

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. When and where did the assimilationist movement amongst Western Jewry begin?
2. How did the proponents of Zionism and assimilationism view each other?
3. How did Ahad Ha'Am's vision of Cultural Zionism differ from the Zionist vision of the Mizrachi movement?
4. Describe the differences between the assimilationist, Zionist, and traditionalist view of the mission of Israel.
5. Describe the difference between the modern and traditional understanding of the concept of Tikun Olam.

This and much more will be addressed in the third lecture of this series:

**“The Many Streams Within Zionism -Part Three:
Assimilation and the Mission of Israel.”**

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the lecture and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

PLEASE NOTE: This outline and source book were designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it, as well, as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

This lecture is dedicated to the merit and honor of the Zuroff family.

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series XXIII Lecture #3

THE MANY STREAMS WITHIN ZIONISM: PART THREE
ASSIMILATION AND THE MISSION OF ISRAEL

A **ANTISEMITISM**

N **NATIONALISM**

I **INTELLIGENTSIA**

M **MOSHIACH**

A **ARAB RELATIONS**

A **ASSIMILATION**

M **MISSION OF ISRAEL**

I **IDEOLOGIES**

N **NON-ZIONISTS**

I. Assimilation and the Zionist Solution

A.

(1) הַעֲלֵה עַל-רוּחְכֶם הַיּוֹ לֹא תִהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר | אַתֶּם אֹמְרִים נִהְיֶה כְּגוֹיִם כְּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָאָרְצוֹת לְשָׂרֵת עֵץ וְאָבֶן: חַי-אֲנִי נְאֻם אֲ-דְנִי ד' אִם-לֹא בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְחִמָּה שְׂפוּכָה אֶמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיכֶם: יְחֻזְקָא כִּלְב-לֵג

And that which comes into your mind shall never come about, that you say, “We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.” “As I live,” says the L-rd G-d, “surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you.” **Ezekiel 20:32-33**

(2) הַגֵּם שֶׁסָּרָה הַהִשְׁגָּחָה הַגְּלוּיָה לַעֲשׂוֹת נְסִים גְּלוּיִם וְלִישָׂא עֲלֵיכֶם אֹר פְּנֵי ד' בְּטוֹבָה וּבְרַכָּה, בְּכ"ז לַעֲנִיֵן זֶה שִׁיחִיָּה מַלְכוּתִי עֲלֵיכֶם עוֹד נְטוּיָה יְדֵי הַחֲזָקָה לְהַכְרִיחַ אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹקֶף עוֹנְשִׁים וְצָרוֹת לְהִיּוֹת תַּחַת מַלְכוּתִי וְעַבְדוּתִי: מַלְבִּי"ם שֵׁם

Even though evident Providence in the form of performing open miracles and of radiating the light of Hashem's countenance upon you with goodness and blessing has departed, nonetheless, in regards to My regal authority, it shall remain with you. My strong hand is poised to force you, through the power of punishments and afflictions, to be under My governance and servitude. **Malbim, ibid.**

B. In speaking of the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) of Berlin I am referring to the vicious and corrupt doctrine that emanated from that city. Its aim was not to cultivate knowledge for its own sake but to cast off Judaism and replace it with “enlightenment”. The example was set by the exponents and high priests of this doctrine—men without wisdom, who understood neither the past nor the future and did not comprehend the present either. They advanced the strange and preposterous theory that the cause of all our suffering and travail is our rejection of enlightenment; we need only to accept and cherish western civilization for the sun of righteousness to dawn upon us. What the “enlighteners” failed to see is that the Jews had not fled into caves and catacombs at the sight of hands of friendship; on the contrary, whenever a hand had been stretched out toward the Jews, it had always betokened attack, disaster, prison, and dungeon. The Jews had never refused to till, reap, and plant—they had been prevented by force from doing so. Hatred had never originated with the Jews—they had always been its targets. The program of this *Haskalah* was not simply to awaken a desire for learning and knowledge among our people. Its basic intention, which was presented as the very word of G-d, was quite different and quite simple: “Imitate the gentiles.” The *Haskalah* of Berlin rested on this keystone: to imitate the gentiles, to abandon our own traditions, to disdain our own manners and ideas, and to conduct ourselves both at home and without—in the synagogue, within our families, everywhere—in imitation of others. As a reward for such a great achievement, so these upright and wise teachers assured us, our children, or our children's children, or their children, would be accepted as equals.

