

Abstract

When an American Jew Produced:

Judah David Eisenstein and the First Hebrew Encyclopedia

Between 1907 and 1913, Judah David Eisenstein (1854–1956), an amateur scholar and entrepreneurial immigrant to New York City, produced the first modern Hebrew encyclopedia, *Ozar Yisrael*. The *Ozar* was in part a traditionalist response to *Otsar Hayahdut: Hoveret l' dugma*, a sample volume of an encyclopedia created by Asher Ginzberg (Ahad Ha'am)'s circle of cultural nationalists. However, Eisenstein was keen for his encyclopedia to have a veneer of objective and academic respectability. To achieve this, he assembled a global cohort of contributors who transcended religious and ideological boundaries, even as he retained firm editorial control. Through the story of the *Ozar Yisrael*, this dissertation highlights the role of America as an exporter of Jewish culture, raises questions about the borders between Haskalah and cultural nationalism, and reveals variety among Orthodox thinkers active in Jewish culture in America at the turn of the twentieth century.

When an American Jew Produced:
Judah David Eisenstein and the First Hebrew Encyclopedia

by

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by

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Acknowledgments

This is a ledger marking debts owed and not a place to discharge them. Some debts are impossible to repay, and most are the result of earlier debts, making it difficult to know where to begin.

My first exposure to academic Jewish studies was in the loving and cultured home of my parents. An *Encyclopedia Judaica* sat on the shelves and offered gleanings of a world that seemed very distant from the eastern suburbs of Sydney, Australia. As an undergraduate at the Department of Semitic Studies at the University of Sydney, these gleanings began to grow. Always unfailingly kind, Professor Rifaat Ebeid, Dr. Ian Young, and Dr. Noel Weeks showed me that there was a different way to study my heritage. A semester abroad at McGill University brought me under the tutelage of Professor B. Barry Levy. A master pedagogue who cared deeply about all of his students, Professor Levy was the reason I returned to McGill to pursue an MA in Jewish Studies, and his year-long course on Jewish Bible interpretation led me to write a dissertation for him. His teaching and example remain with me to this day. One of my teachers at McGill, Professor Lawrence Kaplan, honed my ability to read critically. A polymath who is comfortable in the entire spectrum of Jewish studies, he has through the years become a friend, a treasured resource of intellectual discernment and arbiter of abstract thinking.

Professor Levy taught me that a graduate student must choose his advisor wisely, and Professor Jeffrey S. Gurock is the reason why I settled on American Jewish history. An accomplished academic who is a well-rounded individual with interests beyond academia and an historian whose celebrated works appear at a prodigious rate, Professor Gurock has been the most fantastic advisor. It has been a marathon, and in the almost two decades that I have been working toward my PhD, never have I regretted this decision. Through countless drafts and endless delays, even when I was across the sea and far from research libraries, Professor Gurock never failed to help me. Without his careful guidance, I would not have finished.

As this PhD was never the mainstay of my life, the delays were endless, and progress was slow. Begun when I was a rabbinical student, my doctoral work followed me into three congregations: Brothers of Joseph in Norwich, Connecticut; Beth Sholom in Providence, Rhode Island; and Ohel Leah Synagogue in Hong Kong S.A.R.—three very different congregations that I’ve been privileged to serve and that allowed me to develop in different ways. It was only after arriving in Hong Kong that I settled on the topic of Judah David Eisenstein’s *Ozar Yisrael*. A decade earlier, when I was living in Montreal, I enjoyed many a beautiful Shabbat meal at the home of Reb Yankel and Frieda Abramczyk. It was from Reb Yankel, himself steeped in a world now lost, that I first learned about the *Ozar Yisrael*. As I searched for a dissertation topic, I recalled those heavenly Shabbat meals, and then Professor Steven Fine wisely urged me to consider Eisenstein. When Professor Gurock enthusiastically agreed with this suggestion, I settled on it.

Living in Hong Kong and at a distance from great Jewish libraries, I imagined that this topic would be easy to complete in relative isolation. My plan was to evaluate various entries in the *Ozar Yisrael*, and this naïve plan seduced me. Soon I learned that a huge amount of archival material relating to Eisenstein is scattered in various libraries. Not to draw on these archives would have been irresponsible, and so I began the arduous process of collating and deciphering archival material. In Israel, the Gnazim archive, M. J. Berdyczewski archive, and various collections of the National Library of Israel all held material that was helpful to me. Professor Avner Holtzman of Tel Aviv University and the M. J. Berdyczewski archive spent a significant amount of time teaching me to decipher Berdyczewski's script and reviewing his letters. In the United States, collections at the libraries of Yeshiva University, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the American Jewish Archives were drawn upon. All the librarians and archivists in these institutions were incredibly kind and helpful to me. A Bernard and Audrey Rapoport Fellowship at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives supported my time there in 2013–2014. Rabbi Dr. Gary P. Zola, the center's tireless executive director, has a deep understanding of the overlooked place of Hebraism in American Jewish History and he took a personal interest in my work. Dr. Dana Herman, an old friend from McGill University and director of research and collections at the center, was supremely helpful to me. Dr. Herman and her partner, Professor Jason Kalman, ensured that my stay in Cincinnati was enjoyable, and they extended every hospitality to me.

At the Bernard Revel Graduate School, Dean David Berger helped me at all stages of this journey. An endless source of good cheer and edifying advice, Dean Berger's judicious

comments, especially in the area of Biblical criticism, improved this dissertation. At a crucial point, Professor Joshua M. Karlip became an advisor and offered historical insight. He has improved my understanding of Eisenstein and enhanced this dissertation; I am deeply grateful to him. Ms. Washington, the academic administrator at Revel, has been a friendly constant on my journey, helping me stay current with enrolment and registration. Professors Mordechai Z. Cohen, Shalom Holtz, and Jess Olson have always been available to answer my questions. Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter of Yeshiva University has encouraged me along this path and taken an interest in all aspects of my work. His mentoring is precious to me. Professor Marc Shapiro made available to me his storehouse of knowledge. Professor Lawrence Kaplan carefully read the entire manuscript. Listening to his keen insight at my defense, led me to make some adjustments. An email from Menachem Butler in June 2011 proved once again that the legendary grasp of his bibliographic knowledge is matched only by his selfless sharing.

Dr. Eve Levavi Feinstein, a talented and patient editor, has fastidiously reviewed this dissertation and helped me with formatting and footnotes. Without her help, it would have taken me much longer. For her skill, devotion, and professionalism I am thankful.

This dissertation represents countless hours taken away from family life. My everything, dearest Rachel, who started her PhD after I began mine and finished long before, has not complained about the time this work has inevitably snatched from us. A great joy of completing it is that now I will have more time for what is truly important: her and the four beautiful children, Mordechai, Aryeh, Mira, and Ezra, that God has shared with us.

It is through tears that I write that my mother did not live to see this work to completion. On March 26, 2020, at the onset of the month of Nissan 5780, I completed the conclusion. My plan was to write the acknowledgment over the next few days, but that did not happen. On Friday, March 27, 2020, my world darkened when I woke to news that my beloved mother had been taken from us. Instead of writing the acknowledgments and thanking her and my dear father for all they have done for me, I was plunged into mourning and *shiva*, sad with the knowledge that my mother would not live to see this work and devastated that she would not see so much more with earthly eyes. This dissertation is dedicated to her memory.

אמר רבי אסי מפני מה מתחילין לתינוקות בתורת כהנים ואין מתחילין בבראשית, אלא שה תינוקות
טהורין
והקרבנות טהורין יבואו טהורין ויתעסקו בטהורים.

Dedication

לזכר אמי מורתי

מונירה עוזר

מנורה בת אהובה ומרדכי

עלתה השמימה עש"ק פרשת ויקרא, ב' ניסן תש"פ ונמנה בו ביום

אמר רבי אסי מפני מה מתחילין למיניקות בתורת כהנים ואין מתחילין בכראשית, אלא שהמיניקות קהורין
(הקרבנות קהורין; באו קהורין; יתעסקו בקהורים)

ויקרא רבה 1:1

At moments when such thoughts came to him, Shloyme became unnaturally animated, walked up to his son, wanted to talk to him with passion and at great length, to give him advice on a couple of things, but ... it had been such a long time since he had spoken to anyone, or given anyone advice.

Old Shloyme (1913)

Isaac Babel

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List of Abbreviations

AJHQ: American Jewish Historical Quarterly

EJ: Encyclopedia Judaica

HUCA: Hebrew Union College Annual

JE: Jewish Encyclopedia

JIH: Journal of Israeli History

JJS: Journal of Jewish Studies

JSS: Jewish Social Studies

JTS: Jewish Theological Seminary (New York)

NLI: National Library of Israel (Jerusalem)

OH: Otsar hayahadut

OY: Ozar Yisrael

PAJHS: Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society

ShR: Sefer ha-rikma

YU: Yeshiva University

Introduction

The creation of the *Ozar Yisrael*, a Hebrew encyclopedia published in New York between 1907 and 1913, challenges a long-held assumption that in this era America was a needy cultural recipient that merely imported Jewish scholarship. It is the neglected story of an amateur intellectual named Judah David Eisenstein (1854–1956) who gathered an international group of scholars, writers, and rabbis and directed their efforts to a work that won the attention of the entire spectrum of the Hebraist diaspora, pushing America into an international Jewish discussion.

In 1872, Eisenstein left his native Meseritz and arrived in New York, where he became a proponent of immigration to America.¹ He began his public writing career with panegyric dispatches about his new homeland, and for a time, the overseas Hebrew press marked him as its New York correspondent.² One of the many organizations in his orbit was the Ohole Shem Society (OSS). This was an amateur Hebraist group operating in New York

¹ Eisenstein's father emigrated to the United States in 1862 and settled for a period in San Francisco. See Eisenstadt, *Hakhme Yisrael b'Amerika: Toldot rabanim ha-geonim, ha-hakhamim voha-sofrim, ha-mehabrim, ha-nedivim ve-anshe hashem, al pi mekorim ne'emanim u-nekhonim: Tish'ah asar sifre ha-biyografya* (New York: American Jewish legacy publication society, 2013), vol. 1, part 5, 11–12.

² A list of Eisenstein's dispatches to America can be found in Judah David Eisenstein, *Ozar Zichronotay* (New York: 1927), 380ff. These dispatches began in 1878 and continued through the 1880s.

City between 1890 and 1907 that allowed members and others to deliver lectures at monthly meetings. In 1906, Eisenstein gave a lecture on encyclopedias to this group.

By the time Eisenstein delivered his lecture to OSS, the Jewish world had been grappling for over a decade with a desire to produce an encyclopedia. This desire was fueled by a worldwide movement to produce encyclopedias on various groups, and now two projects targeted the Jewish world. The first of these, written in English, was the recently completed twelve-volume *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901–1905). The second, written in Hebrew, was the failing *Otsar hayahadut*, by Asher Ginzberg, whose nom de plume was Ahad Ha'am. Ahad Ha'am was the major figure of the Hebrew cultural nationalist movement. He pitched his idea for a Hebrew encyclopedia beginning the 1890s, and a sample volume appeared in 1906. Thus, when Eisenstein gave his talk to the OSS and started to sell his encyclopedia, there was already one English-language encyclopedia as well as a sample volume of a long-awaited Hebrew encyclopedia.

During this period, America was experiencing an explosion of print culture. The *Ozar Yisrael* appeared in the same decade as the *Catholic Encyclopedia*;³ Charles W. Eliot's "Fivefoot Shelf," also known as the *Harvard Classics*;⁴ and W. E. Debois's proposal for an

³ Charles B. Herbermann et al., eds., *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1907–1912). This was a fifteen-volume work with an index that appeared in 1914. See Michael F. Lombardo, *Founding Father: John J. Wynne, S.J., and the Inculturation of American Catholicism in the Progressive Era* (PhD diss., University of Dayton, 2014), 211–86.

⁴ See Tim Lacy, "Dreams of a Democratic Culture: Revising the Origins of the Great Books Idea, 1869–1921," in *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7, no. 14 (2008): 397–441, esp. 421–423.

Encyclopedia Africana.⁵ Thus, this Hebraist encyclopedia was linked to an expanding constellation of American print media. At the same time, it extended beyond America and must be considered as more than just an American work.

Crucial to the production of the *Ozar Yisrael* was the fact that it was written by and marketed to an international Hebraist diaspora. From New York City's Lower East Side, Eisenstein commandeered an army of enthusiasts, writers, and subscribers that extended from South Africa to rural Australia and included the Middle East and all of Europe.⁶ At first glance, it appears that well-known writers from across the ideological spectrum wrote for the work, but a deeper look uncovers a more complicated story. Many people chose not to contribute, and among those who did contribute, some regretted their decision. This seems to have been because of the ideology imposed by Eisenstein through his strong editorial control. More than he wanted distinguished people to make scholarly contributions, Eisenstein wished to leverage their reputations. Yet it remains true that a number of recognized personalities from across the ideological spectrum happily contributed entries to the work.

At the time, America was supposed to supply financial aid to world Jewry and act as a safe haven for would-be immigrants. It was not expected to disseminate Jewish culture to

⁵ Henry Louis Gates Jr., "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Encyclopedia Africana, 1909–1963," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (2000): 203–19.

⁶ Their work had just one Australian subscriber, "J. Blumberg" from Queensland, Australia, and he is listed in *OY* 6:4. See Morris S. Ochert, "The Blumbergs of Blumbergville," *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society* 14, no. 1 (1997): 45–46. There are over a hundred references to the *Ozar Yisrael* in Berl Kagan, *Hebrew Subscription Lists: With and Index to 8,767 Jewish Communities in Europe and North Africa* (in Yiddish: *Sefer Haprenumerantn*) (The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Ktav Publishing House: New York, 1975).

the rest of the world.⁷ By producing the *Ozar Yisrael* and then marketing it to Europeans, an editor in America was delivering a double blow to this notion. The project revealed Europe's deficiency: when it came to the Hebrew encyclopedia project, Europe had failed to create a viable product. In this area, Europeans now had to look to America. Hundreds of encyclopedia entries were written in Hebrew across the globe, placed in envelopes, and sent to America. In America, these entries were edited and processed, turned into an encyclopedia, and then exported as the *Ozar Yisrael*. For some Europeans, it was infuriating to see an unknown man in a land without learning executing an intellectual project of the highest order that they had initiated. Others saw it as a sign that America had matured. No longer was she destined to look beyond her borders to import Jewish cultural life, for now she was manufacturing and exporting her own Hebraist culture. (At the time, most people did not realize the extent to which this encyclopedia was the work of a single American immigrant, Judah David Eisenstein.) This is one reason why the appearance of the *Ozar Yisrael* is a significant event for modern Jewish history.

Despite this significance, however, the work has been overlooked until now. For example, in 2009, the Simon Dubnow Institute ran a workshop entitled "Kaleidoscopic

⁷ Tony Michels, writing about the influence of Jewish Socialists on the Russian empire, makes a similar argument: "The leading role of New York in exporting Yiddish socialist literature to Russia suggests the need to revise the standard view of American Jewry as an outpost of European Jewry. According to that view, the cultural, ideological, and political life of immigrant Jews amounted to little more than a replica—and a pale one at that—of European originals. In fact, a tremendous degree of innovation took place in immigrant Jewish communities, so that what might appear to have been European carryovers were actually American inventions ... Thus, instead of a core-periphery model for understanding the relationship between American and Russian Jewry, it would be more helpful to adopt a transnational framework in which individuals, ideas, publications, money, and organizations moved between countries, sometimes in one direction, other times reciprocally." Tony Michels, "Exporting Yiddish Socialism: New York's Role in the Russian Jewish Workers' Movement," *JSS* 16, no. 1 (2009): 2–3.

Knowledge: On Jewish and Other Encyclopedias in Modernity” and published presentations from this workshop;⁸ the *Ozar Yisrael* was not mentioned. This lacuna is due to many factors. The *Ozar Yisrael* fits into American Hebraism, which American Jewish history has neglected. It also fits into modern Jewish history, but many practitioners of that field eschew it for being an American story, which is beyond the boundaries of what they study. Finally, Eisenstein’s long life and encyclopedic writing make the study of the *Ozar Yisrael* and its background a substantial undertaking.

Eisenstein had been a contributor to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, supplying it with around one hundred fifty articles, so writing for a scholarly encyclopedia was familiar to him.⁹ Now, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* supplied him with endless material for his *Ozar Yisrael*. Any weighty topic he wished to include had an up-to-date article and a full bibliography, which could be consulted with ease or even quietly lifted from the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and translated into Hebrew. This sped up the production of the *Ozar Yisrael*, and the additional step of translating from English to Hebrew made such plagiarism harder to detect and a little less barefaced. Whether it was because of plagiarism or just his furious work ethic, Eisenstein produced the *Ozar Yisrael* with alacrity. Even supporters pleaded with him to slow down, but he had good reason for wanting to finish so quickly. The apparently imminent publication of the *Otsar hayahadut* posed a threat to those who, like Eisenstein, wished to assert the sanctity of the Bible and the uniqueness of the Jewish people’s gifts to the world.

⁸ Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 9 (2010).

⁹ Eisenstein listed his entries to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* in *Ozar Zichronotay*, 382–84.

Haskalah, Hebrew Nationalism, and the *Ozar Yisrael*

The competition between the *Ozar Yisrael* and the *Otsar hayahadut* must be understood against the background of the Haskalah and Hebrew cultural nationalism. The Haskalah was the Jewish Enlightenment. It was a revolutionary movement aimed at preparing the Jewish people for emancipation and entry into European society. It is widely accepted that the Haskalah began in Germany in the 1770s and spread across Europe. The Haskalah was not uniform and operated differently in each locale, as did the way Jews mainstreamed into the dominant society. To the east, in Galicia and then Russia, the German model inspired similar movements. However, as these movements failed to live up to their promises, other modern Jewish movements, among them Hebrew nationalism, emerged and replaced them. The Haskalah's core promise was that if the Jews learned to change their ways, the world would learn to accept them. Similarly, non-Jewish advocates of Jewish emancipation argued that whatever "defects" the Jews had were the result of debilitating discrimination. Were the discrimination to be removed, the defects would disappear, and the Jews would become an asset to the state.

Although the emancipation of the Jews in Germany was a process that took a century, by the 1870s the Jews of Germany had gained full emancipation. In Russia, in contrast, it became clear that the trajectory of Jewish emancipation would not parallel the experience to the west, and with the ascent of Alexander III in 1881, any embers of hope were extinguished. When the Russian government blamed the pogroms of 1881 on the Jews, there was a widespread feeling that the Jewish desire to join Russian society was unrequited. This

led to a yearning for a Jewish homeland and inspired pride in the idea that the Jews were not only adherents of a religion but also part of a nation.

Both the Haskalah and Hebrew nationalism maintained that to meet the challenge and opportunity of a new age, the Jewish masses needed to change. Changes included reforming Jewish education and modifying the Jewish style of dress. Emerging in the 1820s and closely related to the Haskalah was the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the “Science of Judaism” movement, known in Hebrew as *Hokhmat Yisrael*. This movement was based on the premise that if Jews wanted to be taken seriously, they needed to show that their religion was worthy of being taken seriously. One of its legacies was the emergence in the nineteenth century of rabbinical seminaries, which opened new vistas of Jewish learning, in both method and scope. The Bible and Talmud were looked at from a fresh “scientific” perspective, and the fields of Jewish history, theology, and liturgy were nurtured.

The promotion of fluency in non-Jewish languages was a pillar of the Haskalah. Maskilim (adherents of the Haskalah) argued that for Germany to accept its Jews, the Jews needed to acculturate into German society, and this included learning German. The founding father of the Haskalah was Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), and maskilim regarded him as a venerated hero worthy of emulation. One work that defined Mendelssohn was his (and his disciples’) *Humash Netivot HaShalom*, a translation of the Pentateuch into German written in Hebrew characters with an accompanying commentary.¹⁰ Thus, the Haskalah privileged German and attempted to displace Yiddish, which into the end of the eighteenth century

¹⁰ Commonly referred to as the *Biur*. See Shmuel Feiner, *Moses Mendelssohn: Sage of Modernity*, trans. Anthony Berris (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2010), 124–34.

remained the language of the Jewish masses in Germany. Yet, even as the maskilim downgraded Yiddish and promoted German, they revived Hebrew, and it became a language that could be used in secular learning. The Haskalah's Jewish educational institutions shifted their focus from Jewish to secular studies. The curriculum of the first educational institution of the Haskalah, the Freischule, which was founded in Berlin in 1778, "heralded the transfer of the center of gravity from Jewish studies to general subjects," and Talmud was completely omitted from the curriculum.¹¹

The second work for which Mendelssohn was known was *Jerusalem*.¹² In this work, he argued that Judaism was a wholly rational religion that did not contradict the principles of the modern state. Judaism's particularistic laws were part of an ecosystem that supported a rational revealed religion and posed no barrier to a Jew becoming a loyal citizen. A general privileging of a rational outlook buttressed the changes that the Haskalah promoted. Thus, the Haskalah maintained that the Jew would win emancipation by learning non-Jewish languages and gaining a secular education. These were the pathways to being accepted into the mainstream.

When the Haskalah migrated to Russia, the maskilim there adopted the German model. From the 1820s onward, schools that followed the "Mendelssohnian" system sprouted in cities and towns across Russia. Many Russian maskilim spoke German, and their schools favored German or Russian over Yiddish. In Russia, the maskilim turned to the government, which was eager to reform Jewish life. In the 1840s, the government appointed Max

¹¹ Azriel Shochat, "Haskalah," *EJ* 8:437.

¹² See Feiner, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 153–86.

Lilienthal (1815–1882) of Riga to help “enlighten the Jews.”¹³ Many believed that Russia would follow the example of other countries that had emancipated their Jews. The reforms that Alexander II instituted in the 1860s, such as emancipating the serfs, and the Hebrew newspapers that began appearing in the 1860s strengthened this view. This had been the promise of the Haskalah: that if Jews acculturated into their host countries, they would be treated like any other citizens.

From the outset, this was a false belief on the part of Russian maskilim, who failed to understand that such a process was only possible in a democratic state of equal citizens, which Russia was not. What was offered to the Jews of Russia was not full emancipation but “selective integration.” Benjamin Nathan points out that maskilim often used the imagery of “the wheat and the chaff” to distinguish between layers of Jewish tradition and to encourage the view that the parts that made up the totality of Jewish tradition were not equally necessary or sacred. In Russia, this metaphor was applied not to Judaism but to Jews themselves.¹⁴ Both the Russian government and an elite of self-appointed unofficial representatives of the Jews explored a path of “selective integration” into Russian society.¹⁵ In a non-democratic society where only some subjects had full rights, it was only natural that integration should also be made available to some Jews.

¹³ Shochat, “Haskalah,” 442.

¹⁴ Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 50.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45–79.

Shmuel Feiner argues that despite some initial misplaced exuberance, in the 1860s the Haskalah began to corrode in three ways: there was a “loss of optimism” (preceding the outbreak of pogroms), there was an “anticlerical struggle,” and there was the “historical vindication of Hasidism.”¹⁶

These new “radical maskilim” had a

low opinion of what they regarded as an excessive preoccupation with history [which] was also linked to their demand that the maskilim cut themselves off from the past and grapple with the present and its problems.

