THE HEART OF ODYSSEUS

Oh, Gerhard, glue the parts of your heart back together. Do it like Odysseus, to whom the gods could only give an impervious heart, because he was so full of cunning and renewed himself time after time. For you know this is not yet the end; something worse can always come. And we also have to be able to undergo the end (and that doesn’t necessarily mean to survive it).

HANNAH ARENDT TO GERSHOM SCHOLEM, NOVEMBER 27, 1946

In my heart, the city
Where God sent me.
Will the angel, the keeper of the seal
Be impressed by it?

GERSHOM SCHOLEM, “GRUSS VOM ANGELUS”

After the Journey

Scholem’s trip to Europe marked the beginning of the Hebrew University’s efforts to rescue Jewish cultural treasures that had been plundered by the Nazis and restore them to Jewish hands, and many further trips to Europe were made on that mission. In the wake of Scholem’s investigations and recommendations, and the promise he had received from the council of the Jewish communities of Bohemia and Moravia to transfer the books that arrived from Theresienstadt to the university, it was decided first to concentrate the efforts and searches in Prague and the rest of Czechoslovakia. The next three trips, the first of which was made by Shmuel Hugo Bergmann in November 1946, about three months after Scholem’s return, were to that country.

Apparently under Scholem’s influence, in view of the insights on the state of the looted Jewish books in Germany that he had gained during his visit, the Hebrew University modified the official guidelines for action that had been set by the legal committee discussed in the previous chapter—no longer would the university demand to be the sole representative of the Jewish people and its self-image,
serving as the legal heir to the stolen treasures of Jewish culture that remained unowned. Scholem’s impressions of the storage conditions of the books in the Offenbach Archival Depot (OAD) and of the danger threatening them from thieves and international law led him to recognize that the various Jewish centers in the world should join forces to remove the books from German soil as soon as possible, without worrying about dividing them among the centers. At a meeting of the Diaspora Treasures Committee soon after Scholem’s return to Palestine—which was attended by Salo Baron, the chairman of the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (CEJCR)—two important decisions were made. The first was to tighten coordination between the committees in Jerusalem and New York, which included having each committee inform the other of its plans. The second decision, reached unanimously by the members of the committee after hearing what Scholem had to say, was that the “removal of the books from Germany is urgent and precedes the issue of their distribution.”

With time the Hebrew University developed a better understanding of the needs of various Jewish centers in the world, especially those in the United States, and the competition among the various centers on this matter died down—in part because priority was given to the National Library of Israel in choosing the books it needed. The establishment in April 1947 of a united front on the part of Jewish institutions throughout the world, through the establishment of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Inc., the umbrella organization for the recovery of stolen Jewish cultural treasures that replaced the CEJCR, contributed to this understanding. This organization worked to locate the treasures, collect them, and distribute them among various Jewish centers; it was disbanded in 1952 when its work had come to an end. Eventually, 85 percent of the treasures was divided between the United States and Israel, 8 percent went to Europe (half of that to Britain), and the remaining 7 percent was divided among the other Jewish centers in the world. During the organization’s existence, Baron was its chairman, and Joshua Starr, followed by Hannah Arendt, was the general secretary. Scholem was its vice chairman for a time.

Judged by any external standard, Scholem’s trip to Europe had been a success. The information that he had found and the connections he had made with the Jewish communities in Czechoslovakia were extremely important for the continuation of the work and led to the transfer of many books to the National Library. Moreover, the preliminary contracts Scholem had made with the directors of the German libraries in Frankfurt and Munich made it possible to hope not only for the return of stolen books but also for negotiations regarding compensation to the Jewish people in the form of Jewish manuscripts that belonged legally to Germany. In addition to all this, Scholem’s intensive work in the OAD in sorting
books and manuscripts, packing some extremely valuable ones in crates, and checking the possibilities for shipping them to Palestine ultimately led Herbert Friedman to smuggle the crates out of Germany.