The consequences of this doctrine were: first, the destruction of the sentiment which is the unifying principle and strongest foundation of the House of Israel—that *we are a nation*; and, second, the abandonment of the hope of redemption. For the exponents of the *Haskalah* of Berlin our nationhood was a serious stumbling block; an existing Jewish national patriotism would be a bar to assimilation, and the memory of the land and sovereignty that once were ours, together with a continuing hope that they be restored, make us a nation. As long as the memory of the past and the hope for the future were still alive, how could they say to the Jews: Abandon your

own traditions and follow blindly in the paths of the gentiles? It was therefore necessary to cut every root of this tree of life. They succeeded in denationalizing Jewry and in teaching it to mimic, apelike, the life around it, but nonetheless their dream did not materialize. These prophets of Haskalah had the audacity to assert over and over again that the contempt in which they continued to be held as Jews was caused by their brethren in nearby lands, through their persistent rejection of the way of Haskalah. Such assertions fanned flames of hatred among German Jews against their brethren; the Jews of Germany were utterly convinced that they were suffering for the sins of the east European Jews. The two strong pillars which supported the House of Israel, the hope of redemption and the love of Jews for one another, were thus toppled. A false doctrine, that religion is the keystone of the House of Israel, was substituted. But this stone, too, crumbled into dust; the very people who paid all this lip service to religion contemned it and spurned all religious customs and laws because they were different from the ways of the gentiles. . . . They first commanded us to throw away any vestige of the love of our people. The House of Israel then struggled with all its might to support itself upon the pillar of religion (i.e. Reform Judaism). But they proceeded to destroy it too and the House of Israel collapsed completely. Its spirit fell to the ground because nothing remained of any of the distinguishing features for which it is called Israel. When the spirit failed, the body also gradually disintegrated. In their haste to catch up with the Gentiles so as to embrace and imitate them, the Jews failed to see that the enemy would attack them from the rear and rain death down upon them.

Let it be understood that we must declare war **not** against the Haskalah in general, for it is a good thing (sic) which the leading (?) spirits of our people accepted wholeheartedly even before the exponents of the Haskalah of Berlin arose, and which intelligent people still accept. Our quarrel is with this particular Haskalah. Let us define this Haskalah clearly so that we do not confuse it with anything else. These are its teachings: (1) to adopt the ways of the gentiles; (2) to transform beyond recognition all that we have inherited from our ancestors; (3) to cast off all bonds of love and group solidarity, so that we may become assimilated; (4) to abandon all hope of return to a life of dignity in our own land, the way in which all other nations live, and go on being wretched and rootless wanderers for all eternity; (5) utterly to eradicate the Hebrew language, the tongue which unites us and enables us to hear one another's cries of woe to the ends of our dispersion; (6) only to seek the favor of the other nations and shy away from whatever does not please them, even if by so doing we will fragmentize Jewry into sects and parties; (7) to be assured that by acceptance of the Haskalah we will gain the love of the Gentiles and that through the Haskalah we will rise to new heights and enjoy equality; (8) to delude ourselves with false hope and speak of peace when there is no peace; (9) to accept on our heads all the sins ever ascribed to us by our enemies, to justify our persecutors, and, instead of seeking ways of saving ourselves, to seek only to "mend our ways" and to redress wrongs we have not committed; (10) not to dare speak of our virtues, lest our enemies accuse us of boasting of qualities we do not really possess. These are the "**ten commandments**" issued to us by the Haskalah of Berlin in place of the Torah and the wisdom of which it has robbed us; these are the characteristics by which the Haskalah may be recognized by all who wish to turn away from it and remove the stumbling blocks it has put in our path. . . . Some ask the nonsensical question: What will we do after we have turned our backs on the Haskalah? Will we go back to the old ghetto education and to letting our youth **rot** (sic) in the academies of the Talmud? These questioners do not really understand the subject we are discussing: We are not fighting the Haskalah, which is only an abstract term, but the corrupt doctrine its high priests have propagated in its name. . . . They have taught that it is our duty to adopt the ways of the gentiles.

