




ANNA BALESTRIERI

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9407-9930>

## “With the Eyes of a Jew”: Unveiling Canvas of Identity in Early 20th Century Art Expeditions to Mandate Palestine

**Summary:** In the early 20th century, a wave of missions to exotic lands, including Mandate Palestine, sparked artistic exploration across cinema, painting, and photography. This article examines how painters on these expeditions aimed to express Jewish identity through their artwork. Drawing from exhibition reviews, it explores the transformative impact of these journeys on artists’ worldview and artistic expression, highlighting their role in bolstering Jewish self-awareness. Through examples like Artur Szyk, Adolphe Feder, and Mane-Katz, it demonstrates how travel to Eretz Israel shaped artists’ self-perception, enriching their artistic perspective while maintaining their deeply rooted ethnic identity.

**Keywords:** Palestina, diaspora, art, Zionism, Chagall, Eretz Israel, Adolphe Feder, Mane-Katz, Jewish identity

### “OCZAMI ŻYDA”: ODSŁANIANIE PŁÓTNA TOŻSAMOŚCI W EKSPEDYCYJACH ARTYSTYCZNYCH POCZĄTKU XXWIEKU DO MANDATU PALESTYNY

**Streszczenie:** Na początku XX wieku fala wypraw do egzotycznych krajów, w tym do Mandatu Palestyny, stała się katalizatorem poszukiwań artystycznych w kinie, malarstwie i fotografii. W artykule analizuję, w jaki sposób malarze biorący udział w tych przedsięwzięciach starali się wyrazić tożsamość żydowską. Czerpiąc z recenzji wystaw zamieszczonych w czasopismach diaspory z okresu międzywojennego, badam transformacyjny wpływ tych podróży na światopogląd i ekspresję artystyczną artystów, podkreślając ich rolę we wzmacnianiu żydowskiej samoświadomości. Poprzez analizę postaci takich, jak Szyk, Feder i Mane-Katz, pokazuje, jak podróż do Ziemi Izraela ukształtowała postrzeganie siebie przez artystów, wzbogacając ich artystyczną perspektywę, zachowując jednocześnie głęboko zakorzoną tożsamość etniczną.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Palestyna, diaspora, sztuka, syjonizm, Chagall, Ziemia Izraela, Adolphe Feder, Mane-Katz, tożsamość żydowska

### ГЛАЗАМИ ЕВРЕЯ: РАСКРЫТИЕ ХОЛСТА ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫХ ЭКСПЕДИЦИЯХ НАЧАЛА 20-ГО ВЕКА В ПОДМАНДАТНУЮ ПАЛЕСТИНУ

**Резюме:** В начале 20-го века волна экспедиций в экзотические страны, в том числе в Подмандатную Палестину, стимулировала художественные исследования в области кино, живописи и фотографии. В этой статье рассматривается, как художники этих проектов стремились сформулировать еврейскую идентичность. Опираясь на обзоры выставок в журналах диаспоры межвоенного периода, автор углубляется в преобразующее влияние этих путешествий на мировоззрение и художественное самовыражение художников, подчеркивая их роль в укреплении еврейского самосознания. Анализ таких личностей, как А. Шик, А. Федер, и Мане-Кац, показывает, как путешествие в Эрец-Исраэль сформировало самовосприятие художников, обогатив их творческую перспективу, сохранив при этом глубоко укоренившуюся этническую идентичность.

**Ключевые слова:** Палестина, diaspora, искусство, сионизм, Шагал, Эрец Исраэль, Адольф Федер, Мане-Кац, еврейская идентичность.