Scholem’s work gained him great respect on the part of his colleagues at the Hebrew University. Werner Senator thanked him in an official letter: “Despite the many difficulties, you succeeded in bringing us a lot of information from abroad and to clarify the situation. You made important connections, and we hope that in the end we will succeed, because of your action, in obtaining very important material for our National Library.” Even Scholem stated in his final report to the Hebrew University that it “was possible to accomplish to a large degree” his main task in Europe. In the weeks after his return, Scholem was still busy with matters connected to his mission. Letters reached him from various places in Europe with new information about books and expressions of willingness to renew academic and personal connections that had been disrupted by the war, and he sent letters to Europe regarding the continuation of his work there, as well as personal letters to people he had gotten to know on the trip. At that time he was also engaged in writing an article on his mission, which was published in Haaretz about a year later, and in preparing a lecture on his impressions of Jewish life in Germany, which was also published in Haaretz. Despite his great activity and apparent success, Scholem returned from his trip exhausted in body and soul. The wound in Berlin and what he had seen and experienced greatly weakened his body and spirit, and a week after his return the university administration allotted him fifty pounds for recuperation and a vacation. Many years later, Fania described his serious condition upon returning from Europe:

He returned to the Land of Israel physically exhausted and mentally depressed. He would lie down for most of the day, doing nothing, hardly speaking with anyone, and only occasionally repeat sentences like: “The Jewish people has been murdered, has ceased to exist, only smoldering stumps are left, with no strength or direction. Their source of nourishment no longer exists, the people has been cut off at the root. And we in Israel, a handful of people, the remnant. Will we really find the strength to build the creative, free society, not materialistic, for the sake of whose formation we came here? Maybe we won’t succeed in the task and we will degenerate, because we are bereft of our nation, we are orphaned.” He was prostrate on his bed, going from couch to couch in his house, without finding repose for himself. Scholem refused to be consoled and he only became himself again and recovered a year later.

One of the central feelings that Scholem repeated in his notes and reports during the whole time he was in Europe was his sense that his mission was a
failure. His repeated complaints about the bad attitude of representatives of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) toward him; about his arriving in Europe too late, so that many items had already been lost; and about the lack of time available to him, which prevented him from finishing his work, reflect his increasing depression. These feelings are also clear in the diary entries and letters he wrote at that time. These documents indicate that the extreme worsening of his mental state began only after he entered Germany, his former homeland. In contrast, when he was in Paris and Czechoslovakia, his expressions of depression and despair were less frequent and extreme. His spirits reached their nadir during his visit to his home city, Berlin. The accident that he suffered there, immediately after his decision to return home, symbolizes the severity of the crisis he experienced.

The outward expressions of what appears to have been a deep depression reflect his internal responses to historical events. Thus, the effort to understand the psychological breakdown that deepened during and after his trip is also an effort to understand the influence of the Holocaust on his life. As a result, his mission should be seen as having two central aspects: the public one, involving his serving as an emissary of the Yishuv on a public mission and his movement through countries; and the personal one, involving his internal changes. The public journey is in fact an expression and symbol of the inner search.

**The Public Aspect**

As discussed in the previous chapter, Scholem went on his European mission disguised as an employee of the JDC, and his frequent trips to the displaced person (DP) camps in Germany show that he actually performed some of the work that he was supposed to be doing for that organization. From his diary entries and letters, it is evident that he regarded this activity as an important part of his mission, and he was well aware of its public aspect. His delivering of lectures and their content, as far as records of them have been preserved, indicate that he was interested in influencing the refugees in the camps, encouraging and supporting those waiting for immigration visas and providing information to the residents of the camps about events in the Land of Israel from the political and spiritual points of view. In this respect, one may understand Scholem’s activities in Europe in the context of the work of other emissaries from the Land of Israel and understand his responses to what he saw and experienced in the broader framework of the experiences of the other emissaries from the Land of Israel who were active in Europe at that time.

Indeed, for all of the emissaries the encounter with the Holocaust survivors in
Europe was complex and difficult, because through it for the first time the representatives of the Yishuv could understand the magnitude and depth of the tragedy. Irit Keynan has noted that “the emissaries went out on a Zionist mission, to bring ‘the message of the Yishuv’ to the refugees, and they saw themselves as bearers of the national vision. The real character and dimensions of the catastrophe of the Holocaust began to penetrate deep into their consciousness only after they reached the camps and met the survivors face to face.”14

At the base of the Zionist purpose of the mission was the view of the survivors as the sole human reservoir that could provide the foundation for continuing the Zionist movement. The emissaries prepared for the encounter with the survivors from this position. Great apprehension about the future of the Zionist movement and the urgent need to bring the survivors to the Land of Israel charged the encounter with “the tension of high hopes from the survivors and strong fear that faith in Zionism and the force and willingness to enlist in a new struggle were not strong enough among them.”15