Peretz Smolenskin, The Haskalah of Berlin (1883)

C. . . . What a degraded era, that was, thought Friedrich, when the Jews had been ashamed of everything Jewish, when they thought they made a better showing when they concealed their Jewishness. Yet in that very concealment they had revealed the temper of the slave, at best, of the liberated slave. They need not have been surprised at the contempt shown them, for they had shown no respect for themselves. They crawled after the others, and were rejected in swift punishment. Curious that they had not drawn the obvious moral! Quite the contrary. Those who succeeded in business or in some other field often openly forsook the faith of their fathers. They were at pains to hide their origin as though it were a taint. Those who forsook Judaism denied their own fathers and mothers in order to be quit of it: they must have thought it something low, reprehensible, evil. To be sure, renegades had not got off scot-free, for they were treated like refugees from plague-stricken countries. After baptism, they were still suspect, and remained, as it were, in quarantine. Marranos, the baptized Jews of medieval Spain had been called. Marranoism, then, was the quarantine for refugee Jews. **Theodore Herzl, Altneuland, 1902**

D. . . . The cosmopolitan tendency which prevailed throughout the Middle Ages, and which gave to European civilization a kind of uniformity irrespective of boundary lines, helped to maintain the unity of the type of Judaism and make it a distinct entity all over the world. The type of Judaism was remarkably similar in all parts of the globe in spite of the distance separating them. Modern life has changed the situation completely. The inner unification of the nations and the development of their life and cultures, make the existence of a different group life within each nation impossible. Judaism suffered the most within the last century; little by little, the general life and culture undermined its strongholds, and confusion reigns in its midst! It is attacked on all flanks. Spiritually it has to struggle against the rich and elevated modern national cultures, which lure its young in a thousand ways, and to oppose to the others' strong influence, Judaism has but its ancient Torah, which, unfortunately, is less and less appreciated by its own members. Economically, it has to contend for the continuation of its institutions, such as the Sabbath and the Holidays; and socially, it has to struggle for the Jewish home, its atmosphere and environment. As a result, disintegration in Judaism goes on slowly. Ignorance of the tradition of the past and of the Torah is increasing in undue proportion and along with it, indifference to everything that is Jewish. The content of Judaism is being gradually emptied among Jews of all classes. It is true that conscious assimilation, due to certain external conditions, has diminished considerably in the last thirty years, but unconscious assimilation has taken its place. Thousands of Jewish young people of both sexes are yearly engulfed in the stream of general life and swept away from Judaism, either by intermarriage, or severing their relations with Judaism in other ways.

There is still another danger lurking for Judaism and that is the severing of its cord of unity. With the expansion of the national cultures, and their penetration into the life of the individual, and group, each culture impresses its stamp also on the type of Judaism within its sphere of influence, so that finally we may have as many different types of Judaism as the countries the Jews inhabit, and thus Judaism may lose its unity of type. Great calamities, such as caused by this world war, which stir every Jewish heart to its foundations, and help to strengthen the tie of Jewry, do not occur too often. And Judaism, left to itself, cannot possibly avoid the imminent danger which is slowly but surely approaching.

This, then, is the Jewish Problem in all its gravity and ominousness, namely, how to maintain Judaism as a religion and as a culture, in the broad sense of the word, in its integrity, as a distinct unified entity, in the midst of the various national cultures which threaten to absorb it, and how to stem the stream of disintegration within Jewry and Judaism? To answer this grave question by denying its existence, is a poor remedy. The question mark is written red in the life history of the

Jewries of every country during the last fifty years. Not only do American and West European Jewries bear evidence to the existence of such a danger, but even Russia, in spite of its large, concentrated number of Jews and its excellent type of Judaism, contains the germs of such disintegration as it is borne out by the events of the last fifteen years, namely, the spread of Socialism in its most anti-Jewish form among the Jewish masses. Those who attempt to deny the existence of the problem are either spiritually blind or foolhardy. The future of the existence of Judaism should concern every Jew of whatever shade, if he still retains some interest in the continuation of the historical existence of his people. Unless one has reached the line of total indifference, when the affairs of Jews and Judaism do not affect him, he cannot pass over the problem in utter silence.

