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Hannah Arendt, the Holocaust and Zionism: A story of Failure

Elhanan Yakira

The thinking of Hannah Arendt, nowadays almost universally acknowledged as one of the most important political thinkers of the twentieth century, was determined to a large degree by her Jewish experience. But it is only lately that her work begins to acquire some presence in Israeli intellectual life, more often than not, in a very positive, sometimes almost hagiographic way. However, the synthesis between ‘universal’ political theory and the more particularistic Jewish concerns has not always been very successful in Arendt’s work; as a matter of fact, its real outcome is a failure – an intellectual and moral failure.

Despite the great interest of Arendt’s work, it also has some known flaws. One of these, less discussed than the others, is a certain lack of compassion that runs through her entire theoretical work. It becomes fully apparent in her book on the Eichmann trial, where she practically ignores the Holocaust survivors’ testimonies given at the court in Jerusalem. This is one expression of a sort of explosion of the tension between the ‘universal’ and her Jewish ‘particularism’ which happens in this book, and which she referred to later as a *cura posterior*. This ‘late cure’ can be seen as a renunciation of the particularistic position, and it receives an explicit expression in what amounts to a theoretic – or rather pseudo-theoretic – attempt to prove the illegitimacy of the legal foundations on which Eichmann was brought to trial in Jerusalem. This is an explanation, or excuse, Arendt gave as an answer to her critics; it only makes the moral failure of this book clearer and more explicit.

Religion of Adults

Emmanuel Levinas

In this paper, originally published in French in 1957 and first translated here into Hebrew, Emmanuel Levinas presents his idea of Judaism as a mature religion in which ethics play a central role. Accordingly, the consciousness and the relation to the transcendent God are bound together with self-consciousness and the respect for the other.

The ethical way of Levinas's thinking and his inquiries on Judaism are necessary to understand his approach to Zionism and Israel.

Emmanuel Levinas's Thoughts on States and the State of Israel

Ephraim Meir

This paper deals with the place that politics in general, and that of the State of Israel in particular, had in the philosophical and Jewish thought of Emmanuel Levinas.

Though the political order is not autonomous it does require ethics. Not because it is compelled to be theocratic, but because it is obliged to be connected to the ethical source of every political and social organization. The mission of the People of Israel in their country is inherent in developing other politics suitable to the monotheism of the Jewish sources.

What Happened to the 'New History' at the Turn of the Millennium

Mordechai Bar-On

Ten years have passed since the self-anointed 'New Historians' first appeared on the Israeli public scene. All three of them: Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappé continued their work and encouraged many disciples to follow in their footsteps. All three published comprehensive narratives of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Shlaim treated the story of the last five decades while Morris goes back to the

origins at the beginning of the First Zionist Immigration to Palestine one hundred and twenty years ago. Pappé, a declared post-modernist and relativist, decided, admittedly, to adopt the Palestinian narrative and has squarely put his writing at the service of the Palestinian propaganda.

While the most innovative critique of the veteran New Historians has failed to change the popular collective memory in Israel, and still angers many Israelis, within the academic discourse many of their theses have been adopted by younger historians, thus changing significantly the way the 1948 War and other chapters of the conflict have been told and analyzed. This change is quite apparent in textbooks designated for high-school students. These new books were the aim of a harsh assault, led by the staff of the right-wing Shalem Institute who regard the crusade they tried to launch as ‘a fight over the nation’s soul’.

Critical historiography has also extended chronologically and now covers the entire first two decades of the State of Israel, as well as earlier periods. Besides history, it has also spread to other disciplines. Young sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists have published new analyses of different periods in Zionist history. Some have made use of the new ‘Post Colonial’ paradigms. This new crop of historians also tends to use new terminologies that are unburdened by ideological phraseology.

On the other hand, some of the more extreme revisions in Zionist history are still rejected by most academic historiography. The opinions, first pronounced by Simha Flapan, that the conflict was avoidable and that much of the responsibility for its escalation remains with the Israelis, had very little following. Idith Zertal, Yona Hadari and Motti Golani in their recent books take this criticism one step ahead. They believe that the entire Israeli culture is saturated with a messianic and unbridled preference given to the use of power. Whether this extreme point of view will sound an echo in Israeli historiography – only the future can tell.

