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Realism and Messianism in Zionism and the Yishuv

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The concept of "messianism," almost always used in conjunction with that of "utopia," has accompanied the Zionist movement from its earliest days. On the one hand, messianism is seen as a kind of demiurge inspiring great changes and summoning up irrational but creative strengths. Drawing its power from the very depths of the nation's past, it confronts the present with the challenge of a golden age. On the other hand, the messianic force is also treated as dangerous in the extreme, and the mere use of the term is often meant to serve as a warning against the seductive fascination of unrestrained fantasies and empty visions.

Messianism is seen as a positive expression of the basic human longing for a better world in the future and of the drive to build such a world; at the same time, it is seen as a negative expression of the no less human craving for a single truth—absolute, all-encompassing and totalitarian—to be imposed on society in its totality. Thus, certain political movements were destined, according to this latter type of analysis, to manifest a character that would be at once messianic, revolutionary and totalitarian. Every revolutionary movement, then, becomes messianic and vice versa; and every messianic-revolutionary movement contains within itself a totalitarian impulse.

The employment of the term "messianism" to characterize and evaluate ideologies, social movements and political parties and events may be explained in a number of different ways. On one point, though, there can be no disagreement: messianism is a concept that has been used persistently and intensively throughout Zionist history. Taken up first by contemporaries, it was then adopted by historians. Thus, for example, the literature that deals with the climate of opinion and political culture of the Yishuv between the Balfour Declaration and the establishment of the state of Israel makes frequent and varied use of the concept. It has served to characterize states of mind, ideologies and concrete historical situations. On more than one occasion mention has been made of the "messianic expectations," or the "messianic fervor" that, at crucial moments, allegedly gripped the Yishuv, or certain circles therein. Various movements with their different social expressions and ideologies have been described as drawing on wellsprings of "messianic expectations" or displaying "messianic yearnings."¹

Both in the literature of the day and in modern historiography, it has been claimed, for example, that messianic expectations in the Yishuv erupted immediately after the Balfour Declaration; that the messianic tidings of the Bolshevik revolution produced a powerful, albeit ambivalent reaction; and that the profound anxiety caused by the rise of fascism and Nazism in the 1930s strengthened the expectations of an actual messianic Redemption. The Third Aliyah, and especially the Gedud Ha'avodah (Labor Battalion) have been described as demonstrating messianic tension during the 1920s; and Revisionism has been seen as expressing either messianic realism (according to its supporters) or false messianism (according to its opponents). In addition, the desire to formulate a consistent messianic message has been ascribed to individual scholars, philosophers and poets, such as Joseph Klausner, Martin Buber and Uri Zvi Greenberg.

In sum, as the concept of messianism has become more commonplace in the characterization, definition and evaluation of various social phenomena, it has been less classified and analyzed in and of itself. Though the connection between Zionism and messianism has been discussed and debated a great deal, such arguments have generally been characterized by a vague and one-dimensional approach. In fact, as I shall try to demonstrate in this discussion, the concept of messianism provides a broad framework within which very different, even conflicting, ideas may find a place. "Messianism" has long served as a fashionable and flexible term, able to provoke an immediate reaction from its audience. However, it has not necessarily been a useful tool for either the social or the intellectual historian.

Interest in the history of Jewish messianic movements, the study of the messianic idea itself and the wide use of the concept of messianism in political and ideological contexts are all closely interlinked. However, the very fact that these different spheres have been so closely connected and that they have even stimulated one another's development makes it all the more important to distinguish between them. The academic research that has made collections of messianic texts and critical-historical studies available to the interested reader for the first time is not to be confused with attempts to formulate a philosophy of Jewish history that assigns a central role to the messianic idea and the various messianic movements. A second distinction is that which should be made between the use of the term "messianism" by ideologists and political figures and its use in society at large.

Historians make their task far too easy when they extract carefully selected phrases from key texts and then declare them to be typical of an entire worldview, or *mentalité*. True, in the analysis of earlier periods of Jewish history, individual texts often do have to serve as conclusive evidence to either illustrate the character of messianic thought or prove the existence of messianic fervor at one time or another. In fact, it is on the basis of a limited number of documents that historians have spoken of "messianic propaganda" or of "an irresistible wave of messianic fervor" in given historical contexts.² However, when it comes to the collective mentality of any modern social grouping to contemporary *anonyme Geistesgeschichte*, there is not a limited collection of texts to be examined but rather a flood of material. Because it is not just interest in the development of messianism per se that motivates the study of messianic tension—the real issue is the supposition that

the messianic idea exerts great social and political power—the quotation of a limited selection of texts is no longer sufficient. Only the examination of a very broad range of sources can enable the historian to ascertain how far messianic concepts and messianic rhetoric really influenced the consciousness, language and outlook (cultural, political, social) of a given group or society.

■ However, the abundance of material by no means simplifies the task of the historian. The fact that messianic themes and concepts were popular or even that they were integrated into the *weltanschauung* of an individual or a movement does not necessarily explain what function they served. There is no doubt that in the modern period the history of Jewish messianism was increasingly made available to the educated reader and that “messianism” did become a convenient and legitimate term of discussion. It is by no means clear, however, precisely what those who used the term actually meant by it.³

As I see it, a clear distinction has to be drawn between *messianic ideas* (or ideology), *messianic metaphors* and *messianic rhetoric*. And it is one of the basic assumptions of this discussion that messianic ideas played only a peripheral role in determining political culture and action during the period under scrutiny. The most important use of messianism was simply as metaphor or rhetoric.

During the process of its politicization, the Zionist movement formulated new definitions of the concept of messianism and made them an integral part of its developing political culture. These meanings, quite different from any that had preceded them, were used to reinforce the message of the movement. Messianism was broken down into a series of precedents, symbols and images that answered the needs and psyche of the time. Thus, any investigation of this subject has to make a clear-cut distinction between the actual role of messianic belief systems in Jewish history—specifically in the rise of Jewish nationalism—and the widespread polemical use made of messianic motifs and symbols.

In his penetrating critique of Jacob L. Talmon's view of political messianism, which had a seminal influence on perceptions of Zionism,⁴ Andrzej Walicki writes:

It is possible to use the term “messianism” as a common name for the ideologies predicting and striving for an imminent regeneration of mankind, [but] if both Mickiewicz and Marx are labelled “messianists,” this can only mean that the word “messianism” is used as a polemical device rather than as a scholarly, descriptive term.⁵

After all, if great expectations of the future are always to be equated with messianism, the result can only be trivialization. One could add that, even when used as a scholarly term, the concept messianism is all too often used vaguely, tendentially or without distinguishing different shades of meaning. Thus, Anthony D. S. Smith, who recently came out strongly against “the millennialist theory of nationalism of both the conservative and radical varieties,” has rightly proposed the use of clear definitions based on both structure and content to distinguish the national from the millenarian movements.⁶

However, when one examines the way in which modern Jewish intellectual history—and within it the history of modern Jewish nationalism—has been written,

one finds that such careful distinctions have rarely been made. Various secular, nonnationalist or antinationalist ideologies are described as linked to traditional Jewish faith in the Redemption. Jewish nationalism, in contrast, is portrayed as often unwilling to accept national redemption alone and as determined to unite it with one form or another of universal millenarianisms (anarchist, Marxist).

The label messianic is applied by historians and sociologists in order to underline the urgency of expectations within a given movement and the degree to which it gives itself over to dreams of Redemption and seeks to realize them. Thus, messianism is used as little more than a synonym for radical revolutionism or political zealotry or even totalitarianism. But in descriptions of Jewish nationalism, these latter phenomena that exist in their own right are too frequently treated as merely secondary aspects of the messianic ethos. And Zionism, in turn, is reduced from independent to subordinate status—a reincarnation, as it were, of the traditional messianic faith in the people of Israel restored to the land of Israel (albeit with the addition of a modern utopianism).

There are thus, two issues here for an observer to define: first, the relationship (and even the continuity) between Zionist messianism and the messianic tradition in Jewish history; second, the precise nature of the messianism to be found within the Zionist movement.

It has justly been said that messianism constituted a great challenge to Zionism, which therefore adopted contradictory attitudes toward it.⁷ Indeed, Zionist appraisals of the messianic movements in Jewish history serve less to illuminate the past than to reveal the self-perceptions characteristic of the Zionist movement at a given time and place. It would be no exaggeration, in fact, to say that certain groups within the movement actually used conflicting attitudes to messianism as the yardstick to mark themselves off from their opponents.

Modern Jewish nationalism, after all, found itself from the first in opposition to a whole range of messianisms: the stance of traditional rabbinic Judaism was characterized as passive messianism because it viewed the Redemption as dependent on divine intervention in history; the mission theology of Reform Judaism was seen as a form of messianism leading to assimilation and the loss of national identity; and Marxism and Communism were feared as forms of universal messianism likewise threatening the loss of nationhood.

On the other hand, of course, there were also many Zionists who were determined to define their own movement as a revitalization of the messianic faith. At the heart of this idea was a view of messianism as one of the fundamental concepts of Judaism—an integral part of both the faith itself and of its teachings. Jewish messianism was revered as a vital force in its own right, one providing a vision of the future in both national and universal terms.⁸ At work here was the conscious desire to understand Jewish nationalism as a phenomenon immanent within, and emerging from, Judaism and Jewish history rather than as the product of pressure and influence from without. The urge to read into history a direct connection between messianism and nationalism was shared by many circles and commentators who otherwise held widely differing viewpoints.

In reality, though, the history of messianic thought and movements in Jewish history is such that it is clearly erroneous to speak of messianism in general.

Messianic thought and messianic movements have taken on a variety of forms. Bar Kokhba's messianism, for example, was different from that of Judah the Patriarch, and both were quite separate from that of Shabbetai Zvi. This being so, with precisely which type of messianism, if any, were Zionists to identify themselves?

Obviously, in very basic terms, they had first to distinguish between the "active" and "passive" forms of traditional messianism. The latter was seen as postponing the Redemption until some distant future; the former as convinced of its imminent approach. No less (perhaps more) important, Zionism had to secularize the concept of false messianism. It was no longer a question of whether great expectations would lead to heterodoxy, religious nihilism and conversion but rather whether they were feasible or else outside the realm of possibility. False messianism, therefore, became that messianism that was unrealistic. In this way, Communism could be defined as false messianism because its promise to redeem the Jews within a universal framework was held to be a delusion tempting them into self-destruction.⁹ Zionist Revisionism could also be defined as false messianism by its rival—the Zionist labor movement—because it promised to bring about a revolutionary political breakthrough and mass aliyah from Eastern Europe within a few years.¹⁰ Indeed, throughout the period discussed here, various groups hurled accusations and counteraccusations at each other, each claiming that its opponents were either passive messianists (minimalists, lacking in initiative and imagination) or else messianic adventurists (maximalists chasing their own fantasies).

