Bibliographical Review

Palestine in the Nineteenth Century,
Jewish Settlement in Palestine during the
British Mandate, and the Zionist Movement:
A Survey of Studies in Israeli Historiography
1973-1979

Yaakov Shavit

This survey deals only with studies published in book form, and not with other kinds of publications.

The remarkable growth in the amount of research in these areas is related to the development of a national historical consciousness, and is ideologically motivated in part. There is no doubt, for example, that the main impetus in the study of the history of Palestine from the time of Bar-Kokhba’s revolt up to and including the nineteenth century was the desire to prove a continuous Jewish presence in Palestine (“continuity of the Jewish community”). This tendency is clearly expressed in Michael Ish-Shalom’s latest book, In the Shadow of Alien Rule: History of the Jews in the Land of Israel, Tel Aviv (1975).\(^1\) This book describes the history of the Yishuv from Bar-Kokhba’s revolt to the Ottoman conquest (1516), emphasizing continuity and change, and thus contrasting sharply with the very slight interest in continued Jewish settlement displayed by European Jewish historians.

The study of the history of mandatory Palestine and of Jewish settlement during that period is motivated by the desire to review and understand the processes contributing to the establishment of the new Jewish society in Eretz Yisrael. It is also concerned with the political circumstances of the Arab-Zionist conflict which preceded the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state. Another reason for the expansion of this research is the desire of a new generation of scholars—and of the public in general—to better understand the recent past.

Witness to this are the new journals on these subjects and the research institutes behind them, among them The Institute for Zionist Research Founded in Memory of Chaim Weizmann at Tel Aviv University which publishes

\(^{1}\) All books are in Hebrew unless otherwise indicated.
Zionism: Studies in the History of the Zionist Movement and the Jewish Community in Palestine, 1970-1979 (6 volumes), the Yitzhak Ben-Zvi Memorial, Jerusalem, which since 1976 has published the quarterly Cathedra for the History of Eretz Yisrael and its Yishuv, and the large number of dissertations published recently by the universities. A detailed survey of these dissertations was published in Research on Eretz Yisrael and the Yishuv in Israeli Universities: Doctoral and M.A. Theses Concluded and in Preparation, comp. by Y. Barnay, Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem (1974). Complete lists were published in Cathedra no. 8, November 1976, and no. 2, July 1978.

What characterizes these studies is the familiarity with primary sources and, when necessary, with the geographic and human setting in which the history actually transpired. Scholars are often preoccupied with small details, particular and local matters and to this extent appear to sidestep general, ideological issues. There is almost no field which is taboo for the new historiography. Furthermore, there is hardly an area in the traditional canon which has emerged unscathed from severe critical reexamination. So much so, that one already hears reservations expressed about critical revision “going too far.”

No single historiographical tendency seems to have emerged in recent years: a significant number of the studies possess the characteristics of a chronicle; others, in particular those from the universities, are analytical and critical. Most writers come from a wide “Zionist consensus,” but there is a broad political and conceptual spectrum within this consensus which influences the choice of material and the historical interpretation. The fact that many of these subjects still have actual political and conceptual significance makes them part of current public debate. The studies on the relationship between the old Yishuv and the new Yishuv and the contribution of the latter to the development of the Jewish community in Palestine is one example. Others are the relationship of the labor movement to middle-class circles and to the Revisionist movement, the policies of the Yishuv and its tactics in the years 1944–1948, attitudes to the Palestinian Arabs and to the national Arab movement, etc. Some studies, in particular those from outside the universities, are designed as part of this historical, conceptual, political argument, and even the “objective” and “neutral” study often cannot escape this involvement.

