⁴⁸ The fact that he conceived of a mission to Sadagora so early on in his development of the Zionist idea, as well as his seemingly constant attempts to use rabbis as spokesmen for his cause, despite their frequent opposition to it, may indicate, however, that Herzl himself was among the people "aroused" by the wonder-rabbis.

Herzl demonstrated certain traits, however, which less equivocally demonstrate a propensity for mystical or religiously symbolic thought -- and from the point of view of a believer, not merely a manipulator of those who

²⁴⁷ See, for example, *ibid.*, II, 505, 641.

²⁴⁸ A number of less clear cases also exist, where it is not certain whether or not Herzl was expressing a religious belief or was using religious symbols in a manipulative fashion. For example, a delegation of East European Jews, during the framing of the Basel program, made some remarks about how this coincided with several predictions of "Bulgarian mysticism." Once the program was drafted, Herzl was heard to remark, "the Jewish state exists, the Bulgarian vision is not altogether untrue"; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 176. Did he believe in the Bulgarian vision, or was this an attempt to win over the mystics and add symbolic weight to his cause? He also noted in his diary, early in 1897, that that year was "one of the critical years of my friend Hechler," a statement that Elon, *Herzl*, 219, said was sarcastic -- but which, in context, could easily be meant seriously. In the discussion below, I have only used statements which I am certain were not used to manipulate others, either because they are private remarks from his diary, or because of the nature of the remarks themselves.

believe. He explicitly linked his fascination with the number seven, noted above, to its "age-old associations" with Judaism, and he wrote about the importance of seven in his diary in contexts which were not designed for the manipulation of the public.²⁴⁹ While some of his remarks about Palestine, such as the many references to its beauty and goodness in Altneuland,²⁵⁰ were meant for public consumption, others, which show an equal fascination with the land, were private remarks in his diary, such as that it "is said to be a magnificent country.... Everything can be done in that country."²⁵¹ He made a large number of important decisions at night, writing "overnight counsel came to me in my sleep, as usual," a method of decision making not too unlike that of mystic visionaries.²⁵² He also indulged in a variety of superstitious behaviors.²⁵³

More importantly, he most definitely did not consider himself to be an atheist, although he never clarified exactly what sort of God he believed in. Furthermore, his

²⁴⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 131; 200.

²⁵⁰ For example, that "it truly is the garden of Eden," Herzl, *Altneuland*, 124.

²⁵¹ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 517.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, III, 923. Such references are fairly common, particularly in late 1900 and early 1901; see, for example, *ibid.*, III, 1028, 1069.

²⁵³ See, for example, *ibid.*, III, 1089, where he left town so that a telegram that he was waiting for would arrive earlier.

belief in God, though relatively amorphous, seemed to be important to Herzl. He remarked, for example, that "I can communicate with my God without rabbis and prescribed prayers,"²⁵⁴ a statement which seems to indicate that he found such communication not only possible but important.

On several occasions, he did try to explain somewhat what he meant by God. He believed that he followed Spinoza: "My conception of God is, after all, Spinozistic."²⁵⁵ On one occasion, he noted that by God he meant "World Spirit," while on another, he wrote that God means "that which is inexplicable."²⁵⁶ Most frequently, he defined God as the "Will to Good."

To me, "God" is a beautiful, dear old word which I want to retain. It is a wonderful abbreviation for conceptions that might be beyond the grasp of a childlike or limited intellect. By "God," I understand the Will to Good! The omnipresent, infinite, omnipotent, eternal Will to Good, which

²⁵⁴ Patai, *Star Over Jordan*, 312.

²⁵⁵ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 231; see also *ibid.*, III, 1090; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 202. Wise also considered himself to be a follower of Spinoza. Spinoza may have been popular with these two for a number of reasons, such as that his God-concept purported to be rationalistic, while, in fact, containing some mystical elements. Also, Spinoza's writings are obscure enough that one could hold a variety of beliefs and think them to be Spinozistic. Spinoza may also have appealed to Herzl because he was a universal and not merely Jewish figure.

²⁵⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 96; 116. Note that this latter quote links up with his statement that the Zionist solution is of value because it cannot be explained; see above.

does not immediately prevail everywhere but is always victorious in the end.²⁵⁷

It is this conceptions of God, as the omnipresent, omnipotent "Will to Good," which played a critical role in Herzl's messianic self-view.

Herzl saw the effects of this Divine Will as being all-pervasive in the world. Describing the events that led to the creation of the "Old-New Land," he wrote that "above all is God!"²⁵⁸ Even evil, which, of course, is only temporary, comes from God. "Anti-Semitism ... contains the divine Will to Good, because it forces us to close ranks, unites us through pressure, and through our unity will make us free."²⁵⁹

While God's Will extends over all, God bestows a special providence on the Jewish people and their land.²⁶⁰ "The natural, God-given charm of Palestine lay unseen and

²⁵⁷ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 231. A few pages later, to make sure the point is clear, he wrote "the Will to Good, by which, as you know, I mean God." *Ibid.*, I, 235. Obviously, this sort of worldview, where God always triumphs in the end, is a very optimistic one. Furthermore, his whole attitude about the word "God" is another example of how his "artistic" view of religion could lead to somewhat antinomian results.

²⁵⁸ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 213.

²⁵⁹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 231. Again, such a view of antisemitism could only come out of a profoundly optimistic worldview.

²⁶⁰ In at least one instance, Herzl defined the Promised Land in terms of his own will, a creation "which I have devised"; Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 116. This might be evidence of the congruity of God and Herzl's will; see below for more such evidence.

forgotten for long centuries.... God has blessed our land."²⁶¹ There, God's Will makes itself evident: "To enjoy the great spectacle of God's peace on earth you must go to Jerusalem."²⁶² God's Will has protected the Jewish people. "God would not have kept us alive so long if there were not left us a role to play in the history of mankind."²⁶³ In Altneuland, he wrote that the "New Exodus" came about because "it was God who helped us."²⁶⁴ By helping us, God concomitantly grants us a special mission:

Only we Jews could have done it.... We only were in a position to create this New Society, this new center of civilization here. It could have come only through us, through our destiny.²⁶⁵

How does God's will become manifest on earth? Unfortunately, Herzl equivocated on his answer to this question. In several references it seems that God's will comes about inevitably. For example, "God's designs hover over us in these world-historic hours. There is no fear if

²⁶¹ Herzl, *Old-New Land*, 129.

²⁶² Herzl, *Altneuland*, 53.

²⁶³ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 46.

²⁶⁴ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 145.

²⁶⁵ Herzl, *Old-New Land*, 82. Despite other statements where Herzl ridicules the idea of the "mission of the Jews," it appears from this quote that he had an idea of mission not dissimilar to Wise's, although Herzl's mission could only be accomplished through the establishment of a Jewish state.

He is with us."²⁶⁶ This sense of the inevitable is transferred to those causes God sides with, such as the creation of the Jewish state. "I believe the Jewish state to be a world necessity -- and that is why it will come into being."²⁶⁷ Herzl's own plans are inevitably fulfilled.

Yesterday I delivered the "Address to the Rothschilds." Thus everything I proposed to do comes to pass, even though at another time and in another way, and the goal will undoubtedly be attained.²⁶⁸

At other times, however, Herzl portrays God's will somewhat differently. Thus, he wrote passages that seem to indicate God's will could be opposed by humans, at least in the short term, even if it will inevitably come about in the end.²⁶⁹ God's will could even be thwarted, at least temporarily, by people lacking vision. "Now, it would really be a crying shame if the development of this serious, great, philanthropic plan were to be thwarted by the opposition of a single person of insufficient intelligence.

²⁶⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 717. Wise also believed that God's will, manifest in the messianic mission of the Jews, would inevitably come about.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 303. A similar statement can be found in Herzl, *The Jewish State*, 33. Such statements closely parallel those of Marx, who, like Herzl, claimed that his plans were rational while those of his opponents were utopian. As noted above, Wise also made statements similar to these.

²⁶⁸ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 426.

²⁶⁹ For an example of people opposing God's will, according to Herzl, see "Herzl, Hechler, the Grand Duke of Baden, and the German Emperor," trans. Harry Zohn, *Herzl Year Book*, 4 (1961-62): 215.

Can this be the will of God?"²⁷⁰ Furthermore, Herzl seemed to believe that while several human factors could speed God's eventual triumph.²⁷¹ He lists these at the close of Altneuland: "the united nation," "the new technology," "Will Power," "love and suffering," and, of course, lastly and most importantly, "God."²⁷²

Herzl's view of the redeeming nature of technology, as well as his fascination with the tragic, suffering hero, have been discussed above. The two other factors, will power and the united nation, are linked not only with each other, but also with both Herzl's notion of God's will and with his self-view as Leader of that united nation. Will power, even when not explicitly linked with God as the Will-to-Good, played a major part in Herzl's ideology, for it was a force that could change the world. "The Hague: a proof that will-power makes cities rise. If I point my finger at

²⁷⁰ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 445. This vacillation between the inevitability of God's will and the necessity for people to bring about God's will through their action again recalls both Wise and Marx [of course, writing about societal forces and not God] to mind. Herzl faced the paradox of many political activists. On the one hand, he did not want to be portrayed as a dreamer, so he wrote about how realistic his plan is -- and the best way to demonstrate that was to show that his plan was not only possible, but inevitable. On the other hand, he had to motivate the masses to get behind his plan -- and to do so, he had to give them a role, which meant that the plan was not inevitable.

²⁷¹ Interestingly, this parallels some of the Talmudic discussion of what brings on the Messianic Era.

²⁷² Herzl, *Altneuland*, 217. "God" is the final word in the book, except for a brief epilogue.

a spot and say 'here shall be a city' -- a city will come into being there."²⁷³ Will could make dreams come true, for "if you will, it is no fairy tale."²⁷⁴ Will power is what makes people great. "He who wills something great is in my eyes a great man."²⁷⁵ It even transcended artistry. "Beauty no longer moves me. For me the world is ... will."²⁷⁶ Will brings technology into the service of humanity; technology, in fact, becomes merely a sophisticated means of expressing one's will. Thus, the expression of will subsumes both artistic and technological redemption. Most critically, through will-power, the Zionist movement could succeed. "My dear Vambery Bacsi [uncle], we can do really everything, but we must have the will."²⁷⁷

How is will, human or divine, expressed? First, through the people, the "united nation." In a letter to de Haas about Palestine Herzl wrote, "if it is God's will, we will soon return home. We are as near to Jerusalem as we

²⁷³ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 674. Note the easy transition, in Herzl's mind, from the power of the will to the power of his will.

²⁷⁴ Herzl, *Altneuland*, frontispiece.

²⁷⁵ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 951.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 1105.

²⁷⁷ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 967.

will it. It is a question of the will in us."²⁷⁸ He elaborated on this linkage between the people and God's will in Altneuland.

Only then did our own people ... realize that they could expect nothing from fantastic miracle workers, but everything from their own strength. No single person, they saw, could bring about their salvation, but the reawakened and reinvigorated soul of the whole nation.... "God's deeds through the Jews" say the truly pious today.... God decides what instrument He chooses for His inscrutable deeds.²⁷⁹

But what unites the people, what reawakens and reinvigorates their soul? What, in fact, makes them a people in the first place? The Leader.

By themselves, the people could never accomplish great things, according to Herzl, for "I cannot esteem the masses that highly."²⁸⁰ A great leader can make them act, however. "If you ask them first, the result is only talk, perhaps a brawl ... that's why the guiding intellects must simply put on the hat [of leadership] and lead the way."²⁸¹ The leader molds them from a disparate mass into a united nation, makes the people into a people.

Who got you out of the ghetto? Who?... The people, the whole people. But without leadership the

²⁷⁸ de Haas, I, 154.

²⁷⁹ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 83.

²⁸⁰ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 1051. Another example of disparaging remarks about the masses can be found on *ibid.*, I, 19; such statements are relatively common throughout the diaries.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, III, 1051.

people could do nothing. It was dispersed all over the world, in small groups, helpless. Before it could help itself, it had to be united.... The leaders, yes the leaders.²⁸²

This people-creating leader works not with human sanction, but with the sanction of the divine Will to Good. Thus Herzl, when defining his application of the *negotiorum gestio*, wrote:

when the property of an incapacitated person is in danger, anyone may step forward and save it. This man is the *gestor*, the director of someone else's affairs. He has received no warrant -- that is, no human warrant.²⁸³

And who is that divinely sanctioned leader? Herzl himself, who not only claimed that he had assumed the role of *gestor*, but who wrote explicitly that he had taken on the mantle of leadership and was to be treated accordingly. "One must not praise me because one must not censure me either. For I am the Leader."²⁸⁴ Thus, it was Herzl, in his own view, who actually created the Jewish people, forging the Jews into a united nation, making a "people out of a decadent rabble."²⁸⁵

²⁸² Herzl, *Altneuland*, 107-108.

²⁸³ Herzl, *The Jewish State*, 92-93.

²⁸⁴ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 198-99.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 1151. He did not always consider himself to be a successful leader, however. Sometimes, he felt the people ignored him, as when he wrote "I almost stand there like an old prophet -- to whom people would not listen." *Ibid.*, II, 21. Of course, even in this example, Herzl still viewed himself as a prophet.

Several of his notes seem to imply that he considered himself to be a divine instrument since he acted in this capacity as divinely sanctioned leader. For example, upon the death of Baron Hirsch, he wrote, "the Jews have lost Hirsch, but they have me.... Progress must go on."²⁸⁶ God aided him in his endeavors: "Let me have the favor of an interview with the Caliph -- and God will put arguments to convince His Majesty in my mouth."²⁸⁷ In return, Herzl served the Jewish people: "I am a very serviceable instrument for the return of the Jews."²⁸⁸ Taken with his statement from Altneuland, noted above, that God selects God's own instruments to act out the divine will, this seems to imply that Herzl felt himself to be a divinely chosen, divinely aided leader, on a divine mission.

What traits qualified him to be this leader? Primarily, as is logical for the executor of the Divine Will, it is the strength of Herzl's own will, for, as Nordau noted at the Seventh Zionist Congress, "Herzl was a genius of will-power. His will-power was the greatest element of a great personality."²⁸⁹ It was his will that raised him

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 327.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 918.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 639.

²⁸⁹ Quoted in de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 332. This incredibly strong will is a not uncommon characteristic in manic-depressives, especially during an active manic phase. Herzl was consistent in defining strength of will as the critical qualification with leadership, both in terms of his

above his subordinates. "All these people, no matter how decent and likeable they may be, by their vacillation made me the leader."²⁹⁰ Most importantly, it was this will which enabled him to create the Zionist movement. As he wrote just after the First Zionist Congress,

Were I to sum up the Basel Congress in a word-- which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly-- it would be this: At Basel I founded the Jewish State.... The foundation of a state lies in the will of the people for a state, yes, even in the will of one sufficiently powerful individual. "I am the state."²⁹¹

Thus, Herzl believed in God, a God who was revealed in this world through the Will to Good. People, through their own will, could change the world, particularly if their will coincided with God's, as God guarantees eventual success for those obeying the divine will. In general, however, the people cannot express their will on their own. They need a leader to make their will manifest. Herzl deserved to be

self-view and his view of leadership in general. See, for example, *Elon, Herzl*, 105; *Herzl, Diaries*, III, 941.

²⁹⁰ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 416. See also *ibid.*, II, 767. Both of these statements also imply that Herzl saw himself "forced" into leadership through the lack of anyone else qualified to act as a leader, a self-deception he shared with Wise. Of course, believing that one must lead one's generation because no one else is qualified is strikingly similar to Nachman's notion of why he was the *tzaddik ha-dor*.

²⁹¹ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 581. As I noted above, Herzl did not write "at Basel the Jewish State was founded," but that "I founded the Jewish State." Like Louis XIV, he is the "sufficiently powerful individual" who can declare that he is the state.

that leader, for his will was the strongest of all; his will could re-create the Jewish people.

Furthermore, since God had a special providence both for Jews and for the land of Israel, the leader of the Zionist cause, as an agent of the Divine Will, was sure to succeed, to bring redemption for the Jews. When, in the person of Herzl, the will of the leader is combined with the messianic vision of the artist and the redemptive power of the bringer of technology, it becomes clear that Herzl, even if he did not consider himself to be the Messiah, was destined, in his view, to play the key role in the redemption of the Jews. By being their leader, he was to act as God's agent in the world, God's agent of redemption.

V. Herzl's Messianic Role

Herzl and Messiah Figures

While he did not discuss messianic figures systematically, as did Wise, Herzl did mention -- and identify with -- several messianic figures, most notably Jesus, Shabbetai Zevi, and Moses, in order of increasing identification.

Jesus

Herzl seems to have been well acquainted with the Gospels and Jesus's life. He quoted Jesus' last words,²⁹² and used several New Testament phrases, such as thirty pieces of

²⁹² Herzl, *Diaries*, IV, 1593.

silver and Jairus's daughter.²⁹³ He seems to have had a positive opinion of Jesus, referring to him as "the amiable dreamer of Nazareth."²⁹⁴ At least one notable Christian, Count Lippay, was impressed with Herzl's evaluation of Jesus.

It had made an especially fine impression that I had expressed myself "so favorably" about Jesus Christ.... I had explained to him my artistic and philosophical attitude toward the touching figure of Jesus, whom, after all, I consider a Jew.²⁹⁵

On occasion, he actively identified with Jesus. For example, when mentioning the "thirty pieces of silver," he spoke of his fears that he himself will be betrayed. When mentioning Jairus's daughter, he wrote that Palestine was about to be awakened from the dead, like the young girl-- and of course, he was to do the waking, taking on the role of Jesus.

Shabbetai Zevi

While making only occasional mention of Jesus, Herzl seemed quite thoroughly fascinated by Shabbetai Zevi. He brought Shabbetai up "all at once" while talking with the King of Italy, read a novel about him, and was more impressed with Smyrna, Shabbetai's home town, than with Athens and the

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, II, 762; 874.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 745.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 1591. Note once again the artistic relation to a religious figure.

Acropolis.²⁹⁶ He even envisioned a grand Wagnerian-style opera about Shabbetai Zevi, which would be a staple of the operatic repertory in Palestine.²⁹⁷ While we do not know of Herzl's sources of information about Shabbetai, other than the Storch novel, he seems to have been fairly knowledgeable about the Sabbatian movement. For example, he knew about Shabbetai Zevi's "marranos," the Doenmeh, and he knew that they made up a major proportion of the Salonica Jewish community.²⁹⁸

More importantly, Herzl liked and identified with Shabbetai. He painted a positive picture of Shabbetai in particular and false Messiahs in general in Altneuland. For example, he wrote that even Shabbetai's enemies were "overawed by the personality of the leader of the masses," and that "he seems to have been an honest dreamer originally."²⁹⁹ False Messiahs, he wrote,

satisfied a deep longing. That is it. The longing brings forth the Messiahs. You must remember what miserable dark ages they were, the times of Sabbatai and his like. Our people were not yet able to gauge their own strength, so they

²⁹⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, IV, 1598; I, 198; de Haas, I, 253. His note about the novel, The Star of Jacob by Ludwig Storch, was his only diary entry for that day.

²⁹⁷ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 74, 82-85.

²⁹⁸ Herzl, *Diaries*, IV, 1507.

²⁹⁹ Herzl, *Old-New Land*, 105.

were fascinated by the spell these men cast over them.³⁰⁰

As was noted above, Herzl believed that he was attempting the same thing that Shabbetai was, except that he had the technical means to be successful, while Shabbetai did not.³⁰¹ When others disparagingly referred to him as a new Shabbetai, he took it as a compliment. After a Passover seder, a professor at the University of Vienna

spoke briefly with me in private, reminded me of Sabbatai Zvi, "who enchanted all people," and winked in a way that seemed to say I ought to become such a Sabbatai. Or did he mean that I already was one?³⁰²

He also identified with Shabbetai's psychological traits.

The difference between myself and Sabbatai Zvi, apart from the technical means inherent in the times, is that Sabbatai made himself great so as to be the equal of the great of the earth. I, however, find the great small, as small as myself.³⁰³

This quote is interesting for two reasons. First, it implies that aside from the difference mentioned, Herzl and Shabbetai were similar, if not the same. Second, Herzl really did try to make the great small, as in his remarks about the Kaiser's arm mentioned above.

³⁰⁰ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 83. Thus, though he was generally abhorred by Jewish leaders, both Wise and Herzl had positive things to say about Shabbetai.

³⁰¹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 114.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, I, 317.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, III, 960.

Herzl most strongly identified with Shabbetai during his journey to Palestine. His travelling companions noted that throughout that journey to Turkey and Palestine, he was preoccupied with thoughts of Shabbetai Zevi, particularly in terms of Shabbetai's arrest by the Sultan.³⁰⁴ While afraid of arrest throughout Turkey, and in general in a great hurry to arrive in Palestine, he made a special point of stopping in Smyrna and visiting the synagogue where Shabbetai started his messianic career.³⁰⁵ Perhaps most revealing of all [see Figure 1] was that, while in Smyrna, and fully aware of the messianic symbolism involved, Herzl made a special point of posing for a photograph while mounted on a white donkey.³⁰⁶

Moses

In contrast to Wise, one cannot assume that Herzl was familiar with the Talmudic material that saw Moses as the prototype for the Messiah. Because of his sensitivity to symbols and symbolic roles, however, it is certainly possible that Herzl, quite independently, made the same connection as had the early rabbis, intuitively understanding that Moses could serve as the prototypical Jewish redeemer-figure. Indeed, "the combination of Moses

³⁰⁴ Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 306.

³⁰⁵ Patai, *Star Over Jordan*, 206.

³⁰⁶ Klinov, *Herzl: Seer of the State*, 60. That Herzl felt that photographs were important can be seen from his comment that they "inspire us with a salutary fear of posterity," and so should never be taken lightly. Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 843.

and Messiah is a recurring theme throughout Herzl's life."³⁰⁷ This combination appeared most clearly in Herzl's childhood messianic dreams³⁰⁸ and in some comments, such as those he made that linked the idea of a "new Moses" with that of a "new David."³⁰⁹ Thus, it does not seem too farfetched to argue that Herzl viewed Moses as a messianic figure. At the least, Herzl saw Moses as a prototype for a Jewish leader who brings about redemption and leads the nation of Israel to the Promised Land --and in these respects, Herzl identified quite thoroughly with Moses.

Herzl seems to have been as fascinated with Moses as he was with Shabbetai Zevi. Indeed, the only other theatre piece mentioned in Altneuland besides the opera about Shabbetai is a "most uplifting play" about Moses.³¹⁰ Furthermore, he identified with Moses in a variety of ways. Herzl saw him as a great social legislator, and based some features of his Old-New Land upon Mosaic legislation:

The Yovel year is nothing new; it is an ancient institution stemming from our great teacher Moses. After seven times seven years, that is every fiftieth year, all land that had been sold returned to its former owner, without any payment

³⁰⁷ Joseph Nedava, "Herzl and Messianism," *Herzl Year Book*, 7 (1971): 13.

³⁰⁸ See below.

³⁰⁹ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 157.

³¹⁰ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 74.

whatsoever.... Moses meant to redistribute the land for the purpose of social justice.³¹¹

In addition, he saw the creation of the Jewish state as a repetition of "a simple old maneuver ... the exodus from Mitzraim," even to the extent that the "Golden Calf" must be avoided.³¹² He called his opponents "followers of Korach," and he asked de Haas to write a frank biography, for "the Bible spared Moses nothing."³¹³ While in Cairo, Herzl began to wonder what Egypt looked like to Moses.³¹⁴

Like Wise, Herzl even began to mold Moses in his own image. For example, he described Moses as the creator of an "individualistic form of society" that served to lead the Jews away from the Socialist tradition of Egypt.³¹⁵ In Herzl's notes for an unfinished drama about Moses, the reader finds a mixture of Moses' and Herzl's life. Herzl described Moses and the play in the following manner:

The drama! How he is shaken inwardly and yet holds himself upright by his will.... He is exhausted by all this and yet he has to lure them onward with ever renewed vigor. It is the tragedy

³¹¹ Herzl, *Altneuland*, 95. Note the emphasis on seven.

³¹² Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 132; 32-33. See also Elon, *Herzl*, 347, for other similar quotes.

³¹³ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 822; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 30. De Haas did not quite follow this order.

³¹⁴ Herzl, *Diaries*, IV, 1453.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 667; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 234.

of the leader, of any leader of men who is not a misleader.³¹⁶

Yet, with all this identification, Herzl, unlike Wise, once again finds "the great small," believing that he will improve upon Moses and Moses' exodus. He wrote that "we cannot journey out of Egypt today in the primitive fashion of ancient times," for, after all, "Moses forgot to take along the fleshpots of Egypt. We shall remember them."³¹⁷ All in all, "the exodus under Moses bears the same relation to this project as a Shrovetide play by Hans Sach does to a Wagner opera."³¹⁸ Herzl was to be a redeemer superior to Moses.

What does his identification with these Messiah-figures show us? Despite his occasional claims to modesty, Herzl clearly linked himself with these grand, if not grandiose, figures, and he even considered himself to be grander than they. Furthermore, he implied, through all these identifications, that his cause, never explicitly labelled as messianic, was the same as their causes, which were

³¹⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, II: 622-623; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 212. Note that, like Wise, his identification with Moses included a realization of the many obstacles Moses had to overcome, as well as Moses's internal doubts-- but that, unlike Wise, Herzl was attracted to the "tragic hero" he believed Moses to be.

³¹⁷ Herzl, *The Jewish State*, 126-27; Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 210.

³¹⁸ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 38. He did not always consider himself to be more successful than Moses, however, once noting that "Moses had an easier time of it." *Ibid.*, III, 916.

explicitly messianic, at least in the cases of Jesus, as depicted in the New Testament, and Shabbetai Zevi. Similarly, each of these figures was an explicitly redemptive leader, lending credence to the view that Herzl viewed himself in this light. Finally, the interest Herzl showed in these figures indicates that, whether or not he viewed himself as the Messiah, he at the very least was fascinated by, and spent a great deal of time thinking about and discussing, people who did view themselves as the such.

Herzl's Messianic Self-view

While his fascination with historical messianic figures provides one source of evidence for his messianic self-view, Herzl, in his diary and through conversations with followers, gave much more direct evidence of his grandiose aspirations, both for himself and for his movement. Some of these aspirations may even have been messianic.

First of all, Herzl viewed the Zionist cause in a messianic light. For example, he seemed to have had messianic aspirations for the Seventh Congress, although he died before these could come to pass. In one letter, he told de Haas to plan the Seventh Congress so that it would begin just before Pesach, for it would prepare the Zionists for the "second exodus." A week later, he wrote even more enthusiastically: "You will organize the Congress of the Exodus -- we meet at the Great Passover," a classic

messianic term.³¹⁹ On another occasion, when told how difficult the rebuilding of Palestine would be, Herzl retorted by exclaiming that "the Messiah would remove all obstacles."³²⁰

In at least one aspect, Herzl also envisioned an explicitly messianic state as Zionism's ultimate goal--for, in the rebuilt state would be the rebuilt Temple. In an article from January, 1896, he wrote, "we shall rebuild the Temple as a glorious remembrance of the faith of our fathers."³²¹ In Altneuland he described his vision of what that Temple would look like, a vision both grand and messianic:

What was that wonderful structure of white and gold, whose roof rested on a whole forest of marble columns with gilt capitals? Friedrich's heart stirred within him as David replied, "That is the Temple!"... The times had fulfilled themselves, and it was rebuilt. Once more ... the pillars of bronze stood before the Holy Place of Israel. "The left pillar was called Boaz, but the name of the right is Jachin." In the forecourt was a mighty bronze altar, with an enormous basin called the brazen sea as in the olden days, when Solomon was king in Israel.³²²

This passage, in addition to revealing that Herzl knew well the biblical descriptions of the Temple, a telling subject

³¹⁹ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 183.

³²⁰ Chaim Bloch, "Theodor Herzl and Joseph S. Bloch," *Herzl Year Book*, 1 (1958): 158. He did not, however, claim to be that messiah.

³²¹ Herzl, *Zionist Writings*, 27.

³²² Herzl, *Old-New Land*, 247-251.

for him to have studied, has one phrase of particular interest: "the times had fulfilled themselves," which seems to be referring to the messianic prophecies regarding the rebuilding of the Temple. Even the name itself of this novel may refer to these prophecies, for Herzl was familiar with the legendary etymology of the *Altneuschul* in Prague. According to this legend, the name comes from the term *al t'nay*, on condition, because the foundation stones for the synagogue supposedly came from the Temple itself, and were used "on condition" that "they would be taken back to Jerusalem when the Messiah would come."³²³

Herzl also did not discourage, and on occasion actively encouraged, people attributing messianic characteristics to him. He wanted his followers to regard him as Zionism's "prophet," though he feared that, in the end, he would "be crucified."³²⁴ Writing after a mass meeting in London, Herzl noted:

I saw and heard my legend being born. The people are sentimental; the masses do not see clearly. I believe that even now they no longer have a clear image of me. A light fog is beginning to rise around me, and it may perhaps become the cloud in which I shall walk.... This is perhaps the most interesting thing I am recording in these notebooks -- the way my legend is being born.³²⁵

³²³ Herzl, *Diaries*, V, 1652-53. The name more likely arose from a still newer shul being built, making it now the old new shul.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 886.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 421-22.

This quote brings up several interesting points. First of all, the imagery of "the cloud in which I shall walk" may be linked to legends of Messiah ben David walking and flying in a cloud.³²⁶ Second, Herzl clearly did not want to disillusion, in the literal sense of the word, the masses. Rather, he would continue to encourage them not to "see clearly" by emphasizing messianic symbolism at the congresses and in the movement as a whole. Finally, Herzl seemed quite captivated by this legendary reception. Not only did he label it "the most interesting thing I am recording in these notebooks," but this entry is from two days after the meeting actually took place -- so the masses' enthusiasm must have been much on his mind.

Herzl encouraged messianic beliefs on several other occasions as well. For example, he wanted English Christians to regard the Zionist movement messianically because then "the pious Christians of England would help us if we want Palestine, for they expect the coming of the Messiah after the Jews have returned home."³²⁷ While there is no evidence that he directly encouraged the Reverend Hechler's messianic claims on his behalf, he did not try to

³²⁶ See Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit, 1979), 81-83.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 282. In *Altneuland*, 45, he went a step farther, portraying Christians who believed that the Messiah had come in the form of the new state. For example, at the Pesach Seder, which took place at the same time as Easter, Herzl had the Catholic priest remark, in reference to both Jesus and to the Old-New Land, "He is risen indeed."

stop Hechler from making such claims even during their trip to Palestine, where Herzl was so afraid of the Turks noticing him that he had his whole group pose as journalists and speak in code.³²⁸ Even more explicit was a conversation with Chaim Zhitlowsky in 1903. Zhitlowsky remarked that Herzl "had been going through a mystical experience" during his journey through Russia. Herzl then said to him, "our people believes that I am the Messiah. I myself do not know this, for I am no theologian."³²⁹ Note that he made no attempt to deny his Messiahship, either to Zhitlowsky or to the Russian masses, although, in this statement, he made no actively messianic claim. Herzl most clearly encouraged others to view him as the Messiah with his symbolic act of riding on a white donkey in Smyrna, where the Sabbatian movement started.

Herzl, however, did not stop with making messianic claims for his movement or even with letting others make messianic claims on his behalf. He also made at least nearly messianic claims for himself. One example is a remark of Herzl's reported by Georges Clemenceau. "Did you know ... that Herzl believed himself immortal? He once told me about it on a night ... at the time of the *Affaire*

³²⁸ Elon, *Herzl*, 288.

³²⁹ Quoted in Nedava, "Herzl and Messianism," 26.

[Dreyfus]."³³⁰ These feelings of immortality would have come just around the time that Herzl, in a manic state, began his Zionist diaries. Starting at that time, and continuing throughout his Zionist career, Herzl also began to identify himself with messianic royalty. First, he compared himself to "Saul, who went forth ... [in search of a donkey and found a kingdom]."³³¹ More revealing is a statement he made to his travelling companions while walking around the Tower of David in Palestine, when he referred to himself as "the restorer of David's throne," a messianic claim.³³²

Most telling of all is a messianic dream Herzl related to a biographer in 1902. This late date is in and of itself interesting, for Herzl made no mention whatsoever of the dream before recounting it to this biographer, even though, according to Herzl, it took place when he was about twelve years old. Perhaps he had been embarrassed to relate it earlier, but by 1902, his grandiose delusions had grown to such an extent that he felt such a dream was justified. Or perhaps, as may have been the case with Wise's messianic dream, this supposedly childhood vision was a later invention of Herzl, which would in itself be revealing. In

³³⁰ Georges Clemenceau, "Clemenceau Remembers Herzl," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 26-27.

³³¹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 73. Ellipses are in the original. This was a not uncommon saying of the day.

³³² Quoted in Patai, *Star Over Jordan*, 210.

any case, the dream is so interesting that it deserves to be quoted at length.

When I was about twelve years old, I chanced upon a German book³³³ -- I do not recall its title-- where I happened to read about the Messiah, the King of Israel, whose arrival is awaited daily by many Jews even in this generation. The words of the legend I read were fragmentary, and in many places I could not understand their meaning. It seemed to me that something was missing. But even those fragments of the Messiah legend kindled my imagination. My heart filled with pain and vague longings.... One night, as I was going to sleep, I suddenly remembered the story of the exodus from Egypt. The story of the historical exodus and the legend of the future redemption which will be brought about by King Messiah became confused in my mind. The past and the future, all became for me one beautiful, magic legend, a kind of exalted and wondrous song.³³⁴ And in my mind the idea took shape of writing a poem about King Messiah. For several nights these thoughts kept me awake. I was ashamed to tell anybody about them. I knew they would mock me and say to me, "Behold, the man of dreams!"³³⁵ But in the depths of my soul, it seems, the legend continued to expand though I was unaware of it. One night I had a wonderful dream: King Messiah lifted me in his arms, and he soared with me on wings of heaven. On one of the

333 Patai, "Herzl's School Years," 58, writes that he received this book as a Bar Mitzvah present, but he does not present any documentation for this. As mentioned above, this may have been Natonek's book.

334 This mixing of time, this viewing of everything as an exalted legend, is often found in descriptions of manic states.

335 "Man of dreams" is a rather peculiar epithet for a twelve-year old boy to think of. Thus, at least the phrasing, if not the entire dream, seems to have come from an adult Herzl. This part of Herzl's account seems a least somewhat reminiscent of the story of Joseph and his brothers; perhaps, in this way, Herzl is alluding to Messiah ben Joseph. There is no direct evidence, however, which shows that Herzl knew of Messiah ben Joseph.

clouds,³³⁶ full of splendor, we met the figure of Moses (his features resembled those of Michelangelo's statue; from early childhood I liked to look at the photographs of that marble portrait) and the Messiah called out to Moses, "For this child I have prayed!" Then he turned to me: "Go and announce to the Jews that I shall soon come and perform great deeds for my people and for all of humanity." I kept this dream a secret and didn't dare tell it to anybody....

[A few days later] there came to my hand one of the popular science booklets of Aron Bernstein which said that electric power ... was the King-Messiah whose wonders would bring liberation to all nations and to all enslaved human beings. I was outraged. What? the Electron as Messiah? What blasphemy! No, the Messiah of legend was much nobler and much more beautiful. Then, a few days later, a sort of revolution took place in my troubled mind. I said to myself: Who knows, perhaps the stream of the electron is really the redeemer whom we await, and he will raise up the slaves of the body and of the soul from degradation. Thereupon I decided to become an engineer.³³⁷

Many aspects of this dream deserve further elaboration. First of all, as has been noted above, Herzl at least purportedly knew messianic legends in some detail from a fairly early age. Furthermore, he seems to have been obsessed both with these legends and with the figure of Moses from the start, unable to stop thinking or even control his thoughts about these legends.³³⁸ His obsession became important enough to cause Herzl to act upon it by

³³⁶ Perhaps linked to the cloud imagery in his diary entry after the London mass meeting; see above.

³³⁷ Brainin, *Hayye Herzl*, 17-19.

³³⁸ If, in fact, Herzl's dream was invented, or at least thoroughly elaborated upon, as an adult, this revealed obsession becomes, if anything, more significant.

deciding to enter technical school and begin studies as an engineer, for example. Nonetheless, he was, from what seems to be an artistic standpoint, dissatisfied with these legends in the form he received them. He wanted to create his own version of the Messiah legend, to write a poem expressing what his views on the Messiah were.³³⁹ This seems to indicate that, while Herzl believed in some sort of Messiah, it was not the Messiah of traditional Jewish expectations.

As noted in above, this dream directly linked together the exodus with messianic redemption, tied together Moses with the Messiah. Also as noted above, technology here is explicitly messianic in function. Thus, Herzl's fascination with both Moses and electricity may well have had messianic overtones.

It should also be noted that, despite the obviously messianic aspects of this dream, Herzl did not claim to actually be the Messiah in it. True, the Messiah announced that Herzl is the prayed-for child, whatever that may mean. In both this dream and his vision of the electron as King-Messiah, however, Herzl appears as some sort of subordinate to the Messiah, a servant of the Messiah.

³³⁹ Unfortunately, we have no evidence that he ever did write such a poem as a youth -- perhaps because he did not have this dream as a youth. He never even wrote it as an adult. Thus, we only know that Herzl was dissatisfied with the standard legend, not what his own belief was.

One final aspect should be highlighted. Herzl seems to have been unusually afraid of being mocked about these dreams, especially if, as he claimed, he had told them to no one, not even his mother -- who surely would have been supportive -- in some thirty years. Part of this fear simply does not fit. Herzl said that he was "ashamed" of thinking about the Messiah, even before he included himself in his messianic visions. Why ashamed? Was it that, in truth, from the beginning of his obsession with the messianic idea, whether this obsession actually began as a child or as an adult, Herzl already viewed himself as the Messiah, or at least as playing a role critical to the success of the Messiah, and that he was ashamed at the grandiosity of this delusion? Or was this statement of "shame" invented as an explanation for the late date of "revealing" a "dream" that had never occurred, a dream whose sole purpose was to encourage others to view him as the Messiah through the publicity of his biographer? Once again, it is impossible to separate unequivocally between Herzl the showman and Herzl the believer.

Did Herzl Believe He was the Messiah?

Having examined the relevant evidence, is it now possible to conclude unequivocally whether or not Herzl believed he was the Messiah? Before trying to answer this question, I first need to dismiss another. Namely, if Herzl

had messianic aspirations, why didn't he say so? In particular, since, unlike Wise, he had a private diary, described as being written with the "rare quality of total candor,"³⁴⁰ why didn't he write about his messianic self-view in his diary? Herzl did not make explicit claims of Messiahship in his diary for two reasons: he recognized that such claims, if discovered, could greatly damage both his personal standing and that of his movement in the Jewish community, and he intended, from the very start, for his diaries to be published.

Long before the publication of the Jewish State, Herzl was definitively and explicitly warned against declaring himself to be the Messiah by at least two different people, Alexander Scharf and Joseph Bloch.³⁴¹ By the time of the First Zionist Congress, he also knew that many of the religious Zionists would flee the movement if he openly declared himself to be the Messiah.³⁴² Thus, Herzl had ample knowledge of the reasons why he might edit out messianic aspirations, if indeed he did not see his diary as a totally private, candid document.

³⁴⁰ Loewenberg, "Herzl," 150. As I will demonstrate below, this statement does not seem to be accurate.

³⁴¹ Bloch, "Theodor Herzl," 158; Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 295.

³⁴² Nedava, "Herzl and Messianism," 19. Of course, this did not require Herzl to actively deny his messianism, either -- especially as other religious Zionists, as will be discussed below, did view Herzl in a messianic light.

Such was clearly the case. Already on the diary's third page, he wrote that he hoped it would be "a reminder to mankind" of how he developed the solution to the "Jewish question," and that he hoped and expected it would be published.³⁴³ Furthermore, since "I always feel the future peering over my shoulder,"³⁴⁴ he edited what he entered into his diary, a self-censorship he explicitly admitted to. "I am ... more aware of my responsibility to express myself ... because obviously these diaries will some day be material for the history of the Jews. In this way, a great deal goes by unrecorded."³⁴⁵ In addition, his first notebook, which covers the creation of the Jewish state idea and includes the notes for what became The Jewish State, as well as describing his most extreme manic period, was actually written down by his father, who may well have added his own censorship to that of his son.³⁴⁶ Therefore, even if Herzl did believe he was the Messiah, it is unlikely that he would have explicitly noted such a belief in his diary.

Thus, the question remains, did he believe he was the Messiah? While his lack of explicit claims is not proof

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, I: 3. For similar examples, see *ibid.*, I: 55; 94; II: 637, *Elon, Herzl*, 219.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 996.

³⁴⁵ Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 594. He made a similar statement on *ibid.*, II, 654, where he noted the he edited out some particular severe depressive episodes.

³⁴⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, V, 1638.

that he did not believe so, neither did he give unequivocal proof that he did so believe. Not only did he not make explicit claims of Messiahship, unlike Wise, he never explicitly defined what he might have signified by the term Messiah, what qualities he believed the Messiah must have. This situation is further complicated by his theatrical sense, so that even his seemingly most "messianic" statement, his "dream," may have simply been a show put on for the public. Thus, this question cannot be answered unequivocally unless some new "secret journal" is discovered, a possibility that is highly unlikely, at best.

Three things can be stated unequivocally, however. First, whether or not he believed he was the Messiah, Herzl not only had a grandiose self-view, but he saw himself in a specifically redemptive role, a role that, furthermore, was involved specifically in the redemption of the Jews. What is in question is only whether or not he considered himself to be a redeemer or the Redeemer.

Second, Herzl was fascinated by and strongly identified with several historical figures who were not only redemptive but also messianic -- Jesus, Shabbetai Zevi and Moses. At least in the case of the first two of these, it is unlikely that his fascination was for "show," because these figures were anathemas to much of the Jewish community. Furthermore, especially if his "dream" was authentic, this

identification may have been an expression of at least an unconscious desire to be regarded as the Messiah.³⁴⁷

Finally, it is quite clear that whether or not Herzl viewed himself, consciously or unconsciously, as the Messiah, he never discouraged and often actively encouraged being portrayed as such to his movement, whether through the explicit claims of others or through his own symbolic words and actions. He knew the power of messianic symbols and he wanted others to view his redemptive role in a messianic light, to view the whole movement as a messianic cause. Through this, he was able to engender a belief on the part of many of his followers that he, indeed, was the Messiah, a belief, as will be shown below, that was critical to his success as the builder of the Zionist movement.