Thus, messianism both as a concept and as a historical paradigm has played a role in Zionist thought since its earliest days. In a positive sense, it could symbolize a belief in the need to make an absolute break and find a total solution; more negatively, it connoted despair, adventurism, total ruin. It could symbolize both the popular activism that had declared war on the fossilized world of the traditional Jew and also the reckless substitution of fantasy for reality. It could be seen as preparing the way for the charismatic leader (made of the same miraculous stuff as the Redeemer himself) and, in general, as endowing Jewish history with a new and dramatic dimension of dynamism and sweeping romanticism. It could act as a restraining influence or exert an almost magical fascination.¹¹

In short, those who viewed political nationalism as eminently realistic and grounded in the concrete analysis of the real world were wary of any identification with messianic delusions from the past. Those, however, who wanted to lay bare deeper spiritual layers in Jewish nationalism held that messianism imparted to nationalism a religious dimension and metaphysical profundity. Even Marxists could claim that messianism was "one of the ways in which national self-consciousness and national activism has revealed itself" and that it had exerted an impact "on the proletariat, too."¹²

As adopted by Zionist groupings, messianism was usually linked to utopianism (national redemption was allied to the redemption of society and mankind as a whole), but it could also act against utopianism. Whereas Zionist messianism sought an immediate and total, quantitative solution to the Jewish question (the redemption of the nation as a whole), Zionist utopias tended to be qualitative in nature, dependent on elite groups rather than on the masses. In fact, the masses were sometimes viewed as an actual barrier on the road of the elite to a utopian life.

All this said, we are left with four basic questions:

1. Did Zionism in any form constitute a continuation of the messianic tradition in Jewish history?
2. Was Zionism messianic, inasmuch as it set itself goals that embraced both national-political redemption and modern social utopianism?
3. Was Zionism messianic because of its revolutionary goals and its willingness to make great sacrifices to that end, demanding complete, even totalistic, loyalty from its followers?
4. Was the ideology of Zionism in general (and of its two major constituent movements, labor and Revisionism, in particular) totalitarian in nature because of its immanent messianic tendencies? And did the actual patterns of behavior manifested by these movements in the political and social spheres reveal the urge to impose a totalitarian uniformity on life in all of its aspects?

It is my thesis that a clear distinction has to be made between the historiographical interpretation of messianic phenomena in Jewish history¹³ and the theory that interprets Zionism as itself messianic; between messianic ideas, a genuine messianic ideology, and messianism used as either a metaphorical or rhetorical device. Again, a distinction has to be made between Zionism as a total idea and its actual *modus operandi* in reality. Belief in an absolute break was (and is), of course, part of the Zionist *weltanschauung*, but more often than not this belief was balanced by empiricism and realism, by restraints both objective and subjective—even when they, in turn, were accompanied by messianic rhetoric. The Zionist use of the term "Redemption" embraced ideas, programs and aspirations that had formed no part of any previous messianic scheme: these included *geulat hakark'a* (the redemption of the soil), *'avodah 'azmit* (Jewish labor); modernization, social planning, the creation of a collective society, individual commitment, a cultural rebirth.

To repeat, then, messianism in Zionist usage constituted a structured credo only rarely; far more often, it served as a convenient tool to label extremism or, alternatively, as a way to inspire emotion or enthusiasm.

Messianism was already a well-established part of modern Jewish nationalism when the Palestine labor movement first made its appearance on the Zionist stage—and this was even more the case twenty years later when Revisionism began to take shape.

There is much evidence that can be used to argue that a messianic awakening took place among the Russian Jews in the early 1880s. The dramatic events of the time were often interpreted as messianic auguries, as the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies, as signposts on a predestined course. On a less exotic level, there were others who saw the events of 1881–1882 as a shock of historic proportions from which would arise a new future. Basically, however, the writings of the Hibbat Zion movement represented not a genuine messianic faith or mode of thought, but simply messianic rhetoric that was meant to explain the crisis and help find an answer to it.

True, the pogroms and the subsequent appearance of Hibbat Zion were, indeed,

described as the long-awaited messianic breakthrough. As Peretz Smolenskin wrote to Eliezer Ben-Yehudah in 1881, "If you seek to clear the way for the Messiah by your efforts, then both the believers and the enlightened will rise up against you."¹⁴ In reality, though, this eruption of expectancy simply reflected a profound but straightforward hope for change that was born out of the chaotic and dangerous circumstances.

For his part, Simon Dubnow produced a quick response to the new messianic mood with the publication in 1882–1883 of a series of articles on Sabbatianism and Frankism in the Russian Jewish monthly, *Voskhod*. These were clearly (and none too subtly) aimed against Hibbat Zion, which looked suspiciously (so the articles seemed to imply) like the pseudomessianic movements of the past.¹⁵

In fact, Hibbat Zion was not a messianic, but a protonational movement. If it was interested in any concrete form of historical messianism at all (and even this in very moderate terms), then it was the Return to Zion of the Persian period—a form that I believe should be termed nonmessianic messianism. The basis for the Return to Zion in the Persian period was the proclamation of the emperor Cyrus in 538 B.C.E. This was the most successful (perhaps, the only) messianic event in Jewish history. Though the talmudic tradition later adopted an ambiguous attitude toward it,¹⁶ contemporary prophets went so far as to hail Cyrus as the Messiah ("Thus said the Lord to Cyrus, His anointed one [i.e., Messiah], whose right hand He has grasped, treading down nations before him, ungirding the loins of kings." [Isa. 45:1]).

This messianic metaphor became so powerful in the writings of Hibbat Zion that quite sane members of Hovevei Zion were capable of comparing so eccentric a figure as Laurence Oliphant with Cyrus the Messiah–Redeemer.¹⁷ The Cyrus phenomenon can be called nonmessianic messianism because it represents a form of "natural" redemption made possible by the gracious permission of a foreign ruler, by politics and settlement and by a gradual process of restoration rather than by a single, miraculous, all-embracing event. For the religious members of Hovevei Zion, the example of Cyrus could thus legitimize both their active political support for the resettlement of Palestine and their cooperation with secular members of the movement.¹⁸

All this notwithstanding, a realistic and pragmatic tone was dominant in the political culture of Hibbat Zion. There were no signs of either eschatological-catastrophic or utopian-revolutionary messianism. Almost no use was made of metaphors drawing on messianic movements (the Persian period apart) from the distant or more recent past. Hibbat Zion, like the Second Aliyah after it, preferred symbols that were romantic, heroic and nationalist in nature—not miraculous. Thus, Judah the Maccabee and Bar Kokhba were perceived as archetypal national heroes rather than as messiahs.

True, if one is looking for messianic characteristics, it is easier to find them in the Zionist movement itself rather than in its protonationalist and protopolitical predecessor of the 1880s. Many observers have been impressed by the almost supernatural—hence messianic—force of Herzl's charismatic personality. Only such a personality, in their view, could have accomplished such great achievements in so short a time. Likewise, it is not surprising that "realistic" Zionists possessed of a

positivist-evolutionist outlook (e.g., Ahad Ha'am) saw Herzl's political Zionism as the reincarnation of Sabbatian messianism, not as a normal political movement. In criticizing Herzl's alleged messianism, Ahad Ha'am made implicit use of messianic themes similar to those addressed by Rabbi Hiyah to Rabbi Shimon ben-Halafta at the time of Judah the Patriarch, "This is the way of Israel's Redemption: little by little at first; but once it is started, it will grow greater" (Palestinian Talmud, Berakhot 1:1).

Like Herzl—and because of him—Ahad Ha'am was very preoccupied with messianic phenomena. He saw messianism as a driving force within history, distinguishing between traditional messianism, which relied on transcendental forces, and modern messianism, which sought scientific explanations for the dynamics of history. Beyond this theoretical distinction, he was also troubled by something that would later trouble the Zionist movement as a whole: the question of chutzpah—the towering self-confidence, even hubris, of those who claimed to see the signs of the Messiah and were eager to announce his arrival. With more than a little sarcasm, he pronounced his "a generation of messiahs" and did not bother to conceal the fact that this barb was aimed at both the socialists and the Herzlian Zionists. "Happy are those," he declared, "at whose door the Messiah stands, Redemption knocks, and the truth is revealed." However, he argued, messianic faith should not be allowed to go beyond the realm of abstract and consoling hope and should not be a guide to action:

Life in these times is hard indeed for anybody who cannot blindly follow the Messiah of one [group] or another; who cannot hear the sounds of the oncoming Redemption and Salvation, neither from near nor from afar, not for their own time, nor for the days when grass will grow over the graves of their children's children; for anybody who still sees knowledge and logic as "mighty gods," set as impartial judges above all parties, and not merely as trumpet-blowing, flag-waving slaves to some "Messiah."¹⁹

This passage, of course, contains a clear reference to the parallel between Herzl and Bar Kokhba, as it echoes the words addressed by Rabbi Yohanan ben-Tortah to Rabbi Akiva, "Grass will grow on your cheeks and still the Son of David will not have come" (Palestinian Talmud, Ta'anit 4:8). Here, incidentally, is an excellent example of how easily a messianic metaphor can create a false analogy: Herzl's aim, after all, was not to liberate the land of Israel by force of arms but rather to win a proclamation parallel to that issued by Cyrus to the Jews in Babylon. When the Uganda plan became a pressing issue, and it seemed to Ahad Ha'am that his direst warnings were about to be justified, he did not hesitate to compare Herzl—the man who was about to lead the Jews to their doom somewhere in darkest Africa—to Shabbetai Zvi.²⁰

Herzl, as will shortly become apparent, was well aware of this comparison. Because he, no less (and perhaps more) than Ahad Ha'am, saw himself as a champion of knowledge and logic, free of irrational messianism in any shape or form, he must have felt such a comparison totally unjustified. Nevertheless, the storm of feeling over the Uganda plan was such that not only Ahad Ha'am, but many others, too, immediately saw it as a new form of Sabbatian nihilism. Perhaps the bitterest

expression was given to these feelings by Hayim Nahman Bialik, who lampooned Herzl in a satirical verse called "Rabbi Zerah" that even Ahad Ha'am refused to publish.²¹

Remarkably enough, Bialik made another, much more favorable, reference to Sabbatianism in 1917, soon after the publication of the Balfour Declaration. At a mass meeting in Odessa on December 20, 1917, Bialik spoke of Shabbetai Zvi and Sabbatianism as forces that had "nurtured the hope of Redemption in the nation's soul" and had "fallen, crushed by the burden of their dreams." They had, therefore, earned the right to be remembered at such an historic moment.²²

Of all the forms of messianism, in fact, it was Sabbatianism that had left the deepest mark on modern Jewish history and that now cast a long shadow over Zionism. Zionist attitudes toward Sabbatianism were complex and ambiguous. In the final analysis, it was seen as a "rebel" and popular movement unique in Jewish history. As such, Zionism could not easily condemn it outright. On the other hand, it had ended in failure and antinomianism, and any identification with this had to be utterly shunned.