S. Dubnow, the Idea of Diaspora Nationalism and Its Dissemination

Marcos Silber

Simon Dubnow’s idea of diaspora nationalism sought recognition for the Jewish minority, as a national minority that merited collective rights, wherever Jews lived.

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This idea enabled the synthesis between Jewish nationalism and loyalty to the State. During the first years of the twentieth century, these ideas penetrated the political thought of East-European Jewry to such an extent that national autonomism became the common denominator of all Jewish national movements in Eastern Europe. Parties that adopted the autonomist idea or incorporated it into a broader ideological perspective flourished.

Why did this idea so captivate the political, national Jewish intelligentsia? The paper claims that the immediate significance of these ideas was the recognition of Jewish cultural capital as a key to the integration of individuals into the state apparatus. Autonomism, by demanding a fair distribution of the State's resources, appealed both to the transformist and the ethnicist Jewish intelligentsia. The meaning of recognition of the Jewish cultural capital as equal to that of the Russian, Polish or German was, in other words, the admission of Jews to the corridors of power and to their receiving their share of the available resources.

Therefore, for the Jewish intelligentsia autonomism was a tool for challenging the hegemonic culture. In the context of the liberalization and democratization of the State, it demanded not only a more equitable distribution of power, but also the legitimization of Jews as an ethnic group like any other. In the competition for resources, it based its demands on universal and objective criteria that it considered effective in its political struggle.

The Jewish intelligentsia demanded recognition as a legitimate group equal to the Polish, German or Russian intelligentsia. Its members sought to abolish the ascendancy of the hegemonic cultures and its cultural capital, and to obtain not only formal, but also actual equality for the Jewish collectivity. In their struggle against the hegemonic culture, wherever it was, the imperial powers as well as the different national movements of other minorities regarded the autonomist claims as gnawing at their own legitimacy. Consequently, the chance that the autonomist ideas would be implemented was marginal. The main success of the autonomist claims was in the crystallization of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe as a modern nation.

Zionist Civil War on the Banks of the Potomac

The Clandestine Aspect of N. Goldmann's Mission to Washington in the Summer of 1946

Zohar Segev

The author of this paper claims that although Dr. Nachum Goldmann's mission to Washington, in the summer of 1946, was to advance the acceptance of the Partition Plan by the American Administration, in fact, he actually promoted the Morrison-Grady plan among top American government officials.

In the course of that summer, a number of important political and military developments took place that affected the struggle for the future of the Land of Israel in the post World War II era. Among those that might be noted: the 'Black Sabbath', the bombing of the King David Hotel, the finalization of the Morrison-Grady Plan by the British. In the wake of these dramatic events, a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive was called in Paris in early August, at which time it was decided to send Dr. Goldmann to Washington.

This essay is about Goldmann's mission to America and the bitter struggle that he waged there with the American Zionist leader, Abba Hillel Silver, who despite being a member of the Zionist Agency Executive, had chosen not to go to Paris.

Backed by documents, the author describes the complex relations between American Zionism and other Zionist centers around the world; about the complex relations that existed between Abba Hillel Silver and the Chair of the Jewish Agency Executive, David Ben Gurion, and follows the difficulties involved with the management of Zionist politics on the American scene in the years following the Holocaust.

How Trans-Jordan was Severed from the Territory of the Jewish National Home

Isaiah Friedman

The decision to sever Trans-Jordan from the territory of the Jewish National Home was taken during the period that Winston Churchill served as Colonial Secretary, 1921-1922. Churchill was an avowed friend of the Zionists but was not familiar

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with the problems of the Middle East. He was influenced by T.E. Lawrence, a member of his staff, towards whom he nourished unlimited admiration. Lawrence persuaded Churchill that Britain was indebted to Emir Feisal for his contribution to the Allied victory over the Turkish Army and that therefore the territory of Trans-Jordan should be allotted to the Sharifian control. It was also Lawrence who, jointly with Hubert Young, had determined that the western boundary of the future Sharifian state would run along the River Jordan. This proposal went much further than Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, had in mind when preparing his letter of 24 October 1915. It was also inconsistent with the concept that had been unanimously advocated by British statesmen and officials. Thus, Balfour, Lord Milner, Lord Robert Cecil, Ormsby-Gore, Colonel Meinertzhagen and others maintained that for strategic, political and economical reasons the eastern boundary of the Jewish National Home in Palestine should extend about 20 miles east of the River Jordan.