³⁴⁷ Herzl may have consciously tried to deny what his unconscious may have been telling him, that he was the messiah, and his dreams may have revealed unconscious urges, as dreams often do. Particularly because in recounting this dream, Herzl said, "the legend continued to expand [in my mind] though I was unaware of it," (cited in Brainin, *Hayye Herzl*, 18) this dream, if it was authentic, seems to have revealed such an urge. Certainly, one can see similar conflicts between Herzl's conscious and unconscious in related areas. For example, as has been demonstrated above, Herzl made several protestations of modesty, where he denied wanting to lead the Zionist movement at all -- and yet, quite clearly, he did desire and enjoy leadership of the movement. Nonetheless, this dream may well have been manufactured. Furthermore, this possible unconscious urge, like any unconscious urges that do not explicitly manifest themselves in the conscious, cannot be proven.

VI. Response of Others to Herzl's Messianic Personality

Herzl's Charisma

Herzl, by almost any conceivable definition, exhibited a great deal of charisma. This charisma, which was expressed in many aspects of his personality, deeply affected not only his followers, but even those who usually opposed him in his movement or who, prior to meeting him, had been enemies of his cause. Not only did it affect others, but Herzl knew that it affected others and used it to his advantage.

Even as a young boy, according to his childhood tutor, Herzl began to exhibit manifestations of charisma. The tutor wrote, "When Theodor strolled in the street, strangers, especially young women, would admire his charm."³⁴⁸ His physical beauty was one notable aspect of his charismatic appeal that continued throughout his life. Dr. Leon Ritler von Bilinski, the Austrian Finance Minister noted:

Herzl's unusually attractive personality won him the sincere sympathy of everyone who knew him. When the nearly fifteen years younger man stood before me for the first time, I was filled with awed astonishment. Even today, the figure of this man of uncommon beauty and Herculean strength is still before my eyes.³⁴⁹

Stefan Zweig wrote that "the man was strikingly handsome," while Israel Cohen, one of Herzl's biographers, in an

³⁴⁸ Quoted in Handler, *Dori*, 42.

³⁴⁹ Bloch, "Herzl and Joseph Bloch," 161-62.

attempt to explain Herzl's success, reasoned, "nobody who ever saw him, as I did on several occasions, failed to be impressed by his physical presence, his dignified demeanor, his sheer physical beauty."³⁵⁰

As commonly occurs with charismatics, such as Wise, many noted the power of Herzl's eyes and voice. Even Joseph Bloch, an opponent of Herzl, said he was "a man with magnetic eyes.... His speech was forceful, with a power of suggestion."³⁵¹ His oratory captivated many, for he had "a remarkable oratorical gift."³⁵² An eyewitness to his first speech to a mass meeting in London wrote "the souls of these people were in the hand of this man, and with the breath of his voice, which seldom rose above a low tone, he could do with them whatever he liked."³⁵³

Herzl's charisma made him majestic, even messianic, in the eyes of his followers. David Wolffson was so "impressed by his [Herzl's] majestic appearance" that he "unreservedly,

³⁵⁰ Stefan Zweig, "King of the Jews," *Herzl Year Book*, 3 (1960): 110; Cohen, *Theodor Herzl*, 369.

³⁵¹ Bloch, "Herzl and Joseph Bloch," 156. See also Elon, *Herzl*, 158, for other quotes about the power of Herzl's eyes.

³⁵² Nahum Sokolow, "Zionism as a Moral Question," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 17.

³⁵³ Quoted in Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 281. In one of the more hagiographic biographies, even his dramatic skills are praised, as he is labelled the "greatest dramatist" of the Jewish people, surely more a testimony to his charismatic appeal than the qualities of his rather mediocre plays. Oscar Benjamin Frankl, *Theodor Herzl: The Jew and the Man* (New York, 1949), 14.

with all that I am and all that I have" placed himself at Herzl's disposal.³⁵⁴ Herzl was described as "majestically tall" or, by Count Eulenberg, "a tall man with a head resembling King David," even though, like Wise, he was not a particularly tall man, standing slightly less than 5'8".³⁵⁵ In his fraternity, he was called the "Prince of Galilee,"³⁵⁶ and, once he began his Zionist activities, he was frequently called "King of Israel," clearly a term with messianic overtones, or described as an "Assyrian King."³⁵⁷

Herzl's charisma went beyond even majesty, however, to the realm of "magic" or "inspiration." Rosenberger wrote that Herzl "had a magic aura of authority that surrounded his personality."³⁵⁸ Herzl's cousin, Auernheimer, wrote

³⁵⁴ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 185. King Victor Emanuel was also impressed with Herzl's kingly looks; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 223.

³⁵⁵ See Elon, *Herzl*, 9; Cohen, *Theodor Herzl*, 369 for examples. The Eulenberg quote is from Alex Bein, "Memoirs and Documents about Herzl's Meeting with the Kaiser," *Herzl Year Book*, 6 (1965): 61.

³⁵⁶ Cohen, *Theodor Herzl*, 29.

³⁵⁷ For "King of Israel" references, see Joseph Cowen, "My Conversion to Zionism," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 104; Patai, *Star over Jordan*, 169; references to an Assyrian or Babylonian King can be found in Elon, *Herzl*, 173; Rosenberger, *Herzl*, 13; and Raoul Auernheimer, "Uncle Dori: Memories of a Cousin and a Literary Colleague," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 34. More general references to Herzl being called a king or described as looking like a king are numerous; see, for example, Patai, *idem*, v; de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 65; I, 218; II, 7; Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 36.

³⁵⁸ Erwin Rosenberger, "The First Congress," *Herzl Year Book*, 1 (1958): 293; emphasis in the original.

that he had "never encountered a person of greater magic."³⁵⁹ Izzet Bey, a Turkish official, "said that I [Herzl] was an 'inspiree,' which is the highest praise among the Moslems."³⁶⁰

Because of these views, many regarded Herzl as a prophet. Nordau called Herzl "the great prophet, the harbinger of a new age," Sokolow said that Herzl had "a prophetic genius ... which I should designate ruakh ha-elohim," and Newlinsky was proud to be "serving the sacred cause and its Prophet."³⁶¹ According to Vambery, the Sultan himself said "this Herzl looks exactly like a prophet."³⁶²

What effect did Herzl's charisma have on his followers? It attracted new people to the Zionist fold and it inspired those already in the movement. Equally important, once his personality had attracted someone to follow Herzl, he held a charismatic authority over them, so that they not only thought very highly of him, but followed his orders. For example, Rabbi Reines brought the religious Zionists under Herzl's sway because he was so impressed by Herzl, calling

³⁵⁹ Raoul Auernheimer, "Beard of the Prophet," *Herzl Year Book*, 6 (1965): 76.

³⁶⁰ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 391.

³⁶¹ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 284; Sokolow, "Zionism as a Moral Question," 19; Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 573. Newlinsky may well have been flattering Herzl, however. See Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 641; S. V. Nahon, *If You Will it, it is no Fairy Tale: Theodor Herzl 50 Years after his Death* (Jerusalem, 1954), back inside cover, for similar examples.

³⁶² Quoted in Cohen, *Theodor Herzl*, 371.

him "the beloved of the beloved, *Morenu ve-Rabbenu*," even though, especially to one of Reines' background, Herzl was Jewishly illiterate.³⁶³ Richard Gottheil wrote

I came into personal contact with him at the Second Congress; and I was so impressed with him that I said: When I get back to the U.S., you may cable me to do anything that is necessary. I shall try to do it -- even if you ask me to stand upon my head.³⁶⁴

Some followers acclaimed Herzl's charisma by developing a cult of personality around him. During his lifetime, this cult could be seen in the throngs that followed him in Sofia, Russia, and Palestine. When Herzl announced the close of the First Zionist Congress, he was applauded for over an hour, because of the sheer adulation of the delegates to the congress.³⁶⁵ By 1903, one writer remarked, "this sort of cult of personality with which the Zionists are surrounding their leader has never been seen even among the Hasidim toward their rebbes."³⁶⁶ His funeral was one of the largest "Vienna had seen in years," and Stefan Zweig noted that he saw there "an elemental and ecstatic mourning such as I had never seen before."³⁶⁷ In many parts of

³⁶³ Quoted in Ehud Luz, *When Parallels Meet*, trans., Lenn J. Schramm (Philadelphia, 1988), 261.

³⁶⁴ Richard Gottheil, "A Tribute to Herzl," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 212.

³⁶⁵ Elon, *Herzl*, 184; 244.

³⁶⁶ Luz, *Parallels Meet*, 267.

³⁶⁷ Elon, *Herzl*, 402.

Eastern Europe, the cult of personality actually grew after Herzl's death.³⁶⁸ Nor is it entirely dead in Israel today, as one can see by entering his re-created study in the Herzl Museum, where "no effort was spared to make the Herzl room identical in every detail with the original study in Vienna."³⁶⁹

Reactions like these led a small band of people to become disciples completely devoted to Herzl, the most extreme example of Herzl's charisma. As was the case with Wise, most of these were fairly young men, and, although they were not literally Herzl's students, they often related to him as children to a father or pupils to a teacher. Joseph Cowen, for example, mourned Herzl for the full year usually reserved for a parent and suffered a "nervous breakdown" following Herzl's death.³⁷⁰ In Nordau, Herzl even had his own Lilienthal, an older, originally more well-

³⁶⁸ Shalom Ben Horin, "Myth and Reality," *The South African Jewish Chronicle*, XLIII, # 28, July 9, 1954, 9.

³⁶⁹ Yehuda Haezrahi, ed., *Theodor Herzl: Man of Vision and Reality* (Jerusalem, 1954), 15. Cult-like phenomena like these directly counter those who claim that Herzl "so successfully displaced his personal charisma onto the ideology itself that when his aspirations were posthumously fulfilled with the creation of the State of Israel, a personality cult did not arise"; Reinharz and Reinharz, "Leadership and Charisma," 278. The evidence clearly contradicts the Reinharzs' analysis. They, like many, try to make Herzl -- and the response to him by the Zionists -- into much more of a rational phenomenon than actually was the case.

³⁷⁰ Hein, *Theodor Herzl*, 107.

known man who soon came to follow the younger, more dynamic charismatic leader.

Herzl won these disciples to his cause and his person through direct contact. In this way, he won over not only Nordau, but Wolffson, de Haas, Cowen, Bierer and many others. These disciples in turn became the actual organizers of Zionism in a variety of countries, de Haas in England and Bierer in Bulgaria, for example.³⁷¹ Herzl even won loyal disciples among non-Jews. For example, after one meeting with Herzl, Friedrich von Wrede not only became an avid supporter of Zionism but went on to write a Zionist novel.³⁷²

His disciples, as is usually the case, viewed Herzl in larger-than-life terms. The special abilities they imbued Herzl with led to their almost complete obedience to him. Gottheil, for example, wrote that Herzl

invoked a zeal and a passion perhaps unique in modern history. He possessed in a larger measure than most men, intellectual grace and persuasive enthusiasm. In a short time, he was surrounded by a band of determined men, to whom his word was almost law, his wish a command.³⁷³

De Haas, one of the most loyal of all the disciples, noted of their relationship that "he commanded, they obeyed," and

³⁷¹ Elon, *Herzl*, 170-72, 215; Hein, *Theodor Herzl*, 106-107.

³⁷² Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 518.

³⁷³ Quoted in Joseph Adler, *The Herzl Paradox: Political, Social, and Economic Theories of a Realist* (New York, 1962), 115.

that this helped lead to Zionism's success. "Their unbounded devotion made the rapid advance of Zionism possible."³⁷⁴

Herzl's charisma affected not only those who followed him, however. It often won over his enemies within the movement, as well as converting those outside the movement, even people with antisemitic reputations, into Zionists. Within the movement, for example, his "charismatic hold" on delegates to the congresses was so complete that he was able to get away with a number of "undemocratic measures, including an improper counting of votes on one occasion."³⁷⁵ Through his personal plea, those who had threatened to secede from the congress after the Uganda proposal "yielded without terms or conditions."³⁷⁶ He put down Ussishkin's rebellion through personal charismatic authority as well. Instead of meeting with Ussishkin's delegation as a group, he met with each person individually, and so, through his personal persuasive power, convinced them to withdraw all demands.³⁷⁷

His charisma won over even antisemitic gentiles and Jews opposed to Zionism altogether. For example, when he

³⁷⁴ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 134; II 258. The contribution of his disciples, through their devotion to Herzl, to the success of his cause is discussed more fully below.

³⁷⁵ Elon, *Herzl*, 242.

³⁷⁶ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 177.

³⁷⁷ Elon, *Herzl*, 394.

first met with the Grand Duke of Baden, the Grand Duke refused to shake hands with Herzl because he was a Jew. By the end of their two and half hour conversation, an unusually and unexpectedly long audience, the Grand Duke firmly held Herzl's hand for a long time. From that point on, he actively supported Herzl's endeavors.³⁷⁸ Similarly, both Eulenberg and Joseph Chamberlain, neither initially supportive of Zionism and both with reputations as antisemites, became active supporters of the cause after Herzl met personally with them and exercised his persuasive ability, and Chamberlain, at least, made concrete contributions to the Zionist movement because of this.³⁷⁹ Baron Nathaniel Rothschild, who had been opposed to Herzl and political Zionism for years, became won over to him and an active supporter of his cause after meeting with Herzl in person for two hours.³⁸⁰ Herzl recognized his own powers of suasion, which convinced him to always try to deal with others in person and not through letters or intermediaries.³⁸¹ Thus, not only was Herzl a charismatic

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 267; 362-63. Even von Plehve, a particularly notorious antisemite, was personally impressed with Herzl and granted some concessions to Zionism because of that, while, at least in Elon's opinion, Newlinsky showed more loyalty to Herzl than to any other employer because of Herzl's charismatic hold on him. *Ibid.*, 379; 196.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 354-55.

³⁸¹ See, for example, *ibid.*, I, 111.

leader, a fact which he himself knew, but this charisma concretely contributed to his success as he used it in his various Zionist activities.

Messianic Statements about Herzl

Some of Herzl's followers reacted so extremely to Herzl's charisma that they identified him with other messianic figures, attributed messianic qualities to him or, in some cases, actually viewed him as the Messiah. His detractors, on the other hand, accused him of being a pseudo-Messiah. Whether acclaiming or denouncing him, these views testify not only to Herzl's charisma and powerful personality, but also to the air of messianic symbolism that Herzl, often intentionally, cloaked himself in.

Many of those around him saw in Herzl the similitude or reincarnation of some other messianic figure. For example, one of his Christian nurses thought he looked like Jesus, and even Benedikt, Herzl's less than sympathetic boss at the Neue Freie Presse, remarked, "when he [Herzl] comes into the room I have the feeling that Jesus Christ has entered."³⁸² Izzet Bey said that the Sultan himself said of Herzl that "that is how Jesus Christ must have looked."³⁸³ Zangwill, in a rather hagiographic memorial ode to Herzl, wrote "to

³⁸² Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 282; Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 620.

³⁸³ Cohen, *Theodor Herzl*, 311.

save a people a leader must be lost/ by foes and followers crucified."³⁸⁴

The Reverend Hechler, in particular, viewed Herzl as a sort of new Jesus. Not only did he consider Herzl "God's worthy and humble instrument" with a "messianic vision," but he explicitly acclaimed him as King of the Jews: "The foreordained moment is here! He lives among us -- incognito -- the King of the Jews!"³⁸⁵ Furthermore, Hechler publicly proclaimed Herzl as "King of the Jews" or even explicitly as Messiah to settlers in Palestine.³⁸⁶ Hechler, who Herzl felt was somewhat antisemitic, even gave an interpretation of Herzl's death reminiscent of some of the anti-Jewish sentiments of the Gospels: "God took Herzl from us, for the Jews were not worthy of him."³⁸⁷

While many compared Herzl to Jesus, even more people viewed him as a new Moses. Gudemann, meeting with Herzl before the publication of The Jewish State, said "you remind

³⁸⁴ Israel Zangwill, "Theodor Herzl," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 8. Herzl was told such things several times while alive; see, for example, Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 482.

³⁸⁵ "Herzl, Hechler, the Grand Duke of Baden, and the German Emperor," 233; William Hechler, "The First Disciple," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 51; quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 188. See also Rosenberger, *Herzl*, 56, for further documentation of Hechler's view of Herzl.

³⁸⁶ Aharon Wardi, *Malki B'Tzion* (Tel Aviv, 1931), 36. Even in these cases, Herzl apparently did not try to stop Hechler's proclamations.

³⁸⁷ Hechler, "The First Disciple," 52.

me of Moses.... Perhaps you are the one called of God."³⁸⁸ Ish-Kishor called him a new Moses during the introduction to Herzl's first mass-meeting in London.³⁸⁹ Wolffson and de Haas both regarded Herzl as a second Moses, while Clemenceau wrote "the Burning Bush and Revolutionary Sinai took shape in his appearance."³⁹⁰ There is even a rather striking stained-glass window in which Moses is portrayed in the figure of Herzl. [see Figure 2]

Some of his followers attributed messianic or near messianic traits to Herzl. For example, Nordau, among others, considered Herzl a gift of Providence.

If I were a believer and had the habit of indulging in mystical language, I would say that your [Herzl's] appearance at the most critical moment in the history of the Jewish people is a work of Providence.³⁹¹

Others, such as the Jews of St. Petersburg, viewed Herzl as "liberator" and "Redeemer."³⁹² He was also acclaimed as the

³⁸⁸ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 233.

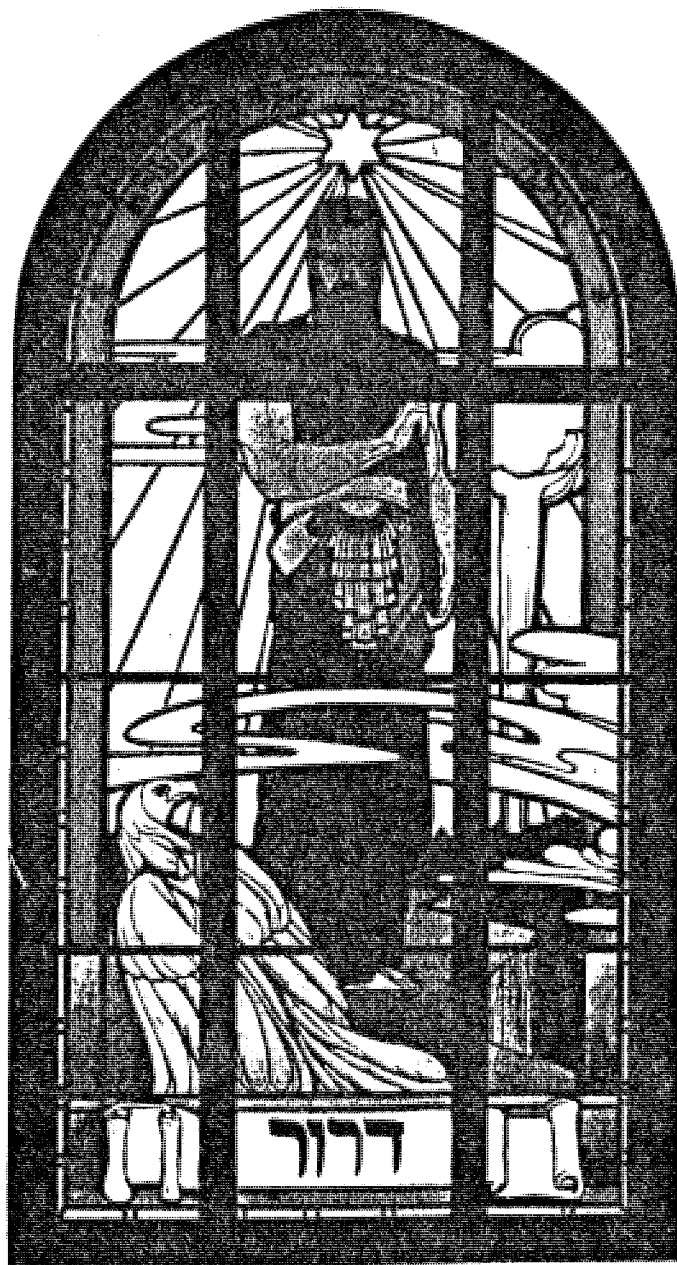
³⁸⁹ Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 206. Religious Zionists in particular liked to compare Herzl to Moses, for, "like Moses from Midian," he had returned to the Jewish people to identify with them in their hour of distress. *Ibid.*, 184.

³⁹⁰ de Haas, I, xx, II, 254; I, 141; Clemenceau, "Clemenceau Remembers Herzl," 26.

³⁹¹ Quoted in Cohen, *Theodor Herzl*, 374. Similar statements are quoted in de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 268.

³⁹² de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 142. Lewisohn, "Death and Apotheosis," *Herzl Year Book*, 3 (1960): 275, makes a similar claim. Perhaps most interesting of all the statements about Herzl as redeemer is that of Edmond Fleg, "If Herzl Came Back: A Poetic Interpretation of a Return of the Author of *Altneuland*," in Weisgal, 66. In this dream-

Figure 2: Lillien's Window of "Moses" as Herzl



holy bringer of salvation. In Vilna, for example, he was presented a Sefer Torah by the town's oldest rabbi, who "dressed in honor of the day in the white robe of the Atonement service." This rabbi, Ze'ev Javitz, blessed Herzl, saying "God is with us, O mighty hero. You have ravished our hearts, our Master.... May God place in your hands the Salvation of Israel."³⁹³ From a similar ceremony in Sofia, where Shabbetai Zevi had had a large following,³⁹⁴ Herzl related the following incident:

I stood on the altar platform. When I was not quite sure how to face the congregation without turning my back to the Holy of Holies, someone cried, "It is all right for you to turn your back to the Ark; you are holier than Torah."³⁹⁵

Herzl was also seen as the harbinger of the messianic age. He published an article in Die Welt that stated that "some saw signs of the coming of the Messiah in the Zionist

like piece, Herzl returns to Israel in the future (it is not clear exactly where Herzl returns from), is hailed as "our Redeemer," and then, like a Greek god, Herzl suddenly "grew. His head reached into heaven. His helmet became like an aureole in the sunlight.. And under his hands, held up in blessing, harvests grew up, and cities."

³⁹³ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 153; Luz, *Parallels Meet*, 147.

³⁹⁴ Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, 1973), 635. It is interesting and perhaps significant that Sofia remained devoted to Shabbetai even after his apostasy.

³⁹⁵ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 402. Shabbetai Zevi was considered "holier than Torah" by his followers.

movement."³⁹⁶ While touring through Rishon leTzion, he was regarded by many of the settlers as at least a sign of the "footsteps of the Messiah," if not the Messiah himself, and several people kissed his footsteps.³⁹⁷ An unnamed delegate to the First Zionist Congress wrote that the congress ushered in a new age of miracles, while Sokolow wrote of his admiration for Herzl's "magic power to initiate a messianic movement."³⁹⁸

Admirers described Herzl as looking like the Messiah, while several artists portrayed Herzl in distinctly messianic pictures. Martin Buber, for example, said that Herzl "was a statue without error or mistake, with the clear signs of genius, a countenance lit with the glance of Messiah."³⁹⁹ In Jerusalem, many, including Wardi, would follow Herzl as he walked, just to look at him. After he passed, they would all discuss how he looked even more kingly than the Kaiser, and how this must be what the Messiah looks like.⁴⁰⁰ Ephraim Moses Lilien, in addition to making the stained glass Moses-Herzl, painted a picture in which Herzl, as an angel, plays a Davidic harp and is

³⁹⁶ The article, by Leib Jaffe, is quoted in Luz, *Parallels Meet*, 146.

³⁹⁷ Wardi, *Malki B'Tzion*, 76.

³⁹⁸ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 170; Sokolow, "Zionism as a Moral Question," 19.

³⁹⁹ Quoted in de Haas, I, xxi.

⁴⁰⁰ Wardi, *Malki B'Tzion*, 152-53.

announced by another angel sounding a shofar.⁴⁰¹ The "most popular of Herzl's portraits was the one in which he is represented as a messianic figure,"⁴⁰² usually with the Tower of David in the background and the First Congress in the foreground. Herzl is seen severing the chains of the Jews, and he is being handed, by either Moses or God, the flowering staff of Aaron, one of the signs of the Messiah [see Figure 3].⁴⁰³

Followers also bestowed on Herzl several messianic or near-messianic titles. Most commonly, people called him King, or King of the Jews. For example, at the First Congress, the delegates shouted "Long live the King," and "Hosanna."⁴⁰⁴ In Palestine, both Arabs and Jews called him "King of Judah."⁴⁰⁵ The masses in Russia acclaimed him as King and, in Vilna, "one of the young workingmen ... surprised me by proposing a toast to the day when 'HaMelekh Herzl' would reign."⁴⁰⁶ He was regarded as "resh Galuta,"

⁴⁰¹ Lionel S. Reiss, "Through Artist's Eyes," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 111.

⁴⁰² M. Narkiss, "The Arts Portray Herzl," in Weisgal, *Theodor Herzl*, 119. By "portrait," Narkiss means a series of popular paintings with similar styles and theme.

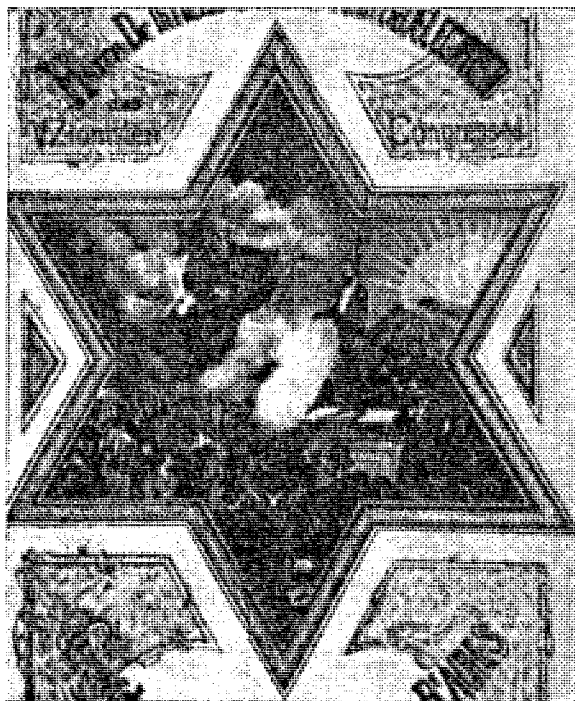
⁴⁰³ *The Herzl Museum Guide and List of Exhibits*, 1965, 24.

⁴⁰⁴ de Haas, I, 160.

⁴⁰⁵ Wardi, *Malki B'Tzion*, 84; 113.

⁴⁰⁶ Elon, *Herzl*, 383, Patai, *Star Over Jordan*, 323; *Herzl, Diaries*, IV, 1544.

Figure 3: Herzl Being Handed Staff of Aaron by Heavenly Moses



traditionally a descendant of David, and "the servant of light," a messianic title.⁴⁰⁷ In Palestine, in several cities, elders recited over him the blessing for heads of state.⁴⁰⁸ One of the most interesting titles was bestowed on Herzl by Samuel Salant, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, after Herzl had successfully interceded on his behalf with the Austrian Consul. Salant gave Herzl a note with an interpretation, based on gematria, of Herzl's name: "*mal'akh moshi'a l'yisrael*."⁴⁰⁹

While Herzl himself was circumspect in making outright messianic claims, a variety of people made such explicit claims for him.⁴¹⁰ For example, Saloman Forb said that "the Messiah may now be Theodor Herzl, the Anointed of the Lord."⁴¹¹ Ben Gurion recalled that "when I was ten years old, a rumor spread that the Messiah had arrived -- a tall [!] handsome man, a 'doctor' no less. Dr Herzl."⁴¹² More definitely, on at least two occasions, Herzl was proclaimed to be Messiah ben Joseph, once in Palestine while he was

⁴⁰⁷ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 264.

⁴⁰⁸ Wardi, *Malki B'Tzion*, 56.

⁴⁰⁹ Bloch, "Herzl and Joseph Bloch," 160.

⁴¹⁰ As noted above, Herzl never actively denied any of these.

⁴¹¹ Quoted in Rosenberger, *Herzl*, 189-90, from a letter to Die Welt.

⁴¹² Quoted in Nedava, "Herzl and Messianism," from a radio broadcast of July 1, 1966.

alive, by some Jewish settlers, and once in a eulogy by Rabbi Abraham Kook.⁴¹³ The chief rabbi of Sofia also considered Herzl to be the Messiah.⁴¹⁴ Mordechai Ben Ami, reporting on the First Zionist Congress, wrote at some length about his growing awareness of Herzl's messianic qualities.

Out of this silent darkness and despair, we suddenly heard the voice of Herzl as the shofar of the Messiah.... He is no longer the suave, elegant Herzl of Vienna, but a scion of the House of David, suddenly risen from the grave in all his legendary splendor.... It seemed as if the great dream cherished by our people for two thousand years had come true at last, and Messiah, the son of David, was standing before us.⁴¹⁵

As noted above, even the Reverend Hechler, though not Jewish, on at least two occasions proclaimed that Herzl was the Messiah.⁴¹⁶ While some such statements, particularly those from Sofia, may have been made to encourage Herzl to openly declare his messianic aspirations, his detractors constantly feared just such a declaration. Herzl's Zionism was attacked as being *dekhikat ha-ketz*, the unlawful hastening of the messianic age, by the Rabbi of Gur.⁴¹⁷ A writer in Der Israelit noted that "we have to

⁴¹³ Patai, *Star Over Jordan*, 208; quoted in Luz, *Parallels Meet*, 141.

⁴¹⁴ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 310.

⁴¹⁵ Quoted in Nedava, "Herzl and Messianism," 17-18.

⁴¹⁶ Wardi, *Malki B'Tzion*, 35, 78.

⁴¹⁷ Elon, *Herzl*, 319,.

deal with a Pseudo-Messianic movement [in Zionism]."⁴¹⁸ Isaac Mayer Wise went further, not only declaring the movement to be pseudo-messianic, but labelling Herzl as an egotistical "pseudo-Messiah."⁴¹⁹ A variety of opponents, such as Rabbi Hirsch Hildesheimer, compared Herzl with Shabbetai Zevi.⁴²⁰ A booklet by L. Neuman, written in response to The Jewish State and titled "The New Messiah," discussed the history of pseudo-Messiahs, concluding:

After the best know of these [false Messiahs], Shabbetai Zevi in the East and Josef Frank in the West, there now comes a third of the same species, Theodor Herzl.... Most probably, Zionism will end in melodrama as Sabbateanism did in its day.⁴²¹

Herzl was also derided as a new Bar Kokhba or the "new Mahdi," a Muslim term analogous to Messiah.⁴²²

Ahad ha-Am, certainly not a devotee of Herzl, saw Herzl as a messianic figure but did not view his messianic aspirations in a completely negative light. Writing after Herzl's death, Ahad ha-Am felt that the Jewish people had, in psychological terms, transferred their messianic beliefs onto Herzl, enabling them to view Zionism as a messianic

⁴¹⁸ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 185.

⁴¹⁹ Isaac Mayer Wise, *New York Times*, September 10, 1897, p. 6.

⁴²⁰ Nedava, "Herzl and Messianism," 20. See also de Haas, I, 283; II, 329.

⁴²¹ Quoted in Josef Fraenkel, *Theodor Herzl: A Biography*, 2nd ed., (London, 1946), 64-65.

⁴²² Almog, *Zionism and History*, 61; Elon, *Herzl*, 165; de Haas I: 93.

movement with Herzl as its Messiah. This, however, was not all bad, for it contributed, in large part, to the popularity and success of the movement. In fact, the founding of a mass movement for Zion could only have been accomplished by

a man possessing a spark of the few men of wonder. In the past, our ancestors believed that the Messiah would wrest our land from the hands of the Sultan and would gather our exiles by means of divinely bestowed powers. Now this belief has been cast into another form more suitable to present-day concepts. But essentially it is still based on the ancient belief in the *personal* power of a single "superman."⁴²³

While, Ahad ha-Am believed, Jews would ultimately need to give up the idea of such personal power, a messianic figure was a necessary step along the way to building up the nation and the national spirit.

What does all this evidence show? First of all, many Zionists responded to Herzl's charisma in a specifically messianic fashion, a fashion encouraged by the messianic symbolism in which Herzl draped himself and his movement. Second, Herzl never actively countered messianic claims made in his honor, even though he was attacked for such claims and even though he usually countered attacks made against him. This seems to indicate that Herzl was sympathetic to such claims. Finally, as Ahad ha-Am realized, the messianic aura surrounding Herzl made Zionism much more attractive to

⁴²³ Ahad ha-Am, *Collected Works* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1954), 250-51; emphasis in the original.

many people, motivating them to join it or become more active in the movement. In the next section, I will examine in more detail how Herzl's messianic leadership, as well as the messianic fashion in which other viewed him, contributed to his success as a movement founder.

VII. The Messianic Leadership Hypothesis and Alternatives

Why did Herzl meet with success in his attempt to found a Zionist movement? Before discussing how his messianic leadership and symbolism made a critical contribution to his success, I will first outline several alternative hypotheses. Each of these alternatives, as will be made clear below, contains severe deficiencies and thus cannot explain Herzl's success.

Herzl as Rational Political Theorist

One of the most interesting attempts to explain Herzl's success is that put forward by Joseph Adler. Adler tries to argue that Herzl succeeded because he was an especially brilliant political theorist, the apex of the Western liberal/rational tradition of political, social, and economic writers. Adler points to three of Herzl's ideas as particularly noteworthy and rationally superior: his reworking of the Venetian system of governance, his enlightened devotion to peace, and, most of all, his use of the concept of *negotiorum gestio*.⁴²⁴ Not only wasn't Herzl

⁴²⁴ Adler, *The Herzl Paradox*. See especially pp. 3-15.

a realist in general, however, but these three ideas themselves have primarily romantic roots and are more closely linked with Herzl's charisma than any intellectual superiority.

Adler feels convinced that Herzl must have been primarily a realist since Herzl himself claimed to be so.⁴²⁵ As noted above, what Adler fails to realize is that realism was so in vogue during Herzl's time that many visionaries, such as Wise or Marx, had to portray themselves as practical, pragmatic reasoners in order to find an audience. Thus, Herzl had to find a "practical" reason why his utopian dream of a Zionist state could be realized, and so he utilized advances in technology and electrification, even though he personally viewed technology, especially electrical technology, in a highly romanticized fashion.

Similarly, Herzl had to present his political reasoning as though it were realistic, and indeed he may have convinced himself of its realism. Thus, when presenting his political theories to the Rothschilds, he pleaded "do not, then consider me a visionary."⁴²⁶ As has amply been demonstrated above, however, "visionary" is exactly what Herzl was.⁴²⁷ Even de Haas, who also tried to mold Herzl

⁴²⁵ As has been noted above, Adler is not alone in making this error. Even Elon, *Herzl*, occasionally falls into this mistake, as, for example, on pp. 139-147.

⁴²⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 132.

⁴²⁷ See, for example, *ibid.*, III, 923.

into a rationalist, wrote that Herzl "had something of the mystic in his make-up," but that he did not discuss such beliefs in public because of possible "danger to the Zionist movement."⁴²⁸ Nonetheless, as Herzl himself wrote,

my old habit, which has been for me a source of sweetest pleasure ... is the desire to dream. I have always found it a delight to lose the ground from beneath my feet and to plunge into memory, or row into the future.⁴²⁹

Even on specifically those ideas which Adler highlights, Herzl thought as a romantic. He turned to the Venetian style of governance not because he thought it was, for some calculated, logical reason, the best, but because some sort of aristocracy appealed to him romantically and because he viewed Venice itself as the epitome of the romantic.⁴³⁰ He wrote passionately about peace in Altneuland not because of an enlightened political philosophy, but because of its romantic beauty. In fact, if one reads his diaries closely, Herzl did not always advocate peace and would have readily turned to military solutions if he thought them necessary.⁴³¹ The idea Adler focuses on most closely is *negotiorum gestio*. He writes "the most unique of Herzl's ideas was his application of the ancient

⁴²⁸ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 259.

⁴²⁹ From an feuilleton, quoted in Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 119.

⁴³⁰ Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 213.

⁴³¹ See, for example, *ibid.*, I: 9; 355; 420; III: 1023.

Roman juristic institution, the *negotiorum gestio*, to political theory." Herzl, however, did not turn to this concept as a political theorist. Rather, he used it as a post-facto justification for his grandiose identity as Leader of the Jewish people. Furthermore, as I demonstrated above, he seems to have believed that the *gestor* was divinely selected and sanctioned, which is far from a rationalistic view. Adler's explanation of Herzl's success is simply wrong, for he fails to take into account Herzl's true motivations.

The Power of the Zionist Idea

A hypothesis similar to, but more reasonable than, Adler's states that Herzl succeeded simply because of the power and originality of the idea he presented -- an autonomous Jewish state. This idea, the core of Herzl's Zionist solution, did not originate with Herzl, however. Pinsker had thought of this concept earlier,⁴³² and he had not been able to build an international Zionist movement on the order of Herzl's. Perhaps, one might say, Pinsker did not succeed because, unlike Herzl, he was not a Westerner or did not specifically call for a Zionist state. Moses Hess, however, a Westerner and at least as much an "outsider" in relation to the Jewish community as Herzl, did use the term

⁴³² Pinsker, however, did not specifically use the term "state.".

"state." Yet Hess fared even worse than Pinsker. Herzl himself admitted, upon reading Pinsker and Hess, that he had thought of nothing they had not already considered⁴³³ -- but he succeeded and they did not. Why?

Weizmann recalled that he and others were "enthralled" not simply by Herzl's ideas, but "by the personality which stood behind them. Here was daring, clarity, and energy.... We were right in our instinctive appreciation that what had emerged from the tract was less a concept than a historic personality."⁴³⁴ Thus, his ideas alone did not bring Herzl success.

Herzl's Personal Charisma

While the power of his ideas fails to provide a sufficient explanation for Herzl's success, because it does not take into account the power of his personality, neither can his personal charisma, separated from his messianic leadership and the messianic symbolism with which he surrounded both himself and his cause, fully explain why he was able to build the Zionist movement. For example, large crowds gathered to see him in London and Sofia before the First Zionist Congress. Obviously, these people had not yet been exposed to Herzl's personal charisma, and most of them

⁴³³ See, for example Herzl, *Diaries*, I, 243, II, 548, 584, III, 1090, 1167, 1179.

⁴³⁴ Quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 184.

could not have even come into contact with Herzl's charisma indirectly, as had Weizmann, through Herzl's writings, for The Jewish State had not yet been translated into a language they could read. Rather, they came to see Herzl because of what he and his ideas symbolized -- a Redeemer about to usher in a messianic age, to end the exile in one dramatic political stroke. Of course, just as Herzl's ego and ego-ideal merged, so too his personal charisma and the power of the messianic symbolism inherent in his ideas and his self-view also merged, so that once the crowds actually saw Herzl, his personal charisma reinforced their fervor and gave added power to his messianic symbolism. If he had dispensed with messianic trappings altogether or if he had been trying to rouse enthusiasm for a less messianic idea, it is doubtful that his personal charisma could have gathered, let alone aroused, such large crowds of Jews. After all, in all his years as a playwright, his personal charisma had not won him widespread praise or a devoted following as a great artist.

Herzl as Skillful Diplomat

Similar to those who would credit Wise's success to his organizational genius, some authors have argued that Herzl's diplomatic skills brought him success. This greatly overrates Herzl's skill as a diplomat, however. As noted above, Herzl's oversensitive pride often interfered with his

diplomatic efforts, both within and outside of the Jewish community. These may have caused Herzl to unintentionally sabotage the negotiations for Sinai/el Arish, and they certainly damaged his negotiations with Hirsch.⁴³⁵

In addition to his occasionally destructive pride, Herzl lacked several attributes necessary for diplomatic excellence. Because of his tendency to view the world romantically, he often failed to realistically assess either those he was negotiating with or his own chances for success. For example, after meeting with the Sultan, Herzl wrote that he "couldn't help feeling sorry for him," portraying the Sultan as an innocent, weak figure, whereas in reality the Sultan was a rather bloody despot.⁴³⁶ Herzl was also occasionally taken in by con-artists, such as Newlinsky. Furthermore, he lacked the ability to accept advice, and he surrounded himself not with accomplished advisors, but with subservient yes-men who sometimes hindered his success. Even in the instances where Herzl did meet with "diplomatic" success, as in his conversations with the Grand Duke of Baden and Eulenberg, he succeeded not so

⁴³⁵ See above; see also Hein, *Theodor Herzl*, 180-84; Elon, *Herzl*, 368; Herzl, *Diaries*, II, 471. As noted above, it is not entirely clear that even if Herzl had not damaged the negotiating process, the Sinai charter would have come through; nonetheless, Herzl certainly did not help his own cause in this case and he actively damaged his cause with Hirsch and the ICA.

⁴³⁶ Herzl, *Diaries*, III, 1128.

much because of any great diplomatic skill but through sheer personal charisma.⁴³⁷

Embodiment of the Spirit of the Age

One hypothesis that Elon hints at, though never states explicitly, is that Herzl's success was due, at least in part, to his embodying the spirit of his time and place, as did Wise in America. Certainly, Herzl fit in with many aspects of fin-de-siecle Vienna. His passion for the dramatic, his fine eye for symbolism and spectacle, his very cosmopolitanism, all may owe something to the general state of mind present in Vienna at that time.⁴³⁸ The dark side of Herzl's vision -- that antisemitism could not be cured with any palliative measure -- also fit in with the prevailing Viennese mood.⁴³⁹

This hypothesis, however, fails to explain three critical points. First, if he was simply embodying the spirit of the age, could not someone else have succeeded at least as easily as Herzl in building a Zionist movement? Yet, despite many efforts by Herzl's contemporaries, the movement had never really gotten off the ground until Herzl.

⁴³⁷ In this aspect, though the comparison should not be taken too far, Herzl was similar to Hitler, who in one-to-one negotiations was notably successful because of his magnetism.

⁴³⁸ See Elon, *Herzl*, 35-44 for a more thorough discussion of this aspect of Herzl's personality.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

More importantly, the most important part of Herzl's idea-- that the "Jewish question" actually had a solution, that there was great cause for hope, for, Herzl believed, Jews would soon have their own state and all their problems would be solved -- did not fit in with the prevailing Viennese mood of despair. Finally, he did not appeal especially to Viennese Jews. In fact, he was much more popular outside of Vienna than within it.

Nevertheless, this hypothesis does highlight one important point. Surely, one reason Herzl struck a chord so deeply and with so many was that he was, like Wise, in harmony with his time and its problems. A solution as radical as Herzl's could not have been contemplated seriously in an age less beset with despair. It was up to Herzl, however, to take the spirit of the age and transform it into an optimistic, future-oriented movement.

