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Two Types of Holiness in Berdichevsky's Early Articles

Ehud Luz

Berdichevsky was the most ambivalent among the Hebrew writers at the age of the renaissance toward the Jewish tradition. Having a deep religious personality, his entire life he had a long struggle with Judaism, searching unsuccessfully, for a new type of holiness which would suit best the modern mindset. On the one hand he completely rejected the enslaving rule of 'The Books' over the Jewish life because he wanted to liberate the creative forces of the individual; but on the other hand he was deeply aware of the fact that there was no chance of creating a new type of Jewish holiness without being rooted in the Jewish community and its tradition. This was the source of his inner rift and despair. The article presents Berdichevsky's ambivalence through analysis of a short lyrical note written towards the end of the 19th century.

The Jewish Revolution and the Old Testament: Berdichevsky's and Tchernihovsky's Reading of the Bible

Boaz Arpali

In the two modern Jewish revolutions — the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) and Zionism — that can be viewed as two stages of one and the same revolution, the Old Testament, that had been neglected and pushed aside in the last centuries of the Diaspora, played a central and multi-faceted role. This article makes the role that the Bible played most perceptible by observing the means by which two of the greatest writers of Hebrew literature, Micha Yosef Berdichevsky (1865-1921) and Shaul Tchernihovsky (1875-1943) read the Bible. Their revolt against Orthodox Judaism was not a rebellion for its own sake but was intended to pave the way for the new national existence. The materials from which the two wished to carve the future for the Jewish people, they found on the outside, in western culture, but they wished to form the very image of that future according to an internal model — Jewish life in Biblical times. They regarded the Bible, the source of Jewish culture, as representing an entirely different Jewish life, even contradictory, to all that had developed in Jewish tradition following it. This life is therefore depicted in the

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texts of these two writers according to what was convenient in order to achieve this end. They 'discovered' in the Bible all the positive values they wished to adopt from within western culture, and in the life that was presented in, the positive contrast to all the things that were to be negated in the contemporary Jewish life.

The article proposes a detailed comparative debate in the 'Biblical Criticism' of these two writers, in their subversive depiction of ancient Israeli life and how these function within their works, within the framework of their historiographic concept that included Jewish life throughout the ages. The article also points to the resemblance between the two writers as it is revealed in the early Berdichevsky essays on the one hand, and Tchernihovsky's poems, from all the periods, on the other hand. The author of the article also surveys the differences between them against the background of this similarity as they are revealed in Berdichevsky's stories that differ in these aspects from Tchernihovsky's poems and even from Berdichevsky's own articles.

The paper concludes with an examination as to the origins of these differences that rose due to the writers' different educational backgrounds that each received in his childhood and adolescence, the peculiar circumstances in which each of them was raised and the different outlooks on life that each of them adopted.

On the 'Nietzschean' Dispute between Ahad Ha'am and Berdichevsky

Jacob Golomb

Through Berdichevsky's mediation, some of Nietzsche's most seminal compositions, as well as the first European researches of his thought were well known to Ahad Ha-Am. Nietzsche's name was mentioned quite frequently in their dispute over the content and the direction of reawakening Hebrew literature and culture. In fact, it was Ahad H'aam who was the first to mention Nietzsche's name in their vibrant dispute. If Nietzsche was Berdichevsky's 'Rabbi', as he used to write to Ahad H'aam, it was only natural that the latter would have liked to know more about his young disciple's 'Rabbi'. However, the main concern of this article is not to resolve which of them was closer to Nietzsche, or who held the views closest to Nietzsche's, but how those views were perceived and used by these two great heroes of the dawning Hebrew culture. If a 'pure' Nietzschean is a thinker who urges the reader

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to overcome an entire cultural upbringing and to exist, as it were, in an a-historical vacuum, then it goes without saying that Ahad Ha-Am could not embrace such 'Nietzscheanism'. Neither could Berdichevsky, a Hebrew writer who was deeply rooted and profoundly versed in the tradition of his people. What both of them tried to do with their 'Hebraized' Nietzsche is depicted and analyzed in this essay.