After the Emir Feisal's expulsion from Damascus in July 1920, the beneficiary of the Trans-Jordanian territory was Emir Abdullah. However, his appointment as its Governor (on an *ad hoc* basis) was conditioned on a guarantee that there would be no anti-Zionist disturbances in Palestine, nor any anti-French agitation. Abdullah agreed to the terms and during a conference in Jerusalem (28-30 March 1921) a deal was struck.

Henceforth began the process of a gradual separation of Trans-Jordanian territory from the Jewish National Home. The separation was enshrined in Article 25 in the draft of the Mandate. Thus, the provisions with regard to the Jewish National Home were made inapplicable to Trans-Jordania.

This move and particularly the exclusion of any Jewish settlement to the east of River Jordan, was inconsistent with the British commitment to the Zionists. The Palestine Royal Commission (The Peel Commission) of 1937, which interviewed a number of leading contemporary statesmen, concluded on this point: 'The field in which the Jewish National Home was to be established was understood, at the time of the Balfour Declaration, to be the whole of historic Palestine, and the Zionists were seriously disappointed when Trans-Jordan was cut away from that field under Article 25'.

Hannah Trager's Stories – A Gender Perspective on the First Immigration Wave

Margalit Shilo

Hannah Trager spent her childhood in Petach Tikvah in the 1880s. She was the first woman author who wrote about her reminiscences as a girl growing up in the colony. So far, historiography has paid only little attention to women's experiences in the First Immigration wave of the 'Lovers of Zion' who came to establish their national home in the Holy Land. Reading Trager's stories reveals not only hidden chapters of the untold women's story, but also the way that national revival reshaped the women's identities. The Zionist revolution was not only an invention of a new national home but also the creation of a New Man and a New Woman. The gender perspective that is unfolded while reading Trager's usually neglected stories convinces the reader that only by understanding the feminine and personal aspect of history can one fully comprehend its public aspect.

An Arab Kibbutz: The Rise and Fall of 'Achva'

Reuven Aharoni and Shaul Mishal

The article follows the perceptions and the structural features that underlay the establishment of the Arab Kibbutz 'Achva' (Hebrew for friendship), on the outskirts of Lydda (Lod) in 1949, and which was dispersed during 1951. The main argument is that the societal and cultural attributes that the Jewish side ascribed to the Arab individual and collective were considered to be the source of the failure of the Arab kibbutz.

After the occupation of Lydda by the Israeli army in the course of the War of Independence in 1948, hundreds of Palestinian Arab refugees from various villages were gathered in the town. Functionaries of the 'Arab Department' of the *Histadrut* (the Israeli General Federation of Workers) took them under their patronage and saw to their employment conditions and social benefits. Lydda, as all the Arab populated regions in the new born Israel, was under military governance.

The idea of a kibbutz was mentioned for the first time as a solution to the problem of the Arab workers in Lydda. Members of the 'Left-Zion-Workers' faction, a Jewish

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socialist party, brought into it the ideological concept. The idea was hardly comprehended among the Arab members of 'Achva' and they refused to accept the argument that the kibbutz format, which they had chosen out of hesitation, suspicion and skepticism, would supposedly fulfill the idea of Jewish-Arab equality in Israel.

The 'Arab Department' officials (and politicians) took great efforts to convince leaders of the kibbutz movements to incorporate the Arab kibbutz into their organization, but they refused. Having no other choice, the initiators of Kibbutz 'Achva' decided to turn it to a 'cooperative kibbutz' type.

Daily life on the kibbutz was conducted by a committee under the leadership of 'Umar al-Zinati, who was a refugee from the village of 'Aqir. He tried to impose obedience on its members. However, organized members' meetings barely took place, leaving him to conduct the kibbutz affairs by himself. He set the regulations and the routine and the members usually agreed with his decisions, whether out of a desire to avoid confrontation, or because of indifference.