1. Primary Sources

The return to primary sources is expressed by the reprinting of travel accounts, pamphlets, diaries, and other writings that deal with Palestine in the nineteenth century, a sampling of which is included here. A.M. Luntz, Guide to Palestine and Syria (1979), Jerusalem, was the first guide to the country from a Jewish point of view published in 1891. Chapters from the diary of Judith Montefiore, published in England in 1836, of which only sections, with obvi-
ous omissions, were published previously, describe the journey of the Montefiores to Palestine in 1827: *Private Journal of a Visit to Egypt and Palestine* (English), photocopy of the London Edition, 1836 (pages 128–234), intro., I. Barta (1976), Jerusalem. Also, *Diary and Letters from Voyages: Palestine in the 1830s*, Photocopy of Selected Passages (1974), Jerusalem, which includes the letters of Eliezer Halevy, Montefiore’s secretary, sections of Judith’s diary, and letters to Sir Moses Montefiore. A. S. Hirshberg’s travel account, *The Way of the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael* (1979), Jerusalem, intro. Y. Kaniel, which was published in Hebrew in Vilna in 1901, gives critical impressions of his visit. He also wrote a more comprehensive book, *In Oriental Lands*, Photocopy of the Hebrew Vilna Edition, 1910 (1977) Jerusalem. There is also Yehiel Brill, *Yesud Hama’ala: The Immigration of Eleven Farmers from Russia in 1883* (1978) Jerusalem, intro., notes and index, G. Kressel. The joint scientific essay by Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and David Ben-Gurion, written during their stay in the United States in 1919 was translated from the Yiddish. This was the first historical study by Zionist writers on the history of Palestine and the Yishuv throughout the ages, and in particular in the nineteenth century. It gives us a picture of what was known at that time and what the historical assessments of Zionist authors at that time were (for example, the chapter on “The Origin of the Fellahs” claims that the Arab mountain-dwelling fellahs are descendants of the tribes of Israel who converted to Islam during the Moslem conquest): *Eretz Yisrael in the Past and in the Present*, by David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, ed., M. Eliva and Y. Ben-Arieh (1979) Jerusalem.

For the history of the Zionist movement, the publication of the correspondence of Chaim Weizmann, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann, Series A, Letters*, is nearing completion. This is an important primary source for the biography of the Zionist statesman and for the diplomatic and political history of the Zionist movement. The eleventh volume of correspondence has come out in Hebrew, covering the period from January 1922 to July 1923, and the English version has already reached the twenty-first volume to May 1945. *The Letters of David Ben-Gurion*, vol. 3 (1928–1933), ed. and annot. by Yehuda Erez (1974), Tel Aviv, the fifth volume of B. Katznelson’s *Letters* (1921–1930), ed. and annot. by Yehuda Erez (1973), Tel Aviv, and the fourth and fifth volumes of the political diary of Moshe Sharett, *Making of Policy: The Diaries of Moshe Sharett*, vol. 4 (1974), vol. 5 (1979), Tel Aviv, which cover the diplomatic struggle of the Zionist movement before and after the “White Paper,” have also appeared.

David Ben-Gurion: *Memoirs*, vol. 4, 1937 (1974) is a miscellany of letters and parts of his diary, speeches, and other publications.

The essays and political articles of Herzl, as a reporter for the “Neue Freie Presse” in Paris, which trace his intellectual development amidst the political and social awakening of France of the Third Republic, appeared in 1974 in three volumes: Theodore Herzl: *From Boulanger to Dreyfus*, 1891–1895,
Jerusalem, trans. from the German; ed. A. Bein and M. Schaerf.


2. The History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Beginning of the Twentieth Century

is a comprehensive collection of sources on the problems of land acquisition and planning, which determined the nature of urban and rural settlement in the mandate period. Leah Doukhan-Landau, *The Zionist Companies for Land Purchase in Palestine, 1897-1914* (1979) Jerusalem. also deals with the subject on the background of Turkish rule.

3. Zionist History: Currents, Political Parties, and the History of the Yishuv in Palestine

The history of the Zionist movement deals with the movement as a social and political phenomenon, as an organized national and international framework, as a superstructure for political parties and ideological trends, and, of course, as a practical movement. In recent historical research, the tone of emotional and moral involvement, characteristic of earlier work, has disappeared. Two general surveys have been published in English. Walter Laqueur: *A History of Zionism*, London (1972); and David Vital: *The Origins of Zionism*, Oxford (1975), the first volume of a more comprehensive work which combines an analysis of Zionism as a social movement and as a political and intellectual framework. The monograph by Mordechai Eliav, *David Wolffson: The Man and His Times* (1972), Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, describes the difficulties of the Zionist movement with the burden of Herzl's legacy on his heirs, mainly David Wolffson, and the dilemma between "practical" and "political Zionism."

The difficulties faced by the Zionist movement in its attempt to carry out the Balfour Declaration by Ehyatar Friesel, *Zionist Policy after the Balfour Declaration, 1917-1922* (1977) Tel Aviv. The study in English by M. Mosse, *Palestine Immigration Policy under Sir Herbert Samuel: British, Zionist and Arab Attitudes* (1978) London, deals with the narrower field of immigration policy and the desire of the Zionist Federation for selective, concentrated immigration in full cooperation with the mandate. Jacob Metzer: *National Capital for a National Home, 1919-1921* (1979), Jerusalem, is the first in a series of studies of the economic history of Palestine in the mandate period by The Maurice Falk Institute for Economic Research in Israel. The author analyzes the basic attitudes of the Zionist Organization toward the economic system in Palestine with respect to ideological and tactical priorities.