The early twentieth century, particularly the 1920s to the 1930s, witnessed a proliferation of missions to exotic lands, driven by a fervent passion for the Orient. This article<sup>1</sup> delves into how painters participating in group-organized or self-arranged art expeditions to Mandate Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s sought to express Jewish identity through their artwork. By examining both intentional and subconscious aspects of this quest, the article highlights the transformative impact of their journeys on their worldview and artistic expression. The sources for this article include exhibition reviews, travel diaries by the artists, and other material published in contemporary press. To fully understand these artistic endeavors, it is crucial to consider the broader historical context. The transition from Ottoman rule to English administration, the shift from the Russian Empire to the Soviet regime, and other pivotal events during the first third of the 20th century significantly influenced artistic discourses. These geopolitical changes not only affected the artists' access to new environments but also shaped their perceptions and artistic narratives. By placing these art expeditions within this wider historical framework, the article offers a deeper insight into how these tumultuous times shaped Jewish artistic identity and expression in Mandate Palestine.

Spearheaded by influential figures like Alexander Kogan, editor of the Berlin art journal "Zhar Ptitsa" (The Firebird), with the aim of "reflecting the spirit of this unique country" through "a living language of life" and "a living material,"<sup>2</sup> these expeditions provided platforms for artists to explore Jewish identity beyond conventional boundaries. Drawing from exhibition reviews in Jewish diaspora journals, the article underscores the role of these journeys in bolstering Jewish self-awareness and articulating aspirations for a Zionist future, shedding light on the broader phenomenon of art expeditions as transformative experiences for artists exploring Jewish identity and heritage.

<sup>1</sup> This article expands upon research first presented at the International Conference on "Displacement, Networks, and Other Transnational Effects in Modern Jewish History: Rethinking the Historical Mapping of Mobility and Migration," organized by Prof. Horowitz from Tulane University and The Leonid Nevezlin Research Center for Russian and East European Jewry in 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Unauthored, *Художественная монография о Палестине*, "Zhar Ptitsa: Ezhemesiachnyi literaturno-khudozhestvennyii Ilustrirovannyi zhurnal," *Russkoe Isskustvo*, Berlin, no. 13, 1925, 36.

## Selection Criteria for Featured Artists

Given the limited space, my selection criteria for artists were guided by a few overarching factors. A crucial aspect was ensuring that they were featured in articles in “Menorah” and “Rassvet,” esteemed publications within the Parisian Russian, Jewish, and Russian-Jewish communities. These journals, known for their quality and contributors like Vladimir Jabotinsky and Gustave Kahn, provided insight into artists’ popularity and significance in their time.

Furthermore, the simultaneous publication timelines of the journals facilitated comparison, as both ceased publication in the first half of the Thirties. I considered artists who physically visited Palestine during those years, either through personal artistic expeditions or self-organized ventures but only temporarily, without permanent residency.<sup>3</sup> Hence, sculptor Nahum Aronson was omitted due to a lack of evidence regarding his visit to Eretz Israel, while Chana Orloff and Leonid Pasternak, despite their pivotal roles in art history and Jewish history, were absent from one of the two journals. From Pasternak’s memoirs, we know that Abel Pann<sup>4</sup> was part of the enterprise. However, Pann’s permanent emigration to Palestine rendered him ineligible for this examination. I focused on artists from that era who were ethnically Jewish and belonged to the Eastern European world of Jewry. This excluded, for instance, Aleksander Yakovlev.

### Arthur Szyk, the Jew who Laughs

Arthur Szyk’s participation is attested by the choice of Alexander Kogan to have one of Szyk’s artworks as a frontispiece of the original book. The planned monograph, intended to be published in two volumes, would have covered Palestine’s history and cultural significance in the first volume, while the second would have described its newly emerging life.<sup>5</sup> Its final version never reached the general public, and the Palestinian monograph remained an outline. A herald of polyhedral figurative art expression, Polish draughtsman, and graphic artist, Arthur Szyk (1894-1951) gained worldwide fame, particularly in the United States, after emigrating before the outbreak of World War II, primarily due to his anti-Nazi political caricatures. “Rassvet” served as a prominent platform for

<sup>3</sup> That is to say, not aligning with the traditional notion of *aliyah*.