As Abraham Uri Kovner (1841–1909) asked:

Why have they wandered so far into past times, where they seek meaning, rather than turning their attention to present-day life?¹⁷

The radical maskilim believed that for Jews to be treated as citizens with a private faith, they needed to shed their collective identity. To create this new reality, it was necessary to break with the past. Present-day life had motivated the Haskalah, but to many Jews its promise that after they became “enlightened” non-Jewish society would accept them now appeared hollow.

The rebellion of the radical maskilim against the old Haskalah took many forms, one of which was Hebrew nationalism.¹⁸ Hebrew nationalism turned its attention to “present-day life” and answered Kovner’s call by joining the past and the present into one organic whole.

¹⁶ Abraham Uri Kovner, “Shnei nevi’im mitnabim besignon ehad,” *Ketavim* (1947): 227, as cited in Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*, trans. Chaya Naor and Sondra Silverston (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002), 274–317.

¹⁷ Kovner, “Shenei nevi’im,” 227, as cited in Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 279.

¹⁸ Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 317–41.

Peretz Smolenskin (1842–1885), one of the earliest representatives of Hebrew nationalism, took it as his “principle aim” “to prove that the Jews had been a people in the past and were a people in the present, and to reject attempts to define Jews in the modern era ... as a mere religious community.”¹⁹ He did not view Mendelssohn as a hero or the Hasidim—a perennial target of the Haskalah—as a blight on the nation.

For early maskilim, history was worth studying, independent of any religious or theological value it might deliver. This “maskilic history” broke with earlier Jewish historical writing that was subservient to a religious goal from which it drew legitimacy. For the maskilim, the study of history was part of the general canon of human knowledge, and it is from this universal axis that it drew its legitimacy. Hebrew nationalism maintained an interest in Jewish history but transitioned from “maskilic history” to “national history,” which had a quasi-mystical quality about it. Smolenskin did not believe that every researcher had the capacity to understand Jewish history. The ideal chronicler of Jewish history had to be Jewish, to know how to draw on Jewish sources, and to believe in the uniqueness of Jewish history. Only one who was part of the national unity and historical continuity of Jewish history could portray it accurately.²⁰

Hebrew nationalism developed from a rebellion against the Haskalah into an independent cultural force. The advent of pogroms in 1881 and onward undermined the assumption that if Jews assimilated into Russian society, they would be granted emancipation, like their coreligionists to the west. Now there was a stirring for a Jewish

¹⁹ Ibid., 319.

²⁰ Ibid., 321.

return to an ancient homeland. Organizations like Hibat Zion (founded in 1884) saw nationalism and Jewish self-governance as the only viable political solution to the plight of the Jewish people. For some, this nationalism was limited to a return to the birthplace of the Hebrew nation, for others it could be realized in the Diaspora, and for yet others both had important roles to play.

Hebrew nationalists believed it was necessary to find a physical solution to the Jewish situation. Some were cultural nationalists, who argued that for any physical solution to be effective, it was necessary for there to be a cultural and spiritual rebuilding of the nation. This sounds religious, but it was not so in the traditional sense. The relationship between Jewish nationalism and religion was fraught with tension, and “from its beginnings walked a thin line between secular and religious revivalism, progressivism and nostalgia, postliberalism and dreams of a Davidic return.”²¹ While one did not require the other, the line between the two could be easily blurred, and this was particularly true for Hebrew, which had always been a “religious language.” Another form of Jewish cultural nationalism revolved around Yiddish, and some people saw in its rise “a shift from a religious-dominated culture to a thoroughly secular and European one.”²² They believed that the bonds of religion were too embedded in Hebrew and that Hebrew nationalism would always be too fettered to tradition to rebuild the nation. However, not everyone saw it this way, and Eisenstein

²¹ Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Kindle loc. 780.

²² Fishman “Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture,” Kindle Loc. 54.

understood that the mere fact that a work was written in Hebrew did not mean that it had a religious worldview. The sample volume of the *Otsar hayahadut* was a Hebrew work that he believed assailed Judaism.

The Haskalah and the early period of Hebrew nationalism were temporally adjacent. They drew from the same sources, and so the boundary between them was not always observable. Hebrew nationalists, especially those inclined toward cultural nationalism, were like maskilim in that they also sought a “gradual reeducation of Jewry.”²³ These cultural nationalists drew “heavily on the Haskalah, whose pedagogical emphasis and cultural politics they still embraced even if they rejected its emancipationist goals.”²⁴ The goal of the Haskalah was to allow the individual Jew to remain tethered to his religion but become a loyal citizen of his country. Hebrew nationalism believed that this was no longer possible. Either the host country would totally assimilate the Jew (as happened to Mendelssohn’s family and disciples) or it would not emancipate its Jewish subjects. Hebrew nationalism was “peculiar to East European Jewish modernity” because in the rest of Europe “Jews were offered an emancipatory contract that they essentially fulfilled: societal and cultural integration as individuals in exchange for the dissolution of all Jewish corporate identity other than the confessional.”²⁵

²³ Zipperstein, “Elusive Prophet,” Kindle Loc. 872.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 872.

²⁵ Kenneth B. Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 10.

Israel Bartal described the transition from Haskalah to Hebrew nationalism as the closing of a circle, using the metaphor of the *pinkas*.²⁶ The *pinkas* was the minutebook-cum-chronicle that many East European towns kept. In it, premodern corporate Jewish communities recorded their history, vicissitudes, and rules. It was the *kahal*, the Jewish community, transposed into a book. As Bartal put it, the Haskalah believed that by doing away with the *pinkas* and all it represented—the corporate Jewish community—society would invite the individual Jew to join its ranks as a private citizen. The original plan of the Haskalah was to surrender the Jewish community and thereby emancipate the individual Jew. Doing so would slacken the bonds that tied Jews to notions of Jewish nationalism. When this plan failed, new institutions arose, including Hasidic courts, modern yeshivot, and *hevrot* (societies), which both replaced and continued the old *kahal* system.²⁷ Another development was Hebrew nationalism, which returned the *pinkas* to its place of glory and tightened those bonds once more.

The *pinkas* metaphor, however, does not describe America. The earliest congregations in the United States learned that “Jews in post-revolutionary America made their own rules concerning how to live Jewishly, and there was little that the synagogue-community could do about it.”²⁸ A weak form of Jewish nationalism appeared in America in the middle of the nineteenth century in the form of the B’nai B’rith. Founded in 1843, it

²⁶ Israel Bartal, *To Redeem a People: Jewish Nationalism and Enlightenment in Eastern Europe* (Jerusalem: Karmel, 2013), 21–53.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁸ Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), Kindle loc. 761.

catered to those who had “rejected the synagogue altogether and focused on ties of peoplehood as the unifying element in Jewish life.”²⁹ However, B’nai B’rith did not come as a rebellion against the failure of the Haskalah to emancipate the Jew. If anything, it was a “strategy aimed at preserving Judaism in America ... strengthening many of the ‘peoplehood’ aspects of Jewish communal life that had declined in America with the collapse of the organized synagogue-community.”³⁰ The “organized synagogue-community” in America was always built around a private confession and was never a self-governing corporate Jewish community like the *kahal*.

Jewish society in nineteenth-century eastern Europe emerged from premodern corporate communities, struggled for Jewish emancipation, and, when that failed, developed a national Jewish consciousness. America did not follow this trajectory; it never had a corporate Jewish community or a struggle for Jewish emancipation, and so in America, this arc did not exist. What had delivered Jewish nationalism to East European Jews was the lack of Jewish emancipation and the pessimistic shadow cast by pogroms. Without these elements, no significant movement of Jewish nationalism could take root in America. When Eisenstein left Europe in 1872, the horrors of the pogroms and the need to find a new solution to the Jewish plight had not yet emerged. And when he arrived in the United States, the conditions were different from what they were in Europe. Jewish nationalism was almost nonexistent, and therefore exposure to it could not have inspired him to create an

²⁹ Ibid., 1180.

³⁰ Ibid., 1380.

encyclopedia. What moved him, at least in part, was his view that the *Otsar hayahadut* threatened normative Jewish beliefs.

“The champions of Jewish culture,” Kenneth Moss explains, “sought more than the overthrow of tradition,” for what they truly sought was “to carve out a Jewish culture that could hold its own.”³¹ Moss is not discussing the *Otsar hayahadut* in this passage, but his observation applies to it and its creators. Indeed, while they failed, Hayim Nahaman Bialik, through his *Sefer Agada*, resacralized Jewish texts along a new matrix of values.³² Eisenstein wanted the *Ozar Yisrael* to do more than support tradition against forces that were trying to overthrow it. He wanted to create a traditional work to hold its own against a new nationalist “Jewish culture that could hold its own” against tradition. The *Ozar Yisrael* was designed as a counterweight to the *Otsar Hayahdut* (which was itself a counterweight to traditional Jewish culture), and in that sense, these two works occupied different ends of a spectrum.

Hebrew culture was not static. Just as Ahad Ha’am’s cultural nationalism was a revolution against the Haskalah that came before him, the next generation of Hebrew culture rebelled against Ahad Ha’am’s vision. Wanting to create a literary aesthetic culture in Hebrew, it faced a choice: “Would a healthy and compelling Jewish aesthetic culture be successfully achieved by deepening its intentional orientation toward ‘the Jewish,’ however

³¹ Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution*, 15.

³² See Adam Rubin, “‘Like a Necklace of Black Pearls Whose String has Snapped’: Bialik’s ‘Aron ha-sefarim’ and the Sacralization of Zionism,” in *Prooftexts* 28:2 (Spring 2008), 157–196.

understood, or, conversely, by pursuing a countervailing imperative of willfully un-Jewish, unparochial ‘European’ or ‘universal’ expression?”³³

A Jewish encyclopedia is not a part of aesthetic literary culture, but a similar debate infused the presentation of Jewish history and texts. A Jewish encyclopedia can endorse “un-Jewish” interpretations and encourage a narrative that eschews Jewish essentialism and exceptionalism. When the sample volume of the *Otsar hayahadut* appeared in 1905, almost half a century had passed since Peretz Smolenskin promoted an orientation toward Jewish essentialism and nationalist history. Eisenstein allied the *Ozar Yisrael* to a similar vision—which had religious overtones—but the cultural nationalists had progressed to less parochial and essentialist interpretations of Jewish history. If the *Otsar Hayahudut* prevailed, it would spread a narrative that undermined Jewish essentialism, and Eisenstein worried that this would diminish the traditional sanctities of Judaism.

A similar debate divided Yiddishists into two camps. On one side were the “national-romantics,” who

gave preference to literary works that drew upon traditional Jewish culture and reflected the antiquity of Jewish wisdom and ethical values. Peretz’s *Hasidic Tales and Tales in the Folk Spirit* and Sholem Asch’s *A Shtetl and Kidush Hashem* (Martyrdom) were the key works of their cannon. They conceived of modern Yiddish literature as, at its essence, a continuation and culmination of earlier phases of Jewish culture.

On the other side were the “cultural radicals,” who

³³ Moss, *Jewish Renaissance*, 106.

gave preference to works that reflected a break with the Jewish religious tradition and an embrace of modernity and works that dealt with modern social issues.

Yet, even for the national-romantics,

there were clearly drawn lines that were not crossed even by its most traditionalist members. Foremost of these was the issue of God. Yiddish schools defined themselves as secular. Discussion of God as creator, master of the universe, or providential force was beyond the pale of acceptable discourse. Consequently, prayer and religious ritual were likewise anathema. The Hebrew liturgy was not taught (even as a literary document), and no blessings were recited. Children were not familiarized with the synagogue and its service.³⁴

Such an outlook was an anathema to Eisenstein. While his encyclopedia did not explicitly attribute metaphysical explanations to Jewish history, he was unbending in his opposition to biblical criticism and was committed to Jewish practice and promoting it. The first work Eisenstein released after his *Ozar Yisrael*—which signaled that he was developing an *Ozar* “brand”—was the *Ozar Dinim u-Minhagim: A Digest of Jewish Laws and Customs* (1917), which was a compendium for the synagogue.³⁵

Jewish cultural reserves nourished Eisenstein, but he never severed them from their premodern religious framework. The *Ozar Yisrael*'s entry on *Ahad Ha'am*, which Eisenstein wrote, demonstrates this point. In it, Eisenstein highlights *Ahad Ha'am*'s opposition to the Reform movement's denial of Judaism's national dimension. Yet, he also judges harshly

³⁴ David E. Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), Kindle loc. 1900–1904.

³⁵ Judah David Eisenstein, *Ozar Dinim u-Minhagim: A Digest of Jewish Laws and Customs in Alphabetic Order* (New York: 1917).

Ahad Ha'am's famous lament that Jews were "the people of the book" (*am ha-sefer*) rather than "the literary people" (*am ha-sifrut*).³⁶

Let us concede that in truth, his opinion about Reform Jews that they are a body without a soul is correct, for they are but a religious church without a national spirit. But if we follow his charge, we will transform into a soul without a body, that is, a nationalism without any religion.³⁷

Just as the Jewish religion had a national dimension, so too did Jewish nationalism need religion: for Eisenstein, the two were inseparable. The *Ozar Yisrael*'s entry on Mendelssohn ended with an excursus about Smolenskin's critique of Mendelssohn.³⁸ In it, Eisenstein observed that

If these maskilim [a reference to Eliezer Schulman³⁹] argued against him [Mendelssohn],⁴⁰ it is no surprise that the greatest rabbi of his time, Moses Sofer,⁴¹ instructed his sons "to the books of Moses of Dessau, don't send forth your hand." For they saw with their eyes how the Haskalah of Mendelssohn affected his children and students, most of whom left Judaism and converted to Christianity. Nevertheless, it is impossible to deny that his work was significant, to teach the children of Israel the wisdom of the nations and to

³⁶ Ahad Ha'am discussed this in his 1894 essay *Torah sh'balev* (*Law of the Heart*), which appears in *Al parshat draham* (Warsaw: Ahisaf, 1901/2), vol. 1.

³⁷ Eisenstein, "Asher Ginzberg," *OY* 3:284. See also Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, Kindle loc. 2353.

³⁸ Peretz Smolenskin was not afforded his own entry in the *Ozar Yisrael*.

³⁹ Elazar Schulman (1837–1904) was a Hebrew writer and researcher of the Yiddish language who was friendly with Peretz Smolenskin. He was a maskil with nationalist commitments and criticized Mendelssohn for denying the importance of Jewish nationalism. See *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, s.v. "Schulman, El'azar," https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Schulman_Elazar.

⁴⁰ For more on this episode, see Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 337–38.

⁴¹ R. Moses Sofer (1762–1839), commonly known as the Hatam Sofer, was a leader of Orthodoxy. See Jacob Katz, "Towards a Biography of the Hatam Sofer," in Jacob Katz, *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998), 403–443. See also Meier Ben Azriel Hildesheimer, "The Attitude of the Hatam Sofer toward Moses Mendelssohn," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 60 (1994): 141–87.

draw them near to general literature. And while many gazed and were injured, there are also those who entered in peace and emerged in peace.⁴²

Unlike Ahad Ha'am, Mendelssohn was someone Eisenstein could theoretically endorse. The changes he wanted did not necessitate dismantling the Jewish religion as Jewish nationalism did, from Eisenstein's perspective. Thus, while the *Ozar Yisrael* was written in the age of Hebrew nationalism and Eisenstein appreciated Hebrew nationalism, in some ways he was more comfortable with Haskalah, which was less threatening to his way of life.

One area in which Eisenstein differed decidedly from the cultural nationalists was in his view of the traditional rabbinate. Bartal explains that America was optimal for those who wanted to improve Jewish society through emigration, because it was "free from rabbinical Judaism in the mode of Lithuanian Orthodoxy."⁴³ But Eisenstein, despite being a great proponent of Jewish immigration to America, defended this form of rabbinical Judaism and the traditional rabbinate whenever it appeared on American shores. In private communication, he admitted that he would prefer to be a laughingstock in the eyes of others than in the eyes of rabbinical scholars, who were the true guardians of Jewish learning.⁴⁴

⁴² Eisenstein, "Moses Mendelssohn," *OY* 6:237. The reference to those who "entered in peace and emerged in peace" is based on a rabbinic legend found in b. Hagigah 14b about four sages who entered "Pardes" and had some form of mystical experience. (Rashi interprets it to mean that "they rose to heaven by means of a name.") One died, one became a heretic, a third lost his mind, but R. Akiva "entered and exited in peace." Eisenstein's suggestion that Mendelssohn's work is similar to Pardes is noteworthy. The Talmud presents "Pardes" as something that was not inherently bad but had the capacity to inflict harm on those—a majority of sages—who were ill prepared. Mendelssohn's work on the Pentateuch is presented in the same light: It is not something inherently bad, but for those ill prepared (which may indeed be most of the Jewish people) it could be harmful. In this way, Eisenstein manages to salvage the Hatam Sofer's opposition to Mendelssohn as good advice, while not wholly dismissing Mendelssohn. For an overview of the Hatam Sofer's complex attitude toward Mendelssohn, see Hildesheimer, "Attitude of the Hatam Sofer."

⁴³ Bartal, *To Redeem a People*, 247.

⁴⁴ Eisenstein to Landau, April 12, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, National Library of Israel (NLI), Jerusalem.

Cultural nationalists did not look to religious figures for inspiration and guidance, for in Ahad Ha'am they had their own leader.

As a pious traditionalist, Eisenstein sensed a moment of danger and a calling. If the *Otsar hayahadut* succeeded, then Jewish texts and practices could slip from the coils of sanctity that centuries of devotion had woven around them. He felt called to respond to this danger, and he answered the call with a Hebrew encyclopedia that was designed to strengthen people's faith and uphold traditional beliefs yet still appear to be an objective scientific work.

There was a window of opportunity. The sample volume of the *Otsar hayahadut* was not a great success and had failed to impress its natural audience. *Ha-shiloah* (the Cultural Zionist journal that Ahad Ha'am founded) criticized it for being too cutting edge—the work had overreached.⁴⁵ It questioned the Bible's sanctity and, for example, challenged the Jewish origins of circumcision.⁴⁶ Instead of presenting a shared heritage that drew from the traditional Jewish consensus, it offered original theories that were taken from “foreign” (i.e., non-Jewish) scholars.⁴⁷ It is not known whether Eisenstein saw the article in *Ha-shiloah*, but it dovetailed with his view that the average Hebrew reader wanted an encyclopedia to sustain

⁴⁵ Rav Tzair (Hayim Tchernowitz), “Hoveret le-Dugma,” *Ha-shiloah* 16, 381–386 and 562–572. There are some parallels between Eisenstein and Tchernowitz (1879-1929). They were both Orthodox and defenders of tradition while being open to Hebrew culture and against its anti-religious tendencies. After emigrating to America in 1923, Tchernowitz taught at the Jewish Institute of Religion, the rabbinical school that reform Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874-1949) founded in NYC. Eisenstein mentions Tchernowitz's position - and salary - and critiques his writings. See *OY*, 158. On Hayim Tchernowitz, see *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, s.v. “Tchernowitz, Hayim,” https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Tchernowitz_Hayim.

⁴⁶ Asher Ginzberg, ed., *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret l'dugma* (Warsaw, 1906), 23–25.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 382–83.

the truths of tradition. It was up to him to produce it before the more recognized *Otsar hayahadut* found a way to recover. He took the window of opportunity to produce his own encyclopedia and did not rest until his work was done.

***Ozar Yisrael* and the Ohole Shem Society**

In addition to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and the *Otsar hayahadut*, the Ohole Shem Society (OSS), an amateur Hebraist society in New York City where Eisenstein had held a leadership role, also influenced the work. Central to the OSS was a monthly lecture that amateur scholars and people interested in Jewish learning prepared and delivered. This model served as a prototype for the *Ozar Yisrael*, which was also open to accepting contributions from anyone. Both the OSS and the *Ozar Yisrael* drew on a wide group of unpaid amateur enthusiasts, and both were created before the professionalization of knowledge became widespread, when Jewish learning was still the domain of rabbinical schools. Like the OSS, the *Ozar Yisrael* drew from a large pool of people. Orthodox and Reform, Hebraists and academicians—all were acceptable to Eisenstein, and all could write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. It is no coincidence that Eisenstein first presented his idea for a Hebrew encyclopedia at the OSS, for its ethos influenced the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Where the *Ozar Yisrael* differed from the OSS was in its editorial policy. Contributors from all backgrounds were welcomed and even pursued, but Eisenstein did not always publish what they wrote. The *Ozar Yisrael* was a partisan work, though it tried hard to give the impression that it was scientific. One way it did this was by giving space to writers from across the ideological spectrum (which the OSS also did), while limiting their freedom of expression (which the OSS did not do). One of the most fascinating facets of this story is

how the entrepreneurial Eisenstein managed to secure entries and endorsements from people who disagreed with his encyclopedia's ideology.

Thus, in creating the *Ozar Yisrael*, three broad influences guided Eisenstein. The first was a worldwide movement to produce encyclopedias that impacted the Jewish world and led to the creation of the English-language *Jewish Encyclopedia*. The second was the Hebrew-language *Otsar hayahadut*, which threatened Eisenstein's worldview. And the third was the OSS, which gave Eisenstein a model of how to produce his encyclopedia. By the time Eisenstein was finished, it could no longer be said that America was a recipient of Jewish culture with nothing to contribute. Eisenstein managed to coopt an idea from the hands of liberalizing Europeans and transform it into an American work that defended traditional Judaism. Through the *Ozar Yisrael*, America—where anything was possible—became a defender of Jewish tradition. The land that Americanized the synagogue⁴⁸ and produced liberal rabbinical academies also sprouted a traditional Hebraic encyclopedia. The coming pages tell the story of this impressive feat.

⁴⁸ See Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820–1870* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1992).

Chaper I: A Transnational Project Emerges in America

An Unknown Speech to a Forgotten Society

Judah David Eisenstein's bookplate depicted a lion and a quill, along with half a verse from Genesis 49:10 promising that "the scepter shall not pass from Judah."⁴⁹ When it came to writing, Eisenstein kept this promise—he was mighty as a lion. From the age of fifty, he produced volume after volume of his *Ozar* series, and he died leaving many other manuscripts unpublished.⁵⁰

Eisenstein's first experiences of public writing came when he was a journalist sending transatlantic dispatches to a variety of Hebrew newspapers in Europe.⁵¹ The way contemporary Jewish life was unfolding before his eyes interested him. He was sensitive to

⁴⁹ The bookplate is part of the Jewish Theological Seminary's library's extensive bookplate collection (vol. 1, p. 60.), which is available online: <http://garfield.jtsa.edu:8881/R/ABTK6HL7AV7ATPC7ICXE4YP5NLCVIH9ULIGT6JEGFM8F6DK7Q-01885?func=results-brief>.

⁵⁰ Menahem Ribalow, a longtime editor of the American Hebrew weekly *Ha-Doar*, requested that Eisenstein write an updated autobiography (Eisenstein published an autobiography, intermeshed with the history of American Jewry, in his *Ozar Zichronotay*, but it only covered his life until 1927.) This biography (updated to 1942) was printed in Getzel Kressel, ed., *Genazim: Kovetz le-toldot ha-sifrut ha-ivrit b'dorot ha-ahronim* (Tel Aviv, 1961), 1:58–81. As part of his updated biography, Eisenstein included a bibliography of his unpublished manuscripts (78–79). Another autobiographical source is an audio interview that Abraham Krantz conducted with Eisenstein when he was one hundred years old: Judah David Eisenstein and Abraham Krantz, "Judah David Eisenstein Interview," Nov. 22, 1954, New York, American Jewish Archives, sound tape reel.

