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Squabbling Brothers and Overarching Unity: the Image of the 'Ideal Jew' as an Expression of National Self-Consciousness among Russian-Jewish Intellectuals in the Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century

Summary: This article examines how Russian-Jewish intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – liberals, Zionists, and Bundists alike – constructed the figure of the "ideal Jew" as a model of national self-consciousness. Despite ideological conflicts, these groups shared a vision of a modern Jew who embodied both Russian and Jewish cultural orientations. The ideal Jew was imagined as an educated, socially responsible individual, capable of elevating the Jewish masses, articulating communal values, and serving as a prototype for collective regeneration. Tracing this figure from the Haskalah of the 1860s and 1870s, through the rise of Jewish nationalism after 1882, and into the post-1917 emigration, the article shows how attitudes toward Russian culture, diasporic identity, and nostalgia shaped the evolving conception of Jewish selfhood. By analyzing literary criticism, historiography, social theory, and journalism, it reveals a persistent pattern of synthesis, Russian and Jewish, cosmopolitan and national, underpinning intellectual debates across generations.
Keywords: Russian-Jewish intelligentsia, Ideal Jew, Jewish nationalism, Haskalah, Diaspora identity, Russian-Jewish press

KŁÓTLIWI BRACIA I NADRZĘDNA JEDNOŚĆ: WIZERUNEK „IDEALNEGO ŻYDA" JAKO WYRAZ ŚWIADOMOŚCI NARODOWEJ WŚRÓD ROSYJSKICH INTELEKTUALISTÓW ŻYDOWSKICH POD KONIEC XIX I NA POCZĄTKU XX WIEKU
Streszczenie: W artykule analizuje się, w jaki sposób rosyjsko-żydowscy intelektualiści końca XIX i początku XX wieku – liberałowie, syjoniści i bundowcy – konstruowali obraz „idealnego Żyda" jako wyraz narodowej samoświadomości. Pomimo różnic ideowych grupy te podzielały wyobrażenie o nowoczesnym Żydzie, łączącym rosyjskie i żydowskie orientacje kulturowe. Idealny Żyd postrzegany był jako osoba wykształcona i społecznie odpowiedzialna, zdolna podnosić poziom żydowskich mas, formułować wartości wspólnoty oraz stanowić model dla zbiorowej odnowy. Śledząc ewolucję tego wyobrażenia od epoki rosyjskiej Haskali lat 60.–70. XIX wieku, przez rozwój żydowskiego ruchu narodowego po roku 1882, aż po emigrację po 1917 roku, artykuł ukazuje, w jaki sposób stosunek do kultury rosyjskiej, tożsamości diasporycznej i nostalgii kształtował koncepcję żydowskiego „ja." Analiza krytyki literackiej, historiografii, myśli społecznej i publicystyki ujawnia trwały motyw syntezy – rosyjskiej i żydowskiej, kosmopolitycznej i narodowej – leżący u podstaw debat intelektualnych kolejnych pokoleń.
Słowa kluczowe: rosyjsko-żydowska inteligencja, Idealny Żyd, żydowski nacjonalizm, Haskala, tożsamość diasporyczna, prasa rosyjsko-żydowska

Братья-ворчуны и всеобъемлющее единство: образ «идеального еврея» как выражение национального самосознания русско-еврейской интеллигенции в конце XIX -- начале XX века.
Резюме: В статье исследуется, как русско-еврейские интеллектуалы конца XIX – начала XX века – либералы, сионисты и бундовцы – конструировали образ «идеального еврея» как выражение национального самосознания. Несмотря на идейные разногласия, эти группы разделяли представление о современном еврее, сочетающем русскую и еврейскую культурные ориентации. Идеальный еврей мыслился как образованный и социально ответственный человек, способный возвышать еврейские массы, формулировать ценности общины и служить моделью для коллективного обновления. Прослеживая эволюцию этого образа от эпохи русской Гаскалы 1860–1870-х годов через становление еврейского национального движения после 1882 года и до эмиграции после 1917 года, статья показывает, как отношение к русской культуре, диаспорной идентичности и ностальгии формировало концепцию еврейского «я». Анализ литературной критики, историографии, социальной мысли и журналистики выявляет устойчивый мотив синтеза – русского и еврейского, космополитического и национального – лежащий в основе интеллектуальных дискуссий нескольких поколений.
Ключевые слова: Русско-еврейская интеллигенция, Идеальный еврей, Еврейский национализм, Гаскала, Диаспорная идентичность, Русско-еврейская пресса

Introduction

An investigation of Russian-Jewish social thought at the middle of the nineteenth century reveals that Jews across the ideological spectrum – from integrationists to nationalists – conceived an ideal image of the Russian Jewish intellectual and that this image guided their thinking and helped direct their ideological programs. The ideal Jew was intended to serve as a model of the values of the group, the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia. This group was saddled with several tasks: educating the Jewish masses, promoting the right values (e.g. justice), and providing a prototype of the person to emulate. These goals could only be achieved, they considered, if a new kind of person appeared. Defining and giving birth to the new Jew became the essential task for several generations of Jewish intellectuals.[1]

This paper makes a contribution because it shows that the concept of the ideal Jew was shared by groups that in all other things engaged in combat with one another. It also intervenes in the scholarship by demonstrating that many Jewish intellectuals loved Russia (or at least various aspects), despite the view dominant in the Cold War that Jews had a blanket negative view. I offer material from a variety of Jewish liberals, Zionists, and Bundists. Although one might wonder at the shared orientation, in fact all these groups at one time or another proclaimed their love for their Russian homeland and Jewish national self-consciousness,

[1] The term, "the new Jew," is usually associated with the Halutsim (Pioneers) who cultivated land in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth-century. It is interesting in this context to realize that Jewish intellectuals in Russia were occupied with defining their own version of the new Jew.

and respect for the diasporic Jewish culture that they built. These attitudes helped form the nostalgia that emerged after many, if not most, of the central figures left Russia in the years after 1917. The role of nostalgia in defining cultural identity is explored in this paper as well.