<sup>4</sup> Gil Weissblei, *In Search of a New Jewish Art: Leonid Pasternak in Jerusalem*, “Ars Judaica,” no. 13, 2017, 91-110.

<sup>5</sup> *Palestine: A prospectus*, The Maor Publishing Company, Paris 1925.

Szyk's artwork throughout its existence until 1934, long before the artist achieved global recognition. His caricatures covered a range of contemporary topics, from the colonization of Crimea (no. 32, August 9, 1925) to England's role in overseeing relations between Jews and Arabs in mandatory Palestine (no. 33, August 16, 1925), and anti-Semitism in France (no. 35, August 30, 1925).



The vignette features a caricatured Jew with a big, hooked nose and an Orthodox-looking hat in a conversation involving a pun.

Have you seen how in Versailles the fountains beat?

Who, Jews?

(А. Шик, *Голусное*, "Rassvet," no. 35, August 30, 1925, 15.

Courtesy of the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel.)

Don Aminado, in his review of Szyk's book "The Jew who laughs," praises the author's skill in capturing Jewish humour, which oscillates between mirth and melancholy. Szyk's pencil acts like a scalpel, dissecting both people and things with merciless precision. "It's not just about depicting hooked noses"— a trait ascribed to Jewish people — "with which, in his indescribable wisdom, God the Lord blessed the sons of Israel, and with which the talented and merciless artist, who also received his gift from God, gener-

ously endows his victims,”<sup>6</sup> Szyk’s caricatures transcend a mere physical portrayal, delving into the essence of his subjects with insight and precision. His talent lies in his ability to reveal truths with wit and entertainment.

G. Isarlov’s article on Szyk’s exhibition describes a different subject of Szyk’s art: his experiments in painting. It discusses the appropriation of a new style by the Jewish painter, who used Semitic motifs in his creative language after a trip to Palestine. Artur Szyk “thinks and feels like a Jewish artist. His childhood passed in [...] the Jewish synagogues in Poland, those Jerusalems of the dispersion, all these elements created that inner world of Artur Szyk.”<sup>7</sup> The Semitic motifs that Szyk embraced included intricate patterns, calligraphic elements, and a symbolic imagery drawn from Jewish history and religious texts. These motifs were understood and expressed through a fusion of traditional Jewish iconography with the vibrant landscapes and cultural elements he encountered in Palestine. Szyk’s work often featured biblical figures, Hebrew letters, and decorative elements reminiscent of ancient synagogue art, all infused with the colors and textures of the Middle Eastern environment. It remains uncertain whether Isarlov was aware that Szyk’s trip to Palestine, sponsored by Alexander Kogan’s enterprise, was not his first (dating back to 1914); he likely was not. By tracing Szyk’s influences, the journalist highlights the journey to Eretz Israel as a crucial moment in the artist’s career:

A trip to Palestine played a big role in the development of Szyk’s creative path: here, finally, he saw with his own eyes that East, in which, spiritually, he grew up and developed.

In Palestine, Artur Szyk finally realized his Semiticism. [...] In the face of Szyk, this European with an oriental soul, we see that reconciling phenomenon, so specifically Jewish, which has played and will continue to play a prominent role in the history of human culture.<sup>8</sup>

The article references Szyk’s series of book illustrations, showcasing his talent for illumination techniques, which were exhibited from May 19 to June 5, 1925 in Paris.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Дон Аминадо, *Еврей, который смеётся*, “Rassvet,” no. 25, June 20, 1926, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Г. Исарлов, *Выставка Артура Шика*, “Rassvet,” no. 23, June 7, 1925, 8-9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> “Menorah,” no. 11, June 1, 1925, 5 (173). These techniques, originating in the Middle Ages and refined by miniaturists, involved the intricate decoration of text, particularly the first letters. Szyk’s mastery in this field reached its zenith when he illuminated a 43-page manuscript of *The Kalisz Statute*, a Jewish protection Charter from medieval Poland. Translating the text into multiple languages, he adorned it with watercolor and gouache miniature paintings. This work garnered worldwide acclaim, touring as an exhibition from 1929 onwards.