Herzl himself, compared by his opponents to Shabbetai Zvi, can be found pondering his attitude toward this seventeenth-century messiah (he seems to have been unaware of any other form of Jewish messianism). Quite conscious of the fact that his own charisma was a central force in the Zionist movement and that this had led many to accept him as a Messiah, he asked himself whether Shabbetai Zvi had really been anything other than an astonishingly magnetic charlatan who had drawn the gullible masses in his wake. Herzl clearly understood the power of the slogans and symbolism that the masses attached to him. To the question of how the leader of a modern political party could be distinguished from a messianic leader in the Sabbatian mold, he answered that, though Shabbetai Zvi had drawn his power from the popular longing for Redemption, there was no place for miracle workers in the modern age. Needed now were political action and national planning. No supernatural leader was required, for the people would inspire themselves with the power of their collective will.

Herzl, then, could not view the dramatic outburst of messianic yearning in an entirely negative light. At the same time, however, he had to establish absolutely the fact that Zionism was not messianic in nature, just as it was not utopian. Zionism's purpose was to give new direction both to the nation's deeply rooted desire for Redemption and to its vision of an ideal society. The methods to be employed were far removed from those of Sabbatianism, which had relied on providential intervention and the overturn of the natural order. One must remember that the same Herzl whose premonition of catastrophe led him to propose his all-encompassing solution also propounded the moderate (and minimalist) Basel program and the Uganda compromise.

It was his grand vision of the Jewish state, though, that made him a "King of Israel." Did this program, however, really reflect the essence of his Zionism? Or was it perhaps only meant to startle Hibbat Zion out of its dead-end routine of clubs and societies?²³ In many respects, Herzl the politician and diplomat was the pragmatist par excellence and took his "messianism" firmly in stride.

If revolutionary ideals were, ipso facto, also messianic or at least transmutations of a messianic outlook, socialist Zionism in all its forms would have to be labeled as a classic case of political messianism. However, if we go beyond such broad generalities, we find that ideology and opinion during the Second Aliyah did not display specific messianic tendencies in any concrete way. It was a rational and essentially realistic outlook, albeit combined, and also in conflict, with nationalist and romantic tendencies, that characterized the labor movement in Palestine at that time.²⁴ Even the nationalist romanticism, which made much of real events and heroes from Jewish history (but reshaped them to fit the demands of a highly developed social as well as national consciousness),²⁵ lacked a genuinely messianic character.

This is also true of the Third Aliyah and its constituent radical movements. Social radicalism, with its roots in Marxist scientific socialism, realistic constructivism, romanticism and utopianism were all of much greater influence than any form of messianism. On the other hand, Communism at that time was taken to be a highly alluring form of (false) messianism that was enticing Jewish youth to its destruction. (This was the message of Yitzhak Lamdan's famous poem of 1927, *Masadah*). Berl Katznelson even tried (with only very limited success) to draw a distinction between socio-Zionist messianism, by which he meant the Marxist varieties of Zionist determinism, and pioneering, socialist-Zionist constructivism, or voluntaristic activism.²⁶ (In this context, the contrast between messianism and activism was clearly tendentious.)

In the period before the First World War, then, neither Poale Zion nor Hapoel Hazair were eagerly expecting any apocalyptic breakthrough to a new age of mass Redemption. Between the two World Wars, it is true, representatives of Hehalutz in independent Poland sometimes described it as a messianic movement whose pioneering spirit "is hastening the millennium; is capable of every sacrifice; and is marching toward the future on the edge of the abyss"²⁷—but the reality was somewhat different. The terms in which Hehalutz characterized its messianic aspirations make it quite clear that here was a case of what might be called existential messianism—a rebellion against life in the Diaspora—rather than any form of political or religious messianism. In truth, constructivist Zionism, which rejected reliance on diplomatic activity ("the Messiah will not come in response to the yawns of politicians"), on party politics and on any single event or breakthrough was here making use of messianic rhetoric to give itself historical meaning and weight that was well beyond anything warranted by its real situation.

The Gedud Ha'avodah has also been described at times as messianic because of its concept of a fully egalitarian society. Its publications, however, reveal very little messianism.²⁸ All-embracing utopian schemes for the future, it should again be stressed, are not to be confused with a messianic world outlook. To be sure, Uri Zvi Greenberg did describe the Gedud Ha'avodah as a "messianic army" in his poetry, and he frequently used similar phraseology ("the preparation of the masses," a "directed spiritual dictatorship") in order to express his revolutionary Bolshevism. However, he was the exception that proved the rule, and his critics in the labor movement attacked in the strongest terms his "nostalgic calls for messianism, for Sabbatianism, for a movement of the spirit and for magic formulae—all of which

simply obscure the fundamental principle of contemporary Zionism: it has to be rooted in action, in a determination to turn ideas into facts." Greenberg's messianic poetry was variously described as populism and chiliastic Zionism, the product of alienation and despair.²⁹

Certainly, the intelligentsia of the labor movement were very strongly influenced both by the decline (as they saw it) of Western culture and equally by their utopian vision of a new world that would combine a new religion, honesty, sanctity and new ideals. At the same time, however, they were quite clearly aware of the great divide separating their ideal from their ability to achieve it for the foreseeable future on anything but the most limited scale.

David Horowitz, then a member of the Hashomer Hazair encampment at Betanyah, asked in 1921:

Would we have had the right to draw strength from the messianic dreams of millennia just in order to establish yet one more small townlet quite undistinguishable from any other in Poland, Lithuania or America? Our only reason for leaving the empty life of Europe was to create for ourselves a new life in our homeland, one that would offer us a rebirth as human beings.³⁰

And somewhat similar thoughts were also voiced there in the same year by Natan Bistrizky:

The Almighty marks out a people of many millions and destroys a few hundred thousand. Others, also in their hundreds of thousands, He drags by force of terror, nostalgia and human instinct to their own homeland, that they find already settled by strangers who also have their own rights there. And from among this great passive mass, He chooses a select few—hundreds, perhaps thousands—and entrusts them with the messianic hopes of the people, of mankind.³¹

Here, as in other such texts, the burden of messianism is seen as falling on the avant-garde, who were distinguished from the people, the rest of the Jews, by their character and destiny alike. The total change in the social order that they sought and saw as essential would remain within the confines of the avant-garde group—the people as a whole would remain unaffected. Moreover, the avant-garde, with few exceptions, thought in terms neither of great political (apocalyptic) coups nor of the military conquest of the land.

In short, political messianism was rarely to be found in the labor movement during the period of the Second and Third Aliyot, although messianic terminology was employed often enough. The thinking of the movement represented a development of Smolenskin's words from the very earliest days of Jewish nationalism: "We do not seek to bring the Messiah by force, nor do we desire as of now to establish a kingdom. We wish simply for the bread of life in the land and tranquility for those who work it."³² Here was no eschatological attempt to bring the millennium, to "force the End."

On the face of things, it was the Balfour Declaration that, for a brief moment at least, revitalized those quasi-messianic hopes that had lain dormant since Herzl's last days. Zionist historiography has made much of the "almost messianic [faith] in the accomplishment of the Zionist dream, of a Jewish state within a few years,"³³

that gripped the Yishuv in the wake of the declaration. Once again, though, this evaluation of the situation is based on a limited number of statements that are highly rhetorical in nature. Shmuel Yavnieli, for example, announced that the declaration represented ". . . the millennium! It is the magic word that we have not dared to utter. Let us speak it now." He went on, "Every Jewish military man in the camp of the Hebrews is doing his part to realize the messianic idea."³⁴ And there were those who saw in the events of late 1917 a repetition of history, comparing the Cyrus declaration, which had brought the Jews back from Babylon, with the Balfour Declaration delivered to Chaim Weizmann.³⁵

Yosef Hayim Brenner, who viewed heroic romanticism and messianism as forms of escapism, as surrender to a burdensome historical mythology, ridiculed the excitement over the Balfour Declaration. With no little sarcasm, he described how, "on the table in front of me there are newspapers full of celebratory articles about Balfour–Cyrus and the dream that for millennia, etc. etc." Brenner maintained that the idea of Balfour as a new Cyrus was based on the blind, naive belief that international affairs were based on principles of good faith and idealism rather than on "the real interests of power."³⁶ He argued that the Jewish Legion ("the [shofar] of messianic Zionism") was a product of naivete and weakness, ever giving itself to meaningless rhetoric. This underlay his famous cry (based on Sanhedrin 99a) "Israel has no Messiah," and so "let us gather our strength in order to live without [him]."³⁷ He shared the stand of Hapoel Hazair that the Poale Zion party, with its support for the Jewish Legion and for the idea of "the historic leap forward," demonstrated a lack of realism: it had abandoned the ideas of organic growth, the conquest of labor and the conquest of the soil, and instead, had been caught up in self-destructive political messianism.

In actual fact, though, the use of messianic and antimessianic rhetoric and metaphor only masked the real intentions of those who employed them. The truth is that the Balfour Declaration (even when combined with the fateful events in Russia) did not arouse expectations of imminent national Redemption or of an immediate Jewish state. The excitement was caused by the decisive, even revolutionary, change in the standing of the Zionist movement both in the international political arena and also, of course, in Palestine. Zionism, it now seemed, had the chance to pursue its policy of settlement without outside interference. At the very most, the reactions can be said to have expressed something of the nonmessianic messianism defined earlier.

