Next Year in Jerusalem

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Editor’s Introduction

For the last two decades or so, we have held our annual symposium on the last Sunday and Monday of October. At the conclusion of every year’s event—and sometimes even before then—someone asks about the topic for the following year. This is not surprising, since our selection of a different topic for each year is a distinctive feature of our series of symposia—and from my perspective (and not mine alone, I think) a positive characteristic.

So it was that at the end of October 2016, with the twenty-ninth symposium still a vivid memory, I began soliciting ideas for our thirtieth installment from my academic colleagues and interested members of Omaha’s Jewish community. My good friend Moshe Gershovich, director of the University of Nebraska at Omaha’s Schwalb Center and an active cosponsor of the symposium series, was brimming with enthusiasm as he suggested “Exile and Return.”

In this context he was especially interested in the Balfour Declaration, which was promulgated one hundred years earlier in 1917. We talked about Moshe’s delivering the keynote address on this topic. Alas, Moshe’s death, which was a personal and professional loss to all who knew him, intervened, and he was no longer alive in the fall of 2017.

We did keep alive Moshe’s idea for the symposium. Recognizing that we could not find a “substitute” Moshe, as it were, to make a keynote presentation, we went in another direction with a concert by renowned performers Maria Krupoves and Gerard Edery. This was made possible through the generosity of the director of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s Harris Center, Jean Cahan.

In a sense, then, the symposium and these essays are a tribute to Moshe and his vision. In a larger sense, they also reflect the combined talents and energies of those who participated in this symposium and prepared a publishable written version of their presentations.

Wherever possible, I have arranged the chapters in this volume in chronological order, beginning with the biblical period and continuing until the very recent present. Acknowledging that this is but one way of arranging the rich material this collection contains, I nonetheless offer it as an approach that illuminates and elucidates developments, both interdependent and independent, that occurred over the past two and a half millennia.

The first five essays deal primarily with the distant past, from the sixth century BCE to the sixteenth century CE. Samuel L. Boyd, University of Colorado–Boulder, focuses our attention on “Place as Real and Imagined in Exile: Jerusalem at the Center of Ezekiel.” As he shows, geography functions
Boyd explores the concept of central place in two ancient documents—the *Mappa Mundi* [Babylonian Map of the World] and the biblical book of Ezekiel—showing how Babylon and Jerusalem function as real and symbolic concepts in each.

Dereck Daschke, Truman State University, also looks at the world of the Bible in his essay “How Deserted Lies the City’: Politics and the Trauma of Homelessness in the Hebrew Bible.” He explains that a growing body of biblical scholarship has begun to recognize the central role of the Babylonian exile in the shaping of the Hebrew Bible. In such readings, the exile represents a quintessential occasion of individual and collective trauma. In this vein, Daschke’s essay examines the trauma of homelessness as it is expressed in the Hebrew Bible in spiritual and political terms.

Menahem Mor, University of Haifa, was the first holder of the Klutznick Chair at Creighton University. His essay “Exile and Return in the Samaritan Traditions” discusses the Samaritan traditions about their version of exile and return in the various Samaritan Chronicles. In the process, he compares these traditions with parallel Jewish sources, including the historian Josephus, to understand the role of exile and return in the Samaritans’ history and the function of Mount Gerizim in these traditions.

Jean-Philippe Delorme, University of Toronto, shows how recently discovered texts help to expand our knowledge of the Babylonian exile. In his essay, titled “The Āl- Yāḥūdu Texts (ca. 572–477 BCE): A New Window into the Life of the Judean Exilic Community of Babylonia,” he begins by reminding us that Jewish history has been punctuated by numerous exilic experiences since its beginnings. At its genesis stands the Babylonian exile. Until recently, our understanding of this crucial period has been based principally on secondary sources of debatable accuracy. The recent publication of the Āl- Yāḥūdu texts makes up for these shortcomings. In his presentation, Delorme illustrates the daily reality of the exiles as it is seen through these archives.

Daniel J. Lasker, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, is the author of the last essay in this section, “ Karaïtes and Jerusalem: From Anan ben David to the Karaite Heritage Center in the Old City.” He notes that Jerusalem has always played a special role in Karaite thought and practice. The golden age of Karaism (tenth–eleventh centuries CE) was centered in Jerusalem. Even after the Karaite community was destroyed by the Crusaders, there was almost
always a Karaite presence in Jerusalem. In his essay, Lasker explores Karaite history and practice, especially as it is presented at the recently opened Karaite Heritage Center in the city of Jerusalem.