In Berkhin's article,<sup>10</sup> which opens with the rhetorical question "does a Jewish art actually exist,"<sup>11</sup> Szyk's illuminated manuscripts serve as a compelling confirmation of the affirmative answer. Berkhin praises Szyk for his ability to draw inspiration from Jewish history and way of life not only in terms of subject matter but also in form. Szyk's work represents a bold attempt to revive a national artistic tradition, which had fragmented over time, contrasting with the rapid stylistic evolution of the modern era.

### **Adolphe Feder: Artistic Awakening and Jewish Identity in Palestine**

Another notable figure featured in both journals who participated in Kogan's expedition to Palestine was Adolphe Feder (1886-1943). In one of the articles dedicated to his exhibitions, accompanied by images of his paintings, Benediktov reflects on Feder's journey to Palestine as a significant moment in his artistic and Jewish awareness. He notes Feder's previous focus on international and Parisian themes in his work but suggests that the trip to Palestine awakened his connection to his Jewish identity and the richness of the East. Benediktov discusses Feder's intention to revisit Palestine to explore and capture its deeper, less picturesque aspects, indicating a shift towards a more nationalistic artistic expression. He suggests that Feder's interest in the East, reflected in his works from Algeria, is not a passing phase but an integral part of his artistic development.<sup>12</sup>

Prior to that, "Rassvet" had already featured an intriguing travel diary by Feder in June 1925, detailing his journey to Palestine.<sup>13</sup> In this diary, his companions are not the other artists from Kogan's team but rather random passengers whom he refers to as "the

<sup>10</sup> М. Берхин, *Выставка Артура Шюка*, "Rassvet," no. 3, January 20, 11-12, 1929. On this author see bibliography for further details.

<sup>11</sup> In several issues of "Menorah," the question is addressed from a different angle, notably by Arnold Lakhovskiy (1880-1937), a Russian-Jewish artist who extensively travelled from 1901 to 1917, visiting Palestine, Italy, France, Belgium, and Finland. He taught at Bezalel in 1908 and later befriended artists like Marc Chagall and Alexander Yakovlev during his Parisian years. Despite being Jewish, his art was perceived as more Russian than distinctly Jewish. Lakhovskiy believed that Jewish artists could contribute to universal art with their intuitive abilities but argued that without a territory or anchored traditions, there could be no distinct Jewish art. He envisioned the possibility of creating such an art in the future, rooted in a strictly national life in Palestine. Similar conclusions are presented in the editorial article. See J. Bielinky, *Un artiste juif de langue russe: Arnold Lakhovsky*, "Menorah," no. 20-21, December 15-31, 1928, 10-11 (320-321), and Unauthorred, *Y-a-t-il un art juif?*, "Menorah," no. 17, September 15, 1925, 1-2 (265-66).

<sup>12</sup> М.Бенедиктов, А.Федер, "Rassvet," no. 4, January 22, 1928, 9-10.

<sup>13</sup> А.Федер, *Из дневника художника. Поездка в Палестину*, "Rassvet," no. 24, June 14, 1925, 14-15.

Americans." Upon arrival in Tel Aviv, Feder's description of the city mirrors the prevailing narratives of the time, portraying it as a place in constant evolution.

The travel diary must have been published months after the actual trip took place, since "Menorah" features in its April 1, 1925, edition an interview with the artist.<sup>14</sup> The journalist is received by an "enthusiastic Feder, returning from Eretz-Israel with his pronounced Semitic type, reminiscent of an Oriental, with a look of pride in his eyes" in the artist's atelier, enveloped in a "distinctive Palestinian ambiance." In the interview, Feder recounts his participation in an artistic mission to Palestine, led by the art publisher Mr. Kogan. This endeavour involved artists and writers documenting Palestine's landscapes, people, and monuments with the goal of creating a book-album to visually represent the region for Jews unable to visit. The nine-week visit encompassed various regions, including Jewish colonies and Arab towns, facilitated by the cooperation of the Palestinian administration. Feder's personal contribution included watercolour paintings depicting Jewish types and ancient monuments. He expressed admiration for Palestine's beauty, describing it as an "Eden" for artists, characterized by vibrant colours and historical richness. Additionally, the interviewee reflects on the simplicity of Arab life and notes the physical resemblance between Arabs and Jews in the region:

As for Jewish life, it is interesting because of the contrast presented by the old Israeli element and the new element. For this group, made up of young people, the ideal is the reconstitution, through work and sacrifice, of an independent Jewish Palestine; for this one, made up of the Hassidim, the ideal is to pray while waiting to die in the Holy City. And this contrast does not stop at ideas: I will not forget for a long time, the contrast of the khaki shirts and caps of *Halutzim*<sup>15</sup> with the large fur hats, the red, garnet, yellow or cardinal purple caftans, of the old Hassidim...<sup>16</sup>

### **Emmanuel Mane-Katz: Bridging Old and New Palestine**

Perhaps the most prominent interpreter of this contrast between old and new was Emmanuel Mane-Katz (1894-1964), born into an Orthodox family, and known in world art history for his paintings of Jewish life, including rabbis, musicians, and scenes of the Eastern European *shtetls*. His visit to Palestine was unrelated

<sup>14</sup> Yisraël Lemaitre, *Un artiste retour de Eretz-Israel. Une conversation avec Feder*, "Menorah," no.7, April 1, 1925, 10 (114).

<sup>15</sup> Zionist pioneers.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

to Kogan's expedition. In Mane Katz's retrospective exhibition review, Berkhin states:

Mane Katz intends to visit Palestine soon. He is attracted not so much by the old Palestine, which captivates the artists of the whole world with its brilliance, but by the new Palestine under construction, the poor one, perhaps in colours, but rich in other wealth. He is attracted by a new type of Jewish idealist with dreamy eyes, that are directed not to heaven, but to the earth. Indeed, such is the Palestinian *halutz*. In the person of Mane Katz, the *halutz* could really find one's own poet.<sup>17</sup>

From May to October 1928, "Rassvet" received his travel diary for Palestine, a captivating narrative that showcases the painter's ironic and observant sensitivity towards both the characters and the landscape. In the initial entry, he depicts the diverse anthropological types of passengers aboard the ship with him from Marseille to Palestine. These include a businessman born in Jerusalem who amassed his fortune in Mexico but "cannot live without Palestine,"<sup>18</sup> an American Jew serving as the rabbi of a small community, a mundane merchant, and an entrepreneur who purchased land:

A fourth-class passenger approached us, a young, typical Galician Jew with side locks, with an uncombed beard. His hat is sort of pulled down over his nose, and a yarmulke is visible behind it. The trousers are short and tight, which makes the shoes seem terribly large, and dangle strangely, and the arms hang in a really funny way. He was the first to come up to me and say: "You are a Jew; you are going to Palestine! Shalom!" And he begins to tell me his adventures. He sits in Jerusalem in the synagogue and receives some kind of subsidy; he is 28 years old, and his profession is to sit at the head of the dead and say "tehilim."<sup>19</sup> I ask him: Is it really an occupation for a man of your age? No, he says, I'm also a writer. Writer?! Here all my companions turned to him. What do you write? I write addresses on envelopes and write letters to rich people in America... It turns out that he lived in America as a child and knows English very well, but most of all he likes to live in the synagogue and be a *schnorrer*.<sup>20</sup> Now he is leaving Europe. He has only been away from Jerusalem for three weeks: in Paris, Brussels, Antwerp: he is terrified of Europe. Paris is not a city: synagogues are closed for a whole week, and in general, he doesn't like nor values Europe after the war. The only thing that interested him in Paris was Schwarzbard and, in general, everything related to pogroms. There is also a Russian mechanic who sells everything because his son fell ill with malaria and the climate of Palestine is good for him.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> М. Берхин, *Выставка Манэ-Каца*, "Rassvet," no. 20, May 13, 1928, 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> Г. Манэ-Кац, *Поездка в Палестину. Путевые встречи*, "Rassvet," no. 38, September 16, 1928, 9-10.