The solution must be a radical one, a thorough and complete one, no half measures will be effective. The religious Jew of the extreme type, the Orthodox, who attributes this indifference to Judaism and its tenets to a mere loosening of religious principles, as a consequence of the spread of free thinking, and satisfies his own conscience by merely bewailing the situation, or even by putting up an individual struggle, is wrong in his conception of the evil and is himself guilty of indifference by his inactivity. The conservative, or more modern Jew, who wants to heal the breaches within the house of Israel by beautifying some of the synagogue ceremonies and explaining to the young generation, the principles of Judaism in the vernacular, errs both in the diagnosis of the disease and in the method of its cure. The evil is far deeper and more extensive in its scope. The solution must be in harmony with the principles of modern life and society (sic). This can only be obtained, by supplying to Judaism and the Jews a central point of gravity. In other words, we must create a center where Judaism will clothe itself in the tangible form of a national Jewish life in all its phases, religious, economic and social. That this center must be Palestine is almost axiomatic. Only the land of the past with its historical atmosphere and the dreamland of ages, can be the land of the future. In this land where **Judaism will be the dominant culture**, and the Jews the majority of the population, the Jewish future will be assured. Freed from struggle for existence and influence of foreign life and culture, Judaism will develop its latent powers and become once more a value creating factor in the history of civilization. There, will all antagonism between life and religion disappear. This center, which will be an economic and social one, and probably a political one also, will not only create a typical Jewish life with the proper atmosphere and environment in Palestine, but will also exert the right influence over the scattered Jewries of the diaspora. It will supply the cord of unity to all Jewries, will radiate influence to all parts of Jewry, as the heart of the body distributes blood to the various organs. **It will be a center of imitation, a model type of Judaism and a standard of values. It will once more unify Judaism and give it the shape and form which will distinguish it from amidst the other national cultures. It will supply the weapons to the diasporic Jewries in their struggle for existence, and even if Judaism in the diaspora will not be as creative and original, it will at least shine by reflection.** This solution is Zionism, the movement which strives toward the securing of a Jewish future, towards a rehabilitation of the Jewish land and people. Its solution is radical and complete, and founded on the principles of modern life and history. But looking upon Zionism as the solution to the plight of Judaism, which is simultaneously, the plight of the Jews, for the two, like the soul and the body, cannot be separated, we do not, by any means, minimize its political character. The center, to be effective, must have, as remarked, **a Jewish atmosphere and complete Jewish life.** And Jewish life cannot be complete and salutary, unless the Jewish nation attains some form of political life. Political life, in our days, is an essential factor in the life of a nation, and an ingredient in the development of the national culture. **Dr. Meyer Waxman, The Mizrahi, Its Aims and Purposes, 1917**

E. . . . This Jewish settlement, which will be a gradual growth, will become in course of time the center of the nation, wherein its spirit will find pure expression and develop in all its aspects up to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable. Then from this center the spirit of Judaism will go forth to the great circumference, to all the communities of the Diaspora, and will breathe new life into them and preserve their unity; and when our national culture in Palestine has attained that level, we may be confident that it will produce men in the country who will be able, on a favourable opportunity, to establish a State which will be a Jewish State, and not merely a State of Jews. . . . **Ahad Ha'Am, The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem, 1897**

II. The Mission of Israel

A.

(1) כֹּה־אָמַר הָאֱלֹהִים | ד' בּוֹרָא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטִיחֵם רַקַּע הָאָרֶץ וְצִאֲצֵאֶיהָ נִתַּן נְשָׁמָה לְעָם עֲלֶיהָ וְרוּחַ לְהִלְכֵם בָּהּ: אֲנִי ד' קְרָאתִיךָ בְּצַדִּיק וְאַחֲזֶק בְּיָדְךָ וְאַצְרֶךָ וְאַתְּנֶנְךָ לְבְרִית עִם לְאוּר גּוֹיִם: יִשְׁעִיהָ מִבֵּית-ו-

Thus said G-d the L-rd, He who created the heavens, and stretched them out; he who spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it; He who gives breath to the people upon it, and spirit to those who walk in it; I the L-rd have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light to the nations. **Isaiah 42:6-7**

(2) וְעַתָּה | אָמַר ד' יִצְרִי מִבֶּטֶן לְעַבְדְּךָ לֹא לְשׁוֹבֵב יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יֵאֶסֶף וְאַפְכַּד בְּעֵינַי ד' וְאֶלֶּהִי הָיָה עֵינַי: וַיֹּאמֶר נִקַּל מִהְיוֹתְךָ לִי עַבְדְּךָ לְהַקִּים אֶת-שְׁבִטִי יַעֲקֹב וּנְצוּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהָשִׁיב וּנְתַתִּיךָ לְאוּר גּוֹיִם לְהִיּוֹת יִשׁוּעָתִי עַד-קֵצֵה הָאָרֶץ: יִשְׁעִיהָ מִטֵּה-ו-

And now, says the L-rd who formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, that Israel should be gathered to Him, and I was honored in the eyes of the L-rd, and my G-d shall be my strength. And He says, It is a light thing that you should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give you for a light to the nations, that My salvation may be to the end of the earth. **Isaiah 49:5-6**

B.