In any event, even the metaphorical and rhetorical use of messianic themes vanished soon enough—long before the utopian ideas went into decline. Both messianic and utopian language had almost completely gone out of fashion by the mid-1920s, except when employed in a pejorative sense. It was this sharp decrease in messianic (or, rather, quasi-messianic) tension within the labor movement and, in particular, within its pioneer avant-garde, that led Uri Zwi Greenberg to react to what he saw as betrayal with stark and biting criticism. He attacked the movement for denying its messianic essence and destiny. However, for its part, the labor movement saw Revisionism, born out of the crisis of the Fourth Aliyah, as nothing other than false messianism come to lead the people astray.

During the 1930s, messianic terminology was not infrequently used in polemics,

particularly, for example, during the partition debate that followed the Peel Commission report of 1937. "You should not be the complete realist, the complete statesman," declared Menahem Ussishkin angrily to Weizmann, "Do not merely satisfy yourself with the hope that the Messiah will come—fight to ensure that he does so in our days."³⁸ In other words, he was accusing Weizmann of that egregious deviation, passive messianism. On the other hand, Ben-Gurion could write during that same debate that Zionist diplomacy should distinguish between realism and mysticism, or in his words, "messianic yearnings," an unbounded faith in Jewish power regardless of circumstances. The nation's statesmen, he argued, should not chase fantasies but see the truth for what it was:³⁹ the demand for Jewish sovereignty over the entire land of Israel west of the Jordan should be kept in the background until some later date; meanwhile, policy had to be based on what was possible.

In other words, messianism came to be used less and less as the labor movement adopted an overtly realistic and pragmatic stance. The symbols now most favored were drawn from the nation's political and military past (David's kingdom, the prophets, the Hasmonean revolt, the revolt of 66–73 C.E., and Bar Kokhba's war)⁴⁰ rather than from messianic mythology. In fact, the distinction drawn between the prophetic and the messianic ideals became particularly pronounced in this period. Generally speaking, in the prevailing political culture during the late 1920s and 1930s, there was a clear preference in the labor movement for a political terminology primarily "modern" in nature, whereas messianic imagery was very clearly associated with the (rejected) traditional world.

In sum, the term "messianism" increasingly became a synonym for "fantasy," that is, a lack of political realism. Even on the eve of, and during, the Second World War—the years of extreme tension and catastrophe—members of the labor movement tended to employ the messianic theme in a pejorative rather than a positive sense. This was not the case, however, at the other end of the political and ideological spectrum. From its very earliest days, Revisionism was described by its enemies on the Left as a romantic and irresponsible political movement. They, therefore, naturally identified it with the European Right and, in due course, even with fascism.⁴¹ However, the fact is that neither messianic ideology nor even messianic metaphor and rhetoric played any significant role in Revisionist publications. They were conspicuously absent in Zev Jabotinsky's writings and in the historical vocabulary employed by other members of the Revisionist leadership.

On closer examination, the accepted opinion that Revisionism entered the political arena imbued with belief in the possibility of mass Redemption (the imminent Ingathering of the Exiles) or in the desirability of a totalitarian society appears to be fallacious. The truth is that Revisionism was an ultranationalist political party suffused with the spirit of romanticism. Even during the great debate of the late 1930s, the Revisionists did not usually summon the messianic ideal to buttress their position; and, of course, they vehemently rejected every attempt to compare their own ideology to Sabbatianism or Frankism.

Messianic metaphor was certainly to be found, however, in the belles lettres and in the historiography produced by members and supporters of the Revisionist movement, as we see in Yaakov Cohen's poem, "The Zealot Anthem" (1933):

The sun in our heart,
Rebellion in our eyes,
And the word of the Lord in our blood,
We,
The hosts of the Messiah,
Brigades of iron and flame.

Cohen's use of the phrase, "The hosts of the Messiah," in this poem (published in the monthly, *Betar*), was clearly intended to suggest that the ancient zealots, in their fight against the Romans, could legitimately be seen as performing a messianic role. The Zealots are described here not simply as archetypal freedom fighters but, more important, as men determined to prepare the way for the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven and earth. The poet thus presents a mythological and highly allegorical view of a messianic past that he believes will one day return.

Moreover, a new dimension was added to the messianic vision at this time—the idea of territorial integrity, of the historic borders. Power over, and possession of, the land of Israel were not to be achieved by means of diplomacy or the plough; they could be won by conquest alone. Force of arms was necessary in order to redeem the land from foreign rule and alien claims. The universal and ethical messages so often associated with the messianic and prophetic idea were here supplanted by chauvinistic themes of war. Blood and the sword, the war of conquest, sacrifice: such were the images drawn from ancient eschatological visions and now presented as the inescapable messianic destiny of the Jewish people in the land of Israel.

Although these themes began to appear here and there in Revisionist publications following the Arab riots of 1929, it was only in the great ideological poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg that any attempt was made to formulate them into a messianic system of thought, a philosophy of history, an active political ideology. The metamorphosis of Greenberg's eschatological outlook (related to changes in both his political affiliations and his poetry in general) as well as the source texts he drew on, deserve a much more detailed examination than can be provided here.⁴² Suffice it to say that Greenberg's disciples viewed him as a messianic poet par excellence and believed that he had reached a profound understanding of Jewish history. In their eyes, he had demonstrated the most penetrating insight into the irreversible trends of the time and was thus vouchsafed a clear vision of the future.

On the other hand, Greenberg's critics saw him as the archexponent of a false messianism. In their view, he preached an eschatological vision of complete national redemption at a single stroke—the Diaspora would be brought to an end and the Kingdom of Israel would be established by a war of conquest. The second false element in Greenberg's outlook, as they saw it, was that he advocated a totalitarian society utterly dedicated to the messianic ideal. In this way, Greenberg was perceived, on the one hand, as a fantasist, on the other, as a fascist.

Greenberg was, perhaps, the only Zionist thinker of his day to seek not simply to interpret Jewish history in messianic terms but also to translate his ideas into a concrete program of immediate political relevance. He saw Zionism as a messianic movement in its very essence, and Herzl as the man, "born in the Holy Spirit,"

who had brought the messianic tidings. Aliyah, immigration to the land of Israel, whether individual or collective, should constitute a messianic act; not merely a physical change of place, it had to bring with it a complete, existential metamorphosis that gave the immigrant, the pioneer, a completely new spiritual outlook and made him literally a new man.

Thus, in the early 1920s, while still in the labor movement, Greenberg could describe the pioneers of the Third Aliyah both in poetry and prose as a messianic avant-garde. They were, in his opinion, bringing to life a new "total ideal," and so constituted the antithesis of the petit bourgeois ethos found not only in Exile but also in Palestine. For him they represented the renewal, in mythological and allegorical terms, of the heroic, superhuman life lived in ancient Palestine. To the Fourth Aliyah, with its openly bourgeois and "normal" values, he reacted with a horrified sarcasm, seeing it as devoid of any metaphysical or messianic ideology, ideals or ethos.

There was no place in his Zionism for a universal message. Particularly after the Arab rioting of 1929, the territorial theme began to replace the existential motif in his concept of messianism. No longer was he thinking in terms of building a new and perfect society on the ruins of a bourgeois (or Christian and antisemitic) Europe; he now developed instead a mystic Jewish nationalism to confront the brutality of Arab nationalism. And on another level, he confronted the Yishuv with the vision of a golden age when the Jewish people, a unique physical and metaphysical entity, a perfect and unchanging *Volksstamm*, would fulfill its ancient destiny.

In this messianic scheme of things, the nation's sovereignty over its entire historical homeland was of supreme significance. Like Martin Buber,⁴³ he, too, saw the union between nation and land as mystical and sacred—sanctified by history and endowed with existential and metahistorical import. However, Greenberg (here in contrast to Buber) was utterly convinced that this union could only be consummated by full possession of the land. For him, the spiritual and cultural renaissance of the Jewish people could be achieved by nothing less.

Greenberg's poetry of the 1930s applied an eschatological key to historic and contemporary events and was imbued with a messianic tension quite unlike anything produced by members of the labor movement. It was composed against the background of the Arab rebellion in Palestine (1936–1938) and the impending catastrophe faced by Polish Jewry. These developments heightened both the fear of apocalyptic cataclysm and the expectation of the Redemption to be brought about by human hands:

And I have a Messiah,
Perhaps still far off,
Hidden in David's sword
In his sheath.⁴⁴

He gives a vivid (almost realistic) description of the Polish Jews crossing the seas, supported by the Messiah–Redeemer:

And he will be as a lion arising in the Yishuv
The Black Sea to his right and the Baltic Sea to his left

Hasidim will rush to immerse themselves
Hastily donning their Sabbath dress on an ordinary weekday.⁴⁵

These hopes of the millennium presented (albeit in verse) as a concrete political program infuriated many. Among those angered was Nahum Sokolow, then president of the Zionist Organization, who wrote these harsh words in 1935, "A new Shabbetai Zvi-ism has appeared in the world—or more accurately a new Frankism, the later Polish version of this delusion—in the form of conspiracy . . . that captures young hearts by means of a militaristic mystique."⁴⁶

Some two years earlier, Hayim Arlosoroff had acutely perceived the nature of the quasi-messianic expectations felt by the Polish Jews, who yearned desperately for charismatic leadership and grandiose plans—thus exerting pressure on the politics of the Yishuv. In a letter to his wife written from Włocławek, Poland, on May 28, 1933, he described the crowds at the railroad station who had greeted him as if he were the "redeemer" bearing tidings of salvation, "As I know too well, there are few points of contact between this dream and reality. The object of their adulation is a total figment of their imagination. However, even as such, he is of symbolic value to the movement and so may do some good."⁴⁷

Although Greenberg's writings constituted the boldest attempt to articulate a non-religious messianic vision, he cannot be said to have produced a full-scale or consistent ideology. It was his apostles—led by Yehoshua Heshel Yeivin, a writer and member of the so-called maximalist trio [Yeivin, Greenberg himself and Abba Ahimeir], and Dr. Yisrael Sheib (Eldad), a leader of Betar in Poland and of the Lehi (Stern Group) in Palestine—who laid the mantle of messianic prophecy on Greenberg's shoulders, proclaiming him the herald of "realistic messianism" and even hailing him as the founder of a genuinely messianic movement. They managed to discount the possible theological heterodoxy contained in his assertion that the attainment of national sovereignty had to precede the return of the Jewish people to full religious observance by appealing to Rabbi Yehoshua's pronouncement that Redemption would precede repentance (Palestinian Talmud, Ta'anit 1:5). Greenberg's followers were also able to cite other classical messianic works (such as the early medieval *Book of Zerubbavel*) that likewise regarded Redemption as independent of repentance.⁴⁸ (It is worth noting that their stance on this issue was little different from that of members in the traditional religious camp who harbored activist messianic leanings. They, too, viewed religious revival as conditional on political and territorial renewal rather than vice versa.)⁴⁹

The fact that Greenberg's poetry gave expression not only to intimations of looming catastrophe and apocalypse, but also to faith in imminent Redemption, was the source of the enormous inner tensions evident in his poetry. This response, however, was rarely reflected in the Revisionist ideology of Betar or the Irgun during the 1930s and 1940s: there radical but unadulterated nationalism reigned supreme even when messianic terminology was employed. When, for example, Ahimeir wrote, "Our Messiah will not come in the form of a poor man riding a donkey. The Messiah will come, as all messiahs do, riding on a tank and bearing tidings to the people,"⁵⁰ he was, for all the messianic rhetoric, simply using a

straightforward metaphor inspired by revolutionary heroism and wars of independence. In general, it was the example of modern European revolutionary movements that had the most formative effect on the Zionist Right. It was only the desire to clothe this experience in Jewish metaphors that led to the frequent use of messianic imagery.