⁵¹ A list of Eisenstein's articles for the Hebrew press is found in *Otzar Zichronotay*, 380–81. He began his literary career in 1878, writing a regular column about life in New York for *Ha-Zfira*.

it, he recorded it, and he wrote prolifically about it. In his lifetime, he published a popular memoir of sorts that included the years he spent working on the *Ozar Yisrael*, yet he published no account of its development.⁵² There is, however, a document that comes close to explaining why he undertook the *Ozar Yisrael*: an address that he gave before the Ohole Shem Society (OSS) in New York City.⁵³ Studying the address and studying the OSS deepens our understanding of Eisenstein and the *Ozar Yisrael*.

An Overview of the Ohole Shem Society

The OSS, which was founded in 1895 and existed until around 1912, is significant for understanding the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁵⁴ The framework of the *Ozar Yisrael* resembles the framework of the OSS, and it was in one of the OSS's meetings that Eisenstein revealed his plan for a Hebrew encyclopedia. While its members were some of the most Jewishly learned Jews of the time, the society was not homogeneous, politically or religiously. Similarly, some

⁵² This was Eisenstein's most important literary project – it was a blatantly unoriginal idea carrying a blatantly unoriginal title. Knowing the context from which the *Ozar Yisrael* emerged and the expansive nature of Eisenstein's writings, why he did not leave an account of how the *Ozar Yisrael* developed is a mystery. The memoir literature hints at Eisenstein's large and poorly compensated staff. For example, see Jacob Zausmer, *B'ikvey ha-dor: Reshimot, masot v'zikhronot* (New York: Ogen, 1957), 116. Zausmer was a Philadelphia-based Hebraist who helped Eisenstein. Eisenstein's letters to him survived (and will be cited later), but Zausmer is not mentioned anywhere in the *Ozar Yisrael*. In his memoir, Zausmer does not mention working for the *Ozar Yisrael*, but he does complain that another Philadelphia Hebraist, Phineas Mordell, was omitted from the *Ozar Yisrael* and then adds (*ibid.*, p. 15): "However, Mordell was not the only one to be omitted ..." (ellipsis in original). An honest account would have to reveal the extent to which Eisenstein relied on help from others, and therefore he may have preferred to remain silent on how the work developed.

⁵³ The address is found in both the papers of the Ohole Shem Society and those of its longtime secretary Nahum T. London. See Ohole Shem Association Minutes ("sefer zikaron"), MS. 258, YU (Yeshiva University) Library, New York; and N. T. London Papers ("N.T. London/Ohole Shem Society/Ozar Yisrael"), MS. 645IV, YU Library. The former is a manuscript that appears to be in Eisenstein's and M's, and the latter is typed, apparently with the intention that it be published.

⁵⁴ Many papers relating to the Society are held at Yeshiva University, including the minutes from the first meeting, which took place on the intermediate days of the Sukkot festival, October 8, 1895. Eisenstein is listed as attending that first meeting. See Ohole Shem Association Minutes, MS. 258, YU Library.

of the contributors to the *Ozar Yisrael* were famous for their learning, but they too came from across the Jewish spectrum.

The *American Hebrew* described the OSS meetings in this way:

The purpose of the “Ohole Shem” Society is to avoid popularity. Its lectures are generally delivered in Hebrew, often in German, and sometimes in English. Its meetings are held for the oral interchange of opinions by students of Jewish literature and science. Necessarily, if popular interest in its meetings is aroused, it is accidental, not intentional.⁵⁵

And so it is that the OSS is almost forgotten from the historical record. But a printed and undated booklet, written in Hebrew and English, of the society’s constitution and bylaws has survived. The first paragraph of the constitution and bylaws sets out the role of the secretary:

The duty of the Secretary shall be to keep the minutes of the society, to issue invitations to members, for regular and special meetings and to furnish a report of the proceedings of each session to the Jewish Press.⁵⁶

For many years, Nahum Tuvia London held this position, and he loyally discharged his duties. Born in 1837, he only arrived in New York in 1895, according to one record. He contributed articles to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and to the first seven volumes of the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁵⁷ His lengthy minutes of OSS meetings, which were handwritten in Hebrew, and his general communication regarding the OSS are a source of information about the group.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ “Is there a Jewish History?,” *American Hebrew*, March 14, 1902, 520.

⁵⁶ Ohole Shem Association, *Constitution and By-Laws of the Ohole Shem Association* (New York: Baron Press, 1895?), AJHS Monographs, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁷ Benzion Eisenstadt, *Dor Rabbeinu ve-soferav* (Warsaw: Halter ve-Eisenstadt, 1895–1903), 5:62.

⁵⁸ N. T. London Papers, MS. 645IV, YU Library, New York. These papers are a treasure trove of information about Jewish life at the turn of the century in New York City. They include London’s communication with the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

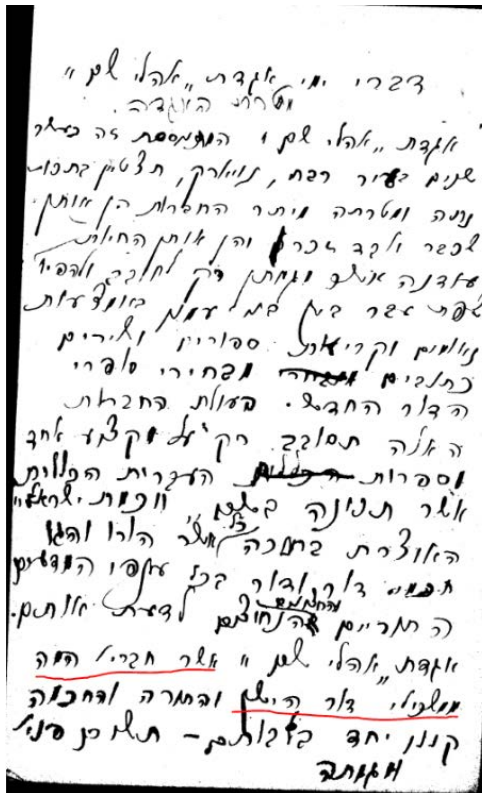
Another source of information is Eisenstein's memoir, *Ozar Zichronotay*. According to his account, the society was founded in 1895 and held its first meeting in the home of Adolph Radin. Eisenstein started off as the treasurer, but when the society was renewed at a meeting at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) on December 3, 1899, Eisenstein was listed as the vice president.⁵⁹

London wrote a history of the OSS that describes members as old-school maskilim,⁶⁰ and an examination of key members shows that London's description is correct. Herman Rosenthal, the founder and longtime president, was born in Friedrichstadt (Jaunjelgava), Latvia, part of the Russian empire, in 1843 and arrived in New York in 1881. He tried his hand at creating Jewish colonies in Louisiana, South Dakota, and New Jersey, and in 1898 he became the head of the Slavonic Department at the New York Public Library. He was also the editor of the department of Russian Jewry for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. In America, for a time, he edited a Yiddish newspaper, but his mother tongue was German, and when he gave talks to the OSS, he did so in that language. (This may explain why this Hebraist group in New York allowed for German: it was the native language of its founder.)⁶¹

⁵⁹ Judah David Eisenstein, *Ozar Zichronotay* (New York: 1927), 80.

⁶⁰ Ohole Shem Association Minutes, MS. 258, YU Library, New York.

⁶¹ "Herman Rosenthal," in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Herman Rosenthal," 10:478–79.



The first page of Nahum London's manuscript on the history of the Ohole Shem Society where he describes its members as "Maskilim of the Old Generation who have the Torah and wisdom both nested in their hearts" – MS 258

Another founding member was Simon Brainin, whose biography for the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was written by Herman Rosenthal.⁶² Born in Riga in 1854 with a Russified background, Brainin undertook medical studies in Berlin and returned to Riga to serve as a physician in the Jewish community, where he authored a Hebrew medical textbook. He emigrated to New York in 1895, and by the time the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was published, he was active in the County Medical Society, the German Medical Society, and the New York Historical Society. In 1904, Brainin served as one of OSS's two vice presidents. The other

⁶² *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Brainin, Simon," 3:348.

vice president was Adolph Radin, who was born in 1848 in Poland and immigrated to the United States in 1886. Radin had been a student at the yeshiva in Volozhin and studied at German universities. After immigrating, he became the rabbi of the People's Synagogue at the Educational Alliance and distinguished himself as an advocate for Jewish prisoners.⁶³

Men like Brainin, Eisenstein, Radin, and Rosenthal found the OSS out of a love for Hebrew learning, which they wished to share with others. There was a membership fee to join the OSS, and although non-members could attend meetings, they could only do so three times a year and only as guests of a member. For the forum to thrive, members needed to attend meetings, and invitation cards were sent to them in advance. When members skipped meetings, they informed the secretary of their upcoming absence. For example, from the archive, we learn that when Nissim Behar was unable to attend a meeting, he sent the following note:

NY, Jan 27, 1903

Dear Mr Secretary,

Kindly excuse Mr Behar's absence from tonight's meeting, as he is gone to Pittsburgh.

Very resp. yours,

S. Frank⁶⁴

⁶³ Brainin, Radin, and Rosenthal exemplify the people involved with the OSS. The N.T. London Papers (MS 645IV, box 5, folder 13) list Rosenthal as the president, and Brainin and Radin as vice-presidents for the year 1903–1904. Over the years, members and presenters of the OSS included David Blaustein, Reuben Brainin, Israel Davidson, Bernard Drachman, Abraham Baer Dubsewitz, Arnold Ehrlich, Abraham Freidus, Israel Friedlander, Louis Ginzberg, Jacob de Haas, George Kohut, Jacob Z. Lauterbach, Abraham Elijah Lubarsky, Zevi Hirsch Masliansky, Max Raisin, Abraham Hayyim Rosenberg, Max Seligsohn, Isidore Singer, Pinchas Turberg, Peter Wiernik, Aaron Wise, and Joseph Zosnitz.

⁶⁴ N. T. London Papers, MS. 645IV, box 5, folder 7.

Not to have informed the society of his pending absence would have been a breach of etiquette. There is a similar letter explaining a pending absence from David Blaustein (1866–1912), the superintendent of the Educational Alliance.⁶⁵ From other ethnic literary societies, one learns that these societies were not just a financial commitment—members were encouraged to attend meetings. Michael Logan, the editor of *An Gaodhal*, a monthly bilingual (Irish and English) journal, “published a column in which he praised regular attendees [of the Brooklyn Philo-Celts] and castigated those whose commitment he regarded as being below par.”⁶⁶ Public humiliation was extreme, and there is no evidence that it occurred in the OSS. Nonetheless, newspapers reported on happenings at the OSS, and the short note from Nissim Behar suggests that members were self-conscious about their attendance.

Eisenstein and the Ohole Shem Society: Between Old and New Hebraism

The OSS leaned toward a Hebraic Haskalah that focused on history, philology, law, and philosophy. This form of abstract Haskalah was passé by the 1880s, and its persistence in America into the first decade of the twentieth century shows that America was behind the times. Eventually, America outgrew this non-literary form of maskilic Hebraism and transitioned into the “new Hebrew literature,” which had already developed extensively in Europe. Writing in 1918, Daniel Persky described the late arrival of the new Hebrew literature:

⁶⁵ Ibid. The letter is dated April 29, 1906.

⁶⁶ Úna Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America, 1870–1915: The Gaelic Revival* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 41.

The new Hebrew literature hesitated to come to America. Twenty-five years after it ruled the heavens in Russia; still here the world continued as it was: the Haskalah literature remained standing in its fullness and strength. Only ten years ago was our new literature revealed here, and from then on it continued to mature in this land. After a challenging war, it conquered the land, and these last five years it is expanding with no one opposing or disturbing it.⁶⁷

In 1909, almost a decade before Persky wrote these words, the well-known Hebrew writer Reuven Brainin (1862–1939, not to be confused with Simon Brainin) arrived in New York and presented a paper on the new Hebrew literature to the OSS.⁶⁸ The written invitation to hear Brainin speak on Nov. 22, 1909 included one other point of business for that day’s meeting: to elect new officers to the society.⁶⁹ Perhaps it was thought that Brainin would draw a different crowd from the society’s staple of old-school maskilim and that this crowd could inject some new enthusiasm and direction into the society.

There is evidence that even before this, the Society was experimenting with a way to transition away from maskilic topics toward more nationalist ones. For example, on April 30, 1906, a Dr. Leon Kaplowitz delivered a talk on “Peter Smolenskin und sein Einfluss auf die nationale Bewegung” (Peter Smolenskin and his influence on the nationalist movement).⁷⁰ Yet a non-nationalist and maskilic orientation persisted, and later that year (November 27, 1906), Peter Wiernik, the editor of the Yiddish daily *Der Morgen Zhurnal*, lectured on “the

⁶⁷ Daniel Persky, “Ha-sifrut ha-ivrit b’Amerika,” in *Luah Ahiever* (New York: Histadrut Ahiever 1918), 1:63. A letter from Eisenstein to Persky (November 20, 1937) is preserved in the Genazim Archive in Tel Aviv.

⁶⁸ Although later in life he became less well known and he largely forgotten today, Brainin had an interesting career that spanned both eastern and western Europe, as well as the United States and Canada. At one time, he had been an editor of *Ha-melitz*, which was the primary maskilic journal in Russia. See Naomi Caruso, *Reuven Brainin: The Fall of an Icon* (Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee, 2007).

⁶⁹ N. T. London Papers, MS 645IV, box 5, folder 8.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

collapse of the new Hebrew literature in Russia and the outlook for its future.”⁷¹ Whatever attempts the Society was making to change its orientation, it was a case of too little too late.

While the OSS remained ossified in the past, Reuven Brainin and others⁷² found different forums to promote their new Hebraism. Alan Mintz’s *Sanctuary in the Wilderness: A Critical Introduction to American Hebrew Poetry* briefly discusses the American Hebraist scene that was on the cusp of change in this era:

For the Maskilim ... Hebrew was a venerated classical medium to be used for commentary and satire or for the sort of neo-biblical verse that lamented the sad persecutions of the nations. For the younger Hebraists, however, Hebrew served as a very existential and direct medium for representing the anguished birth pangs of the newly emerging Jewish life ... In 1908 they founded their own society called Ahiever among whose goals it was to create venues for publishing the works of young writers. Thus began a series of short-lived endeavors that eventually led to the creation of *Hatoren*. *Shibolim* was a biweekly that lasted for seven issues in 1908. In the same year, a literary miscellany called *Senunit* appeared, edited by Reuven Brainin, a veteran Hebrew writer who had recently settled in New York. Brainin also edited *Haderor*, which lasted for fifteen issues in 1911. Both *senunit* and *deror* are terms for the swallow, and their choice as titles suggests the combination of self-assurance and tentativeness that characterized the cultural moment. Although their accomplishments were still slight, they were a harbinger of things to come.⁷³

For Persky and Mintz, it is axiomatic that prior to the new Hebrew literature taking root in America in the early twentieth century, Haskalah was the engine of American Hebraism. Mintz, however, does not address why American Hebraism lagged behind Europe. This

⁷¹ Ibid. Peter Wiernik and Herman Rosenthal were co-authors of the entry “Haskalah” in *JE* 6:256–58.

⁷² E.g., Simon Ginzburg (1890–1944), Daniel Persky (1887–1962), Benjamin Silkiner (1882–1933). Not only were these men much younger than the members of the Ohole Shem Society, they also emigrated to America much later: 1912, 1906, and 1904, respectively.

⁷³ Alan L. Mintz, *Sanctuary in the Wilderness: A Critical Introduction to American Hebrew Poetry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 13.

question deserves our attention, since Eisenstein's *Ozar Yisrael* is a form of this old-style of Hebraism.

Persky is bewildered that American Hebraists were lagging behind Europe, and he asks: "How did we end up with this situation, that in regard to our literature, progressive America was so conservative?"⁷⁴ He explains the situation in two ways: First, maskilim who immigrated to America were those who were unsuccessful in Eastern Europe. When they came to America, they ended up in the newspaper industry, and not much could be expected from such people. Second, the Hebraist movement in America lacked youthful readers and writers. No young people were involved in Hebrew, and the older generation was not only old in years but also in its thinking.⁷⁵ This second answer can be developed.

The leaders of the OSS arrived in America as mature adults who had lived and experienced life in the old world. Had they stayed in Europe and not immigrated, perhaps they themselves would have turned away from Haskalah and embraced the new Hebraism. But now they were in America, and the political and social forces that shaped American Jews were different from those that shaped Jewry elsewhere. Once they arrived in the United States, they no longer faced existential threats. For those they left behind in the 1870s and 1880s, such threats were increasing, and it was harder for a Jew in Russia to adhere to a movement like Haskalah or be spiritually sustained by a *Hokhmat Yisrael* that was divorced from the concerns of daily Jewish life. The drive to transform Haskalah into another movement, like cultural nationalism, began in Europe and was more acutely felt there.

⁷⁴ Persky, "ha-sifrut ha-Ivrit b'Amerika," 65.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Eventually, it would make its way to America, but this journey would take some time.

The trajectory of American Hebraism, and of Eisenstein's literary career in particular, accords with the model for the development of ethnic literature that Robert Spiller outlines. According to this model, ethnic literature passes through four stages. It begins with personal writing, such as letters, autobiographies, and diaries; then progresses to the public forum of journalism and other nonfictional forms; then to "imitative" literature; and finally, to the creation of a new literature out of the community's unique experiences.⁷⁶

One of the few articles written about Eisenstein includes a translation of two of his letters, which were written in Hebrew to a friend in his hometown shortly after he arrived in New York in the 1870s.⁷⁷ *Ozar Zikhronotay*, published toward the end of 1929, grew out of a personal diary he kept shortly after arriving in New York in 1872.⁷⁸ Beginning in the 1880s, he wrote a regular column for various Hebrew newspapers, including *Ha-melitz* and *Ha-tzfira*, and the rest of his lifework was devoted to other nonfictional forms, from which he almost never "progressed."⁷⁹ The Hebraism of the OSS was also "stuck" on nonfictional forms, the same stage at which Eisenstein would toil for the rest of his life. Eventually,

⁷⁶ Robert E. Spiller, "The Cycle and the Roots: National Identity in American Literature," in *Toward a New American Literary History: Essays in Honor of Arlin Turner*, ed. Louis J. Budd, Edwin H. Cady, and Carl L. Anderson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1980), 3–18.

⁷⁷ Lloyd P. Gartner, "From New York to Miedzyrzec: Immigrant Letters of Judah David Eisenstein, 1878–1886," *AJHQ* 52, no. 3 (1963): 234–43.

⁷⁸ In the introduction to his memoir, Eisenstein writes: "The year 1872 is a fork in the road for me, between the past and the present. From that year I begin to lay out a chronicle that I wrote in my diary book for each and every year, until the end of 1928, which is the seventy-fifth year of my life" (Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronotay*, 4).

⁷⁹ Eisenstein did publish (at least) one play of his trusted friend and collaborator, Judah Leo Landau. See Judah Leo Landau, *Don Yitzhaq Abrabanel: Hizayon history b'hamesh ma'archot* (New York: J. D. Eisenstein, 1919). When the Hebrew press advertised the work, it stated that Eisenstein, the publisher of the *Ozar Yisrael*, published it in New York "on beautiful paper, and beautiful cloth binding" (*Ha-Zfira*, May 27, 1920, 4).

American Hebraism moved to the “imitative” stage, and later, new literature emerged from the community’s unique experiences, but these stages were carried out by the next generation of Hebraists. These Hebraists were not only the “next generation” because they were born later but also because they emigrated later. For example, Reuven Brainin was born in 1862, and based on his age, he should have fit in with the OSS crowd. However, because he did not arrive in America until 1909, from the perspective of immigration history, he was part of the next generation.

Even when (earlier) immigrants knew about the hardships their overseas brethren endured, in their daily lives they were removed from their suffering. Men like Eisenstein, Radin, and Rosenthal arrived as maskilim and became Americanized maskilim. Passage to America delivered them from searching for a personal solution to the Jewish plight. In America, where there was no desperate search for a Jewish political solution, an apolitical variety of Haskalah persisted beyond the 1880s and into the first decade of the twentieth century. Thus, although the OSS was shaped by the contemporary American experience, it was created and guided by men whose Jewish thinking was stuck in the eastern Europe of the 1870s and 1880s.

Eyes on America: Eisenstein and the Ohole Shem Society

On September 10, 1897, the OSS discussed whether to embrace Zionism. Israel Davidson (1870–1937) suggested that many other youngsters were Zionists and that if the OSS became a Zionist organization, they would become members. This pragmatic argument

failed to persuade the group, most of whose members were older than Davidson.⁸⁰ At the next month's meeting, Radin—who was more than twenty years older than Davidson—spoke against joining the Zionist movement. Paraphrasing the talmudic (and New Testament) proverb, he said that what the Zionists wanted was harder than driving an elephant through the head of a needle.⁸¹ He accused Herzl of building towers in the air and warned the gathering that Zion was the past and that the future lay in America.⁸²

In a letter to the *American Hebrew*, Dr. Michael Singer, Herzl's representative in the United States, wrote: "I could not give my sympathy to the 'Ohole Shem' because some of her members are anti-Zionists, and hence I did not visit her meetings."⁸³ The Hebraism of the OSS was not the Hebraism found overseas, where the need for a political solution to the Jewish plight was giving birth to nationalistic movements and marrying them to Jewish languages. The Hebraism of the OSS was the old maskilic Hebraism that belonged to a disappearing generation of maskilim.

In 1902, *The American Hebrew* stated that the aim of the society was "to foster the study of the Hebrew language and of Jewish literature."⁸⁴ This was something that could be done without promoting Jewish nationalism, and *The American Hebrew* often described

⁸⁰ N. T. London, "Divre yeme Agudat 'Ohole Shem' me-et hivasdah ad ha-yom ha-ze," MS. 466, YU Library, New York.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Later, Nahum London reviewed this page and added a note at the bottom. The note states that after the Kishinev pogrom (1903), Radin changed his views and devoted himself to the Zionist cause.

⁸³ Michael Singer, letter to the editor, *American Hebrew*, February 18, 1898, 479.

⁸⁴ "The City," *American Hebrew*, Feb. 14, 1902, 8.

those who attended these meetings as “maskilim.”⁸⁵ In an undated copy of the constitution and bylaws, there is no mention of any political affiliation. When Joseph Jacobs (1854–1916) presented a paper with the title “Is there a Jewish History?,” he concluded that there was no such thing, since Jews have no political history, and history is the relationship between a state and a subject.⁸⁶ Attendees criticized Jacobs, and Louis Ginzberg (1873–1953) and David Blaustein stressed the unity of the Jewish race. However, the fact that such a paper was presented and discussed shows that on the question of Jewish nationalism, the OSS endorsed no platform.⁸⁷

The topics presented over the years show that the OSS was not focused on contemporary Jewish life. These topics included: the law of evidence in biblical, talmudical, and post-talmudical literature;⁸⁸ targumim;⁸⁹ the life of Rabbi Akiva;⁹⁰ Philo;⁹¹ and the date

⁸⁵ For example, when it advertised a lecture that Herman Rosenthal was delivering to the society in German, it added “A discussion will follow in which many Maskilim will be heard.” “The City,” *American Hebrew*, May 30, 1902, 48.