The Logic of the Messianic Leadership Hypothesis

The above alternative hypotheses do not fully explain Herzl's success. While some of them are completely wrong, others point toward what I believe was the key to Herzl's success, just as it was the key to Wise's -- the combination of a charismatic personality with a messianic ideology and messianic symbols, leading to messianic leadership. This enabled Herzl to build the Zionist movement.

For Herzl to succeed, he first had to start. What motivated him to sacrifice the ease and social popularity of a career as feuilletonist? Loewenberg writes, "I suggest that Herzl's Zionist calling was determined by a personal need to be a Messiah-savior-political leader."⁴⁴⁰ It was this need which could not be met by his career with the Neue Freie Presse or by his rather miserable family life. His ego-need for fame and adulation drove him into political life, and his specifically redemptive self-view, as well as his wounded pride and unfulfilled grandiose identity needs, led him specifically to Zionism, where, in a single stroke, he could end the antisemitic hindrances to his own, and to other Jews', careers, while at the same time achieving unparalleled fame as the redeemer of God's people and through them of humanity. Furthermore, because these were Herzl's primary needs, he could sacrifice a career, his own wealth, and his family to the cause which satisfied his desires. Indeed, as his ego and his ego-ideal merged, Herzl, to his own mind, became his cause -- and so was driven to make his cause succeed, for his self-esteem rested on that success.

Once Herzl began on his Zionist quest, he needed endless determination and stamina to bring it to fruition-- and, once again, his manic energy, so closely tied in with his messianic personality, provided these. As de Haas

⁴⁴⁰ Loewenberg, "Herzl," 151.

noted, "his resources were his indefatigable concentration upon it [Zionism], his ability to seize ideas, absorb them and then transmute them to his purpose."⁴⁴¹ The concentration and energy which came as a result of his manic/depressive syndrome both led him to become obsessed with the Zionist idea and, during his manic phases, gave him the energy to pursue it tirelessly.⁴⁴²

His manic phases, and their accompanying grandiose delusions, led Herzl to have, at least at intervals, absolute faith in himself and his abilities. Not only did this faith keep him going through the many failures he encountered, it was, to a great extent, "his self inspiration which inspired others."⁴⁴³ Especially during the early days of the movement, this self-faith was almost all that Zionism had, and through it Herzl built a reality that others could believe in, a sense of sovereignty that caused others to believe that sovereignty for the whole people was possible.⁴⁴⁴ As Nordau wrote, "Herzl managed to build a facade without a house and believed it would not occur to anyone to look behind it. He could do so because

⁴⁴¹ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 67.

⁴⁴² As noted above, it also contributed, at least indirectly, to his early death.

⁴⁴³ de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, I, 67.

⁴⁴⁴ This idea is explored more fully in Ben Halpern, "Herzl's Historic Gift: The Sense of Sovereignty," *Herzl Year Book*, 3 (1960): 33.

he had such immense faith in himself."⁴⁴⁵ This indefatigable faith stemmed from his grandiose identity as redeemer, and possibly as Messiah -- and from it grew his charisma, as others began to believe of Herzl what he believed of himself. Thus, his charisma, so critical to the movement, is in itself derivative of his redemptive self-view. His charisma helped his cause both directly and indirectly. Not only did it persuade potential or past enemies to become allies and win over followers, but furthermore, these very followers, particularly his loyal disciples, themselves contributed to his success, serving as the chief organizers for the Zionist movement in various countries and raising much needed money for the movement.

Along with this faith in himself came an unshakable faith in his ideas, a faith which not only kept Herzl in pursuit of these ideas, but inspired others with faith in them. Since Herzl, as God's chosen leader, understood God's will, his diagnosis of "the Jewish question" and his proposed cure both carried the weight of revelation. Furthermore, since he was executing God's will, he would succeed, and, since he had revelatory certainty about his plan, he could justify undertaking radical changes in the norms of the Jewish community, norms such as a focus on a national identity for Jews, a devotion to the Zionist cause, and, more basically, a sense of pride in being a Jew. With

⁴⁴⁵ Quoted in Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 338.

such faith in his idea, he was not shaken by the occasional doubts that beset his people. He could picture himself as a Moses, who stuck to his divinely-ordained mission despite the complaining of the Israelites along the way. Also, through his tendency to idealize other people, he never doubted that, in their hearts, the Jews really wanted to support him and his ideas, whatever their complaints.⁴⁴⁶

Since Herzl's ego and ego-ideal merged, he thoroughly personalized the Zionist cause. While occasionally this caused some difficulties for the movement, since those who took a dislike to Herzl were then disenchanted with the movement as a whole, it also served a very necessary function. During Herzl's day, the Zionist movement consisted of a variety of groups with widely differing ideologies and goals. Herzl took this fractious, fissiparous group and, as far as was possible, united them. He even charmed the Orthodox who might otherwise been repelled by his religious practices and beliefs.⁴⁴⁷ At the least, he deflected serious ideological conflict, managing to keep the religious, cultural and political Zionists all working together, even bandaging up, to some extent, the wounds from Uganda through his personal charismatic

⁴⁴⁶ Nordau brought up this point in his speech to the Seventh Zionist Congress; see de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 331.

⁴⁴⁷ Luz, *Parallels Meet*, 140.

authority.⁴⁴⁸ The extent to which Herzl himself held the movement together can be clearly seen by how divided it became after his death.

Furthermore, Herzl's explicitly messianic symbols also attracted and inspired followers, as well as serving to unite his movement. For example, the more his followers viewed Herzl in a messianic light, the more devoted they became to the Zionist cause. This can be seen in Sofia, once a hotbed of Sabbatianism. Herzl recorded that "the most stalwart people so far have been the Zionists in Sofia. Today there arrived a resolution which was passed in the synagogue of Sofia under the chairmanship of the Chief Rabbi," the very same Chief Rabbi who was the first to declare Herzl to be the Messiah.⁴⁴⁹ His messianic trappings even appealed to certain British leaders and may have been instrumental in breaking the ground for the Balfour Declaration.⁴⁵⁰ Of equal importance, the Zionist cause itself, bound up with the messianic idea of the return to the homeland and the worldwide redemption of Jews, was elevated to a messianic cause through this symbolism.

⁴⁴⁸ See de Haas, *Theodor Herzl*, II, 179; Elon, *Herzl*, 317 for a further discussion of this. Because of Herzl's personal intervention, Reines and Mizrahi either actively backed up or at least did not oppose Herzl on Uganda; Luz, *Parallels Meet*, 261.

⁴⁴⁹ Elon, *Herzl*, 225; Herzl, *Diaries*, I: 321.

⁴⁵⁰ Hein, *Theodor Herzl*, 151, 296.

All these elements of personality, of charisma and faith in self, together with the messianic symbols Herzl so adroitly used and the messianic idea of return to Zion, made the Zionist cause inspiring. Thus, many Jews who might have had "only a slight idea of his views, or who opposed him," were "moved by the legendary figure of the 'King of the Jews,'" who held out promise for the end of political, cultural, religious and social exile.⁴⁵¹ As Gonen wrote, Herzl

provided the Jewish people with at least a foretaste of the realization of the magnificent [messianic] dream ... due to the fact that political Zionism presented to the Jewish people not another old type of pleader or interceder, but a King.⁴⁵²

By joining the movement, people aligned themselves with a splendid, regal, messianic dream, a dream inspiring in and of itself. With these messianically-inspired followers, the dreamer Herzl was able to build a movement that would later build his dreamed-of state.

⁴⁵¹ Ben Halpern, *The Idea of the Jewish State*, 2nd edn., (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 82.

⁴⁵² Gonen, *A Psychohistory of Zionism*, 45.

Chapter Four
Zevi Yehuda Kook: Sage, Prophet, Priest, and Messiah

Zevi Yehuda Kook (1891-1982), became one of the founders, the "spiritual father" and the guide of *Gush Emunim* during the last years of his life. Because of this role, this once obscure rabbi, long overshadowed by his father, Abraham Isaac Kook,¹ was transformed into one of the most influential people in Israel, affecting Israeli society politically, religiously, and culturally.² He fundamentally

¹ In order to avoid confusion, I am using their full name for both of the Kooks. Interestingly, in *Gush Emunim* literature, Abraham Isaac Kook is usually referred to as "Maran ha-Rav," our master, the Rabbi, while Zevi Yehuda Kook is most often called "Rabenu," our Rabbi. Other literature tends to refer to the father as Kook and the son as Zevi Yehuda. The implications of this are discussed below.

² One of the difficulties in any study of either Zevi Yehuda Kook or *Gush Emunim* is that no one has undertaken a truly objective evaluation of either of them. *Gush Emunim* writers tend not only to praise Zevi Yehuda Kook and the movement but to exaggerate its importance and influence, while critics of both the man and movement vary greatly in their assessment of the impact they have had on Israeli society, depending on whether they portray *Gush Emunim* as a potent threat or as a fringe movement to be dismissed. An example of a pro-*Gush Emunim* piece is Mordechai Nisan, "Gush Emunim: A Rational Perspective," *Forum*, 36 (Fall/Winter, 1979): 15-23. Shulamith Hareven, "Sociological Model and Reality," *Forum*, 26 (January, 1977): 27-37, dismisses the importance of both Zevi Yehuda Kook and *Gush Emunim* almost entirely. Tzvi Ra'anani, *הגוש העממי* (Tel Aviv, 1980) portrays the movement, and Zevi Yehuda Kook, as the most severe threat to Israeli society today. Probably the most objective study to date is that of Ian S. Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (New York, 1988). Even this study, however, is not without its problems, including an apparent unfamiliarity with Zevi Yehuda Kook's major works in Hebrew. I have tried to sort through these various biases as much as possible, particularly through the study of primary sources. Furthermore, this entire debate is somewhat beside the

changed religious Zionism, and religious Zionism's position within the state, in several critical ways.

First, he changed the relationship between secular and religious Zionism. While the very first "proto-Zionists" were religious, at least since the time of Herzl, secular Zionists had led and religious Zionists had been secondary, either following the lead of the secularists or opposing secular initiatives, winning, at best, small concessions. In either case, however, secular Zionists acted and religious Zionists reacted. Since the Six-Day War, religious Zionists, under the leadership of Zevi Yehuda Kook, took a new role in the state. They took a leadership position on an issue and had a variety of secular Zionists follow them -- the issue of settlement of the West Bank, settlement led by *Gush Emunim* activists under Zevi Yehuda Kook's direction.³

point, for no one, besides Hareven, tries to deny that *Gush Emunim* has had some effect on Israeli society and politics, has changed some norms in at least some segments of that society. Zevi Yehuda Kook's importance in the movement has also been debated, particularly by those who, since his death, have tried to turn *Gush Emunim* into a more extreme movement, taking steps that Zevi Yehuda Kook refused to take during his lifetime. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, Zevi Yehuda Kook was critical both to the building of the movement and to its growth. Nonetheless, one must be careful not to simply equate all of *Gush Emunim*'s actions with Zevi Yehuda Kook, as, even during his lifetime, *Gush Emunim* was not an entirely unified movement. Furthermore, it is not yet clear, due to the small amount of time that has elapsed since his death, how well the movement will survive, as a movement, without him.

³ Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley, 1983), 203.

He also changed the nature of the debate in religious communities. Not only had religious Zionists, prior to Zevi Yehuda Kook's rise to fame, suffered from charges by the secular Zionists that they were not Zionist enough, they faced similar charges by the non- or anti-Zionist Orthodox groups that they were not religious enough. Zevi Yehuda Kook showed a way out of this inferiority complex. He redefined what it meant to be "most religious," equating it with "that which is most effective in bringing about Redemption, in drawing the Messianic Era closer," a definition increasingly popular in the religious Zionist community. Thus, religious Zionists, at least of the *Gush Emunim* stripe, became "more religious" in their own view than even the ultra-pietistic *haredim*. Furthermore, because of this focus on national redemption, even religious Zionist groups more mainstream than *Gush Emunim* began to focus, for the first time since the creation of the state, on a political agenda broader than matters of personal belief and behavior, such as Shabbat regulations.⁴ Even religious groups opposed to Zevi Yehuda Kook's political stands were forced to use his language in debate. Either they had to deny the messianic significance of Israel, an option that became less and less popular as *Gush Emunim* rose in prominence, or they had to show that the messianic

⁴ David Schnall, "An Impact Assessment," in David Newman, ed., *The Impact of Gush Emunim: Politics and Settlement in the West Bank* (New York, 1985), 16-17.

significance of Israel could be interpreted in such a way that settlement was not the top priority.⁵ Even the symbols of opposition groups may have been a reaction to Zevi Yehuda Kook, such as the name *Netivot Shalom*, which is perhaps a response to Zevi Yehuda Kook's writings about "*netivot Yisrael*," (paths of Israel) in most of his books.

Zevi Yehuda Kook also rose to prominence through the actions of his disciples, actions they took under his guidance or even command. For example, he originated the concept of *Yeshivot Hesder*, yeshivas in settlement areas whose students also serve in the army -- and most of these yeshivas are today run by his disciples.⁶ It was because of a conversation with Zevi Yehuda Kook that Moshe Levinger decided to occupy a Hebron hotel, an action that eventually led to the founding of Kiryat Arba.⁷ The secular right-wing party *Tehiya* was formed "in a meeting held in March 1976, at the home of Zevi Yehuda Kook."⁸ One of his disciples, Hanan Porat, was an early leader of the party. It was also through Zevi Yehuda Kook's influence and on his advice that Rabbi Chaim Druckman was elected to the Knesset on the

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור פנימי*, Chaim Shtainer, Y. Ezer Klonsky, eds. (Jerusalem, 1989), 290.

⁷ Lustick, *For the Land*, 42.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

National Religious Party's slate, as a way to try to change the NRP from within.⁹

Zevi Yehuda Kook's greatest influence on Israeli society, however, came through his role with *Gush Emunim*, a movement that an opponent labelled, as recently as 1986, as "the most dynamic social and cultural force in Israel today."¹⁰ His importance to *Gush Emunim* is unquestionable. As some of his disciples wrote, in *Nekuda*, the movement's magazine, "*Gush Emunim* and the settlement movement were founded by Zevi Yehuda Kook, and continued and grew by his hand, all the time.... He was the foundation of the unity of the movement."¹¹ This leadership manifested itself both directly and indirectly. For example, as late as 1981, 15% of the men in *Gush Emunim* settlements had studied at Zevi Yehuda Kook's yeshiva, the Merkaz haRav, and 63% of the settlers who had been most active in *Gush Emunim* before moving to the West Bank viewed their move directly in light of Zevi Yehuda Kook's teachings.¹² More generally, all of *Gush Emunim*'s ideology can be found in Zevi Yehuda Kook's

⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰ Ehud Sprinzak, *Gush Emunim: The Politics of Zionist Fundamentalism in Israel* (New York, 1986), 2.

¹¹ Y. Ezer Klonsky and Chaim Shteiner, "Courage and Strength in the Struggle for Perfection of the Land," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 56 (3/28/1983): 20.

¹² David Weisburd and Elin Waring, "Settlement Motivations in the *Gush Emunim* Movement: Comparing bonds of Altruism and Self-interest," in Newman, *Impact of Gush Emunim*, 185, 189-191.

teachings, although in a form popularized by his disciples.¹³ Through these teachings, *Gush Emunim* created "a constituency for West Bank settlement which did not exist before."¹⁴

While he wrought concrete changes in Israel through his efforts, of equal note are the changes Zevi Yehuda Kook helped bring about in the norms of Israeli society, for he sought "a complete spiritual and conceptual revolution, not just a settlement ideology."¹⁵ Before this revolution in norms, a rather pragmatic Zionism had been prevalent for years. With the establishment of the state, many previously ideological aims had been achieved, and so the Zionist movement's focus turned to pragmatic goals such as becoming "a nation like all other nations," a process that was seen as gradual, but inevitable.¹⁶

With the rise of *Gush Emunim*, this ideology, or rather lack of ideology, was questioned, as Zevi Yehuda Kook

¹³ Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Jewish Messianism, Religious Zionism, and Israeli Politics: The Impact and Origins of *Gush Emunim*," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 23 (April, 1987): 225.

¹⁴ Schnall, "Impact," 22.

¹⁵ Ra'anan, *נוש אמונים*, 59. See Schnall, "Impact," 15, for a similar view.

¹⁶ Lustick, *For the Land*, 2; Eliezer Schweid, "Jewish Messianism: Metamorphoses of an Idea," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 36 (1985): 64; and Lilly Weissbrod, "Core Values and Revolutionary Change," in Newman, *Impact of Gush Emunim*, 72, all agree with this assessment of post-state, pre-Six Day War Zionism. Weissbrod goes even further, claiming that there was an "ideological vacuum" in Israel at this time, *ibid.*, 72.

attempted both to delegitimize its viewpoint and to establish alternative norms. First and most importantly, he believed that the State of Israel normatively should be viewed in redemptionist terms, as part of the divine plan being worked out.¹⁷ Furthermore, the furthering of that redemptive process, even to the extent of *dekhikat ha-ketz*, the "hastening of the end," was considered good, a radical change from traditional Jewish norms.¹⁸ This use of "redemption" to legitimize territorial claims became so accepted a norm that even secular right-wing Israelis began using such imagery.¹⁹ Even some of those who oppose this belief of *Gush Emunim* admit that the idealism of Zevi Yehuda

¹⁷ Lustick, *For the Land*, 28. Lustick is of the opinion, which is generally supported, that this belief was not held by a majority even among religious Zionists prior to 1967.

¹⁸ Jacob B. Agus, *High Priest of Rebirth: The Life, Times and Thought of Abraham Isaac Kook*, 2d. edn., (New York, 1972), 215.

¹⁹ Amnon Sella, "Custodians and Redeemers: Israeli Leaders' Perceptions of Peace, 1967-1979," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 22 (April, 1986): 236, 251. Schweid, "Jewish Messianism," 76, claims that Abraham Isaac Kook took the notion of "hastening the end" from the early secular Zionists, rather than the image of redemption spilling over from the religious to the secular realms. While it is true that both Kooks may have absorbed from their surroundings the notion of human-initiated revolution, I think it unlikely that either would consciously "take" that notion and dress it in religious terms. Rather, the language of redemption is so thoroughly religious that it must be the secular Zionists who have done the borrowing.

Kook's followers stands in stark contrast to many others involved in Israeli politics.²⁰

Not only is the State part of the redemptive process, according to Zevi Yehuda Kook, but the very goal of becoming a "nation like other nations" is both wrong and impossible, a norm that desperately needs to be changed. Israel should take pride in its special, holy status. Furthermore, even if it does not, other nations will never accept Israel, until the Messiah comes, and, in fact, no other nation can be completely trusted. Similarly, antisemitism is not something "rational" that will disappear with the establishment of the state, as secular Zionism had believed. Rather, it is a sign of the cosmic nature of the conflict between Israel and the nations, and thus will not cease until redemption is complete.²¹

Along with such notions came changes in norms relating to democracy on the one hand and the Arab-Israeli conflict on the other. Zevi Yehuda Kook was not anti-democracy as a matter of principle; he believed, however, that truth was not a matter of majority opinion, and that the true aim of any government of Israel was to try to do God's will,

²⁰ Schnall, "Impact," 17.

²¹ Amnon Rubenstein, *The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back*, (New York, 1984), 105. Myron J. Aronoff, "The Institutionalization and Co-optation of a Charismatic, Messianic, Religious-Political Revitalization Movement," in Newman, *Impact of Gush Emunim*, 64, presents a similar view.

whether or not the majority supported that. Thus, doing God's will, however that is interpreted, is valued, while democracy is devalued.²² Even if the majority wants to trade territory for peace with the Arab nations, for example, such a trade would both be immoral, for it would contradict the will of God, and impractical, for the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot end until redemption is fully achieved.

Of course, the norm Zevi Yehuda Kook succeeded most in changing was Israeli attitudes towards the territories. From the mid-seventies, when *Gush Emunim* began its activities, till his death in 1982, there was a 30-50% increase in support for the permanent annexation of the territories.²³ His success in this area led *Gush Emunim* to be called the "first and only Israeli example of ... the political interest group."²⁴ With regard to this norm, as well as, to a somewhat lesser extent, with the others, even those who do not share his opinions have been forced to at least modify or defend their own position.²⁵ In doing so, as will be discussed more fully below, such people have needed to counter the "transcendent imperatives" which Zevi

²² David Newman, "Gush Emunim: Between Fundamentalism and Pragmatism," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 39 (Spring 1986): 35.

²³ Schnall, "Impact," 15.

²⁴ David Schnall, "Gush Emunim: Messianic Dissent and Israeli Politics," *Judaism*, 26, (Spring, 1977): 159.

²⁵ Lustick, *For the Land*, 154.

Yehuda Kook used to legitimize these new norms -- the imperatives of the imminent messianic age.²⁶

How did Zevi Yehuda Kook succeed in bringing about and legitimizing such changes? This chapter examines first how he, like Wise and Herzl, was shaped and motivated by certain background characteristics, primarily psychological in nature. While the evidence for these is not as clear-cut as was the case with either Wise or Herzl, and, in fact, has not been noted before, it seems likely from the evidence at hand that he shared many of their traits. These in turn led to the development of Zevi Yehuda Kook's self-view, which placed him in a variety of redemptive roles, most particularly that of Messiah ben Joseph, a messianic outlook somewhat similar to that of Nachman of Bratzlav. His actions flowed naturally from his belief in these roles, especially during the year תר"ץ, to which he attached messianic significance. His followers devoted themselves to him and his causes at least in part because of this outlook, which many of them shared in part or as a whole. Finally, I will try to show that Zevi Yehuda Kook's success came, at least in part, from the messianic symbolism he used and his messianic self-view.

²⁶ Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics in Israel* (Bloomington, Ind., 1989), 113.

I. Messianic Personality Factors -- Family and Friends

Childhood and Relationship with his Father²⁷

Any discussion of Zevi Yehuda Kook's family and youth must begin with at least a brief review of parts of his father's life. Such a review may provide two different kinds of data. Obviously, his father's life affected Zevi Yehuda Kook's growing up. It is also possible, however, that certain of Abraham Isaac Kook's personality characteristics, about which there is relatively more information, may have been shared by his son, especially when such characteristics seem to fit in with Zevi Yehuda Kook's general psychological make-up.

For example, we know that the role of High Priest became increasingly important to Zevi Yehuda Kook in his later writings, as will be discussed below. We have no information, however, about when this fascination began. Abraham Isaac Kook, on the other hand, at least from the age of nine dreamed of serving as High Priest in the rebuilt temple and had several grandiose delusions in relation to

²⁷ Biographical information about Zevi Yehuda Kook is severely limited, even in Hebrew sources. I have culled the following information from brief statements in a wide variety of sources, such as introductions to works by Zevi Yehuda Kook and articles in *Nekuda*. The most extended source of biographical information can be found in a section in Zevi Yehuda Kook's *אור פנימית*, written by the editors of that work, Shteiner and Klonsky. Since these were his students of and continue to be his devoted disciples, this information can hardly be considered objective. Such being the case, I have tried to sift bias from fact, but even so, many of the conclusions in the next section must remain tentative, at best.

his yearning to be High Priest.²⁸ He stated at fifteen that one reason he prayed for the coming of the Messiah was so that he could serve as the Messiah's anointer and High Priest.²⁹ Also around that age, he would frequently stay up late in the yeshiva, praying, fixated upon the idea that it was only his prayers, as the future High Priest, that were keeping the people of Israel from destruction.³⁰ It is certainly possible that Zevi Yehuda Kook had similar delusions as a child; he certainly had them as an adult, as will be seen below.

From Zevi Yehuda Kook's marriage, it is also possible to deduce something of his attitude toward women, but I have found no evidence whatsoever about how he related to women as a youngster. Abraham Isaac Kook, however, was fairly obsessed, as had been Nachman of Bratzlav, with the evil sexual power of women. At nine, for example, he would scratch his face till it bled whenever he saw a woman approaching "in order to eliminate all 'strange thoughts' from his mind."³¹ His son may have shared such attitudes as a child.

²⁸ Agus, *High Priest*, 11-12; Dov Peretz Elkins, *Shepherd of Jerusalem: A Biography of Abraham Isaac Kook* (New York, 1975), 14.

²⁹ Elkins, *Shepherd*, 14.

³⁰ Agus, *High Priest*, 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

As will be discussed below, evidence suggests that Zevi Yehuda Kook also showed symptoms of manic-depressive syndrome, although the data are rather less conclusive than for either Wise or Herzl. Abraham Isaac Kook, on the other hand, showed such symptoms rather more clearly, up to and including his final years. For example, he would often write, almost without break, for weeks at a time, staying up quite late, for he believed he was possessed of a "prophetic spirit" and needed to express this spirit as fully as possible. Abraham Isaac Kook left literally hundreds of boxes of handwritten manuscripts from these final years. Such periods of intense, manic activity would alternate with times where he would sleep for days on end, sometimes talking to no one, at other times weeping ceaselessly.³²

In each of these cases, the evidence for a certain characteristic in the father is by no means proof, at least in and of itself, that the son shared the same characteristic. It does tend to reinforce, however, the impression that more direct evidence leaves us with, and it may indicate that certain adult characteristics of Zevi Yehuda Kook were already present in his childhood.

Fortunately, some of the biographical evidence is more direct. Zevi Yehuda Kook's childhood, for example, suffered from some of the same uncertainty and instability that both

³² See Agus, *High Priest*, 124 for some discussion of Abraham Isaac Kook's final years.

Wise and Herzl went through. Family life did not seem to be very important to Abraham Isaac Kook. He delayed marriage for as long as was socially acceptable in the Orthodox milieu.³³ His first wife died shortly after marriage, and he seems to have married his second wife primarily for financial reasons, as he took advantage of his father-in-law's generosity for as long as possible and had to be forced out of the house in order to earn a living on his own.³⁴ He did not meet this second wife, Reyza Rivka, until after his engagement, and while this may have been customary for the time, the protestations by his biographers to the effect that "romantic love was not the consideration for marriage in his milieu" seem overly defensive, perhaps indicating that love was even less important to him than was customary. Such motivations for marriage were unlikely to create a supportive, nurturing environment for the young Zevi Yehuda Kook.

³³ Agus, *High Priest*, 23-24.

³⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*, 377; Justin Harley Lewis, *Vision of Redemption: The Educational Philosophy of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook in Historical Perspective* (New Haven, Conn., 1979), 25, 27; Agus, *High Priest*, 23-24; Elkins, *Shepherd*, 30-31. None of the English biographical works on Abraham Isaac Kook mention the first wife at all. This may be an accurate reflection of her lack of importance to Abraham Isaac Kook, or it may have been a simple oversight on the part of the biographers; it seems likely, however, that since three independent English biographical works cover this period of Abraham Isaac Kook's life, and none of them mention her (nor very much else about his family life -- for example, none of his daughters are mentioned in the English works, either) that family did not matter much to him.

Other instabilities contributed to this lack of nurturing. Abraham Isaac Kook often was away from home for a month or two straight, on "preaching tours" through the surrounding countryside.³⁵ By the time Zevi Yehuda Kook was six, his family had moved twice, and by the time he was fifteen, they had moved four times, having lived in three different countries and on two continents. Then, at fifteen, Zevi Yehuda Kook was sent away from home to study at a yeshiva, as had been done with his father.³⁶ When the turmoil of the years of World War I, during which father and son were often separated and Zevi Yehuda Kook had to try to support his mother and sisters,³⁷ is added to these moves, one can see a possible motivation for the son to seek security in a grandiose identity, having not found it in his family.

Several of his father's projects may have contributed to feelings of insecurity. These started before Zevi Yehuda Kook's birth and continued into his early thirties. Abraham Isaac Kook tried to found a magazine with a grandiose purpose in 1888, nothing less than the defeat of the maskilim -- but it folded within a year, leaving Kook with debts. Around the time of his son's birth, Abraham Isaac

³⁵ Agus, *High Priest*, 28-30.

³⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור נתיבות*, 285; Agus, *High Priest*, 9.

³⁷ Agus, *High Priest*, 89.

Kook undertook several commercial ventures, designed to bring him enough money so that he could be free to study and would not have to pursue a career in the rabbinate. All of these failed, again with financial loss, leading to a situation of financial uncertainty such as was the case with both Wise's and Herzl's childhoods.³⁸

One other, and the most tragic, "instability" struck during Zevi Yehuda Kook's teen years. At least in part because of his father's spending so much time on other matters, one of Zevi Yehuda Kook's older sisters died at seventeen or eighteen, around Zevi Yehuda Kook's fifteenth birthday. He was severely depressed because of this death, and, at least from that time, was noted as being particularly serious and sober.³⁹ In fact, from that time on, he, like his father, seems to have used humor only when making sarcastic comments about enemies.⁴⁰

Zevi Yehuda Kook, like Herzl and Nachman of Bratzlav, also suffered from the burden of high expectations placed upon him from early childhood. His father had sired three

³⁸ Agus, *High Priest*, 25.

³⁹ Unrecorded phone interview with Yosi Kaufman, former student of Zevi Yehuda Kook, January 3, 1990. Yosi Kaufman is still a loyal disciple of Zevi Yehuda Kook and is presently in New York raising funds for political groups supporting the annexation of the territories.

⁴⁰ See Zevi Yehuda Kook, *להנהיג צבור* (Jerusalem, 1987), 239; Hagai Segal, *Dear Brothers: The West Bank Jewish Underground* (Woodmere, New York, 1988), 26, for examples of Zevi Yehuda Kook's sarcasm. Agus, *High Priest*, 26, comments on Abraham Isaac Kook's lack of sense of humor.

daughters in fairly quick succession before Zevi Yehuda Kook's birth, but no children were born after him, the only son -- probably indicating, as was common in Orthodox homes, a preference for a male child. The expectations placed on Zevi Yehuda Kook went beyond those for an only son, however. He was born on the eve of the First Seder in 1891, a fact his father considered to be significant, and the very name given him has messianic overtones, as the "gazelle of Judah" is one of the names for the Messiah, though not as common as "lion of Judah."⁴¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook came from a long line of rabbis on both sides of his family, and, like his father had been, was tutored privately and intensely by his father as a young child. His father also arranged for him to receive special treatment in the yeshiva -- he was boarded at the home of the *Rosh Yeshiva* -- he was sent to at fifteen, so that he could continue to get private tutoring and not be "held back" by other pupils.⁴² His father's move to Israel may have been tied to high, even messianic, aspirations for his son, for, while Abraham Isaac Kook had received the call to Jaffa several years earlier, he delayed coming to Israel until shortly before his son's bar mitzvah in the year 5651, a year reminiscent the Passover Seder and thus of

⁴¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור נחמיה*, 285.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 285-86. See Agus, *High Priest*, 5-8, to see how similar this was to his father's childhood.

both the Exodus from Egypt and Zevi Yehuda Kook's own birth on Erev Pesach.⁴³

Such narcissistic high expectations, similar to those of Herzl's mother toward her son, could easily have contributed to an unstable self-esteem, perhaps causing Zevi Yehuda Kook to turn to a grandiose identity for the security he could not find in his family and contributing to the development of a manic-depressive syndrome. Furthermore, in Zevi Yehuda Kook's case, there is at least the possibility that his father would have promoted a specifically messianic identity; at the very least, he taught his son about the responsibilities of a potential future High Priest of Israel.

Zevi Yehuda Kook also had to deal with one problem that neither Wise nor Herzl faced -- a father who overshadowed him for most of his life. While his father was alive, Zevi Yehuda Kook witnessed the growth of legends about his father that he must have known were not based in fact, such as a tale about silver candlesticks, a thief, and Abraham Isaac Kook's great mercy that must have been lifted directly from

⁴³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור הנביא*, 285. It is even possible, though I consider it to be less likely, that one of his father's teachings about acceptance of the deeds of the secular Israeli pioneers reflects messianic aspirations he held for his son. Abraham Isaac Kook wrote that the pioneers were helping to bring the Messiah even though they did not know it, just as "Jesse was only following natural urges when he begot David." Quoted in Rivka Shatz, "Utopia and Messianism in the Thought of Rabbi Kook," *Forum*, 32/33 (Fall, 1978): 86.

Les Miserables.⁴⁴ He knew, even after his father's death, that any reference to "Rav Kook" was to his father -- he was referred to as "Rav Zevi Yehudah," usually without the "Kook," as noted above. Sometimes his followers would even attribute to his father his own words, but never the other way around. For example, in an essay published in 1978, while Zevi Yehuda Kook was still alive, his disciple, Shlomo Aviner, discussed a speech he attributes to Abraham Isaac Kook -- but the speech was given in 1937, two years after his death.⁴⁵ Even in an effusively complimentary introduction to a work published after his death, two other disciples wrote that his ideas were not original, but rather came from his father.⁴⁶

His father's fame, however, also aided Zevi Yehuda Kook on occasion, especially during his late teens and early twenties. At nineteen, Zevi Yehuda Kook edited and contributed to a book of his father. Because of the reception of this book, he was able, by 1913, to publish two articles that became well known in religious Zionist circles. He also started to become known to a variety of

⁴⁴ From Masha Fridman, *Stories from the Life of Rav Kook* (Woodmere, New York, 1988), 18-22.

⁴⁵ Shlomo Aviner, "Messianic Realism," in Avner Tomaschoff, ed., *Whose Homeland: Eretz Yisrael, Roots of the Jewish Claim* (Jerusalem, 1978): 117.

⁴⁶ In Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור פנימי*, 9.

rabbis in Israel through helping his father with the work of the Chief Rabbinate of Jaffa.⁴⁷

As might be expected, this engendered a somewhat ambivalent attitude on Zevi Yehuda Kook's part toward his father's life, writings and heritage. On the one hand, while never leaving the role of the pietistic son, one gets frequent indications that Zevi Yehuda Kook experienced some tension with regard to his father. For example, at twenty-three, claiming that the work he had undertaken on behalf of his father's position as Chief Rabbi in Jaffa "was interfering with the growth of his studies," Zevi Yehuda Kook moved to Jerusalem to study there, away from his father. Even in Jerusalem, with Abraham Isaac Kook still in Jaffa, he seems to have felt tension with regard to his father, for "when he found that his studies were interfered with even there... he decided to go out of the country [to Europe] to study."⁴⁸ Considering his devotion to the Land of Israel, and considering that his father's work in Jaffa could not have been interfering with his study in Jerusalem, this move seems to indicate a fairly high level of tension between the two. Furthermore, during World War I, when both were in Europe, Zevi Yehuda Kook decided to remain in

⁴⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור לנתיבות, 286; David Cohen and Zevi Yehuda Kook, דודי לצבי, ed. Joseph Toledano, (Jerusalem, 1974), 12. This work is a collection of letters between David Cohen and Zevi Yehuda Kook, although the vast majority of the letters are from David Cohen.

⁴⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור לנתיבות, 286.

Switzerland when his father was invited to England, even though Abraham Isaac Kook requested that he go along.⁴⁹

Some of Zevi Yehuda Kook's own writings reinforce this impression of tension. For example, the two letters to his father which have been published, both from 1922, show a rather formal relationship between the two. Both start with an elaborate series of titles, not unusual in formal letters from that period, but extraordinary in letters to friends, or especially one's father.⁵⁰ Some of the titles are remarkable in and of themselves: "the tzaddik who is the foundation of the world and the joy of the generations, ... my life, my spirit, my soul." The bulk of both letters are lengthy apologies to his father for not having written sooner, even though, for at least one of the letters, Zevi Yehuda Kook had written just one week before. The apologies are also somewhat extreme: "there is no end to the greatness of the wellsprings of pain in my heart and the shame of my soul about the neglectfulness and delay of my writing," "I must greatly increase my pleas of forgiveness over the lateness of my writing."⁵¹ Other references in his writings may also indicate some tension between father and

⁴⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, מתוך התורה הנואלת, Chaim Abihu, ed. (Jerusalem, 1982), 50, 287.

⁵⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור לנתיבות, 297-98. In his letters to David Cohen, Zevi Yehuda Kook used fairly few titles; see Cohen and Kook, דודי לצבי.

⁵¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור לנתיבות, 297-298. See also Zevi Yehuda Kook, מתוך התורה הנואלת, 47.

son. For example, whenever Zevi Yehuda Kook wrote about Elijah, he always included the phrase "who will turn the hearts of fathers to children," though he rarely used the second part of the phrase, or referred to any other prophecy concerning Elijah.⁵² Also, in the midst of a discussion having to do with the teaching of Torah, and not at all with parents or children, Zevi Yehuda Kook wrote, "more beautiful is the strength of the son than that of the father."⁵³ Furthermore, even though he may have appeared to be the dutiful son through his devotion to editing his father's writings, his motivations may have been much less altruistic. Not only could he increase his own fame by publishing his father's works, but it also appears that, in fact, some, if not much, of what he published in his father's name was in fact his own work, for which he was trying to get a broader readership by claiming that it was his father's.⁵⁴

⁵² See, for example, Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*, 88.

⁵³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *קנין תורה*, ed. Nakhum Rickover (2d edn., Jerusalem, 1985), 49. In context, this statement does not seem to make sense. Thus, while it might not reflect personal feelings, that explanation is as reasonable as any other.

⁵⁴ David Hanshaka, "What Happened to the Lights of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 79, (October, 1984): 12; Hagai Segal, "Lights in Darkness," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 113, (8/28/87): 17-18. It should be noted that Segal, one of the convicted members of the "Underground," has been, since Zevi Yehuda Kook's death, one of his most vocal critics within the movement, claiming that he did not go far enough in his messianism; Thus, his statements may not be entirely objective. Even those who do not dispute

On other occasions, he praised his father extravagantly, attributing even messianic qualities to him. He praised his father's holiness as a sage, writing that "God brought a new divine light to Zion ... with my father."⁵⁵ Abraham Isaac Kook's work, Orot (lights), edited and published posthumously by his son, is referred to by Zevi Yehuda Kook as the "holy of holies," especially since it "contains the light of the Messiah."⁵⁶ He wrote that his father's book, B'er Eliyahu (the well of Elijah), was "in the likeness of an angel of the Lord of Hosts," and that it will help "the return of the Shekhinah to Zion."⁵⁷ On

Zevi Yehuda Kook's editing argue that he has over-simplified his father's thoughts in his teachings, emphasizing only those aspects that support his political agenda. See Lawrence Kaplan, "Education and Ideology in Religious Zionism Today," *Forum*, 36 (Fall/Winter, 1979), 25-34 for a discussion of such arguments. As Kaplan correctly notes, however, while Abraham Isaac Kook's thought is indeed complex, the interpretation of it that Zevi Yehuda Kook gave is certainly as legitimate as any other, as backed up the sources, even if one cannot say that it is the right interpretation. An editorial, "The Teaching of the Rabbi," (Hebrew), in *Nekuda*, 100, (7/11/86): 84, argued that, in fact, Zevi Yehuda Kook understood his father's teachings better than anyone else, even during Abraham Isaac Kook's own generation, for "only this generation merits the understanding of complexities" in his father's thought. .

⁵⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, ממנוך התורה הנוארת, 222. The phrase "a new light to Zion" is usually interpreted messianically.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5; Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור לנתיבותי, 368. It may be significant that this is one of the books which, according to Segal, Zevi Yehuda Kook significantly altered, introducing his own teachings into those of his father; Segal, "Lights in Darkness," 18.

⁵⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור לנתיבותי, 280. Similar comments by Zevi Yehuda Kook about other writings of his father can be found on ממנוך התורה הנוארת, 47, and in Zevi

several occasions, he referred to his father as the "High Priest of Israel."⁵⁸ He also seems to have regarded his father as a prophet, not only including his teachings in the section on "prophets" in a collection of sayings by "prophets and sages," but also writing that his father had a "great prophetic spirit," that "he was in the highest heavens, a watcher on the chariot," and that this prophetic spirit enables his father, even after his death, to "give strength and life to us here on earth and in the world to come."⁵⁹ Lastly, he explicitly linked his father with redemption on a variety of occasions, calling Abraham Isaac Kook's teachings the "Torah of Redemption," and saying that his father "who lives with us," is sitting by the throne of God "in his [his father's] work, the true work of the ordering of redemption."⁶⁰

The tensions between father and son also appeared in the latter's role at his father's yeshiva, Merkaz haRav.

Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל* (Jerusalem, 1966), frontispiece; and Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לשלושה בארץ*, #3, (Jerusalem, 1938), 3.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Zevi Yehuda Kook, *התורה הנואלת*, מתוך, 200; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לשלושה בארץ*, #12, (Jerusalem, 1947), 3. This was a fairly common phrase of his.

⁵⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *ציון וירושלים* (Jerusalem, 1948), 7-9; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *התורה הנואלת*, מתוך, 38-39.

⁶⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבותי*, 280-282; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *התורה הנואלת*, מתוך, 41. See also *ibid.*, 47, 48 for similar remarks. Interestingly, his disciples applied the phrase "Torah of Redemption" to Zevi Yehuda Kook's own teachings, as can be seen by the title, *התורה הנואלת*.

During his father's lifetime, Zevi Yehuda Kook taught classes in "faith" and "fear of God" in the yeshiva, and was appointed its "leader of spirit."⁶¹ In his will, Abraham Isaac Kook requested that his son be involved in all major decisions of the yeshiva -- but did not appoint him to be its head. From the time of his father's death, and for most of the following years until 1952, Zevi Yehuda Kook, since he had not been chosen to lead the yeshiva, invested little to no energy in it, and it began to decline almost immediately. Instead, Zevi Yehuda Kook took full advantage of the fact that his father's papers had been left solely in his care, and he refused to let anyone else view them, so that their only conduit to the public was through his own editing and publishing. He only started paying attention to the affairs of the yeshiva when he became its head in 1952, by which time it had become a small, second or third rate institution. By 1960, however, Zevi Yehuda Kook had begun to attract a larger number of students and the yeshiva's fortunes began to change.⁶²

These tensions with his father and his father's fame were never resolved entirely by Zevi Yehuda Kook. Rather, they must have been a constant source of inner conflict-- and a motivation for a variety of messianic roles.

⁶¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור פנימית, 287. It is not entirely clear what this last title meant.

⁶² Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור פנימית, 289, 377; Lustick, *For the Land*, 34.

Furthermore, because, in the Orthodox milieu, and especially with a famous, respected father, Zevi Yehuda Kook could not openly express his tensions with or resentment of his father, he had to sublimate them in a variety of ways. First of all, because of guilt feelings his resentment must have engendered, he often idealized his father. During these times, when he esteemed his father but not himself, he could either fall into a depressive lethargy, or he could try to erase his own ego and promote that of his father, serving as a faithful servant to his father's messianic destiny and teachings. At such times, he was also trying to call attention to himself. He knew that his father valued work more than family -- and thus, through this work, he hoped to earn his father's approval, even posthumously. At other times, when he resented his father, he would want to surpass his father, to take on a more directly messianic role, to win even greater fame than his father had ever achieved, to use his father for his own ends. Even during these times, however, the very roles he would take on-- those of holy sage, prophet, priest, and Messiah -- were the same he viewed his father as fulfilling. These tensions, thus, seem to have lain at the root of the various messianic roles Zevi Yehuda Kook took on, both when he was trying to serve and when he was striving to triumph over his father. Finally, he also seems to have "learned" from his father the very behavior he resented -- that of not investing himself

in family life, of emphasizing his work to the point of neglecting his family.