Moreover, for the radical Right, the use of such imagery was appealing because it seemed to emphasize that Jewish heroism was uniquely authentic (with itself as a prime example) and that national wars were immanent in Jewish history and, again, qualitatively unique. It was this desire to underline the degree of continuity between the Lehi and historical messianic movements that led Avraham ("Yair") Stern to write a series of articles, published under the title "The Messianic Movements in Israel," in the underground paper *Bamaḥteret* during the period 1940–1941. Here, indeed, an attempt was made to translate Greenberg's eschatological poetry into concrete political terms.

Stern argued forcefully that the messianic ideal, "the utter certainty that the Messiah will come, is not the creation of the Diaspora." Instead, this idea was born at the time when the nation suffered under Roman subjugation, although it grew stronger after the destruction of the Second Temple. It was able to console the people for their loss and give them hope for both a dramatic Redemption and vengeance against their enemies. Opposed to this nationalist, historical messianism, as Stern saw it, stood a passive, mystical, ahistorical messianism; in his view, the whole of Jewish history could be reduced to the eternal struggle between these two forces. The struggle for independence and Lehi's declaration of war on the British authorities thus became nothing less than the last link in the chain of messianic activism.

Following Stern's violent death, Yisrael Eldad took upon himself the task of organizing these fragmentary thoughts and ideas into a systematic and reasoned ideology. He did this in a series of articles entitled "Avnei yesod" ("Foundation Stones") that was published in 1943 in the movement's journal, *Heḥazit* (the successor to *Bamaḥteret*). Eldad described Zionism in entirely messianic terms: Jewish national aspirations were in no way the result of suffering in the Diaspora, and mere Jewish sovereignty was not the true goal. Zionism had to be understood as an expression of the Jewish destiny and of the immutable sovereignty inherent in the Jewish people, and its goal was the restoration of the golden age of the Davidic kingdom. This term took on a mythological and allegorical status in Lehi's messianic scheme of things⁵¹ (the "Kingdom" forms one of the divine spheres in kabbalistic thought).

It is not easy to evaluate the impact that this militant messianic ideology had even on Lehi itself. The articles on this subject that were published during the years of the armed struggle only reflected the outlook of a small group of "prophets" and their disciples. They were not characteristic of the underground movement as a whole, which expressed its ideas primarily in classical national-revolutionary terminology. There is even disagreement regarding the extent to which the majority identified with the messianic program of the "Eighteen Principles of the Revival," supposedly the manifesto of the movement.

In the years prior to the establishment of the state, then, messianic ideology was employed systematically only by marginal groups. Even in the most intense period of drama and anticipation, from 1944 to 1948, it is almost impossible to find genuine declarations of messianic fervor in the mainstream.

Furthermore, the establishment of the state itself was rarely understood as the arrival of the millennium, despite the undoubtedly dramatic way in which it came about. The War of Independence, dissatisfaction with the country's truncated borders, disappointment with the developing character of the state and, above all, the marginal role played by messianic ideas and metaphors in symbolism and historical allusion acted together to deny to the establishment of an independent Jewish state—a revolutionary breakthrough that could well have been interpreted as a messianic event—any historic or metahistorical messianic significance.

However, the messianic theme can still be followed during the 1950s. First, David Ben-Gurion, who had previously avoided using messianic ideas or metaphors, now tried to confer on the state a new symbolism, portraying it not just as a regime, a political end in itself, but as a radically new means for the Jewish people to fulfill their historic mission. This "messianic destiny," as Ben-Gurion formulated it, was thoroughly bound up with the Ingathering of the Exiles, with making the desert bloom, with the ethical duties of the state. His critics, however, suspected that this form of messianic rhetoric masked an urge to endow the state with absolute power.⁵²

Another possible example of messianism in the 1950s was to be found on the fringes of the political spectrum. The "Sulam" group was formed by past members of Lehi who refused to abandon their militant and messianic nationalist ideology. They were extremely critical of all aspects of the state as it had developed since 1948, and they continued to dream of the establishment of the Third Commonwealth that would, among other things, attain the nation's maximal historical frontiers.

Different fates were in store for these two types of messianic formula. Ben-Gurion's use of messianic terminology, which aroused much hostility, was already becoming rare by the mid-1950s. The messianism of the Sulam group, in contrast, survived on the periphery of Israeli political life only to be launched suddenly onto center stage by the events prior to, during and after the Six Day War of 1967. Since then, it has grown into a major force in Israeli political culture.

I have already noted that the widespread interest in the history of Jewish messianic movements was clearly linked to the urge to define the place of Zionism within Jewish history. And there is no question that both historians and writers did a great deal to familiarize the public at large with the major messianic episodes of the past. Such scholars as Joseph Klausner, A. Z. Aescoly, Yehudah Even-Shmuel Kaufman, Ben-Zion Dinur, A. Marmorstein, Gershom Scholem and Yitzhak Baer⁵³ made available to the Hebrew reader for the first time documentary collections and academic studies of the subject, while literary treatments of messianic themes often caught the public imagination.⁵⁴

Though a wide-ranging corpus of messianic material was thus available to the

general reader, it would seem that in the ideological polemics of the time little distinction was drawn between the different historical forms of messianism. Moreover, a particular interpretation of messianism as such and of its place in Jewish history did not necessarily match the political ideology of the scholar involved; at times, the opposite appeared to be the case. Academic research, after all, followed its own rules, at least to some extent. Messianism as a generalized category became a yardstick against which to measure the Zionist ethos as a whole, its relationship to Judaism and its place in the continuity of Jewish history. Messianism was widely seen as an expression of the life-force of the Jewish people—a source of dynamism and vitality in opposition to the mundane concerns of the halakhah.

The historiographical viewpoint represented on the Left by Rubashov (Shazar) and Dinur, for example, reveals a remarkable (though ultimately not surprising) similarity to the views held by some groups on the Right. The similarity is not unexpected, as there were many at both poles who shared the same strong romantic nationalist tendencies. In 1925, on the three-hundredth anniversary of Shabbetai Zvi's birth, Rubashov published an article in *Davar* in which he extolled the virtues of the man who had, "through the magic of messianic hopes, established a popular movement of dimensions hitherto unknown in the history of the Diaspora."⁵⁵ Klausner (even though he stood much further to the Right) described Shabbetai Zvi more circumspectly as a man who had "claimed that he could bring the Redemption by means of the practical Kabbalah and miracles," and contrasted him most unfavorably with Don Yosef Nasi, who had tried to bring the Redemption nearer by the use of normal (including political) means.⁵⁶ Even Klausner, however, tended to attribute the various outbursts of false messianism to the national longing for Zion, regarding them therefore as genuine revolutionary movements.

Klausner divided the messianic movements of Jewish history into two classes: rational and irrational (mystical) movements (though he regarded both as expressing a negative urge to escape from history). He defined the irrational movements as those in which the yearning for Zion had become so intense that the everyday mitzvot were considered as no longer binding:

This yearning at times gives the impression of having represented nothing but a pathological craving for something non-existent—an empty longing, expressive only of a religious romanticism. And yet, not infrequently, while watching, we see that this yearning became a mighty driving force, bursting its way into history and working wonders. Then the realization comes upon us that we have witnessed a total revolution in the life of the Jews.⁵⁷

He argued that these irrational movements, with their new values drawn from within rather than from without (in contrast to those of the rational movements), set the land of Israel at the center of Jewish life and thought, thus transforming what had been simply religious sentiment into an explosive national force.

Klausner saw a dialectical process as built into the history of Jewish messianism that, on the one hand, was drawn toward heresy, heterodoxy and an escape from history and, on the other hand, was drawn to the land of Israel as the national territory, thus preventing a total divorce from reality. Historic—that is, rabbinic—

Judaism responded to this challenge by reemphasizing, in turn, the value and status of the national homeland.

In modern times, Klausner argued, secular Zionism, for all its opposition to tradition, found itself forced by a similar process to place an ever greater emphasis on the importance of the land of Israel. At the very heart of the contemporary transformation of Jewish "dehistoricism" into creative "historicism," Klausner argued, was a romanticism that saw the national heritage and collective memory as of intrinsic worth and that encouraged dreams of political renewal in the ancestral homeland.

Klausner's historical conception (*Geschichtskonstruktion*) shares a common denominator with that of Ben-Zion Dinur, who likewise described the magnetic pull of the land of Israel as a central (or perhaps, *the* central) factor in Jewish history. Dinur laid heavier emphasis, however, on the various forms of Jewish messianic excitement in medieval Europe, seeing them not merely as symptomatic of the past, but also as possessing long-term significance. The messianic urge at work in traditional society encouraged aliyah as a means to hasten the Redemption as well as fostering the search for new ways to establish contact with distant and lost Jewish communities (the Ten Tribes).

Dinur and his students claimed that not only was there no contradiction or break between the Jewish faith (and commandments) and active messianism, but that the two were even organically connected. He was, therefore, able to view Sabbatianism in a basically favorable light because, in his view, it had revived hope in the resettlement of Palestine, produced a literature to reinforce that hope and imbued the mass of the people with the idea that Redemption in the national homeland was a real and imminent possibility.⁵⁸ He was able to bypass the fact that Sabbatianism and Frankism were heretical by subsuming them under the general heading of messianism and by stressing that messianic movements in general were in the mainstream of Jewish history.