עַל כֵּן נִקְוָה לְךָ ד' א-לֵהֵינוּ לְרֵאוֹת מֵהֵרָה בַתְּפֹאֶרֶת עֲזֶךָ לְהַעֲבִיר גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וְהֵאֱלִילִים כְּרוֹת יִכְרַתוּן. לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בַּמַּלְכוּת ש-דִּי וְכֹל בְּנֵי בָשָׂר יִקְרְאוּ בְּשִׁמְךָ לְהַפְנוֹת אֵלֶיךָ כָּל רְשָׁעֵי אֶרֶץ. יִכִּירוּ וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תְּבֵל כִּי לְךָ תִּכְרַע כָּל בֶּרֶךְ תִּשְׁבַּע כָּל לְשׁוֹן. לְפָנֶיךָ ד' א-לֵהֵינוּ יִכְרְעוּ וַיִּפּוּלוּ. וְלִכְבוֹד שִׁמְךָ יִקָּר יִתְּנוּ. וַיִּקְבְּלוּ כָּל אֶת עוֹל מַלְכוּתְךָ. וְתִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם מֵהֵרָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. סִידוֹר הַתְּפִלָּה

Therefore we put our hope in You, Hashem, our G-d, that we may soon see Your mighty splendor, to remove detestable idolatry from the earth, and false gods will be utterly cut off, to perfect the universe through the Al-mighty's sovereignty. That all of humanity will call upon Your Name, to turn all the earth's wicked toward You. All the world's inhabitants will recognize and know that to You every knee should bend, every tongue should swear. Before You, Hashem, our G-d, they will bend every knee and cast themselves down and to the glory of Your Name they will render homage, and they will all accept upon themselves the yoke of Your kingship that You may reign over them soon and eternally. **“Oleinu” - Siddur**

C.

(1) שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ד' א-לֵהֵינוּ יְד' | אֶחָד: דְּבָרִים וּד-

Hear, O Israel; Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is [the only] one. **Deuteronomy 6:4**

(2) ד' שהוא א-להינו עתה, ולא א-להי האומות עובדי אלילים, הוא עתיד להיות ד' אחד, שנאמר כי אז אהפוך אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרוא כולם בשם ד' לעבדו שכם אחד (צפניה ג, ט). ונאמר ביום ההוא יהיה ד' אחד ושמו אחד (זכריה יד, ט): רש"י, שם

Hashem, who is presently our G-d but not the G-d of the idolatrous nations, is destined to become the only G-d, as it says (Tzeiphania 3:9), “For then I will convert the peoples to a clear language, to all call out in the name of Hashem to serve Him with one accord,” and as it says (Zechariah 14:9) “ And Hashem shall be king over all the earth; on that day Hashem shall be one, and His name one.” **Rashi, ibid.**

D. You wrote that the Jewish people has not made any contribution to the edifice of human civilization. I do not want to ask whether any one of all the other peoples has consciously contributed a single building block. I do not want to probe whether it is not true that virtually all of them merely sought their own benefit, unaware that they themselves were building blocks in the hands of G-d. Nor do I want to raise the question whether or not all their contributions were indeed a source of blessing. But I do want to ask whether it was not in fact Yisrael that succeeded, consciously and at the sacrifice of its own temporal happiness, in rescuing out of the shipwreck of the times the only safeguard that could ultimately turn all else — science, culture, art and inventive skill — into blessed building blocks for the salvation of the world by subordinating these endeavors to their true purpose. Is it not the highest level of human greatness to be the bearer of the Al-mighty’s teachings regarding G-d and **man’s mission**? To teach, by one’s destiny and way of life, that there is a higher goal than wealth and pleasure, science and culture, and that all these should serve as means to the fulfillment of that goal? You wrote that the Torah isolates us. True! If it did not, Yisrael would long since have lost its identity. Look what struggles are required to preserve the purity of Yisrael’s spirit within our people despite this isolation! But does this spell enmity? Or pride? As if G-d were not the L-rd of all creatures, all men? An unfortunate misinterpretation indeed! After all, Yisrael has no other task than to acknowledge as its G-d the One Who calls and educates human beings to His service, and to make Him known as such, through its destiny and way of life! When the Torah speaks of the Jewish people as “*segullah*” (an exclusive treasure), it does not mean that G-d does not belong to any other people, but that this people must not belong to any other god, must not acknowledge any other being as a god. Does not Yisrael consider universal acceptance of the brotherhood of mankind to be its ultimate goal? Do we not implore G-d, on almost every page of our prayers, to further this goal? We are all working on one great edifice — all the nations, the ones that have been and are gone, and the ones that still exist, in the east, the west, the south and the north — each one through its activities upon the stage of history and through its decline, through its successes and its failures, its virtue and its vices, its wisdom and its folly, its rise and its fall, and through the legacy that it has left to posterity as the sum total of its existence. All this is a contribution to the one edifice of humanity — all men are being guided toward serving the One G-d. The righteous among the nations, who exemplified unselfish justice and genuine human dignity, lived for this goal. The enlightened among them labored for it when they lifted up their brethren by word and deed to the One Alone, to respect for justice and to the elevation of man above the level of beasts. Toward the overall goal of humanity, the art of the Greeks — to the extent that it was morally clean — had a refining effect on the mind, and their thought — to the extent that it embodied truth — enlightened the spirit. Toward this end, the Romans’ sword united the nations; and, in a more peaceful way, the trade of the Europeans laid the basis for a brotherly community of nations. Yisrael, too, has contributed to this end in its own way. **The Nineteen Letters- Letter 15, Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch, 1836**