Relationship with Women

Very little is known about Zevi Yehuda Kook's family life, but the published facts seem to show a situation similar to that of his father's. Zevi Yehuda Kook married very late in life for the Orthodox community of his time, not until 1922 when he was already thirty-one. Again, it was an arranged marriage, one that took place during his mission to Europe on behalf of his father's unsuccessful attempt to found political party, and it appears that the marriage may have been arranged at least in part as a sort of "treaty-signing" with a previously anti-Zionistic rabbinical family.⁶³ He and his wife, Chavah Leah, had no children, again unusual for an Orthodox family. According to his disciples, "she gave to Rabbi Zevi Yehuda Kook all the needs of his life. He was accustomed to consulting with her about both spiritual and practical matters."⁶⁴ In 1943, she died of an illness, described in rather vague terms, but which appears to have had a debilitating effect on her mental functioning. He never remarried, and from that time on lived alone, except for the one or two yeshiva students

⁶³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*, 287.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 288.

that he would customarily house.⁶⁵ Thus, he lived on some forty years after her death without remarrying, even though he had not yet had any children -- again, unusual for an Orthodox Jew of his time.⁶⁶

Whether it was because she met "all his needs," because he had to take care of her,⁶⁷ or for unrelated reasons, two peculiar gaps occurred during the time of his marriage. First of all, he recorded no "prophetic dreams"⁶⁸ during the entire period of the marriage, although he had them both before and after.⁶⁹ Second, while he spent the years from his father's death to his wife's death editing his father's works, he did not begin to publish them until after his wife's death, at which point he began to publish these works at a fairly rapid pace.⁷⁰

In general, he seemed to have considered women unimportant or even a hindrance. He wrote a lengthy defense

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Perhaps he was impotent, or perhaps he even had latent homosexual urges which were expressed in his close relationships with his students and disciples, as seems to have been the case with Herzl. In any event, his disciples made no comment whatsoever about his lack of children, a silence that may be significant in and of itself.

⁶⁷ There is no indication that she was ill until the last years of her life, although it is certainly possible that her final illness lasted several years.

⁶⁸ Discussed below.

⁶⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור החיים*, 308-309.

⁷⁰ From an untitled article, *Nekuda*, 82, (1/4/1986): 6.

of the statement of the sages that one should avoid talking with women.⁷¹ He also attracted primarily single students, and he encouraged them to stay single so that they could spend more time in study.⁷² In fact, his earliest and most devoted disciples had come from a splinter group of the B'nai Akiva youth movement who, despite belonging to a co-ed youth group, had organized exclusively male, all-night celebrations, which included "sexual confessions," before they came to study with Zevi Yehuda Kook.⁷³

While the evidence is far from unassailable, it seems likely that Zevi Yehuda Kook sublimated energies that might have otherwise been devoted to family, even sexual energies, into his work and his relationship with his students. Not only did this sublimation give rise to "prophetic" states and increased activity on behalf of his causes, it served to bind him closer to his disciples, as may have been the case for Herzl as well.

⁷¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוד התורה הנואמת*, 136.

⁷² Gideon Aran, "From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion: The Roots of *Gush Emunim*," in Peter Medding, ed., *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 2, (Bloomington, Indiana, 1986), 131. Interestingly, however, among American *Gush Emunim* settlers, a much higher percentage -- almost twice as high -- of women are devoted to Zevi Yehuda Kook's teachings than are men. Chaim Waxman, "Political and Social Attitudes of Americans Among the Settlers in the Territories," in Newman, *Impact of Gush Emunim*, 219.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 129. .

Relationships with Friends and Students

As noted above, Zevi Yehuda Kook, like his father, was isolated from other boys during his youth, and it appears that he had no close friends until at least his late teens.⁷⁴ From that point on, he tended to have only one or two close friends at a time, although these would change with time. These friends tended to be either much older or much younger than he was.⁷⁵ For example, during the 1920's, his best friend was the much older Rabbi Abraham Burstein. When Burstein died, he cried for two weeks straight.⁷⁶

Especially after the death of his wife, when he began taking students into his home, Zevi Yehuda Kook's life revolved mostly around his students. While he was not intimate with the yeshiva students in general, he always, since the late fifties, had a circle of disciples that he brought much closer to him, teaching them special classes and meeting with them in private. All the students vied for inclusion in this inner circle, which he said substituted for the sons he never had. This close relationship,

⁷⁴ See Agus, *High Priest*, 20, for a discussion of Abraham Isaac Kook's youth.

⁷⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*, 285-87.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 377. Interestingly, this source mentions no such emotion at his father's death.

however, was always as a father to a son and not as one equal to another.⁷⁷

With this inner circle, he developed the strong leader-disciple bond typical of charismatic leaders. "They fulfilled each other's needs almost perfectly, and the relationship enjoyed a singular mutuality, even a completeness. To the young men, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda was their teacher, their leader, their father; to him, they were disciples, sons, a public,"⁷⁸ a relationship not dissimilar from that between Wise and his students. As noted above, there may have been sublimated sexual overtones to this relationship, as may have been the case with Herzl and his disciples. As Hanan Porat, one of Zevi Yehuda Kook's closest disciples, said, "the contact between the Rabbi (Zevi Yehuda Kook) and his pupils ... [is like] the connection between a son and his parents or between a husband and wife."⁷⁹ Clearly, Zevi Yehuda Kook found his relationship with his students psychologically satisfying, which may have provided him with a motivation for maintaining or building the *Gush Emunim* movement so as to ensure that that relationship would continue or grow.

⁷⁷ Interview, Yosi Kaufman. Below, I discuss how he won over his first disciples.

⁷⁸ Aran, "From Religious Zionism," 136. Danny Rubenstein, *נוש אמנים: מי לה' אפי' נוש אמנים* (Tel Aviv, 1982), 19 also notes this "deep and exceptional relationship" with his students, who often called him "father."

⁷⁹ Ra'anan, *נוש אמנים*, 71.

II. Messianic Personality Factors -- Psychological

Manic-Depression

Unlike the cases of Wise and Herzl, the evidence as to whether or not Zevi Yehuda Kook might have had symptoms of a manic/depressive syndrome is not unambiguous. Nonetheless, it appears that he indeed did go through manic and depressed phases, although no depressions of the severity of Wise or Herzl are recorded. He did show several symptoms, however, that are associated with depressive episodes.

The most obvious of these symptoms was his crying episodes. On occasions, he would suddenly start crying in the midst of lectures and be unable to stop.⁸⁰ Such episodes usually came near each other -- one of his students recalls that he would not cry at all for months, and then he would cry at lectures, often to the point of not being able to stop, for several weeks straight.⁸¹

He also had periods of great lethargy and inactivity, which usually accompany depressive episodes. For instance, on one occasion, he noted in a journal of ideas that he kept that he had been feeling listless and tired for quite some time, even requiring many extra hours of sleep. During this period, he had not been able to write or edit anything.⁸²

⁸⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסע חתירה*, xii.

⁸¹ Interview, Yosi Kaufman.

⁸² Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור פנימי*, 318. He also notes in *לשונתו*, #12, 3, that he would work in spurts with periods of inactivity.

During such episodes, he would sometimes give up lecturing entirely.⁸³ Occasionally, he would struggle to write, but would feel unworthy to do so, perhaps indicating the low self-esteem accompanying depression. At such times he prayed that "I will merit again the help of Heaven to no longer abandon this [his journal]."⁸⁴

Sometimes, his periods of lethargy would be explicitly linked with times of sadness. For example, in one letter to David Cohen, he noted that for the first time "in a long time," his spirits had lifted "from the depths of feeling" and that he was able to find the energy to communicate again.⁸⁵ At other times, he would not only feel a "deep sadness," but also "agitated in spirit," necessitating him to try meditative exercises before attempting to write.⁸⁶ Such paralyzing anxiety also frequently accompanies depression.

When he would "break out" from such periods of inactivity, he would usually note that he had been filled with "God's illumination" or the "divine spirit,"⁸⁷ terms which, though religious in nature, may have indicated the

⁸³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, קנין תורה, 7.

⁸⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור לנתיבות, 11.

⁸⁵ Cohen and Kook, דודי לעב, 44.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור לנתיבות, 317-18. This first of these phrases was used by Sabbatians to describe Shabbetai Zevi's manic "prophetic" states.

beginning of a manic phase. During such times, he would write in his notebooks almost ceaselessly, feeling, as is often the case in manic states, that he was compelled to do so.⁸⁸ He noted on one occasion that once one merits the "clothes of prophecy," the "prophetic spirit" comes without one being able to stop it all, and it comes all at once.⁸⁹ He frequently quoted a saying which he attributed to his father that "when I write, it is not because I have the strength to write, but rather that I do not have the strength to be silent."⁹⁰ Also during such times, his handwriting would change from being extremely neat and painstaking to messy and obviously rushed.⁹¹ His mood change would be obvious to his students, who, during such times, would find that he could not only work non-stop, but could give energy and encouragement to all his followers, with "exceptional light, charm, and love."⁹² This is the most obvious example in his case of the charisma that can be associated with manic phases.

⁸⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*, 11.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁰ Interview, Yosi Kaufman.

⁹¹ Compare, for example, the samples of his handwriting on pp. 15 and 321 in Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*. Since one of these samples is not dated, however, it is possible that the change may have been due to age.

⁹² Klonsky and Shteiner, "Courage and Strength," 21.

As was the case with Herzl, manic phases accompanied the most critical moments of his activities with his movement. For example, during the 30-day period just before and during the actual founding of *Gush Emunim*, he wrote over three times as many public notices as during any other 30-day period.⁹³ Another manic phase extended almost throughout the year תשכ"ז, as will be discussed below.⁹⁴ His most famous manic episode came just before and during Yom HaAtzmaut, 1967. At this time, he noted in his journal of ideas that he had his most frequent "prophetic visions," and he began to write voluminously.⁹⁵ This phase culminated with what his students regarded as his "consecration" to prophetic status.

"Consecration"

As Danny Rubenstein noted, "it is doubtful that anyone who ever studied at Merkaz haRav has not heard and circulated the 'miraculous story'" of Zevi Yehuda Kook's "divine prophecy" during his customary midnight Yom HaAtzma'ut lecture in the spring of 1967.⁹⁶ In this

⁹³ See Zevi Yehuda Kook, להלכות צבור, 41-48.

⁹⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, מתוך התורה הנוראה, 57-160.

⁹⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור פנתיבתי, 319.

⁹⁶ Rubenstein, מי לה' ארי, 21-22. Almost all the researchers discussing *Gush Emunim*'s origins make mention of this "conversion." See, for example, Lustick, *For the Land*, 36; Fred David Levine, *Territory or Peace: Religious Zionism in Conflict* (New York, 1986), 1; Sprinzak, *Gush*

lecture, after a series of dramatic pauses and some tears, Zevi Yehuda Kook related how, during the founding of the State of Israel, while everyone else was rejoicing, he was in tears. He had said to himself, he told the students:

Where is our Hebron? Have we forgotten this? Where is our Shechem and our Jericho? Where? Have we forgotten?... Is it in our hands to give up even a millimeter of it?... It has come to us to improve on this on this miracle [of the founding of the state] ... and without the help of other nations, thank God! This year we have merited to a certain extent, real and symbolic, this breaking of the yoke of the nations from upon our neck. Blessed are we!... It is upon us to do this mitzvah which is obligatory for us with this strength [of the army] -- the conquering of the land..... Thank God, we merited and merit even now, to fulfill this word of God through the glorious strength of our army.⁹⁷

Because the Six-Day War, with the conquering of Hebron, Shechem and Jericho by the Israeli Army, took place just three weeks after this talk, and because, according to his students, he had "never in 19 years" told of his sadness at the founding of the state nor mourned the lack of any part

Emunim, 16; Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel, Volume II: From the Aftermath of the Yom Kippur War* (New York, 1987), 16; Ralph Mergui and Phillipe Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs: Meir Kahane and the Far Right in Israel* (London, 1987), 125; and Don-Yehiya, "Jewish Messianism," 228. Only Don-Yehiya discusses the doubts I bring up below in any detail, and all of the others, except for Lustick, accept the story entirely at face value. .

⁹⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "This is the State that the Prophets Envisioned," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 86, (4/26/1985): 6. The mere fact that this talk was published in 1985 testifies to its continuing importance as a myth to the *Gush Emunim* movement. It is also possible, considering its publication, apparently for the first time, so long after Zevi Yehuda Kook's death, that the text has been "edited" in order to appear more prophetic.

of the land, they felt his speech was a divine prophecy.⁹⁸ They described the speech as "a miracle ... equal to the deeds of the Six-Day War,"⁹⁹ and were filled with "an incontrovertible belief in the divine source of the guidance they received from" Zevi Yehuda Kook.¹⁰⁰

When examined carefully, however, it becomes clear that no dramatic change, no sudden "consecration," at least on the part of Zevi Yehuda Kook, took place that night.¹⁰¹ Even before the founding of the state, Zevi Yehuda Kook had objected to any of the biblical territory of Israel remaining under Arab rule.¹⁰² In an article first published in 1953, he linked settlement of all the land, not just the present borders, as being linked with full redemption -- but these statements were ignored at the time.¹⁰³ More

⁹⁸ Rubenstein, מ' דק' א"י, 22.

⁹⁹ Editor's comment to Zevi Yehuda Kook, "This is the State," 6.

¹⁰⁰ Lustick, *For the Land*, 36.

¹⁰¹ Interestingly, Abraham Isaac Kook also had a "consecration myth" grow up around him, at least with his consent, if not actually by his own hand. It is often reported that he only had "mystical experiences" once actually in the land of Israel -- but he recorded several such experiences prior to his first arrival in the land. See Agus, *High Priest*, 69.

¹⁰² Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion*, 199; Zevi Yehuda Kook, דגותיבות ישראל, 94-98.

¹⁰³ Menachem Friedman, "The State of Israel as a Theological Dilemma," in Baruch Kimmerling, ed., *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers* (Albany, 1989), 202-203. The article in question was later reprinted in English: Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy,"

directly, in his 1952 Yom HaAtzma'ut midnight lecture at Merkaz haRav, he mourned the present boundaries of the state.

But we have not yet conquered all our land. Even Jerusalem, the Sanctuary of our sovereignty, is not yet entirely in our hands. Also, the physical extent and quality of our rule over our land still demand completion and perfection.¹⁰⁴

He went on in this speech to state that he believed such conquest would surely happen, for "the power of Israel ... progresses and becomes prominent in our lifetime with the present bursting forth ... of the tendency toward the re-establishment of the people upon its historical land."¹⁰⁵ Thus, his 1967 speech contained nothing new.

It did not even mark the establishment of his charismatic relationship with his first circle of disciples. These students, who all came from a group called *Gahelet*, an elite splinter group from the B'nai Akiva youth movement, had come to Zevi Yehuda Kook in the late 50's and had become completely devoted to him at least by 1964.¹⁰⁶ While, before their arrival at Merkaz haRav, the yeshiva was floundering, with only some 20 students and a poor faculty, it flowered quickly once they came, so that Zevi Yehuda Kook

in Yosef Tirosh, ed, *Religious Zionism: An Anthology* (Jerusalem, Israel, 1975), 167-187.

¹⁰⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *בנינו*, 178.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁰⁶ Aran, "From Religious Zionism," 118, 134-35.

by 1964 had "now become a spiritual force" in religious Zionist circles in Israel "owing to the adulation of his disciples."¹⁰⁷ Thus, neither Zevi Yehuda Kook's ideology nor even the *Gush Emunim* movement itself were created in one climactic moment. Furthermore, even after the "consecration," *Gush Emunim* was not formally founded for another seven years, as Zevi Yehuda Kook's movement continued in its evolution.

If no dramatic "consecration" to prophetic status actually occurred, then why would this moment seem so important to his disciples, to the point where not only they, but most researchers of *Gush Emunim*, quote it without questioning? In the conclusion, I will attempt an explanation of the general power of this "consecration myth." With Zevi Yehuda Kook, however, as had been the case with Nachman of Bratzlav, there was obviously a need on the part of his followers to find some religious justification for their charismatic attachment to their leader, as well as a religious explanation for their leader's manic episodes. In addition, they needed to see these episodes not as a cycle of ups and downs, but rather as a series of complete triumphs of the divine spirit. A belief that in one "moment of consecration" their leader took on prophetic status would

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 134-35; Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion*, 200; Eliezer Goldman, "Messianic Interpretation of Current Events," *Forum*, 26 (January, 1977): 38.

meet all these needs -- and would inspire deep devotion on their part to their divinely-endowed leader.

Grandiose Delusions

Zevi Yehuda Kook's grandiose delusions are not as well documented as those of either Wise or Herzl, but, despite his modest dress and generally unassuming manner, both private notes and public statements reveal a tendency toward grandiosity, particularly linked with the notion of redemption. Thus, as was the case with Wise and Herzl, his grandiose thoughts tie in with his messianic self-view.

He often titled his public proclamations rather grandiosely. For example, he called one "A Revelation of the Knowledge of Israel and Torah to all the People of Israel and to All the Entire World," and he declared the founding of *Gush Emunim* in a "Proclamation to the World," which he felt was of critical importance to "all peoples of the earth."¹⁰⁸ The former of these was published before the founding of *Gush Emunim*, and so it is extremely doubtful that the "Entire World" paid much attention. He also sometimes wrote grandiose introductions to his works. For example, he claimed that he wrote *L'netivot Yisrael* (To the Paths of Israel) upon "the request of many and important

¹⁰⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *להשכנת צבור*, 64; Janet O'Dea, "Gush Emunim, Roots and Ambiguities: The Perspective of the Sociology of Religion," *Forum*, 25, (April, 1976): 41.

people," when, in fact, his works were not yet in any sort of demand.¹⁰⁹

He also, like Herzl, believed that his private journal would be of great significance to others. He felt that others would treasure these notebooks because of "the depth of their importance and faith," as well as the "fulfillment of the holy task of my father." Most importantly, he felt that these notebooks would "cause the public to merit the illumination of Torah and of redemption," a fairly messianic claim.¹¹⁰

In these private notebooks, he recorded a series of grandiose visions, visions he considered to be prophetic. These became steadily more grandiose with time. For example, in 1927, shortly after he began teaching as part of the faculty of Mercaz haRav, he had a vision that he was teaching famous sages and that they were all impressed "with the great depth and grand explanations" he was giving through "divinely revealed" knowledge.¹¹¹ During 1948, he had a series of visions where he believed that, through his recitation of psalms, he had prevented Arab massacres and helped to protect soldiers.¹¹² In 1967, during the Six-Day

¹⁰⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לפני בוא ישראל*, frontispiece. .

¹¹⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אמר לפני בתי*, 11.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 308-309.

¹¹² See, for example, *ibid.*, 311, 312, 313.

War, he recorded the last of these published visions.¹¹³ This vision differed from the others in a number of important ways. While his father had appeared in other visions, helping Zevi Yehuda Kook with his prayers, in this one Abraham Isaac Kook appeared "not in the appearance of one elderly ... but with the appearance of the strength of freedom that would be one day soon," which seems to be an allusion to messianic redemption. Zevi Yehuda Kook noted that on this occasion he prayed "with difficulty," but "succeeded," a triumph of the manic over the depressive state. He prayed not psalms, but the *birkat kohanim*, the priestly blessing, fulfilling his role as High Priest. Last but not least, what followed from his prayers was not merely the saving of some lives, but, in his words, the "greatest" victory of the Six-Day War.¹¹⁴

Like Wise and Herzl, however, he did not become totally lost in grandiose fantasy. Also like them, he struggled to prove that his grandiose visions were, in fact realistic. Interestingly, one way he tried to show his realism was by comparing himself to Herzl. Just as Herzl was at first considered irrational and crazy, but had prophesied a state which had actually come about, so too would Zevi Yehuda Kook's visions become reality, no matter if they seemed

¹¹³ He may have had others, but his students did not publish them. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 319.

unrealistic at the time.¹¹⁵ Like Herzl, he claimed that he was dealing with "facts" and not fantasies. "The holiness of the souls of Israel is an observable fact."¹¹⁶ Indeed, holiness is "the most powerful reality, truly real."¹¹⁷ He called the "chosenness of Israel" a "natural fact," a law of the universe akin to those Einstein discovered, which operated even if you did not believe them.¹¹⁸

Like Wise and Herzl, Zevi Yehuda Kook also portrayed his grandiose visions as being realistic by declaring his opponents to be the truly utopian thinkers. He called those with "a belief in an abstract peace which is slow to come" the "most romantic and naive" people of all.¹¹⁹ Only through "settling" and "conquest" can "real and complete peace" come to Israel -- any other sort of peace is only contingent and will prove in the end to be a deception.¹²⁰

Only a muddled mind ... could envision the severance of vital portions from the Jewish

¹¹⁵ Lustick, *For the Land*, 98.

¹¹⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "This is the State," 7.

¹¹⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוך התורה הנואפת*, 91.

¹¹⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*, 226.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Schnall, "Gush Emunim," 150.

¹²⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוך התורה הנואפת*, 133. Similar quotes can be found in Ra'anan, *נרש אמורים*, 65; Aviezer Ravitsky, "Redemption and Covenant: Religious Zionism of Another Kind," *Forum*, 60, (Summer, 1987): 31-32; David J. Biale, "Mysticism and Politics in Modern Israel: The Messianic Ideology of Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook," in Peter Merkl and Ninian Smart, eds., *Religion and Politics in the Modern World* (New York, 1985), 201.

homeland.... It would be tragic to allow the sound Jewish sense of judgement, naturally sustained by divine illumination, to lose its balance by the intrusion of alien notions such as the dismemberment of our divine heritage. It is the integrity of the Land of Israel rather than partition and reduction that brought prosperity to the Jewish People.¹²¹

Even this quote, however, which purports to be pragmatic and realistic, shows the ideological, grandiose underpinnings of Zevi Yehuda Kook's vision -- a "divine heritage" which had brought "prosperity" that exists more clearly in his mind than in the State.

Delusions of Persecution

None of Zevi Yehuda Kook's published writings give evidence for any personal delusions of persecution. The closest he came was a grandiose delusion about the nature of Israel's relationship with other nations. He saw other nations' enmity to Israel as proof of its chosen status, a "theological sign of election."¹²² Not only did this persecution come about because of, as well as prove, Israel's chosenness, the nations opposed Israel for a unique reason -- not rational enmity, but as part of the cosmic battle of forces trying to prevent redemption. Thus, no

¹²¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Torah Loyalty and the Land," in Tomaschoff, *Whose Homeland*, 187. Mervin Verbit, "Gush Emunim, Peace Now and Israel's Future," *Jerusalem Institute for Federal Studies Viewpoints*, 12 (April, 1980): 2, records a similar mixing of pragmatic and ideological reasoning.

¹²² Quoted in Lustick, *For the Land*, 79.

other nation, not even the United States, could be a trusted ally of Israel, for none shared its unique redemptive status.¹²³ This delusion not only elevated the importance of Israel in his mind and the minds of his followers, it also justified *Gush Emunim's* single-minded pursuit of its policies.

"Charismatic" vs. "Messianic" Personality Type

Zevi Yehuda Kook, to an even greater extent than Wise or Herzl, did not take financial rewards from his position. Although he did not suffer financially, especially after his popularity began to rise, he lived a simple, modest life in a spare Jerusalem apartment, and he was known for his modest dress. Especially during his later years, when his yeshiva and movement were flourishing, he could have easily lived more luxuriously, but he seemed to prefer a more ascetic life-style. It was, in fact, this ascetic, above-the-fray appearance that had originally attracted his earliest disciples to him.¹²⁴

He also considered modesty to be a great virtue and preached about it on many occasions. He went so far as to write that a lack of modesty "weakens and blurs" the "revealing ... of the secrets of Torah," while true modesty "gives strength and greatness" to the prophetic vision. In

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Aran, "From Religious Zionism," 135.

the cause of the Land of Israel and the people of Israel, he wrote, there should be no "I" but only a devotion to the cause; the Messiah, he claimed, would be a person "entirely without an I."¹²⁵

It would be a gross oversimplification, however, to accept such statements at face value, for Zevi Yehuda Kook's ego did play a large role in his actions, particularly as it merged, like Wise's and Herzl's, with his ego-ideal, his cause. Clearly, for example, Zevi Yehuda Kook received a great deal of ego gratification from his relationship with his adoring disciples.¹²⁶ This merging of ego and ego-ideal can also be seen in his various attempts to transform attacks directed personally against him into attacks on his movement's ideology.¹²⁷ Furthermore, as noted above, his grandiose visions placed him at the center of redemption and credited him with miraculous powers. As will be discussed below, these visions played themselves out in a variety of redemptive roles that Zevi Yehuda Kook believed he fulfilled. By fulfilling these roles, he served his cause at the same time that he served himself, thus merging the ego and the ego-ideal.

¹²⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבותי*, 46.

¹²⁶ Aran, "From Religious Zionism," 135.

¹²⁷ See, for example, *להקנות צבור*, 44-48.

III. Other Background Messianic Factors

Outsider Status

Since Abraham Isaac Kook spent his last years as Chief Rabbi of Palestine, he was not what one might usually consider a peripheral member of Israeli society. And yet, in some ways he was an "outsider." Not only was he a religious Zionist, caught between a mostly secular state and an often anti-Zionist Old Yishuv, he staked out a unique-- and lonely -- position as a religious Zionist, being the only major figure of his time to see explicitly redemptionist qualities even in the secular Zionist movement. Furthermore, Abraham Isaac Kook was an organizational failure. He never managed to build up a party, or even a devoted following, which supported his political or religious views. In fact, he was almost completely outside of the organizational mainstream of Israeli life. He never joined either Mizrahi or Agudat Yisrael, and he held no party or political posts, other than that of Chief Rabbi. During his lifetime, even this office was not recognized by many Orthodox leaders in Israel, such as Rabbi Sonnefeld of Jerusalem. While he at times had been quite popular with secular settlers, he fell out of favor during his last years due to his support of the Revisionists during the Arlosoroff assassination trial.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Lustick, *For the Land*, 30; Agus, *High Priest*, 100-113; 118-120.

For most of his life, Zevi Yehuda Kook played a marginal role in Israeli society. Not only was he known chiefly through his father, himself a loner, but he was not nearly as well-known as his father had been. In the early 50's, before the arrival of the *Gahelet* students, he ran a small, unknown yeshiva, never held any party or political office, and "was far from being well-known,"¹²⁹ especially by the secular majority of Israeli society. In the NRP, he was looked down on as being "pure but naive ... even simple," and he would not get involved in party conflicts. He even upset much of the party hierarchy when he came out, on a rather regular basis, against religious coercion on issues such as Shabbat laws, preferring to "bring people to faith through love."¹³⁰

Being an outsider proved to be an advantage for Zevi Yehuda Kook when it came to the *Gahelet* splinter group, which had rebelled against not only the B'nai Akiva and NRP leadership, but often against their own parents' values.¹³¹ This group was looking for a leader unsullied by compromise and political battles, someone who, like themselves, was not part of the present establishment. His stands against

¹²⁹ Rubenstein, 'מ' 'ה' 'א, 18-19; Friedman, "The State of Israel," 205.

¹³⁰ Rubenstein, 'מ' 'ה' 'א, 18-19.

¹³¹ Aran, "From Religious Zionism," 119; Lustick, *For the Land*, 34.

religious coercion also appealed to them.¹³² Furthermore, through his messianic ideology, these disciples could see themselves not as marginal outsiders, but as a vanguard elite, ahead of their time but destined to triumph and lead the whole society to their value system.¹³³

Zevi Yehuda Kook's messianic ideology also allowed him to work with other "outsiders," at least from the standpoint of the religious parties -- secular Zionists. While his father talked about cooperation with secular Zionists, he was "willing to implement the theoretical principles and conceptions implied" in his father's teachings "in a much more determined, consistent and radical way."¹³⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook used the nearness of redemption as an excuse to justify working with the non-religious, for unity was needed in this critical time.¹³⁵ He also used his stands against religious coercion as a platform to "bring near the distant" through "faith and love."¹³⁶

How did this "bringing near" work? After the Six-Day War, Zevi Yehuda Kook deliberately cultivated allies in Herut through Mercaz haRav, so that by the time Likud came

¹³² *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³³ This is reminiscent not only of the early days of the Sabbatian movement but also of the Dead Sea sect.

¹³⁴ Don-Yehiya, "Jewish Messianism," 232.

¹³⁵ Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics*, 112. I discuss the full import of "unity" below.

¹³⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור הנביא*, 290.

to power, he was close to Begin and several ministers.¹³⁷ He did not oppose those on the other end of the economic ideological perspective, however, encouraging Labor activists to settle in the variety of communal organizations he proposed for the West Bank.¹³⁸ When, for purely economic reasons, some oilfield workers protested the return of Sinai to Egypt, Zevi Yehuda Kook reinterpreted this as a religious struggle, sent his disciples to aid the workers, and called them "our beloved, holy brothers."¹³⁹ This work with the secularists was so successful that by 1977, *Gush Emunim* had "swallowed" the "Movement for the Whole Land of Israel," a secular group with similar territorial aims.¹⁴⁰

Zevi Yehuda Kook, at least to a greater extent than others in *Gush Emunim*, was also willing to work with non-Jews, under certain circumstances. Several Christians came to his lectures at Mercaz haRav, converted and became disciples, most notably Dan Be'eri, who became one of the "Underground."¹⁴¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook considered Muslims to be "unquestionably monotheistic" and advised settlers to cooperate with and aid individual Arabs as much as possible -- as long as these Arabs did not claim any national tie to

¹³⁷ Lustick, *For the Land*, 56.

¹³⁸ Schnall, "Impact," 19.

¹³⁹ Editorial, "Yamit," *Nekuda*, 52, (12/29/82): 5.

¹⁴⁰ Lustick, *For the Land*, 44.

¹⁴¹ Segal, *Dear Brothers*, 42.

the land. While he considered most Christians to be "idol worshippers," he believed that there could be "great" Christians, who, like George Elliot, "acknowledged that the Land of Israel is joined to the people of Israel."¹⁴²

As this "idol worshipper" comment points out, Zevi Yehuda Kook's willingness to work with, and success at establishing coalitions with, "outsiders" should not be construed as a great humanitarian impulse on his part. These people could help bring the Messianic Era -- and so they should be used. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated below, he, like Wise, believed in the union of the Jewish people as a prerequisite for the coming of the messianic age, and so he needed to try to "bring them near with love." The depth of this "love," however, is clearly revealed in an answer Zevi Yehuda Kook gave to the question of whether or not Mercaz haRav students should risk their lives for non-religious Israelis. He replied that of course they should, just like "Abraham who risked his life for Sodom."¹⁴³ Clearly, the comparison to the denizens of Sodom was not meant to be complimentary.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Between the People and the Land," (Hebrew), *Artzi*, 2 (1982): 19-20.

¹⁴³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור הנר*, 69.

¹⁴⁴ It should be noted, however, that Abraham pleaded for the righteous in Sodom, so that Zevi Yehuda Kook was perhaps implying by this remark that even among the secular there were righteous people.

Antinomianism

Though Orthodox, and so in one sense clearly less antinomian than either Wise or Herzl, who both, at least implicitly, rejected traditional interpretations of Jewish law, Zevi Yehuda Kook's antinomian tendencies were at least as strong as these two, because of his messianic world view. As noted earlier, he, like Herzl and Wise, tried to change many norms of Israeli society, plunging it into a "kulturkampf" with his notions about the uniqueness of the Jewish people and state and his promotion of settlements. Even his method of activity, outside of the parties and traditional political system, changed norms in society, perhaps even setting a precedent for the peace movement in Israel.¹⁴⁵

Zevi Yehuda Kook went further than just changing norms, however. Unlike either Wise or Herzl, he advocated breaking the laws of the state. He wrote that, in general, "any stipulation [by the Israeli government] that contravenes a ruling of Torah is automatically and retrospectively invalidated. It is as if the transaction had never been undertaken."¹⁴⁶ Specifically with regard to the territories, he considered it a mitzvah to violate any secular law that prevented the settling and conquering of the Land of Israel, justifying this belief on the grounds of

¹⁴⁵ Lustick, *For the Land*, 2-3.

¹⁴⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Torah Loyalty," 184.

the "Torah of Redemption."¹⁴⁷ In 1981, 61% of West Bank settlers who were primarily motivated by Zevi Yehuda Kook's teachings were willing to violently resist attempts by the Israeli government to dismantle settlements, a percentage twice as high as other West Bank settlers.¹⁴⁸

Not only does the messianic idea of settlement supersede secular law, it transcends any "human notion" of "moral consideration."¹⁴⁹ Under certain circumstances, it even transcends what most would consider to be halakhah. For example, while many Orthodox Jews consider the prohibition against "forcing the end" to have halakhic status, Zevi Yehuda Kook dismissed that notion and felt that, in the present era, forcing the end was even a commandment.¹⁵⁰ On at least two occasions, he urged secular Jews to break Orthodox law or custom as part of his redemptive mission to "bring near the distant." Once, he asked a kibbutznik not to put on a kippah when the young man

¹⁴⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוך התורה הנצאית*, 76. Note that his disciple Chaim Abihu, through the title he gave this work, implied that Zevi Yehuda Kook's teachings themselves were this "Torah of Redemption." See also Lustick, *For the Land*, 4; Klonsky and Shteiner, "Courage and Strength," 21. It should be noted that his father considered it a mitzvah to violate certain laws of the British Mandate, such as laws against immigration; Fridman, *Rav Kook*, 92.

¹⁴⁸ Weisburd and Waring, "Settlement Motivation," 194.

¹⁴⁹ Aviner, paraphrasing Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Messianic Realism," 115.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Dan Tor, "To Continue to Push the End," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 96 (2/21/86): 12-13.

had come to visit the rabbi, stating that the kibbutznik would not ask him to take off his kippah if he visited the kibbutz. On another occasion, he told a secular Jew to drive from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on Shabbat in order to hear his *d'var torah*.¹⁵¹

On occasion, his imagery and declarations became distinctly Sabbatian. He wrote that "the whole Torah is not equal to the Torah of the Messiah," and that "the holiness of the Land of Israel" is so great that it can "transform that which is forbidden into that which is permitted."¹⁵² Statements similar to both of these can be found in Sabbatian literature as justifications for antinomian behavior. Zevi Yehuda Kook even wrote that it is "permissible to erase the name for the sake of the redemption of the world," which is how the Sabbatians justified what others considered to be blasphemy.¹⁵³ He also frequently used a Sabbatian phrase, "the rotting of the seed before the sprouting," to justify working with secular Jews.¹⁵⁴ Not only did he use the "Torah of Redemption," another Sabbatian phrase, to justify defying some secular

¹⁵¹ Rubenstein, *מי דה' ארץ*, 19-20.

¹⁵² Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנוראה*, 41; 140.

¹⁵³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *קנין תורה*, 23.

¹⁵⁴ Biale, "Mysticism and Politics," 198, Aran, "From Religious Zionism," 120. His father used similar imagery to justify his toleration of the secular pioneers and his relaxation of the Sabbatical laws; Agus, *High Priest*, 81, 117.

laws, but, after his death, certain of his former disciples used this teaching to justify the illegal -- from both a secular and halakhic point of view -- actions they took as members of the "Underground."¹⁵⁵ Thus, it is clear that his movement embodied some antinomian tendencies and sparked even more extreme ones, all justified on the basis that they would hasten the coming of the Messiah.

Positive/Negative World View

Some of the researchers who have examined the sociological underpinnings of *Gush Emunim* have made the same mistake that I noted in the first chapter with regard to messianic movements in general: the assumption that they are born primarily out of despair. For example, Ra'anan wrote that Zevi Yehuda Kook started the movement over despair about a variety of issues: the lack of ingathering of the exiles, the continuing absence of peace, the existence of antisemitism even after the establishment of the state, and the general state of Israeli culture.¹⁵⁶ I

¹⁵⁵ Moshe Tzuriel, "In Defense of the Redemption Initiative," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 105 (12/9/1986): 15; Yoel Ben-Nun, "The Way of the Lights and the Way of Aberration," *Nekuda*, 91, (9/15/1985): 11. [n. b.: Yoel Ben-Nun opposed the tactics of the "Underground."] While the "Underground" used his teaching on the "Torah of Redemption" to justify their actions, it should be noted that Zevi Yehuda Kook consistently opposed plans of such actions during his lifetime. For a discussion of the use of the concept of "Torah of Redemption" by the Sabbatians, see Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971), 55.

¹⁵⁶ Ra'anan, *נוש אמונים*, 163-174.

believe, however, that his motivation was not entirely, or even primarily, despair, and that, in fact, he had a generally positive world view.

For example, one must first note that *Gush Emunim* was born out of both the Six-Day War, which it viewed as a divine triumph, and the Yom Kippur War, which it saw as a divine warning, thus being conceived in an era of confidence, even though it became powerful during a time when doubt began to rise. Furthermore, Zevi Yehuda Kook seems to have found positive aspects in precisely those issues that Ra'anan claims gave rise to despair. For example, Zevi Yehuda Kook wrote that "in everyone of us [Jews]" is "the intention of ideal justice,"¹⁵⁷ which is clearly a positive evaluation of the potential of Israeli society, whatever its present state. He also felt that, no matter what temporary setbacks might occur, redemption would triumph and true peace would come, that, in fact, every "regression" would be followed by even greater progress.¹⁵⁸ Thus, he saw the Six-Day War as a sign of God being with us and the Yom Kippur War as a travail that announced the

¹⁵⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "My Brother, I Beg," (Hebrew), *Nekuda*, 55, (2/27/1983): 1.

¹⁵⁸ Aviner, "Messianic Realism," 113. This echoes, on an ideological level, the psychological pattern of the manic/depressive.

nearing of redemption, putting a positive interpretation on it.¹⁵⁹

Similarly, while some religious Zionists felt threatened by the general triumph of secularism in Israeli society, and particularly by a secular ideology that portrayed itself as a substitute for religion, Zevi Yehuda Kook ascribed to this secular "rebellion a paramount spiritual value," the re-awakening of the redemptive process.¹⁶⁰ He held analogous views about the possibility of peace. While he felt that any trade of territory for peace would bring only a "temporary peace" that would end up being a "curse for generations to come," he believed that God "will provide us with the courage for a true-peace that will last, in our land, for all eternity."¹⁶¹ Thus, he was not full of despair. Rather, through the lens of his messianic vision, Zevi Yehuda Kook could see hope and triumph where others saw only despair, for he was fundamentally, messianically optimistic about Israel and Israeli society.

Messianic and Patriotic Symbols

While obviously not as dramatic a personality as Herzl, Zevi Yehuda Kook was in his own way just as skillful at the

¹⁵⁹ Lustick, *For the Land*, 151.

¹⁶⁰ Aran, "From Religious Zionism," 120.

¹⁶¹ Quoted in Lustick, *For the Land*, 82.

creation and manipulation of symbols. He used symbols to elevate values, escalate the importance of conflict, cover over his movement's weakness, and legitimize both the norms and institutions of his movement. These powerful symbols, and the messianic matrix in which they arose and gained meaning, helped bring about much of Zevi Yehuda Kook's success. As O'Dea noted, "the fervent enthusiasm with which this idea of reconquest and resettlement of the territories is grasped and the radical dedication of the group that holds it ... can be explained only in light of the symbolic elements which are triggered," the elements of imminent messianic redemption.¹⁶²

Zevi Yehuda Kook used symbols, first of all, to elevate the importance of the issues he was addressing. For example, the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs over the territories was not an ordinary international dispute, but a conflict between the "treasured people" and the "Canaanites or Amalekites," nations "arrogant in their evil," for the "enemies of Israel are the enemies of God."¹⁶³ Although the Jews face grave peril, they need not

¹⁶² O'Dea, "Roots," 45.

¹⁶³ Lustick, *For the Land*, 75; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנואלת*, #12, 3; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לשלושה באפריל*, 36. Interestingly, he noted in this last essay that he did not bear any hatred toward individual Arabs, only toward their actions as a nation, for, he believed, once they recognized the Jews right to sovereignty over the whole land, they would have their own "sages and tzaddikim" arise amongst them.

worry if they follow his teachings, for "when we do God's will, God will protect us from the Judgement of the Nations."¹⁶⁴ Through this symbolic imagery, the Arab-Israeli conflict was elevated to a cosmic level, one of great religious significance.

Through the use of a variety of symbols, Zevi Yehuda Kook also emphasized and elevated the importance of the land itself, as well as the process of settling and conquering it. The land is precious beyond compare because "every patch of the soil of the Land of Israel" is "pledged to the Jewish people and consecrated to the mitzvot." In fact, the land itself becomes a symbol of "the living Torah faith."¹⁶⁵ The link between the people and the land is both cosmic and eternal, central to the scheme of the entire universe, for "the land was chosen even before the people.... The chosen land and the chosen people comprise one completed, divine unity, joined together at the creation of the world."¹⁶⁶

Because the land is so essential, the mitzvot of settling and conquering the land take on cosmic import, for, according to Zevi Yehuda Kook, it is the complete settling

¹⁶⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Torah Loyalty," 185.

¹⁶⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Torah Loyalty," 183; 185.

¹⁶⁶ Lustick, *For the Land*, 84; Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Between the People and its Land," 15-16; emphasis his.

of the land upon which the second stage of redemption hangs.¹⁶⁷ As Zevi Yehuda Kook wrote:

We are commanded both to possess and to settle. The meaning of possession is [military] conquest and in performing this mitzvah, we can perform the other -- the mitzvah to settle.... Torah, war, and settlement -- they are three things in one and we rejoice in the authority we have been given for each of them.¹⁶⁸

For this reason, according to him, the settling and conquering of the land is one of only three mitzvot for which one is supposed to risk one's life -- obviously the highest value one can attach to an act.¹⁶⁹

Furthermore, the giving up of any territory becomes, symbolically, the most horrible act imaginable. It is the symbolic equivalent of the "desecration of the Name,"¹⁷⁰ or even conversion to idol worship.¹⁷¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook even tapped into the two most powerful Jewish symbols of

¹⁶⁷ Lustick, *For the Land*, 35. This is discussed more fully below.

¹⁶⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Between the People and its Land," 19.