⁸⁶ “Is there a Jewish History?,” *American Hebrew*, March 14, 1902, 520, contains a report of the lively conversation surrounding this talk.

⁸⁷ Jacobs was born in 1854, whereas Bluastein and Ginzberg were born in 1866 and 1870, respectively.

⁸⁸ Eisenstein was scheduled to speak, in English, on “The Law of Evidence in [the] Bible, Talmud, and post-Talmudical Jewish authorities” in October of 1896 (Ohole Shem Association Minutes).

⁸⁹ Herman Rosenthal spoke in Hebrew on “The relationship between the Samaritan Targum to the Holy Scripture, to the Targumim, the Talmud, and to Midrashim” on January 4, 1896 (Ohole Shem Association Minutes).

⁹⁰ Louis Ginzberg spoke on this topic on December 31, 1900 (London, “Divre yeme Agudat ‘Ohole Shem’). Ginzberg was also the author of the entry on Rabbi Akiva for the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Ginzberg, “Akiba ben Joseph,” *JE* 1:304–10).

⁹¹ Dr. Bernard Talmey spoke on April 24, 1905 on “Philo Judaeus and his Approach to Jewish Philosophy” (N. T. London Papers, MS. 645IV, box 5, folder 13).

of composition of the book of Kohelet.⁹² Occasionally, there were memorials or celebrations for important people affiliated with *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In 1901, JTS and the OSS joined to hold a memorial marking twenty-five years since the passing of the president of the Jewish Theological Seminary at Breslau and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholar Zecharias Frankel (1801–1875),⁹³ and when Solomon Schechter (1847–1915) arrived to become the president of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the society held a reception in his honor.⁹⁴ OSS celebrated the ninetieth birthday of Isaac Hirsch Weiss (1815–1905),⁹⁵ and the *American Hebrew* published a talk about Weiss that Eisenstein delivered on that occasion.⁹⁶ The society also celebrated the life of editor of midrashic texts Salomon Buber (1827–1906), bibliographer Mortiz Steinschneider (1816–1907),⁹⁷ Reform Rabbi and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholar Abraham Geiger (1810–1874),⁹⁸ and Vienna’s Chief Rabbi and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholar Moritz Gudemann (1835–1918).⁹⁹ The type of Jewish learning that these figures represented was the Hebraism that engaged members of the OSS. Almost none of the talks dealt with “the Jewish question” or the contemporary situation of

⁹² Herman Rosenthal is recorded as having delivered a talk “Concerning the Date of Composition and the Author of Kohelet” on April 14 1896 (London, “Divre yeme Agudat ‘Ohole Shem’).

⁹³ Jacob Goldstein, “The Zacharias Frankel Centenary,” *American Hebrew*, October 4, 1901, 505.

⁹⁴ “The City,” *American Hebrew*, October 10, 1902, 582.

⁹⁵ “The City,” *American Hebrew*, February 17, 1905, 397.

⁹⁶ Eisenstein, “Historian of Jewish Tradition,” *American Hebrew*, February 10, 1905, 355.

⁹⁷ “The City,” *American Hebrew*, March 22, 1907, 529.

⁹⁸ Israel Davidson delivered a talk “In Memory of Rabbi Geiger on the Thirtieth Anniversary of his Passing” (MS 569, YU Library, New York).

⁹⁹ “The City,” *American Hebrew*, February 17, 1905, 397.

the Jewish people. Instead they focused on history and Jewish learning and made almost no comment on the crises that faces global Jewry, This indicates how far removed the OSS was from the concerns of the East European Jewish community, which was searching earnestly for the meaning of, and prospects for, Jewish existence.

Aloof as it was from Zionism and the fate of the global Jewish community, the OSS was very interested in the American Jewish experience. Dr. George Kohut (1874–1933) gave a talk on some little-known chapters of American Jewish history,¹⁰⁰ Rabbi Bernard Drachman (1861–1945) offered a paper on an early American rabbi,¹⁰¹ and Israel Davidson discussed the growth of Hebrew literature in America.¹⁰² Abraham Shomer (1876–1946), who would go on to establish the World Jewish Congress, gave a talk on marriage and divorce that focused on husbands deserting their wives,¹⁰³ a problem that immigration to the United States exacerbated greatly.¹⁰⁴ In 1905, the society discussed how to celebrate 250 years of Jewish settlement in the United States.¹⁰⁵

If there was one member, more than any other, who was eager to lecture about

¹⁰⁰ The date of this talk was April 25, 1904 (Ohole Shem Association Minutes).

¹⁰¹ “The City,” *American Hebrew*, May 14, 1909, 39.

¹⁰² “The City,” *American Hebrew*, October 24, 1902, 643.

¹⁰³ “Mr Shomer gave his experience as a lawyer in numerous divorce proceedings on the East Side and pointed out some of the reasons for the alarming increase in such cases. The men generally immigrate first and are quickly Americanized, becoming estranged from the ways of the wife, who follows many years later. He also blamed two extremes—poverty and prosperity—as causes of the husband’s desertion” (*American Hebrew*, March 2, 1906, 463).

¹⁰⁴ See Bluma Goldstein, *Enforced Marginality: Jewish Narratives on Abandoned Wives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 92–129.

¹⁰⁵ Yeshiva University, MS. 258.

America, it was Eisenstein. When the United States occupied the Philippines, he delivered a paper on whether, from a Jewish perspective, the natives were covered by the rights and privileges of the US Constitution.¹⁰⁶ Another time, he spoke about the Jewish laws of disinterment and how they related to the state;¹⁰⁷ and yet another time, he spoke about responsa between Europe and the Americas.¹⁰⁸ His most prescient talk came in 1906, when he discussed his encyclopedia. At that time, no one in the room could have known that Eisenstein was going to produce the first complete Hebrew encyclopedia. However, after years of watching encyclopedias come and, mostly, go and observing how the OSS operated, he had a formula for how to produce his encyclopedia. Eisenstein had studied the OSS; he saw it operate in America while remaining part of a transnational Jewish matrix, and his encyclopedia would follow its example. It would be a transnational Jewish project whose American pedigree was unmistakable to all who saw it.

Transnationalism, America's Ethnic Literary Societies, and the Ohole Shem Society

The OSS was a Hebraist society and also an American phenomenon that was similar to other ethnic literary societies that operated in America during this period. The archives have preserved correspondence of a dramatic episode showing how different ethnic literary societies operated and even overlapped. Dr. Bernard S. Talmey was a well-known doctor and

¹⁰⁶ The topic was "The Annexations of the Philippine Islands from the Standpoint of Mosaic and Talmudic Law." See "The City: Society Ohole Shem," *American Hebrew*, November 1, 1901, 632.

¹⁰⁷ The topic was "Disinterment in Relation to the Laws of the State," *American Hebrew*, March 2, 1906, 463.

¹⁰⁸ See N. T. London Papers, MS 645IV, box 5, folder 13.

author who had worked at the Yorkville Hospital and was an active member of the OSS.¹⁰⁹ He had delivered a number of talks for them, including one on “Communitistic Tendencies among the Hebrews and Other Nations in Antiquity.”¹¹⁰ In the latter half of 1905, he delivered a talk for the OSS in German, and became desperate for Nahum London to send his manuscript back. Over the course of a short period, he wrote to London repeatedly, in ever more urgent terms, beseeching him to return the manuscript, if only temporarily. The reason he was desperate for his manuscript was because he was scheduled to deliver that very same paper in front of a different literary society, the German Literary Society.¹¹¹ The OSS was an *American* Hebraist society and therefore, it was natural for the same paper to be of interest to two neighboring ethnic literary societies.

Letters from Bernard S. Talmey to Nahum T. London

¹⁰⁹ The entry on “Medicine” in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* names Jewish physicians across the globe. Talmey is listed as a “pathologist” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 8:422. Some of his works include *Woman: A Treatise on the Normal and Pathological Emotions of Feminine Love* (New York: Stanley Press Corporation, 1906) and *Love: A Treatise on Science of Sex-Attraction, For the Use of Physicians and Students of Medical Jurisprudence* (New York: Practitioners’ Publishing Company, 1916). Bernard’s younger brother was Max Talmey (1869–1941), famous for being an early mentor of Albert Einstein.

¹¹⁰ “Communism in Ancient Jewry: Discussed at Ohole Shem Meeting,” *American Hebrew*, March 1, 1907, 438. This talk can be viewed as part of a broader attempt to turn away from maskilic topics toward those with a more nationalist—or practical—orientation. Talmey was himself uncomfortable with the advertising for this lecture, as the article reported: “In opening Dr Talmey said, that the subject of his lecture instead of being Socialistic tendencies as was announced, should really be Communitistic tendencies as Socialism in the modern sense could not have of course been known to the ancients with their institutions of slavery. It was hard to define Socialism, he said, perhaps the most pithy definition would be that given by one of the philosophers, who called it an “antagonism between the actual and the ideal state of humanity.” The spectacle of a medical doctor, whose professional specialty was sexuality, discussing communism among the ancient Hebrews captures the amateur nature of the Ohole Shem Society.

¹¹¹ N. T. London Papers, MS 645IV, box 5, folder 13.

N. Y. Oct 7 05
My dear Mr London:
Will you please return
to me my manuscript
on the Philosophy of
Philo and oblige
Dr B. S. Talmy
62. W. 126th St

N. Y. Dec 12 12
Dear Mr. London:
Will you please send me
the manuscript you still
have. I am going to lecture
on the same subject in
an oblar society and I
need the manuscript
Yours cordially
Dr B. S. Talmy
62. W. 126th St

January 17 06
My dear Mr London:
I was requested to deliver
my lecture on the affinity
between the Hebrew etc in
a German society and I
need the manuscript for
the translation. Please
send it to me. You may
have it afterwards.
Yours cordially
Dr Talmy
62. W. 126

DR. B. S. TALMEY
62 W. 126th St.

TELEPHONE, 528 HARLEM

NEW YORK, January 18 1906
My dear Mr. London:
Please send me the
lecture on the "affinity between etc". I
was asked to deliver this lecture in
"allgemeinem Deutschen Sprachverein"
and I have to translate it into German.
You may have the copy afterwards.
Yours truly
Dr Talmy

In *Building Irish Identity in America, 1870–1915: The Gaelic Revival*, Una Ni
Brohimeil argues against the idea that the Irish “brought little of culture other than the
‘culture’ of Catholicism” to the United States.¹¹² Her work retrieves a cultural revival

¹¹² Bhroiméil, *Irish Identity*, 8.

movement at the end of the nineteenth century and the first fifteen years of the twentieth century—roughly the same period that the OSS functioned. Similarly, among the Polish immigrants to Saint Paul, Minnesota, a yearning for Polish language and culture spawned a number of literary societies. While “the most important community events were religious,”¹¹³ by the end of the nineteenth century, immigrants established an ethnic literary society affiliated with the Polish National Alliance. It went under various names, including the Kosciuszko Society and the Enlightenment Society, and it held literary events and formed its own (mostly Polish-language) library. There was also the Union of Lublin Library Society, which described itself as a library and literary circle. Some of their events drew on “ritual and emotional intensity from the participants’ Polish (and Catholic) heritage, combined with a format taken from contemporary Anglo-Protestant Chautauquas.”¹¹⁴ Again, one finds another ethnic group, during the same period but in a different city, doing for their members what the OSS was doing for its members.

Two other examples, this time from the African American community, show how widespread literary societies for marginalized populations were in this period. The Bethel Literary and Historical Society was founded in Washington, D.C., in 1881 and remained active into the 1910s, and the Boston Literary and Historical Association was founded in 1901 and remained active into the 1920s. African American literary societies were driven by the belief that “association with literature was one way of definitively asserting a positive,

¹¹³ John Radziłowski, “Wojciechowow: Polish Immigrants to St. Paul, Minnesota, 1875 to 1925,” *Polish American Studies*, 63, no. 2 (2006): 54.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 52–53.

learned identity far removed from the intellectual poverty associated with slavery.”¹¹⁵ The format of the Bethel Literary and Historical Society and Boston Literary and Historical Association was exactly the same as that of the OSS. In all three societies, “meetings were focused around a formal presentation delivered by an invited speaker, and the audience participated in the program by taking part in the discussion that followed the lecture.”¹¹⁶ Karen Majewski’s *Traitors and True Poles: Narrating a Polish-American Identity 1880–1939* presents theoretical models that attempt to understand a “literature of turn-of-the-century immigrants [that is] all but forgotten.”¹¹⁷ Her work focuses on narrative fiction, but she asks probing questions that can be reformulated and applied to the different strands and strata of American Hebraism:

Was this Polish literature? American literature? Should these works be studied as artifacts? As examples of popular culture? As sociological records? Only with the rise in interdisciplinary studies, and with the recognition of a multilingual American culture, has a space begun to emerge for the serious study of works like these, from all of these perspectives.¹¹⁸

Similarly, it is simplistic to ask whether the OSS was an American or a maskilic phenomenon, and our understanding is deepened by rejecting these neat categories.

The OSS was another ethnic literary society in America. It inhabited a transnational Jewish matrix *and* an American one, as did the *Ozar Yisrael*. This interpretation dulls any

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African-American Literary Societies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 141.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹¹⁷ Karen Majewski, *Traitors and True Poles: Narrating a Polish-American Identity, 1880–1939* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2003), 145.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

question about the supposed aberration of a “maskilic” group that was out of sync with the rest of the Jewish world. When we evaluate the OSS solely on the basis of overseas trends and standards, there is a temptation to force it to fit into a framework of maskilic and Jewish history that ignores the local immanent forces that permeated it. Comparing the Hebraism of the OSS to overseas trends leads us to recognize the uniqueness of the society and the American context that impacted it.

No Time for Amateurs: The Decline of the Ohole Shem Society

Nobody announced the disbandment of the OSS. The last mention of its activities is in the *American Hebrew* in January of 1912.¹¹⁹ After that time, announcements and reports about its activity stopped. The decline of the society is linked to a maturing of Jewish life in New York City. Ethnic literary societies were for amateurs, and although they counted professional scholars among their members, they were not created for them. Not one of the founding members of the OSS held an academic post. It was a society for people from all walks of life brought together by their love of Hebraic learning. An exclusive forum for scholars who pursued knowledge as a vocation within an academic setting would not arise until 1920, when the American Academy for Jewish Research (AAJR) was formed. However, even before that time, academic Jewish studies was finding a place for itself in America.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ This was an announcement that “Dr Joseph S. Block will lecture ... His theme will be, ‘Some Thoughts on the Kol Nidre Prayers’” (*American Hebrew*, January 26, 1912, 389).

¹²⁰ For an earlier attempt at creating an American organization of Jewish academics, see Ira Robinson, “Cyrus Adler, Bernard Revel and the Prehistory of Organized Jewish Scholarship in the United States,” *American Jewish History* 69 (1980): 497–505. See also Kristen Loveland, “The Association for Jewish Studies: A Brief History,” Association for Jewish Studies 40th Annual Conference, Washington, D.C., December 21–23, 2008

The blossoming of academic Jewish studies erected a border between the scholar-specialist and the amateur-generalist. This rendered the OSS, with its mixture of professionals and amateurs, an odd and anachronistic venture to sustain. For example, Israel Davidson, Louis Ginzberg, and Alexander Marx were all members of the OSS who held full-time positions at JTS. They can all be described as professional scholars. These men represented the future of Jewish scholarship in the United States, and they were outgrowing the OSS. Even when they were members of the OSS, they were an anomaly. The society's "membership consisted mainly of Russian Jewish scholars, many of whom, although their names were hardly known in university circles, were deeply learned in Hebraic lore."¹²¹

1906 was a turning point for the OSS, because in that year its founder and long-serving president, Herman Rosenthal, relinquished the presidency of the group to Rabbi Bernard Drachman.¹²² Perhaps this was to be expected, for in 1905, when Nahum T. London wrote a retrospective of that year's meetings, he lauded their quality and lamented their quantity. To those interested in *Hokhmat Yisrael*, the meetings were enriching,¹²³ but this

(<https://www.associationforjewishstudies.org/docs/default-source/ajs-history/ajs-history.pdf?> Accessed November 8, 2018, 2–3). There are some parallels and divergences between the AAJR and the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS). For example, like the OSS, which declined in the same decade that the AAJR emerged, the AJS was "more inclusive and democratic in its approach than the AAJR" (Loveland, "Association for Jewish Studies," 9), and in this respect it was more similar to the OSS, which declined less than a decade prior to the appearance of the AAJR. Nonetheless, unlike the AJS, the OSS never sought to "delineate experts in the field by using its membership categories to establish boundaries between full-time rabbis and university professors" (Loveland, "Association for Jewish Studies," 5).

¹²¹ Bernard Drachman, *The Unfailing Light: Memoirs of an American Rabbi* (New York: Rabbinical Council of America, 1948), 266.

¹²² "A Unique Distinction: Rev. Dr B, Drachman's Election as President of the Ohole Shem Marks a New Era—American Jewish Scholarship Recognized," *Hebrew Standard*, November 9, 1906, 4.

¹²³ Ohole Shem Association Minutes.

could not reverse the fact that interest in the society was waning.

Meetings were held only when someone was willing to present a paper. As fewer people were willing to offer “popular” lectures, these meetings became less frequent. When in 1909 the poet Naftali Hertz Imber died, Rabbi Bernard Drachman wrote to Nahum London to say that the society should really commemorate his death. Because the OSS could not locate an appropriate speaker, this did not happen,¹²⁴ which is ironic, since at this time Jewish learning was expanding in the United States.

1906, the year the presidency of the OSS changed hands, also saw the beginning of a very different Hebraist society, the Harvard Menorah Society:

In their quest to redefine themselves as modern Jews, Harvard Menorah Society Members chose not to emphasize religion as the cornerstone of Jewish identity. These young men instead embraced Hebraism, which they understood as an identity grounded in scholarly study of Jewish history and culture.¹²⁵

On the surface, this was not different from the way the constitution of the OSS¹²⁶ described its mission:

The object of the Society shall be

A) To foster and promote the study of Hebrew;

B) To encourage the study of Jewish History and Literature.

The difference between them is that the OSS was the domain of older European maskilim,

¹²⁴ N. T. London Papers, MS. 645IV, box 5, folder 1.

¹²⁵ Daniel Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism: The Menorah Association and American Diversity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 15–16.

¹²⁶ The Center for Jewish History in New York City holds a copy of the constitution.

and the Harvard Menorah Society was aimed at the American university student. Thus, 1906 saw the decline of the amateur OSS and the beginning of the university-based Harvard Menorah Society. A trend toward professionalization and a focus on the university campus would continue.

As American scholarship was undergoing professionalization with the implementation of new standards of training, evaluation, and accreditation, so too was Jewish learning searching for a professional niche in the academy of higher education.¹²⁷

To that end, Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning was founded in Philadelphia in 1907, offering the world's first accredited doctoral program in Jewish Studies. The leadership of Dropsie always identified their institution with the early activity of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* that flourished in Germany in the early nineteenth century. And like the early vision of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, they had an apologetic agenda that sought full participation for Jews in modern society.¹²⁸

The development of Menorah Society and Dropsie reflected the growth and gravitational pull of professional learning in a university setting. For an amateur Hebraist Society whose membership was aging, this development meant that their future was not bright. Age was a key factor in the decline of the OSS, and by 1912, when the society stopped functioning, its core members were either dead or old. Eisenstein was an exception, for in 1912 he was “only” approaching the midpoint of his sixth decade and lived to produce

¹²⁷ Arthur Kiron, “The Professionalization of Wisdom: The Legacy of Dropsie College,” in *The Penn Library Collections at 250: From Franklin to the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Library, 2000), 185.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

many more works before dying a centenarian. However, by 1912, Adolph Radin and Simon Brainin, two past vice presidents of the OSS, were dead,¹²⁹ and the society's founder, Herman Rosenthal, would die in 1917.¹³⁰ While the date of Nahum London's death is unknown, he was born in 1837, which made him even older than all the others (although as late as 1910 he was still active in the society).¹³¹

Drachman's agreement to serve as the society's president is noteworthy. A love for Hebraic learning united him and Herman Rosenthal, yet they lived very different lives. Drachman was a rabbi who was known for his efforts to adapt traditional Jewish observance to American norms, and in 1908 he became the president of the Union of Orthodox Congregations of America. Judging by Rosenthal's funeral arrangements, Drachman failed to exert any influence over him. According to his wishes, his remains were cremated, and only members of Schlaraffia, a German speaking society, were permitted to eulogize him.¹³² The Jewish element of the funeral, a rendition of Kol Nidrei by a piano and cello duo,¹³³ offended traditional Jewish practice, which prohibited music at a funeral. Drachman had long been an active participant in the OSS, and together with Rosenthal is a good example of the broad spectrum of its members. As JTS embraced a more academic orientation, Drachman's role at

¹²⁹ They died in 1909 and 1911, respectively.

¹³⁰ "Death of Herman Rosenthal: Noted Jewish Author and Scholar Passes Away in Seventy-Fourth Year—Tributes to his Genius," *American Hebrew*, February 2, 1917, 416.

¹³¹ The Yeshiva University Library, which houses London's papers, gives his date of birth as 1837. The first pages of MS 645IV contain correspondence between Nahum London's son, Abraham London, and Yeshiva University librarian Jacob I. Dienstag about depositing his papers with the library.

¹³² "Death of Herman Rosenthal," *American Hebrew*, 416.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

the institution diminished, and by 1909, his departure from JTS was complete.¹³⁴ Thus, his taking the helm of the OSS coincided with the decline of his academic reputation.

The *Hebrew Standard* reported Drachman's election to the presidency with much fanfare. Touting his election as "a tribute to American Jewish scholarship," since he was "a native of this country,"¹³⁵ it neglected to mention that he was the only native-born American in the society and that after the arrival of Solomon Schechter, JTS demoted him as the dean of the faculty.¹³⁶ For the OSS to be revived, it would need to become a place where professional scholars reigned, if only because its membership base—old-style maskilim—were dying. Drachman understood this, and the *Hebrew Standard* reported that his wish was to "make the Ohole Shem the most important Jewish literary society in the country and to elevate it to the standard of the 'Die Gesellschaft zur Foderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums in Germany' and to that of the Paris 'Societe des Etudes Juives.'" For the OSS to remain relevant, it would have to become an organization for professional scholars, but Drachman was himself not a professional scholar and did not lead the way to the necessary change.

Ironically, soon after Drachman took over the presidency, as the OSS was on its way to becoming irrelevant, Eisenstein presented a talk to the society in which he introduced his

¹³⁴ Later he would join the faculty of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (Drachman, *Unfailing Light*, 258–61 and 368). Drachman was suspicious of Schechter and believed "his commitment to Orthodoxy was merely a strategic ploy to mask his real intention to carve out a distinctive path for a new form of 'Conservative' Judaism that would depart significantly from religious traditions." See Jack Wertheimer, *Tradition Renewed: History of JTS* (New York: JTS, 1997), 1:39.