In contrast, those scholars who continued to view messianism as a heterodox phenomenon and to emphasize the dialectics of continuity and messianic crisis were now faced with a not inconsiderable problem. Their philosophy of history posited the organic unity of Jewish history; and they looked forward to a rebirth of the nation involving, *inter alia*, not just the attainment of the land of Israel, but also a revolution in Jewish law (halakhah). Messianism in this scheme of things could, it was hoped, serve as an overall ideal and as the basis of the national renaissance that would provide the new Hebrew culture with a metaphysical dimension. They were thus tempted to view false messianism in a positive light, conceiving it as a legitimate element both in their view of history and in their vision of Jewish destiny.

Klausner sought to harmonize the nationalistic and universal aspects of the Jewish messianic vision—to balance the messianic by the prophetic ideal. And he was anxious, too, to give some contemporary relevance to the ideas of Redemption implicit (in his view) in the Haskalah and in the nationalist forms of Judaism in the West. Others on the Right, however, dropped these universal ideas, as well as the concept of the mission theology, without a second thought. Their sole concern was the future destiny of the nation, not of humanity. If they expected a second revelation, it was destined for the Jewish people and not for the world as a whole.

The messianic thought of Klausner (and still more that of Dinur) was developed by Yehoshua Heshel Yeivin, who, in the late 1920s had partnered Uri Zvi Greenberg and Abba Ahimeir in founding the maximalist wing of the Revisionist movement. In 1928 Yeivin published an article entitled "*Miniftulei derekh hageulah*" ("The Twisting Road to Redemption") in the official Zionist weekly *Ha'olam*.⁵⁹ The article was accompanied by an editorial that described it as "an important essay on Zionist ideology," but as "*only partly* reflecting the views of the editors."

Yeivin argued that no widespread messianic movement had arisen in the fourteen hundred years between the fall of Betar at the time of Bar Kokhba and the destruction of Spanish Jewry at the end of the fifteenth century (apart from the uprising of David Elroi, which did not impinge on the Jewish centers in Europe). In contrast to Klausner, Yeivin did not include the Karaite messianic movements in his discussion but, along with Dinur, he did see Jewish history from the sixteenth century on as "a series of almost unremitting attempts to attain Redemption." He sought the explanation for this development in, among other things, the influence of European nationalism, the new geographical discoveries of the day and the schisms in the Christian church.

The notion that Redemption would come in the wake of historical crises was, as he saw it, the major factor that had given rise to various messianic schemes and programs. He viewed sixteenth- and seventeenth-century messianic activity—David Reuveni's military fantasy, Rabbi Yaakov Berab's attempt to renew the ancient rabbinical ordination, the kabbalistic system of Rabbi Yitzhak Luria and Shabbetai Zvi's dreams of kingship—as being manifestations of a single revivalist movement "to turn the wheel of Hebrew history toward national liberation." In the hundred years between the mid-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century, however, Hasidism had succeeded in cooling down the messianic excitement and in finding a spiritual substitute for the magnetic pull of the land of Israel.

Herzl's role in Jewish history, Yeivin maintained, was as successor not to the founder of the Hasidic movement, the Baal Shem Tov, but to Shabbetai Zvi. Herzl's form of Zionism was "a messianic movement in modern garb: essentially uncompromising, its goal was to revolutionize Jewish history." (It was Buber's quasi-messianism, according to Yeivin, that was the modern reincarnation of Hasidism and that could, therefore, endanger "Herzlian messianism.") Yeivin claimed that Herzlian Zionism could

trace its pedigree back to David Reuveni, Shlomo Molkho and Shabbetai Zvi. From the hands of these few rebels it has accepted its standard, which it should bear proudly . . . for it has but one clear and unmistakable aim: the quest for territorial Redemption, the foundation of the Kingdom for, and by, the Jewish nation on the soil of Israel.⁶⁰

Any discussion of the role of messianism in secular Zionist political culture and in the Yishuv must take into account the complexities of the subject. Thus, for example, as argued here, the relationship between modern nationalism and the messianic ideal (or past outbursts of messianism) is one issue; and the possibly messianic character of Zionism as a movement allegedly seeking to "force the End" or attain total Redemption is another. It is one thing to use the concept of messianic tension as a definition of mass psychosis or fever and something very different to undertake

a scholarly exploration of the messianic phenomenon in history. Yet another distinction is that between a messianic ideology or belief system and the more or less casual (or, more often, manipulative) use of messianic allusions or rhetoric.

I have described how Zionists in the Yishuv, despite their political differences, shared a penchant for translating a string of contemporary terms and concepts into messianic language. Thus, for example, revolution could become "Redemption"; a diplomatic triumph, "the bells of the Messiah"; a war, "the birth pangs of the Messiah"; an avant-garde, "the army of the Messiah." It is, of course, no easy task to tell when such usage was merely a question of rhetorical effect, of fashion, and when it was the outcome of a conscious and reasoned decision.

At all events, if we define political messianism as the impatient and expectant hope for a single, dramatic, all-embracing Redemption that would create a radically new world of predetermined and unchangeable shape, then the overall weltanschauung of Zionism (in particular, of its two main parties in the period discussed here) may be said to have demonstrated some, albeit essentially marginal, signs of messianism. The more extreme the group, whether on the Left or the Right, the stronger the expression of messianic themes and sentiments became. A careful distinction must, however, be made between mood, *mentalité* and even historical consciousness, on the one hand, and political ideologies, programs and activity, on the other. This latter, more operative category displayed only the very faintest traces of active messianism in the period surveyed here.

It was the eschatological idea, the longing for a totally new Jewish world to replace the old one as it disintegrated, that stimulated the Zionist ethos, particularly in the period 1917–1922. However, even then, as we have emphasized, utopian elements undoubtedly played a stronger role than messianism—at least until nationalist messianism was taken up so enthusiastically by some members of the radical Right.

The cult of redemptionism was quite incompatible (and remained in a constant state of tension) with the "realistic" political and ideological stance of the Zionist movement as a whole that, opposing any hasty attempts to bring on the millennium, preached patience in attaining its goals.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the generation of Zionists discussed here was one that lived through the violent extremes of annihilation and "Redemption." They did not, however, produce any new or original messianic ideas. It may be that their mood was simply too realistic to find consolation in dreams. But perhaps the fact that they inhabited so tangible and dynamic a world rather than an imagined world of messianic visions enabled them to find a balance between messianic mysticism and historical realism.

Notes

This paper does not deal with religious Zionism, which developed very different attitudes toward messianism than those of secular Zionism. There is also no reference to the "civic" or liberal camp in Zionism and the Yishuv, which lacked a messianic dimension.

1. See, e.g., Yosef Gorni, *Ahdut ha'avodah 1919–1930: hayesodot hara'ayoniim vehashitah hamedinit* (Tel-Aviv: 1973), 17–23. Here the author discusses the atmosphere in the labor movement after the Balfour Declaration, using terms such as “messianic expectations,” “messianic feeling” and “messianic-political activism.” Messianic metaphor did lead some contemporaries to call those who had enlisted in the Jewish Legion “the soldiers of the Judean army” who are “realizing the messianic ideal.” Equally, the struggle over the socialist nature of the Yishuv after the war was referred to, e.g., as “the war of Gog and Magog.” Anita Shapira also mentions in connection with the Balfour Declaration “messianic hopes” and “a wave of messianic excitement” that, in her view, vanished during the year 1918, see “Haziyonut vehakoah—etos umeziut,” in Anita Shapira, *Hahalikhah 'al kav haofek* (Tel-Aviv: 1989), 41–42 and *passim*.

2. See Moshe Idel's new introduction to Aharon Zev Aescoly, *Hatenu'ot hameshihiyot beyisrael* (Jerusalem: 1987 [1st ed. 1956]), 10–11. Yishayahu Tishby, *Meshihiut bedor gerushei sefarad ufortugal* (Jerusalem: 1985), 52–53.

3. The majority of those who have written on the subject do not distinguish between the different and sometimes conflicting messianic ideals and expectations to be found in Jewish tradition. These, in fact, presented a wide range of messianic possibilities (i.e., different types of expectations and ways of viewing the future). Cf. Moshe David Herr, “Meshihiut medinit reialit umeshihiut eskhatologit kosmit bedivrei hazal,” *Tarbiz* 54, no. 3 (1985), 331–346.

4. Avraham Shapira has found in Martin Buber's writings of the 1930s (in particular, his first lectures at The Hebrew University in 1938) ideas prefiguring those of Jacob Talmon. Buber dealt with the total nature of secular political messianism, which surrenders its coercive powers to an overwhelming political force. Talmon, however (and perhaps Buber, too), was able to reach his conclusions concerning the nature of totalitarian democracy—the inevitable result of secular messianism—on the basis not only of de Tocqueville, but also of Carl I. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: 1932). By 1975, this book had reached its thirty-ninth edition, though it was only translated into Hebrew in 1979. It is worth noting here that Buber's outlook on culture was also total in nature. However, in his existential eschatology, the creation of a single, unified culture had to be the result of a spontaneous process rather than of pressure from an elite or higher authority. See Avraham Shapira, “Meshihiyut politi umekomah betefisat hageulah shel Martin Buber,” in *Devarim lezikhro shel Martin Buber bimeleat 'esrim shanah liftirato* (no ed. named) (Jerusalem: 1977), 51–72. Jacob Talmon's *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* was first published in Hebrew (as *Reishitah shel hademokratyah hatotalit*) in 1955. The Hebrew version of the second part, *Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase*, was published (as *Hameshihiyut hapolitiit*) ten years later. It would be interesting to try to analyze both the seminal effect of Talmon's work on the understanding of Zionism (and other modern ideological movements) as messianism and the ways in which his ideas were taken up and used by others. No less interesting would be an attempt to see how Talmon's view of messianism affected that of others, particularly Gershom Scholem. It would seem likely that Talmon had the greatest influence on historians working in modern history, since he dealt more with the messianic mentality than with the nature of the traditional messianic idea and its transfer to the realm of secular ideology.

5. Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (Oxford: 1982), 240.