¹⁶⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנואלת*, 123. Klonsky and Shteiner, "Courage and Strength," 22, note that because Zevi Yehuda Kook promoted this value of risking one's life, many settlers have adopted it.

¹⁷⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook used this phrase in this fashion on a number of occasions. See, for example, Zevi Yehuda Kook, *להלכות צבור*, 44; 249; and *מתוך התורה הנואלת*, 52.

¹⁷¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *להלכות צבור*, 44; Uriel Tal, "The Nationalism of Gush Emunim in Historical Perspective," *Forum*, 36 (Fall/Winter, 1979): 13. For a similar example, See also Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 113.

destruction, the Holocaust and the destruction of the Temple. He wrote that Jews should refuse to "have any area of what is considered rightfully Jewish become-- 'Judenrein,'" and he called the planned destruction of Yamit and other Sinai settlements a potential "hurban."¹⁷²

He also attached elevated importance -- under certain circumstances -- to the government and army of Israel. Unless it obviously violates the Torah, the State is to be treated as the "Kingdom of Israel" and its government as the "King of Israel," symbols with obviously messianic connotations.¹⁷³ The army is "completely holy," and is, in fact, to be considered the "host of the Lord of Hosts," a pun on the modern hebrew word for army.¹⁷⁴ In fact, "the Kingdom of Israel, the State of Israel, the army of Israel, this is all one."¹⁷⁵ Such symbolism surely could contribute to patriotic, if not ultra-nationalistic, feelings.

¹⁷² Quoted in O'Dea, "Roots," 45; Lustick, *For the Land*, 61, 206. This use of "hurban" for the destruction of Yamit was taken up by his disciples after his death, when Yamit was indeed dismantled.

¹⁷³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 160; Yehuda Zoldin, "Patience of Redemption," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 79 (8/10/1984): 22-23; Uriel Tal, "Foundations of a Political Messianic Trend in Israel," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 35 (Spring, 1985): 38.

¹⁷⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 157-58; 118-19; 108. Also see Klonsky and Shteiner, "Courage and Strength," 22, for similar quotes.

¹⁷⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנואלת*, 79.

Gush Emunim, under the leadership of Zevi Yehuda Kook, also organized a series of symbolic demonstrations, demonstrations designed not only to take advantage of the power of messianic symbols, but also to make *Gush Emunim* appear more powerful than it actually was. These radical, often extralegal, acts focused the nation's, and sometimes the world's attention on the movement, even when it was still small, weak, and could not follow up such demonstrations with concrete deeds. These began before the actual founding of *Gush Emunim*. For example, as soon as the Western Wall was liberated, Zevi Yehuda Kook made sure that he was escorted there. He proceeded to lead the first service there in many years, in and of itself a symbolic act, and then turned to reporters and said, "we hereby announce to all of Israel and the entire world that by divine command we have come home, to the Holy Ascents and the city of our Temple. From this day on, we shall not move from here."¹⁷⁶ He also advised Moshe Levinger, in 1968, to occupy a hotel in Hebron during Passover, the most messianic of holidays.¹⁷⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook himself led one of *Gush Emunim*'s first official demonstrations, the attempted settling of Elon Moreh, and arranged to plant trees and say

¹⁷⁶ Quoted in Hagai Segal, *Dear Brothers*, 51. Note that this announcement, like others noted above, was addressed to "the entire world," and that Zevi Yehuda Kook had no problem speaking for the whole of Israel.

¹⁷⁷ Lustick, *For the Land*, 42-43.

the *shehekhiyanu* with the settlers before being chased out by the army, thus tying together religious symbols with the secular Zionist symbolic act of tree-planting.¹⁷⁸ Through the next several years, he led several large marches, usually scheduling them during Pesach and Hanukkah, to tie them in with traditional symbols of freedom and redemption.¹⁷⁹ However, once real settlements became possible, he focused the movement's energies on these concrete accomplishments, for these could in and of themselves become symbols, obviating the need for purely symbolic acts.¹⁸⁰

Zevi Yehuda Kook also used symbols to reach out beyond his original constituency. For example, in an attempt to appeal to the secular, he often spoke about *halutziut*, pioneering spirit, and held demonstrations on "pioneering" holidays, such as Tel Chai day.¹⁸¹ He even portrayed the risks that his movement was taking as being analogous to those taken by the pioneers during the establishment of the state.¹⁸² With such methods, he was able to win support

¹⁷⁸ Segal, *Dear Brothers*, 26-27.

¹⁷⁹ Lustick, *For the Land*, 41.

¹⁸⁰ Aronoff, "Institutionalization," 59.

¹⁸¹ Schnall, "Impact," 17; Rubenstein, *מִי לָא אֵלֵינוּ*, 126-130; Arthur Samuelson, "Gush Emunim: This Land's Our Land," *The Nation*, Dec. 8th, 1979, p. 592.

¹⁸² Michael Keren, *The Pen and the Sword: Israeli Intellectuals and the Making of the Nation-State* (Boulder, Colo., 1989), 95.

even from some on the right wing of the Labor party, and images of redemption, lifted from *Gush Emunim* ideology, became common among the movement's secular allies, although some argue that this is an attempt by the secular right to use *Gush Emunim* and not the other way around.¹⁸³

Zevi Yehuda Kook also used names with messianic overtones to try to help legitimize *Gush Emunim*'s institutions, as well as those of its allies. For example, the movement's settlement branch is called Amana, or faith, and its governing council is Yesha, salvation. *Nekuda* is named after one of his designations for the Western Wall: *Nekudat-Mercatz Shel HaAretz*, the center-point of the land.¹⁸⁴ *Tehiya*, which was founded in Zevi Yehuda Kook's apartment, means not only "renaissance" to the secular, but "revival," to the religious, hinting at the revival of the dead, expected to take place at the start of the Messianic Era.¹⁸⁵ Thus, messianic symbols were used not only to

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*; Rubenstein, *The Zionist Dream*, 179; Sella, "Custodians and Redeemers," 236, 251; Lustick, *For the Land*, 31, 224 argues that both sides used each other. Even some of the haredim picked up parts of *Gush Emunim*'s symbols, such as the emphasis on preparing future Kohanim for the imminent rebuilding of the Temple; Lustick, *For the Land*, 167-68.

¹⁸⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אמנה וישיבה*, 18.

¹⁸⁵ Chava Pinchas-Cohen, "Gush Emunim: The First Days," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 69 (2/3/84): 4, recounts the time that was spent on choosing the various names and Zevi Yehuda Kook's role in their choice. On the whole, the article is not particularly sympathetic to him, as the writer comes from the most extreme branch of *Gush Emunim*, which supported the underground.

promote new norms, such as the settlement of the West Bank, but to legitimize the institutions which attempted to promulgate these new norms.

IV. Zevi Yehuda Kook's Messianic Ideology

Zevi Yehuda Kook developed a rather detailed, intricate messianic schema.¹⁸⁶ It is important to understand this schema in order to fully comprehend the messianic import of both the symbols he used and the roles he took on. This section explains first what this schema was, what stage of redemption he believed Israel was presently in, and what actions he thought were necessary to further the redemptive process.

The Schema

How did Zevi Yehuda Kook envision the redemptive process? The first step toward understanding this process is to understand how he viewed history. Like Wise and Herzl, he saw history as the steady unfolding of God's will, God's way of communicating to the world.¹⁸⁷ God controls history, especially the destiny of Israel: "This [our rule over the Land] is no accident. We are not accidents. God

¹⁸⁶ Lustick, *For the Land*, 72, among others, complains that Zevi Yehuda Kook never made a systematic presentation of his views on the redemptive process. While that may be the case, scattered among his various writings is a fairly consistent schema, one which I believe is systematized here for the first time.

¹⁸⁷ Lustick, *For the Land*, 86.

brings down and sets up Kings ... in order to bring our independence."¹⁸⁸ "It is God and no other ... who was the immediate cause of all the great upheavals that have occurred on this earth during the last fifty years.... The world is not filled with randomness, but ordered by the hand of the Master of the Universe."¹⁸⁹

Not only is history in general ordered, but all major historical events, when properly interpreted, reveal God's desires. For example, the Balfour Declaration revealed the power of "Torah faith," even among the gentiles.¹⁹⁰ The Holocaust was a sign for Jews that their days among the gentiles were over, that they should return to their homeland: "This total collapse, the total uprootedness ... of Knesset Yisrael from its presence among the gentiles ... is an expression of the Light of Lights and rebirth of a holy people."¹⁹¹ The U.N. resolution acknowledging the creation of Israel demonstrated that God rules over all nations.¹⁹² Of course, as has been mentioned above, the Six-Day War was "a clear sign of the growth of redemption,"

¹⁸⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסע חורבן הנאצי*, 123.

¹⁸⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Between the People and its Land," 21. Aviner, "Messianic Realism," 110, made a similar statement in paraphrasing Zevi Yehuda Kook.

¹⁹⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Torah Loyalty," 185.

¹⁹¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לוחמינו*, 112-113.

¹⁹² Zevi Yehuda Kook, "On the Genuine Significance of the State of Israel," (Hebrew) *Artzi*, 1, (1978): 5.

while the Yom Kippur War was a warning to increase the pace of settling the territories.¹⁹³ Even the "anger of the nations at the conquering of Jerusalem" is but a sign of the "closeness of final redemption."¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, if one can understand, through history, what God wills, one can understand the unfolding of the messianic age, for, in Judaism, "the concept of religion, of doing God's will, and the messianic concept ... are in truth one concept."¹⁹⁵

And how will the messianic age unfold? Like Maimonides -- and like Wise -- Zevi Yehuda Kook believed that the messianic age would unfold gradually and continuously, "little by little," through a steady, generally unmiraculous evolution rather than a radical consummation of history.¹⁹⁶ He went so far as to write that only "the stupid ones" believe that the Messiah will bring "miracles and wonders."¹⁹⁷ Over possibly several generations perfect redemption "will proceed by gradual stages."¹⁹⁸

But what are these gradual stages and how many are there? Basically, he envisioned a three-stage process. The

¹⁹³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לְנִתְיָבוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל*, 113; Lustick, *For the Land*, 86.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Rubenstein, *מִי לָהּ אֵלֵי*, 26-27.

¹⁹⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לְנִתְיָבוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל*, 37.

¹⁹⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מִתּוֹךְ הַתּוֹרָה הַנּוֹאֶלֶת*, 79.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy," 175.

first stage, traditionally called "the beginning of redemption," and labelled by him as "repentance prompted by fear," is marked by the physical return to the land.¹⁹⁹ It began, according to him, in a single year -- the year marked by both Herzl's death and his father's aliyah, 1904. He believed that Herzl and his father were the leaders of this generation.²⁰⁰ The second stage, "redemption" or "the generation of unification," began with the founding of the state.²⁰¹ This period is marked by "settlement of the whole land" and the "healing of the people of Israel."²⁰² During this stage, prophecy will increase in the land.²⁰³ He did not mention explicitly who is the leader of this generation, although, as I will demonstrate below, he believed that he was. The final stage begins with the anointing of Messiah ben David and the changing of the return of the exiles from "drops to a steady stream."²⁰⁴ Only after the Messiah has

¹⁹⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 44; Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy," 176.

²⁰⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנואלת*, 53. It is possible, considering his views on the respective roles of Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David (see below) that he believed that Herzl was a prototype for Messiah ben David while his father was one for Messiah ben Joseph.

²⁰¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 103; Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy," 171-72, 176.

²⁰² Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy," 176; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 103.

²⁰³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy," 177.

²⁰⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנואלת*, 35.

been anointed will the final redemption come, "repentance prompted by love," spiritual return and the fulfillment of all the commandments.²⁰⁵

What is the role of humanity in this process? Zevi Yehuda Kook equivocated slightly on this point, but, in general, he seems to have believed that while redemption is inevitable, humans can either "delay the word of God in its coming" or "bring redemption closer."²⁰⁶ If Jews meet a series of tests, described in more detail below, and, most importantly, if they "recognize it [the messianic process] with the perfect recognition of faith," they can "hasten the end."²⁰⁷

Zevi Yehuda Kook saw both universalistic and particularistic dimensions to the process of redemption. He believed that redemption would be "cosmological and universal," affecting all humans and, in fact, all life, bringing "reconciliation" even between humans and animals.²⁰⁸ This universal redemption, however, had a particular source, for Zevi Yehuda Kook also believed a version of the "mission" theory: the redemption of the entire world will come from the redemption of Israel, "an

²⁰⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy," 176, 172; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 103.

²⁰⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "This is the State," 7; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 104.

²⁰⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "This is the Nation," 7.

²⁰⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבותי*, 247.

eternal dream which strengthens all of humanity."²⁰⁹ Not only would universal redemption have a particular source, however, it would also have a particular nature, which Israel could best help bring about by being as particularistic as possible. This is because, according to Zevi Yehuda Kook, when Israel looks out for itself, "its deeds are whole" and thus more greatly "heal the welfare" of other nations.²¹⁰ Thus, the stronger the Jews are in their ownership of the Western Wall, the stronger they are in defending their claim to the land, the more strongly "we stand by the Torah," the more they will "bring light to the world."²¹¹

The Present Stage

What stage did Zevi Yehuda Kook see his own time being in, in terms of the process of redemption? As the schema above should have indicated, he, unlike other religious Zionists, did not believe that he lived during the "beginning of the redemption." Rather, other people "speak of the beginning of the redemption. In my opinion, this is

²⁰⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מחשבות צבור*, 7, emphasis mine. This notion of a messianic mission of Israel, in which Israel is redeemed first and then redeems all other nations, can also be found in his father's writings. See Biale, "Mysticism and Politics," 199; Lustick, *For the Land*, 32; and Elkins, *Shepherd of Israel*, 89, for a discussion of this.

²¹⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy," 177.

²¹¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מחשבות ישראל*, 19, 61, 143.

already the middle of the redemption."²¹² In fact, he believed that his generation was very close to the end of this second stage and to the commencement of the third stage, the era of Messiah ben David. He wrote that "this is the generation that the Son of David will come in."²¹³ Even the gentiles "cannot ignore the force of the Biblical prophecies realized in our own day."²¹⁴ Since the final redemption is so near, it becomes imperative to pay strict attention to what must be done to draw it even nearer.

The Bringing of Redemption

Zevi Yehuda Kook outlined several prerequisites for the completion of redemption and the coming of Messiah ben David, tests that the people of Israel must pass. The most notable thing most of these prerequisites have in common is that they are all traits that Zevi Yehuda Kook believed that

²¹² Quote in Uriel Tal, "The Land of Israel and the State of Israel in Israeli Religious Life," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America*, vol. XXXVIII (1976): 9. I think that this belief, that we are in the middle, rather than the beginning of redemption is the major distinction between the ideologies of Abraham Isaac Kook and Zevi Yehuda Kook, for the son often saw actual holiness where the father saw potential holiness. If the father had lived to see the founding of the state, however, he might have believed exactly as his son did. See Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion*, 75; Agus, *High Priest*, 212 for a further discussion of Abraham Isaac Kook's views.

²¹³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסע הכורסה הנוראה*, 57. In a *Gush Emunim* publication, *Elon Moreh*, (no date, author, or place of publication listed) 21, he spoke in a slightly more veiled fashion: "Our generation is the generation of the marvel."

²¹⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Torah Loyalty," 185.

he himself either possessed or worked toward. For example, in order to have the "power and might and strength and greatness" needed to bring on "complete redemption," modesty needed to increase. Zevi Yehuda Kook, however, defined modesty in a very particular fashion. Being modest, to him, meant: wearing modest dress; trusting in God; being as religiously and nationalistically Jewish as possible and rejecting other nations and national identities, especially their clothes and culture; identifying with the whole of the Jewish people; seeing the hand of God in history; and being a "fearer of God."²¹⁵ Obviously, in his opinion, he not only tried to satisfy all these criteria, but he dedicated himself to bringing them about in others.

The second prerequisite was that "the redemption of Israel hangs on ... the teaching of my lord, my father, teacher and rabbi's ... great explanations of the secrets of Torah."²¹⁶ Who should do this teaching? According to Zevi Yehuda Kook, the prophecy about Elijah's turning the hearts of the children to parents meant that he should spread his father's teaching, and so help bring redemption.²¹⁷

The third prerequisite, the one most strongly emphasized by *Gush Emunim* as a movement, is the settlement of the entire land, for "settlement ... will accomplish the

²¹⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור פנימיות*, 276-79.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 282.

²¹⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *פנימיות ישראל*, 44.

act of redemption" once the "entire land" is under "our rule."²¹⁸ *Shlemut*, wholeness, in the rule over the land will bring *shlemut*, perfection, in terms of redemption. In fact, the only "reasons why false Messiahs arose was that Israel was not established in its land," a statement that seems to imply that even previous messianic movements would have succeeded if only Israel had been established in the land.²¹⁹ Obviously, Zevi Yehuda Kook, through his leadership of *Gush Emunim*, was actively involved in the fulfillment of this prerequisite.

The final prerequisite,²²⁰ and the one that Zevi Yehuda Kook personally emphasized the most was the same as a messianic prerequisite of Wise -- union and peace amid the Jewish people. Unification is "cosmological perfection," the ultimate goal of all creation.²²¹ As it increases, "thus progresses redemption."²²² The most important unification is that of the Jewish people, for "when we are one people in the land, then God's name will be one" and the

²¹⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy," 177.

²¹⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לְנִתְיָבוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל*, 38.

²²⁰ In some of his earlier writings, Zevi Yehuda Kook mentioned other prerequisites which have already been fulfilled, such as the establishment of an Israeli Army and the possession of the Western Wall.

²²¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אֵרֶץ לְנִתְיָבוֹת*, 243.

²²² *Ibid.*, 71.

Messianic Era will have arrived in full.²²³ Similarly, anything that causes Jews "not to be united is ... desecration of God's name."²²⁴ This "union of Israel" can only come about when those "far from Torah" are drawn near with "true love," which can bring about "perfection and redemption."²²⁵ In order to accomplish this drawing near, the religious must be prepared to "compromise on any controversial issues," for such "compromise" is not compromise at all, but the bringing of redemption.²²⁶

The union of the people is important, in part, because it is linked with peace, *shalom*, and perfection or wholeness, *shlemut*.²²⁷ The Torah is a complete and perfect unit, with all its mitzvot linked. If any are broken, the whole is harmed. Similarly with the people of Israel; if

²²³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לְנִתְיָבוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל*, 38. Wise, too, made frequent reference to the prophecy, "God's name will be one."

²²⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "My Brother, I Beg," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 55 (2/27/1983): 1.

²²⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לְנִתְיָבוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל*, 26; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מִתּוֹךְ הַתּוֹרָה הַנּוֹאֲלָה*, 58.

²²⁶ Quoted in Lustick, *For the Land*, 59. This notion is similar to some of his father's, who, again for messianic reasons, preached compromise with secular Israelis. See Rivka Shatz, "Utopia and Messianism," 84; Lilly Weissbrod, "Gush Emunim: From Religious Doctrine to Political Action," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 18, (July, 1988) 268-69. Again, note the similarity to Wise.

²²⁷ While there can be some debate as to whether or not Wise used these words with any kabbalistic overtones, it is quite clear, both because of his extensive Zohar quotations and because of the context in which he uses these words, that Zevi Yehuda Kook is using them kabbalistically.

one sins, all are affected. Along with this, the Land of Israel must be whole, that is, wholly under Jewish rule, or all its mitzvot are "damaged." When all three unions are established, redemption will be complete.²²⁸ *Shlemut* and *shalom* are also intrinsically linked, for only with *shlemut* of the land will come perfect peace.²²⁹ Again, Zevi Yehuda Kook clearly was trying to work toward the fulfillment of this prerequisite.

Thus, according to Zevi Yehuda Kook's messianic ideology, history holds the key to knowing the will of God -- and he himself understands that key. The messianic idea stands at the center of history -- and Zevi Yehuda Kook knows how to bring the messianic age nearer. And since the messianic age may dawn at any moment, if Israelis take the right actions now, it becomes imperative for the people of Israel to follow his leadership. With such an ideology as a background, it is no surprise that Zevi Yehuda Kook took on several key redemptive roles, in his own view, including that of Messiah ben Joseph.

V. Zevi Yehuda Kook's Redemptive Roles

As should be expected considering his messianic ideology, Zevi Yehuda Kook saw himself as central to, if not in the very center of, the ongoing process of redemption. Some of

²²⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור חיים*, 49-51.

²²⁹ Lustick, *For the Land*, 142.

the roles he pictured himself as fulfilling seem to have grown out of those he believed his father fulfilled, such as that of High Priest of Israel. At least one, that of Messiah ben Joseph, grew out of his own messianic self-view, one similar in many respects to that of Nachman of Bratzlav. Indeed, like Nachman, Zevi Yehuda Kook engaged in messianic calculations, which are reflected not only in "prophecies" he proclaimed, but also in the level of his activities during years of high messianic expectations.

Merkaz HaRav -- Substitute for the Temple

Zevi Yehuda Kook's first messianic role was as the head of an institution he saw in a distinctly messianic light-- his yeshiva, Merkaz HaRav. His father, the founder of the yeshiva, also seems to have viewed it as having a messianic purpose, one which, in fact, shows a great deal of similarity to the messianic purpose Isaac Mayer Wise envisioned originally for the Hebrew Union College. Indeed, Abraham Isaac Kook started up the yeshiva only after he, like Wise, had failed in an attempt to start a Sanhedrin, one of whose goals was to be the ushering in of the messianic age. He wanted to start a yeshiva that would combine general studies with rabbinic ones, all from a Jewish viewpoint, just as Wise had planned at first. Furthermore, he named his yeshiva the "Universal Central" or "Universal Union Yeshiva," because, like Wise, he emphasized

the importance of "union" for the progression of redemption.²³⁰

Zevi Yehuda Kook carried on, and expanded, the messianic mission of the yeshiva, renamed Merkaz HaRav after his father's death. One way this mission made itself clear is in the guiding principle he used in designing the curriculum: whatever will most surely bring redemption should be most emphasized in study. Thus, for example, the students "first of all study the Rishonim, [because] one cannot force the end by studying the Aharonim."²³¹ At Merkaz HaRav, students learn both "the revealed and the hidden," because this brings "the holiness of God to all the generations."²³² The Talmud Yerushalmi is emphasized, not only because all works created in Israel are inherently more holy, but also because studying it helps hasten redemption.²³³ According to Zevi Yehuda Kook, "students need to be expert" in three areas, "aggadah, halakhah, and things political," in order to bring full redemption, and "all this is here [at Merkaz HaRav]."²³⁴ With such an

²³⁰ Lewis, *Vision of Redemption*, 69-74; Agus, *High Priest*, 103.

²³¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסעוד התורה הנוראה*, 21.

²³² *Ibid.*, 78.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 101.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

orientation to the curriculum, it is natural that Merkaz HaRav should serve as a center for redemption.

And indeed it was, according to Zevi Yehuda Kook. In fact, he believed that it was a substitute for the Temple-- and that he was its High Priest.²³⁵ He called it "the Great House" and the "Palace," both terms used to refer to the Temple.²³⁶ He also called it "the holy mountain" on several occasions, a term usually reserved for the Temple. For example, he wrote "the holy mountain, the highest holiness that is in Jerusalem, is Merkaz HaRav."²³⁷ He drew a parallel between the purposes of the Temple and of his yeshiva. The Temple, he wrote, had two main functions, "worship" or the "enhancement of faith," and "concentration," an allusion, through the root **כנס**, to the name of his yeshiva. Thus, both of these purposes are fulfilled by his yeshiva, since he personally taught the classes in "enhancement of faith," and since he certainly

²³⁵ This belief may explain why he was much more moderate than many others in *Gush Emunim* about the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock. He consistently advised his followers not to go up the Temple Mount, although he considered the Kotel to be very holy. As noted above, he also advised against terrorist activities directed against the Dome of the Rock. His role as High Priest will be fully explored below.

²³⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, **אור לנתיבות**, 225; Zevi Yehuda Kook, **קנין תורה**, 7.

²³⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, **מסוד התורה הנואמת**, 61. Similar quotations can be found on *ibid.*, 58; 108.

hoped the yeshiva would be instrumental in bringing a concentration of divine energy to the people of Israel.²³⁸

Indeed, he hoped that "a new light upon Zion" would "go forth ... to all Israel from Merkaz HaRav," an image usually interpreted as symbolizing the coming of the Messiah.²³⁹ Merkaz HaRav was to be a place of "the risking of life for the sake of the holiness of the ... public," a place from which "goes forth the strength for success in war for the army of Israel."²⁴⁰ Because of its focus on redemption and the chosenness of Israel, his yeshiva became, in his view, the "center of life" for the state, embodying the "holiness of all the community."²⁴¹

Obviously, the director of such a center of redemption and holiness must be critical to the process of redemption. Through being Rosh Yeshiva of Merkaz HaRav, Zevi Yehuda Kook believed he personally was helping to bring about the messianic age. Just how critical his presence was to the redemptive focus of the yeshiva can be seen in the changes it has already undergone since his death. It has increasingly concentrated on matters of personal piety and

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 226.

²³⁹ He used such phrases on a number of occasions. See, for example, *ibid.*, 6-7; 129; 86. In *ibid.*, 7, he also used the word משיח, also usually associated with the Davidic Messiah.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65; 102.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

has steadily become less involved politically. Some of the students have even become *haredim*, and certain "redemptive" aspects of the curriculum, including the emphasis on the Yerushalmi, have been eliminated.²⁴²

The Redeeming Sage -- A New Akiva

Zevi Yehuda Kook did not limit his messianic role to that of Rosh Yeshiva of a messianic institution, however. Rather, he also took on a role that he had projected onto his father, that of redeeming sage. He modelled this sage especially after Akiva, who not only was a great sage for Israel, but, more importantly, anointed a messianic leader, Bar Kokhba.

He believed that great sages, in general, had a special role in the bringing of the messianic age, in the "lifting up to the highest.... The special ones, the wise ones are made similar to ministering angels, and make worthy the faithful masses through their deeds and thoughts ... which reveal, from what was in darkness, the lights of salvation ... and prepare the generation."²⁴³ While such sages are always important, they become more important during ages of significance, and "how much the more so ... in this

²⁴² Lustick, *For the Land*, 166.

²⁴³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור הנביא*, 238-39. A similar quote can be found on *ibid.*, 148.

generation of the redemption."²⁴⁴ In this age, he believed, because of the nearness of the completion of redemption, a single sage could be critical in being able to reveal the secrets needed for complete redemption -- and he was that sage, not only because he lived at the most critical of times, but also because the necessary secrets were to be found in his father's teachings, according to one of his "prophetic" dreams.²⁴⁵

Certainly, his descriptions of this redemptive sage, who will "authorize the revealing of the true Messiah,"²⁴⁶ match his own self-proclaimed characteristics rather closely. For example, this sage should be able to combine broad ideals with details and should be willing to take stands on the political issues facing the nation, just as he had through Merkaz HaRav.²⁴⁷ He²⁴⁸ would guide Israel through the "factors which complicate and confuse the whole existence of this great progress" of redemption by finding an "accord between the earthly eye ... and the heavenly eye," thus revealing "in broad daylight, the face of our righteous Messiah," by knowing how to reveal the secrets of

²⁴⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 166.

²⁴⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבותי*, 309-310.

²⁴⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 38.

²⁴⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוך התורה הנוראה*, 3.

²⁴⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, unlike Wise, could see no role of significance for women in the bringing of redemption.

Torah.²⁴⁹ Since Zevi Yehuda Kook felt himself to be uniquely capable of revealing such secrets, as the best interpreter of his father's works, this sage must be himself.

Not only would the sage of this generation serve as the revealer of messianic secrets, thus hurrying redemption along, he would also be "tzaddik ha-dor," a concept Zevi Yehuda Kook explicitly borrows from Nachman of Bratzlav.²⁵⁰ What is the role of tzaddik ha-dor? As we enter the "era of the footsteps of the Messiah, God will send out and reveal the soul of the great sage who will prepare the age, ... our present Chosen Tzaddik, that eye to eye they [God and the people of Israel] will see, in order that we merit the uplifting."²⁵¹ In other words, the tzaddik ha-dor prepares the generation for the Messiah by "bringing near the distant with his love," by teaching with "whole faith, the revealed

²⁴⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, "Zionism and Biblical Prophecy," 178-79.

²⁵⁰ Lustick, *For the Land*, 92. Abraham Isaac Kook, in general, was fascinated with Nachman's teachings and quoted them in many of his works, so Zevi Yehuda Kook was clearly familiar with Nachman's writings. This does not prove, however, that he believed, as did Nachman, that the tzaddik ha-dor carried the soul of Messiah ben Joseph, although, as will be discussed below, since Zevi Yehuda Kook saw himself as Messiah ben Joseph, this may have been the case. Certainly, his father saw a rather extraordinary role for tzaddikei ha-dor, calling them "Israel's princes," with a link to God which is "fed .. by prophecy." Abraham Isaac Kook, "The Road to Renewal," *Tradition*, 13 (Winter, 1973): 151-52.

²⁵¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוד התורה הנראית*, 221.

and the hidden, the private and the communal obligations," by "elevating their spirit," thus ensuring the "revival and salvation ... of the nation of Israel."²⁵² Since Zevi Yehuda Kook himself worked to "bring near the distant," since, at Merkaz HaRav, he taught courses in "faith" and emphasized "the revealed and the hidden," he was acting as, and probably viewed himself as, the tzaddik ha-dor.²⁵³

The redeeming sage is not only indirectly involved with bringing the messianic age, however. Zevi Yehuda Kook based his ideal sage on a historical model -- that of Rabbi Akiva. By focusing on Akiva, he wanted to emphasize that the redeeming sage must actively and directly work toward bringing the Messiah, as Akiva attempted with Bar Kokhba. Thus, he wrote that Akiva was the "giant of the giants," the greatest of all sages, because he actively fought to bring about complete redemption.²⁵⁴ Furthermore, "Akiva did not err when he thought Bar Kokhba to be the Messiah... Bar Kokhba ... was similar to the Messiah,... there was in him something messianic."²⁵⁵ Akiva's belief in Bar Kokhba and

²⁵² Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*, 268-72.

²⁵³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*; 26, Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנואלת*, 58; 226; 78.

²⁵⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 181-182.

²⁵⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנואלת*, 195. Similar quotes can be found in Yitzhak Shilat, "Useless Messianism and False Messianism," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 76 (8/10/1984): 16-17; Tor, "To Continue to Push the End," 12-13. Tor quotes Zevi Yehuda Kook as saying that it was only "when he [Bar Kokhba] was killed that it was known to him [Akiva] that he

in the imminent coming of the Messianic Era was "the distinct virtue of Rabbi Akiva," which should serve to

arouse our enthusiasm and devotion to enhance all the manifestations of the redemptive revival of Israel in its homeland. The very fact that, at the time, Rabbi Akiva's hopes were dashed with the downfall of Bar Kokhba and the subsequent decline of Israel as an independent nation, provides us with an assurance that the sacred truth issuing from the mouth of this sage must be fulfilled at the appointed time, seen to be drawing nearer and nearer.²⁵⁶

It seems from such statements that Zevi Yehuda Kook saw himself as a new Akiva -- and that, therefore, he hoped soon to anoint his own Bar Kokhba, a Bar Kokhba who would be completely victorious, who would be Messiah ben David.

The Redeeming Prophet -- A New Elijah

Zevi Yehuda Kook was not content with being a new Akiva, however. He also viewed himself as a prophet, as he had viewed his father, and he saw this prophetic role as being integral to the process of redemption. Furthermore, this prophetic role again had a historical model -- that of Elijah, who, according to tradition, will come to usher in the Messianic Era.

was not the one [the Messiah]." Abraham Isaac Kook also thought highly of Akiva and Bar Kokhba, and he was fascinated by other messianic movements as well; Shatz, "Utopia and Messianism," 87.

²⁵⁶ From a talk to the B'nai Akiva movement in 1937, quoted in Aviner, "Messianic Realism," 117. Aviner incorrectly attributes this to Abraham Isaac Kook, who had been dead for two years by that time.

Zevi Yehuda Kook considered the role of the prophet to be linked with that of the sage. He agreed with his father's teaching that "all the prophets were sages," and that, furthermore, an ideal prophet combines halakhic learning with prophetic insight, promoting practical ways to live out God's ideals, as did Moses, whom he considered to be the greatest prophet.²⁵⁷ Since, as the Messiah draws near, prophets will become more and more like Moses, they will become more and more like sages. Similarly, as the messianic age dawns, sages become more and more like prophets, for the more important the generation is, the more filled with the spirit of God is the *g'dol ha-dor*, the great one of the generation.²⁵⁸

Since Zevi Yehuda Kook considered himself to be a great sage, he, by his own definition, is at the least close to being a prophet. Moreover, his definition of the prophet's general functions shows that, once again, he defined a role in such a manner that he himself was uniquely qualified to fill it. For example, he wrote that a prophet is one who reveals "inspiration" by connecting "practical details of oral law" with "philosophy," as he himself did at Merkaz HaRav. Furthermore, one important role of the prophet is

²⁵⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנוראה*, 27; Aviezer Ravitsky, "The Prophet and Social Reality in the Thought of Ahad Ha'am, Martin Buber, and Rabbi Kook," *Forum*, 32-33, (Fall, 1978): 97-101.

²⁵⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 236.

that he "reveals how to remain in the Land," and, in that same essay, Zevi Yehuda Kook revealed just that, explaining that in order to stay in the land, Jews must settle it and focus their souls on the blessing, "God chose us from all the nations."²⁵⁹ He thus fulfilled these necessary requirements for being considered a prophet.

As noted before, he also had what he considered to be prophetic visions, another part of the role of the prophet. Even though these take place at night, he referred to them not as dreams but as "visions," a term traditionally applied only to prophetic revelations.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, as noted earlier, these visions had the power, according to Zevi Yehuda Kook, to win battles for the Israeli Army, a power which emphasized their divine origin.

How is prophecy related to redemption? Zevi Yehuda Kook linked prophecy to redemption as both a cause and an effect. He wrote that as the End of Days draws nearer, prophecy will become stronger and stronger.²⁶¹ Also, through the "merit of settling," prophetic vision becomes clearer and clearer.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנראית*, 110.

²⁶⁰ See, for example, Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבותי*, 318-319; 308; 310; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנראית*, 100-101.

²⁶¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 142.

²⁶² Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבותי*, 36. His father also predicted that prophecy would increase as more and more of the Land of Israel came under Jewish control; Agus, *High*

The fashion in which prophecy helps speed redemption along is best seen through his comments about Elijah, the model he used for a redeeming prophet. Once again, he delineated as Elijah's best and most important qualities characteristics which he himself had. For example, he claimed that the most important task of Elijah was to "lead men to serve in fighting in a war," and that to do Elijah's job, one "must send men to the fight of their generation."²⁶³ Since Zevi Yehuda Kook pioneered the concept of yeshiva students serving in the Israel army, he met this criterion. Elijah's other major task was to "criticize harshly the government when it is against mitzvot," another role Zevi Yehuda Kook fulfilled quite well.²⁶⁴ Through these tasks, Elijah helped to redeem the people of Israel. Elijah also had visions of salvation, visions that brought strength to the people -- and Zevi Yehuda Kook had similar visions, ones that typically ended with him reciting a prayer about the coming of salvation or the arrival of the Messiah.²⁶⁵ Particularly in his last recorded sermon, Zevi Yehuda Kook seemed to identify with, or perhaps as, Elijah. Though the parashah did not

Priest, xii; Weissbrod, "Gush Emunim Ideology", 268.

²⁶³ Quoted in Klonsky and Shteiner, "Courage and Strength," 22.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור הנביא*, 310-11.

explicitly deal with Elijah or redemptionist themes, Zevi Yehuda Kook nonetheless focused the sermon almost entirely on him. He interrupted the sermon four times to sing "Eliyahu Ha-Navi," and he closed with the messianic prophecy, "Here I send to you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord." It seems from the context that when Zevi Yehuda Kook said "here I send to you," that he was talking about himself being sent.²⁶⁶ As will be discussed below, certainly a number of his students interpreted his statements in such a fashion.

Zevi Yehuda Kook's prophetic role, then, is messianic in several ways. First of all, the renewal of prophecy itself is a sign of the dawning of the messianic age. Secondly, the prophet's task is to help in the salvation of the nation, thus hastening redemption. In this context, Zevi Yehuda Kook became not an interpreter of traditional texts, but rather a person who spoke with direct prophetic authority, a divinely-ordained guide to understanding the divine will, a person endowed with the most powerful sort of charismatic authority. Finally, the prophet he modelled

²⁶⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוד התורה הנוראה*, 247-48. Zevi Yehuda Kook was not the only Jewish leader to identify with, or perhaps as, Elijah. Samson Raphael Hirsch, who showed a number a similarities with the leaders examined here, also portrayed himself as, and perhaps believed himself to be, Elijah. For an interesting discussion of this, see Robert Liberles, "Champion of Orthodoxy: The Emergence of Samson Raphael Hirsch as Religious Leader," *AJS Review*, 6 (1981): 52-57.

himself after was Elijah, who will personally usher in the messianic age.

The Redeeming High Priest -- A New Samuel

As noted earlier, Abraham Isaac Kook dreamed from his youth of becoming High Priest and serving the Messiah in his Temple. While this dream was never achieved, he was often called the "High Priest of the Rebirth," even during his life, and his son, on several occasions, referred to him as the "High Priest of all Israel."²⁶⁷ As might be expected, this dream seems to have been passed down from father to son. In fact, it was around the time of Zevi Yehuda Kook's birth that Abraham Isaac Kook began to intensify his study of priestly law, and his son began to learn such law from the beginning of his studies with his father.²⁶⁸ Study of priestly law was a key part of the curriculum Abraham Isaac Kook established at Merkaz HaRav, and his son continued and expanded these classes, personally overseeing them.²⁶⁹ Given such a background, it is not surprising that Zevi Yehuda Kook also emphasized his own priestly status and that, furthermore, after calling his father "High Priest of

²⁶⁷ Elkins, *Shepherd of Jerusalem*, 127. For Zevi Yehuda Kook's references to his father, see, for example, Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנואלת*, 200; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *להלכות צבור*, 47.

²⁶⁸ Agus, *High Priest*, 27-28.

²⁶⁹ Lewis, *Vision of Redemption*, 72.

Israel," he emphasized that the High Priesthood is inherited by "family ties," thus establishing himself as his father's successor as High Priest.²⁷⁰

What sort of role did Zevi Yehuda Kook see the High Priest as fulfilling? First of all, the High Priest has a "special holiness," holier than all the rest of Israel.²⁷¹ Furthermore, just as "Jerusalem is the center of the Land of Israel," and "the center of Jerusalem is the Temple," "the center of the people of Israel are the priests, the heart of Israel."²⁷² He also identified the High Priest with tzaddik ha-dor, who, "through his priesthood," intervenes on behalf of the people of Israel "in order to speed redemption."²⁷³ And, since the High Priesthood could not actually be re-established until Messiah ben David comes, the role of High Priest was bound up in the process of redemption.

But the High Priest was even more directly involved in the redemptive process than that. Not only would the High Priest anoint the Messiah, thus, in fact, making him a Messiah, but "the holiness of the Priest," the greatest of all levels of holiness, would hasten redemption, for

²⁷⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, קנין תורה, 32.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 74. It should be noted that he used the word Merkaz here over and over again, possibly alluding to Merkaz HaRav.

²⁷³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, גותיבות ישראל, 145. Of course, since Zevi Yehuda Kook considered himself to be tzaddik ha-dor, he would be High Priest as well.

"through his explanations [of Torah], he prepares the great redemption ... and causes a new light to shine upon Zion."²⁷⁴ He is the "representative of all Israel" in the process of redemption.²⁷⁵ In fact, the goal of the entire messianic process is to create, in a slight variation on the biblical phrase, "a kingdom which fulfills priestly requirements."²⁷⁶

As with the roles of redeeming sage and prophet, the redeeming High Priest also has a historical model, Samuel.²⁷⁷ Samuel served as an appropriate model for the redeeming High Priest for several reasons. First of all, he combined a variety of roles, being a judge and prophet as well as being a priest. Second, he in a sense started the messianic process, for he anointed the first king from the House of David, David himself, the messianic prototype. Third, and probably of equal importance from Zevi Yehuda Kook's viewpoint, his own father had been linked with Samuel. Many had called Abraham Isaac Kook the "seer" during his life, which was not only a play on the Hebrew initials for Rabbi Abraham HaKohen, but also the prophetic

²⁷⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוד התורה הנואמת*, 79; 141.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁷⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבות ישראל*, 37,.

²⁷⁷ Interestingly, Jesus, who was depicted as a High Priest-Messiah in the Epistle to the Hebrews, seems to have been portrayed as a second Samuel in the birth narrative of the Gospel of Luke.

title reserved for Samuel alone.²⁷⁸ Zevi Yehuda Kook himself referred to his father as "the seer" and called him both a priest and a judge.²⁷⁹

Zevi Yehuda Kook also identified with Samuel. He said that in the last generation before Messiah ben David, tzaddik ha-dor must be both a priest and a judge, the functions of Samuel.²⁸⁰ Since he considered himself to be tzaddik ha-dor, and since he believed that his was the last generation before Messiah ben David, he implied that he also was a Samuel figure, combining the roles of priest, judge and prophet. Indeed, if the wise believe that one has "the inspiration of prophecy," then one should "become a judge"- and since he was obviously a prophet, he must become a judge, and thus, through these combined roles, a new Samuel.²⁸¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that he named one of the early *Gush Emunim* settlements he helped found *K'far HaRoeh*, the village of the seer, or that the word he used to describe his visions was that used in relation to Samuel.²⁸²

²⁷⁸ Elkins, *Shepherd of Israel*, 127.

²⁷⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסעך התורה הנוראה*, 38; 33.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

²⁸² Tal, "The Land of Israel," 5; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנביא*, 317.

One other possibility should be mentioned in connection with the redeeming High Priest. As was mentioned above, there is a long and well-developed tradition of an Aaronide Messiah. While much of this tradition obviously lies outside of mainstream Judaism, Zevi Yehuda Kook most likely would have been familiar with kabbalistic interpretations of Zechariah 4: 1-5, 11-14 and 6: 12-13, which speak of a priestly Messiah. Thus, while we have no direct evidence for Zevi Yehuda Kook believing in an Aaronide Messiah, or that he himself was such a Messiah, it is certainly possible, given the great importance he placed on the priestly role in general and its relationship to redemption in particular, that he held such beliefs.

In any case, it should be noted that all three of the historical models he used for these redeeming roles share an important characteristic. All were involved, or, in the case of Elijah, will be involved, with the announcing and anointing of a messianic figure. From this, it seems clear that Zevi Yehuda Kook expected to announce or even anoint Messiah ben David imminently, thus ushering in the Messianic Era.