The political and ideological hegemony of the labor movement in the implementation of Zionism tried to give the worker a social and national vision amid the tension between the ideological dimension and the constraints of Palestinian reality. Yosef Gorni: *Ahadut Ha'avoda, 1919-1939: The Ideological Principles and the Political System* (1973), Tel Aviv, views constructive socialism, in theory and practice, as utopian. Yehuda Slutzky: *Introduction to the History of the Labor Movement in Israel* (1973) Tel Aviv, describes the formative period of the Zionist workers' party in Europe and in Palestine up to the
founding of the Histadrut. Elkana Margalit analyzes the leftist Zionist parties in two studies. The first, Hashomer Hatzair: From Youth Community to Revolutionary Marxism (1971), Tel Aviv, describes its development into a revolutionary Marxist movement combined with pioneering activity. The Anatomy of the Left: The Left Poalei-Zion in Eretz Yisrael, 1919-1946 (1976), Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, describes the ideology and mentality of the radicals in the Zionist parties as they trod the thin line between Zionism and anti-Zionist communism. The teachings of Ber Borokhov, his synthesis of Marxism and Zionism, had an influence on the radical current in the Jewish workers’ party. Matityahu Mintz: Ber Borokhov: Circle One (1900-1906) (1976), Tel Aviv, examines the intellectual development of the young Borokhov in the years 1900-1906. For most of this period, Borokhov had not yet developed his labor-Zionist ideology. At the end of this period a marked change took place in his fundamental philosophical and theoretical assumptions about the position of the Jewish proletariat in the Zionist movement.

Studies have been written on different facets of “the political community” of the Yishuv, which analyze the various parties and settlement movements. Yaakov Goldstein in his book, The Workers’ Party (Mapai) of Eretz Yisrael: Factors in its Creation (1973), Tel Aviv, describes the unification of the two central national workers’ parties, Ahдут Ha’avoda and Hapoel Hatzair, at the end of the twenties. Baruh Ben-Avram’s study, The Union of Kibbutz—Its Social and Ideological Development (1976), Tel Aviv, deals with one of the kibbutz movements as a framework of unified settlement, particularly on the plane of political affiliation and behavior. Anita Shapira’s study, Fruitful Struggle: The Jewish Labor Controversy, 1929–1939 (1977), Tel Aviv, gives a comprehensive description of the struggle for “Jewish labor” and “organized labor” in the thirties as one of the most important manifestations of the economic and political development of the Yishuv in this period. The study emphasizes the incompatibility of the two concepts and the mere partial “victory” of the struggle for “Jewish labor” in the colonies. Menachem Friedman: Society and Religion: The Non-Zionist Orthodox in Eretz Yisrael, 1918-1936 (1977), Jerusalem, is the first study of its kind of the development of the zealous, religious community in Palestine, secluded from the Yishuv, its struggle against and partial accommodation to it, and the development of national religious institutions such as the Chief Rabbinate. Yonatan Shapiro: The Organization of Power (1975), Tel Aviv, analyzes the sources of the political power of Ahдут Ha’avoda up to 1930 and its course of action from the viewpoint of political sociology. In a quite comprehensive study, The Origins of the Israeli Policy: The Political System of the Jewish Community in Palestine under the Mandate (1977), Jerusalem, the editors, Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, describe the crystallization of the autonomous political community in mandatory Palestine and its power structure. From the viewpoint of “social science,” Yael Ishai: Factionalism in the Labor Movement: Faction B in Mapai
(1978), Tel Aviv, analyzes the emergence of faction B in Mapai, which split off and formed the Ahдут Ha’avoda party in 1944 (not the historical Ahдут Ha’avoda party of 1919-1930). This is a case of the emergence of an ideological and organizational opposition within a ruling party. In his study, *Revisionism in Zionism—the Revisionist Movement: the Plan for Colonizatory Regime and Social Ideas, 1925-1935* (1978), Tel Aviv, Yaakov Shavit places the emphasis on the social character and social ideology of the Revisionist movement on the background of its opposition stance. In the joint study by Yaakov Shavit and Yaakov Goldstein, *The Ben-Gurion—Jabotinsky Agreement and its Failure* (1979), Tel Aviv, the web of relationships between Mapai and Zohar during the London agreements of 1934 and their failure in the Histadrut referendum in the summer of 1935 are examined. Yosef Gorn: *Partnership and Conflict—Chaim Weizmann and the Jewish Labor Movement in Palestine* (1976), Tel Aviv, describes the ideological and political foundation of the hegemonic coalition between Chaim Weizmann and the workers’ parties.