What were the basic characteristics of the ideal Jew? Sometimes one imagined him or her leaning more toward the Russian side as fully integrated and embedded in Russian culture. At times, he was portrayed more as Jewish, the embodiment of an ancient national tradition. At all times, however, the figure blended two national and cultural orientations. The idea of a Russian-Jewish synthesis became a powerful element in the identity of Jewish intellectuals in Russia and, as we shall see, of those who left the country after 1917. In fact, we can speak of a motif that grew in importance as part of an overall value system that reflected positive attitudes toward Russian culture, although not concomitantly to its government.

In Russian-Jewish intellectual life of the nineteenth century, the central premise concerned the relation of knowledge to power, i.e. the struggle of Jews for civil or equal rights.[2] Since the government held a monopoly of political power well into the nineteenth century, Jewish intellectuals who favored secularism were aware to include government officials in their intended audience. Other members of the audience consisted of Russian "society": professors, journalists, lawyers, students, and a rising class of intellectuals and others without a definite social position.

Jewish social theory in this essay includes sociology and ethnography, as well as historiography.[3] Indeed, the genres of non-fiction were themselves not clearly defined. In the Russian context, literary criticism often served the goals of politics as well as offering examples of incipient sociology. Therefore, my choice of texts does not conform to generic consistency. Instead, I focus on texts that best reflect the ideals and values of Jewish thinkers in the late-tsarist period.

In the first section of the essay, I examine the image of the Russian Jew in the 1860s–1880s. In the second section there is a break in the political positions of some thinkers, and the image of the

[2] The best discussion of knowledge and power is M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, Vintage Books, New York 1980; in the Russian context see L. Engelstein, "Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia," *The American Historical Review*, 1993, vol. 98, no 2, pp. 338–340.

[3] An example of a model for "social theory" is Alexander Etkind's book *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*, London: Polity Press, 2011.

ideal Russian Jew changes to accommodate the turn in the direction of Jewish nationalism. The last section examines Russian-Jewish synthesis in the emigration as an indication of the persistence of certain attitudes long after the authors had left Russia.

Part ONE: Haskalah and Russian-Jewish Intellectual Life in the 1860s and 1870s

Judah Leib Gordon, the noted Hebrew poet and writer, offered a pithy definition of the Haskalah with his phrase, "Be a man in the streets and a Jew at home." Although some interpret this as two selves for two different contexts, Michael Stanislawski considers that the phrase "was a call not for the bifurcation of Jewish identity, but for its integration."[4] It advocated being both a full-fledged man-a free, modern, enlightened Russian-speaking Mensch-and a Jew at home in the creative spirit of the Hebrew language. This central point that the maskil blended within himself two orientations is key to understanding Jewish thought in Russia. Although the content of "secular" and "Jewish" changed, the idea of a synthesis remained especially strong among Jewish thinkers for a century.

The 1860s in Russia were characterized by optimism as a result of Alexander II's Great Reforms. Although Jews had not yet realized their dream of full legal rights, governmental policy was moving in a liberal direction. Already in 1856, Alexander II abolished some of the most burdensome anti-Jewish legislation of the earlier period, such as the recruitment of so-called "cantonists" (adolescent Jewish boys for army service of twenty-five years or more). He had also permitted improvements in the lives of so-called "privileged Jews," such as the right of Jews of the First Merchant Guild or university graduates, to live permanently outside the Pale of Settlement in St. Petersburg or Moscow.[5] In 1867, one of the most hoped-for decrees appeared: Jewish artisans were permitted to live outside the Pale as well. Jews thought that this rule would have substantial impact since a large proportion of the Jewish population were artisans. This would allow many thousands to move into Russia proper to practice their trade and enrich themselves and local communities throughout the country. For

[4] M. Stanislawski, *For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry*, Oxford University Press, New York 1988, p. 52.

[5] B. Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: the Jewish Encounter with Late-Tsarist Russia*, University of California Press, Los Angeles 2002, p. 53.

a variety of reasons the law had only modest effects.[6] However, many Jews at this time, especially among the russified elite, felt optimistic about their future, the government's intentions, and their own role in promoting change.

Osip Rabinovich, the author and publisher of *Rassvet* (1860–61), Russia's first Jewish newspaper in the Russian language proposed that Jews, as members of the non-aristocratic class, should integrate into the new Russian intelligentsia formed from the raznochintsy (individuals of various social classes). This group, he argued, was gaining prestige and would soon overtake aristocrats in positions in the upper echelons of governmental service and populate the professions, such as medicine and law. Additionally, Jews could join the Russian intelligentsia as experts at politics and current events, as well as in the arts. Rabinovich, an Odessan, saw the need for a variety of Jewish experts to fulfill roles in commerce that was rapidly intensifying, but where ethnic divisions in the population were still distinct. He explained:

> Where are the doctors, teachers, and pharmacists of our city? Why does society do without the help that the efforts of such individuals could bring; individuals who have received a systematic education and therefore are capable of everything wonderful and useful? In our opinion, this respected class of people has been unfairly removed from public activity and from now on should be invited to every meeting when we discuss the community's tasks. We are certain that these meetings will be reinvigorated thanks to these new activists. They will bring a new spirit, the European spirit of order and frankness, human dignity and independence; the meetings will acquire meaning and purpose, instead of chaotic meaninglessness in which up to now the best forces and intentions dishonorably die in isolation.[7]

Rabinovich envisioned a democratic future for Russia in which Alexander II's reforms were just the beginning. He conceived of a new leadership – Jews educated in universities who were comfortable in Russian, Russian literature, Western culture, and also devoted to Jewish social improvement and cultural accomplishment. This meant rabbis too. His modern vision looked to Germany and the rise of a bourgeois middle class to resolve the problems of Jewish isolation and poverty.