¹³⁵ "Unique Distinction," *Hebrew Standard*, 4.

¹³⁶ Drachman, *Unfailing Light*, 184.

new encyclopedia.

Eisenstein Compares the *Ozar Yisrael* to Other Encyclopedias

On January 25, 1907, *The American Hebrew* advertised that at the regular monthly meeting of the Ohole Shem Society, “Mr J. D. Eisenstein, one of the editors of the new Hebrew encyclopedia will deliver a lecture on the subject: ‘Various Jewish Encyclopedias Compared.’”¹³⁷ In the years prior to the *Ozar Yisrael*, there had been two attempts to create Jewish encyclopedias, one successful and the other not. The successful *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901–1905) was an American venture that Eisenstein wrote for and critiqued.¹³⁸ The *Otsar hayahadut* was inspired by the Hebraist and cultural nationalist Asher Ginzberg (Ahad Ha’am) and remained an unrealized dream of Russian Jewry; with his choice of title, *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein paid cheeky homage to its failure.¹³⁹

The talk mostly revolved around Eisenstein’s disappointment with the sample volume of the *Otsar hayahadut*, published in 1906 as the *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret l’dugma*.¹⁴⁰ From his comments, one can infer the direction in which he was planning to lead the *Ozar Yisrael*. Every author feels that they are able to fill a lacuna in the marketplace of ideas, and

¹³⁷ “The City,” *American Hebrew*, January 25, 1907, 311. Interestingly, the same pages carried a lengthy article about a “discourse” that Dr Judah L. Magenes had given on “Achad Ha-Am” at Temple Emanu-El.

¹³⁸ For an overview of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, see Shuly Rubin Schwartz, *The Emergence of Jewish Scholarship in America: The Publication of the Jewish Encyclopedia* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1991). A list of the entries Eisenstein wrote for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, as well as the reviews of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* that he wrote, can be found in Eisenstein, *Ozar Zichronotay*, 382–85.

¹³⁹ For an overview of the *Otsar Hayahdut*, see Adam Rubin, “Jewish Nationalism and the Encyclopaedic Imagination: The Failure (and Success) of Ahad Ha’am’s *Otsar Hayahdut*,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3, no. 3 (2004): 247–67.

¹⁴⁰ Asher Ginzberg, *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret l’dugma* (Warsaw: Ahiasaf, 1905/6).

every publisher thinks shelves will make space for their publications. Eisenstein was a mixture of author and publisher, and his discussion of these other encyclopedias is an indication of the buyers and readers he was hoping to serve.

In this lecture, Eisenstein described the *Jewish Encyclopedia* in a manner that was neither unkind nor inaccurate.

A real encyclopedia is the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which was printed in New York in the English language and was completed by 1906. Truly, this work from the outset was done as an exercise in being “a prophet to the nations,” to enable showing the greatness of Israel and its glory in the eyes of the nations, and therefore it contains the biographies of great doctors and venerable political figures who emerged from Israelite origins even though they have no connection to Judaism and Hebrew literature.¹⁴¹

This upbeat tone was at best a left-handed compliment, yet it is unexpected, as in the past Eisenstein had mercilessly critiqued the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, even as he continued to write entries for it.¹⁴² His audience that night would certainly have included people who had worked on the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.¹⁴³ Speaking that evening, Eisenstein muted his perpetual criticism; he knew that the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was an irreversible

¹⁴¹ Two copies of his talk have been located. One is a manuscript in Eisenstein’s hand and is in Yeshiva University Library MS. 258, and the other is in typeset and is in MS 645IV, box 5, folder 10. The latter starts on p. 12 and ends on p. 14, and so it appears to be part of a galley proof.

¹⁴² Eisenstein’s critiques of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* appeared in the *American Hebrew*. For a full list, see *Ozar Zichronotay*, 381–82. On p. 320 of that work, he republished his Hebrew critique of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which first appeared in *Ha-Ivri*, the New York Hebrew periodical founded by Kasriel Sarasohn and edited by Gershon Rosenzweig. These critiques were not ignored. For one response, see Gotthard Deutsch, “A Last Word on the Encyclopedia Criticism,” *American Hebrew*, October 25, 1901, 501. This was not in fact the last word that the *American Hebrew* published from either of the warring sides.

¹⁴³ For example, Herman Rosenthal was the founder and president of the Ohole Shem Society; he was the head of the Slavonic department at the New York Public Library and was the editor of the department of Russian Jewry for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

accomplishment. And ever the pragmatist, he recognized that his words would have no impact on its success, so it was best not to spend much time criticizing it. Furthermore, now he was embarking on a collaborative project, and it was a time to build bridges.

Eisenstein stressed that the *Ozar Yisrael* would not be a translation of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

Regarding the publication of the *Ozar Yisrael*, whose first volume has already appeared, it would not be “right for a baker to testify about his dough,” but I will say that it is not a translation from the Hebrew [Jewish] Encyclopedia, either from it or a part of it. The inclinations of each work are polar opposites. Firstly, the reader should know that the change in language from English to Hebrew reduces the essays by two-fifths or forty percent.

This quote reflects the fact that there were rumors that the *Ozar Yisrael* was just a Hebrew translation of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.¹⁴⁴ This rumor reached New York and troubled Eisenstein enough that he denied it explicitly. While he pointed out some of the flaws of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, he avoided a meaningful comparison between it and his project. He asserted that the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was not made for Jewish consumption but for anti-defamation and external propaganda. Thus, its purpose was different from that of the *Ozar Yisrael*.

The assertion that the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was only interested in educating non-Jews about Judaism is unfair, but this was certainly part of its purpose. Writing about the creation of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Shuly Rubin Schwartz placed it in the context of the antisemitism of the 1890s, when the Dreyfus affair demonstrated that neither emancipation

¹⁴⁴ See I. H. Tawiw, See I. H. Taw,” *Ha-Zman*, October 13, 1907, 1ff.

nor assimilation could resolve the Jewish question.¹⁴⁵ The *Jewish Encyclopedia* tried to educate Christians (and Jews) about Judaism as well as countering Christian polemics.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the growing ties between liberal Jewish and Christian leaders forced Reform Judaism to justify its own existence, and it attempted to do so in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.¹⁴⁷ While not the only goal, one of the objectives of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was clearly Jewish defense and combating anti-Semitism.

Choosing to write in a Jewish language allowed Eisenstein to divest himself of the responsibility for educating the non-Jewish world about things Jewish. His mission was to create an encyclopedia that would only focus on educating Jewish people. Therefore, there was no sense in comparing the *Jewish Encyclopedia* to his upcoming project: they were written in different languages and had different goals. This argument contains an implicit criticism of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. A desire to present Jews and Judaism in the best possible light to the rest of the world was a central feature of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, but it is absurd to suggest that the *Jewish Encyclopedia* only set out to educate the non-Jewish world and that it neither aspired to nor contained educational content for a Jewish audience. Such a claim denies the *Jewish Encyclopedia* any educational mission aimed at Jews and reduces the project to apologia. In ignoring this aspect of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Eisenstein was able to avoid saying anything unkind about the work while simultaneously stripping it of a key objective: to educate its Jewish audience. He argued that he, and not the

¹⁴⁵ Schwartz, *Jewish Scholarship*, 2.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

Jewish Encyclopedia, was coming to educate the Jews.

An expanded Jewish curriculum, Eisenstein explained, created an urgent need for a new encyclopedia. Since *Hokhmat Yisrael*, Jewish scholarship, required general studies, a mastery of traditional Jewish sources was no longer sufficient, and more than ever, an encyclopedia was necessary:

An encyclopedia is a literary index, a tool and an aid in the hand of a writer for a searching examination. Sometimes an encyclopedia is called an *eshkol* [cluster] because it is a condensation of everything and includes everything, and whoever reads it learns all of Torah on one foot. The urgency for an encyclopedia is apparent to everyone, especially since the expansion of *Hokhmat Yisrael* that has added general studies. The path of brevity, which contains much, is the optimal way whereby it is possible to satisfy two commands: study of Torah and other wisdoms.

Eisenstein knew firsthand that in a modern democratic society, secular schooling was enforced by the government, and the amount of time available for religious learning was limited. This highlighted the need to master—or, at the very least, know how to access—material in ever shorter amounts of time. To that end, efficient methods of studying, mastering, and finding material would need to be devised.

Eisenstein made a similar argument in 1917, when he published *Ozar Dinim u-Minhagim* (A Digest of Jewish Laws and Customs):

At these times, lifestyles are confused and hurried, and the physical and spiritual needs of man are numerous. On the one hand, the yoke of earning a livelihood is placed upon him and is a millstone on his neck, and on the other hand, one must stand through the test of being a learned (*melumad*) man in human society—in these times, no time is left to study and consider all the specialties of *Hokhmat Yisrael*...

However, I have not compiled this book of mine for rabbis who decide practical law, for they will not find in it the many details and nuances that they need, for the purpose of my book is to assist working Torah men and *young*

rabbis [my emphasis] who want to know some law or custom on one foot without searching ... it will also help other rabbis who want to search after the source of some law in the Talmud and codes, for they will find here a list of books and source citations.¹⁴⁸

The reference to young rabbis using the *Ozar Dinim u-Minhagim* to look up a law while standing “on one foot” points to a belief that contemporary rabbis did not have the time or training to be proficient in synagogue laws and customs. Eisenstein had used this same phrase, “on one foot,” a decade earlier in the talk about Hebrew encyclopedias that he delivered to the OSS.

When he produced an abridged translation of the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Tamzit Shulhan Arukh*) in 1900, Eisenstein was driven by a similar concern. In the introduction to that work, he gave a short overview of various codes from the times of the medieval legalists Alfasi and Maimonides to the more recent work of Solomon Ganzfried, author of the popular abridged code of Jewish law the *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*.¹⁴⁹

About earlier codifiers, he wrote:

Without a doubt, each and every one [codifier] assisted his generation greatly in his own time ... in my work I have constantly placed before my eyes the current times and the newly created generation ... I have established everything according to an organized order in a way that will be easy to copy and sweeten the concepts according to their needs and the spirit of learning to which the youths who study in the general schools have become accustomed ...¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Eisenstein, *Ozar dinim u-minhagim*, vii.

¹⁴⁹ First published in 1864, the work had already enjoyed fourteen editions before Ganzfried died in 1886. See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (2007), s.v. “Ganzfried, Solomon ben Joseph,” 7:379–80.

¹⁵⁰ Judah David Eisenstein, *Tamzit shulhan arukh: Orah Hayim—Hilkhhot berakhot* (New York: Joel Aronson, 1900), iii.

The quotations above show two things. First, Eisenstein was a pragmatist. He described the reality that was before him. There is no attempt to turn the clock back to a world where people studied more, and there is no lament that such a world no longer exists. Instead, Eisenstein focused on “these times” when “lifestyles are confused and hurried.” Secondly, before he embarked on the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein had been searching for different ways to present information. The translation of an abridged *Shulhan Arukh* was a failed outcome of this search. The lecture to the Ohole Shem Society was delivered after he published his abridged translation of the *Shulhan Arukh* (1900) and before the appearance of his *Ozar Dinim u-Minhaigim* (1917). In this lecture, he described a growing need to master material while standing “on one foot” because of the new methodologies¹⁵¹ and additional material that one must master. Later in the speech, he claimed that an encyclopedia was “the optimal way whereby it is possible to satisfy two commands: study of Torah and other wisdoms.” A difficulty of the contemporary era was the fact that there was less time available to dedicate to Jewish studies, and an encyclopedia could help alleviate this problem. The *Ozar Yisrael* was to be a pedagogical tool for a generation bereft of the Jewish education of previous times.

An encyclopedia is a gatekeeper, and this role challenged Eisenstein. *Hokhmat*

¹⁵¹ This is an extrapolation, since in his speech, Eisenstein did not explicitly refer to new methodologies but mentioned:

"נחיצת האנציקלופדיה נראה לעין כל בפרט בהרחבת חכמת ישראל שנתוספה למודים כללים"

I have translated this as: “The urgency for an encyclopedia is apparent to everyone, especially since the expansion of *hokhmat yisrael* that has added general studies.” This extrapolation is legitimate, because applying general studies to traditional texts was itself a new methodology that gave birth to fields like biblical criticism, which Eisenstein viewed as a prime challenge for a Hebrew encyclopedia.

Yisrael had developed new ways of studying and explaining Jewish culture. Even if he did not mention it in his talk, Eisenstein had long been aware of new methodologies. In an 1886 article about the establishment of JTS,¹⁵² he laid out several changes that the institution urgently needed to make. The third change was that students “should study with their heads covered, and in all the ways of their study¹⁵³ there should not be anything that contradicts the *Shulhan Arukh*.”¹⁵⁴ It is possible that by “ways of their study” Eisenstein was not only demanding that their outward behavior conform to the *Shulhan Arukh* but that their method of study should not involve any heresy.¹⁵⁵ The requirement to cover one’s head, even for religious study, was not always universally accepted.¹⁵⁶ Eisenstein may have singled out this issue because Reform Judaism did not mandate a head covering.¹⁵⁷ Instead, he described a dual challenge: the amount of time available for Jewish education was decreasing, and the amount of material to master was—due to new methods of study—increasing.

Encyclopedias draw boundaries: welcoming accepted knowledge and barring spurious learning, they demarcate the borders of information. The expanding Jewish curriculum demanded mastery over more information, but it also challenged encyclopedias to evaluate ancient and contemporary knowledge. The way a Jewish encyclopedia supplied—or

¹⁵² The article appears in Eisenstein, *Ozar Zichronotay*, 206–11.

¹⁵³ The Hebrew is “*Darkhe limmud*.”

¹⁵⁴ Eisenstein, *Ozar Zichronotay*, 211.

¹⁵⁵ Heresy is mentioned in the *Shulhan Arukh*; see *Orah Hayim* 307:16, *Yoreh Deah* 281:1, and *Hoshen Mishpat* 425:5.

¹⁵⁶ See Dan Rabinowitz, “Yarmulke: A Historic Cover-up?,” *Hakirah: The Flatbush Journal of Jewish Law and Thought* 4 (2007): 221–38.

¹⁵⁷ See, however, Rabinowitz, *Yarmulka*, 232n32.

withheld—this new material would shape the contours of knowledge and the texture of religious belief.

Eisenstein argued that there was now a serious attempt, in Hebrew, to redraw borders that would affect knowledge and belief. Due to the *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret l'dugma*, what was authentic for centuries suddenly became apocryphal, and that which was unthinkable was now presented as the only way to think: the *Otsar hayahadut* had endorsed biblical criticism.¹⁵⁸ While Eisenstein cited *Otsar Hayahdut*'s inclusion of biblical criticism, in this lecture he did not deal with it in a meaningful way. He merely deflected the issue with scandalized disbelief that so shameless an attack on all that is holy could come from a Jewish pen. He complained that

the great principle of Torah from Heaven, he [David Neumark,¹⁵⁹ author of the *Otsar hayahadut*'s article on dogmas] denies, following the approach of Wellhausen and his colleagues of the "Higher Criticism," which "lowers" Judaism to the bottom of Sheol ... He also imitates the way of the New Critics, who philosophize over ideas that have no foundation ... And in this way he fell into the trap of the literary anti-Semites.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* had also presented biblical criticism, but neither in this lecture nor anywhere else did Eisenstein complain much about this.¹⁶⁰ What suddenly inspired him to

¹⁵⁸ In the years following the publication of the sample volume of the *Otsar Hayahdut*, the topic of biblical criticism continued to divide Ahad Ha'am's circle. See Allan Arkush, "Biblical Criticism and Cultural Zionism Prior to the First World War," *Jewish History* 21 (2007): 121–58; Yaacov Shavit and Mordechai Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn: From Holy Scripture to the Book of Books*, trans. Chaya Naor (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 373–89; and Alan T. Levenson, "In Search of Ahad Ha'am's Bible," *Journal of Israeli History* 32, no. 2 (2013): 241–56.

¹⁵⁹ David Neumark (1866–1924) was born in Galicia. He was ordained at the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* and earned a doctorate from the university of Berlin. In 1907, he moved to the United States and became a professor of philosophy at the Hebrew Union College, a post he held until his death. He wrote for *Ha-shiloah* was close to Ahad Ha'am, who appointed him to be the editor of the sample volume of the *Otsar Hayahdut*.

¹⁶⁰ Eisenstein knew that the *Jewish Encyclopedia* included biblical criticism. In a letter dated June 26, 1904, he

contend with this issue was the brazen and strongheaded way that the *Otsar Hayahdut* had presented it. The sample volume offered a glimpse of future volumes, and it did not portend good news for traditionalists. Biblical criticism was the only way the sample volume of the *Otsar hayahadut* approached the Bible. Because it struggled to respect multiple viewpoints, the *Jewish Encyclopedia*'s presentation of biblical criticism was more diplomatic. Where necessary, it contained parallel discussions for the same entry, and even when it did not strike the "right" balance, it was clear that it was trying to please everyone.¹⁶¹

For example, Emile G. Hirsch and Joseph Jacobs wrote the entry on the Pentateuch for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.¹⁶² They accepted the Documentary Hypothesis but ended the entry by pointing out its flaws:

The arguments by which Wellhausen has almost entirely captured the whole body of contemporary Biblical critics are based on two assumptions: first that ritual becomes more elaborate in the development of religion; secondly, that older sources necessarily deal with the earlier stages of ritual development. The former assumption is against the evidence of primitive cultures, and the

defended the Agudath ha-Rabbanim's condemnation of JTS: "You cannot blame the rabbis for their action, since Professors Schechter and Ginzberg, the leaders of that institution, are expounders of High Criticism, which is anything but Orthodoxy. In the seventh volume of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, article "Law, Codification of," signed by Professor Ginzberg and approved by Professor Schechter..." (J. D. Eisenstein, letter to the editor, *American Hebrew*, July 1, 1904, 180). However, this was not as much an attack on the *Jewish Encyclopedia* for including biblical criticism as it was another attack on the Seminary, which by 1904 was already a longtime foe of Eisenstein's. This is very different from his booklet "Critical Review of the Legal Articles in the Jewish Encyclopedia" (New York 1901), where he took issue with the *Jewish Encyclopedia* directly. (The booklet was a reprint of some of his reviews of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*'s legal articles that he wrote for the *American Hebrew*.) It is interesting that despite all his issues with the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, he continued to remain active in the project until the very end. Not everyone felt they could do the same. Bernard Drachman was an early supporter of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, but his entries are primarily limited to the first three volumes. Shuly Rubin Schwartz assumes that this was because he was unable to reconcile his views with the encyclopedia's (Schwartz, *Jewish Scholarship*, 164). Eisenstein's willingness to continue writing for a project that he doggedly pursued over many years is an example of how difficult it is to "label" or "classify" his ideological commitments.

¹⁶¹ Schwartz, *Jewish Scholarship*, 140, 159.

¹⁶² *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Pentateuch," 9:589–92.

latter finds no support in the evidence of ritual codes like those of India. Wellhausen's views are based almost exclusively on literal analyses and will need to be supplemented from the point of view of institutional archeology.¹⁶³

Only the most dogmatic traditionalist would refuse to entertain any mention of a theory that “almost entirely captured the whole body of contemporary Biblical critics.” Even so, the entry did not damage the dignity of traditionalists, who could point to the unstable foundation of biblical criticism.¹⁶⁴ This spirit of compromise was absent from the *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret L'dugma*, and this ignited Eisenstein's ire. Furthermore, one of the aims of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was to educate non-Jews and respond to a non-Jewish (Christian) English reading audience that used biblical criticism to advance its own theological, and often anti-Jewish, positions. On this basis, one could excuse its inclusion of biblical criticism. But this justification did not extend to a Hebrew encyclopedia aimed at a Jewish audience that had limited exposure to biblical criticism. For these reasons, it was impossible for Eisenstein to view the *Otsar hayahadut* as a positive development.

Eisenstein complained that the *Otsar hayahadut*'s article on dogmas was too much the work of a single man, David Neumark (1866–1924). Eisenstein would become the main driver of the *Ozar Yisrael*, and it is ironic that he would make such a complaint about the *Otsar hayahadut*. What truly bothered him was not that the *Otsar hayahadut* was the work of one man—indeed, the sample volume contained four essays by four different scholars: Zwi Perez Chajes (1876–1927), Ismar Elbogen (1874–1943), Joseph Klausner (1874–1958), and

¹⁶³ Ibid., 591–92.

¹⁶⁴ This was not the only time the *Jewish Encyclopedia* engaged in biblical criticism. According to Schwartz, “Jacob's entries clearly represent the high point of the Jewish response to higher biblical criticism in the encyclopedia” (*Jewish Scholarship*, 144).

David Neumark. What bothered him was its unflinching inclusion of ideas that he felt were not held by most Hebrew readers. He described Neumark as one who “created new dogmas that our fathers did not imagine” and stated that this was not the task of an encyclopedia. An encyclopedia should not “suggest new things” but only “receive and collate from the preexisting literature into a proper and orderly arrangement.” But this argument was a smokescreen. What truly bothered Eisenstein was the “inclusion of new dogmas that our fathers did not imagine.” Historically, this language was used to denote heresy, and it was the inclusion of heresy that troubled Eisenstein more than anything else.¹⁶⁵

Not only did the *Otsar hayahadut* contain subversive content, but its language was also problematic. Singling out some genuinely tortuous phrases, Eisenstein assumed that if he did not understand them, then the same was true for ninety-nine percent of Hebrew readers. And so he accused the *Otsar hayahadut* of alienating its audience with strange and unintelligible Hebrew.

Disappointed as he was with the *Otsar hayahadut*, this was not the only impetus for him to publish his own encyclopedia. Between the appearance of the *Otsar Hayahadut: Hoveret Ledugma* (1906) and the publication of the *Ozar Yisrael* (1907) was a small window of time, making it impossible for the latter to have appeared solely on account of the former. At the same time, the former inspired the latter. From the 1890s, Russian Hebraists wanted to create an encyclopedia, and they planned to call it *Otsar hayahdut*.¹⁶⁶ Eisenstein used the

¹⁶⁵ This is a common phrase used in traditional texts of excommunication. See, for example, the Vilna community’s 1771 excommunication of the Hasidim in Mordecai Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim: A Study of the Controversy between Them in the Years 1772–1855* (Heb.) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1990), 1:103.

¹⁶⁶ For an account of these attempts, see Rubin, *Jewish Nationalism*, 247–48 and 263.

same word, *Ozar*, to describe his project, and this was hardly an accident. Choosing this word sent a clear message: his *Ozar Yisrael* was replacing their *Otsar hayahadut*, and it would become the gatekeeper of information. If he made this defiant decision before seeing the *Otsar hayahadut*'s sample volume, its appearance strengthened his resolve. Luckily for Eisenstein, reports about his first volume rendered it more successful than anything his competition had produced. Even natural allies of the *Otsar hayahadut* were forced to notice this unknown man beyond the Atlantic who was implementing their dream on his terms.