On the Watch: M. Y. Berdichevsky as a Political Commentator

Avner Holtzman

The article describes a unique — and a completely unknown — chapter in M. Y. Berdichevsky's literary career: his regular writing in the Hebrew daily newspaper *Hatsfirah* during the year 1903. In his personal column he used to regard the political and cultural events within the Jewish public arena and comment on them on an almost daily basis. Close examination of these short journalistic essays may undermine some of the seemingly self-evident assumptions that characterize the discourse around Berdichevsky's work. In contrast with Berdichevsky's established image of an ecstatic, expressive, Dionysian creator who experienced the world through an intensified and stormy perspective, these essays reflect a strong yearning for order, clarity, methodicalness and defined borders in life and literature. In contrast with his rebellious image, his essays reveal a deep, constant care for the fate of traditional Jewish existence in its East-European centers. Berdichevsky's reputation as the main preacher for the absorption of modern, western cultural components into the Jewish national culture may also be questioned in light of these essays, as none of them is dedicated to a non-Jewish matter. Most of all: this half-hidden journalistic corpus provides a sharp portrait of Berdichevsky's views toward Zionism, which also differs from our common knowledge hitherto. Unlike previous descriptions, here he is exposed as a strong, unequivocal supporter of practical Zionism — the only possible solution he saw for the Jewish people at the beginning of the twentieth century. His straightforward practical Zionism marks quite a distance between his views and other Zionist programs, such as Herzl's political Zionism and Ahad H'aam spiritual Zionism.

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The Sacrifice beyond the River A Reading of Micha Yosef Berdichevsky's *My Offering*

Yitzhak Ben-Morderchai

The story raises several questions, particularly regarding the connection between its various parts. The first question is: how is this mythological story affected by the fact that it is also a modern story, written in the 20th century? Another question is: why did Berdichevsky write a rural story featuring gentile characters?

The River-God in the story is a mythological god, similar to other river gods who have received offerings, at times human, in Greek and other mythologies. These myths depict the struggle between human beings and river-gods. In this sense Berdichevsky remains true to the myth. It is in this context that the author compares this story to another one written by Berdichevsky 'Hidden in Thunder'. The modernism in 'My Offering' is expressed in the way that alongside the mythical time, there is also a physical time, and parallel to the mythical space, there is also a modern one. Modernism is also evident in the fact that at the end of the story, the storyteller addresses the spirit of the hero. At the end of the story Vasil acts as a modern hero.

Another part of the essay deals with the possible connection between the story and Berdichevsky's mental and spiritual world. In Berdichevsky's earlier stories, the crossing of the river portrays a shift from the world of tradition to a more secular, modern world. Could it be that the story 'My Offering' implies that Berdichevsky held a pessimistic attitude towards such a change?

What did Yosef Haim Brenner Receive from Hillel Zeitlin

Hamutal Bar-Yosef

Hillel Zeitlin (1871-1942) was Yosef Haim Brenner's (1881-1921) mentor from 1894 to 1901 while the latter was living in Homel (Gomel). Yosef Klauzner wrote that Zeitlin drew Brenner to Zionism and Yaacov Golomb wrote that he introduced Brenner with Nietzsche's writings. Examination of Zeitlin's ideas at that time against contemporary Russian high culture brings one to the conclusion that Zeitlin was above all an 'idealist'. Namely, he did not believe in social and political solutions (and therefore rejected the 'Bund'). He hoped that Zionism would bring about a

spiritual, semi-mystical redemption for the Jewish people, in the vein of the Russian neo-idealists who opposed Marxism. However, Zeitlin also criticized spiritual Zionists (Ahad H'aam and Berdichevsky) who neglected the real suffering of the individual Jew.

In 1899-1900 Zeitlin published a series of essays in which he presented his belief in philosophical pessimism in the vein of Schopenhauer and in mysticism. He found similarity between these ideas and Hasidism. Brenner's writings show the influence of Zeitlin's idealism; his care for the individual's suffering; his belief in the truth of pessimism and his attraction to mysticism.

L. N. Tolstoy's *Master and Man* and J. H. Brenner's Hebrew Translation

Rina Lapidus

Yosef Haim Brenner was deeply influenced by Russian literature, from which he learned and which he admired. In 1914, he translated Tolstoy's lengthy journey story, *Master and Man*. In this article, a comparison is drawn between the original Russian version and Brenner's translation, with the aim of determining whether Brenner incorporated material of his own within his translation and, if so, how this affected the spirit and style of the story.