The great gap between the goals of the mission as defined in the Land of Israel and the situation on the ground in Europe, as well as the great emotional burden that accompanied the encounter with the refugees, gave the emissaries a feeling of being caught between two worlds. On the one hand, they had a feeling that no one in the Land of Israel understood the situation in Europe properly, and on the other hand, they themselves found it difficult to understand the world of the refugees. Together with difficulties created by the poor state of the infrastructure in Germany after the war, which made it very hard to contact people in Palestine by mail or telegram, this situation often made the emissaries feel isolated and frustrated. In addition to the intense and exhausting work in the camps, there were often difficulties in communication and coordination with the American military authorities and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.16 In Scholem’s case, he had trouble obtaining an entry visa for Germany, and he complained repeatedly about lack of cooperation from the JDC and his disappointment with its representatives. Scholem’s situation was harder in a certain sense than that of the other emissaries, and his isolation was greater. Scholem did not belong to any organization with a base in Europe like the Jewish Agency or the JDC, and no supporting institution or organizational network stood behind him. Perhaps this situation heightened his feelings that some people wanted his mission to fail and put difficulties in his way. These feelings were grounded in reality, based on the competition that arose among the various Jewish centers in the world to be the official representative of Jewry after the Holocaust and the legal heir of the property left ownerless. Though Scholem
had a clear position on the matter, the conflict of interest between the Jews of the United States who were acting in the American occupation zone and the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine, which he represented, convinced him that the prognosis for continued Jewish existence was poor—a pessimistic attitude bound up with his fear for the fate of the Jews’ cultural treasures. These feelings led him to change his mind during his journey and eventually support the establishment of an umbrella organization that would unite the interests of all the Jewish centers and create a united front in facing the world.

Another feeling that often arose in his writings during his trip was that he had arrived too late, and as a result great damage had been done to Jewish interests—many books had already been returned to their country of origin, and many others had disappeared. The emissaries from Palestine whose goal was the DP camps were in a similar situation. These emissaries frequently reported that the refugees accused them of having arrived in Europe very late, seven months after the end of the war. This disappointment affected the attitude of the refugees toward the emissaries and the Yishuv in general, and it also disturbed the emissaries.17

As a member of the Yishuv who had been sent to Europe by the Zionist leadership, Scholem found that his meetings with the survivors intensified his feelings of helplessness, as he wrote in a letter to Ben-Zion Dinur in 1943 that is discussed at length in chapter 4. As a Zionist who rejected coexistence between Jews and Germans and who was in favor of the renewal of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, Scholem was appalled by the sights and sounds that confirmed the tragic end of European Jewry for him and made him feel helpless. As he wrote to Dinur, Scholem did not believe that any of the thinkers and shapers of Zionism (himself included) could have imagined such an end to the Jewish question. Even worse, in hindsight it was also clear that Zionism could never have been able to offer the correct solution, because none of its founders could have foreseen the problem in the correct light and its full extent, because reality had surpassed all imagination. The trap into which the Zionist movement fell because of the Holocaust appeared to him in its full power in his encounter with Germany and its residents in 1946. The helplessness of Zionism was demonstrated to Scholem by the ruins, the eyes of the refugees whom he met on his trip, and the pages of the abandoned books. But at the same time these were the remnants on whom the continuity of physical and spiritual Jewish existence was supposed to be based after the catastrophe. This paradoxical situation, containing both destruction and growth, extinction and the need for creation and continuity, characterized Scholem’s personal situation during his time in Europe.
The Personal Aspect

It is impossible to completely separate the public aspect of Scholem’s trip as an emissary of the Yishuv and the personal aspect of his journey, since Zionism had a central place in his life and played an extremely important role in shaping of his personality. Nevertheless, it may be said that Scholem’s sojourn in Europe had great personal meaning for him, which also had consequences for his path in Zionism. The effort to understand this meaning opens a window on his inner journey and provides a way to understand the deep impression his experiences made on him. Here, perhaps, may be a reason for his increasingly serious personal state during the trip and after his return. To try to understand what this personal journey meant for him, it is necessary to shift the point of view from the level of external events to the symbolic level.