E.

אמר רבי אלעזר: לא הגלה הקדוש ברוך הוא את ישראל לבין האומות אלא כדי שיתוספו עליהם גרים, שנאמר (הושע ב) וזרעתיה לי בארץ. כלום אדם זורע סאה - אלא להכניס כמה כורין. פסחים פז:

R. Eleazar also said: The Holy One, blessed be He, did not exile Israel among the nations save in order that proselytes might join them, for it is said (Hoshea 2:25), “And I will sow her unto Me in the land.” Surely a man sows a se'ah in order to harvest many kor! **Pesachim 87b**

F. Jewish rationalists, who have as little reason to remain within the fold of Judaism as have the Christian rationalists for clinging to Christianity, are as inventive as their Christian friends in discovering new pretexts for the existence of a religion which, by the logic of their position, no longer has any *raison d'être*. According to them, the dispersion of the Jews was their vocation and mission. All hail to the really splendid list of great tasks that our “friends of light” have compiled for the Jews to accomplish in the dispersion! First of all, they are to represent “pure” theism, in contradistinction to Christianity. In the next place, “tolerant” Judaism is to teach intolerant Christianity the principles of humanitarianism. Furthermore, it is the concern of Judaism in its dispersion that morality and life, which are severed from each other in the Christian world, should again become one. Is this all? No, through their industrial and commercial endeavors the Jews have become necessary to the civilized nations in whose midst they live, and they are an indispensable leaven to the future development of these peoples. I have even heard it said quite seriously that the Indo-Germanic race improve its quality by mingling with the Jewish race! But, mark you, the restoration of the Jewish state will not deprive the world of even a single one of all these benefits, both real and imaginary, which the Jews in the dispersion confer upon it. At the time of the return from the Babylonian exile, not all the Jews were settled in Palestine by a messianic miracle, but the majority remained in the lands of exile, where there had been Jewish settlements since the dispersion of Israel and Judah; we, therefore, need not expect such a miracle as a feature of a future restoration. Besides, it seems to me that the benefits which the Jews in exile supposedly confer upon the world have been exaggerated, “for the sake of the cause.” I consider it an anachronism to assign to the Jews those missions which they performed in antiquity, particularly at the end of that epoch, and to some extent also in medieval times, but which, at present, no longer belong peculiarly to them. As to effecting the unity of morality and life, this can be done only by a nation which is politically organized which can embody such unity in its social institutions. . . . From the viewpoint of enlightenment, I see no tenable reason for the continued existence of either Judaism or Christianity. The Jew who does not believe in the national regeneration of his people has only one task—to labor, like the enlightened Christian, for the dissolution of his religion. I understand how one can hold such an opinion. But what I do not understand is how it is possible to believe simultaneously in “enlightenment” and in “the mission of the Jews in the dispersion” – in other words, how it is possible to believe at once in the ultimate dissolution and in the continued existence of Judaism. **Moses Hess, Rome and Jerusalem, The Eighth Letter**