He believed as well that Jewish intellectuals would displace the Shtadlonim, the intercessors from among the richest who were the community's leaders. To his mind, with the passing of the feudal past, so too should disappear the position of the anti-demo-

[6] J. Klier, "The Concept of 'Jewish Emancipation,' in a Russian Context," in *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*, O. Crisp and L. Edmondson, eds. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1989, 144.

[7] O. Rabinovich, "Odessa," *Rassvet*, 1960, no 7, p. 101.

cratic Shtadlan, who stood above the others and appealed for the mitigation of onerous decrees. In its place, Rabinovich imagined citizens with civil rights who insisted as well on national rights. Although it might seem premature in 1860 to worry about the assimilation of the Jewish elite, he was convinced that Jews who had done well economically would ignore their unfortunate brethren. "Some of our educated co-religionists remain apart, and they regard with icy indifference or even worse, arrogant contempt the battle of the brave ones who dare challenge publicly the numerous adherents of darkness and stagnation."[8]

Rabinovich was prescient that within a short time a Jewish intelligentsia would form and strive to attain leadership roles in the Jewish community. He was also right in predicting the enormous indifference of many privileged Jews to the Jewish plight. But he failed to see that the Shtadlan would remain an important figure in Jewish politics, education and social life. At the highest levels, the tsarist government and its ministries were usually aristocrats who preferred dealing with members of their own class rather than with liberals or worse radicals.[9]

In the 1870s Russia's Jews continued to believe in Russia's general modernization. The main difference was the realization that improvement in the Jewish condition would depend on more than the government's good intentions (which were already wavering), but on the Jews themselves. Additionally, Jewish thinkers realized the path would be more difficult and that forces antagonistic to emancipation were more entrenched than was previously considered. Several events prompted Jewish intellectuals to lower expectations. After the assassination attempt on Alexander II in 1866, reforms slowed and finally ceased. Additionally, hostile attitudes toward Jews continued to appear in the Russian press throughout the 1860s and early 70s.[10] The pogrom in Odessa in 1871 shook the confidence of the Jewish intelligentsia, although hopes for the future had not been completely dashed.

Ilya Orshansky played a leading role in trying to improve the civic condition of Russia's Jews. Educated as a lawyer, he had also edited *The Day* (Den'), the Russian-language Jewish newspaper that began in 1869, but closed after the Odessa pogrom of 1871.

[8] O. Rabinovich, "Intelligentsiia," *Rassvet*, 1860, no 31, p. 492. See also M. Polishchuk, *Evrei Odessy i Novorossii: sotsial'no-politicheskaia istoriia evreev Odessy i drugikh gorodov Novorossii, 1881–1904*, Gesherim, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 100–110.

[9] S. Zipperstein, "The Politics of Relief: the Transformation of Russian Jewish Communal Life during the First World War," in *Contemporary Jewry. Jews and the Eastern European Crisis, 1914–1921*, J. Frankel, ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford 1988, pp. 22–40.

[10] J. Klier, "The Jewish 'Den' and Literary Mice, 1869–1872," *Russian History*, 1983, no 10, pp. 31–49.

According to Orshanky, the Jewish question was first and foremost a legal issue that sprung from Russian jurisprudence. He concluded that the Russian law code was filled with inconsistencies and marked by religious obscurantism. Little could be done to help Jews unless it was entirely revamped.[11] At the same time, he was convinced that Jews would face pressure to assimilate because, just as in Western Europe, capitalism in Russia demanded uniformity. He maintained that positive incentives would encourage Jews to seek economic advantages, one of which was conversion to Christianity. He expected mass conversion, as he wrote in 1875:

> Honestly, for a Russian Jew there is only one escape from this situation: adopt Christianity and especially Russian Orthodoxy. The results of this act for each Jew are two-sided. First of all, right away all the infinite persecutions and prohibitions that legally bind the Jew who remains in his religion disappear. A Jew who adopts Christianity immediately enters into that stratum of society to which he belongs by virtue of profession, education, and talent. Secondly, the law is formulated to give various kinds of support for the person. Converted Jews can join any social stratum that they find most appealing without requesting the agreement of those groups beforehand, as is generally required. They enjoy the privilege of not paying taxes to that social stratum for the first three years. From the state they receive as a benefit for their immediate needs from 15 to 30 rubles for each person.[12]

Orshansky, who died in 1878 at the age of 29, did not live to see the waves of emigration from Russia or the political alternatives to integration that appeared after 1882. "His reality" was of Jews facing an economic catastrophe. He feared that no people could live long under endless liabilities and discrimination.[13] Although he acknowledged that the hostile feelings of the non-Jewish population impeded assimilation, he also maintained that the attempt to evade antisemitism would prompt Jews to assimilate. However, the government was not as supportive of Jewish conversion as perhaps he thought.[14]

It is characteristic of the optimism of the age of Alexander II that the Jewish historian Abraham Harkavy explored in archeology themes similar to those that interested Orshansky's. Harkavy supposedly found evidence of the assimilation of Jews in Russia before the arrival of Ashkenazi Jews. These "first arrivals" allegedly appeared on the shores of the Black Sea before the Crusades.