The next four essays cover the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century, prior to the founding of the modern State of Israel in 1948. First is “Jewish Folk Songs: Exile and Return” by Paula Eisenstein Baker, adjunct instructor of violoncello and chamber music emerita, University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas. In her essay, Eisenstein Baker shows how Jewish folk songs, as employed in art music, experienced multiple exiles. By the early 1920s, the Society for Jewish Folk Music in St. Petersburg and its Moscow branch had quit publishing. Their works, with new publishers, were exiled to Berlin and Vienna. Beginning in the mid-1930s, these tunes faced exile again, this time to New York City.

Haim Sperber, Western Galilee College, is next with “Is Zionism a Movement of Return?” In this essay, Sperber supports his claim that the early Zionist movement was a political union of two different movements aiming at two different objectives—re-creating the old kingdom of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel and creating a new political Jewish nation. These two movements reflect two different kinds of nationalism: cultural-ethnical nationalism and cultural-political nationalism. The decision to form a united political organization initially blurred the differences between the two.

Judah M. Bernstein, New York University, turns the focus to the United States in his essay, titled “The Jew in Situ: Variations of Zionism in Early Twentieth Century America.” He observes that historians who have studied the early decades of American Zionism (1898–1948) have typically operated with the assumption that for Jews, America was viewed as home and not exile. It is no doubt true that American Zionist leaders seldom called on Jews to migrate. At the same time, as Bernstein shows, this interpretation overlooks the ambivalence felt by a number of influential American Zionist intellectuals about whether to consider America home or exile.

Jean Axelrad Cahan, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, is one of the symposium’s cosponsors. In her essay “Returning to Jewish Theology: Further Reflections on Franz Rosenzweig,” she is interested in reconsidering some of Rosenzweig’s ideas on a possible return to Jewish theology. In the process, she shows that historical and scientific critiques of Judaism constituted a central preoccupation of his. Indeed, Rosenzweig’s account of revelation was intended to displace or overcome precisely that kind of critique.
The last five essays cover developments from the early years of the State of Israel to the twenty-first century. Joseph Hodes, Texas Tech University, is the author of the essay “Exile and Return: Indian Jews and the Politics of Homecoming.” According to the traditions of the Indian Jewish community the Bene Israel, their founders left the biblical kingdom of Israel and came ashore near present-day Mumbai. They lived peacefully with their Hindu hosts for the next 1,800 years. In his essay, Hodes chronicles Jewish life in India and the multiple exiles and returns the Bene Israel made to the State of Israel in its early years.

Next, Philip Hollander, University of Wisconsin–Madison, looks at literature in “Against the Sabra Current: Hanokh Bartov’s Each Had Six Wings and the Embrace of Diasporic Vitality.” He reminds us that the Israeli Declaration of Independence, drawing on traditional Jewish terminology, voices the State of Israel’s commitment to the ingathering of the exiles. Thus, in Israel’s first years, its resources were committed to immigrant absorption. This monumental undertaking, however, found limited literary representation. In his presentation, Hollander analyzes Bartov’s novel of 1954 as a significant exception to this trend.

In his essay “Shylock and the Ghetto, or East European Jewish Culture and Israeli Identity,” Dror Abend-David, University of Florida, focuses on the theater. In 1984, Abend-David observes, author Yehushua Sobol brought to stage the play Ghetto, which was directed by Gedalya Besser for the Haifa Municipal Theater. In reading this work, Abend-David explores the ghetto as a psychological phenomenon that has been ingrained and perpetuated in modern Jewish culture long after the physical walls of the Jewish ghetto were dismantled. For better or worse, then, the ghetto is an essential part of modern Jewish history.

Shlomo Abramovich, visiting scholar, Beth Israel Synagogue, Omaha, begins his essay “Exile and Zionism in the Writings of Rav Shagar” by pointing out that the term “Zionism” can be understood in many ways. Many Zionist thinkers added to it a negative attitude toward the exile and diaspora. Therefore, finding a Zionist thinker with a positive approach to the exile is exceptional. In his essay, Abramovich presents Rav Shagar’s ideas on such an approach and examines his unique position on Zionism.

The last essay in the volume, by Mordechai (Motti) Inbari, University of North Carolina, Pembroke, is titled “The Role of the Temple Mount Faithful Movement in Changing Messianic Religious Zionists’ Attitude toward the Temple Mount.” As he explains, the rebuilding of the Third Temple is viewed
in rabbinic literature as the manifestation of Jewish redemption. The establish-
ment of the State of Israel and the Israeli victory of 1967 gave rise to the view
among religious Zionists that the End Days were drawing near. In his presenta-
tion, Inbari describes the internal debate within these circles over the question
of Jews entering the Temple Mount and presents the religious dynamics that
permitted Jews to enter.

Leonard J. Greenspoon