In an economic study, *Wage Differentials and Equality within the Histadrut: the Impact of Egalitarian Ideology and Arab Labor on Jewish Wages in Palestine* (1972), Tel Aviv, Zvi Sussman examines the extent of social stratification in the Histadrut membership as dictated by “market forces” beyond their control. He points out the pervasiveness of wage differentials in a society which aspired to equality. Aryeh Levi Sarid comprehensively documents the most important source of “the labor aliyah” and “the pioneer aliyah” between the two world wars, the “Hehalutz” federations, particularly in Poland: *The Pioneers: Hehalutz and the Youth Movement in Poland* (1979), Tel Aviv. In the same vein, two volumes have appeared so far of a comprehensive and well-documented description of the history of Betar: Ch. Ben-Yeruham: *Book of Betar—History and Sources* (1969-1975). Tel Aviv.

4. The Struggle over the Political Future of Palestine

The political and diplomatic history of Palestine during the mandate is a central issue in historical studies because of the repercussions it has had on the political situation since the establishment of the State of Israel. Research has broadened due to both the great interest in this subject among the reading public in Israel and in the West and the opening of many archival sources in Britain and the U.S. Historians have examined the mutual relations between the principal parties—Palestine, Great Britain, the U.S., and others. Here, too, one notes the trend away from “subjective” evaluation and description. Perhaps only Martin Gilbert’s book (in English), *Exile and Return—the Emergence of Jewish Statehood* (1978), London and Tel Aviv, still talks in terms of “the betrayal of Britain.” This study is based on the policies of Winston Churchill towards Zionism and the Yishuv. Nicholas Bethell, on the other hand, in his book, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle between the British, the
Jews and the Arabs, 1935-1938 (1979), London and Tel Aviv, uses, in addition to material from archives, interviews with British government officials in order to present a compelling and readable description of the political history of the mandate (English). Several Israeli researchers have published studies of a narrower scope, but of a more academic nature. Among them, Nathaniel Katzburg, in two books, From Partition to White Paper: British Policy in Palestine, 1936-1940 (1974), Jerusalem, and The Palestine Problem in British Policy, 1940-1945 (1977), Jerusalem, examines Britain’s withdrawal from the mandate and from the partition plan of 1937, and her quest for a political solution other than the political solution of the “White Paper” of 1939. Michael J. Cohen deals with the same matter in his study (English), Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate—the Making of British Policy, 1936-1945 (1978), London. In Churchill and Palestine, 1939-1942 (1976), London, Gavriel Cohen concentrates on Churchill’s policies during the first years of the war, when he failed to change the White Paper with respect to immigration and land, but succeeded in postponing the activation of its constitutional article (English). In their books, America, Britain and Palestine—the Origins and Development of America’s Intervention in Britain’s Palestine Policy, 1938-1947 (1979), Jerusalem, and Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948 (1979), New York, Zvi Gatim and Amitzur Ilan look at the question of Palestine through Britain’s relations with the U.S. and through the increase in the power of the Jewish “lobby” in the U.S. under the direction of Abba Hillel Silver (English). They see these as key factors in America’s pressure on Britain to withdraw from Palestine. Shmuel Dothan has written a study of Partition of Eretz Yisrael in the Mandatory Period: The Jewish Controversy (1979), Jerusalem. The Arab scene has also been studied. In two volumes, The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1919-1929 (1971), Tel Aviv, and From Riots to Rebellion, the Palestinian-Arab National Movement 1929-1939 (1978), London (English), Yehoshua Porath analyzes Palestinian Arab society and its political maturation, its struggle against Zionism, and its relations with the various Arab countries. This is the first study by an Israeli to objectively examine the internal struggle of the Palestinian Arabs and their political crystallization vis-à-vis the Zionist movement until their loss of strength as an autonomous political factor. Two supplementary studies are Yuval Arnon-Ohana’s study of the role of the fellahs as a social factor in the different stages of the Arab Revolt, Fellahs in the Arab Revolt in Eretz Yisrael 1936-1939 (1978), Tel Aviv, and Yosef Nevo’s study of the relationship between King Abdullah of Transjordan and the Palestinians’ political leadership—Abdallah and the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael (1975), Tel Aviv.