[11] I. Orshansky, "Russkoe zakonodatel'stvo o evreiakh," *Evreiskaia biblioteka*, 1875, no 3, p. 92.

[12] Orshansky, "Russkoe zakonodatel'stvo o evreiakh," p. 95.

[13] I. Orshansky, *Evrei v Rossii: ocherki i issledovaniia*, St. Petersburg, 1872, p. 212

[14] J. D. Klier, "State Policies and the Conversion of Jews in Imperial Russia," in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, R. P. Geraci and M. Khodarkovsky, eds., Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London 2001, pp. 92–112.

Although he was a trained scholar, nonetheless, Harkavy wanted to legitimate Jewish presence in Russia in order to dispel arguments that Jews were outsiders. In his book, *On the Language of Jews Who Lived in Ancient Times in Russia*, he wrote:[15]

> […] We tried to prove that the first Jews in Southern Russia were not Asians who had come across the Caucasus. Now we look: on the basis of the historical evidence regarding the language that these earliest migrants spoke, can we not conclude [the following]? It is clear that we are dealing with the earliest epoch of migration for which we have evidence. It was before the flood of German Jews came during the time of the First Crusades because, beginning at this time, the native language of the latter was pushed out little by little by the German dialect and by the influence of German Jews who were much more numerous than their Slavic co-religionists…[16]

Harkavy maintained that these earliest Jews were part of a diaspora from the Mediterranean Basin. Using as his evidence daily-life artifacts, such as ancient coins, and descriptions about the group from outsiders, Harkavy asserted that these people quickly became "Slavicized." This permitted them to create a unique Jewish-Slavic language, a mixture of Greek, Hebrew, and Slavic, achieved by adopting new Slavic words and expressions into their vocabulary. The fate of the community was full assimilation into the local Slavic population. From his research, Harkavy concluded that the accusation that Jews were new comers, not native (korennye), and therefore unworthy of equal rights, was false. In fact, because of their early arrival, Jews deserve special deference.

Part TWO: the Ideal Russian Jew in the Jewish National Movements After 1882

In the wake of the pogroms of 1881–82, Russian Jewry moved in various directions. From the point of view of ideology, the Bilu group of settlers, who emigrated to Palestine in order to realize the ideas of the recently formed Hibbat Tsion movement, were the most radical. They resolved not only to leave Russia, but also envisioned fulfilling the imperative of repopulating the ancient homeland with modern Jews.[17] However, in the early 1880s, only

[15] Harkavy's earlier studies appeared in the Hebrew newspaper, *Ha-Karmel,* 1864, no 31 and 43, and 1865, no 2, 3, 9, and 10.

[16] A. Garkavy, "O iazyke evreev, zhivshikh v drevnee vremia na Rusi, I o slavianskikh slovakh, vstrehaemykh u evreiskikh pisatelei," in *Trudy Vostochnogo otdela Imp. Arkheologiheskogo Obshchestva*, 1865, p. 3.

[17] J. Frankel, *Prophesy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York 1981, pp. 115–117.

a few individuals actually took up this forbidding challenge. Palestine was located in a far corner of the Turkish Empire, was economically backward and filled with swamps and malaria. The Jews who lived there made up the so-called Old Yishuv. Religiously observant, they lived from the charity of co-religionists abroad (Haluchah).[18]

Another alternative for Russia's Jews was emigration, which ebbed and flowed in years of crisis.[19] Jews from Russia emigrated to North America primarily, but also to Western Europe, Latin America (Argentina), Australia, and elsewhere. Although the primary motivation for the majority was greater economic opportunity, a few intellectuals formed the Am Olam movement, which set out to create collective Jewish farming communities in the United States. A Jewish farmer appealed to a dedicated few, such as Hermann Rosenthal, Israel Mandelkern, and William Frey, who facilitated the development of a physically strong Jew akin to Jean Jacques Rousseau's natural man.[20] Incidentally, a similar vision was promulgated by Zionists, especially Max Nordau, who spoke of "muscular" Jews. Several Russian Zionists, such as Micah Yosef Berdichevsky and A. D. Gordon, adopted and embodied this transformative vision of a closeness between the Jew and the soil.

It is hard not to see in these "agriculturalists" the influence of Russian Populism with its idealization of the Russian peasant. Although the Kibbutz movement was far more integral to the Zionist project than the socially marginal Am Olam, Jewish farming communities reveal a post-liberal alternative to Jewish integration whether in Louisiana, Oregon, New Jersey, or Rishon Le Tsion.

Among programs that envisioned Jews staying in Russia, these may be divided between those that planned for revolution and those that envisioned a gradual change in governing institutions, such as the transformation of autocracy into a liberal democracy. Liberals, in favor of gradualism, found themselves at the height of popularity at the time of the 1905 Revolution and just after.[21] In contrast, the (non-Zionist) Jewish national movement gained

[18] B. Halpern & J. Reinharz, *Zionism and the Creation of a New Society*, Brandeis University Press, Hanover & London 2000, pp. 38–39.

[19] J. Lestschinsky, *Jewish Migration for the Past Hundred Years*, Yiddish Scientific Institute, New York 1944.