<sup>19</sup> Psalms, recited by Jewish people collectively and individually.

<sup>20</sup> A beggar.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*



The talent of the portraitist with the brush seems to be fully interpreted by Mane Katz also with the pen. The artist's fascination lies in uncovering oriental traits among his fellow believers, yet he expresses disappointment upon encountering Iranian Jews in Jerusalem during his wanderings. Comparing them unfavourably to Polish Jews, he perceives a lack of dynamism and vitality in their demeanour.

Despite this, he finds intrigue in their reclining postures, which evoke a "timeless, biblical" quality.<sup>22</sup> In late October 1928, the Granov gallery announced the opening of Mane Katz's "oriental" exhibition, which prominently featured works inspired by his recent sojourn in Palestine. Out of the thirty-four pieces displayed, a substantial twenty-six revolved around Palestinian themes.<sup>23</sup> The review of Mane Katz's Palestine exhibition by Mikhail Berkhin Benediktov begins with the initial disorientation experienced by visitors accustomed to conventional Eastern imagery, noting the absence of typical oriental motifs. However, this initial perplexity quickly gives way to appreciation for Katz's departure from stereotypical representations. Katz's works, devoid of traditional oriental exoticism, reflect his courage in portraying his genuine perceptions of Palestine. Benediktov suggests that Katz deliberately eschewed the orientalist template to convey the immediacy of his impressions, highlighting the artist's ability to emancipate himself from subconscious influences. Katz's depiction of Palestine is characterized by its authenticity, shaped by his childhood memories of the Bible and his nationalist sentiments as a Jew. Furthermore, Benediktov observes a distinctly "European" appearance in Katz's portrayal of Palestine, attributing this to the artist's profound affiliation to his Jewish identity and the Europeanization of the country through Jewish immigration. Despite the European influence, Katz's works exhibit a cohesive mood and atmosphere, evoking a genuine sense of Palestine that deeply connects with viewers. Benediktov's review encapsulates a journey from initial perplexity to unequivocal affirmation. Starting with the rhetorical question, "Is this Palestine?" visitors confront the absence of familiar oriental motifs. However, as they immerse themselves in Katz's depictions, they are drawn into a world authentically shaped by the artist's

<sup>22</sup> Г. Манэ-Кац, *Поездка в Палестину. Тель-Авив*, "Rassvet," no. 39, September 23, 1928, 7-8.

<sup>23</sup> Unauthored, *Выставка Манэ-Каца*, "Rassvet," no. 44, October 28, 1928, 9. The painter's travelogue in Palestine concludes in tandem with the announcement of his Parisian exhibition featuring Palestinian-themed artwork, accompanied by images of his paintings, see Манэ-Кац, *По Палестине (Путевые заметки)*, "Rassvet," no. 44, October 28, 1928, 5-7. Within this article, Mane Katz recounts his journey north to Tiberias, where he sought to deepen his acquaintance with Bialik. He further elaborates on the depth of his Jewish identity.

perceptions. Despite the absence of traditional exoticism, Katz's works resonate with a sense of Palestine that transcends conventional imagery. Thus, by the review's end, viewers leave with a definitive answer: "yes, indeed, this is Palestine".<sup>24</sup>