Messiah ben Joseph

No matter how critical these roles may have been to the process of redemption, Zevi Yehuda Kook did not content himself with the roles of redeeming sage, prophet, or

priest. Rather, he placed himself in the very heart of the messianic age through his belief that he himself was Messiah ben Joseph, a claim which echoed that of Nachman of Bratzlav. Indeed, like Nachman, he made messianic calculations with relation to Messiah ben Joseph, and he increased his activities during years that he predicted would be critical to the coming of Messiah ben David.

Before addressing the evidence for his belief that he was Messiah ben Joseph, it should first be made clear what he believed Messiah ben Joseph should be like, for his beliefs in this area differ greatly from traditional interpretations, although they come rather close to those of Nachman of Bratzlav. Usually, Messiah ben Joseph is portrayed as a warrior, a hero-Messiah, who will die in battle just before the coming of Messiah ben David, the Messiah who brings total redemption, both physical and spiritual. Zevi Yehuda Kook, however, portrayed Messiah ben David as "the Messiah of Kingship ... of the army and state."²⁸³

In contrast, Messiah ben Joseph, according to Zevi Yehuda Kook, is sent (משל) by Messiah ben David "to teach and ... to repair the house of study." He is "the Messiah of the strengthening of Judaism, of the establishment of Torah and mitzvot," the revealer who "furthers the oral law" and teaches the people of Israel

²⁸³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, מתוך התורה הנואמת, 80.

that "divine intention supersedes private choice."²⁸⁴ Messiah ben Joseph will be a sage, like Moses, and will, in fact, "have the soul of Moses, our teacher." He is the successor to the High Priest. Furthermore, he will be so modest as to be "without an 'I.'"²⁸⁵

Careful examination of Zevi Yehuda Kook's writings show that he met all these requirements. Since he is the priest, he is the "one sent," (שליח) for all Israel.²⁸⁶ He certainly dedicated his life to teaching and the "repair of the house of study" through his work on the curriculum of Merkaz HaRav. Through *Gush Emunim* and Merkaz HaRav, he promoted not just the mitzvot in general, but the most important mitzvah of all, especially from the viewpoint of redemption: the settling of the land. Furthermore, he strengthened Judaism by "drawing near the far," thus helping to further establish Torah. Since he worked out of "love" and not religious coercion, he was able to further the oral law, both in his yeshiva and with those who had been non-religious before their contact with him.²⁸⁷ His stance that the territories must be kept, because of commandments by

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 80; Zevi Yehuda Kook, קנין תורה, 21-22. Note that "sent" is in the past tense, implying that Messiah ben Joseph has already appeared.

²⁸⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, מתוך התורה הנוראה, 206; Zevi Yehuda Kook, אור לנתיבות, 46.

²⁸⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, מתוך התורה הנוראה, 58.

²⁸⁷ Zevi Yehuda Kook, מתוך התורה הנוראה, 78.

God, whether or not the majority favors the occupation, demonstrated that the divine commandment must supersede private choice. He most certainly believed that he was a sage, and since, like his father, he believed that the prophet in the generation in which the Messiah will come-- his own generation, for which he was the prophet -- contains the "soul of Moses,"²⁸⁸ he met the requirement that Messiah ben Joseph will have that soul. As far as being a successor to the High Priest, this can be understood two ways. He might have meant that he is the successor to his father, the High Priest, or he himself is not only a High Priest, but more. In either case, he met this requirement as well. Finally, as noted above, Zevi Yehuda Kook clearly thought he met the general requirement for modesty. According to one of his speeches, he also fulfilled the requirement not to have an "I." In this speech, he protested over and over again that he never did anything for personal gain, that in all he ever did in his life, "there is no I here."²⁸⁹

The evidence seems clear, therefore, that not only did Zevi Yehuda Kook see himself playing a variety of redemptive roles, but that these roles culminated in his belief that he actually was Messiah ben Joseph, the very last step before the complete redemption of Messiah ben David. Through the merit of running a messianic yeshiva, Merkaz HaRav, through

²⁸⁸ Ravitsky, "The Prophet and Social Reality," 97.

²⁸⁹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *למנוח צדק*, 239; emphasis his.

the combined talents of his being a sage, prophet and priest, he came to be at the center of the messianic process -- for without Messiah ben Joseph, Messiah ben David cannot come, and if Messiah ben Joseph truly does appear, Messiah ben David's coming is imminent.

Messianic Calculations

Wise, for much if not most of his American career, fully expected the messianic age to begin by the start of the twentieth century. He did not base this belief, however, on any sort of traditional messianic calculation, at least according to present evidence. Zevi Yehuda Kook, on the other, did engage in messianic calculations, and these had a profound affect on his activities during two years.

Zevi Yehuda Kook paid a great deal of attention to dates, noting, for example that after having been born on Erev Pesakh, he arrived in Israel during the year תשד"ז, "make a seder," and that his father arrived in Jerusalem on the very day that, during 1967, the Old City, including the Western Wall, was recaptured, the day that would become Yom Yerushalayim.²⁹⁰ He even explicitly endorsed the making of messianic calculations, stating that all those who had done so in the past had not "declared useless words," but rather

²⁹⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור פנימי*, 285; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוך התורה הנואפת*, 47.

had helped to bring about the messianic age through their "profound and great" actions.²⁹¹

One calculation he used was based upon a teaching from the Talmud about how much time will pass from "the beginning of redemption" until "perfect redemption."²⁹² This passage indicates that seven years will elapse between the beginning of redemption and the arrival of Messiah ben David. The first year will be marked by "difficult wars." In the sixth will come "cries," in the seventh, the "final war," and at the beginning of the eighth year, "the Son of David comes."

It appears that, based on this passage, Zevi Yehuda Kook assumed that the Six-Day War was the "difficult war" and the Yom Kippur War the "final war." Just before the start of the seventh year after the Six-Day War, according to the Hebrew calendar, he predicted that this would be the year of the "great deed of God."²⁹³ It was during this year, 1973/74, in the midst of a several month-long phase of manic activity, that *Gush Emunim* was founded. Also during this year, he made his first attempt at founding a settlement, Elon Moreh.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנוארת*, 80. This statement was made during *תש"י*, which, as will be discussed below, was one of his years of messianic expectation.

²⁹² This teaching is found in B.T. *Megillah*, 17b. That this was the calculation he used can be found in *Ra'anan*, *נפש אמונים*, 66.

²⁹³ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנוארת*, 42.

²⁹⁴ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *להפכות צבור*, 41-50.

The second "calculation" seems to have been based on the significance of the Hebrew letter equivalent of a year. This year, תשנ"ח, 1977/78, was the focus of more predictions and more sustained messianic activities than the earlier attempt at messianic calculation. During his Rosh HaShanah sermon for תשנ"ח, Zevi Yehuda Kook made much of the fact that תשנ"ח was the year of "the sending." This was to be the "New Year of the Son of David," a year of "Send forth my people," a passage from Exodus that is usually associated with the dawning of the Messianic era.²⁹⁵ It was during תשנ"ח that he wrote his description of Messiah ben Joseph, particularly emphasizing that "Messiah ben David sent (נשלח) Messiah ben Joseph out" in order to bring about the messianic age.²⁹⁶ Also during his Rosh HaShanah sermon of that year, he said that the High Priest is the "one sent out (נשלח) by all Israel."²⁹⁷

He did not content himself with predictions during תשנ"ח, however. He dedicated a new *Bet HaMidrash* in Merkaz HaRav at the beginning of the year, with a speech that made reference to Messiah ben David and Messiah ben Joseph.²⁹⁸ He appears to have instituted a special *tikkun khatzot*, a

²⁹⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, מתוך התורה הנואמת, 57.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 79-80. Note that the verb "sent" is in the past tense, indicating the Messiah ben Joseph has already arrived.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 243-245.

type of midnight prayer, on behalf of Messiah ben Joseph.²⁹⁹ More importantly, his activities during that year increased tremendously, making it appear that he spent nearly the entire year in a manic phase. For example, he sent out twice as many public announcements during that year than during any other.³⁰⁰ Furthermore, his sermonic output and his rabbinical writings increased tremendously. Over 40% of all his sermonic material from 1971 to 1982 was written and delivered during תש"ל. When Messiah ben David did not appear even by the end of the following year, he became severely depressed and ended up being hospitalized for a "great illness," which reduced his output to almost nothing during the following two years.³⁰¹

Thus, his messianic self-view did not remain in the theoretical realm. Rather, because he believed himself to be Messiah ben Joseph, he increased his activities significantly during times which he thought were critical to Messiah ben Joseph. These actions certainly had a great impact upon his movement; *Gush Emunim* was founded during the first of these periods of high messianic expectation, and it

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

³⁰⁰ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לחזקת צבור*, 116-62.

³⁰¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לחזקת צבור*, 212-223; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מחנך התורה הנואם*, 247-48; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *לנתיבותי*, 291. While it is true that he was quite old by this time and that the decrease in productivity might have been due in part to his old age, he did become more productive the year following these two, apparently having gotten over his disappointment from תש"ל.

had its year of greatest growth, both in terms of settlements founded and in terms of public notice, during the second of these periods.

VI. Response of Others to Zevi Yehuda Kook's Messianic Roles

Others' Views of his Charisma

In some ways, Zevi Yehuda Kook did not seem typically charismatic. No reports emphasize his eyes or physical presence. One American scholar even went so far as to write that "he was barely articulate, and that both his speech and writings were hard to follow."³⁰² Nevertheless, his Hebrew writings, particularly his collected sermons, contain an undeniable power and fascination, and they often speak with crystal clarity. His delivery of these sermons, according to his own students, was far from inarticulate. He would often pause theatrically, or even break into song or tears in dramatically appropriate places.³⁰³ These sermons, even when on difficult subjects, were usually "completely entrancing," and students "would usually lose track of time."³⁰⁴ Furthermore, his public notices, written in a much simpler style than his learned sermons, were, if

³⁰² Aronoff, "Institutionalization," 63. Lustick, *For the Land*, 92, makes a similar, though less extreme conclusion about the clarity of Zevi Yehuda Kook's writings.

³⁰³ See, for example, Zevi Yehuda Kook, *התורה הנוראה* [The Great Torah], 47, 247-48.

³⁰⁴ Interview, Yosi Kaufman.

anything, even more dramatic and full of fire.³⁰⁵ Clearly, though a different type of writer or orator than Wise or Herzl, he exhibited great charisma when speaking and writing.

While he did not exhibit the sort of commanding physical presence Herzl did, he did seem to physically radiate holiness, according to his students. One wrote that "his face shone with an exceptional divine light," while another claimed that when he would enter the yeshiva, the students' "hearts and thoughts would be filled with the exaltation of God."³⁰⁶ It was this "light of holiness," as well as his obvious idealism that so appealed to the *Gahelet* splinter-group when they first met him.³⁰⁷ Interestingly, Hanan Porat wrote that Zevi Yehuda Kook was not "charismatic ... because that is a personal matter. His power comes from divine matters and thus is irresistible," although, according to Weber, that is precisely what charisma is.³⁰⁸ His holiness so suffused his writings that Rabbi Abraham Shapira, Chief Rabbi of Israel, wrote that his sermons were "oral Torah" and his writings "written Torah."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *להלכות צבור*.

³⁰⁶ Klonsky and Shteiner, "Courage and Strength," 20; Chaim Abihu, in Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנואפת*, x.

³⁰⁷ Aronoff, "Institutionalization," 48.

³⁰⁸ Quoted in Ra'anan, *גוש אמונים*, 71.

³⁰⁹ In Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבותי*, 9.

Through this "holiness," he established strong charismatic bonds with his disciples. In fact, "his influence over his followers was to exceed the influence his father exercised," and his disciples came to view him as an all knowing father, "doing whatever he would suggest."³¹⁰ In this manner, he continued to win over new disciples, personally recruiting students and establishing a personal, charismatic bond with them, as Wise had. Often, non-Orthodox students would come for one lecture, out of curiosity, and then would become *baalei t'shuvah* and remain as yeshiva students.³¹¹

This charisma affected not only his disciples, but his secular political allies as well. Though they would often refuse to deal with his own disciples, such as Moshe Levinger, they treated Zevi Yehuda Kook with utmost respect.³¹² His charisma "overcame both severe personal rivalries and religious differences within the group" when he set about to aid the founding of Tehiya.³¹³ Again, his personal presence prevented, during his lifetime, the eruption of tensions between religious and non-religious

³¹⁰ Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics*, 74; Interview, Yosi Kaufman. Segal, one of his critics on the extreme right, claims, however, that he always framed advice to followers "in a manner which left his pupils room to choose and decide for themselves"; Segal, *Dear Brothers*, 25.

³¹¹ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור החיים*, 290.

³¹² Segal, *Dear Brothers*, 62; Lustick, *For the Land*, 99.

³¹³ Lustick, *For the Land*, 58.

settlers in *Gush Emunim* settlements, although these have gotten steadily worse since his death.³¹⁴ Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to his charismatic authority with secular politicians was Begin's visit to him in 1977, just after Begin was asked to form the government. Begin went to Zevi Yehuda Kook's apartment "to solicit the rabbi's blessing and to kiss his hand."³¹⁵ Begin came

as if this man, Zevi Yehuda, was God's representative. Suddenly the Prime Minister kneels and bows before Zevi Yehuda. Imagine for yourself what all the students standing there and watching this surrealistic scene were thinking. I'll never forget it. I felt that my heart was bursting within me. What greater empirical proof could there be that his fantasies and imaginings were indeed reality? You could see for yourself that instead of treating him as if he were crazy, people looked upon him as upon something holy. And everything he said or did became holy as well.³¹⁶

Even those opposed, or at least initially opposed to him were influenced by his charisma. When he, with his followers, tried to settle Elon Moreh, Israeli soldiers were sent to forcibly evict them. The soldiers did so, even when the settlers physically resisted. They even wrestled General Ariel Sharon, who was with the settlers, into an army jeep and confined him there. But no one dared touch

³¹⁴ Weissbrod, "*Gush Emunim* Ideology," 270.

³¹⁵ Sachar, *History of Israel*, 93-94.

³¹⁶ Daniel Ben-Simon, "Merkaz HaRav: Here Developed *Gush Emunim*," (Hebrew) *Ha'aretz*, April 4, 1986, p. 8, cited in Lustick, *For the Land*, 59.

Zevi Yehuda Kook.³¹⁷ When anti-religious, secular settlers in the Golan, in Keshet, objected to students from Merkaz HaRav coming to help their effort at establishing a settlement, Zevi Yehuda Kook went to meet with those opposed to him and his students. After one meeting, not only were they convinced to go along with him, but many became religious and eventually came to study at Merkaz HaRav, because of the "strength of his deep and certain confidence," which "emanated from within him."³¹⁸

Another effect of his charisma became manifest after his death. He was mourned by "hundreds of thousands," and "his children-students cried out and uttered an awful cry: 'Our father, and father of all Israel!' ... Who can retell and who can describe those awesome, terrible and exalted hours?"³¹⁹ Since then, huge religious celebrations have marked the anniversary of his death each year.³²⁰

The effect his charisma had had also became manifest in one other way after his death. As long as he had been alive, *Gush Emunim* had had uncontested, authoritative

³¹⁷ Segal, *Dear Brothers*, 27.

³¹⁸ B. Ehrlich, "Keshet: The Holy Rebellion," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 100 (7/11/86): 12-13.

³¹⁹ Aronoff, "Institutionalization," 63; Chaim Abihu in Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מתוך התורה הנוראה*, ix.

³²⁰ Julien Bauer, "A New Approach to Religious-Secular Relationships?" in Newman, *Impact of Gush Emunim*, 106.

leadership. They have not had such leadership since. As Rabbi Yaakov Ariel wrote:

While Rabbi Zevi Yehuda was still living, there was natural leadership, but since his death... divisions of opinion have been created. Rabbi Zevi Yehuda ... was not just an abstract ideologue, but rather also told us what to do and how to do it, which was the greatness of his leadership.... After the death of Rabbi Zevi Yehuda, no longer are there people who can be satisfied with expressing opinions [about the way our movement should go]; only all the public [all of *Gush Emunim*] together can, perhaps, merit the same enlightenment that previously one person merited by himself.³²¹

Many of his disciples have tried to take on Zevi Yehuda Kook's leadership, to speak with his authority. Usually, in order to do so, they claim they are only interpreting his own teachings.³²² Even Hagai Segal, deeply embittered by criticism from much of the *Gush Emunim* leadership after the arrest of the "underground, started the photographic section of his book with a picture of himself standing with Zevi Yehuda Kook.³²³

But such attempts to appeal to his authority have failed. Within a month after his death, *Gush Emunim* was already deeply split over the response to the withdrawal from Sinai. During the next two years, rivalries between his disciples increased steadily, as four different

³²¹ Yaakov Ariel, "Only Together," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 59 (6/10/1983): 16.

³²² See, for example, Aviner, "Messianic Realism," 110; Lustick, *For the Land*, 73; 92.

³²³ Segal, *Dear Brothers*, 158.

political parties were started, each with internal schisms, and three different attempts at founding a *Gush Emunim* governing board failed.³²⁴ Tehiya split apart, and, in general, none of his disciples had anywhere near the stature Zevi Yehuda Kook had, with either secular or religious Zionists.³²⁵

Thus, Zevi Yehuda Kook's charismatic authority, even without being explicitly linked to his various redemptive roles, helped him to build his movement. It enabled him to win over devoted disciples, allies, and, on occasion, even those initially opposed to him. Without that authority, his disciples have not managed to truly succeed him -- or to continue to bring success to his movement.

Others' Response to his Redemptive Roles

His followers, however, did not respond merely to Zevi Yehuda Kook's charisma, but especially to the way that it manifested itself in his various redemptive roles of sage, prophet and priest. For example, several of his disciples, after his death, called him the *tzaddik ha-dor* "chosen *tzaddik*" of the generation. As the *tzaddik ha-dor*, he was the "wellspring of salvation of the joyous teaching."³²⁶ He

³²⁴ Lustick, *For the Land*, 62-64; 73.

³²⁵ Don-Yehiya, "Jewish Messianism" 232; Schnall, "*Gush Emunim*," 155.

³²⁶ Zevi Yehuda Kook, *קנין תורה*, 6; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *הנוראה* *אור לנתיבות*, 17. *מתוך התורה*, xiv; Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*, 17.

was even compared positively to Akiva by an American supporter of *Gush Emunim*.³²⁷

More frequently, his followers considered him a prophet, and some of these even compared him to, or considered him to be, Elijah. For example, in a work where Zevi Yehuda Kook defined a prophet as one who is "entirely *Shekhinah*," the editor, in the introduction, wrote that Zevi Yehuda Kook himself was "entirely *Shekhinah*."³²⁸ Certainly after his "consecration," many of his disciples considered all of his teachings to be prophetic.³²⁹

Some credited him with characteristics usually reserved for Elijah. For example, Rabbi Abraham Shapira, the Chief Rabbi of Israel, said that Zevi Yehuda Kook "turned the heart of the parents to the children and the heart of the children to their parents," a prophecy that Elijah is supposed to fulfill just before the coming of Messiah ben David.³³⁰ Chaim Abihu wrote that, like Elijah, Zevi Yehuda Kook "merited the revival of the dead."³³¹ Abihu also called Zevi Yehuda Kook "the chariot of Israel," an

³²⁷ Shubert Spero, "The Religious Meaning of the State of Israel," *Forum*, 29 (January, 1976): 81-82.

³²⁸ Chaim Abihu, in Zevi Yehuda Kook, *התורה הנואלת*, *מסוד*, x. Zevi Yehuda Kook's definition of the prophet can be found on *ibid.*, 27.

³²⁹ Lustick, *For the Land*, 92.

³³⁰ In Zevi Yehuda Kook, *אור לנתיבות*, 10.

³³¹ In Zevi Yehuda Kook, *התורה הנואלת*, *מסוד*, xi.

appellation of Elijah that Wise's disciples used for him after his death.³³² He even went so far as to start the whole book he edited with the description of Elisha and the other disciples witnessing Elijah's ascent into heaven, concluding this story by saying that after Zevi Yehuda Kook's death, his disciples saw that they must "take the mantle of Elijah that remained in our hands," so as to "complete the perfection of redemption" and publish his teachings.³³³ Furthermore, he closed this book with the sentence, "Lo, I send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the Lord."³³⁴

Aviner, in a passage that apparently alludes to Zevi Yehuda Kook, also attributed to him characteristics of Elijah. He talked of two Messiahs. Secular Zionism is "Messiah ben Joseph," who is "tottering on the brink of death." But "we [Zionists from Merkaz HaRav] are building a new stage, of the spirit of Messiah ben David ... which will be announced by our new Herzl, the Herzl of *Gush Emunim*." While this "new Herzl" is not explicitly identified, at the time this was written, with Zevi Yehuda Kook still alive and

³³² *Ibid.*, 247.

³³³ *Ibid.*, x-xi.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 248, emphasis in the original. This passage is a quote from Malachi 3:23 and is used to close *The Prophets*.

healthy, it is very unlikely that he could have been referring to anyone else.³³⁵

While such comparisons are relatively less frequent, some of his disciples also viewed him, as his father had been viewed, as the High Priest of Israel, or more specifically, as a new Samuel.³³⁶ Abihu, for example, wrote that he came "in the likeness of Samuel" and as a "Judge of God."³³⁷ In describing Zevi Yehuda Kook's death, Abihu made one last comparison which, while not fitting directly into any of the "roles" of Zevi Yehuda Kook, certainly shows the devotion of his disciples and their belief in his redeeming power. He wrote that "the heavens wept a sweet tear as they accepted an ... angel of the Lord of Hosts ... who arose to them."³³⁸

From these testimonies, it is clear that, at the least, a sizable percentage of his disciples believed that Zevi Yehuda Kook was critical to the redemption process. Some saw him as the tzaddik ha-dor, others as a High Priest, and a large number as a prophet, even as Elijah himself. Of course, if they truly believed Zevi Yehuda Kook was Elijah, their devotion to his teachings, particularly in relation to the coming of the Messiah, has a certain inner logic. Who

³³⁵ Quoted in Rubenstein, *מי לה' אף*, 114-15.

³³⁶ Mergui and Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs*, 128.

³³⁷ In Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוך התורה הנואפת*, xi.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, ix.

would know better than Elijah just when the messianic age will dawn? And, if one's rabbi truly is Elijah, then one should give him one's complete devotion, for his word is a revelation of God's will.

Others' Views Of His Messianic Role

Perhaps fearing repercussions from their opponents, no one in *Gush Emunim* openly declared that Zevi Yehuda Kook was Messiah ben Joseph. Indeed, such fears would not be groundless, for opponents of the movement often compared it to Sabbatianism and Zevi Yehuda Kook was occasionally called a new Shabbetai Zevi. Even some of his halakhic rulings were criticized on the grounds that he had taken too much authority upon himself because of messianic pretensions.³³⁹ Several pieces of evidence, however, seem to indicate that some in the movement may have held that belief, even though they did not state it in public. For example, in the late 70's, some *Gush Emunim* settlers were proclaiming that "the Messiah has already come," while in 1980, an editorial in *Nekuda* stated that "Messiah ben Joseph is with us," although in neither case was the Messiah named.³⁴⁰

³³⁹ Schnall, "*Gush Emunim*," 157; Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics*, 94. Yeshayahu Leibowitz is among those who labelled the movement as Sabbatian in nature.

³⁴⁰ Quoted in Tal, "Foundations," 39. The 1980 *Nekuda* editorial is discussed in a later editorial, "Messiah Now," (Hebrew) *Nekuda*, 100, (7/11/86): 76.

In other remarks, Zevi Yehuda Kook is explicitly identified with messianic tasks, although he is not called the Messiah. For example, many of his disciples associated him with the building of the Third Temple, which he clearly stated could only be done by the Messiah.³⁴¹ Abihu wrote that Zevi Yehuda Kook's "perfect explanation" of the Torah will bring "the end of days," and applied to him the phrase from Isaiah 49:3, "you are my servant ... in whom I glory," a phrase frequently associated with the Messiah.³⁴²

Perhaps the clearest, although still indirect, linking of Zevi Yehuda Kook with Messiah ben Joseph is that of Yaakov Filber, one of Zevi Yehuda Kook's older followers, who, while Zevi Yehuda Kook was still alive, explained Zevi Yehuda Kook's messianic schema and agreed that Israel was presently in the midst of the second stage, during which Messiah ben Joseph would arise. Messiah ben Joseph, Filber claimed, would be "one who spreads the light of Abraham Isaac Kook." This Messiah was alive now, as the "tzaddik ha-dor," although Filber did not name him. He did hint, however, that many did not recognize Messiah ben Joseph, because the "*sitra achra* [the "other side," the forces of evil] keeps us from recognizing him."³⁴³ Nonetheless, he

³⁴¹ Sprinzak, *Gush Emunim*, 9.

³⁴² In Zevi Yehuda Kook, *מסוד תורה הנורא*, xiv; x.

³⁴³ Yaakov HaLevi Filber, *אילת השחר*, (2d edn., Jerusalem, Israel, 1975): 117, 134-135, 139-140. This last notion, of the *sitra achra* working to prevent the

asserted, the one who will bring redemption as Messiah ben Joseph is the one who "opened our prayers" at the Western Wall.³⁴⁴ Since Zevi Yehuda Kook obviously was involved with spreading his father's teaching, since many of his followers acknowledged that he was tzaddik ha-dor, and, most of all, since he led the first prayer service at the Wall after its recapture, thus "opening our prayers," it seems fairly certain that Filber was referring to Zevi Yehuda Kook.

If such expressions and opinions are indicative of the views of *Gush Emunim* adherents, then the messianic fervor of the movement, like that of historical messianic movements, was not abstract, but rather was focused on one messianic leader. Such a belief makes understandable his followers' devotion to him and his cause, for if they believed that he was Messiah ben Joseph, they must have had complete faith not only in him but in the eventual success of their movement. It would also explain why, since his death, the movement has often been in disarray and has sometimes turned to even more extreme and violent measures than he himself had advocated. After all, if a person that one believes was Messiah ben Joseph dies, it can only mean one of two things. First, perhaps he was Messiah ben Joseph, in which case Messiah ben David will arrive any day, thus justifying

recognition of Messiah ben Joseph, may have been a reflection of delusions of persecution stemming from Zevi Yehuda Kook's grandiose self-view.

³⁴⁴ Filber, *אֵילַת הַשָּׁחַר*, 180-181.

extreme measures out of hope. On the other hand, if he was not Messiah ben Joseph after all, this would justify extreme measures out of despair, as happened after Shabbetai Zevi's apostasy.

VII. The Messianic Leadership Hypothesis and Alternatives

The rapid rise of *Gush Emunim* to prominence within Israeli society intrigued many writers, both political and scholarly. These writers have come up with a variety of theories to explain *Gush Emunim*'s success. I believe that each of these theories is flawed, to a greater or lesser extent, and that Zevi Yehuda Kook's success in founding the *Gush Emunim* movement cannot be explained without examining the critical role messianic leadership played in building up that movement. Before discussing the logic of the messianic leadership hypothesis within the context of *Gush Emunim*, however, I will first review the various proposed theories, roughly in order from least to most useful.

Revolt Against Secularism

Kevin Auruch believes that *Gush Emunim*'s success can be attributed to a revolt against the ongoing secularization and modernization of Israeli society. He draws an analogy between *Gush Emunim* and the early Hasmoneans, who revolted not only against the Seleucid Empire, but also against the "hellenized" Jews, Jews who were eager to follow foreign cultures at the expense of their own. *Gush Emunim*,

according to Auruch, plays upon feelings of resentment at the triumph of secularism, a sort of new "hellenization," and it attempts to bring about a new Hasmonean revolution, bringing Jews back to the faith.³⁴⁵

This theory contains several fundamental flaws. First of all, secularism was not on the ascendancy when *Gush Emunim* originated. If anything, the state, even before *Gush Emunim* was founded, had become less secular than during its founding, due to such factors as changing patterns of immigration, population growth among Orthodox communities, and the like. Second, *Gush Emunim* was by no means the most extremely anti-secular movement of its time -- the haredim were far more antagonistic to secularism than *Gush Emunim*, which, in fact, encouraged secular settlers to join its movement. Finally, the center of *Gush Emunim*'s revolt was not directed against secularism or modernism per se, but against the notion that Israel was a normal nation, a notion shared by secular and religious Jew alike. Zevi Yehuda Kook wanted to change the way people viewed Israeli history, to enable them to see the hand of God in Israel's ongoing redemption.

Nonetheless, the analogy to the Hasmonean period is not entirely inapt. Zevi Yehuda Kook did speak of the possibility of "brother fighting against brother," and he

³⁴⁵ Kevin Auruch, "*Gush Emunim: Politics, Religion and Ideology in Israel*," *Middle East Review*, 11, (April, 1982): 30.

did reject foreign, as opposed to modern culture.³⁴⁶ The notion of a movement for national independence linked with religious renewal, led by a priestly family, may also have appealed to Zevi Yehuda Kook, although he wrote more about Bar Kokhba than the Maccabees.

Organizational Superiority

Other analysts, similar to those who would credit Wise's success to his "organizing genius," have credited *Gush Emunim*'s success to its effective organizing skills.³⁴⁷ The movement orchestrated mass demonstrations, lobbying efforts, and settlement campaigns, with an "impressive ability to differentiate between ends and means."³⁴⁸ While I believe this latter ability to be important, *Gush Emunim*, in fact, did not show sustained effectiveness in organizing skills, and its differentiation between ends and means stems not from any management skills, but rather from its messianic ideology.

To claim great organizing skills for *Gush Emunim* is to completely ignore its history since the death of Zevi Yehuda Kook. Once he died, the movement foundered in a series of rivalries and organizational squabbles, leaving it, at

³⁴⁶ Quoted in O'dea, "Roots," 43.

³⁴⁷ See, for example, Giora Goldberg and Efraim Ben-Zadok, "Gush Emunim in the West Bank," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 22 (January, 1986): 65-66.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

present, with no official governing board or spokesperson. The leadership, without the charismatic, unifying presence of Zevi Yehuda Kook, simply could not hold the movement together.

But even Zevi Yehuda Kook himself did not hold the movement together through any great skills at organizing. Any objective look at his history shows that, for most of his life, he was, like his father, an organizational failure. Until he managed to successfully assert his charisma, he could not even run a yeshiva, let alone build a society-changing movement.³⁴⁹ He held the movement together because, as had Herzl, he personified its goal -- the achievement of messianic redemption for all the Land and people of Israel.

Nonetheless, one facet of this theory, *Gush Emunim's* ability to distinguish between ends and means, is worthy of note, for it highlights the importance of Zevi Yehuda Kook's underlying messianic ideology. Because, like Wise, he emphasized the messianic importance of union, he could give transcendent justification for what might appear to be pragmatic compromise. Furthermore, he used his charismatic authority, as had Herzl, to give him flexibility in dealing with various potential allies that more rigid ideologues might not have met with.

³⁴⁹ Lustick, *For the Land*, 12.

The Critical Importance of His Disciples

As noted above, several writers claim that Zevi Yehuda Kook was not critical to *Gush Emunim's* success, that his "disciples" were the true leadership of the movement from the start, and that they brought about its success. There is no denying the importance of these disciples. However, a look at their effectiveness as a group before meeting Zevi Yehuda Kook, as well as their difficulties since his death, demonstrates his greater relative importance.

As noted above, all of his earliest disciples came from a group known as *Gahelet*, a splinter-group of B'nai Akiva. They had worked together for almost ten years before coming to Merkaz HaRav to study with Zevi Yehuda Kook. In that time they had attempted a revolt against the B'nai Akiva leadership -- which had failed -- and a revolt against NRP leadership -- which also failed.

Zevi Yehuda Kook gave them a coherent ideology and a messianic focus. Under his leadership, they possessed a great goal to work toward -- the messianic redemption of all of Israel -- and a path toward that goal -- the teachings of Zevi Yehuda Kook. Inspired by his charisma, devoted to him and the cause because of the strong leader-disciple bond, they began to make his vision a reality. Under his guidance, they set up Yeshivot Hesder, successfully changed sections of the B'nai Akiva movement, successfully were

elected to leadership positions within the NRP, founded Tehiya, and built up and led many settlements.

It does not detract from Zevi Yehuda Kook's importance when one credits the role of his disciples. Rather, it highlights the importance of the leader-disciple bond under a charismatic leader, for through his disciples, such a leader can increase his success manifold. Even Herzl, who chose relatively ineffective disciples, could not have accomplished all he did without them; and with Zevi Yehuda Kook, it is clear that his disciples were often quite talented.

But they were not talented enough to build a movement on their own. This is aptly demonstrated by their quarrels and rivalries since Zevi Yehuda Kook's death. More than their common background in *Gahalet*, Zevi Yehuda Kook's messianic leadership held them together. Once it was gone, they disputed each other's authority, and none of them could fill the redemptive roles that Zevi Yehuda Kook had taken on.

The Popularity of Extremism

Many writers have commented on the "inspiring self-confidence" of Zevi Yehuda Kook and *Gush Emunim* members.³⁵⁰ Janet O'Dea believes that this is the primary reason for *Gush Emunim*'s success. She wrote that "the voice of

³⁵⁰ See, for example, Lustick, *For the Land*, 14.

rationality and moderation is always dim next to the voice of extremism and emotionalism," that "the voice that introduces complications and ambiguities is always dim next to the voice of clarity and self-certainty," and she notes the undeniable appeal of a movement "which identifies the holy with an empirical social order," which "asserts the unique and superior rights of the 'family'."³⁵¹ Particularly during a time of anomie, "when consensus on values and meaning is threatened," people "are searching for certainty and security."³⁵² Thus, because it is a "voice of extremism," because of its self-certainty, *Gush Emunim* has succeeded.

Again, this theory is problematic in several aspects. O'Dea proposes a general theory that historically does not hold true. Extremism simply does not always triumph. Furthermore, it does not even hold completely true in this case. During *Gush Emunim*'s rise, even more extreme alternatives, such as Meir Kahane, also came onto the Israeli scene, but they have yet to achieve the power or popularity of *Gush Emunim* at its height. In many respects, the haredim are also more extreme than Zevi Yehuda Kook was, but, at least until his death, *Gush Emunim* appeared to be growing much more quickly.

³⁵¹ Janet O'Dea, "Religious Zionism Today," *Forum*, 28/29 (Winter, 1978): 117.

³⁵² O'Dea, "Roots," 41.

In fact, in some ways, it is the more "moderate" aspects of *Gush Emunim* which are most critical to its success. Zevi Yehuda Kook reached out to a variety of secular Israelis, both settlers and politicians, entering into coalitions that Kahane or the haredim would never have contemplated. His openness to the secular Israelis, his willingness to forgo religious coercion, his obvious idealism, made him popular with many who were less extreme than he.

On the other hand, it is clear that his certainty was an important factor in his popularity. What, however, gave birth to his certainty? Like Herzl, Zevi Yehuda Kook could have absolute confidence in both himself and his ideas because of his grandiose identity as redeemer, most specifically, in his case, as Messiah ben Joseph. He knew that he was working for a process that must inevitably succeed -- the divine redemption of Israel -- and that, in fact, he must succeed, because he was the divinely chosen instrument to bring about the next stage in that redemptive process. With this knowledge, he had the confidence both to project a reassuring, inspiring self-certainty that inspired certainty in his followers, while still occasionally being able to be "moderate" or flexible.

The Popularity of His Ideology

A number of writers credit Zevi Yehuda Kook's success to the appeal of his ideology. On one level, his ideology was popular, it has been argued, simply because it was an ideology with some "ideal" to it. Secular Zionism, by the time of the Six-Day War, had achieved most of its goals and was focused on the pragmatic, while the NRP consisted of "functionaries ... [with] a zeal for compromise in the name of political gain." Religious Zionists, as has been noted above, were under attack by the religious for not being religious enough and by Zionists for not focusing enough on Zionism.³⁵³ By finding a redemptive meaning in the history of the state of Israel, by focusing "religion" on the act of settling, Zevi Yehuda Kook managed not only to propose an ideology with ideals, but the only ideology which actually linked religion and Zionism, which gave explicit religious significance to the state.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, he turned the general messianic attitudes of his father into a doctrine with "specific political and behavioral implications," an ideology that could be acted upon.³⁵⁵

Certainly, Zevi Yehuda Kook's ideology was critical to the success of *Gush Emunim*, but not always for the reasons or to the extent that this theory proposes. First of all,

³⁵³ Schnall, "Impact," 21.

³⁵⁴ Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics*, 78.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 74; Aran, "From Religious Zionism," 139.

much of his ideology was not his ideology but his father's. While stating that all his ideas "are surely derivative and unoriginal" or that his "intellectual capacity was hardly the equal of his father's"³⁵⁶ probably exaggerates the point, it is clear that most of "his" ideology had already been thoroughly expounded by his father some twenty years before the founding of the state.³⁵⁷ Thus, like Herzl and Wise, much of Zevi Yehuda Kook's thought had been expressed by others earlier. If ideology, however, was all that was required for a movement to be founded and to grow, his father would not have failed in his many attempts to found political parties, institutions, a Sanhedrin, and so on. Something more than ideology is required for the successful building of a movement.

As to the idea that somehow Zevi Yehuda Kook contributed something critical to his father's ideology by concretizing it and giving it political foundations, this just does not seem to be the case. Abraham Isaac Kook himself wrote that the people of Israel "possess absolute sanctity, unconditioned by their behavior."³⁵⁸ Abraham Isaac Kook also wrote that the secular can partake of holiness, whether they know it or not, and that it is holy

³⁵⁶ Biale, "Mysticism and Politics," 194; Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics*, 74.

³⁵⁷ Lewis, *Vision of Redemption*, 75.

³⁵⁸ Quoted in Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion*, 196.

to work with them.³⁵⁹ Thus he expressed his thought politically, with suggestions for political and social action. Certainly, his attempts to start a religious party were not meant to be theoretical. The only major "ideological" difference between father and son was what stage of the messianic process they saw themselves in, a difference born as much out of history as out of ideology. And yet his father was never able to build up a political following, let alone a party, despite several attempts.

Why, then, did Zevi Yehuda Kook succeed and his father fail in this respect? First of all, he succeeded because of his charisma, which was rooted in his messianic self-view. Thus he was "adulated as a spiritual leader by ... many who ... in all likelihood never had read his articles or heard his speeches," a sure sign that they were moved by something more than his ideology.³⁶⁰ Furthermore, because his messianic hopes were more imminent than his father's, they could be both more inspiring and more demanding politically, calling for more concrete actions to further the redemptive process. Finally, because he felt that he himself was Messiah ben Joseph, he gave a real focus to the messianic ideology. He was not just a visionary. He was, in his own view, a "realist," because he knew that his vision would become reality, because he had divinely inspired knowledge

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

³⁶⁰ Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics*, 76.

and was a divinely chosen instrument. Thus, without having to sully himself like an NRP member, he was able to appear both idealistic and, in the context of his messianic self-view, realistic.

The Spirit of the Age

Probably the most popular hypothesis, and one that, as was the case with both Wise and Herzl, does explain some of Zevi Yehuda Kook's success, was that he succeeded because he fit in with the "spirit of the age." While his father had proposed his ideology too far ahead of his time, Zevi Yehuda Kook correctly felt the pulse of the nation and responded to its emotional and spiritual needs. Because he met these needs, his movement succeeded.

What needs were these? First of all, even before the Six-Day War, a process of "petrification" had begun in secular, pragmatic Zionism. The very establishment of the state had forced much rethinking -- because the long sought-for goal of Zionism had been met. Now, many early leaders had thought, Israeli society needed to move from ideological debates to the practical act of building up the state. This, however, led to an ideological vacuum.³⁶¹

This vacuum was exacerbated by the Six-Day and Yom Kippur Wars. Just before the Six-Day War, many Israelis had

³⁶¹ Yigal Elam, "Gush Emunim: A False Messianism," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 1, (Fall, 1976): 60-61; Aran, "From Religious Zionism," 120.

felt abandoned by other nations as Arab forces massed near their borders. When, despite this abandonment, Israel won, and in the process of winning, conquered places steeped in messianic symbolism, such as the Temple Mount, many Israelis began to feel, first, that other nations should not be trusted, and second, that Israeli history was somehow special, that the Israeli army was, "in a special sense the instrument of God."³⁶² The Yom Kippur War, if anything, increased the questioning that was going on in Israeli society, as well as reinforcing the attitude that other nations could not be counted on.³⁶³

According to this theory, Zevi Yehuda Kook tapped into all these feelings and questions and thus succeeded in founding a powerful movement. His ideology addressed feelings of power and feelings of fear, the feeling that other nations were not reliable allies, and the feeling that Israel had a special destiny, a destiny which emphasized the importance of Jewish unity.³⁶⁴ He was in tune with the spirit of the time and so rode a wave of popular opinion into success for *Gush Emunim*.

This, however, greatly oversimplifies the situation. First of all, the spirit of the times was not univocal.

³⁶² Friedman, "The State of Israel," 203; Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion*, 201.

³⁶³ Don-Yehiya, "Jewish Messianism," 232.

³⁶⁴ Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics*, 112.

After the Yom Kippur War, a large number of grass-roots, anti-establishment groups formed, and some, such as Yigal Yadin's "Democratic Movement for Change," even met with success for a while. These movements must have sensed a different "spirit of the time" than Zevi Yehuda Kook, and, if their initial success is any indication, there were those in society who agreed with them. And yet, with the exception of *Gush Emunim*, these groups all died out within a few years.³⁶⁵ Even a movement with aims similar to *Gush Emunim*, that in some sense was responding to the same "spirit," the "Movement for the Whole Land of Israel," was swallowed up by *Gush Emunim* by 1977.³⁶⁶

Furthermore, even Zevi Yehuda Kook's religious interpretation of the Yom Kippur war, that it was a warning from God that we had not settled the territories quickly enough, was disputed by others who felt a different spirit of the time. Oz v'Shalom, for example, saw the Yom Kippur War as having the opposite meaning -- a warning from God about our arrogance in not returning the territories.³⁶⁷ And yet, *Gush Emunim* grew much more quickly than Oz v'Shalom.