Empty Promises: Encyclopedia Projects before the *Ozar Yisrael*¹⁶⁷

The *Ozar Yisrael* was part of a transnational Jewish matrix in two ways. First, it drew subscribers and writers from across the Hebraist world. Second, it arrived after two decades of failed attempts to produce a Hebrew encyclopedia. According to one account, between 1881 and 1918, “ten multi-volume encyclopedias and seven geographical compendiums and encyclopedias have [*sic*] served as a sources and as a tool [*sic*] for maskilim to explore their identity.”¹⁶⁸ Thus, by the time the *Ozar Yisrael* was published, the Hebrew reading public was agitating for an encyclopedia, which by now was a matter of a national pride.¹⁶⁹ Before the *Ozar Yisrael*, there was a series of earlier (unsuccessful) attempts to produce a Jewish encyclopedia. Lurking in the background were unhappy memories of failed attempts and

¹⁶⁷ The goal of the coming pages is to show that the *Ozar Yisrael* arrived at a time when there was heightened discussion about encyclopedia projects. An overview of the ideological differences between the competing encyclopedia projects is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹⁶⁸ Dan Tsahor, “Hebrew Encyclopedias: Objectivity, Jewish History, and the National Territory” (PhD diss., New York University, 2015), 1

¹⁶⁹ The best overview of the encyclopedia enterprise during our period remains Brisman, *History and Guide*, 2:7–34, but also see Rubin, “Jewish Nationalism.”

grandiose promises that always delivered little.

Cynicism about encyclopedia projects was widespread but did not extend to American initiatives. *Ha-Magid* reported the creation of the English-language *Jewish Encyclopedia* in 1900 and stressed the project's importance. The Jewish diaspora and literature spread across many lands and operated in "seventy languages." Even for those fluent in Hebrew or in German, much information remained available in other languages. Therefore, *Ha-Magid* argued that an encyclopedia was especially important for *Hokhmat Yisrael*, Jewish scholarship. Since English was the one truly international language, *Ha-Magid* was satisfied with the encyclopedia's choice of English. At the same time, it pointed out that despite serving the Jews of America and England, the encyclopedia would remain "sealed with seven seals" for most of the Jewish diaspora. The article ended with the hope that the English-language encyclopedia would succeed and be translated into Hebrew, something already done for works written in German. The article suggests that this time another failure would not emerge to disappoint the public. The industriousness and financial power of America could be trusted, and "our hope will not end in thin air like it did when the *Eshkol* began to appear in Warsaw."¹⁷⁰

The *Eshkol* was the earliest failed attempt at a Jewish encyclopedia in the nineteenth century. What was supposed to be general encyclopedia published biweekly in Hebrew booklets turned out to be just six such booklets. The first booklet was published in March

¹⁷⁰ "Encyklopedia l'Hokmat Yisrael," *Ha-Magid*, May 24, 1900, 5.

1888, and after October, the project was not heard of again.¹⁷¹ The next attempt at a Hebrew encyclopedia was the *Otsar hayahadut*,¹⁷² and it too would amount to very little—but not before much discussion and frustration.

The public first learned about the *Otsar hayahadut* when Asher Ginzberg (Ahad Ha'am) published his correspondence with the philanthropist Kalman Wissotzky in the pages of *Ha-melitz* in July 1894.¹⁷³ Ginzberg explained to Wissotzky why an encyclopedia was needed at this time and asked him to fund the project. Their published correspondence confirms that Wissotzky agreed and pledged twenty thousand rubles to the project. An editorial offered a robust endorsement, saying that the “‘*Otsar Hayahdut* in the Hebrew Language’ was a very, very necessary book,” yet it came with a caveat. Ginzberg asked the press to refrain from publishing articles about the project. Instead, he wanted feedback to be sent directly to him. Naturally, this did not happen, and the Hebrew press discussed the project at length.

In August 1894, Nahum Sokolow, writing under his pen name, “Nes,” published an article in ten parts in his *Ha-tzfira*¹⁷⁴ that was a response to the Ginzberg-Wissotzky correspondence published in *Ha-melitz*. In the first part of the article, he asked whether the totality of the sum pledged should be used for an encyclopedia of Jewish scholarship

¹⁷¹ In his study of encyclopedias, Brisman mentions the work in a chronological list of Jewish encyclopedias (Brisman, *History and Guide*, 105) but does not discuss the work. Tsahor discusses the importance of *Ha-Eshkol* in “Hebrew Encyclopedias,” 27–63.

¹⁷² Abraham Leib Shalkovich (Ben Avigdor) was planning an encyclopedia in 1891 but did not even manage to produce a prospectus. See Tsahor, “Hebrew Encyclopedias,” 66.

¹⁷³ Asher Ginzberg, “Ezrat Sofrim: Ozar hayahadut b’lashon ivrit,” *Ha-melitz*, July 16, 1894, 1ff.

¹⁷⁴ See Brisman, *History and Guide*, 367n42.

(*Hokhmat Yisrael*).¹⁷⁵ Sokolow argued that just because a donor has pledged money to a literary project does not mean that everyone must automatically accept it without comment. Common courtesy should not be allowed to stifle this discussion, which was so important to the well-being of Hebrew literature.

Sokolow suggested that twenty thousand rubles was a generous amount but was insufficient for an encyclopedia. He argued that nations with more developed bodies of literature—Russia, Hungary, and Sweden—had still not produced encyclopedias, and that therefore such a thing could hardly be expected from Hebrew literature. Furthermore, an encyclopedia needed to summarize knowledge, and many fields had not yet been investigated in the Hebrew language. Hebrew was hardly ready for its own encyclopedia, for it would have to “create” knowledge and even create new words.¹⁷⁶ For these reasons, it was better to endow a perpetual fund for Hebrew literature without designating for an encyclopedia.¹⁷⁷

Sokolow thought that if such great effort was going to be expended anyway, it would be far better to create an encyclopedia of general knowledge in Hebrew than one that was limited to Jewish scholarship. To that end, he favored reviving the general Hebrew encyclopedia *Ha-Eshkol* over creating a new particularistic Jewish encyclopedia.¹⁷⁸ An encyclopedia of Jewish scholarship would inevitably be either too large or too small, but a

¹⁷⁵ Nahum Sokolow, “Ma na’ase l’sifriteinu (I/X),” *Ha-Zfira*, August 14, 1894, 2ff.

¹⁷⁶ Nahum Sokolow, “Ma na’ase l’sifriteinu (IV/X),” *Ha-Zfira*, August 18, 1894, 2ff.

¹⁷⁷ Nahum Sokolow, “Ma na’ase l’sifriteinu (III/X),” *Ha-Zfira*, August 16, 1894, 2ff.

¹⁷⁸ Nahum Sokolow, “Ma na’aseh l’sifriteinu (V/X),” *Ha-Zfira*, August 20, 1894, 2ff.

general encyclopedia would expand minds.¹⁷⁹ At the end of his tenth and last installment, Sokolow offered two choices, one better and one worse. The better option would be for Wissotzky to endow a literary fund, and the worse option would be to go ahead with a general encyclopedia, but there was no justification for a Jewish encyclopedia in Hebrew.¹⁸⁰ Thus, after Ginzberg proposed an *Ozar hayahadut* and asked for no public discussion, Sokolow dismissed both requests and used ten installments to argue against it.¹⁸¹

After the project was opposed, Wissotzky reconsidered his generosity. In an open letter, he wrote that only if other philanthropists joined him would he stand by his initial promise of twenty thousand rubles.¹⁸² When no one came forward, the project was forgotten, until *Ahiasaf*, the Hebrew publishing house closely associated with Ginzberg's disciples, revived it and delivered the *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret l'dugma* in 1906.

After questioning the need for encyclopedias in the 1890s, Sokolow proposed a general encyclopedia in 1901. Hoping for funds from the Zionist movement, he proposed his encyclopedia to the fifth Zionist Congress in Basel, but little happened.¹⁸³ Two years later, he suddenly boasted on the front page of *Ha-Zfira*:

Today I am a man with an announcement to make. That to which I have lifted my soul for years, and for which I have worked with all my power, only now

¹⁷⁹ Nahum Sokolow, "Ma na'ase l'sifuteinu (VI/X)" in *Ha-Zfira*, August 21, 1894, 2ff.

¹⁸⁰ Nahum Sokolow, "Ma Na'ase l'sifuteinu (X/X)," *Ha-Zfira*, August 26, 1894, 2ff.

¹⁸¹ The Russian newspaper *Voskhod* also rejected Ahad Ha'am's proposal, and Sokolow discussed their viewpoint in his article, particularly in the August 23, 24 installment. See Brisman, *A History and Guide to Judaic Encyclopedias and Lexicons* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1987), 10.

¹⁸² Kalman Wissotzky, "Mikhtav Galuy," *Ha-melitz*, October 21, 1895, 1.

¹⁸³ See Birsman, *History and Guide*, 2:373n77 for the references to this attempt, and Tsahor, "Hebrew Encyclopedias," 97.

can I say about it that it has emerged from the abstract into something concrete, it is something ready and certain that has no more doubt whatsoever ... this debt I will pay. I have made a promise and I will keep it! ... I am the guarantor and the one responsible for this obligation of mine ... when I say that the matter is established, that its publishing is certain, it is understood that all the pitfalls have been removed. There is a permanent fund, there is a strong and solid foundation that no longer needs any sort of kindness. The encyclopedia is established!¹⁸⁴

Confident that others shared his enthusiasm, he said, “my heart is certain that the Hebraist community will rejoice in this announcement.” But his confidence was premature, and his enthusiasm was not shared easily or quickly. People were weary of empty promises and fatigued by those who spoke much but delivered little.

The biweekly *Ha-Zman* reprinted Sokolow’s proposal, not to stoke his ambition but to make it a ready target for their disdain. After presenting the proposal, the unsigned article began, “Clearly—it is impossible for a prospect not to exaggerate!” The article raised two concerns. The first was regarding the dearth of Hebrew writers capable of writing for a general encyclopedia—something Sokolow himself had argued only a few years earlier. The second regarded the possibility that an unrealistic dream—a general encyclopedia—would usurp the more modest and realistic *Otsar hayahadut*.

Whether this great thing will come to fruition—the publishing of a general encyclopedia in the Hebrew language—is doubtful, but it is clear to us that for the sake of this one, the publication of the *Otsar hayahadut* will be pushed aside, to our heart’s anguish, until the end of time. The people of Israel are impoverished of physical and cultural power; even in the “good days,” the publication of the *Otsar hayahadut* is not an easy labor, and what will be at a time when one encyclopedia is competing against another?

No doubt the reciter of the declaration will soon publicize more detailed information, and then, if to our heart’s delight it is proven that that we are

¹⁸⁴ Nahum Sokolow, “Encyklopedia g’dola klalit,” *Ha-Zfira*, July 16, 1903, 1.

mistaken and there is no place for feelings of doubt or despair that have stolen our hearts, then certainly we will accept the knowledge of the general encyclopedia in Hebrew with the same feelings of satisfaction that the honorable proposer has delivered it.¹⁸⁵

Usually someone's literary dream was not newsworthy, but an encyclopedia was a national project and not a private individual's plaything. A week later, *Ha-Zman* stressed that since this was a national project, there was an obligation to consult the public.

If the general encyclopedia is not a private affair but a public affair, then it is important to clarify before we approach the work which encyclopedia we now need for our nation and which encyclopedia the nation can support. Every project that comes to our nation with great fanfare but afterwards declines and dies causes much harm to our nation and to its "national affairs."¹⁸⁶

Around the same time, *Ha-Magid* voiced a similar concern. It worried that

although Sokolow's power is indeed wondrously great, nonetheless this matter still gives a bad impression, that the publication of an encyclopedia, the soul's longing of every lover of our literature, the only man to have accepted this upon himself—even one as great as Sokolow—is one who is burdened with other duties that are beyond a person's capacity.¹⁸⁷

Ha-Magid had predicted that the *Jewish Encyclopedia* would succeed because it was an American project and America had money. Indeed, the lack of financial stability in Europe led to general pessimism about its ability to produce an encyclopedia of any type. Of the times and its problems, *Ha-Magid* wrote:

Our age is an age of proposals; each one comes with a proposal in his hand. This one proposes to write an encyclopedia for *Hokhmat Yisrael*, and another proposes to establish a Sanhedrin, and a third an academy of Jewish studies. All these proposals, the way they are described on paper, are good and

¹⁸⁵ "B'mikhteveu Ha-Ittim," *Ha-Zman*, July 20, 1903, 1–2.

¹⁸⁶ "B'mikhtevei Ha-Ittim," *Ha-Zman*, July 27, 1903, 1–2.

¹⁸⁷ "Al Ha-Mitzpe," *Ha-Magid*, July 23, 1903, 4.

desirable, that is, as a theory that does not need to be translated into visible action. But when it is necessary to carry them out, immediately the impossibility of implementing them appears, simply because of a lack of money.¹⁸⁸

Ha-Zman also raised the issue of finances and whether Sokolow had the monetary backing that was necessary to create an encyclopedia. There was a rumor that a certain Hayim Tworok of South Africa had agreed to donate one million francs toward the encyclopedia, but *Ha-Magid* posited that this was nothing more than widely exaggerated gossip:

According to what was made known to the writers of these lines from a reliable source, the amount H. Tworok of Cape Town donated for the general encyclopedia is even less than a hundred thousand francs (were the “baron” to fulfill his promise!), and with such an amount, were a man to approach an edifice as great as this, it would be a joke!¹⁸⁹

After insinuating that Sokolow was inflating the figure raised from Tworok, *Ha-Zman* was ready to offer more details. A week later, it reprinted correspondence between Sokolow and Tworok from which the public learned that Tworok had only promised twelve thousand rubles—less than Wissotzky had pledged for a Jewish encyclopedia. *Ha-Zman* gloated over Sokolow’s naiveté:

It is almost impossible to believe the sight before our eyes! Does Sokolow intend to play a joke on us, to publish a Hebrew encyclopedia when there is only a foundational fund of twelve thousand rubles? Behold, with such an amount it is impossible to publish even one volume! We remember the great announcement of the honorable proposer that the encyclopedia would be one of the choicest in Europe, that it would be a general and Jewish encyclopedia all in one, and all of this with a sum of pennies!

¹⁸⁸ David Zemach, “Luach Ahiassaf l’Shnat 5663 (1903),” *Ha-Maggid*, August 13, 1903, 11.

¹⁸⁹ Makkabi, “Al Davar Ha-Encyklopedia,” *Ha-Zman*, September 8, 1903, 6.

Were this a business like any other private business, then we would certainly have no right to discuss something that has not yet come to life. However, as the honorable proposer himself would say, this project is not a private project but a national project, and also, this fund is not just any money but charitable funds—to the national collection. Therefore, when we see the loss of this money, knowingly, we need to ask for an accounting from the “reciter of the declaration.”¹⁹⁰

Sokolow’s plan was for funds to be raised through the Zionist Congress to pay for his encyclopedia, and at the fifth Zionist congress in Basel (1901), a resolution to establish a committee for the encyclopedia was passed.¹⁹¹ And so, his project opened itself to a double critique. One criticism was that it was a national project and that therefore, regardless of where the funding came from, the public had a duty to take an interest. Eisenstein would not be immune to this sort of criticism. The second criticism was that money for cultural projects was limited and that therefore if Sokolow wanted charitable funds for his encyclopedia, the public was right to ask questions. They needed to evaluate whether the encyclopedia was viable or whether the money would be lost to a failed project.

Anxiety about money was not the only problem facing Sokolow’s encyclopedia.¹⁹² At a meeting in Berlin that Sokolow convened, Dr. Abraham Berliner of the Orthodox Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary expressed confidence that when it came to the entries on biblical and talmudical criticism, Sokolow’s planned encyclopedia would abide by traditional

¹⁹⁰ Makkabi, “Al Davar Ha-Encyklopedia,” *Ha-Zman*, September 13, 1903, 5.

¹⁹¹ Brisman, *History and Guide*, 2:15.

¹⁹² So ubiquitous was the problem of funding that in her “Editor’s Note” in the *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 5, no. 3 (2006): 267—an issue devoted to encyclopedias (which did not mention the *Ozar Yisrael*)—Glenda Abramson remarked that “funding is now, as it was then, a constant and insoluble problem. As we see from the essays in this Special Issue, in the early years of this (sic!) century the editors were obliged to spend much of their time and energy seeking financial help, which some received from devoted supporters.”

beliefs. This allowed his faithful colleagues to participate in this national project. Sokolow responded by saying that to

questions about Torah and belief, one will not find solutions in guesses that are far-removed from that which is agreed upon and recognized and that hang on nothing. The encyclopedia will explain its entries through demonstrable, certain, and clear foundations that are beyond any doubt.¹⁹³

Biblical and talmudical criticism were always going to be a challenge, and Berliner raised this issue at the very outset. He posited that whether he and his colleagues could participate in the encyclopedia depended on this sensitive question.¹⁹⁴ Knowing what a loaded issue this was, Sokolow avoided it. His attempt at an encyclopedia fizzled out, so it is not known how he would have handled the topic.

In 1903, as some were mocking Sokolow's plan, Akhiasaf, the literary group and publishing house associated with Ginzberg's disciples, was reviving the *Otsar hayahadut*. Setting up offices in Warsaw and Berlin, they named Dr. Joseph Klausner editor-in-chief and Dr. David Neumark assistant editor of the project.¹⁹⁵ Klausner and Neumark announced the project in *Ha-shiloah* under the heading "To the Lovers of Hebrew Literature."¹⁹⁶ This was to be a transnational project, with satellite offices in England, Italy, and the United States to aid their main offices in Warsaw and Berlin. They revealed that they were preparing an

¹⁹³ Nahum Sokolow, "Ha-encyklopedia ha-ivrit," *Ha-Zman*, December 4, 1903, 12.

¹⁹⁴ Abraham Berliner was not a contributor to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* or the *Ozar Yisrael*. In the latter, he has his own entry, which Eisenstein wrote. See Judah David Eisenstein, "Berliner, Avraham (Adolf)," *OY* 3:213.

¹⁹⁵ Brisman, *History and Guide*, 2:12.

¹⁹⁶ Joseph Klausner and David Neumark, "El hoveve ha-sifrut ha-ivrit!—'Otsar hayahadut,'" *Ha-shiloah* 13 (1903): 482–84.

alphabetical index and that they would be releasing a sample volume shortly. Finally, they appealed for financial support. They possessed twenty-three thousand rubles, but this amount was not enough, and they were now looking for subscribers and donors.

What they promised would be arriving shortly arrived three years later, when they published the sample volume in 1906, and afterward the project quietly died. Brisman pointed out that Ginzberg himself was unhappy with the *Otsar hayahadut* and that his “disillusionment ... and a devastating criticism [in *Ha-shiloah*] together with the difficult economic situation that had developed in Russia after the revolutionary years of 1905–1906, were the final nails in the coffin” of the *Otsar hayahadut*.¹⁹⁷ Thus, Eisenstein inserted himself and his encyclopedia into a milieu that was ripe for such a work. He did not have to convince anyone that there was a need for what he was trying to do. Failed attempts and two decades of haggling in the Hebrew press had prepared the way for him. The public wanted an encyclopedia, and Eisenstein was going to give it to them. By doing so, he was bringing America into a transnational Jewish conversation.

An Initial Reaction to the *Otsar Hayahadut* and the *Ozar Yisrael*

While taking inspiration from the competition, Eisenstein was not candid about the existence of a competitor.¹⁹⁸ Both sides of the Atlantic were trying to do the same thing—

¹⁹⁷ Brisman, 13 and 317–72. A much fuller account of the attempt to revive the *Otsar Hayahadut* can be found in Tsahor, 101–22.

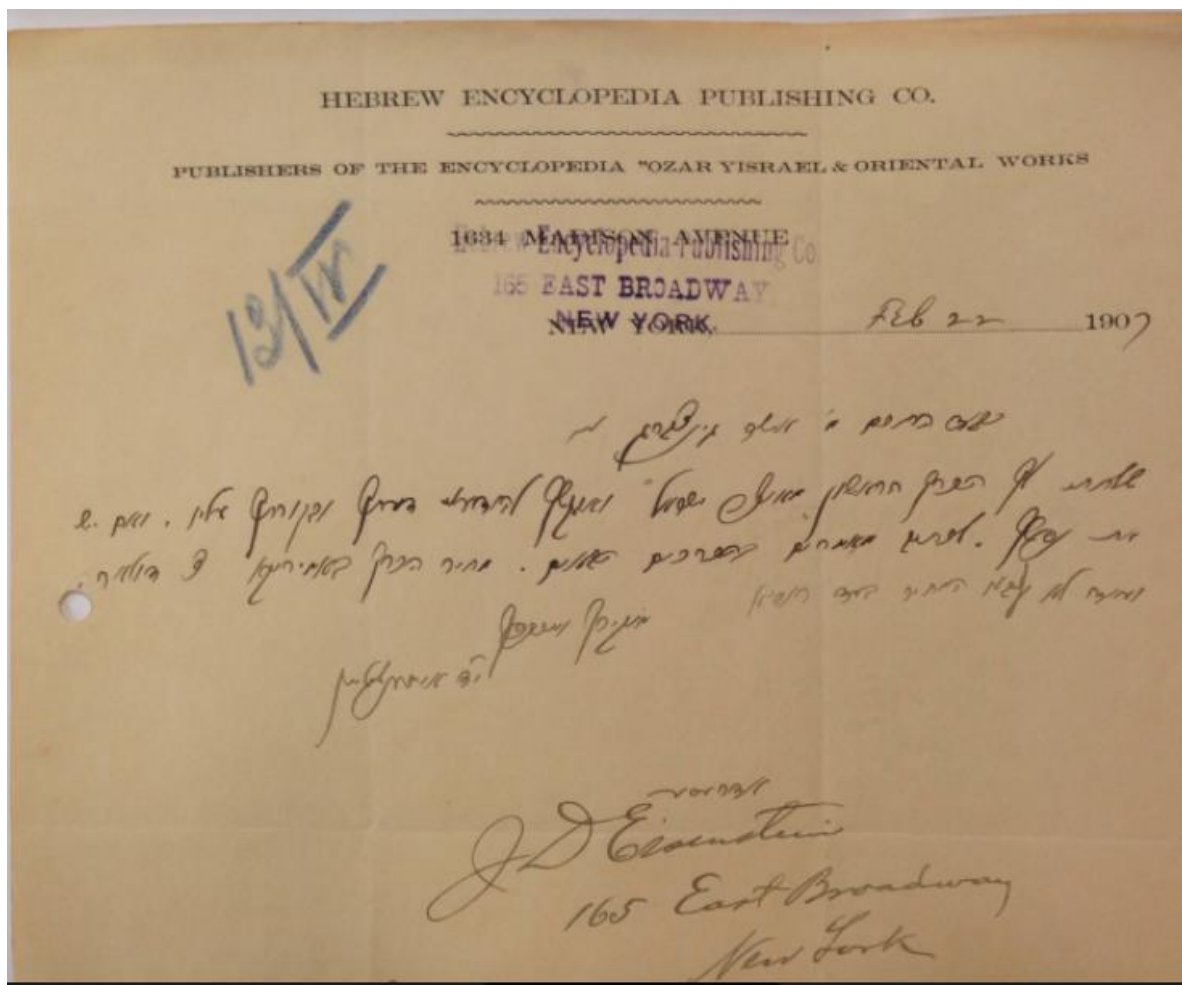
¹⁹⁸ Eisenstein was a keen political operator, and he was aware of the competition. Among the papers of Ahad Ha'am is an ambitious letter from Eisenstein requesting that Ahad Ha'am become a contributor to the *Ozar Yisrael*. On February 22, 1907, Eisenstein, having already sent Ahad Ha'am the first volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, wrote to him: “I ask of you to inform me of your opinion and criticism about it. And if you would like to write some entries for the upcoming volumes.” Ahad Ha'am did not write for the *Ozar Yisrael*; whether he sent Eisenstein his opinion of the work is unknown. Eisenstein also informed Ahad Ha'am of what the work cost in New York but said that a price for Russia has not yet been set. This implied that that Ahad Ha'am should

they were in a race—although only the losing side admitted as much out loud. It was natural to compare these two ventures, which appeared around the same time. Just as broad support for the *Otsar hayahadut* would be a problem for the *Ozar Yisrael*,¹⁹⁹ disappointment in it encouraged Eisenstein.

pay for the unsolicited volume that Eisenstein sent him. The letter is found in the Ahad Ha'am Archive in the National Library of Israel (NLI), Jerusalem (ARC. 4*791 1 717).