The task of translation was not an easy one for Brenner. First of all because Tolstoy's story is full of detailed descriptions of the reality of Russian village life for which there were no suitable equivalents in the Hebrew of Brenner's day. Alongside these objective difficulties, Brenner's translation is marked by a personal tendency to intensify language, especially verbs. Whereas in Tolstoy's story a verb of moderate degree of intensity can be found, in his translation, Brenner would use a Hebrew parallel of far greater intensity, as well as adding another excessively powerful verb not found in the original. This tendency stands out particularly in Brenner's descriptions of his protagonists' actions and speech. Thus, when it says in Russian that the travelers 'cried out something,' the Hebrew reads that they 'uttered frightful cries.' As a result of these additions, the Russian story assumes a more active and emotional coloration in its Hebrew translation, while its heroes tend to be more verbal, as well as seeming more tense and nervous. The text loses the lyrical and didactic texture of the original and assumes a more human and dramatic coloration, more characteristic of Dostoyvsky than of Tolstoy.

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Y. H. Brenner's Translation of *Crime and Punishment* (first chapter)

Maya Arad

Brenner's translation of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1911, published 1924) is among the crowning achievements of his work and of Hebrew translation in the twentieth century. The article points to the precision in detail of Brenner's translation but also to its deeply 'Jewish' character. This raises a familiar paradox: how come the translation feels so close to Dostoyevsky's own spirit, even though its character is so deeply informed by Hebrew and Jewish registers? The article sets side by side Miron's account of Brenner's style, as well as Bakhtin's well known account of Dostoyevsky's style, showing why both authors wish to question, in effect, style itself. 'Polyphony', for Brenner, was an existential need, representing the basic setting of his literature-in-diglossia.

Activism and Moderation Regarding the Use of Force: Brenner, Gordon and 'Hapoel Hatzair'

Meir Chazan

Aharon David Gordon and Yosef Haim Brenner were the spiritual leaders of the immigrants who arrived to Palestine during the Second *Aliya*. This article examines their attitudes towards the use of force by analyzing the connection between their stands and those of *Hapoel Hatzair*, a party that had reservations regarding the use of force in realizing Zionist goals. Two main questions are discussed: first, what particular stance did Brenner and Gordon adopt when the issue of using force arose in practice. The second, whether any commonalities can be detected between their attitudes at different junctures and toward different kinds of use of force. Against this background, the article considers several topics: the debate on the use of violence during the construction of *Ahuzat Bayit* in 1909, Gordon's and Brenner's attitudes toward defense activities, the controversy over volunteering to the Jewish Legion in 1918, the debates about the defense of Tel-Hai in 1920, the establishment of the *Haganah* and the outbreak of the May 1921 riots.

The main conclusion of the article is that at times of crisis, the particular attitudes of Gordon and Brenner did not determine the behavior of the young immigrants of

the Second *Aliya*. Examining this issue, which has not been sufficiently explored in the historical research, can contribute not only to clarifying Gordon's and Brenner's stands on these various topics, but also to understanding the Labor Movement in its early days.

The Brenner- Gordon Debate and its Influence on the Israeli Labor Movement

Eliezer Schweid

Brenner's "practicality" and Gordon's "impracticality" are imbedded in the difference between their different perceptions of the "doctrines on humanity." Gordon believed that a person can — both as an individual and as part of a collective — transcend the level of existence in which he is presently immersed. Progress is necessary for two reasons: In terms of the nature of a human existence and in terms of the chances for survival. The evolution of humanity has reached a point of no return that demands a decision be made between destruction and rising to a new level of inter-human and inter-national relations, that can be achieved with the power of moral choice, and not through force inflicted by authority. He believed that individuals who became conscious of the inevitability of despair with all "practical" solutions would affect the change and constitute the ideal for their nation and for all nations.

Brenner based his "nevertheless" term (in which he justified the pioneering determination to fulfill the impossibility of the Zionist idea by settling the land and building a vigorous Jewish society) on the confrontation between the irrational, burning human desire and awareness of the imminent annihilation. Like Gordon, Brenner thought that despair derived from direct contemplation with truth would be the deciding factor. The difference between them was highlighted again on the anthropological level: Brenner identifies with the Darwinist will to live while Gordon identifies with the creative life experience that becomes a "categorical imperative" which instigates existential change. This is a fundamental difference between the ambition to exist "normally" and the recognition that only the establishment of different, more moral values can save humanity and the nation of Israel from extinction.

The solution appears paradoxical: The influence of Brenner's concept of despair on the second and third *aliyot* (immigrations) overpowered Gordon's concept

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of despair, despite the fact that Gordon suggested a path in which the agony of fulfillment means superior humanity, while Brenner only suggested a farfetched change for a meager existence in the future.