For Scholem, the stolen Jewish books were more than Jewish property that had to be recovered. They were the cultural heritage of the Jewish people and the key to its continued spiritual existence after the Holocaust. As discussed in the previous chapter, the question of whom the books belonged to, in the absence of legal heirs, was linked to the questions of who was the true representative of the Jewish people and where would be the future center and focus of its existence. The potential for the continuity of Jewish cultural and spiritual existence was embedded in the stolen books, which is what gave them such great significance in the Jewish world during and after the war and aroused such interest and competition among the various centers. Under these circumstances, the boundaries between the Jewish books that were to be found throughout Europe and their murdered owners were easily blurred, and the mission of saving the Jewish treasures of the Diaspora could be interpreted in light of the failure to save their owners. These books could also easily become a symbol of the surviving Jews of Europe, who—like the books—became both a symbol of the hope for the continuity of Jewish existence and a monument to the millions who had been annihilated. The parallel between the books and Jewish people who had been saved from the Holocaust and were still in Europe in 1946 was also drawn by Scholem’s contemporaries who visited the OAD. For example, the American historian Lucy Dawidowicz, who, in her capacity as an emissary of the JDC sorted books in the OAD about half a year after Scholem was there, described the experience: “The smell of death emanated from these hundreds of thousands of books and religious objects—orphanned and homeless mute survivors of their murdered owners. Like the human survivors, these inanimate remnants of a once-thriving civilization had found temporary and comfortless shelter in the land of Amalek. The sight of these massed inert objects chilled me.”
In contrast, the books were much more to Scholem than mute objects, and his attitude toward them was emotional. When he first immigrated to the Land of Israel, he worked as a librarian in the National Library, and all his life he worked on his own library, which today is the Scholem Collection in the National and University Library in Jerusalem. Malachi Beit-Arié described Scholem’s special relationship to books in a talk after his death:

Gershom Scholem never ceased dealing with books as the physical products of spiritual culture—with sensitivity, with spiritual tempestuousness, and with enthusiasm, whose outward expressions rose above the outward expression of any other subject that concerned him. One might compare Scholem’s attachment to books, which would appear to be no more than the “sheaths of wisdom,” to use Ibn Ezra’s expression, and their place in his inner world to the status of the symbols of Kabbalah according to his definition—as a spiritual reality that has no other way of being revealed except in the symbol itself, in the books themselves.20

What, then, was the spiritual reality that was revealed to Scholem through the books that he went to seek in Europe? And what was their inner personal meaning for him? A hint of this can be found in a sentence he wrote in his diary toward the end of the trip: “This mission has eaten me up, and it did not bring with it the inner salvation I had thought of.”21 Understanding what “inner salvation” he was seeking when he left could explain his motivation for undertaking the trip and sticking with it to the point of exhaustion. Though the historian’s tools do not make it possible to fully answer a question of this kind, which belongs rather to the field of psychology, one may still try to understand Scholem’s motivations by using a model of a human quest that includes a deep emotional experience, usually religious, and the search for a solution to material problems in the present, or salvation. I refer to a sacred journey or pilgrimage.

To understand Scholem’s journey in this way, one may use the anthropologist Alan Morinis’s definition of a pilgrimage as a journey made by someone seeking a place that, according to his faith, embodies some ideal. Morinis defines the goal of the journey as “an intensified version of some ideal that the pilgrim values but cannot achieve at home.”22 The special nature of the OAD, as a collection point for plundered Jewish books whose owners had been murdered, gave it and its contents special emotional significance—even a sanctity—for those who visited it or worked there. The huge halls, full of immense quantities of books, and the monotonous work of sorting them and repacking them by a relative small number of workers certainly contributed to this feeling. The blurring of the boundary between the books and people discussed above took place very easily within the confines of the warehouse, and it could cause its visitors...
and workers to idealize and emphasize the books’ symbolic character, whether one looked to the past (seeing the books as symbols of a culture that had been destroyed), the future (seeing them as a symbol of the remaining survivors), or both. According to Morinis, the pilgrimage has more than a present importance: in his journey, the pilgrim aspires to join the present to the past and unite them. Thereby, Morinis claims, “all time is collapsed into an eternal moment in which perfection overcomes the incompleteness of mundane lived time.” He immediately adds: “This is salvation.”23 The feeling of such inner salvation is described in Dawidowicz’s autobiographical work. At the end of her memoirs, she once again compares books to people, this time in the context of her personal voyage throughout Germany and her activity in the OAD. Dawidowicz had had been a research fellow at the Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut (yivo) in Vilna in 1938–39, and after the war she located and sorted Yiddish books in the OAD—including some that had been stolen from the yivo library in Vilna—and sent them to the yivo library in New York. She concludes her memoirs with the following words:

Once the yivo library had been shipped to New York, I felt that I had laid to rest those ghosts of Vilna that had haunted me since 1939. I had realized the obsessive fantasies of rescue which had tormented me for years. I had in fact saved a few remnants of Vilna, even if they were just books, mere pieces of paper, the tatters and shards of a civilization. The sweet memories of Vilna and of the people I had known and loved were still intact in my mind. I knew that nothing more was left to me. My fevered feeling of guilt for having abandoned them had died away. I was ready now to move ahead. I was ready now to start a new life.24

Dawidowicz, who had been born in New York, could be reconciled with herself, her past, and the feelings of guilt that gnawed at her at the end of her journey. She attained a sense of fulfillment, even of redemption, by joining the past to her present by performing what she saw as the rescue of the stolen books: their removal from the OAD and shipment to the United States. For her, this action was a substitute for rescuing her friends from the year she had spent in Vilna from the Holocaust, which she could not do. At the end of her journey, she says, she could start a new chapter in her life and leave her past behind.

In contrast, Scholem’s inner journey to save the books was doomed to failure from the start. For Scholem, who had been born in Berlin and spent his childhood and youth in Germany, the books also symbolized his own destroyed past—the world into which he had been born and that before the war had been one of the most flourishing Jewish centers in Europe. The power and obstinacy with which he invested his strength in the task, until exhaustion, were connected to his private mourning. The great destruction in the present of the familiar land-
scapes of his past did not permit Scholem to look toward the future with hope. Instead, he was turned to stone in the face of the huge catastrophe, like the angel of history described by Walter Benjamin, who had committed suicide six years earlier, in September 1940, while fleeing from the Nazis.

Concluding Remarks

The years of the Holocaust were a turning point in Scholem’s life, when tendencies that had begun years before grew stronger. The fact that one finds no direct public reference to the subject or any expression of a thought-out position toward it on his part does not indicate that it had little influence on him—perhaps just the opposite. The impressions made by such an extreme historical event on a person’s soul and the degree to which he or she internalized those impressions cannot be determined by public speech or silence, and it is very difficult to judge the matter with certainty.25 However, on the basis of a few facts and various documents one may assume that the events of the Holocaust touched very intimate and vital levels of Scholem’s soul, and for that reason he could not relate to it in an organized and calm way. During the war, Scholem lost not only Benjamin, but also his brother Werner, who was the closest of his three siblings to him and who was murdered in Buchenwald in the summer of 1940. And Scholem’s mother passed away a few months after the war. His letter to Dinur discussed in chapter 4 shows that he did not see himself as qualified or ready to discuss the Holocaust directly, because in his opinion he lacked the historical perspective needed for that. Perhaps his view of himself as someone who stands truly in the center of the historical events never completely left Scholem, and he never could approach the subject with the psychological distance required of the historian. Similarly, I have found no document containing a deep discussion by Scholem of the fate of Werner, or even an expression of emotion that indicates the influence on him of his brother’s long imprisonment and death in a concentration camp. Of course, this does not show that he ignored the tragedy of his brother and his family, or that it did not touch his soul.26 Those years were also important in determining Scholem’s path in scholarship. Moshe Idel identified a fundamental turning point in Scholem’s thinking during the war, which was expressed “in a radical rejection of Jewish scholarship of nineteenth-century Germany and in the call to see history as a primary subject both for the kabbalist and for the scholar of Kabbalism, and, implicitly, for scholars of Judaism.” According to Idel, the years of the Holocaust caused a crisis in Scholem’s faith in metaphysics, faith that had characterized his earlier thought, and transfer of the emphasis to history: “Out of the Holocaust Scholem’s most dramatic transition took place—from
the search for a transcendental metaphysics to historical scholarship of dynamic character, ruled by irrational forces.”