¹⁹⁹ Ahad Ha'am's view of biblical criticism is complicated and beyond the scope of this dissertation. It is plausible that he was undecided about the *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret l'dugma*—he offered no opinion on it that I could locate. His silence about a project that he initiated is difficult to parse and leads one to suspect that he may have not had a firm opinion to offer or that he was in a quandary about the advisability of voicing his opinion.

Among the papers of Ahad Ha'am is a letter (May 10, 1906) from Solomon Schechter to Ahad Ha'am's disciple Abraham Elijah Lubarsky, who was living in the United States. How this letter to Lubarsky (sent from New York and received in New York) ended up with the papers of Ahad Ha'am is unknown, although it is possible that Lubarsky canvassed it for the purpose of sending it to Ahad Ha'am. The letter contains Schechter's assessment of the sample volume of the *Otsar hayahadut*, after Lubarsky had sent him a copy and asked him for his opinion of it. Schechter seems to be aware of the possibility that Ahad Ha'am would see the letter, for he lavishes the most generous praise on him, and it almost appears as if he is speaking directly to him. Schechter wrote favorably about the article by Neumark (he referred to it by the Hebrew phrase עדי עדיית, "crème de la crème") and directed his harshest criticism at the entry on Amos that Zwi Perez Chajes wrote. However, Schechter ended with an ultimatum that if at present it was impossible to create the *Otsar hayahadut* without relying on the approach of Wellhausen, then it was better to have no *Otsar* and wait until writers thought differently, for in the end the truth (that Wellhausen's approach was wrong) would be victorious. A note at the end of the letter states: "Do not think that I will go out to quarrel with the editors or I will damage them in some way, for this is not my approach, and certainly not when Ahad Ha'am is keen on its success. However, I have desired to tell you why I will keep my distance [from the *Otsar*] and am not able to get involved with them. The *Otsar*, in my opinion, is able to be scientific to all [word missing] without the approach of the [biblical] critics mentioned earlier, noticeable from its each and every line" (Solomon Schechter to Abraham Elijah Lubarsky, Ahad Ha'am Archive, ARC: 4*791 1 46, NLI, Jerusalem).



Letter from Eisenstein to Ahad Ha'am regarding the Ozar Yisrael.

The journal *Ha-shiloah* was founded by Asher Ginzberg in 1896, and around the same time that Eisenstein offered an oral exposé of Hebrew encyclopedias to the OSS, Ginzberg's circle was doing something similar. In this journal, Hayyim Tchernowitz (Rav Tzair) reviewed the *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret l'dugma*. Although he was not a contributor to the *Ozar Yisrael*, and there is no proof that Eisenstein asked him to write for it, his profile should have made him a natural ally for Eisenstein. He was a maskilic rabbi who was close to

Ahad Ha'am and rejected secularism and biblical criticism, and his review of the sample volume was respectful but devastating.²⁰⁰

Comparing *Ozar* to *Otsar*, Tchernowitz admitted to admiring the *Ozar Yisrael*, and he contrasted its success—wrought in America—to the troubles that plagued the *Otsar hayahadut*.

In the period of time that passed from the day that the idea of an *Otsar hayahadut* in the Hebrew language was born in the thoughts of Ahad Ha'am, the children of America have managed to publish an Israelite encyclopedia in the English language in twelve large tomes. Against our will, we must say that this encyclopedia, with all its failings, is in the very end a book of great intrinsic value. At the very least it will serve as very important material for an encyclopedia that will appear at some time in Hebrew. Now the American Jews have drawn close to publishing *Ozar Yisrael* in the Hebrew language, and as one can judge from the first volume, which appeared just now, this book will also bring, even though most of it is not original,²⁰¹ noticeable assistance in the form of a usable book for a great portion of our nation, and many entries, especially the talmudical entries, have been written for it with great seriousness and knowledge of the topics, which the authors of the entries have come to consider, and it is also presented in a manner that is light, easy, and understandable. All this was done quietly, by the hands of men who are not so well-known to the community of Hebrew readers, and without any complaints or requests from the Jewish community. This is what those who are capable say and do.²⁰²

Seeing others have confidence in his project encouraged Eisenstein to think that his goal of completing a Hebrew encyclopedia was within reach. However, Tchernowitz's confidence was unjustified, for Eisenstein had only produced one lone volume, and multivolume

²⁰⁰ The review appeared in two installments, and I was not able to ascertain the months when they appeared, only the (yearly) volume in which they appeared. See Tchernowitz, "Hoveret l'Dugma," 381–86 and 562–72.

²⁰¹ This could be another example of the rumor that the *Ozar Yisrael* was but a translation into Hebrew of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, an accusation that Eisenstein rebuffed in his talk to the Ohole Shem Society.

²⁰² Tchernowitz, "Hoveret L'Dugma," 381.

ventures often failed. Therefore, this prediction was remarkable for its accuracy, especially since Tchernowitz appears not to have previously known of Eisenstein, and the review never mentions him by name. This praise for the *Ozar Yisrael*, on the basis of almost nothing, was used as a foil to highlight the failure of the *Otsar hayahadut*. That a relatively unknown Hebrew writer could produce an encyclopedia was an embarrassment to a truly central figure like Ahad Ha'am and his disciples.

What led Tchernowitz to believe that this encyclopedia would succeed had less to do with Eisenstein and more to do with America. For Tchernowitz, America was a wondrous place that could accomplish this feat and allow unknown men to best famous writers at their own game. America was allowing Eisenstein to implement someone else's dream on his terms, for America was home to those capable of word *and* deed. Although the *Ozar Yisrael* was written in Hebrew for a transnational diaspora, it was perceived as having an American heritage.



Image from the introduction to Vol. I of the *Ozar Yisrael*

The *Ozar Yisrael* propagated this impression, and its introduction showed a well-dressed man

standing in America and extending a copy of the work to a well-dressed man standing in Europe. Next to the image was the word “conservative” written in bold Hebrew letters. What Eisenstein meant by the word “conservative” is difficult to know. The encyclopedia would offer a conservative interpretation of Judaism, but at the beginning of the twentieth century, this phrase was vague and undefined. A recent work has argued that the very phrase “Conservative Judaism” only became distinctly meaningful in the second half of the twentieth century.²⁰³ “Conservative” may have suggested that this was not a work that would introduce unknown ideas that would trouble readers. It would expand the reader’s knowledge without changing their worldview.

Eisenstein’s primary issue with the *Otsar hayahadut* was the article by Neumark that embraced biblical criticism. Tchernowitz also struggled with this element of the *Otsar hayahadut*:

I do not lay a complaint against him [Neumark] that he made space in his essay for open enquiry of the Holy Scriptures. I also admit that in a popular work, one also needs to leave room for enquiry into the TaNaKh, for this is a large discipline that many Jewish and Christian savants have dealt with, and it is impossible to skip over it silently. However, we need to recognize that this study is still young, and it still does not have a stable foundation, because almost exclusively non-Jewish savants have dealt with it, whereby almost all of them debated it from their own perspective, that is, from a point of opposition to Judaism, while Jewish savants have not yet evaluated it from the perspective of Judaism and have only critiqued the words of the Christian savants a little.²⁰⁴

To the question of whether biblical criticism should be included in the *Otsar hayahadut*

²⁰³ Michael R. Cohen, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter’s Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 382–83.

Tchernowitz offered a meek “yes” that was quickly restrained by an unambiguous disclaimer. Eisenstein developed a similar approach to this controversial topic, as will be demonstrated later.

Eisenstein’s talk to the OSS was advertised on January 27, 1907.²⁰⁵ Tchernowitz’s critique of the *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret l’dugma* also appeared some time in 1907. Both were uncomfortable with the biblical criticism they found in the *Otsar hayahadut*. It is difficult to determine whether Eisenstein saw Tchernowitz’s review in *Ha-shiloah* before preparing his talk²⁰⁶ or whether any similarity is a coincidence, but regardless, the outcome is the same. On this topic, he found agreement with a leading, if more complex, voice of the cultural nationalists.

Therefore, Eisenstein’s polemic against the *Otsar hayahadut*’s acceptance of biblical criticism cannot be dismissed as the narrow perspective of a pious Jew out of touch with a new scientific approach. Proponents of the *Otsar hayahadut* who longed to see the work succeed were also upset, believing that the sample volume had gone too far and with too much gusto into a topic that was taboo. When one considers that Joseph Klausner, who was both the editor of *Ha-shiloah* and the editor of the sample volume of *Otsar hayahadut*,

²⁰⁵ “The City,” *American Hebrew*, January 25, 1907, 311.

²⁰⁶ The relationship between America and *Ha-shiloah* is another chapter in the history of American Hebraism that is waiting to be explored. The journal showed some interest in America, and similarly, there was some interest from America in the journal. In the Ahad Ha’am Archive at the National Library of Israel are letters sent from America to Ahad Ha’am requesting subscriptions to *Ha-shiloah* (ARC. 4* 791 1 274 and ARC. 4* 791 1 967). One of those letters came from a young Max Raisin, who also published articles about America in *Ha-shiloah*. For example, see Max Raisin, “Jews and Jews in America” (Heb.), *Ha-shiloah* 4 (1898): 169ff, 468ff, and 569ff. Max’s brother, Jacob Raisin, was a contributor to the *Ozar Yisrael*. See Michael A. Meyer, “Two Anomalous Reform Rabbis: The Brothers Jacob and Max Raisin,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 68, no. 2 (2016): 1–33.

published an initial review that questioned the appropriateness of biblical criticism in the *Otsar hayahadut*, one is led to consider whether the average Hebrew-reading Jew of 1907 would pay for the privilege of learning that his Holy Scripture was a composite of multiple sources from different periods.

The question posed above is ordinary, unlearned, and anti-academic. Scholars are tasked with writing articles and searching for the truth, and to them, what to include in an encyclopedia should only be a scholastic question. However, for the entrepreneur or publisher tasked with selling encyclopedias, what to include in them is a commercial question. Eisenstein was an amateur scholar, but he was also a businessman and the driving force behind the *Ozar Yisrael*; he needed to ensure its financial viability.²⁰⁷ Despite the philanthropic support it enjoyed, it was well known that the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was plagued with money woes, and Eisenstein would have known of these troubles.²⁰⁸ The *Ozar Yisrael* was a private venture that enjoyed no communal support; it could not afford to be in a similar predicament.

Jacob Schiff gave financial support to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*,²⁰⁹ and in a letter to Jacob Zausmer, Eisenstein related that originally, he too had sought some modest backing from the famous tycoon. According to the letter, upon publication of the first volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein sent Schiff a copy and asked him to become a subscriber. Schiff

²⁰⁷ Initially, Eisenstein shared the project's financial burden with Hersh Bernstein, but shortly after the project began, Bernstein died and Eisenstein became the project's sole owner. See Shimeon Brisman, *A History and Guide to Judaic Encyclopedias and Lexicons* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1987), 2:38.

²⁰⁸ Schwartz deals with the financial troubles of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (*Jewish Scholarship*, 60–79).

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

replied that he was willing to purchase a set—after Eisenstein completed it. Eisenstein remarked to Zausmer that once the encyclopedia was complete, he would no longer need support from Schiff or anyone else of his ilk, and that if everyone behaved as Schiff had, then he would have never proceeded beyond the first volume, whereas now, in 1911, five volumes were already finished.²¹⁰ From the outset, Eisenstein internalized a hard truth: producing a Jewish encyclopedia, even with the backing of philanthropic benefactors, was risky. Knowing this, he created an affordable product and marketed it to people across the world; this was the only way he could produce a successful encyclopedia.

Overseas opponents ridiculed the *Ozar Yisrael* for exuding crass commercialism,²¹¹ but this hyper-intellectualism obscured their anxiety that the *Ozar Yisrael* was depriving them of the opportunity to create their own Hebrew encyclopedia. Without consumers, these opponents could not hope to produce another encyclopedia, and there was something about the *Ozar Yisrael* that kept consumers coming back. When, in his 1907 review of the *Otsar hayahadut*, Tchernowitz predicted that the *Ozar Yisrael* would become “a usable book for a great portion of our nation,”²¹² it was almost as if he were pointing to an example of what the *Otsar hayahadut* should have been. Eighty years later, a writer affirmed what Tchernowitz had predicted after the appearance of the first volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*:

Interestingly enough, among the supporters of the *Otsar [Yisrael]* were scholars with radical views on biblical and religious matters. Some of them

²¹⁰ The letter from Eisenstein to Zausmer is dated February 13, 1911, and is in the Genazim Archive in Tel Aviv.

²¹¹ I. H. Tawiow, “Od al ha-Encyklopedia ha-Ivriti,” *Ha-Zfira*, February 13, 1912, 2.

²¹² Tchernowitz, *Hoveret l’Dugma*, 381.

even served as co-editors of the *Otsar* ... The subscribers and users of this work not only did not mind the “American product,” they seemed to have found it worthy of purchase. Thus, the *Otsar Yisrael* became a real “best-seller.”... The *Otsar Yisrael* remains to this day the only complete, all-inclusive Jewish encyclopedia in Hebrew. Its popularity did not diminish; in traditional circles it has even grown.²¹³

Eisenstein and Tchernowitz charged the *Otsar hayahadut* with not having the right balance between the “old” and the “new.” Tchernowitz discussed two possible aspects of an encyclopedia, arguing that it was best for it to be both *sadrانيت* and *yatzranit*, curatorial and creative.²¹⁴ An encyclopedia needed both elements, but its primary task was curatorial. For Tchernowitz and Eisenstein, the *Otsar hayahadut* was too creative, especially regarding its acceptance of biblical criticism, which was not yet embedded in the Jewish community.

To strike the right balance between the encyclopedia’s curatorial and creative roles was also important for commercial reasons. Tchernowitz did not explicitly discuss the economic ramifications of not providing a work that people wanted, but he did explain that an encyclopedia should contain what people expect to find in it.

The purpose of an encyclopedia is not to give us new creations that have not yet acquired their place in the storehouse (*otsar*) of the people, but rather, its purpose is only to summarize and disseminate those popular creations that have already become organic (*she-nit’azrehu*) to the nation. Therefore, it is possible to say that the major essence of an encyclopedia is curatorial, not creative.²¹⁵

Tchernowitz was pointing to the symbiotic relationship that exists between an encyclopedia and its readers. A project that wished to be a reservoir of Jewish cultural information needed

²¹³ Brisman, *History and Guide*, 2:39.

²¹⁴ Tchernowitz, *Hoveret l’Dugma*, 381.

²¹⁵ Tchernowitz, *Hoveret l’Dugma*, 381.

to inform its readers, but it also needed to be informed by them. *Otsar hayahadut* was failing to do this, and therefore its chances of becoming a popular work were slim. Ze'ev Gries writes that, reading the *Otsar hayahadut* today,

it is hard to see how they [its entries] could have nurtured a thirst for knowledge. ... The *Otsar hayahadut* failed miserably, but the historical irony is that a series of *Otsarot* later published in America over a forty-year period for an east European Jewish readership was a great success.²¹⁶

The *Ozar Yisrael*, as much as it was driven by an ideological individual, was in symbiotic communion with its readers and writers. This symbiotic communion between the cultural consumer and producer, between the reader and the editor, is something Eisenstein saw at the OSS, and by transposing this model into a written format, he created the *Ozar Yisrael*. Not only were the two similar in the way they operated, they were also similar in the style of Hebrew learning they presented.

The Rise of Anthologies and the Afterlife of the *Otsar Hayahadut*

While the *Otsar hayahadut* died a quiet death, the impulse to collect and curate Jewish knowledge grew, and within a decade, Hayim Nahman Bialik, one of Asher Ginzberg's chief disciples, began to anthologize Jewish literature.²¹⁷ Together with Yehoshua

²¹⁶ Zeev Gries, *The Book in the Jewish World 1700–1900*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 183.

²¹⁷ Other works that point to the era's impulse to collect and synthesize material are Solomon Mandelkorn's concordance, *Heichal HaKodesh* (1896), Eliezer Ben Yehuda's dictionary that started to appear in 1908, Micha Josef Berdyczewski's anthology of Jewish folktales, *Der Born Judas* (1916-1923), Benjamin M. Lewin's thesaurus of Geonic literature, *Otzar HaGeonim* (1928-1942), and even Yechezkel Mikhel Epstein's halakhik work, *Arukh HaShulchan* (1884-1893).

H. Ravnitski, he published the *Sefer Ha-Agada*, which appeared in three volumes between 1908 and 1911. The goal of this project was not so much to reinvent the past as to allow it to take on new meaning. An anthology could select texts, take them out of their natural context, and change their meaning by placing them in a new context. This way, the connection to the past texts remained, even as they were imbued with new meaning. Adam Rubin has described this process as a “transvaluation of the texts and traditions of Judaism”²¹⁸ so that they become “re-sacralized.”²¹⁹

While offering a different format from the *Otsar Hayahdut*, the *Sefer Ha-Agada* had similar goals. Bialik hoped that it would become a

model for a new secular *halacha* (law). His models did not include, as might have been expected, contemporary European folklore collections like the *Grimm Brothers’ Fairy Tales* and *A Thousand and One Nights*, which influenced other anthologists of Jewish traditions, but rather Jewish religious books. According to his writings, Bialik hopes to compile an anthology that could take the place of the Pentateuch with Rashi’s commentaries, the *Mishna*, and the *Shulhan Arukh* (a compendium of Jewish religious observance) as an exclusive source for identification with Judaism.²²⁰

The introduction to the *Otsar hayahadut* described it as a “new Talmud,” and while it failed, a “new Torah” emerged, as the successful *Sefer Ha-Agada* came to be known as “‘the new Torah’ of the of the Jews.”²²¹

²¹⁸ Adam Rubin, “‘Like a Necklace of Black Pearls Whose String Has Snapped’: Bialik’s ‘Aron ha-sefarim’ and the Sacralization of Zionism,” *Prooftexts* 28, no. 2 (2008): 159.

²¹⁹ Rubin, “Necklace of Black Pearls,” 176.

²²⁰ Tsaffi Sebba-Elran, “From *Sefer Ha’aggadah* to the Jewish Bookcase: Dynamics of a Cultural Change,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2013): 276. Sebba-Elran is unable to prove that nineteenth century endeavors such as *Grimm Brother’s Fairy Tales* had no influence on Bialik’s folklorizing of Aggadah.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 273. All neo-romantic Jewish cultural-nationalists invoked this type of rhetoric. For example, the founders of the YIVO (the Yiddish Scientific Institute) believed that they too were creating a new type of

Eisenstein's literary trajectory mirrored the arc from encyclopedia to anthology. After the *Otzar Yisrael*, he produced so many anthologies that Joseph Tabory, in an essay in *The Anthology in Jewish Literature*, states that Eisenstein "may well be described as the 'master of anthologies.'"²²² It is surprising that aside from this superlative praise, Eisenstein is hardly mentioned elsewhere in the book. While this omission is not explained directly, Tabory does offer a framework for understanding it. He explains that there are two types of anthologies, one that operates along a "collective principle" and one that operates along a "selective principle." The collective principle seeks "scattered material to create a corpus, frequently because the individual items are short and may easily be disregarded and lost ... and this was apparently the motivation of Judah David Eisenstein."²²³ The process of sacralization, giving existing canonical texts new meaning, rests on the "selective principle," which only seeks to give a sample of relevant texts. The *Sefer Ha-Agada* operated along the "selective principle" model, whereas Eisenstein's anthologies operated along the "collective principle" model.

Eisenstein followed the "collective principle" for his anthologies because he was not interested in creating a "new Torah." Indeed, in his speech about encyclopedias to the OSS, he singled out the phrase "new Talmud" for criticism, telling the gathering that "if we permit each person to tell us their unique opinion according to their private understanding, a new Talmud will be created each day." As a subject of inquiry, an anthologist who operates on the

scholarship for a new audience. See Cecile E. Kuznitz, *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture: Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 55–69.

²²² Joseph Tabory, "The Prayerbook (Siddur) as an Anthology of Judaism," in *The Anthology in Jewish Literature*, ed. David Stern (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 144.

²²³ *Ibid.*

“selective principle” is ripe for study, much more than one who operates on the “collective principle.” This is another example of how Eisenstein was connected to a transnational Jewish conversation but participated in his own way.

The *Ozar Yisrael* and American Print Culture

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of Eisenstein’s passing, Jacob Kabakoff published an article entitled “Judah David Eisenstein’s *Meah Sefarim Muvharim*.”²²⁴ The article introduced a four-page pamphlet that Eisenstein used to promote the fourth volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*. The pamphlet itself was a list, titled “The Best One-Hundred Assorted Hebrew Books, Selected by J. D. Eisenstein.”²²⁵ Appearing in 1910, it was promised to anyone who sent the names of potential subscribers to Eisenstein and could be viewed as crass marketing. Believing the pamphlet to be a rare item, Kabakoff discussed it and showed that although Eisenstein was a traditionalist, he included books by Ahad Ha’am, Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891), Abraham Mapu (1808–1867), and Peretz Smolenskin. The inclusion of works by such authors proves that Eisenstein was interested in, and saw himself as part of, a global Hebraist movement.

Kabakoff theorized why Eisenstein released the list:

It comes as no surprise that one whose life is so closely tied up with Jewish learning should have had a deep and abiding attachment to the Jewish book. It was this attachment that led him to prepare his 4-page brochure *Me’ah*

²²⁴ Jacob Kabakoff, “Judah David Eisenstein’s ‘*Me’ah Sefarim Muvharim*,’” *Hebrew Studies* 22 (1981): 97–102.

²²⁵ An original of the pamphlet is held in the Jacob Kabakoff Collection, MS 659, box 2, folder 1, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

Sefarim Muvharim, which he issued in 1910 and which is reproduced as an appendix to this article.²²⁶

This straightforward explanation does not recognize the cultural cross-pollination that produced this pamphlet. Eisenstein loved Jewish learning and was attached to the Jewish book, but cultural devotion alone was not enough of a reason to release a promotional pamphlet touting his top hundred books.