Ben Tavriya<sup>25</sup> offers a distinctive perspective on Mane Katz's artwork, viewing it through the lens of the European Jew, the diasporic Jew. He portrays Katz as deeply entrenched in his Jewish identity, with his art reflecting the palpable weight of diasporic existence. Katz's brushstrokes seem compelled by the relentless grip of the diaspora, giving rise to ghostly, vibrant visions suffused with suffering and compassion. In Katz's creations, there is a sense of unrest, with every element in constant motion. Katz's depiction of the Jewish figure is one of perpetual movement, propelled forward by an unseen force. Even in portraits, the turmoil of emotions and thoughts is evident, suggesting an inner restlessness. Ben Tavriya presents Katz as an artist deeply rooted in the experience of the European Jew, whether in Eretz Israel or in the diaspora. His characters, viewed through the magnifying glass of the ghetto, reflect a shared understanding of the complexities of Jewish existence.<sup>26</sup> His artwork appears to be the epitome of Gustave Kahn's definition: "Ethnicity is not always immediately apparent. One sure indication of this is when a Jewish painter tackles Jewish subjects, where we often encounter a nuanced blend of dreamlike or nostalgic melancholy, juxtaposed almost paradoxically with a sense of acute perception."<sup>27</sup>

### **Chagall's Journey as an Epitome: Jewish Identity and Zionism Prevail Over Exoticism**

While Ben Tavriya delves into Katz's deeply rooted connection to the European and diasporic Jewish identity through his art, Mayani's dialogue with Chagall offers a glimpse into the artist's personal reflections on his journey to Palestine. The interview captures Marc Chagall's experiences during his two-and-a-half-month journey to Palestine, which was prompted by an invitation from Mayor Dizengoff for the establishment of the Tel Aviv Museum of Arts. The interview presents Chagall's reflections on Palestine

<sup>24</sup> М. Бенедиктов, *По поводу палестинской выставки Манэ-Каца*, "Rassvet," no. 48, November 25, 1928, 7-8.

<sup>25</sup> The journalist and his pseudonyms have been the subject of one of my articles in this journal. See bibliography for further details.

<sup>26</sup> Бен Таврия, *Манэ-Кац*, "Rassvet," no. 45, November 11, 1931, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Gustave Kahn, *Peintres Juifs*. Gustave Kahn archive, ARC. Ms. Var. 143 05 77, Archives Department, The National Library of Israel.

and Jerusalem, alongside his skepticism regarding the museum project's success due to the lack of competent staff. The dialogue between Mayani and Chagall unfolds as a sort of monologue:

– ... Did Palestine attract me, exactly as an artist? You see, I went there as a Jew. I wanted to see it all with my own eyes – how they are building the country. It's always like this with me – the man goes first, and the artist follows him. And then, all this exoticism of the East, which is usually chased after, all this ethnography that artists hasten to put on the canvas, seems to me insignificant... Is it really a matter of some kind of palm tree or mountain? After all, the same palm tree and almost the same mountain, the same motley Arabs and camels, can be found several hundred kilometres from Palestine. To do this, it is enough to go to Algeria or Morocco... No, the European standard cannot give anything. It's another matter if you look at everything. It's with an inner eye, do you understand?... Of course, Delacroix and Matisse, unlike Gauguin, tried to see something in North Africa, but they are not Jews; they don't have our past. No, I looked at all this with the eyes of a Jew, and nothing more.<sup>28</sup>

The quote from Chagall encapsulates the overarching theme of the article, suggesting that the journey to Palestine did not fundamentally alter the artists' core vision or their ethnic identity. Chagall's journey and those of his contemporaries were not merely about encountering the exotic but were deeply intertwined with their Jewish identity and the Zionist aspirations of reclaiming and redefining their cultural heritage. Through this lens, the significance of their travels to Eretz Israel becomes clear, highlighting the enduring impact on their self-perception as Jewish artists and their artistic expressions.

In conclusion, while the romanticized notion of the Orient may have initially drawn these artists to Palestine, it was their Jewish identity and the historical context of Zionism that profoundly influenced their work. This article underscores the importance of viewing their artistic journeys not just as quests for exotic inspiration, but as decisive moments in the ongoing evolution of Jewish art and identity.

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<sup>28</sup> Бен Таврия, *М. Шагал в Палестине*, "Rassvet," no. 24, June 14, 1931, 10-11.

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