The attempt to explain the failure is connected with a conscious ideological decision which was taken by the Israeli-Jewish 'labor movement'. The members of 'Achva' did not belong either to the kibbutz sector or to the Israeli collective, and from the viewpoint of the people of the Jewish labor movement they remained with their familial preferences and their conservative gaits, lacking the chance to become full members and partners in a project whose essence was to achieve national salvation although its rhetorical strategies remain universalistic.

Uri Ilan's Last Will and Testament

Judy Baumel

Uri Ilan, the Israeli soldier captured in December 1954 while on a clandestine mission in Syria, who committed suicide in the El Mazeh prison in Damascus in January 1955 in order not to break under interrogation, has been an Israeli legend for almost half a century. When his body was returned to Israel and examined, nine pieces of paper, each of which contained a message he had written, were found in his clothes. The most famous of the notes 'I did not betray [the nation], I committed suicide', was made public and soon became known as his last will and testament. For many years, his behaviour was considered a model of Israeli heroism.

The article examines how this particular note – and not any of the others,

particularly those mentioning ‘vengeance’ and ‘revenge’ became associated in the public sector with Ilan and how various groups – political, military, and other – reacted to his suicide, and the message that it imparted to the Israeli military and public.

Between the Scroll and the Sword

The Development of Jewish Religious Law Respecting the Military and War in Modern Israel, 1948-2004

Stuart A. Cohen

Of the many religious challenges posed by modern Jewish statehood, one of the most acute is the experience of military service and the use of armed force. Not surprisingly, therefore, recent decades have witnessed a remarkable growth in the number of publications concerned with various aspects of a field that, in Israel, is generically termed *dinei tzavah u-milkhamah* (religious law respecting the military and war). Topics once almost totally neglected in the traditional literature are now analyzed in minute detail.

The purpose of the present article is to examine that corpus of literature.

Attention is focused on three principal topics.

1. Its authorship. This is especially noteworthy since much of the new literature is now composed by rabbis who have themselves experienced military service.
2. The various formats and forums in which the relevant religious teachings are published and transmitted.
3. The content of this literature – and especially its treatment of issues that in the western world are categorized as *ius in bello* and *ius ad bellum*.

In conclusion, the article also examines the intellectual and operational implications of the discussion of these issues, especially in light of the increasingly high profile of religiously orthodox soldiers in the complement of the IDF.

Pinhas Sapir and the Issue of the ‘Occupied Territories’:
From Perceptiveness to Passivity

Yitzhak Greenberg

After the Six Days War, Minister of Finance Pinhas Sapir adopted the view that Israel must separate itself from the West Bank first and from the Gaza strip later. Sapir saw two options: ruling these territories and the Palestinian people who inhabited them without civil rights; or issuing them Israeli citizenship. The first option, according to Sapir, was doomed to damage the moral image and democratic character of Israel; while the second option implied a bi-national state at the expense of gradually renouncing the Jewish identity of the State of Israel. Sapir regarded both options as undesired. Thus, he concluded that it was imperative to forgo the ruling of the ‘Occupied Territories’ and the Palestinian citizens in order to enable the existence of Israel as a Jewish Democratic State. And yet, there was a great discrepancy between Sapir’s conclusion and his willingness to accomplish it. In fact, between the Six Days War and the Yom Kippur War, despite his vehement position regarding the ‘Occupied Territories’, he did not use his political and economic power to advance that vision of a Jewish Democratic State which was threatened by Israel’s rule over the territories. The explanation lies in Sapir’s realization that in the political and social euphoric atmosphere of victory following the Six Days War, it was impossible to bring these ideas to fruition. On the other hand, his low self-esteem in the presence of Prime Minister Golda Meir prevented him from advancing these ideas which were contrary to those of Golda.

The Palestinian Leadership Crisis

Part II

‘All Palestine Government’ in September 1948
and the Mufti’s Demise

Moshe Shemesh

This chapter is the second part of an article published in the previous volume entitled ‘The Palestinian Leadership Crisis: From the Early 1930s to the “All-Palestine

Government”, 1948’. Thus the main topic of this part evolves round the establishment of the All-Palestine Government in September 1948 and its rapid disintegration within a few weeks.