Gordon, Buber and the Question of the Bond to the Eretz-Israel

Shalom Ratzabi

The great importance of Aharon David Gordon as a Zionist and social thinker was already clear to Buber in the first years of World War I, when he published *der Jude* in 1916. This assessment was also expressed in his response to a poll carried out in 1928 regarding two Hebrew books constituting a historical event, when he identified Ahad Ha'am's letters and Gordon's writings as the most important books written. Buber argued that these two books comprise a "major testament to the strong, independent human existence, loyal to the movement from which they originated. He did not settle for this characterization alone and tried to describe them from the Zionist orientation emanating from them. Buber explained that these books gave expression to two paths of Zionist fulfillment whose elements were identical but whose methods were different. While Ahad Ha'am's approach is "spirit-nation-land," Gordon's approach is "land-nation-spirit."

The purpose of the following is to reconstruct Gordon's national thought through process. The uniqueness of Gordon's Zionism, similar to that of Buber, originates in the concept of the bond between the nation and the land. According to this approach, the goal of Zionism is the restoration of the individual bond to his people and through its people, to the land. Furthermore, unlike Buber's approach, whereby the people of Israel's formation is not natural but dependent on a covenant with God and therefore there is no reason to discuss his perception of nationalism within the conventional conceptual framework, but rather in a theopolitical one, Gordon's writing demonstrates that he sees the Hebrew nation as a nation whose fate is the same as all other nations. Obviously Gordon's doctrine has no place for terms like "chosenness of Israel" or "its uniqueness." Thus, while Buber saw both Jewish nationalism and Zionism in theopolitical, religious terms, at the center of which is the term "covenant," and the sovereignty of a prophetic God, Gordon saw the nation of Israel as a "division of nature," like all other nations and thus identified the bond between himself and his land as the natural and normal bond that exists between a nation and its land.

Irrationalism and National Revival in A. D. Gordon's Thought

Gideon Katz

Irrational ideas were contemplated by Zionist thinkers for two reasons: (A) Irrational trends were salient in European culture. They influenced the formulation of national ideas in Europe and on Zionist thought; (B) This school of thought included different models of the concept of "life" as articulated by those same European thinkers, as they helped forge its hopes for a national revival and definition of the new Jew.

Philosophical ideas found in the writings of Zionist thinkers were adopted second hand and from popular literature. These ideas have many intellectual origins. The analysis presented here attempts to clarify all of this. This is not a study in the history of ideas. This article focuses on the inner workings of Gordon's writing. The purpose of discussing Gordon is to clarify how irrational ideas and perceptions, as they are presented in his writings — and being that they are not, as said, original — determine his analysis of national and cultural questions of Jewishness. In short, it is not the relation between European sources and their evolution in Hebrew culture that interests me here, but rather shedding light on the internal relation of his thought process — to understand how perspectives on life serve as the basis for the approaches to national revival in Gordon's writing.

Aharon David Gordon as a Shaper of Culture

Moti Zeira

Aharon David Gordon was one of the extraordinary characters of the Second *Aliyah*. He was the only one of his generation to try and establish a comprehensive, philosophical view of the humane-Jewish-pioneer existence of his time, and he left behind a relatively inclusive and ample written heritage. Over the years, these literary works have caused, amongst other things, the creation of a certain diversion in the writings on Gordon to the direction of academic research and philosophical-cognitive study.

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Berdichevsky, Brenner and Gordon on the Sabbath

Zvi Zameret

Berdichevsky, Brenner, Gordon are well known as three thinkers who had exceptional influence over the new, secular Jewish public. In the article, the author claims that all three, despite their rebellion against religion, remained attached to tradition, each in his own way. This claim is supported by the use of various sources from their writings that illustrate their attitude towards the mainstay of Jewish existence: the Sabbath.

All three of them changed their views and lifestyles in the course of their lives. This is particularly notable with regard to their attitude towards religion and Jewish tradition. However, in the final analysis, despite their critique of traditional Orthodoxy, when they discussed the subject of the Sabbath, more than once they asked themselves how it could be preserved. All of them hoped that the Sabbath could be reshaped so as to suit modern times and the 'New Jews'.

All three thinkers displayed pride that the 'Book of Books' bequeathed to the world the weekly day of rest. They all regarded the Sabbath as a kind of command obliging consideration with all mankind and even beasts, but in particular with the workingman. All three sought out the ethical dimension of the Sabbath and believed that it could be nurtured in a world that would stress individual independence and autonomy. All three recognized that without the Jewish Sabbath the life of the individual Jew would be much poorer. They were afraid that if the Sabbath lost its unique character, the entire life of the Jewish people, not only their religious life, but also their national life, would be endangered.