[20] T. H. Friedgut, *Stepmother Russia, Foster Mother America: Identity Transitions in the New Odessa Jewish Commune, 1881–1891* & *Recollections of a Communist*, Academic Studies Press, Boston 1914; also B. Horowitz, "Mandarin Jew: Herman Rosenthal's Peculiar Eastern-European Legacy in Progressive-Era New York (1881–1917)," *American Jewish Archives*, 2013, LXV, no 1 and 2, pp. 45–71.

[21] Vladimir Levin, "Russian Jews and the Three First Dumas: the Elections and the Jewish Question in the Dumas (1906–1912)," an. M. A. Thesis, Hebrew University, 1998 (in Hebrew).

popularity as a result of liberalism's failure in the years following 1905 up through 1917.[22]

Semyon Dubnov was the most significant theorist of Jewish nationalism in the post-1882 period. Although Dubnov valorized Jewish separatism, his own life and work reflects a vision of a Russian-Jew who strongly interacts with Russian and European culture in order to strengthen the consciousness of the modern secular Jew. Because this vision represents an emendation of the synthetic (Russian-Jewish) model and because Dubnov played such an important role in Russian-Jewish culture, it makes sense to examine the historian's evolution and his intellectual shifts from the early 1880s to 1921, when he left Russia for Berlin.

In his early works, Dubnov revered the Haskalah and placed his hopes on reason and cosmopolitanism.[23] With youthful obedience, Dubnov sought examples of the Haskalah in the history of Jews of Eastern Europe. The famous quotation from his essay on Shabbtai Zvi, written just after the pogroms in 1882, is paradigmatic. "The Jewish people stood at a crossroads. The Amsterdam philosopher called them to enlightenment, showed them the glowing dawn of a new life, new civilization. The kabbalist from Smyrna tempted them toward ignorance and darkness, the thick gloom of the past… A Judaism reborn cursed the former and followed the latter. It was a decisive, fatal step." [24] Not only did Dubnov prefer reason and secularism against the self-proclaimed messiah, but he also sided with the enlightened individual against the crowd.

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, Dubnov began to perceive the flaws of this dogmatism. Dubnov's worldview was transformed and made more complex by his formulation of a philosophy of Jewish history. Under the influence of a number of thinkers and historians, including Heinrich Graetz, Sergei Bershadsky, Vasily Kliuchevsky, and Nikolay Kostomarov, Dubnov asked what makes Jewish history unique.[25] He claimed that Jewish history reached far back in space and time so that wherever civilization made its mark, Jews were present. True, Jews had always been a nation apart, but also moving in tandem with the people among whom they lived.

[22] V. Levin, "Jewish Politics in the Russian Empire during the Period of Reaction, 1907–1914," a PhD thesis, Hebrew University 2007 (in Hebrew).

[23] Dubnov's attitude toward the Haskalah can be seen in his memoir, *Kniga zhizni: Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia: materialy dlia istorii moego vremeni*, 3 vols., Riga 1934–35 (vols. 1–2); and New York 1957 (vol. 3), republished, Gesharim, Moscow – Jerusalem 2004, pp. 30–45. See also V. E. Kel'ner, *Missioner istorii: zhizn' I Trudy Semena Markovicha Dubnova*, Mir, St. Petersburg 2008, pp. 26–65.

[24] S. Dubnov, "Sabbatai Tsevi i psevdomessianizm v 17 veke," *Voskhod*, 1882, no 7 and 8, p. 137.

[25] S. Dubnov, "Chto takoe evreiskaia istoriia? Opyt kratkoi filosofskoi kharakteristiki," *Voskhod*, 1893, no 11, p. 111.

This condition had given Jews a dual vision that permitted them to acquire the wisdom of every age and yet preserve an essential and particular way of life. Thus, Jews were present in Eretz Israel, Egypt, and Babylonia, as well as in medieval Spain, Italy, Germany, Poland, and now Russia and North America.

Far from an insignificant factor in the history of civilization, Jews occupied a major place for Dubnov. "If you conceive of world history in the form of a circle, then Jewish history would occupy the place of the diameter that runs across the whole historical circle. The histories of other nations make up lines running through one or another part of the circle. The history of the Jewish people runs through the whole history of mankind from one pole to the other like a central axis."[26] The realization that Jewish history included the entire "significant" world history led him to imitate Heinrich Graetz and commit to a multi-volume history of the Jews. It also convinced him that Jewish identity was formed not only on the basis of religion or ethnicity, but also on historical feelings. "Our inclinations, convictions, and character make up the complex product of the entire sum of impressions earlier experienced by us, our so-called experience of the past, which is shaped by ideas and crystallized by feeling, and this crystallization of spiritual elements signifies knowing oneself and understanding one's own development."[27] From this realization, Dubnov perceived the historian as a surrogate priest, a leader of the nation.

In the late 1880s, Dubnov recanted the hope for full integration and advanced the politics of Jewish cultural autonomy. These ideas would find their full expression in the essays published in *Voskhod* between 1897 and 1903, and appeared in a volume entitled *Letters on Old and New Judaism*.[28] Although the ideas were not limited to political strategies, but included social, historical, and ideological elements, perhaps the political claims were most significant: Jews should attain cultural rights, including Jewish courts and a parliament, in addition to basic civil rights as citizens of the Russian state. These ideas became embodied in the program of the Folks Partey, a political party that Dubnov helped to found and that vied unsuccessfully for seats in the Russian Duma.[29]

Dubnov's conception of cultural rights within the Russian Empire was influenced by the Austrian theories of nationalism pro-

[26] Dubnov, "Chto takoe evreiskaia istoriia? Opyt kratkoi filosofskoi kharakteristiki," p. 114.