G. [The idea of equality] is by no means new; it is the essence of Judaism. The greatest prophets of the Israelite people delineated in misty antiquity in their own splendid way the unity of peoplehood and mankind in the double-image of the messianic ideal. Zion's golden future and the whole of humanity's final resolution rose together as one for the great seers of the Jewish past. . . . We must not forget the solution of the social question and the victory of democratic principles as we build toward our final goal . . . [nor] that the solution of social questions [is impossible] through our inorganic insertion in the national inventions of Europe.... [Rather] we must gather all our spiritual and physical power to make our necessary demands for independent operation in the national-social relationship. **Nathan Birnbaum, Selbst Emancipation 3:2 April 16, 1890**

III. A Light Unto the Nations in Eretz Yisrael

A.

והי' באחרית הימים נכון יהיה הר בית ד' בראש ההרים ונשא מגבעות ונהרו אליו כל הגוים. והלכו עמים רבים ואמרו לכו ונעלה אל הר ד' אל בית אלקי יעקב ויורנו מדרכיו ונלכה בארחתיו כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ד' מירושלם. ישעיה ב:ב-ג

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the L-rd's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the L-rd, to the house of the G-d of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths," for out of Zion shall go forth the Law (Torah), and the word of the L-rd from Jerusalem. (כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ד' מירושלם.) **Isaiah 2:2-3**

B.

תביאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך, אמרו במכילתא תביאנו לא אמרו אלא תביאמו ניבאו ולא ידעו מה ניבאו, פי' שנזרקה נבואה בפיהם שלא במתכוין דבניהם יבאו ולא הם בעצמם. אמנם יש להבין מה סברו הם באמרם לשון זה. והנראה דהם נתכוונו בזה לכוונה אחרת ולא נתקיימה כוונתם רק נתקיימה לנבואה זו שלא נתכוונו הם לה. דבמסכת פסחים (דף פ"ז) איתא לא גלו ישראל אלא בשביל שיתוספו עליהם שנאמר (הושע ב:כה) וזרעתיה לי בארץ, כלום אדם זורע כור אלא להכניס כמה כורים. כוונת הגמרא דאע"ג דודאי הגלות הגיע להם עבור חטאם רק דהיה יכול להעניש אותם בארצם ולא גלו מארצם רק בשביל שיתוספו עליהם כו'. והנה אלמלא לא חטאו ולא היה מקום לגלות בע"כ שהי' אלו הצריכים להתחבר להם באים מעצמם לארץ ישראל וכמו דאיתא במדרש (קה"ר ה:יא) המשל למלך שנטע כרם יפה בעירו בכל מקום שהיה רואה נטיעה יפה היה נוטלו ושותלו בתוך כרמו. אבל אחר שחטאו וצריכים להעניש ונעשו שפלים בעיני כל ורחוק הדבר שיבאו אליהם הוכרחו ישראל להגלות וילכו הם אחרי הגרים לקבצם, ולזה הוא שנתכוונו עולי הים בשירתם ואמרו שמעו עמים ירגזון כו' אז נבהלו כו' תפול עליהם אימתה ופחד כו' שמדבר באומות שכני א"י, ואמרו אח"כ תביאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך אמרו בלשון נסתר דהטובים שבהם שראויים להתוסף עלינו תביאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך דהם יבאו אצלינו ולא נצטרך לילך אחריהם. ולא נתקיימה כוונתם זאת והך תביאמו קאי על הבנים שלהם שיבאו ולא הם עצמם וזהו ניבאו ולא ידעו מה ניבאו. בית הלוי לשמות ט:יז

"You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance." (Exodus 15:17) [Our Sages] stated in the Mechilta: It is not phrased, "Bring us," but rather, "Bring them." They prophecied without realizing it, i.e. prophecy came out of their mouths without them realizing it, for their children actually came in and not they themselves. However we must [still] understand what they were thinking when they said these words. It seems that they had something else in mind but what they intended was not fulfilled and the prophecy that was fulfilled was not what they had in mind. In the tractate Pesachim 87b it is stated, "Israel went into exile only in order that proselytes (converts) would join them, as it says (Hoshea 2:25), 'And I will sow her to me in the earth.' Surely a man sows a se'ah in order to harvest many kor (1kor = 30 se'ah)!" The gemora means to say that even though they were definitely condemned to exile because of their sins, they could have been [equally] punished while they were in their own land. They were only exiled in order to that converts would join them. Now if they hadn't sinned at all and there would be no call for them to be punished with exile, perforce those that needed to join them would have had to come on their own to Eretz Yisrael, as it is stated in the Medrash (Koheles Rabbah 5:11), "This is akin to a king who planted a beautiful vineyard in his city. Anytime he would find a fine