On 22 September 1948, the Arab Higher Committee headed by the Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husayni announced the setting up of the All-Palestine Government. It was sponsored by the Arab League and particularly by Egypt. On 30 September 1948, a Palestinian National Congress, comprised of 83 members, convened in Gaza and voted its confidence in the All-Palestine Government. This government was comprised of eleven ministers with Ahmad Hilmi Abd al-Baqi as its Prime Minister. The government’s platform that was approved by the congress included ‘The declaration of Filastin in its mandatory recognized borders of 15 May 1948 as an independent democratic state that has national sovereignty and Jerusalem as its capital’.

As a counter act, and a step in his struggle against the All-Palestine Government, King Abdullah tried to mobilize the Palestinians of the West Bank, now under his rule, to protest against the establishment of this government. The king encouraged the convening of the First Palestinian Congress in Amman on 1 October 1948, and the Second Palestinian Congress in Jericho, on 1 December 1948. These two conventions condemned the establishment of the All-Palestine Government and expressed support for the annexation of the West Bank to Trans-Jordan and the declaration of Abdullah as the king of the united kingdom.

Despite being recognized by the Arab states, with the exception of Jordan, this government remained only on paper. It had no Palestinian territory and no population to rule, no army, no budget or even an administration. The government of All-Palestine disappeared from the Palestinian and Arab scene within a short period and its members found other posts in Arab countries including Jordan. The Arab states were incapable of preventing the *fait accompli* created by King Abdullah while most of the Palestinian population and territories were under his jurisdiction.

Ohel – The Rise and Fall of a Workers’ Theater

Ben-Ami Feingold

The article reviews and discusses one of the most important chapters in the history of the Hebrew theater. The *Ohel* (literally ‘tent’) Theater in Tel Aviv, 1925-1969;

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its historical background, activities, repertoire, actors and directors and the causes that brought to its final closing after forty five years.

Ohel began originally as a workers' amateur studio. In 1934, the Histadrut (Workers Organization) gave it the title 'Land of Israel Workers' Theatre'. From 1958, when the Histadrut withdrew its patronage, *Ohel* remained an independent public institution.

Ohel's contribution to the Hebrew theatre was very important and appreciated in Palestine and abroad. It was located in Tel Aviv but made many successful tours around the country and in Europe before the Second World War, playing before different audiences, Jews and non-Jews, workers and other social classes.

Ohel, founded by the actor and director Moshe Halevi, was influenced by some contemporary, but actually contradictory movements, like the proletarian theater in Europe and the United States. It contributed to the development and creation of authentic Hebrew workers' culture in Palestine. Similarly, its aim was to act not only as a labor class theater but also as a proper artistic group. The company was made up of amateurs and professionals, a fact that complicated casting.

Ohel's repertoire included diverse themes and genres: proletarian, Modern Hebrew plays, historical and biblical dramas, translations from Yiddish and other languages, as well as plays by Shakespeare, Moliere, Pirandello, Brecht and many others.

The article also discusses the reasons for *Ohel's* failure to survive due to its difficulties caused by several factors: the unwillingness of the Histadrut to subsidize the theatre, the doubtful actual need for a contemporary workers' theater, the professional-amateur problematic casting, the artistic contest with other groups, and Halevy's complicated and quite contradictory personality. He tried to integrate two different and contradictory tendencies: proletarian, propagandist theatre and, in contrast with, an artistic assignment to stage for the sake of art.

Nevertheless, despite *Ohel's* failure to persist, its contribution to Hebrew culture, the Hebrew workers' culture, and in particular to the Hebrew theater, is unique.

In Praise of Labor

Yaakov Orland's Affinity to the Working Youth Movement

Tamar Wolf-Monzon

The later work of poet Yaakov Orland reveals a feature that he tried to hide for many years: his intense concern with his personal biography, with his parents' influence, and with the imprint of the experiences that molded his artistic persona. From the 1970s on, Orland turned the act of reconstruction, based on private and national memory, into the constituting axis of his poetry books, and reshaped the picture of historical reality, supported by an assiduous collection of testimonies, details, anecdotes and facts. This article focuses on the literary and socio-cultural climate in which Orland worked at the beginning of his literary career in the 1930s, and on his special affinity to the Working Youth Movement during that period.