[27] S. Dubnov, *Ob izuchenii istorii russkikh evreev i ob uchrezhdenii russko-evreiskogo istoricheskogo obshchestva,* St. Petersburg, 1891, p. 2.

[28] S. Dubnov, *Pis'ma o staron i novom evreistve*, 2nd ed., Obshchestvennaia pol'za, St. Petersburg, 1907.

[29] V. Levin, "The Folks-Partey of Simon Dubnow – A Story of Failure?," *Tsion*, 1912, no 3, pp. 359–368.

moted by Otto Bauer and Karl Renner.[30] But it was also realities in Russia that drew his attention, such as the flourishing of national Jewish culture. In particular, Dubnov's work as the literary critic of *Voskhod* in the 1880s helped to form his vision of the ideal Russian Jew. In the middle of the decade, Dubnov became acquainted with the growing successes in Yiddish and Hebrew literature. He wrote enthusiastically about Mendele Mocher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, Saul Tchernychovsky, and later Hayim Nachman Bialik.[31] But the figure that he idealized most and praised ecstatically was not one of these super talents, but the far less accomplished poet Semyon Frug, his close friend who admittedly received popular acclaim in the years of the *fin de siècle*. Frug, perhaps better than anyone else, embodies Dubnov's conception of the ideal Russian Jew in a national framework.[32]

Frug represented an artist who had penetrated Russian culture to such a degree that he used the Russian language and forms of Russian prosody to make his art. At the same time he was not assimilated. According to Dubnov, Frug used Russian in order to create something entirely original in Jewish culture:

> […] Frug is an atavistic partner of the best creators of our 'Selikhot' and 'Kinot' [medieval religious poems], which have an elegiac beauty that only a few contemporary historians can appreciate… In him lives the vigorous soul of a 'Salakh,' the bard from the wonderful Sephardic school of Moses Ibn Ezra, but he managed to reach the poetic pathos of Judah Halevi.. […] Frug wrote primarily in Russian, masterfully using Russian poetic language, but nevertheless remained a Jewish national poet – this is his main characteristic and huge advantage. He stood on the border between two literatures – Jewish and Russian, and if he occupied himself solely with presenting general, I mean, exclusively poetic themes, he could occupy a central place in the 'Russian Parnassus,' where many people situated him.[33]

For Dubnov, himself an advocate of diasporic Jewish nationalism, Frug expressed the voice of diasporic Jewry. Comparing Frug to Judah Halevi, Dubnov underscored the advantage in belonging to two cultures at once. Stating that Jews in Russia could contribute to Jewish literature to the same degree as Jews in Muslim Spain had contributed to Jewish culture in their day, Dubnov saw

[30] S. Rabinovich, "Alternative to Zion: the Jewish Autonomist Movement in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia," a PhD dissertation, Brandeis University, 2007, p. 48.

[31] This insight was expressed earlier. See S. Niger-Charney, "Simon Dubnow as a Literary Critic," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, 1946, no 1, pp. 305–317.

[32] B. Horowitz, "Poet and Nation: Fame and Amnesia in Shimon Frug's Literary Reputation," in *Empire Jews: Jewish Nationalism and Acculturation in 19th– and Early 20th-Century Russia*, Slavica, Bloomington 2009, pp. 51–64.

[33] S. Dubnov, "Vospominaniia o S. M. Fruge," *Evreiskaia starina*, 1916, no 4, pp. 447 and 458.

Frug as an example of cultural synthesis. But his conception was not a synthesis for its own sake, but for the sake of reinvigorated creativity in Jewish culture.

In contrast to Frug, Dubnov offered a negative image of the synthetic Jew. He dedicated an entire chapter ("About a Despairing Intelligentsia") in his *Letters on Old and New Judaism* to Mikhail Morgulis.[34] Morgulis, whom Dubnov got to know in Odessa, was a well-known civic leader in the city for almost forty years, starting in the mid-1960s. However, Dubnov mocked him during the school debates in Odessa in 1902 as a hopeless assimilator.[35] Morgulis represented the position of the board of Odessa's Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment in the debates and spoke forcefully for schools with a majority of hours spent on secular subjects. He claimed that secular subjects were more important than Jewish classes because "Jews needed to be prepared to compete in a difficult job market."[36]

Dubnov characterized Morgulis as an intellectual "at wits end," and wrote that such people "suffer from a dualism in their world view, in which national and assimilationist elements are mixed together."[37] This confused attitude, Dubnov wrote, can be seen in Morgulis's negative attitude towards a national school, a national political party, and Jewish cultural autonomy. According to Dubnov, assimilation was a natural process for minorities who did not pursue a national program, "the direct practical result of the rejection of the national idea."[38] For Dubnov, Morgulis portrayed more than a single example, but represented an entire generation for whom synthesis served the pragmatic purposes of integration rather than the advancement of Jewish nationalism.

PART THREE: the Image of the Ideal Russian Jew in Post-1917 Emigration

There were many other Jewish groups and individuals who had their own vision of the ideal Russian Jew in late-tsarist times. It is easy enough to recall a few such groups as the Jewish Bund, General Zionists, Poalei Tsion, Jewish Socialists, and liberals ("Jewish Kadets"). Despite ideological differences, their portraiture

[34] Originally published in volume 12, *Voskhod*, 1902.
[35] S. Dubnov, "O rasteriavsheisia intelligentsii," *Voskhod*, 1902, no 12, p. 87.
[36] Mikhail Morgulis, "Natsionalizatsiia i assimiliatsiia," *Voskhod* 1902, no. 5 pp. 110–111.
[37] S. Dubnov, "O rasteriavsheisia intelligentsia," in *Voskhod*, 1902, no 12, p. 87.
[38] Dubnov, "O rasteriavsheisia intelligentsia," p. 74.

would by necessity conform either to the liberal integrationist or the nationalist paradigm, albeit with various modifications. For the purposes of this essay, there is no need to go through the exercise of describing each group individually.