6. Anthony D. S. Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (London: 1979), esp. ch. 2, “Nationalism and the Millennium,” 14–41. It should be noted that the use of traditional motifs is characteristic even of revolutionary movements. Cf. R. J. Werblowsky's comment that “also radical forms of eschatology usually try to legitimate themselves by appeal to one or more element of tradition” in his *Beyond Tradition and Modernity: Changing Religions in a Changing World* (London: 1976), 4–5. Thus, it is hardly surprising to find that use was frequently made of traditional messianic motifs in the revolutionary ideas developed within the Zionist movement. See also S. Thrupp (ed.), *Millennial Dreams in Action* (The Hague: 1972); Yonina Talmon, “The Pursuit of the Millennium: The Relation

Between Religion and Social Change,” *European Journal of Sociology* 3 (1962), 125–140.

7. See Shmuel Almog, “Hameshihiyut keetgar leziyonut,” in *Meshihiyut veeskhatologia* ed. Zvi Baras (Jerusalem: 1983), 419–431.

8. It is important to distinguish here between the common nineteenth-century ideas of Judaism's universal mission as well as the Judaeo-messianic views of revolutionary and missionary movements and an outlook such as that of Klausner. The latter saw in national unity and national sovereignty a condition essential both for the fulfillment of the universal messianic idea within the framework of Jewish society and for the dissemination of the Jewish national ideal among the nations.

Mission theology was thus fused with a political-nationalist outlook, Judaism with humanity. Klausner's book was published in three parts—in 1909, 1921 and 1923. See Joseph (Yosef) Klausner's introduction to his *Har'ayon hameshihi beyisrael mereishito ve'ad hatimat hamishnah*, 2nd ed., corrected and enlarged (Jerusalem: 1927), 3–18. Klausner developed his ideology in no small measure in order to prove that the Jewish messianic ideal represented exalted utopian social ideals and, therefore, had no need of Marxism or materialist Communism. He argued that, unlike that of Communism, the messianic social vision of the Israelite prophets was essentially ethical. The nationalist ideology took up the universal aspect of Israelite prophecy, which mission theology had divested of all nationalist implications, but it tended to limit its significance to Jewish national and social questions alone: its purpose became the establishment not of a new world, but of a new Jewish world. The idea of a “mission to the nations” as expressed by Herzl or Klausner (among others) came to the fore again in the 1950s, when it was taken up by David Ben-Gurion.

9. On the extremely uncertain attitude of the Palestinian labor movement toward the Bolshevik revolution, see Anita Shapira, “‘Black Night—White Snow’: Attitudes of the Palestinian Labor Movement to the Russian Revolution, 1917–29,” in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 4, *The Jews and the European Crisis, 1914–21*, ed. Jonathan Frankel, (New York: 1988), 144–171; *idem*, “Berl Tabenkin, uVen-Gurion veyahasam lemahapekhat oktober,” in *Hahalikhah 'al kav haofek*, 258–292.

10. On 27 September 1932, *Haarev* published an article by Shlomo Haalkushi, in which he described the “negation of the Diaspora” in Revisionist ideology as false messianism. Such attacks on Zev Jabotinsky's Revisionist movement were commonplace at that time.

11. This ambivalent attitude characterized the treatment of Sabbatianism from the earliest days of the Haskalah. See Shmuel Verses, *Haskalah veshabtaut: toldotav shel ma'avak* (Jerusalem: 1988). To the generations that witnessed the rise of popular movements, only Sabbatianism could have presented some possible parallel in Jewish history to what they had seen.

12. See the speech of Nahum Rafalkis-Nir in *Ve'idat krakov shel misfeget po'alei zionut berusyah, 1907 (te'udot [documents])*, ed. with a preface by Matityahu Minc (Tel-Aviv: 1979), 152.

13. See, e.g., the discussion concerning messianic faith that took place in the German Rabbinical Conference held in Frankfurt in 1845 in *Ve'idat harabanim begermaniah bashanim 1844–1846*, intro. M. Meyer (Jerusalem: 1986), 37–45. See also Michael Graetz, “Hameshihiut hahilonit bemeah hatesh'a'esreh kederekh shivah leyahadut,” in *Boras, Meshihiyut veeskhatologia*; 401–418; Baruch Mevorach, *Sheelat hamashiah befulmusei haemanzipaziah vehareformah, 1781–1819* (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University, 1966). The question of messianic faith in Judaism in the nineteenth century was one of the crucial questions in the controversy between the supporters of the Reform movement, of Orthodox Judaism and of secular Jewish nationalism. The nationalists were also forced to deal with the Enlightenment point of view that the messianic ideal belongs to the area of folklore and that belief in the Messiah is not one of the foundations of the faith but rather a reaction to historical circumstances—in other words, belief in the Messiah is neither realistic nor necessary in the age of Emancipation. See Mordechai Levin, *Erkhei hevrah vekhalkalah baidologia shel tekufat hahaskalah* (Jerusalem: 1975), 227–231.

14. Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, *Yisrael learzo utelshono*, ed. Itamar Ben-Avi (Jerusalem: 1929), 221.

15. See Werses, *Haskalah veshabtaut*, 185–186.
16. Ephraim E. Urbach, *Koresh vehakhrzato be'einei hazal*, *Molad* 19, no. 157 (1961), 368–374.
17. On the question of Laurenee Oliphant's standing, see Shulamit Laskov's conclusions in *Habiluim* (Jerusalem: 1979), 54–71.
18. See Yaacov Shavit, "The Return to Zion in the Hibbat Zion Movement," *Zionism* 9 (1984), 359–372. I intend to deal with the question of the rise and fall of Cyrus as a historical symbol in modern Jewish national consciousness at greater length elsewhere. There are a number of aspects to the messianism of the Return to Zion that differed from the later prophecies to be found, e.g., in Chronicles. On the one hand, it is restorative in nature, dreaming of a past golden age, whereas, on the other hand, it contains very strong utopian elements and the vision of an entirely new world. The literature on this subject is too extensive to be summarized here. On the feeling of history repeating itself and its effect on those in this period who acted to make it come true, see Sarah Japhet, *Emunot vede'ot besefer divrei hayamim umekomon ba'olam hanahshavah hamikrait* (Jerusalem: 1977), 327.
19. Ahad Ha'am's essay "Be'ikvot meshiha" was published in *Hashiloah* 16, no. 2 (1907), and *idem*, *'Al parashat derakhim* (Berlin: 1930), vol. 4, 97–100.
20. According to Ahad Ha'am, it was "people like this who once followed Shabbetai Zvi and Frank farther than Africa: [they took] a road from which there is no return. How, then, can they fail to follow Herzl to Africa in order to return from there to the land of Israel?" "Habokhim," in *'Al parashat derakhim*, vol. 3, 200.
21. See David Vital, *Hamahapekha ha'zionit*, vol. 1, *Reshit hatenu'ah* (Tel-Aviv: 1978), 243, n. 5.
22. Quoted in Werses, *Haskalah veshabtaut*, 261.
23. *Ibid.* for a short discussion of Herzl's attitude toward Sabbatianism, 245–258.
24. See Yosef Gorni, "Hayesod haromanti baidologia shel ha'aliyah hasheniya," *Asufot* 10 (1966), 55–75; Jonathan Frankel, "Sefer 'hayizkor' mishnat 1911—he'arah 'al mitosim leumiim betekufat ha'aliyah hasheniya," *Yahadut zamanenu* 4 (1988), 67–96.
25. This common interpretation of the war of freedom from Rome saw the roots of the war as not only political, but also social in nature. Thus, in its pantheon, the heroes of the Jews' struggle became heroes of the struggle for social justice, etc.
26. Berl Katznelson to Hugo Bergmann 24 August 1920, quoted in Yisrael Kolatt, "Ziyonut umeshihyut," in Baras, *Meshihyut veeshkatologia*, 424. Katznelson, therefore, saw messianism as an attempt at radical change with unattainable goals; on the other hand, activism was a substitute, or perhaps even a synonym, for evolutionist constructivism. This latter ideology does not betray passivity of any kind, demonstrating rather a daring pioneerism that was well beyond that which might have been expected from the historical circumstances, although still remaining within the realm of the possible. Between these two extremes of messianism and activism, however, there was a gray area.
27. See Yisrael Oppenheimer, *Tenuat hehalutz befolin (1917–1929)* (Jerusalem: 1982), 194.
28. See, e.g., Elkanah Margalit's attempt to distinguish between the positive utopian attitudes of the Gedud Ha'avodah and Hashomer Hazair and their members' attraction toward more dangerous millenarian utopianism, despair and nihilism (see *Hashomer ha'azair: mi'edat ne'urim lemarksizm mahapakhani 1913–1936* [Tel-Aviv: 1971], 17–25. Margalit examines the growth of Hashomer Hazair in an atmosphere that varied from a messianic idealism and perfectionism to bitter disappointment, disillusion, despair and even nihilism, and he discusses the themes and metaphors of both extremes. See *idem*, *Komunah, hevrah ufolitikah: gedud ha'avodah 'al-shem Trumpeldor beerez-yisrael: masah bemasoret haradikalism hakomunotari vehashivyonit betenu'at ha'avodah ha'ivrit* (Tel-Aviv: 1980), 11–54; Anita Shapira, "Leshivro shel halom ehad: gedud ha'avodah 'al shem Yosef Trumpeldor," in *Hahalikhah al kav haofek*, 157–207. The Labor Battalion represents the best example of a messianic avant-garde to be found in the Yishuv, and so it is very often characterized by the terms "utopian" and "messianic," used either separately or in concert.
29. G. Hanoch, "Dorshei hazaron," *Hapo'el ha'azair*, 20 May 1927.