'The Illegals'

The First Feature Film that Documented Illegal Immigration to Palestine in 1947

Liat Steir-Livny

Between 1945 and 1948 Zionist organizations in Palestine and the USA (Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael, Keren Hayesod, Hadassah, Americans for the Hagannah) produced films that were used for propaganda throughout the world. The films described the Zionist struggle and portrayed Eretz Israel as the only place that could solve the Holocaust survivors' problems. They showed the Holocaust survivors' distress in post-war Europe, their ambition to immigrate to Palestine and every day life in Rebuilding Palestine. One of the most important films, historically, was 'The Illegals'. In 1947, the American author and filmmaker Meyer Levin accompanied a group of Holocaust survivors from the D.P. camps of Central Europe to a port in Italy, then onto the illegal ship *Lo Tafhidunu* (Thou Shall Not Scare Us) until they were captured by a British ship. It was the first time that such a voyage was documented from beginning to end in a feature film. The article tells the story of this outstanding production, which was highly complicated and accompanied by many power struggles that eventually only caused damage to this unique film. The

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film was not presented to the public at the right time and disappeared for decades from the public eye.

Looking for a Homeland: The 'Frayland Lige', the Yishuv, and the State of Israel, 1934-1956

Gur Alroey

In 1934, one year after the rise of the Nazi regime and in the course of the Jewish-Arab conflict, the 'Frayland Lige' organization was established in London. This paper focuses on the ideological confrontation between the 'Frayland Lige' (Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization) and the Zionist movement. In contrast to the Zionist movement, the 'Frayland Lige' and its charismatic leader Isaac N. Steinberg were unwilling to place the fate of European Jewry on a single piece of territory. Furthermore, this article examines the attitude of the Yishuv and the State of Israel to the ideology of Territorialism.

'Propaganda Organization' or 'A Political Party'? New York's Jewish-Socialism: One Ideology, Two Ways

Ehud Manor

In November 1917, mayoral elections were held in New York. The Socialist Party's (SP) candidate was Morris Hillquit who challenged three other candidates, a Republican, a Democrat and an independent. In New York, the SP was supported by the *Jewish Daily Forward (JDF)* whose editor Abraham Cahan, just like Hillquit, was a long time New Yorker, a veteran socialist militant and a well known public figure. Though Cahan and Hillquit spoke the same socialist 'language' and shared the same Jewish background, they represented two different ways in Jewish socialism and possibly in socialism in general.

The 1917 mayoral elections raise some issues of great interest: ethnic-politics, 'Americanism' in war time, non-official censorship practices under the First Amendment, local versus national politics, to name only a few. This article tries to cover some of these issues while focusing on the internal tension between the above

mentioned two ways in Jewish socialism. This tension has been defined by Arthur Goren as stemming from the gap between ‘cosmopolitans’ and ‘survivalists’ within Jewish socialism in New York. The intent of this article is to use this ‘cultural’ interpretation in order to suggest a ‘political’ one.

The author shows that although Cahan and Hillquit cooperated as members of the same movement, in fact they were working under similar ideology and slogans towards different goals and aims. Hillquit from his early political life strove for the construction of a larger political movement leftward from the Democrats and Progressives. Being aware as to the limits of a ‘third party’ within the binary political system in the United States, Hillquit thought of using the war issue in 1917 as a matter that many Americans, not only socialists, would take as a good departure point for a larger political movement. Cahan, on the other hand, saw mainly the future of Jewish separateness. Hence he regarded the socialist activity, such as the 1917 mayoral campaign, as yet another opportunity to strengthen the *JDF*.

The fact that at the culmination of the campaign the *JDF* was saved by Louis Marshall (co-leader with Jacob Schiff of the Jewish plutocracy) from closure by the U.S. government, and the fact that Hillquit hardly mentioned this paper in his memoirs, despite Cahan’s support for Hillquit’s campaign, suggests that the *JDF*’s ‘survivalism’ was more important for Jewish conservatism, than for Hillquit’s ‘cosmopolitanism’.