All these groups attempted to respond to the "spirit of the time," and some, at least, met with as much initial

³⁶⁵ Lustick, *For the Land*, 44.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ Hareven, "Sociological Model," 28.

success as Zevi Yehuda Kook and his movement. Can *Gush Emunim's* ultimately greater success be attributed solely to an ability to be more in tune with the spirit of the times? Zevi Yehuda Kook succeeded more than Oz v'Shalom on the one hand and the "Movement for the Whole Land of Israel," on the other, because he proposed an ideology, and had a self-view, that was messianic, and they did not. Thus, he proposed a plan that could guarantee a more perfect peace than Oz v'Shalom because it would be a God-given peace, given to the people of Israel when they do God's will. He proposed a motivation for keeping the territories far more powerful than those of the "Movement for the Whole Land," for, according to Zevi Yehuda Kook, Israel needs to keep the territories because God wants it to, because if it does so, it would help speed up the completion of redemption, not just preserve the wholeness of the land. Thus, Zevi Yehuda Kook managed to tap into not only the spirit of the time, but the timeless spirit and symbolic power of the messianic idea, as embodied in himself and his movement.

Nonetheless, certain aspects of the spirit of the times obviously aided his movement's growth, as was the case for both Wise and Herzl. For example, the "miraculous" victories of the Six-Day War must have made his messianic vision seem more attainable, for suddenly others began to notice what he had been preaching for years about the redemptive nature of the state. Furthermore, the

questioning that arose after the Yom Kippur War made Zevi Yehuda Kook's messianic certainty all the more appealing to many Israelis.

The Logic of the Messianic Leadership Hypothesis

To sum up, it was the combination of Zevi Yehuda Kook's messianic self-view and the messianic ideology upon which he founded *Gush Emunim* that brought him success. These contributed to his success in a variety of ways. First of all, several aspects of Zevi Yehuda Kook's messianic personality contributed to his success. Because of his manic phases, he was able to devote extreme amounts of energy to the movement at critical times. In addition, these very manic states were interpreted by his followers as being times of prophetic revelation, thus inspiring them to be more devoted to him and to his cause. In particular, he was in a manic phase at three critical times for *Gush Emunim*: before and during his "consecration," in 1967, which greatly impressed his disciples and bound them close to him; before and during the founding of the movement itself, in 1973/74, when his manic state again inspired confidence on the part of his followers and his ability to work and write for long hours helped spread the message of the movement; and during the year תשנ"ז, 1977/78, when many settlements were founded.

His personal charisma, combined with the inspirational effects of his manic phases, won to him a circle of devoted disciples. These disciples, through his guidance and under his command, built a series of institutions that helped spread the message of *Gush Emunim* even more.³⁶⁸ Their hard work and absolute loyalty to him were critical to the early growth of the movement.

His messianic ideology also inspired devotion on the part of his other followers. It made *Gush Emunim* a great and inspiring cause to be a part of -- not merely the settling of a territory, but the bringing of redemption to Israel and to all the world. Thus it raised the issue of settling the West Bank to a cosmic level, making any disloyalty to the cause into a delay of world redemption. It also was fundamentally optimistic, for, being on God's side, members of *Gush Emunim* knew they would succeed in the end. They could see their devotion as being self-less, for they were merely trying to follow God's will, not their own. This messianic ideology also gave a transcendent quality to the imperatives of Zevi Yehuda Kook: since world redemption hung upon his teachings, he must be followed, even if his ideas are not immediately popular.

This transcendent quality, as well as the power of messianic symbolism, thus legitimized the changes in societal norms which Zevi Yehuda Kook felt should take

³⁶⁸ Don-Yehiya, "Jewish Messianism," 228.

place. For example, Israel's divinely ordained destiny meant that the secular Zionist ideal of becoming "like all other nations" should be dispensed with. The cosmic import of settling the territories meant that they should not be considered negotiable, as had been the norm. Along with this, despite what Israeli leaders had been attempting since the beginning of the state, no normal, political solution could be found to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It could only be solved by hastening the messianic redemption. Finally, religious Zionists should feel proud and not inferior because, if they followed Zevi Yehuda Kook's ideology, they would be both more Zionist than the secular Zionists and more religious than the *haredim*. Thus, not only was cleaving to these new norms, all buttressed by messianic symbolism, legitimized, but any beliefs contradicting Zevi Yehuda Kook's views were delegitimized.

Messianic symbols also helped the movement to grow, even among the non-religious. Because secular Zionism had used messianic symbols since before the founding of the state, Zevi Yehuda Kook's use of these symbols could speak even to secular allies.³⁶⁹ Thus, allies like Begin could respond to, and begin to use, the language of redemption--spreading *Gush Emunim*'s message still further.

³⁶⁹ Lilly Weissbrod, "Core Values and Revolutionary Change," in Newman, *Impact of Gush Emunim*, 80.

The new norms Zevi Yehuda Kook promoted, norms based on a messianic ideology, also brought a new sense of meaning to his followers. They made one's whole life significant, for every action could be tied into the redemptive process. They also engendered community, not only because of shared symbols, but because everyone in the movement had a shared purpose -- bringing about the Messianic Era -- and many had a shared geography -- the West Bank. The transcendent imperative of Zevi Yehuda Kook's thought could fill their whole life, bringing them personal fulfillment.

Finally, because of his messianic self-view, Zevi Yehuda Kook could be seen as both an idealist and a realist. Clearly, his messianic ideology was full of lofty, inspiring ideals. But, his followers believed, these were not just distant, unachievable visions. They had a redeeming sage, prophet, priest, even Messiah ben Joseph at the head of their movement, a man in contact with God, who knew the divine will. And so, they believed, his visions will be realized. The cause will be victorious. With faith such as that, it is not surprising how quickly *Gush Emunim* rose to prominence within Israeli society during Zevi Yehuda Kook's lifetime.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This study has examined Isaac Mayer Wise, Theodor Herzl, and Zevi Yehuda Kook in relation to the movements they founded, focusing on the effect their messianic self-view and their use of messianic symbolism had on their respective successes. During the course of this study, various similarities and differences in background and ideology have appeared. This conclusion first compares the backgrounds and ideologies of these three leaders and highlight the significance of their similarities and differences. Following these comparisons, it attempts to answer the variety of questions about messianic ideology, leadership and symbolism in these movements which these case studies have raised.

I. Comparison of Backgrounds

Wise, Herzl, and Kook¹ shared some remarkable similarities in terms of their personal histories. Along with, and rooted in, such similarities in biography, they shared many personality traits, although with some differences between them. These similarities played a significant role in both their development and success as leaders.

¹ Since this chapter does not deal with Abraham Isaac Kook, Zevi Yehuda Kook will be referred to simply as "Kook."

Personal Histories

Though they grew up in different countries, with differing surrounding cultures, even in families with different economic statuses, these three, in several significant respects, experienced remarkably similar childhoods. Most importantly, they lived through rather unstable family situations during their childhood. One source of this instability was economic. All three had fathers who were business failures, causing, at least periodically, economic hardship for their families. Related to and in part caused by this economic hardship, their fathers, for the most part, paid little attention to them. Perhaps for this reason, they all harbored resentments against their fathers. At least in the cases of Wise and Herzl,² they grew up much closer to their mothers, although it appears, most clearly in Herzl's case, that the attention their mothers paid to them was highly narcissistic, even, on occasion, veering from smothering attention to almost complete neglect, a situation Shabbetai Zevi also encountered. Both Herzl and Kook suffered the additional "instability" of having an older sister die during their late teen years,³ while both Wise and Kook moved many times

² Possibly for Kook as well, but biographical data are silent on this.

³ While six of Wise's brothers and sisters died, there is no indication of how old he was when they died or of any traumatic reaction on his part to their death. Nonetheless, it is certainly possible that he, too, had such a reaction.

during their early years, also contributing to feelings of instability and insecurity.

In addition to such insecurity, at least Herzl and Kook, like Nachman of Bratzlav, had extremely high expectations placed on them from early childhood. These expectations were tied up with the narcissistic relationship their parents had with them. Wise, apparently the oldest surviving son, may have experienced such high expectations from his grandfather, who seems to have been disappointed in his own son. Such high expectations probably contributed to feelings of unstable self-esteem.

Perhaps due to the traumas they experienced in childhood, as well as reflecting the high expectations placed on them, Wise, Herzl, and Kook all deemphasized their childhoods as adults, keeping their early years obscure. The only childhood incidents that they, or their early, hagiographic biographers would relate, are a few isolated examples of "early genius," times when they accomplished something extraordinary for their age. Even these incidents seem to have been distorted or deliberately manufactured, as was the case with Samson Raphael Hirsch.

One effect of such obscure childhoods was what I have called the "consecration myth," the myth propagated by these leaders and their followers that they had a sudden consecration experience, after which they emerged fully formed, their ideology and leadership skills entirely

developed, with a complete devotion to the divine cause for which they had been consecrated. Thus, Wise, for example, portrayed himself as "reborn" upon his arrival in America, steadfastly devoted to his new mission, though such was not the case, as he, upon arriving, most certainly did not set directly about becoming a rabbi, let alone a builder of the Reform movement. Similarly, Herzl, and later his followers, portrayed the Dreyfus affair as not only a consecration but as a "conversionary moment" for him -- although he had begun his journey to Zionism much earlier and did not fully develop his ideas until later. Even more notably, Kook's "prophetic" speech before the Six-Day War was part of a long development toward viewing Israel's history in a redemptive light, including several years of pleading for the conquest of the "whole land."

Since no sudden "consecration" occurred in any of these three instances, why did each movement accept this myth? What needs did it answer, so that it arose in each of these cases, even without factual backing? What is the power of the consecration myth? This myth's power becomes even more apparent when other examples of such "consecrations," mythic or not, are brought to mind, such as those of Moses at the burning bush, the prophetic call of Jeremiah, Paul on the road to Damascus, even Buddha and Mohammed.⁴ The number,

⁴ In at least Paul's case, the evidence, from a comparison of Paul's own epistles with the much later story of his life in the ahistorical Book of Acts, makes his

and variety, of leaders who have undergone sudden consecrations indicates the broad appeal of this myth.

While the psychological depths of a given myth may never be fully plumbed, there is a variety of readily apparent reasons for the development of such a myth. One such appeal is that this myth answers the question of how a person with a seemingly ordinary childhood can become an extraordinary leader. "Exceptional," and perhaps fictitious tales from childhood aside, Wise, Herzl, and Kook all led rather undistinguished lives as young adults. Herzl, after many failed starts, did achieve some fame as a writer before he became a Zionist leader, although his plays, which he believed were his forte, never became as popular as he had hoped, and many, even at the height of his fame as a writer, failed. Wise and Kook did not even achieve this much fame until later in life, Kook remaining obscure until he was already in his seventies. And yet, before their deaths, they each became founders and leaders of movements.

The myth of consecration provides an emotionally satisfying explanation for this phenomenon. On the one hand, it allows followers to ignore the relatively undistinguished youth of their great leader, for any time

"conversion" appear to be mythic. It certainly could be so in these other cases, as well.

before the "consecration" is not important.⁵ Thus, this undistinguished past is not allowed to detract from the power of the leader once the "consecration" has taken place. On the other hand, it makes such leadership seem available to the ordinary follower, who might reason: If my leader, who was once ordinary, could become exceptional, perhaps I can be transformed as well.

For Herzl, like Paul, this transcending of one's personal history was particularly important. Paul, from his own epistles, was known to have been a persecutor of the church. And yet, by the time he wrote those epistles, he was already one of the most powerful figures in the church hierarchy. How could such an enemy become not only loyal but be granted power by those who had been loyal all along? Not just a consecration but a dramatic conversion was needed to justify the power that Paul had already achieved. Similarly, Herzl had been, at best, indifferent to Jews and things Jewish, sometimes even writing in a vein that appears antisemitic, such as his characterizations of rabbis in The New Ghetto. How could one who stood so thoroughly outside the mainstream of the community dare to lead that community, and why should the mainstream recognize such leadership? The story of his "conversion" through the Dreyfus affair

⁵ In this context, "exceptional" stories from youth serve to prefigure the later transformation, much as, in the New Testament, Jesus' debate with Pharisees at thirteen prefigures his later ministry, even though no other tales from his youth are recorded.

made his devotion to the Zionist cause plausible, made his leadership of the cause excusable.

The consecration myth serves as something more than an excuse for personal history, however. It also connects the leader with the divine. The moment of consecration is seen as one of direct intervention by and revelation of God, a moment which elevates the leader and thus, through their connection with their leader, the followers. As William James noted, "the spirit of God is with us at these dramatic moments in a peculiarly miraculous way, unlike what happens at any other juncture of our lives."⁶ Thus, through their contact with the newly-elevated leader, followers are brought into close relationship with the divine. Furthermore, the very words and deeds of the leader are given elevated importance, since they constitute a direct connection with God and the divine will.

Since earlier prophetic figures, such as Moses or Jeremiah, are traditionally held to have undergone a consecration, these leaders become linked with the prophets of history when they too become "consecrated." This linkage itself elevates the leader and his cause. Thus, for example, Kook's followers elevated him, his words, and their cause when they treated his 1967 Independence Day talk as a

⁶ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York, 1936), 222.

moment of prophetic consecration, for, with a prophet as their leader, how could their cause fail?

Finally, the myth of sudden consecration seems more fitting for of a divine drama than does a gradual evolution. It is, quite clearly, more dramatic, even in a theatrical sense, to have a sudden consecration, a single, distinct moment of change. Furthermore, considering that the leader is supposed to be a divine agent, with certainty in the divine righteousness of the cause, such drama seems both appropriate and necessary. Thus, for example, it is important for Wise to appear as if, from the moment he first considered the question -- or rather was inspired by God to consider the question -- he was absolutely certain that Reform Judaism was the answer for Jews in America. After all, if he himself took years to be convinced of his answer, why should others be convinced of it? More importantly, how could it have been a divine inspiration unless he was immediately, dramatically convinced of its inspired nature, unless he was fundamentally and permanently transformed by that moment? Thus, for a variety of reasons, the myth of consecration serves to both highlight positive aspects of these leaders and excuse or obscure negative aspects, serving to make them more attractive to their followers.

Two other aspects of their adult personal history show significant similarities, similarities that also affected their abilities as leaders. First, family life was not

important for any of the three. Wise's and Herzl's children were neglected, leading, in Herzl's case, to severe, even fatal, problems, while Kook never even had children. Their wives, too, seem to have been secondary, at best, and both Wise and Herzl spent much time travelling alone. Wise's first wife, as well as Herzl's and Kook's wives, suffered from severe mental illness, at least at the end of their lives, and it appears that this illness was exacerbated, if not caused, by their husband's neglect.

The dynamic of their marriages seems to have been as follows. Initially, for whatever reason,⁷ Wise, Herzl, and Kook did not find complete fulfillment in their marriages, or even, in Kook's case, may not have been especially interested in marriage in the first place. Consequently, they sought fulfillment elsewhere, their cause. Then, once they began to invest time and energy in that cause, their marriage went further downhill -- further encouraging them to invest energy in their causes and not their marriage, so that they became obsessively devoted to their causes, an obsession that may have contributed to their success as movement founders even as it destroyed their family life.

⁷ This may have stemmed from childhood problems, particularly an inability to place complete trust in a relationship and a tendency to view others in black and white terms. Also, they seem to have all "learned" such neglect from their fathers, repeating the pattern of their parents' marriages.

The final significant similarity of their personal history was their shared status as outsiders, each in a variety of ways. Wise was a reformer and a Bohemian in a primarily Orthodox, German-American Jewish community, Herzl a Hungarian in Vienna who had never been active in the Jewish community, and Kook was an obscure rabbi at an obscure yeshiva, staking out a lonely position in the small camp of religious Zionists. Unlike most of the literature on the notion of "leader from the periphery," however, it is clear that the appeal they had as outsiders did not stem entirely, or even mainly, from negative feelings their followers had towards Judaism, from a secret desire to assimilate and thus associate oneself with a more assimilated leader.⁸

Such reasoning fails, at least to some extent, with all three leaders. Kook was by no means an assimilated Jew. While it is possible, in Jerusalem, to find yeshivot with stricter interpretations of certain laws, the students who came to Kook came from families less observant than they became at Merkaz HaRav. Wise promoted the observance of the

⁸ This is not to deny that such feelings played no role whatsoever in these movements. Herzl, for example, was popular at least in part because he was famous in the non-Jewish world -- a fame that served him better with some of his followers than "Jewish" fame would have. Moreover, at least some of his followers thought he was charismatic precisely because he did not "look" or "act" Jewish. Nonetheless, this was not the only reason Herzl was popular -- or even the only reason why his being an outsider appealed to his followers.

Sabbath, encouraging the closing of stores on Shabbat in areas that had never done so. In general, he tried to increase the level of Jewish participation on the part of those who did not practice Judaism at all as much as he focused on eliminating rituals among the Orthodox. Even Herzl, who did not promote ritual observance per se, wanted Jews to become more and not less proud of their Jewish identity, to become more open about the fact that they were Jews, to identify more actively with the Jewish people.

What role, then, did being an outsider play in these leaders' lives? What appeal might it have had for their followers? First of all, all of these leaders were supported from the beginning by other "outsiders" who, in time, became the core of the new movement. For example, the Gahelet splinter-group were disaffected outsiders, alienated from Israeli society in general and even from other religious Zionists. Similarly, Wise appealed to those who wanted to identify both as Americans and as Jews, who wanted neither to be Orthodox or to assimilate -- and such Jews were certainly not in power when he first came to America. Neither were Herzl's earliest followers part of the mainstream, either coming from older, previously small and relatively impotent Zionist societies, or becoming involved in Jewish society for the first time.

These leaders not only spoke to these outsiders, they promised to speak for them, to bring them from the outside

into the center. Thus, Wise, Herzl, and Kook all felt that they had the true vision of what Judaism should be, a vision that, in time, would be shared by all Jews. Their followers, therefore, would not only become less peripheral, but would, in fact, become the new mainstream.

Furthermore, by being outsiders, these leaders could give, or at the least appear able to give, a fresh perspective to problems facing the Jewish community, not beholden either to previous ideologies or to established authorities. Pre-Herzlian Zionists often appreciated Herzl's very lack of experience, for example, because he had not yet experienced defeat or infighting and so still had hope and energy. Wise also brought new energy to the American scene, while Kook appealed to the Gaheliet splinter-group because he was not an establishment -- and thus compromised -- NRP figure.

These leaders' "outsider" status also tied into their charisma in two ways. First, since they started as "outsiders," outside the establishment and without positions of power, they could not attract followers through any bureaucratic power they might have held if they had arisen within the context of an existing institution.⁹ They needed

⁹ It is true that Kook headed an existing institution, but before his charismatic bond with the Gaheliet splinter-group, he derived little power from that position, either within his institution or in Israeli society at large. As has been noted above, his students did not come to him because they thought highly of his yeshiva, which was floundering, but because they wished to study with him, personally.

charisma in order to be noted in the first place, in order to attract even their first, disaffected with society, followers. Second, in order to move these followers from the periphery into some sort of societal power, they again needed charismatic authority. With such authority, they could question and attempt to delegitimize existing power structures and institutions at the same time that they built up their own. Thus, for example, one way that Herzl made Zionism popular was to contrast it with the timid, establishment groups that tried to deal with antisemitism through "education." Therefore, their outsider status not only helped them to appeal to their initial followers, but it also required that they have a charismatic appeal in order to extend their initial base of support.

Personality Traits

The most dramatic and significant similarity in personality traits between these three leaders is their apparent manic/depressive syndromes.¹⁰ Since similar evidence has been brought forth for two earlier messianic figures, Shabbetai Zevi and Nachman of Bratzlav, and since several other explicitly messianic figures also showed traits associated with manic/depressive syndrome, it may be

¹⁰ While the evidence for such syndromes seems rather clear for both Wise and Herzl, and while there is at least some convincing evidence even for Kook, any such ex post facto analysis, without personal observation by a trained psychiatrist, must remain somewhat tentative.

that this syndrome is a necessary prerequisite for the formation of a messianic self-view. It certainly did have some direct effect upon this self-view, both internally and externally. Furthermore, this syndrome itself seems to have been caused, at least in part, by the unstable childhood environment these leaders grew up in.

Internally, the cycles of mania and depression created a psychological backdrop against which a messianic self-view made a certain sort of sense. During a manic phase, an individual feels virtually omnipotent, filled with a power that seems external to the self. A messianic delusion interprets such feelings religiously, making the individual believe that he or she is filled with divine inspiration and granted divine power. Wise, Herzl and Kook all believed that they were so inspired. During a depressive phase, an individual feels beset with problems, anxious, almost paralyzed. A messianic delusion would make the person interpret such feelings by externalizing them, by believing that he or she is opposed by powerful and evil forces which wish to thwart redemption. Wise, Herzl, and Kook all wrote about such forces. Wise focused on the opposition of society to "genius," Herzl wrote about how great leaders are often considered mad, while Kook, writing in a more traditional vein, taught that the forces of evil would try to obscure the mission of Messiah ben Joseph.

Their manic/depressive syndrome also served to reinforce their messianic self-view externally, by helping to convince their followers of their messianic destiny. As was demonstrated with both Shabbetai Zevi and Nachman of Bratzlav, manic phases may appear to followers, and not just to oneself, as times of prophecy, of divine inspiration. Something similar seems to have happened during Kook's "prophetic" moments, especially the 1967 speech. Wise's and Herzl's manic phases, while perhaps not interpreted as moments of prophecy by their followers, nonetheless deeply impressed their followers and lay at the core of their charismatic appeal. Furthermore, their ability to work almost ceaselessly during a manic phase helped further the cause of their respective movements. Finally, the periodic "triumph" of the manic phase over depression inspired their followers, for these triumphs were not seen as part of an endless cycle, but rather as a sort of psychological foreshadowing of the eventual triumph of their cause over its obstacles.

With all three leaders, their manic/depressive syndrome seems rooted in their childhood experiences, although, at least in the case of Herzl, it may have had a biological component as well. As was noted with Shabbetai Zevi, a childhood of high expectations but little emotional support, of parenting that swings wildly between narcissistic smothering and almost complete neglect, with a father who is

often absent, due, at least in part, to economic necessity, can create the unstable self-esteem that develops into manic-depression. All three leaders had at least several, if not all, of these elements in their childhood.

While a manic/depressive syndrome may be a necessary cause for a messianic self-view, however, it clearly is not a sufficient cause. Not all people with unstable childhoods, not even all people who could be clinically diagnosed as suffering from manic-depression, go on to become or even try to become great leaders, founders of movements. Certainly, they do not all believe themselves to be the messiah. Thus, while this personality trait may help explain the development of these leaders' messianic self-views, in and of itself it is not a complete explanation. For some reason or reasons, reasons I do not know and that may not be knowable, these figures transformed their psychological problems into the foundation of their attempt to build Jewish movements, accomplishments which stand no matter what motivated these leaders originally.

Their manic-depression also gave rise to their grandiose delusions, delusions that led each of these leaders to truly believe that they were to be the redeemers of the Jewish people, if not actually the messiah. Thus, for example, Wise so firmly believed that he was the destined leader of American Jewry that, except during depressions, he was certain that he could overcome any

difficulties. That explains his persistence in the face of failure, a persistence that was crucial to his success. Similarly, Herzl, knew he would redeem the Jewish people and create a homeland for them, and so he was able to keep on trying even when attempt after attempt came to naught.

Certain of their own greatness and eventual success, these leaders were able to convince their followers of it as well. Such certainty must also have helped create their charismatic authority. It certainly helped give them a special "presence" to which their followers responded, a presence noted for all three leaders. While Herzl's very physique also contributed to his presence, the same could not be said for either Wise or Kook. And yet, despite his short stature, Wise was routinely described as "tall," and he certainly captivated those in his presence. While Kook was not described by his followers as being majestic, as Herzl, and, to a lesser extent, Wise were, he seemed imbued with a "holiness," according to his students. It may also have been this burning certainty, along with their general obsession with their causes, that gave Herzl's and Wise's eyes their notable power.

While their grandiose delusions may seem rather extreme, neither Wise, Herzl, nor Kook were ever completely overtaken by their grandiose delusions. None, not even

Kook, ever publicly and explicitly made messianic claims.¹¹ All had grand schemes, but all realized how grand their schemes were. Nor did any of the three make false assumptions that others would immediately share their grandiose views of themselves. Even Herzl, who certainly thought highly of both himself and his various schemes, knew that he had to work to convince others of their rightness. Thus, all three remained somewhat in contact with reality, never letting their grandiose delusions grow completely out of bounds. Their flights of fancy lifted them to heights that inspired their followers -- but rarely, if ever, caused severe crashes -- until their death.

Similarly, none of these leaders developed deeply rooted delusion of persecution. In fact, whatever paranoid reactions they had, seemed at their core to be rooted in grandiose delusions rather than a paranoid world-view. Thus, they each believed that they were, at least on occasion, persecuted because they were great, because their ideas were so far ahead of their times.¹² Furthermore, these occasional feelings of persecution also demonstrated how much these leaders had merged their ego and ego-ideal,

¹¹ It is possible that Kook, like Nachman, communicated such claims to his inner circle of students, but no direct evidence for such claims has been discovered as of yet.

¹² Wise and Herzl expressed such thoughts in secular terms, speaking of the persecution of genius, while Kook spoke in cosmic, religious terms. Such reactions fit in well with the depressive phases of manic/depressive syndromes.

their cause. Whenever someone attacked them personally, they held it as an attack against the cause. And whenever someone attacked the cause, they accused their attacker of having personal motives, of holding a personal grudge against them, of being envious of their success or something similar.

What role did these feelings of persecution play in their movements? First of all, the merging of ego and ego-ideal focused the energy of the movement on the leader. Any disloyalty to him betrayed not only the leader, but also the cause itself. Such a focus could serve to unify the movement. It could also render these movements xenophobic, however, for whoever was not an ally could be an enemy. Certainly, Wise, Herzl, and Kook saw the world as populated with a variety of enemies, although such a view may have been at least as realistic as it was paranoid. Finally, in one sense, it made it more inspiring to be part of these movements. Even when the movement was not succeeding, even when it was under attack, that was only further proof of the greatness of its mission.

These leaders' manic phases, as well as their grandiose delusions and occasional feelings of persecution, also lent a certain obsessive quality to their devotion to their respective movements. All of them wrote that, at least on occasion, they could not stop writing or working for their cause. This gave them tremendous energy and devotion for

their cause, which was particularly critical to their success during the early stages of their movements, when devoted followers could not yet be counted on to spread the message of the movement.

Their deep emotional commitment to their causes also helped make each of these leaders into extremely effective communicators. Although their styles of writing and oration differed greatly, each of these three managed to captivate their audiences. All of them also had a sense of the dramatic, and each could create dramatic rituals, full of rich symbolism. Herzl led his whole life in a highly dramatic fashion, much more so than either Wise or Kook, but even these two lent great drama to their cause on many occasions, such as the dedication of the Plum Street Temple or the demonstration at Elon Moreh.

These similarities in personal history and personality are neither coincidental nor incidental. Rather, they helped lead these leaders into believing they were the redeemer of the Jewish people and, in at least Wise's and Kook's case, on being the Messiah, as well as contributed greatly to the fulfillment of their visions, enabling them to succeed in attracting followers and building movements. Nonetheless, such similarities, no matter how striking, cannot mechanistically explain how and why these three men became founders and leaders of movements. After all, as has been noted above, these are not the only three who faced

unstable situations in their childhoods, nor are they the only three who developed manic/depressive syndromes out of such childhoods. These similarities in background may be necessary, but they are certainly not sufficient, causes for the development of messianic leadership. Even with detailed analysis, the full reasons why they, and not others with similar backgrounds, developed into such leaders is not, and perhaps cannot be, known.

II. Comparisons of Ideology

At first glance, the ideologies of these three leaders seem as different as possible one from another. For example, Wise viewed Jewish identity as primarily religious, Herzl viewed it primarily as national identity like all other national identities, while Kook maintained that it was both national and religious, a unique and holy combination. Nonetheless, in several significant ways, their ideologies have much in common.

First of all, it should be noted that whatever their other accomplishments, none of these leaders were great original thinkers, a trait shared by many historical messianic pretenders, such as Shabbetai Zevi. Kook, for the most part, used and expanded his father's ideology, rather than developing one of his own. Herzl's Zionist ideology had been proposed by others before him, which even he, once he read such works, was ready to acknowledge. Wise, despite

some pretensions to the contrary, was not a brilliant philosopher or theologian. Even during his lifetime, there were other Reform rabbis in America who wrote more profound works. And yet, more than their contemporaries and predecessors, they effectively translated their ideologies into action.

This is in part explained by their emphasis on, and successful manipulation¹³ of, powerful symbols. They knew how to connect abstract ideas with highly emotive, action producing symbols. Such symbols could meet the emotional and psychological needs of their followers, especially during the early days of their movements, when material rewards could by no means be guaranteed. Typically, the most powerful of these symbols were messianic. Thus, for example, Herzl draped his movement in the symbols of the exodus from Egypt, Kook spoke of the wholeness of the land bringing the peace of the Messiah, and Wise etched his hopes for a dawning messianic era into the very windows of the Plum Street Temple. In each case, these symbols struck resonant chords in their followers.

One concept that each of these leaders used, and that Wise and Kook turned into one of their movements' central symbols, is that of union. Wise made the union of all of American Jewry into one of his most important goals,

¹³ By manipulation, I do not mean to imply that they themselves did not believe in the symbols they used, for each of these leaders sincerely believed in their causes.

building it into the very names of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College. Kook spoke of union and unification in terms of kabbalistic symbols, implying that union among his followers would help bring about unification in the heavens. While Herzl did not emphasize union as much in his ideology, he certainly put it high on his pragmatic agenda, trying to keep divisive issues, such as discussions of religion, away from the Zionist congresses.

These leaders also all believed that God's hand was behind history and that God's will was revealed through history -- and thus that one who held the key to understanding history understood God's will. As would be expected, they also believed that they themselves held that key. Wise saw the inevitable progress of rationalism and democracy everywhere he looked, and he believed that his style of Reform would inherit the earth, as the religion of rationalism and democracy. Herzl saw nationalism as the most basic force propelling humankind's activities, and so knew that Jews must primarily be a nation, a nation that, like all others, needed, and would achieve, a national home. He also believed that modern history had one other key, technology, whose true purpose, the liberation of humanity and the creation of the Jewish state, only he realized. Kook believed that Zionism was part of the divine process of redemption. Furthermore, only he knew precisely what stage

that process was in, that Israel was in the middle of redemption. This enabled him to interpret God's will through the Six-Day and Yom Kippur Wars.

These leaders also held a variety of dialectical ideas that they tried to keep in balance. Thus, for example, they all addressed both universalism and particularism. Each, in fact, believed that by redeeming the Jews, the whole world would be redeemed, because the Jews had a "mission" to the world. Wise spoke of the "Messianic mission of Israel" frequently. Jews, or rather, in his terminology, Israelites, needed to hold fast to their faith, to keep from assimilating, because it was through this faith that redemption for all of humankind would come. Herzl ridiculed the idea of the mission, as expounded by the Reformers, but he also proposed his own mission theory in his novel, Altneuland, the Jews created the most model of nations, thus leading all other nations to perfection and peace, a peace which would issue forth from Jerusalem. Kook, often accused of being more particularistic than his father, merely emphasized that the redemption of Israel must precede the redemption of the whole world, and so, he claimed, the most effective way to work for the redemption of the world was to work on behalf of Israel's redemption.

Similarly, these leaders sought a balance between portraying their ideas as inevitably coming about and

needing the devotion of their followers.¹⁴ Wise knew that Judaism would be the world religion of the future -- but, nonetheless, he strove mightily to strengthen Judaism among American Jews, to make them more proud of their heritage. Herzl knew that the Zionist state would be created, but, he hoped, with the support of his followers this creation could happen now. Kook also knew that Messiah ben David would come soon, no matter what -- but if all of Israel were settled, if the people were unified, Messiah could come now. Thus, in each case, there was a role for their followers, while at the same time this sense of inevitable success could keep those followers optimistic through times of apparent failure.

Each of these leaders also draped their ideas for the future in symbols and concepts of the past. In this fashion, they portrayed themselves as continuing, or even fulfilling, past Jewish history at the same time that they proposed radical changes in that history, offering both the comfort of tradition and the hope of a new future.¹⁵ Wise

¹⁴ This is not unique to these leaders. Marx, for example, wrote extensively about how capitalism would "inevitably" collapse -- while at the same time, calling for the "workers of the world" to "unite."

¹⁵ Gershom Scholem claimed, as noted above, that this was a key characteristic of Jewish messianic movements. While I agree that this characteristic is found in such movements, I think, in fact, that it probably is characteristic of almost all movements for social change. Most radical reformers cast themselves both as visionaries of the future and fulfillers of the past. For example, the French Revolution spoke of the natural "rights of man,"

claimed that Moses himself was the original reformer, and so that Reform Jews, rather than being revolutionaries, were simply returning to the roots of true Judaism. Furthermore, by becoming a "light unto the nations," Jews were fulfilling their original purpose. Herzl portrayed Zionism as simply a second exodus. He also claimed that the national element had been the core of Jewish identity all along, and so nationalism was not itself a revolutionary change. Kook saw *Gush Emunim* as a return to the "core ideas" of Judaism, chosenness, the land, and Messiah. He did not want to establish some new form of government, but rather to fulfill the words of the prophets and reestablish the Davidic kingdom. At the same time, he was returning to the original Zionist spirit of *halutziut*, attracting settlers who were idealistic and pioneering.

Despite, or perhaps in conjunction with, their ideology and ideals, all of these leaders also tried to balance their own image, to appear both realistic and idealistic. This balance seems to have been related to that between inevitability and action, *s'* or the very notion of inevitable success made these leader's visions seem more realistic. Also, while they focused almost entirely on symbols and symbolic actions during the early days of their movements,

rights they believed originated in primitive societies which they idealized. The Puritans believed they were returning to a more Biblical faith. Even the word radical itself shows this dual focus on both past and future -- for it means to return to the root of something.

each progressively focused more and more on concrete actions as time went on, even if those actions entailed compromise.¹⁶ Moreover, each of these leaders, despite their visionary talk and high ideals, each explicitly labelled themselves as realists, and each accused opponents, even opponents who attacked them as being dreamers, of being utopian and unrealistic. Nonetheless, each had appealing visions, and each, in comparison to more established leaders, appeared idealistic. For example, Kook was certainly more idealistic than National Religious Party officials, while Herzl's vision had far more dramatic appeal than *shtadlanut*.

Along with this "realism," each of these leaders also tried to appeal to the pragmatic side of would-be followers. Thus, Herzl emphasized not just the grand ideals and drama of the Zionist cause, but also how it was, he believed, the most practical solution to antisemitism. Thus, it would offer his followers protection from pogroms and the like. Certainly, such considerations played a major role in the Uganda proposal. Even in the most idealized version of the Zionist state, Herzl emphasized over and over again how the Jews would be more economically successful, with the exception of families like the Rothschilds, than they were

¹⁶ This should not imply that concrete actions cannot have symbolic value as well, for, of course, they can. Rather, in the early days of the movement, symbolic actions tended to be just that, symbolic, without any concrete accomplishments.

in Europe. Wise, while more indirect in his pragmatic appeals, told his followers that they could be both American and Jewish, that they did not have to choose, and that, furthermore, they could, as Jews, succeed economically and socially in America -- as long they were proud Reform Jews. Kook, for all his portrayal of the *halutziut* of the West Bank settlers, also lobbied for the huge subsidies such settlers enjoyed, subsidies which became, for many of the settlers, more of a motivation than Kook's ideology.

What is the significance of these ideological similarities? Most, if not all of them can be explained rather simply, I believe. They served a pragmatic function in the building of these movements and may, in fact, be prerequisites for the successful building of any social movement. Thus, for example, any leader wishing to propose and implement a new vision must avoid being regarded as too visionary or he or she will be ignored by the masses. Similarly, when leaders portray their ideas as something that will inevitably come to pass, it makes them seem realistic -- but if they focus too much on the inevitability, they cannot motivate their followers to act. An emphasis on union, whatever its ideological import, serves a critical pragmatic function, that of keeping the movement together. Even the tension between universalism and particularism may have served a pragmatic function. Why should one join and actively participate in a movement

unless it helps oneself, offers promises of personal redemption? And yet, most people, even when crassly acting in their own interest, do not wish to regard themselves as being selfish. What better way to look out for oneself and still not feel selfish than to believe that one's personal redemption will help the whole world?

By pointing out the pragmatic function that these ideas serve, I do not wish to imply that these leaders consciously and hypocritically set about trying to manufacture ideologies with mass appeal. I think, rather, that all these leaders believed what they said. What they believed, however, could and did become popular because it met people's needs. These leaders promoted what they believed - and they succeeded because what they believed attracted others, both idealists and pragmatists. Their ideologies, almost as if by design, were structured to compete well in the marketplace of ideas.

This, in turn, highlights the function of their messianic ideology, for this too helped their ideas "compete" against others. Messianic symbols simply worked well; they attracted followers to these leaders' causes. They were very effective within the Jewish community, being both idealistic and pragmatic, meeting emotional, spiritual, and material needs. They were ancient symbols, with all the comfort and familiarity of tradition, while nonetheless progressive, forward-looking, and full of hope for the

future. With generally appealing ideologies, built upon symbols that specifically appealed to Jews, led by dynamic, charismatic leaders, it is no wonder that these movements succeeded.

III. Findings

Findings about Charisma

In Chapter I, I discussed two hypotheses about the societal situations which tend to give rise to charismatic leaders: unsettled times, times during which people seek security in the "natural omnipotence" of a charismatic leader; and a perceived need on the part of people to be connected to the "core of the cosmos." Which hypothesis does the evidence from these case studies support?

All three of these charismatic leaders began to increase in popularity¹⁷ during unsettled times. Wise came to an American Jewish community that was not quite yet American, often not very Jewish, and certainly not a true community. There was little leadership and less direction in a community which was desperately trying to deal with a situation far different from European life. In America, there were more economic opportunities -- but also more opportunities to assimilate. There was religious freedom--

¹⁷ Since there are no objective criteria for determining whether or not a person is charismatic, I hope, by focusing on the time when these leaders became popular, to reflect the time their charismatic authority assumed importance.

but also very few Jewish communal institutions to take advantage of that freedom. Herzl began his Zionist career at a time of great turmoil in Europe. Not only was there the general uncertainty of *fin-de-siecle* Europe, with empires crumbling and revolutionaries agitating, but, in addition, the Jewish community faced particular uncertainties of its own. The basic assumption of much of Western European Jewry -- that antisemitism was dying out, that the enlightenment had triumphed -- seemed increasingly questionable. Furthermore, the persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe was also steadily increasing. Kook founded Gush Emunim during a time of increased doubt and soul-searching in Israel, during a crisis of confidence not only in the government, but in the very meaning of the state. Thus, in all three cases, the rise of these leaders seems to lend credence to the theory that links charismatic leadership to unsettled times.

People, however, did not seem to turn to charismatic leadership for security especially when they lost faith in the divine. Certainly, Kook's followers had no lack of faith in the divine. Wise railed again and again against atheism. Even in the case of Herzl, much of the rank and file of his movement, if not the leadership, were Jews who had not stopped believing in God, or even in traditional Judaism.

Did these leaders try to connect their followers to the "core of the cosmos," to provide them with meaningful lives?

I think this can be said without reservation only in the case of Kook, who gave his followers a religious context for their whole lives, for their every action. Wise did try to make Judaism more meaningful, more alive for his followers, but early American Reform did not focus on providing feelings of emotional fulfillment for its adherents. While Herzl believed that Jews could only live "normal," and thus meaningful lives in their own state, while he believed that national identity was at the core of such meaning, he certainly did not emphasize becoming connected to the "core of the cosmos" as one of the advantages of becoming a Zionist. Rather, he emphasized other benefits of the Zionist cause, such as a safe homeland, and he ridiculed those, such as Ahad ha-Am, who focused on spiritual development. Thus, this notion of somehow filling followers' lives with meaning does not seem to be central to charisma.

If charisma arises primarily during unsettled times, as these case studies seem to indicate, what function does it serve during such times? How does it affect society in a way that makes it particularly appealing during such times? Interestingly, considering the unstable nature of manic/depressive personalities,¹⁸ charismatic leaders become "islands of stability," or, in these cases, "rocks of

¹⁸ It may also be that especially in relation to unsettled times, manic-depression does not appear to be so unstable.

Israel" upon which followers may find security. Because, during manic states, these leaders believe themselves to be infallible, they begin to appear infallible to their followers. No matter what is going on in society as a whole, these followers believe that their charismatic leader has the knowledge, power, or both to meet the challenge. Their absolute trust in their leader gives them security that previously comforting societal institutions may no longer provide, especially when these institutions themselves may be threatened by the unsettled times.

This finding of security in the very person of the charismatic leader has some important consequences. First, it appears to be, at least in part, the reason why charismatic leaders can bring about normative changes in society, even during unsettled times, times when their followers, and society in general, seek more security. Especially during such times, one might think, people would be resistant to change. If, however, one's source of security is the very person of the leader, it simply does not matter as much what changes are occurring outside of this "island of stability." In fact, since the "status quo" is not stable in the first place, people may be less invested in trying to guard it from further change. Furthermore, if one truly believes in the power of the charismatic leader, as did some of Herzl's followers, or in the leader's divine, and thus all-knowing, source of

inspiration, as did Kook's followers, one might also believe that any changes the leader wants will bring more and not less stability to society as a whole. Certainly, Zionists thought that a homeland would bring them safety and peace, while those in *Gush Emunim* believed that only through following Kook's messianic ideology could peace come to the land.

Strikingly, charismatic authority not only gives charismatic leaders the ability to change societies, but also to be less ideologically rigid than some in their own movements, to resist calls for more ideological rigidity. Wise was certainly less ideologically rigid than such extreme reformers as David Einhorn. Herzl tried to avoid and play down the various ideological debates coming from the many factions of the Zionist movement, preferring political action to any ideological discussion about the content of the future Zionist state. Even Kook, as extreme as he may have been on occasion, was far less extreme than some of his followers, such as those who tried, and failed, to get his support for blowing up the Dome of the Rock during his lifetime and who went on to form the "Underground" after his death. After their death, with no one of their stature to lead the movement, each of these movements became more ideologically rigid. The "radical reformers" came to power, Zionism split into various

distinct parties, and the "underground" began its activities.

This is not to imply that charismatic leaders necessarily provide society with the most flexible of leadership. After all, each of these leaders was inflexible on some points -- and on these points, they could be quite rigid indeed, because of their belief in their own infallibility. Thus, Wise would never budge from his position that "Americanism" and Judaism were completely compatible, Herzl would never accept any solution other than the creation of a state through political means, and Kook would never accept any territorial compromise. I merely want to point out that charismatic leadership is not completely rigid, and that, in fact, movements without such leaders may become more rigid, needing to create, in the absence of such a leader, an external enemy or a feeling of crisis in order to hold the movement together.