sapling he would take it and transplant it within his vineyard.” But after they sinned and needed to be punished, they were considered to be ignoble in the eyes of all that beheld them and it was unlikely that these [potential proselytes] would come to them. For that reason they were forced to go into exile and go after the [potential] proselytes that they be gathered unto them. This is what those who rose out of the sea had in mind in their song, as they said (Exodus 15:14-16), “The people shall hear, and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them,” which is referring to the nations neighboring Eretz Yisrael. Afterwards they said, “You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance,” (Exodus 15:17) which is stated in the third person, i.e. the best of them are worthy to join us. So “bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance,” for they will come to us and we won’t need to come to them. What they had in mind was not fulfilled and therefore the words, “bring them in etc.” was fulfilled by their children coming there but not they themselves. This is the meaning of, “They prophecied without realizing it.” **Bais HaLevi Exodus 15:17**

C. . . . We are not come here to seek wealth, or dominion, or greatness. How much of these can this poor little country give us? We wish to find here only a domain of our own for our physical and intellectual labor. We have not yet achieved great things here. We have not had time to wash the dust of long wanderings from our feet and to change our patched garments. Undoubtedly many years have yet to pass until we have healed this desolate land of the leprosy of its rocks and the rot of its swamps. For the present there is only a small beginning of upbuilding; yet already the need has been felt for erecting a home for the intellectual work of the nation. Such has ever been the nature of our people: it cannot live for three consecutive days without Torah. Already at this early hour we experience cultural needs that cannot be postponed and must be satisfied at once. Besides, we are burdened with heavy cares for the cultural fate of our people in the Diaspora. Nations born only yesterday foolishly imagine that through intellectual parching, by means of a *numerus clausus* (quotas to limit Jewish students), they can do to death an old nation with a past of four thousand years of Torah. We must therefore hasten to light here the first lamp of learning and science and of every sort of intellectual activity in Israel, ere the last lamp grows dark for us in foreign lands. And this we propose to do in the house whose doors have been opened this day upon Mount Scopus. There is an ancient tradition that in the time of the Redemption the synagogues and houses of study of the Diaspora will be transported, along with their foundations, to Palestine. . . . the house of knowledge and learning that has been erected on Mount Scopus will differ greatly, not only in the materials of which it is made but in its nature and purpose, from the old *bet-midrash*. But, Ladies and Gentlemen, amid the ruins of those hallowed structures there are many sound and beautiful stones that can and ought to be foundation stones of our new edifice. Let not the builders reject these stones. At this hallowed moment I feel impelled to pray: May those stones not be forgotten! May we succeed in raising the science and learning that will issue from this house to the moral level to which our people raised its Torah! We should not be worthy of this festive day if we proposed to content ourselves with a poor imitation of other peoples. We know well that true wisdom is that which learns from all; the windows of this house will therefore be open on every side, that the fairest fruit produced by man's creative spirit in every land and every age may enter. But we ourselves are not newcomers to the Kingdom of the Spirit and while learning from everybody we also have something to teach. I feel sure that a time will come when the moral principles upon which our Houses of Torah were founded, such as those enumerated in the wonderful short baraita known as “The Chapter on the Acquisition of Torah,” will become the heritage of humanity at large.

Ladies and Gentlemen! Thousands of our youth, obeying the call of their hearts, are streaming from the four comers of the earth to this land for the purpose of redeeming it from desolation and ruin. They are prepared to pour all their aspirations and longings and to empty all the strength of their youth into the bosom of this wasteland in order to revive it. They are plowing rocks, draining swamps, and building roads amid singing and rejoicing. These young people know how to raise simple and crude labor-physical labor—to the level of highest sanctity, to the level of religion. It is our task to kindle such a holy fire within the walls of the house which has just been opened upon Mount Scopus. Let those youths build the Earthly Jerusalem with fire and let them who work within these walls build the Heavenly Jerusalem with fire, and between them let them build and establish our House of Life. “For Thou, O L-rd, didst consume it with fire, and with fire Thou wilt rebuild it.” **Chaim Nachman Bialik at the Inauguration Ceremony of the Hebrew University, January 4, 1925**