In the light of various documents and sources, one may point out two central changes that took place in Scholem during the years of the war and the Holocaust. On the personal level, his feelings of depression and of being cut off from his surroundings and the people around him intensified. Ideologically, the Holocaust wrought a change in his attitude toward Zionism because of the trap into which the events made it fall. The inability of Zionism to offer a response in the past or the present to the problem of Jewish existence in the Diaspora, as well as its inability to ensure Jewish existence in the Land of Israel and a base for the creation of a new society in accordance with Scholem’s Zionist vision, caused him bitter disappointment. His journey on a mission for the Yishuv to save the treasures of the Diaspora made his situation even more extreme. In Europe he saw with his own eyes the dimensions of the human disaster, symbolized by the cultural disaster. His secret aspiration for an inner salvation that would come during the journey and help him overcome the influence of historical events and be reconciled with them was also disappointed. Instead of finding consolation and reconciliation with himself and the present, the encounter with Europe and especially with Germany, his birthplace, in 1946 only intensified his despair and exhausted him. In a letter to Arendt, he confessed: “I am afraid this trip merely broke my heart, if such a thing exists (as I suppose). In any case, my hopes, which I left behind in Europe. Where can I find them again? I would like to know myself.”

The feelings of despair and helplessness with which Scholem returned from Europe accompanied him during the months following his return, though the historical events that came later created a situation in which little room was left for passivity. The violent events that preceded the establishment of the State of Israel, the danger that it would be “lost in its first steps in a sea of slaughter,” and the war that followed demanded the full mental and physical forces of the Yishuv. During the siege of Jerusalem in May and June 1948, Scholem worked sometimes on the city’s fortifications and read the works of Franz Rosenzweig. With Emanuel Ben-Dor and Benjamin Mazar (later Meisler), new archaeological officers from the headquarters of the Jerusalem district, Scholem patrolled the Old City (where he helped a little in arranging the library of the Dormition Abbey, which had suffered during the war and had become a military post of the Irgun), the Protestant cemetery on Mount Zion, and the Yemin Moshe neighborhood. Like most of the Jews in Jerusalem, Scholem met frequently with the besieged people of his city, and among his guests was the Haganah commander of the Jerusalem district, David Shealtiel. Shealtiel told Scholem that he been in the same
bloc as his brother Werner during eight months of imprisonment in the Dachau concentration camp in 1936.

Scholem observed the imminent establishment of the state with cautious expectation and even some apprehension. He saw the course of events of the Holocaust and the renewal as a test that entailed danger for the Jewish people, by bringing the problem of Judaism to the surface in its full strength. In a letter to Hugo and Asha Bergmann in late 1947 his desperate worry is evident: “While it is true that if we attain the establishment of a state of the Jews and it is not lost in its first steps in a sea of slaughter, the question of Judaism or the Jewish tradition will stand before us for the last time, in a particularly harsh form, and who knows how things will fall out and where the Jews will turn in their state. I live in despair and cannot act except in despair.” On July 14, he expressed in his diary his expectation of the arrival of the fateful hour, writing that “in principle the partition is assured. The problem of the state and Judaism in the light of the last developments will quickly emerge.” Years later Fania recalled her husband’s apprehensions: “When the state was established, he said that we would pay a heavy price for it. Two grave events—the Holocaust and the renewal—that struck the nation, one after the other, were more than a nation could bear . . . without being damaged. We can expect the spiritual and moral decline of the Jewish people, he said and added that if there is a sick body, and it has a wound in one of its limbs, all the blood flows to the wounded limb. With us, all the talents and powers flow to defense, and this is one of the reasons for the spiritual decline.”

Scholem also expressed concern about the direction the young state was going and indirectly criticized it in an article that he published in Luach Haaretz in 1948, in which he discussed the history of the Magen David—the symbol chosen to decorate the Israeli flag. In this article Scholem showed that “the hexagram is not a Jewish symbol, much less ‘the symbol of Judaism,’” and that it received its true Jewish meaning during the Holocaust from “those who made it for millions into a mark of shame and degradation.” Thus, he tried to separate the national symbol from the religious contexts that had been attributed to it—in other words, to distinguish between the religious and political aspects of the young state. In addition, by means of his efforts to remind people, who had so quickly become victors, about the period when Jewry was defeated, Scholem tried to prevent the strengthening of the arrogance that had already penetrated the hearts of the residents of the new state. For Scholem, the end of World War II, the realization of the dimensions of the Holocaust, and the fulfillment of the Zionist territorial dream in the figure of a Jewish state, which took place a short time afterward, paradoxically symbolized the beginning of a process of return to Europe.