In the introduction, I noted claims that "authoritarian personalities" are particularly likely to be attracted to charismatic leaders. Did such personalities make up the majority, or even the core, of the followers of these leaders? Did these leaders appeal only to the more pathological elements of society, or did their charisma have a broader appeal? In all three of these cases, these leaders' charisma had a very broad appeal. Wise personally brought into the Union a wide variety and large number of

congregations, some of which had earlier been antagonistic to Reform. Herzl united into one movement not only the variety of smaller Zionist societies, but also many who had in no fashion been Zionist before, such as Nordau. Kook appealed not only to religious Zionists but also to Likud leaders, to those who founded Tehiya, and even to some in the Labor party.

This appeal seems to have been a combination of the charisma of personalities and ideas. Each leader won over converts through his personal charisma, but some individuals became true converts to the ideals of the movement, converts who remained with their movements after the leader's death - although, in each case, some followers remained converts only to the leaders themselves and during their lifetimes. Thus, some of the secular allies Kook won for *Gush Emunim* have remained allied with its causes, while others have left. A number of Herzl's followers left, or became inactive in, the Zionist movement after his death. Some of the congregations that Wise personally brought into the Union through his persuasiveness and charismatic appeal later left for ideological reasons.

I have so far discussed when charisma arises, how it affects society, and whom it attracts. Have these case studies also shed any light on why it occurs, on the mechanisms of the charismatic appeal and bond? As I discussed in the introduction, Kohut theorized that two

distinct personality types can become what are commonly called charismatic leaders, the "charismatic" personality type and the "messianic" personality type. These differ with regard to which aspect of their personality is hypertrophied, what their prime motivations are, and how their followers relate to them. Basically, a "charismatic" personality type has a grandiose archaic self, or primitive ego, works to aggrandize him or herself and to preserve feelings of omnipotence, and attracts followers who want to feel more powerful through association with an "omnipotent" leader, while a "messianic" personality type has a hypertrophied ego ideal, works to reinforce the belief that he or she fulfills that ideal perfectly, and attracts followers who wish to become more "perfect" through association with that leader.

What actually occurred in these three cases, however, was quite different. In fact, one of the most notable personality traits of all three leaders was how they merged their ego and ego ideal. On the one hand, they sincerely believed in their causes, and believed that these causes, their ego ideals, were completely right, if not perfect. On the other hand, they also all believed that they themselves were the divinely chosen instrument for achieving success for their cause -- and because they were divinely chosen, they would succeed, guaranteeing them power as well as perfection. This merging of ego and ego ideal played a

significant role in their causes, for, as noted above, they attracted followers both because of themselves, because of their person or ego, and because of their ideals, the cause itself or the ego ideal. There was certainly an aspect of "personality cult" in all three movements -- but there was more to each movement than merely such a cult.

Nonetheless, Kohut's theory does bring out two interesting points. While all of these leaders clearly got a great deal of ego satisfaction from their roles in their respective movements, with Wise and Kook enjoying the veneration of disciples and Herzl enjoying the adoration of crowds, none of these leaders were crassly self-interested. All could have gained more direct financial benefits from their leadership roles, and none tried to do so. Not only did they sincerely believe in their causes, they also sincerely believed that their leadership was the best for the cause -- that they should be the leader not for personal gain, but for the sake of the movement. One could not accuse these leaders of either the hypocrisy or the financial wrongdoings of some charismatic religious leaders.

Second, psychological transference, though not operating exactly as Kohut predicted, does seem to have played a critical role in these movements. All of these leaders were certain of the worth of their ego and their ego ideal, of themselves and their causes -- and this certainty not only attracted followers in search of security but

inspired many followers to similarly certain beliefs. Furthermore, these leaders were not only unapologetic but distinctly proud of their ideas, if not themselves.¹⁹ This pride, too, was transferred to their followers. Herzl's followers, watching this Jew who once resented being Jewish proudly negotiate with world rulers, acting as an equal to kings and emperors, took pride in themselves and their nationality. Wise, unlike other American Jews, did not apologize for being American or for being a Reform Jew. He helped a community that was still focused on Europe, still tentative and apologetic about its reforms, to take pride in its own accomplishments, to cease looking elsewhere for approval. Similarly, Kook transformed a segment of the religious Zionist movement from people who felt inferior to secular Zionists with respect to their Zionism and to the *haredim* with respect to their religious observance into a devout band of followers who believed that they were the spiritual and moral vanguard of the entire nation.

Findings about Messianic Leadership

How important was messianic leadership to the success of these movements? This section first examines some subsidiary questions relating to the messianic nature of

¹⁹ Herzl and Wise clearly were quite proud of themselves; the evidence for Kook, because of his various protestations of modesty and the lack of objective sources, is more ambiguous.

these movements. Following this discussion, I examine whether or not the evidence from these case studies supports the messianic leadership hypothesis.

In the course of this study, I have reached a variety of conclusions on subsidiary issues dealing with messianic movements. The first of these is whether the world view of such movements is positive or negative. As noted in the introduction, most of those who have written about messianic movements have assumed or claimed that they arise particularly during catastrophic times and have generally negative views of the world. None of these leaders viewed their times as particularly catastrophic,²⁰ and each was generally optimistic, although they did see some trends that disturbed them.

American Jewry, during Wise's time, did not face a particularly problematic situation. At least when he first arrived in America, antisemitism was not on the rise and was far less prominent than in Europe. Jews had both religious freedom and at least some economic opportunities. Wise himself generally felt quite optimistic about the possibilities for Jewish life in America. He considered America to be the chosen nation, democracy to be the best and most divine form of government. Nonetheless, he also saw a variety of problems facing American Jewry. He

²⁰ Herzl seems to have reacted quite strongly to the Kishinev pogroms, but these came well after he began the Zionist movement.

described the Jewish community as small, unlearned, and disorganized, with no real leadership and an Orthodoxy whose rote practices showed no real understanding of Judaism. Thus, he saw both present problems and future possibilities -- and he was optimistic that he could change the present into that ideal future.

Herzl faced a Europe that was far less hospitable to Jews than Wise's America. Herzl, in fact, saw the state of the Jews as being potentially tragic, if nothing was done to change their fate. He was optimistic, however, that their fate could be changed. In fact, he believed that only during his age had a potential solution to the "Jewish problem" become available, for a variety of reasons. First of all, technology now made the building of a Jewish state feasible. Second, antisemitism itself would come to serve the Jews, driving them to their homeland where they would become whole once more -- and once they were in their own land, antisemitism would disappear forever.

Kook's movement began growing during times of great uncertainty in Israel. Politicians and citizens were debating about the role, the future, even the very identity of the nation. Nonetheless, this time could not be considered a catastrophic one. After all, despite all the soul-searching that followed it, the Yom Kippur War was not lost. Israel was at peace, its borders for the time being secure, and even its economy or relations with other nations

were not markedly worse than usual. Kook, like Wise and Herzl, saw both present problems and potential solutions in this situation. He felt the nation was in danger of losing its resolve, of backsliding from redemption by giving up the territories in exchange for what he believed was a futile effort at peace. And yet he believed that the possibility for a true peace, a messianically perfect peace, had never been stronger. The nation, the land, the army all were holy, all were God's instruments. If the territories could be settled, if Jewish rule were truly to extend over the whole land, Messiah ben David would come and all problems would be solved.

In all cases, these leaders saw severe problems in the Jewish community, problems that critically needed to be addressed. Each, however, was confident that he had the solution to these problems and that he was destined to succeed. Thus, through their world view, these leaders could both justify changes in norms -- because of the problems they outlined -- and could inspire confidence and give security to their followers -- because they knew that these problems would be overcome.

Another subsidiary question to which these case studies have provided some answers is the antinomian nature of messianic movements. Are such movements intrinsically antinomian? Certainly, none of these movements was antinomian to the extent of the Sabbatian or Frankist

messianic movements. And yet, each, in its own way, had antinomian elements. More significantly, each set about to change, and did change in at least a portion of the Jewish community, several societal norms.

The very notion of Reform, even a rather moderately defined Reform, such as that of Wise, is somewhat antinomian. Certainly, it questions the validity of what Orthodoxy has defined as law. Wise, however, did not go nearly as far as others, such as David Einhorn did, in denying the validity of halakhah altogether. In fact, he believed strongly in Mosaic law, or at least the Decalogue, as the foundation of civilization. He also strongly believed in upholding American law, although he opposed laws and politicians that tried to mix church and state. Nonetheless, he did set out to change several norms of the Jewish community of his time. First, he transformed Reform from a small, downtrodden group, to, at least for a while, the most powerful segment of American Jewry. Equally important, he made American Jewry, Reform and otherwise, American. He set up American institutions, brought in English, rather than German, to his synagogues, and organized American Jewry into a national community. From his time onward, American Jewry did not depend on Europe for its direction. In fact, American patriotism became so much a part of Jewish life in the United States that even devoted American Zionists, such as Louis Brandeis, believed as

deeply in "Americanism" as in Zionism. Finally, he tried to make pride a norm for American Jewry -- pride both in being an American and in being a Jew, pride that stood in contradistinction to the Jews who wished to bring Eastern Europe to New York City, on the one hand, and those who wished to assimilate entirely, on the other.

Herzl was both more and less antinomian than Wise. He did not specifically set out to change any religious laws-- he did not want to upset any part of the Jewish community. Yet, personally, Jewish law and traditions meant little if anything to him, certainly less than it did to Wise. He did not even have his son circumcised. More than he was antinomian, however, he was a norm-changer. For example, he set about to destroy the notion, certainly the norm until his time, that Judaism was primarily, if not entirely, a religion. He proposed, as an alternative to a religious identity, a national Jewish identity. Along with these changes, he made the creation of a Jewish state a normative belief in many Jewish communities, certainly a radical change in norms. Lastly, he, like Wise, tried to make pride a norm. He dealt with political leaders as an equal -- and he wanted all Jews to be as proud of their national identity as he had become.

Kook, while the most traditional of the three, was in some ways also the most classically antinomian. As noted above, he occasionally advocated the breaking of Jewish law

or custom, albeit by non-religious Jews, in order to bring non-religious Jews closer to him and his views. He certainly believed in the breaking of civil law, claiming that it was a mitzvah to break certain laws of the Israeli government. He also used a variety of distinctly Sabbatian concepts in his teachings, such as the notion of a Torah of Redemption that might allow previously forbidden acts. Nonetheless, he did not intend to create a new Sabbatian movement, and he expressly forbade his followers from blowing up the Temple Mount during his lifetime.²¹ He, too, wanted to establish new norms more than he wanted to destroy present laws. Primarily, he wanted to make a belief that the territories were not negotiable a norm in all of Israel, and he certainly seems to have influenced a large percentage of the population. He also wanted to make a religious, even messianic, view of the state the norm of society, a desire that has come to fruition at least within his own movement. Lastly, he wanted to create an ideology which legitimized "forcing the end," certainly a change from normative Jewish views.

What Scholem described as the inherently antinomian nature of messianic movements, thus, does not seem to have

²¹ One piece of evidence for the underlying antinomian impulses of his movement is how overt these impulses became once Kook died, both with attempts to blow up the Dome of the Rock and with the formation of the Underground. Significantly, each of these acts was justified on the grounds of the "Torah of Redemption."

held true in these cases. While they may have expressed some antinomian tendencies, such tendencies were far from the focus of any of these movements. Nonetheless, significant norm changes were part of the core agenda of all of these movements. Perhaps with halakhah no longer serving as a communally enforced body of law, antinomian impulses were transformed into norm-changing ones.

One last issue, not considered in my introductory chapter, arose during the course of this study -- the issue of the importance of the "spirit of the age." Indeed, this is not an issue restricted to messianic movements, but one that any potential movement must consider. To become a successful movement, one cannot so disregard the tenor of one's time as to be considered completely impractical or even crazy. On the other hand, to attract adherents, a movement must somehow distinguish itself from already established institutions. One way to do so is to discover, whether intentionally or not,²² individuals or groups whose needs, spiritual or material, are not being met by society's present institutions -- the very "outsiders" that these movements appealed to. In this sense, a movement, to succeed, needs to find not so much the "spirit of the age" as the "discontent of the times," to discover gaps where present organizations do not meet the spirit of the age.

²² As I mentioned above, I do not believe that any of these leaders intentionally "manufactured" their ideology in order to give it greater mass appeal.

For the solution they propose to be popular, however, leaders must do more than tap into societal discontent. They need to propose some sort of solution, some way of making those "outsiders" into the new insiders. For their solution to be regarded as feasible, it too needs to fit in somehow with the "spirit of the age." All these leaders managed, on some level, to do this. Wise came at a time of rising optimism and a growing belief in the "manifest destiny" of America. With his ideology, he placed American Jews at the center of this destiny. Herzl was attuned to the strange mixture of optimism and pessimism -- and most of all, nationalism -- that made up *fin de siecle* Europe. Kook's movement not only offered certainty in a time of doubt, but came at a time when fundamentalism was on the rise across the globe, especially in the Middle East. Thus, each of these leaders was in tune with the "spirit of the age" in a variety of ways.

In order for the messianic leadership hypothesis to hold true, it first must be established that these leaders viewed themselves messianically, or at least that their followers viewed them in such a fashion. It is clear that all three of these leaders viewed themselves as redeemer figures, as fulfilling a variety of redemptive roles. Furthermore, both Wise and Kook actually viewed themselves as the, or at least as a messiah, according to their own definition of messiah. Herzl also may have viewed himself

as the messiah, although this is not as clear, particularly because he never recorded his own definition of messiah.

At least some followers in each of these movements saw these leaders as bringers of redemption. At the least, Wise was seen as a new Moses, Herzl as both a Moses figure and the King of the Jews, and Kook as a new Elijah. In at least several instances with regard to Wise and Kook, and in quite a number with regard to Herzl, followers made statements that seem to indicate that they truly believed that these leaders were the messiah. Not only their followers, especially their close disciples, viewed them messianically, however. Each of these leaders was accused by opponents of having messianic pretensions. In general, such accusations seem to have been ignored, rather than strenuously denied as one might have expected.²³

To truly support the messianic leadership hypothesis, however, it must be established not only that these leaders had messianic self-views and that their followers attributed messianic qualities to them. It must be demonstrated that such self-views and attributions contributed significantly to their success as movement founders. The evidence for this has already been presented in each of the case study chapters, in the sections entitled "The Logic of the

²³ This may indicate that these leaders did not wish to deny their messianic pretensions, either because of their messianic self-view or because they did not wish to disillusion their devoted followers.

Messianic Leadership Hypothesis." I will only briefly review and summarize this evidence here.

First of all, it is clear that charisma was critical to each of these leaders' success, for it was their charisma that won them their disciples as well as their other followers, that gave them strong persuasive powers, and that even helped them to win over some former enemies. Charisma also gave them a source of legitimacy and authority during the early days of their movements, when they had no actual power or ability to grant material rewards. Furthermore, it seems evident that their charisma was intrinsically linked to their messianic self-view. Because they viewed themselves as redeemers, because they each believed they were the divinely chosen instrument for the redemption of the Jewish people, and thus, eventually, the world, they radiated a charismatic self-certainty.

The personality traits that seem to have led to their messianic self-view also may have contributed significantly to their successes. Their manic states, for example, gave them the extreme amounts of energy needed to found a movement and to keep it going during its initial stages. These states also probably contributed to their charismatic aura. Their grandiose delusions gave them the confidence to tackle what might otherwise have seemed impossible tasks. Because of their grandiose self-confidence, they not only attempted these tasks, but tried again and again and again

to prevail, a persistence born both out of their confidence that they would eventually succeed and from the single-minded, perhaps obsessive, devotion they gave to their causes, even at the expense of their family or health. While such an obsession may have isolated them from their families, it did contribute to the success of their movements.

As discussed above, their use of messianic symbols also contributed to the success of their movements. In particular, they gave messianic significance, and thus legitimation, to the norm-changing institutions each was trying to build up. Thus, for example, Herzl described the various Zionist organizations he created as a collective "new Moses," which had two important symbolic implications. First, despite their appearance, these were not radically new institutions, promoting the modern idea of nationalism, but actually a continuation of Jewish tradition. Second, these new institutions were redemptive -- and so were of great value. Kook and Wise described their seminaries in similar terms, also emphasizing how these were to unify the Jewish people in preparation for the messianic age. Thus, Hebrew Union College was not supposed to be some radical institution, but a place of learning for all Jews, and, even more importantly, a place where "the morning dawns," the morning of the messianic age.

All this evidence, however, does not conclusively prove the messianic leadership hypothesis. It by no means indicates that it is not possible to build a norm-changing movement without messianic leadership. One would need to examine a much wider variety of Jewish movements to even begin to test the general validity of this hypothesis. Nonetheless, it appears that at least in these three cases, messianic leadership was critical to the success of the founding of these movements.

I also have not demonstrated conclusively that "messianic" movements cannot arise without a messiah to lead them. Again, a wider variety of cases would need to be examined before such conclusions could be drawn. What should be noted, however, is that, while each of these three movements, American Reform Judaism, Zionism, and *Gush Emunim*, have previously been described as being at least attenuated forms of "messianism," no scholars, to my knowledge have previously indicated that they were truly messianic movements in that they were led by a messiah-figure, although such is clearly the case. I believe that this evidence might lead one to examine other "messianic" movements which are purported to have been messiah-less, in order to see if they, too, might have had messianic leadership.

Still, despite the critical role messianic leadership and symbolism played in these movements, none of these

movements were unqualified successes. Certainly, none of them achieved either the widespread popularity or the ecstatic devotion of the Sabbatian movement. For example, despite Wise's efforts, all of the institutions he created faced constant financial difficulties during his lifetime. His newspapers almost folded on several occasions, the UAHC often had very little money, and HUC consistently had trouble raising funds. In fact, it was this very difficulty that caused his earlier attempts at founding a college to fail.

In addition to money difficulties, Wise also faced a certain lack of devotion on the part of many of his followers. Congregations left the UAHC, rabbis did not join the CCAR, and, most of all, students did not enroll in HUC. Despite his personal attention to this matter, recruitment of rabbinical students remained difficult throughout HUC's early decades. Furthermore, the rank and file of the Reform movement, while they may have come to hear him in droves, were by no means the devoted followers of a Shabbetai Zevi. Not only did they not contribute money to his institutions, they did not even become devoted members of their own synagogues.

Despite his many successes, Herzl, like Wise, failed to stir up enthusiasm or success on the order of a Shabbetai Zevi. By lack of success, I do not mean so much that he was unable to actually found a Jewish state, for that success

did not lie within his control. Herzl, however, did not even achieve unqualified success within his own movement, let alone within the Jewish community as a whole.

For example, Herzl could not inspire such devotion upon the part of his disciples that they were willing to make as large sacrifices of their time or money as he was. When Herzl pleaded with Nordau to step into the leadership of the movement, even if for only a year, to let Herzl get some rest, Nordau refused, at least in part because he didn't want to devote that much of his energy to the cause. Herzl frequently had difficulties in fundraising. During his lifetime, the Jewish National Fund achieved barely half of his goal for it, while the Jewish Bank did not even receive one-sixth of its goal. After his death, his disciples started a memorial fund for his family. Even this received only one-third of the projected funds. Finally, while the Zionist movement certainly grew during his lifetime and became an important part of the Jewish community and its norms, many segments of the Jewish community would remain anti-, or at least non-Zionist for years to come. Even with a messianic self-view and messianic ideas and symbols, Herzl could not inspire the ecstatic devotion associated with earlier messianic figures.

Even Zevi Yehuda Kook, despite the occasional fervor of his disciples, did not achieve the sort of success with his movement that a Shabbetai Zevi had. While the symbolism and

the dramatic protests and marches were quite popular, when it came to concrete deeds, he often had trouble motivating his followers. This was particularly true with the central item on *Gush Emunim's* agenda -- the settling of the West Bank.

True, *Gush Emunim* brought in many settlers and founded a wide variety of settlements. Excluding East Jerusalem, however, there are still only some 70,000 settlers in the West Bank, even though around \$1 billion were spent to promote the settlements. Furthermore, a large percentage, and probably the majority, of these 70,000 were not motivated primarily by *Gush Emunim* ideology. Even at the Yeshivot Hesder, one of Zevi Yehuda Kook's own innovations, most of the graduates do not stay to settle in the West Bank but move back inside the Green Line. He could not even win support for some of his symbolic acts, such as protests against withdrawal from Sinai, that were less directly messianic. He tried and failed to gather one million signatures against the move. Planned large rallies for the Sinai settlements failed.

Why didn't these movements achieve the massive, dedicated following that the Sabbatian movement did, or even the more localized, but still ecstatically devoted following of other, earlier messianic movements? While answers to this question must remain speculative, a variety of possibilities come to mind. First of all, it might be

related to a general rise in rationalism, at least since the start of the Sabbatian movement. Other, highly non-rational movements, however, have arisen in the twentieth century, with leaders who did arouse ecstatic devotion on the part of their followers. It might be due to the increasing secularization of the world -- but again, Herzl's movement was secular, so it is not clear why secularization should have lessened the devotion of its followers. Perhaps messianic symbols simply aren't as powerful as they once were in the Jewish community. After all, for a symbol to be powerful, it has to speak at an almost instinctual level-- and perhaps messianic symbols have become too outdated, too foreign, for them to speak in such a fashion to modern Jews. This might explain why Kook's followers, though fewer in number, were in many ways more devoted than those of Wise and Herzl -- because they still lived in a milieu where messianic symbols could speak powerfully.

Despite their limitations, however, messianic leadership and ideology served extremely important functions in all three movements. Did they, however, function the same way in each movement, or did the messianic impulses of these movements differ in any significant ways? In fact, they show several similarities and several distinct differences. One important similarity is that each movement saw the complete redemption of the Jews, the dawning of the messianic age, as being imminent. Wise predicted that it

would begin with the start of the twentieth century. Herzl always expected that his Zionist state would be founded within a few years; even *Altneuland* was set less than thirty years in the future. Kook expected Messiah ben David to appear at any moment, and seems even to have made predictions that he would appear during two different years. While Herzl and Kook may have expected a more dramatic beginning to redemption -- the founding of a state or the appearance of Messiah ben David -- all three expected redemption to begin imminently.

They all also were working toward basically the same messianic ideal: the complete redemption of the Jewish people, and, through it, of the entire world. As different as their preferred means may have been, Wise, Herzl, and Kook all had complete redemption as their ultimate goal. This raises the question, which this study cannot address, as to whether or not messianic symbolism would be as powerful if used in the context of an ultimate goal other than redemption.

Finally, there does not seem to have been a significant difference in the importance of the theme of redemption between religious and secular Jews in these movements. Both Herzl and Kook had religious and secular followers -- and both segments spoke in terms of redemption. Nor did religious followers seem to expect a dramatically more supernatural messianic age. Wise, who definitely considered

himself religious, saw the messianic age as the eventual triumph of reason and the most rational of religions, a vision no more fantastic or romantic than those of Herzl. Even Kook downplayed the role of miracles in the coming of the Messianic Era.

Nevertheless, the messianic leadership and ideology of these movements did differ significantly in some aspects. First of all, all of these leaders developed their own messianic schema, a schema not entirely different from traditional messianic expectations -- but not identical with such expectations either. Wise spoke of the role of genius, instead of prophecy, Herzl saw the will of God expressed in modern technology and electricity, and even Kook, in most regards the most traditional of these three, radically reinterpreted both the concept of Messiah ben Joseph and the actual sequence of redemption, although he claimed that he was following tradition with regard to both. Wise and Kook both drew on traditional messianic prototypes -- but they drew on different ones, Wise focusing on Moses, Kook on Messiah ben Joseph, as well as, perhaps, an Aaronide messiah.

One other difference seems especially intriguing. Herzl spoke very little about the messianic significance of Zionism -- and yet, of these three leaders, he clearly was the one who was viewed the most messianically by his followers. His figure loomed large through everything his

movement did; he was, during its early years, seemingly the alpha and omega of the movement. With a less overtly messianic ideology, his messianic presence became more important. Wise spoke more frequently about the messianic mission of American Jewry, although he emphasized such messianic visions less than Kook. Nonetheless, he was visibly at the head of every aspect of the Reform movement, although neither in as complete control as Herzl nor as much the focus of the entire movement. Kook's ideology was the most overtly messianic of them all; in fact, without his messianic teachings, he had very little ideology at all. Interestingly, however, he was less the focus of his movement than either Wise or Herzl. While I can only speculate on the meaning of this pattern, perhaps a certain combined amount of messianic leadership and ideology is required; if one's ideology is more explicitly messianic, less obviously messianic leadership is required, and vice versa. In any case, however, some combination of the two appears critical to the success of norm-changing Jewish movements, even in modernity. Messianic leadership still plays an important role in the modern Jewish community.

Epilogue

Some Thoughts on Charisma and Institutional Dynamics

Each of these movements began as charismatic movements, movements which could not have survived, let alone grown, without the charismatic appeal and authority of their leaders. And yet, charisma does not last for long past the leader's death. Reform Judaism is certainly not a charismatic movement today; neither is political Zionism. *Gush Emunim* is not a united charismatic movement, either. Rather, it has splintered, with some small, more extreme groups following a variety of different charismatic leaders, while the majority of settlers deal with pragmatic, day-to-day issues much more than they concern themselves with ideology or charisma. Does charisma always end? Is it somehow self-limiting? And how does an originally charismatic movement survive, or at least attempt to survive, once it has ceased to be charismatic?

A variety of processes, which begin during the charismatic leader's lifetime and increase after his or her death, serve to set bounds to charismatic authority and to begin the transition from a purely charismatic movement to one that is not charismatic at all. The first of these is institutionalization. Charismatic leaders have two possible motivations for wishing to institutionalize their movement. First of all, institutions, like any collective entity, can be more powerful than individuals. Certain tasks that even

the most charismatic of leaders cannot accomplish by themselves can be handled easily by an institution. Institutions may be particularly valuable when dealing with financial matters. Charismatic leaders who focus on ideology, as did Wise, Herzl and Kook,²⁴ and not only on their own individual power, want their ideas to survive and be propagated -- and institutions simply survive longer than individuals. For these two reasons, institutions may be created.

Wise, Herzl and Kook each created a variety of institutions. They each had a newspaper, although Kook was less directly involved with *Nekuda* than Wise and Herzl were with their papers. They each started some sort of governing body: the UAHC, the Zionist congresses, and Yesha. Herzl and Kook started separate institutions for raising and managing funds for their movements, while Wise and Kook headed schools of vital importance to their movements. These institutions served to increase the power of these leaders during their lifetime and to spread their ideas even after their deaths.

Once created, however, institutions have their own dynamics, dynamics which can diffuse charismatic leaders' power and which can alter, even subvert, their vision after their death. For example, even during Kook's lifetime,

²⁴ In Kohut's terminology, any leaders with "messianic" qualities as well as "charismatic" ones.

Yesha increasingly began to focus on day-to-day life in the settlements, rather than on any ideological vision. And once the charismatic leader dies, the institution may increasingly focus on its own survival, rather than on the leader's visionary ideals. Its leadership tends to become specialized, "expert," pragmatic, with a compartmentalized view of the world, rather than the leader's original broad scope. Thus, the various Zionist agencies stopped pursuing grand schemes after Herzl's death, focusing on incremental settlement. The UAHC and HUC focused on their own survival rather than the propagation of Reform as the ideal religion for all of America, a process that had already begun during Wise's last years. Thus, the very institutions leaders build to ensure the survival of their ideals tend to lose sight of those very ideals and to concern themselves instead with a narrow, institutional agenda.

A second process which limits and attenuates the power of charismatic leadership is the very process of a movement's growth. In order for a movement to grow, it needs to reach out to more and more individuals, to move beyond the initial core of devoted, highly ideological followers. Though the movement may have started with the disaffected, with those on the periphery, it needs to appeal to those who are not on the periphery and who, therefore, may not want such revolutionary changes. To broaden its appeal, to succeed in growing, a movement must become less

ideological, or, at the least, its ideology must become more palatable to more people. Thus, for example, Wise attempted to reach out to the Orthodox on a number of occasions, Herzl would deal with anyone, even antisemites, who might bring something to his cause, even if they were ideological enemies, and *Gush Emunim* increasingly turned to government subsidies, rather than ideology, as a method to increase West Bank settlement. These later, less ideological followers tend not to develop the strong leader-follower bonds usually associated with charismatic movements -- and therefore, they are less likely to be as devoted to their erstwhile leader.

Just as the inherent nature of the growth of movements may limit a leader's charismatic authority, so too may success itself have negative consequences. Once a movement which starts on the periphery manages to create institutions and become more powerful, it also creates opposition -- for just as that movement becomes less peripheral, other segments in society become more so. Furthermore, the more public and concrete one's aims and accomplishments, the more likely it is that opposition will arise, as happened with both Zionism and Reform Judaism.

The last, and perhaps most critical, limitation to charismatic authority is the death of the charismatic leader. Such a death always creates at least a temporary crisis in a charismatic movement. In general, the more that

leader has focused on the building of institutions and the less he or she has focused on building up personal power, the less severe the succession crisis will be. For example, by the time of his death, the institutions Wise had created were all relatively healthy, and so Reform Judaism did not appear to be on the brink of death because of his death.²⁵ On the other hand, in such a movement, with powerful institutions and a sudden leadership vacuum, it is unlikely that a charismatic, rather than an institutionally oriented, successor will arise. Indeed, Wise did not have a charismatic successor. Such was also the case when Herzl died -- the movement existed institutionally, but it had no strong leader for many years, and its charismatic nature almost vanished. Kook's case shows the reverse problem. Institutionally, *Gush Emunim* was not particularly strong at the time of his death. His disciples immediately began to quarrel over who should lead the movement, and many tried to exert charismatic authority. Despite these attempts, none has managed to fill Kook's role, and so the movement has begun to splinter into various factions, each led by a different disciple. Unlike a bureaucratic office, charismatic authority cannot be handed down from one leader to another.

²⁵ Although, as noted above, the survival of institutions does not guarantee the survival of their founder's ideals.

Given dynamics such as these, is there any reason to expect, as did Weber, that charismatic leadership should, on the whole, become less and less important in modern society? Can the rise of bureaucratic institutions explain why charismatic leaders such as Wise, Herzl, and Kook did not arouse the same sort of devotion that a Shabbetai Zevi did?

While bureaucratic institutions may limit charisma, it appears that even in a highly bureaucratic society, charismatic leadership can still arise. As has been noted, all of these leaders were in some fashion outsiders, and many of their initial followers were also peripheral, to some degree. It is precisely from such groups that charismatic leadership can arise, even in the presence of bureaucratic institutionalization. After all, these peripheral groups, through their very nature, have unmet needs and desires. Furthermore, they do not have powerful institutions that are successfully trying to meet those needs and desires. Such vacuums in leadership, particularly bureaucratic, institutional leadership, create opportunities for charismatic leadership to arise. Thus, neither Wise nor Herzl arose from within an existing organization but created their own institutions *ex nihilo*. While Kook may have nominally headed an institution even before he began to found *Gush Emunim*, that institution was essentially moribund. Furthermore, even in Merkaz HaRav, before *Gahelot* began to study under him, his authority was not great -- and

Gahelet most definitely did not come to study with him because of the strength of his institution. Thus, while bureaucratic institutionalization may discourage charismatic leaders from arising within institutions, these very institutions, through their selective distribution of power, create the peripheries where charismatic leadership may still arise.

This leaves one more question, a question that serves as a transition to the next part of the epilogue: Is charismatic leadership preferable in some circumstances? When an institution already exists and functions well, it is not likely that a charismatic leader will arise -- but such leadership may also not be appropriate for such an institution. Such leaders, with their breadth of vision, may wish to bring too much change to a well-functioning system, to leave too much of a personal imprint in an organization that requires only maintenance. On the other hand, precisely in those circumstances where charismatic, perhaps revolutionary, leadership is more likely to arise, it may, on occasion, be appropriate -- for under such circumstances, revolutionary changes and sweeping new visions may be needed.

Some Personal Reflections on Messianic Leadership

These case studies have given me much to reflect on, both as a person and more specifically as a rabbi-to-be.

They have given me the chance to think about genius, creativity, and leadership, about the balance between work and family, about the nature of messianic symbolism.

The first thought these case studies brought to mind was the relation between genius and madness. Though none of these leaders completely lost touch with reality, they all had various psychological pathologies, ranging from their manic-depression to their various delusions to their general obsession with their cause. Equally unquestionable, however, is that they all accomplished a great deal. I have thought long about whether or not they could have succeeded as they did if they were entirely sane and realistic. I don't know, but I suspect not. Perhaps it takes a certain kind of madness to believe you can actually make a difference in the world, to overcome the tremendous inertia of the status quo -- but perhaps that sort of craziness, when viewed properly, is a form of sanity a world with a less than perfect status quo greatly needs.

Similarly, I have struggled with the question of what really is a delusion? Is a deluded leader merely one who has failed? If you can convince others of your delusions, are you no longer deluded? Certainly, many thought that Herzl's dreams of a Zionist state were delusions, and perhaps, at the time, they were -- but Israel exists today. Is there a distinct difference between a prophetic vision for the future and a delusion? After all, Isaiah's vision

of the lion laying down with the lamb could just as easily be dismissed as a delusion as Wise's vision of the evolving genius of humanity. Is the only criterion for the "sanity" of a vision whether or not it is actualized? I hesitate to use that as the sole criterion, for, after all, Hitler came very close to achieving his deluded ideals. Rather, I believe that some "delusions," whether or not they are "realistic," may have positive value, may help us to imagine a better world and thus, perhaps, to achieve it.

This brings me to another reflection upon the psychological problems of these leaders. As I noted above, many people have traumatic childhoods; thousands suffer from manic-depression. Few, however, achieve greatness. All of us fantasize at times; few turn those fantasies into reality. I don't know exactly how these leaders managed to transcend their problems, but it may perhaps, in a limited fashion, serve as a model. After all, what they did, in essence, was to turn their attempt to heal themselves into an effort to heal society. It might be a positive trend if our present pre-occupation with "self-help" turned into a search for a way to help others as well as ourselves.

On the other hand, this model is also somewhat problematic. One could argue, for example, that instead of healing society as they healed themselves, leaders with psychological problems have transferred their pathology onto society as a whole. Certainly, charismatic leaders have

caused entire countries to suffer from delusions of grandeur or persecution. Furthermore, working to help society in order to bring psychic healing to oneself may not derive from the most altruistic of motives. Nonetheless, individuals attempting to heal themselves may have relevant insights into how society should be healed -- and may be able to become agents of societal healing. I know my own insights into helping others often have stemmed from attempts to solve my own problems.

These case studies also led me to reflect on the nature of the messianic idea and its relevance to modern society. As I noted in the introduction, most writers discussing messianic concepts have had definite ideological biases either for or against messianic movements. While I tried not to let such a bias seep into my case studies, I certainly thought about this idea constantly. In the end, I must admit, I remain somewhat ambivalent.

On the one hand, it is clear that many messianic movements have become extremist. Furthermore, certain messianic movements, notably *Gush Emunim*, support political agendas which I find repugnant. Is extremism, however, inherent in the messianic idea? I do not know, but I don't think so. I believe, for example, that Wise was just as committed to his messianic ideology as was Kook -- but I find Wise's achievements admirable and Kook's problematic. Somehow, Wise managed not to become as extreme as Kook, but,

despite trying, I cannot find a way to attribute this difference to some basic typological difference in their messianic ideology. For example, one could not say that Wise was more moderate because he had a less imminent eschatology, for he, like Kook, believed he was going to live into the dawning of the messianic age. Perhaps it is not the extremity of the vision that is problematic but rather its content. After all, in presenting his broad ideals of a better world, Isaiah did not restrain himself from extremism.

It is this very emphasis upon a broad, hopeful vision, rather than narrow institutional or entirely pragmatic agendas, that I find most appealing about the messianic idea, for, as I noted in my reflections upon delusions, there may be times when too much realism is not good, when an extreme vision is called for. Some sort of belief in an ideal, an ideal with the inspirational scope of messianic ideology, is critical to the improvement of society -- even though such broad visions, if destructive in nature, may lead to the violent chauvanism of *Gush Emunim*.

We need visions, despite their danger, for though I believe in the power of institutions to do good, I fear that, all too often, institutions look out only for themselves, or at best for the one or two issues they focus on, sometimes to the detriment of society as a whole. The Jewish community is a perfect example of this. We have a

variety of duplicative institutions which compete against each other, rather than working for a common cause. This is perhaps most obvious in areas such as Soviet Jewry, where a variety of groups with essentially identical agendas compete for resources rather than cooperating, but it takes place at various levels, down to conflicts between synagogues and community centers. Only with the sort of overall vision of a messianic leader can we work to improve society as a whole. We need leaders, we need rabbis, with such visions, even if we do not need them to become messiahs.

This notion of "wholeness" is appealing on a personal as well as communal level. As much as I disagree with their politics, there is something undeniably attractive about the way that dedicated members of *Gush Emunim* integrate their ideology into every aspect of their lives. Everything they do, even tending to their homes, has a transcendent purpose, the hastening of the messianic age. Indeed, they believe they have become connected to the "core of the cosmos." Wouldn't it be wonderful, I sometimes think, if I as a rabbi could instill that sort of a sense of purpose and meaning, that feeling of working for the divine, into my congregants' lives.

And yet I find something terribly problematic in this notion of divine purpose. After all, if you believe that you follow the divine will in everything you do, then anyone who differs with you is at least stupid, if not actually an

enemy of God. Not only that, but followers who are not as completely obsessed with the divine cause as is the leader are condemned. Indeed, Wise, Herzl, and Kook all criticized those who they believed were fence-sitters. If one believes one's cause is completely right, completely divine, such condemnation makes sense -- which leads me to fear the extremism I believe is inherent in the belief that one is knows God's will. Perhaps personal "wholeness" comes at too great a cost.

Similarly, the notion of mission is both attractive and problematic. It can inspire one with purpose. It can even help one to work for a good and righteous cause. Necessarily implied in any concept of mission, however, is that one is somehow superior -- and thus that others are inferior. Certainly Wise, for all his work with Christian leaders, believed that Judaism was inherently superior-- and furthermore that Judaism would someday triumph over Christianity. This notion of mission became even more extreme, and thus more problematic, under Kook's interpretation.

Can one defuse the potential for violent extremism of messianic ideology? Can one enjoy the benefits of these ideas without too much danger from their costs? I think that two measures may help prevent extremism: doubt and humor. Certainty is powerful -- but it is also dangerous. Doubt can sometimes cripple, but if it is balanced with

belief, it can rein in triumphalism. These leaders all saw doubt as an enemy, as something to be triumphed over. If they had accepted doubt as an ally, however, they might have tempered their visions with enough reality to have kept away extremism while preserving a messianic vision. I believe that a Kook who had kept his belief in the messianic nature of Israel but who at the same time could experience doubts about the correctness of his interpretation of that messianic nature might have learned to compromise on the territories.

Similarly, humor, especially self-deprecating humor, can act as a balance to too much certainty. Perhaps Wise vision was more benign because he could laugh. Admittedly, he could not always laugh at himself, but he was able, on occasion, to poke fun at the grandiose intentions he had for his institutions, as in his humorous descriptions of the early days of HUC. Humor can serve as a check both to the hypertrophied ego and to the complete merging of ego with ego-ideal, to the notion that one has become utterly necessary to one's cause. I believe that any leader who can laugh at him or herself can remain in balance. I am not sure, however, that messianism is possible without certainty, at least at the crucial, often manic moments. Perhaps a messiah who can doubt and laugh at him or herself is a contradiction in terms.

This brings me to some reflections on the nature of charismatic leadership itself. Is such leadership necessarily bad or extreme? As I pointed out above, sometimes charismatic leaders are more flexible than other ideologues, have less rigid agendas than bureaucracies. Sometimes, they can bring helpful changes to a society that might otherwise cling to the status quo, can help hold societies together in times of crisis. On the other hand, such a leader disenfranchises people. He or she becomes an overprotective parent -- and such parents infantilize their children. Charismatic leaders may even encourage such feelings of helplessness or at least dependence on the part of their followers, for that makes them feel even more powerful. They certainly encourage the establishment of hierarchical relationships between themselves and their followers. This may be why Herzl chose so many incompetent disciples.

For these reasons, I think, the model of a charismatic leader is not entirely appropriate for rabbis. We should work to empower our congregations, as threatening as that may be to our ego, to ensure that they have less need of us as time goes on rather than more. I believe that the point of good leadership, like the point of parenting, is to enable people to lead themselves. A charismatic leader, no matter how talented, cannot do that.

These leaders also helped me to reflect on the relationship between leadership and ego-gratification. None of these leaders was hypocritical or grossly self-serving. Yet each obviously enjoyed his leadership role. It may not be possible to be a completely altruistic leader. Knowing that, one can then watch oneself, trying to prevent ego-gratification from playing too prominent a role in one's leadership.

Wise, Herzl, and Kook also helped me to think about the consequences of being obsessed by one's work and causes. Clearly, this obsession helped them to remain dedicated and persistent where others might have given up and thus failed. Through this obsessive energy they inspired their followers as well as achieving tremendous things by themselves. And yet, at what cost? Each wrote that they could not stop working at times -- and thus seemed to indicate at least a subconscious resentment of their obsession with work, their addiction to saving the masses. Furthermore, as often happens with addictive helpers, their family life obviously suffered. Herzl's marriage was the most obviously unhappy, but Wise's relationship with his wives and children was also less than ideal. Kook's late marriage and lack of children also seems to indicate the relegation of family life to secondary or tertiary importance. Unfortunately, too many rabbis, convinced as these leaders were that they are indispensable at work, dispense with their family duties.

One final reflection concerns the fact that these leaders, like all historical Jewish messianic figures, were male. Is the messianic leadership model somehow intrinsically male? Are even attenuated forms of this model, such as the tzaddik, or even workaholic rabbis who believe themselves to be indispensable, also male? I don't think so -- especially as female workaholic rabbis begin to appear, and since female messiah-figures have appeared in the Christian world. I do believe, however, that the messianic model of leadership, problematic for all the reasons listed above, from its disenfranchising nature to the problematics of certainty itself, can be balanced by values that have often been regarded as female. Studies of female leadership, for example, have shown that such leadership sometimes consciously works to be empowering, rather than disenfranchising, to establish peer relationships, rather than leader-disciple hierarchies, to appreciate doubt rather than be wedded to certainty, to value family life, rather than being completely obsessed with work.²⁶ If we could combine such values with the hopeful, inspiring, and comprehensive visions of messianic leaders, we could perhaps truly bring about the messianic age.

²⁶ See, for example, M. H. Brown and D. M. Hosking, "Distributed Leadership and Skilled Performance as Successful Organization in Social Movements," *Human Relations*, 39:1 (1986): 65-79.

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