However, I would like briefly to examine what happened after 1917 in connection with some of the ideas described above. A process of canonization took place in which many leading émigrés held fast to their former ideologies and even intensified reverence for their former values. Among those values, they displayed nostalgia for the synthetic unity of a Russian Jew. This assertion is true regarding liberals, Bundists, and some Zionists.

Svetlana Boym, the author of *The Future of Nostalgia*, has written that nostalgia "is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy."[39] As Boym points out, when a culture ends quickly, especially as a result of a revolution, nostalgia emerges. The Bolshevik revolution ended a living culture and sent its participants around the world with memories to commit to paper.

In the emigration, Jewish liberals from Russia did not turn their back on the past but occupied themselves with remembering. Instead of disappearing into the new environment, they remembered colleagues who embodied such ideals as respect for the rule of law, individual rights, and the democratic process. In 1939, Shaul Gintsburg in New York gave this evaluation of the former Russian-Jewish intelligentsia: "An intelligentsia that gave its people a pleiad of such activists as, for example, I. G. Orshansky, M. I. Kulisher, M. G. Morgulis, L. I. Katsenel'son, Ia. M. Halperin, N. I. Bakst, G. B. Sliozberg, and A. I. Braudo, does not have to feel ashamed of the road that it traveled. The future historian of Russian Jewry, if only he is not blinded by party loyalty or chauvinism, will give proper respect to their work and service."[40]

In memoirs about tsarist times by Jewish liberals, writers also claimed that Russian Jews embodied the finest moral values by fusing the Russian and Jewish traditions. In *Evreiskii Mir* (1944), a volume published in the emigration, Grigory Aronson offers this praise for Leon B[ramson], the Petersburg lawyer, civic leader, and member of the First Duma. "L[eon] Bramson's spiritual development was formed under the sign of two principles – Jewish and Russian. As a result of the interaction and interpenetration of these two principles, an original human alloy was created that

[39] S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Basic Books, New York 2001, p. xiii.

[40] Sh. Ginsburg, "O russko–everiskoi intelligentsii," *Evreiskii mir*, 1939, no. 1, Paris, p. 40.

entered into history as the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia…"[41] Jewish liberals emphasized their patriotism, civic mindedness, and self-sacrifice for Russia, at the same time praising their love for the Jewish people. Although they lost to the Bolsheviks, they viewed their values as eternal and alive in the present.

Bundists in the emigration also sought a synthetic Russian Jew for the emulation of their adherents. In 1943, the American representatives of the Bund published in Yiddish *Vladimir Medem zum zviantsikstn yortseyt*, a volume of essays about the former Russian-Jewish political leader. The book offered the chance to redefine the image of Vladimir Medem and presumably the Bund itself in the light of the end of independent Poland and Lithuania, the war against Nazism, and the Final Solution.

His former colleagues took advantage of the opportunity to criticize the Medem's legend, which was growing in the United States. John Mill claimed that Vladimir Kossovsky thought up the Bund's national program for which Medem received so much credit. Conversely, Kossovsky described his dissatisfaction with Medem's reputation, saying that Medem had not been an effective spokesman for the Bund in its debates with *Iskra* and that Medem's "neutralism," his formulation of the national question, had not provided an effective statement of the Bund's national program. Instead, it had caused unnecessary confusion.

These criticisms were undercut, however, in the introduction to the volume given under the byline – "the American publishers" – a group that emphasized Medem's efforts to strengthen Jewish national identity. These unnamed individuals that likely included Noah Portnoy, lauded Medem's labors to establish Jewish schools in Poland and his support for compromise with liberal Jewish groups in the realm of culture. They noted his increasing devotion to Jewish nationalism, from his early writings to his later articles, such as "Deeper in Life" or "Again, Ourselves and Our Nationalism."

In short, the Medem that the publishers embraced was the familiar amalgam of Jewish nationalism and socialism. The publishers wrote:

> During the forty years that have past since Medem entered the 'Bund' with a brilliance, and after almost twenty years was laid to rest in a New York cemetery, countless dreams have erupted and faded. The bloodiest storms in history have fallen upon us; worlds have gone down. If through his writings the veil from this time is torn off and sparks of light from Meden's spiritual legacy

[41] Grigorii A., "Zhizn' I deiatel'nost' Leontiia Moiseevicha Bramsona," *Evreiskii mir: sbornik 1944 goda*, New York, [republished by Gesharim, Jerusalem 2001, pp. 13–14].

> emerge, if through such an abyss and catastrophe Medem's colorful and novel image arises today as a consolation, then let it appear clearer what Medem meant for the Bund, for Jewish-Socialist thought and for the Jewish Workers Movement.[42]

The image from the *Zohar* of "sparks of light" emphasizes the sacred attitude that the writers held regarding Medem. Such hagiography clearly reflects the need of Bundists in the United States to celebrate a hero. Additionally he was not tainted by collaboration with the Soviets, but had opposed Lenin and maintained the organization's independence. With the fate of Eastern European Jewry in the balance, the authors portrayed a Medem who embodied consolation between Jews and non-Jews, and among Jews of different groups for the defense of and national blossoming of Jewish life.