A number of scholars have dealt with Zionist involvement in historical events during the mandate, notably in connection with The Second World War. Yehuda Bauer deals with the “Brihah” (escape) movement in Europe after the war as a manifestation of the Jewish “will to live” and the move-
ment's influence on American and British policies: *Flight and Rescue* / *Briah* (n.d.) Tel Aviv (Hebrew and English). In the first volume of a comprehensive study, Yoav Gelber describes the attempt of the Yishuv to join the British Army and the controversy within the Yishuv on the form and direction of this cooperation—*Jewish Palestinian Voluntering in the British Army During the Second Worl'd War, Volume 1: Volunteering and its Role in Zionist Policy 1939/1942* (1979), Jerusalem. Yehuda Szlutskey's monumental study of the history of the "Haganah" is summarized in *A Brief History of the Haganah* (1978), Tel Aviv.

Along the same lines, Shlomo Lev-Ami (Levi): *By Struggle and by Revolt: Haganah, Irgun and Lehi* (1979), Tel Aviv, tries to strike a balance between the activities of the three military undergrounds. Yigal Elam: *Haganah: The Zionist Way to Power* (1979), Tel Aviv, presents the Haganah as the central factor in the development of Jewish self-defense. These studies show the historical and political controversy concerning the effect of the struggle of the Yishuv on the British decision to withdraw from Palestine and their tactics in the years 1944-1948.


*Ben-Gurion: A Political Biography* (1975-1977), Tel Aviv, by Michael Bar-Zohar is a comprehensive biography in three volumes. Shabatai Tevet has published the first volume of a more detailed biography of Ben-Gurion, *The Life of David Ben-Gurion* (1976), Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Miriam Getter: *Chaim Arlosoroff: A Political Biography* (1977), Tel Aviv, describes Arlosoroff as a man with historical and political insight and a brilliant Zionist statesman who oscillated between intellect and emotion, and between first-rate analytical talent and impractical radical proposals. Monographs have also appeared on Mania Shohat, one of the founders of "Hashomer," by Rahel Yanait Ben-Zvi (1976) Jerusalem, Yosef Lishansky, a controversial figure who was a member of Nili and was hanged by the Turks by Joseph Nedava (1977) Tel Aviv, and Enzo Sereni: Ruth Bondy: *The Emissary — The Life of Enzo Sereni* (1973), available in English.

Since 1977, several popular biographies of Menahem Begin have appeared, among them (in English) Eitan Haber: *Menahem Begin: The Legend and the Man* (1978), New York. Numerous autobiographies have appeared which have captured public interest because of the personality of the writers, among them Golda Meir, Abba Eban, Moshe Dayan, all with English editions. In
addition, there are autobiographies by lesser-known individuals which give a
close view of famous figures. Benjamin Brenner has written about his broth-
jer, Yosef Haim Brenner. *Reminiscences: 1911-1921* (1978), Tel Aviv, and
Hanna Katzenelson Nesher about her brother, Berl Katzenelson, *Brother and
Sister: Memoirs* (1978), Tel Aviv.

Books on controversial events have evoked public interest, such as the two
conflicting studies of the “Altalen” affair (an Etzel weapons boat): Uri Bren-
nner: *Altalen: A Political and Military Study* (1978), Tel Aviv, and Shlomo
Nakdimon: *Altalen* (1978), Tel Aviv. Nakdimon Rogel: *Tel Hay* (1979), Tel
Aviv, is a study of the defense of the settlement outpost and the fall of Joseph
Trumpeldor and his comrades.

In the area of cultural history, the first volume of Gershon Shaked’s history
of Hebrew literature is worth mentioning: *Hebrew Narrative Fiction, 1880-
1970. In Exile* (1977), Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as Uriel Ofek: *Hebrew
Children’s Literature — The Beginnings* (1978), Tel Aviv.

Finally, one must mention a number of reference books such as *Carta’s
Jerusalem.

Several wide-range and systematic summary projects on the history of
Eretz Yisrael and the Zionist movement are now being completed, the two
most important of which are the History of Modern Palestine from 1882–
1956, and a history of the land of Israel from prehistorical times to the pre-
sent.