30. *Kehilatenu*, 1922 collection, reissued with a commentary and illustrations by Muki Zur (Jerusalem: 1988), 145.
31. *Ibid.*, 155.
32. Peretz Smolenskin, "Ne'hapasah darkeinu," in his *Maamarim* (Jerusalem: 1920), 118.
33. Shapira, "Haziyonut vehakoah," 38–42; Gorni, *Ahdut ha'avodah 1919–1930*, 19–23.
34. Quoted in Gorni, *Ahdut ha'avodah 1919–1930*, 18–19; Shapira, *Haziyonut vehakoah* 39. This is one of the best examples of messianic rhetoric being used as evidence for the existence of a collective mood.
35. In S. Ben Zion's article "El mul penei hahistoriyah," which was published in the "Shay shel sifrut" supplement to the *Palestine News* of 5 July 1918. He viewed the Balfour Declaration as "history repeating itself," and Cyrus's declaration as "the historical present."
36. Yosef Hayim Brenner, "Seridei sihot noshanot," in *Kol kitvei Y. H. Brenner* (Tel-Aviv: 1960), vol. 2, 159–161. Brenner also saw service in the Battalions, at least from the point of view of many who did so, as following "the trumpet call of messianic Zionism," and he commented somewhat epigrammatically, "our messianic faith stems from our weakness or is even its cause; at all events, he will not come mounted on a knightly charger, our Messiah." This view of service in the Jewish Legion during the First World War as an expression of sword-bearing messianic Zionism is of course metaphorical: the Battalions were never meant to conquer Palestine and establish Jewish sovereignty there.
37. Yosef Hayim Brenner, "Ba'itonut uvasifrut," *Hapo'el ha'azair* 24 November 1910.
38. *Protokol hakongres ha'zioni ha'esrim*, the fifth session of the Jewish Agency, August 1937, Jerusalem, 46.
39. David Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot* (Tel-Aviv: 1974), vol. 4, 388. Ben-Gurion did not view the breakthrough to the partition plan, which was eventually to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish state in part of western Palestine, as a messianic event. Rather, he characterized the messianic age as being the time when there would be "a world without evil"—a contemporary reference to the rise of Nazism (*ibid.*, 294). The critics of the partition plan vilified the eagerness for the immediate establishment of a state as the "dizzy desire for a state and Shabbetai Zvi's dream" (*ibid.*, 145). Thus, any political scheme that seemed unrealistic was soon stigmatized as false messianism. On the development of Ben-Gurion's political views during the First World War, see Matityahu Minc, "'Hakonzeptzia hahistorit: leivur 'emdat hapolitit vehaziyonit shel David Ben-Gurion be'et milhemet ha'olam harishonah lifnei hazharat Balfor," *Ziyonut* 13 (1988), 69–88.
40. The historical metaphors used during the years of "the struggle" are surveyed in Hilda Schatzberger, *Meri umasoret beerez-yisrael betekufot hamandot* (Tel-Aviv: 1985), 47–69.
41. Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement 1925–1948* (London: 1988), 322–350.
42. *Ibid.*, 143–151, and the references therein. See also Yaacov Shavit, "Uri Zvi Greenberg: Conservative Revolutionarism and National Messianism," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 48 (Fall 1988), 63–72. On the messianism of Uri Zvi Greenberg, Avraham Stern and Yisrael Sheib (Eldad), see Yosef Heller, *Lehi: ideologia ufolitikah: 1940–1949*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: 1989).
43. Martin Buber, *Bein 'am le'azot: 'ikarei toldotav shel ra'ayon* (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: 1984 [1st ed. 1944]).
44. Uri Zvi Greenberg, "Yehudah hayoni, yehudah ma'har: masa' devai, nasa' gil," *Hayarden* (June 1938).
45. Uri Zvi Greenberg, "He will surely come . . ." *Hamedinah* (Warsaw: 1938).
46. Nahum Sokolow, "Journey Through Poland in 1935," in his *Watchman unto the House of Israel* (Jerusalem: 1961), 256. It is interesting to note that there was an astonishing reversal in political Zionism from the end of the First World War until the 1930s. By then, any expectations of a dramatic political breakthrough were viewed simply as false mes-

sianism. The same Sokolow who treated with derision the Revisionist political program and what he viewed as the false promises it was making had thirty years earlier reacted in exactly the same way to Herzl's vision of a "Jews' State."

47. Hayim Arlosoroff, *Kitvei Hayim Arlozorov* (Tel-Aviv: 1934), vol. 6, 264.

48. See Israel Ben-Shalom, "Tahalihim veidcologiyah betekufat Yavne kegormim akifim lemered bar-Kokhva," in *Mered bar-Kokhva: mehkarim hadashim*, ed. A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport (Jerusalem: 1984), 6–7. Ben-Shalom states, "The idea of repentance was one of the key themes in the Zealot ideology during the Second Temple period" (7).

49. In other words, Redemption can be brought about by people who are not religious, and physical redemption is a precondition for repentance. Repentance here does not mean the acceptance of the Law and all its commandments as binding but rather a religious revival—a new revelation. Shcib (Eldad) developed Klausner's dialectic argument (also propounded by Scholem in his 1934 paper "*Mizvah habaah ba'averah*") [Redemption through Sin] and argued that "He who comes to redeem us will somehow burst the bounds of existing religious practice, canceling various of the commandments, whether trifling or weighty . . . always with the feeling that Redemption demands some drastic action." Nationalistic messianism is not meant, however, to supersede faith or religion; it must first bring physical Redemption to the nation and only afterwards religious renewal. National renaissance, caused by the power of messianism, is an essential precondition to messianic spiritual revival. See Yisrael Eldad, "Shorshei hama'avak hadati," in his *Hegyonot yisrael* (Tel-Aviv: 1980), 144–162. Though the essay was only published in 1963, it is an excellent summary of his views.

50. Abba Ahimeir in the newspaper, "Doar hayom," 14 October 1928. This quotation has often been taken as evidence of Ahimeir's fascism; in fact, it was written in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution. See Yosef Ncdava's introduction to Ahimeir's *Brit habiryoniim: ketavim nivharim* (Tel-Aviv: 1972), vol. 3, 7–58. Yeivin echoed these sentiments in a letter from the end of July 1932 in which he wrote that, as revolutionaries, he and his friends could not believe that the Messiah would come on a "bridge of paper." He was referring to the petition then being organized by the Revisionists in order to bring moral pressure to bear on Britain, *ibid.*, 36–37.

51. The Second Temple period is not heavily emphasized in messianic historiography because of the deep historical and religious feeling that it was in no way a high point in the history of the Jewish nation and could not compare to the golden age of David and Solomon. In addition, of course, there is the fact that the Jews at that time were exiled from their land. It is interesting to note that Ben-Gurion, too, though for different reasons, tended to play down the Second Temple period, preferring to emphasize the glorious period of the Israelite kingdom. Despite this, it would be accurate to say that the messianic dreams (though not the reality) of the Second Temple period have been the inspiration for modern nationalist messianism, whereas the more ancient visions became more "real" than reality itself.

52. On Ben-Gurion's 1950s polemic with Buber and Scholem, among others, and on the question of messianism, see Shapira, *Hahalikhah 'al kav haofek*, 59; and for a lengthy treatment, see Michael Keren, *Ben Gurion and the Intellectuals: Power, Knowledge, and Charisma* (De Kalb: 1983), 36–99. I do not agree with Keren's interpretation of this issue, though this is not the place to examine his approach in depth.

53. See Moshe Idel's introduction to Aescoly's *Hatenu'ot hameshihiyot beyisrael*, 9–10. This book and Even Shmuel's book *Midreshei geulah* were published in 1956 and 1953, respectively, and Yitzhak Baer's article, "Hatenu'ah hameshihit besefarad batekufat hageirush," in *Maasef ziyon* 5 (1932–1933). Though Scholem's essay, "*Mizvah habaah ba'averah*," was published in *Kenesset* 2 (1934), his studies were published only after 1948. I have been unable to find any use made of Abba Hillel Silver's *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel* (New York: 1927, rpr. Boston 1959) in the period discussed here. Dinur's influence was felt mostly through the lectures he gave at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a number of articles in which he gave expression to his Palestinian view of Jewish history, and in which he assessed its irrational elements. Marmorstein's articles on the messianic idea in the Tannaite and Amorite writings were published in Hebrew in *Sinai*,

vols. 5, 7 and 8 (1942–1944). See, too, J. Rabinowitz, ed., *Sinai: Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Theology* by A. Marmorstein (Oxford: 1956), 11–56, in which he argued that in the fourth century C.E., the rabbinic leadership came to the conclusion that it was no longer possible to rely on Redemption to be attained by human means, as all attempts of this kind had ended in disaster. There was no alternative in their view except to rely on the divine will and power alone. The blossoming of interest (even in religious circles) in messianism in both academic and literary contexts also belongs to a later period; see, e.g., Raphael Halevi Eisenberg, *Hevlei mashi'ah bezemanenu* (Jerusalem: 1971). A thorough study of the influence of messianism and the publication of messianic texts on modern literature and historical-ideological polemic still remains to be done. Shmuel Werses's recent study (see n. 11) deals with this topic only in relation to Sabbatianism and only in the context of the very earliest days of the Zionist movement.

54. For a preliminary discussion of messianic and catastrophic themes in Polish Jewish literature in interwar Poland, see David Weinfeld, "Al shirah 'ivrit befolin" in *Iyunim besifrut: devarim sheneemru ba'erev likhvod Dov Sadan bemeleat lo shemonim vehamesh shanah* (Jerusalem: 1988), 7–20; see also Chone Shmeruk, "Yezirato shel Uri Zvi Grinberg beyidish beerez yisrael uvefolin besof shenot ha'esrim vehasheloshim," in *Hasifrut* 29 (December 1979), 82–92. Shmeruk discusses the idea of the "leap forward" as expressed in the poem of the same name of 1924. This poem was later incorporated into still another, entitled *Eimah gedolah veyareah*, whose central character was Shabbetai Zvi. Shmeruk also makes a number of very important points concerning both the publicistic literature of the interwar period that made use of messianic terminology and the use of messianic themes in the Jewish literature of the same period. This must, of course, be seen in the wider context of the interest of Polish historians and other writers in messianism. [On the question of messianism in the Hebrew literature of the interwar period, see Hannan Hever herein 128–158—Ed.]

55. Quoted in Werses, *Haskalah veshabtaut*, 263.

56. See Klausner's article, "Don Yosef Nasi," in his collection of historical studies, *Keshehaumah nilhemet 'al herutah*, published first in 1936 (and subsequently in a number of editions), 285. The contents of the collection had appeared previously in various contexts.

57. Joseph (Yosef) Klausner, "Erez yisrael utenu'at hamahapekha beyisrael," in *Keshehaumah nilhemet*, 294.

58. Dinur's position is reflected most clearly in a later article, "Hatesisah hameshihit vha'alayah leerez yisrael mimas'aei hazlav 'ad hamagefah hashehorah, veyesodoteihen haid-eologiim," in *Lezikhro*, (Jerusalem: 1969), 75–88; repr. in *idem*, *Bema'avak hadorot* (Jerusalem: 1975), 237–248. See also Aryeh Morgenstern, *Meshi'ut veyishuv erez yisrael banahazit harishonah shel hame'ah hatesh'a 'esrei* (Jerusalem: 1985).

59. Yehoshua Heshel Yeivin, "Minaftulei derekh hageulah," *Ha'olam* 41 (1928); repr. in *idem*, *Ketavim* (Tel-Aviv: 1959), 345–350.

60. *Ibid.*