In the years after 1917, there was also an attempt among intellectuals to recapture, remember, and recount the achievements of the Russian past in the light of the present in Eretz Israel. Yosef Klausner, who had become a professor at the Hebrew University, clearly felt a deep connection to the world of his youth. More importantly, in his eyes Russia's Jewish culture had served as an incubator of modern Hebrew literature.

To say the obvious, many Zionists were ambivalent about *fin de siècle* Russia. While a few Zionists interpreted the Bolshevik take-over as a harbinger of great things for mankind, most viewed it negatively as leading to Jewish assimilation.[43] In the 1930s, many perceived the rise of a virulent form of antisemitism in Germany as a sign of the perspicuity of Zionism's condemnation of the Galut. Klausner felt similarly.

Nonetheless, some of Zionism's greatest writers, Yosef Brenner, Micha Berdichevsky and Hayim Nachman Bialik, showed enormous respect for and even nostalgia toward Russian-Jewish culture. Yosef Hayim Brenner, for example, wrote a great deal about Russian literature as a critic and in his notebooks.[44] Similarly in his seven-volume *History of Contemporary Hebrew Literature* (1930–1950), Klausner reflected on the influence on his work of Russian literature generally and Dostoevsky in particular. Klausner claimed, as Dostoevsky did in his "Pushkin Speech" (1880), that modern Hebrew literature incorporated in itself all of world culture – Kant,

[42] V. Medem, *Medem zum zviantsikstn yortseyt*, American Representation of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland, New York 1943, p. 20.

[43] A. Shapira, *Land and Power: the Zionist Resort to Force*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto 1999, p. 144.

[44] See J. H. Brenner, *Out of the Depths and Other Stories*, D. Patterson and E. Spicehandler, eds., Toby Press, New Milford 2008.

Goethe, Shiller, Corneille, Racine, Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, and the ideas of socialism and communism.[45]

In addition to these European sources, Klausner emphasizes Mendele Mokher Sforim's influence. Although Klausner criticized Abramovitch as a writer who remained for his whole life "in the framework of the Haskalah" and was lukewarm toward Zionism, Klausner expressed special love for Abramovitch, who above all others was able to show the importance of the old ghetto for modern Jewish culture. Klausner writes:

> I know in my soul that I too 'rejected the Galut,' and I was opposed completely to many of its ideas and philosophical discourse that, it seemed to me, was at times rooted in the old maskilim generation and based on a point of view no longer relevant. Still I was influenced by the original thoughts that, like a genius Mendele had, especially the amazing brilliance that sometimes presented in a new light a complete set of phenomena that in old Judaism had appeared as unsolved mysteries before Mendele.[46]

Klausner esteemed in Abramovitch the creativity and productivity of Jewish culture, in which he, Klausner, was himself a leading figure. In this light we can understand how Klausner could question the Zionist shibboleth, "negation of the Galut." By openly celebrating the literary achievements of Hebrew literature on Russian soil and especially Mendele Mokher Sforim's contributions, Klausner paid homage to the Russian-Jewish Galut.

In fact, he was not alone in lauding the creativity of Jews in Russia. If we examine closely the memoirs of other Zionists – Jabotinsky's *roman à clef*, *The Five*, or *Between the Revolutions* by Benzion Dinur (Dinaburg) – we will likely discover an undying appreciation for Jewish culture in Russia that inculcated high aesthetic demands and uncompromising moral values.[47] In the case of these books and in Klausner's writings, the homage to the past did not substitute for an empty present, but affirmed the tie between the past and present. Klausner wanted to bring the values from the Russian shore to Palestine for their expansion and propagation in the future Zionist Jewish culture there.

Although the three examples that I have chosen – by a Bundist, a liberal, and a Zionist – vary in genres (one is a volume of essays, the other a memoir, and the last a work of scholarship), this generic differentiation helps one see the growing idealization of Jew-

[45] J. Klausner, *Historiyah shel ha-sifrut ha-'Ivrit ha-hadashah*, 6 vols., Ahi'asaf, Jerusalem 1949–1954, 6 vols., p. 456.

[46] Klausner, *Historiyah shel ha-sifrut ha-'Ivrit ha-hadashah*, 6 vols., p. 455.

[47] See V. Jabotinsky, *Piatero*, Ars, Paris 1936; B. Dinur, *Bīmē milḥamā ū-mahpek̲ā: zik̲ronot ū-rĕšumot mederek̲ ḥayyim (5674–5681)*, Mosad Bialik, Jerusalem 1960.

ish culture from tsarist times that took place outside Russia in the 1920s and 1930s. However, in each work, the authors depict a Russian-Jewish culture that conforms to their needs in the present. All of them embody nostalgia.

Nonetheless, the desire to unite Jewish culture with Russian had detractors. Religious Jews remained hostile to the idea of imitation, although some made compromises to advance political interests. For the most part, Zionists were faithful to the "negation of the Galut," although there were many exceptions.[48]

Nostalgia is perhaps an essential part of the motivation for idealization, yet it is not the only factor. The emigration was a complex phenomenon characterized by shared values, ethics, aesthetics, norms of personal behavior, and interpersonal relations that attempted to recapture a past that was quickly escaping their grasp. For that reason perhaps the past resoundingly served as a compass to define the present. Among shared values was the image cultivated initially by maskilim of the Jew in Russia as a unity of Jewish and Russian moral, cultural, linguistic, and ideological values. Jews in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the emigration in the twentieth century paid homage to an enduring, but increasingly fading ideal.

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[48] Y. Gorny, *Converging Alternatives: the Bund and the Zionist Labor Movement, 1897–1985*, State University of New York Press, Albany 2006.

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