The idea of compiling a list of one hundred “best books,” described as the “Victorian-era marker for great book-promoters,” can be traced to Sir John Lubbock, who presented such a list in London in January 1886.²²⁷ After the *New York Times* published the list in February, the fad moved across the Atlantic, and many followed Lubbock’s example, producing their own lists. This book list mania was the precursor to the “great books” idea, which began in earnest in the early 1900s with projects like Charles W. Eliot’s “Five Foot Shelf,” which became the Harvard Classics (1909), and the Loeb Classical Library (1912).²²⁸ While Eisenstein’s list of his top hundred books appeared in 1910, much later than the fad first began, it was not his first attempt at producing such a list. In 1900, he published a thirty-four-page brochure titled “Judaica and Hebraica: List of Books from the Library of J. D. Eisenstein,” which listed some 290 volumes.²²⁹

²²⁶ Jacob Kabakoff, “Judah David Eisenstein’s ‘*Me’ah Sefarim Muvharim*,” *Hebrew Studies* 22 (1981): 98–99.

²²⁷ Lacy, “Democratic Culture,” 408.

²²⁸ On the transatlantic aspect of this idea, see Lacy, “Democratic Culture,” 402–3 and 413–17.

²²⁹ Judah David Eisenstein, *Judaica and Hebraica: A List of Books from the Library of J. D. Eisenstein* (New York: A. H. Rosenberg, 1900). A rare item a copy is held at the American Jewish Historical Society in New York (Z7070.E37). See also Kabakoff, “*Me’ah Sefarim Muvharim*,” 100.

Titular appropriation draws a clear line from the *Otsar hayahadut* to the *Ozar Yisrael*. There is no similar connection between Eisenstein's Hebrew encyclopedia and American print media. However, these two pamphlets, one from 1900 and the other from 1910, show the extent to which American book culture had seeped into Eisenstein's consciousness. They show how the *Ozar Yisrael* was part of an explosion of American print media that was underway in this period. Even if one cannot always show direct causation, Eisenstein inhabited and drew from a web of American influence.

To understand the role of the *Ozar Yisrael* within an American context, it is helpful to consider insights from Henry F. May and Joan Shelley Rubin. May opened *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912–1917* with an iconic assertion: "Everyone knows that at some point in the twentieth century America went through a cultural revolution."²³⁰ The cultural revolution included an explosion in technology: new forms of music ("the jazz age"); literature ("the lost generation"); and, with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution (1920), women's suffrage. Whereas most people believed that World War I helped to generate this revolution, May argued that the years immediately preceding World War I contained elements of the new order.

In *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*,²³¹ Joan Shelley Rubin questioned May's assumption that the old Victorian order was completely overrun by the 1920s. Building her

²³⁰ Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), ix.

²³¹ Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

case through the growth of middlebrow literature, she argued that the “old order” did not disappear but instead was repackaged and emerged in the 1920s and beyond. Book-of-the-month clubs, which began in the 1920s, exemplified what she called “middlebrow literature.” They were an heir of the genteel tradition, which had propagated a view that true culture was, to quote Mathew Arnold, “the best that has been thought and said.” Middlebrow literature sought to do the same, although to be sure, “as middlebrow popularizers accommodated consumer priorities, worthwhile aesthetic commitments were also lost in the bargain.”²³² Whenever the “‘middleness’ of middlebrow culture—its preservation of the familiar touchstones of the genteel tradition while accommodating the values of a consumer society”²³³—took hold, there was a democratization and desacralization of culture that continued deep into the twentieth century.

These two insights, about the timing of the breakdown of the old order and its reappearance in the form of middlebrow culture, can shape our understanding of the *Ozar Yisrael* and the anthologies, or *ozarot*, that followed it. Eisenstein and his anthologies project, which extended to 1941,²³⁴ was a repackaging of the “old order,” an American Hebraist’s version of the middlebrow phenomenon. Prior to World War I and starting with the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein tried to revive old assumptions and truths, not as a confessional project but as a cultural one. May’s argument that changes were already underway prior to World

²³² Rubin, *Making of Middlebrow Culture*, Kindle loc. 221.

²³³ Joan Shelley Rubin, “Henry F. May’s *The End of American Innocence*,” *Reviews in American History* 18, no. 1 (1990): 147.

²³⁴ Eisenstein’s last published work in the *Ozar* series was *Ozar Mussar u-Middot: Chrestomathy of Morals and Ethics* (New York, 1941).

War I and Rubin’s claim that after the genteel tradition was overtaken it reappeared “in a chastened and redirected form, throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s”²³⁵ applies to the way Eisenstein experienced, and sought to shape, Jewish culture. He did not attempt to create a “new Torah” but to sustain a new generation’s interest in the “old Torah.” And the final effort of his life—which continued posthumously—was devoted to this cause.²³⁶

When Eisenstein died, he left some sixteen works in manuscript form.²³⁷ His will requested that one of them be printed. It was a book for which “he made notes for many years ... he exerted his last strength upon this book.”²³⁸ To uphold Eisenstein’s final wish, the family turned the manuscript over to his grandson, Rabbi Ira Eisenstein (1906–2001), a son-in-law of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983) and the co-founder, with Kaplan, of the Reconstructionist movement. The book was published in 1960 as Eisenstein’s *Commentary on the Torah: A Defense of the Traditional Jewish Viewpoint*.

Certainty about life’s big questions, optimism, and a belief in progress and the enduring value of culture were hallmarks of Victorian culture. Eisenstein, who was born into and came of age in the Victorian period, embodied this approach. He saw the rise of liberal Judaism in the United States and remained unconvinced of the sweeping changes it wished to

²³⁵ Rubin, *Making of Middlebrow Culture*, Kindle loc. 182.

²³⁶ Ben-Zion Dinaburg (1884–1973), a proponent of “Palestinocentric” historiography, was also enamored with anthologies. They were a valuable pedagogical tool that fused scholarly and popular-national concerns and also gave one access to a broader audience. See David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 130.

²³⁷ Judah David Eisenstein, *Eisenstein’s Commentary on the Torah: A Defense of the Traditional Jewish Viewpoint* (New York: Pardes, 1960), vii. See also A. L. Baron, “B’olam Sifrutenu ‘Otzarot’ b’ktuvei yad,” *Hadoar* 33, no. 24.

²³⁸ Eisenstein, *Commentary on the Torah*, viii.

make. Even the relatively conservative Jewish Theological Seminary provoked his censure. While he was one of the most modern of the various East European figures, he still found a way to defend the ways of an older generation. Writing about a talk on East European Jews that Eisenstein delivered to the American Jewish Historical Society in 1900, one scholar concluded that “Eisenstein’s sympathies were with the old social ways.”²³⁹ At the same time, he was the most Americanized of the East European “downtown Jews, he was progressive and an optimist, believing that America was destined to be a future center of Jewish life. When he celebrated the completion of the *Ozar Yisrael*, he did so on *Thanksgiving*, combining his two great loves the *Ozar Yisrael* and America.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Jeffrey Gurock, “Judah David Eisenstein on East European Jews in America in 1901: A First for the PAJHS,” *American Jewish History* 99, no. 4 (2015): 324.

²⁴⁰ Jacob Kabakoff Collection, MS 659, box 2, folder 1, American Jewish Archives, New York.



The invitation to Eisenstein's Bronx home to celebrate the completion of the Ozar Yisrael. In brackets, it states that it coincides with Thanksgiving.

He also had an abiding belief in the importance of the older variety of Hebrew culture and literature. It was the combination of these values that guided the *Ozar Yisrael* and the other works that followed it.

The expansion of print media in this period made it difficult to know what was worth reading. As a result, “expertise came to be viewed as the antidote to bewilderment,” and

“Americans cast public officials and educators as advisers about book selection.”²⁴¹ This led to the rise of critics and literary experts who directed readers to books that were worth reading. Eisenstein was keen to promote the positive appraisals that critics and experts pronounced on his encyclopedia. The outermost vertical column of his letterhead contained printed endorsements, in English, French, German, Hebrew, and Russian, from leading figures in Jewish world. The letterheads were not uniform, and different ones featured different endorsements, but they invariably featured experts promoting the *Ozar Yisrael* as a worthy work. For example, on the letter he sent to the celebrated Reform Rabbi David Philipson, the first endorsement is from Judge Mayer Sulzberger, who is listed as the “Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Publication Society of America; Chairman of the American Jewish Committee, Philadelphia, PA.” His endorsement began, “The Hebrew Encyclopedia is a piece of work of which you may be proud.” This was not the only expert endorsement on the page; another one came from Isidore Singer (1859–1939), “originator and managing editor of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*,” and yet another from Gotthard Deutsch of Hebrew Union College, from where Philipson had graduated.²⁴²

The *Ozar Yisrael* began the *Ozar* series, which was a form of American Hebraic middlebrow literature. As critics and literary experts were called upon to offer guidance on

²⁴¹ Rubin cites Noah Porter’s *Books and Reading: Or What Books Shall I Read and How Shall I Read Them* (1871) as an early example. Rubin, *Making of Middlebrow Culture*, 17.

²⁴² On this particular letterhead, the other endorsements came from Hartwig Derenbourg, Max Heller, Henry Pereira Mendes, and Nahum Perferkovich. See David Philippon Papers, MS 35, box 1, folder 3, American Jewish Archives, New York.

what was worth reading, Eisenstein created an encyclopedia and then digests and anthologies. To help promote the project, Eisenstein highlighted—on every piece of official communication he sent—the wide array of experts who recommended the *Ozar Yisrael*. The *Ozar Yisrael* sought to speak with a voice of authority and stem the tide of change that the Jewish world was undergoing. With its unrelenting commitment to the sanctity of the Bible, it refused entry to new ways of thinking that would destabilize an older worldview. A very different form of Hebrew literature was about to emerge in America, and the *Ozar* series represented a past that looked as if it was disappearing.

Overseas Jews clamoring for a Hebrew encyclopedia were not the only influence on Eisenstein. America was his home, and it was on American soil that his encyclopedia grew. When critics overseas referred to it as an American *ozar*, they may not have been able to articulate what it was exactly that made them refer to it in this way. The work was simultaneously familiar and foreign. Although it was written in a language that they understood and developed out of an idea that they had promoted, it remained different—it was American.

How Eisenstein, an uncredentialed lone American, managed to convince people living overseas to write for this American work is the next part of this story.

Chapter II: An Amateur Recruits Professionals

The First Recruit: Eisenstein Enlists

Two globes, each side showing a different part of the world, adorned the front cover of the *Ozar Yisrael*. Standing between the globes was a Menorah whose flames pointed to the ten volumes of the *Ozar Yisrael*.



Front Cover of the Ozar Yisrael

This striking image imparted the promise that the *Ozar Yisrael* would light up and draw knowledge from the entire world, and this chapter tells the story of how that promise

materialized. Drawing on correspondence from a wide array of archives, it recounts how Eisenstein convinced people to write for and subscribe to his encyclopedia. It also encompasses issues of editing, for when Eisenstein wrote to people and asked them to participate, they responded with questions and complaints about his editorial decisions and the encyclopedia's direction.

The title pages of the *Ozar Yisrael*'s volumes display names that appear to be those of members of an editorial committee.²⁴³ However, there was in fact no editorial committee.²⁴⁴ This was a marketing ploy and an incentive for those who enjoyed fame to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. On March 26, 1906, Eisenstein wrote to Ephraim Deinard (1846–1930), a prolific Hebrew writer and publisher who immigrated to America in 1888, to address his complaint about the first volume's inconsistent Hebrew orthography.²⁴⁵ Eisenstein explained that he treated Eastern countries differently from Western countries. And then he added: "I do not decree to accept my opinion, but I wait for the agreement of the majority." The "majority" to which Eisenstein referred would emerge from a special meeting:

Regarding the orthography, we are not allowed to decide the *halakha*²⁴⁶ according to the opinion of one person, and inclining after the majority is a

²⁴³ For example, volume 1's title page highlights the following names: H. Bernstein, Dr. G. Deutsch, and A. H. Rosenberg. Volume 10's title page highlights the following names: Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Bacher, Dr. Samuel Colombo, Dr. Israel Goldberger, and Rabbi Dr. J. L. Landau.

²⁴⁴ Brisman, *History and Guide*, 38–39 lists some twenty-four people as "co-editors" of the *Ozar Yisrael*. Some of them are accomplished scholars, including Ludwig Blau, Meir Friedmann (Ish-Shalom), Micahel Guttman, and Jacob Zallel Lauterbach. There is no evidence, beyond Eisenstein's title page, that any of these figures served in any type of editorial capacity for the *Ozar Yisrael*. Almost a century later, when Brisman published his work, Eisenstein's marketing ploy continued to be effective.

²⁴⁵ Schward 01 01 242, item 9, Juda David Eisenstein Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

²⁴⁶ Literally, "Jewish law."

great rule of the Torah, and at a special meeting we will call you and other writers.

This letter was written after the first volume appeared. The fact that no such meeting had yet been held signifies that Eisenstein was, at best, indifferent to any joint effort. Although he told Deinard that orthography should be uniform and should not be left to one person to decide, in the end he alone decided on the orthography—and everything else.

Three names appear on the title page of the first volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*: H. Bernstein (1846–1907), A. H. Rosenberg (1838–1928), and Dr. G. Deutsch (1859–1921). Whereas Deutsch was a scholar and Rosenberg was an educator and translator who had served as the Crown Rabbi of Pinsk,²⁴⁷ Zvi Hirsch Bernstein emigrated to the United States in 1870 and became a pioneer of the Hebrew and Yiddish press; he was a newspaper man not known for his scholarship.²⁴⁸ His name did not appear on the list of authors in volume 1, and so it is curious that he received such prominent attention. One of Eisenstein’s letterheads sheds light on the matter. Centered at the top is the title “Hebrew Encyclopedia Publishing Co.” In the top left corner, “J. D. Eisenstein” is listed as the president, and in the top right corner, “H. Bernstein” is listed as the treasurer.²⁴⁹ Thus, Bernstein played a financial role in

²⁴⁷ Deutsch is a known figure who served on the HUC faculty. Rosenberg, less known than Deutsch, was a graduate of the Rabbinical Seminary in Zhitomir and had a printing press in New York. See “Rosenberg, Abraham Hayyim,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 10:474.

²⁴⁸ For a short account of his life see the introduction to “An Account of the Jews and Judaism 34 Years Ago in New York (circa 1870), by Zvi Hirsch Bernstein, Translated and Annotated by Gary P. Zola,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* L, no. 1–2 (1998): 110–12.

²⁴⁹ David Philipson Papers, MS 35, box 1, folder 3, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

the *Ozar Yisrael*, and this was why Eisenstein mentioned him on the title page of the first volume.²⁵⁰

Further evidence of this comes from a letter Eisenstein wrote to David Philipson, a key figure in the Reform movement.²⁵¹ Explaining that subscriptions alone could not fund the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein asked Philipson for financial support:

Your eventual subscription is contingent on my ability to raise the full amount of \$10,000, i.e., the capital sufficient to finish the Hebrew Encyclopedia on the scale of perfection I was happy to reach with vol. 1, which I brought out partly myself, but mainly owing to the financial support of Mr. H. Bernstein, 106 E 116, N.Y., a great lover of Hebrew literature.²⁵²

This letter reveals that Bernstein was an early financial supporter of the project. Written some six months before Bernstein died, the letter shows that even while Bernstein was still alive, funding was a challenge. Whatever entreaties Eisenstein made to wealthy benefactors, no one—after Bernstein—ended up helping him with money. However, once he was financially independent, Eisenstein truly became a free agent who could create the *Ozar Yisrael* according to his own wishes. Since Eisenstein had no external funding and was not part of the emerging scholarly community, the first person he had to recruit was himself. A massive and multifaceted task lay before him: he needed to find subscribers and writers, and

²⁵⁰ Brisman writes that Eisenstein “organized the Hebrew Encyclopedia Publishing Company. The company received a charter from the state of New York and began to sell shares in the planned project. By mid-1906 the company had set up a Hebrew printing shop and issued a 16-page prospectus... Soon thereafter, Hirsch Bernstein (1846–1907), the main investor in the company, died, and the sales of the shares fell behind expectations. Eisenstein took over the company together with the printing shop and became the sole owner of the operation” (Brisman, *History and Guide*, 37–38). Bernstein created and lost wealth a few times See also Eisenstadt Vol. I, Part V, P. 20-22.

²⁵¹ Jacob Rader Marcus described Philipson as the “Dean of the American Reform Rabbinate” in his article “Dr David Philipson’s Place in American Jewish Historiography,” *American Jewish Archives* 3, no. 2 (1951): 28.

²⁵² The letter is dated April 7, 1907 and, per *Ozar Zikhronotay* p. 27, Bernstein passed away on August 1, 1907.

he needed to set the work's ideological tone and make editorial decisions. Only he would decide how long to wait for entries and what to do when they arrived late. The impression that the *Ozar Yisrael* was a collaborative effort that drew from a large cross section of the community is accurate; however, it is also accurate that Judah David Eisenstein created the *Ozar Yisrael*. Only through reconstructing the story of how he produced it can one see the extent to which it truly is *his* work—he was that first tireless and prolific recruit.

Many dilemmas demanded Eisenstein's attention. He wished to draw on the widest array of writers—and indeed, this is what he did—but he could not allow the encyclopedia to authorize the widest array of ideological opinions. He was a traditionalist, and without alienating writers or subscribers, the encyclopedia would have to follow that path. While he was not an unknown figure, he was not intertwined with the scholarly community. He knew its members, but he was not one of them. He was an amateur scholar, and in order for the encyclopedia to succeed, he would have to recruit professionals. Whether they were rabbis or writers, he needed at least some of his recruits to be people who were recognized in the Hebraist community. Learned but not a rabbi or scholar, a columnist but not a full-time writer, Eisenstein was different from the type of people he wanted to recruit, and this made it hard to convince others to follow him. But with his entrepreneurial mindset, Eisenstein was able to overcome this challenge. Sometimes he dangled the prospect of money, and sometimes he dangled the prospect of minor fame. He knew how to leverage his connections, and where none existed, he still found a way to create a connection and did not allow propriety to interfere with his efforts. When the need arose, he could manipulate vulnerabilities in a person and set them to work on behalf of the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Above all, Eisenstein would need to convince people that it was acceptable for so grand a project to be the private fiefdom of one autodidactic and autocratic Russian immigrant living in New York City. This was no small feat; there were 221 contributors to the *Ozar Yisrael*,²⁵³ and they came from across the ideological and geographic spectrum. From Henry Malter²⁵⁴ to Micha Joseph Berdyczewski,²⁵⁵ from József Patai²⁵⁶ to R. Abraham Isaac Kook,²⁵⁷ Eisenstein convinced people to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. He found them in the well-known hubs of Jewish life of Europe and Palestine and coaxed them to write from their homes in Cairo,²⁵⁸ Capetown,²⁵⁹ Cochin.²⁶⁰

Moved by Money

The easiest way to attract writers was to pay them. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* paid

²⁵³ This number is based on a broadside for the *Ozar Yisrael* that is cataloged as an American Jewish Historical Society Monograph and is held by the Center for Jewish History in New York, DS 102.8.095.

²⁵⁴ He is listed as both a co-editor and a contributor to vol. 2.

²⁵⁵ Vol. 2.

²⁵⁶ Vol. 6.

²⁵⁷ Vol. 3.

²⁵⁸ Vol. 6 lists Meir David HaYerushalmi, whose place of residence was Cairo, as a contributor.

²⁵⁹ Vols. 7 and 9 list Moshe Hayyim Mirvish as a contributor. He was on friendly terms with Judah Leo Landau, and in Landau's archives there are letters from him. See Judah Leo Landau Papers, ARC. 4* 798 Section (Sidra) 3, folder 36, NLI, Jerusalem.

²⁶⁰ Naphtali E. Roby (Rahabi) is listed as a co-editor and contributor to vol. 9. In a number of works, there are references to an unpublished manuscript he wrote on the Jews of Cochin. Such a manuscript is held in the YU Library, MS 1288: Nahptali E. Rahabi, "Toldot beit Rahabi b'Kochin." A different work, "Divrei yeme ha-Yehudim b'Kochin," is held by the NLI, David Solomon Sassoon Papers, MS 268.

contributors,²⁶¹ and surely some of the monies needed to produce the *Otsar hayahadut* were going to be used to pay contributors. However, from early on in the project, Eisenstein decided against paying for entries, and he did not deviate from this stance. Originally, he was not transparent about his non-payment policy. This can be seen from his interaction with Berdyczewski and Malter, two well-known contributors to volume 2 of the *Ozar Yisrael*, who removed themselves from the project and left with a measure of lingering bitterness.

On June 13, 1907, Eisenstein composed a letter to Berdyczewski, a man he knew of but had never met.²⁶² In this initial letter, he told him about the *Ozar Yisrael* and offered payment of \$2.50 per hundred lines, with each line being approximately eight words. Any Hebrew writer would welcome a new stream of income, and this offer enticed Berdyczewski to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. Almost a year after they first communicated, Eisenstein wrote to Berdyczewski to say that he had heard from Malter (then based in New York City) that Berdyczewski was upset at not yet being paid. Now Eisenstein explained to Berdyczewski his unique understanding of how to calculate payment. He explained that he had only received one entry (“Bava ben Buta”²⁶³) and that it was worth roughly \$1.50. This amount was to be deducted from the price of two (unsolicited) volumes of the *Ozar Yisrael*, which cost \$7.00 and had already been sent to him. According to this reckoning, Berdyczewski was

²⁶¹ For example, a “Memorandum of Agreement” between the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and Nahum T. London can be found in Jewish Encyclopedia Correspondence, N. T. London, MS 522, YU Library, New York. It lists the terms of his compensation.

²⁶² Eisenstein to Berdyczewski, June 13, 1907, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

²⁶³ M. J. Berdyczewski, “Bava ben Buta,” in *Ozar Yisrael* 2:285–86.

in debt to Eisenstein, and he could either pay or write his way out.²⁶⁴ What had essentially happened was that Eisenstein sent unsolicited sample volumes of the *Ozar Yisrael* to Berdyczewski and asked him to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*, all the while leading him to believe that he would be paid for his efforts. When time for payment came, Eisenstein never denied offering payment but tried to avoid his obligation.

When Berdyczewski wrote to Eisenstein asking for payment,²⁶⁵ Eisenstein steadfastly insisted that Berdyczewski was the debtor and that he ought to be the one paying around \$5.00.²⁶⁶ With no contract between them, the best Eisenstein could do was to beseech Berdyczewski to pay up or write up. At one point, paraphrasing a biblical warning, he urged him, “I hope no iniquity shall dwell in your tent.”²⁶⁷ Ultimately, Eisenstein backed down and agreed to take back the two unsolicited volumes that he had sent to Berdyczewski. Not only did he send payment to Berdyczewski for the one entry that he wrote, he also sent him the cost of mailing back the two volumes.²⁶⁸ Clearly, Eisenstein never intended to pay anyone to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*, and realizing this, Berdyczewski called his bluff.

The evidence suggests that Eisenstein did not pay for entries,²⁶⁹ but there are

²⁶⁴ The very top of his letterhead advertises in smaller print: “Out: Volumes I. and II. Price per Volume \$3.00 bound in cloth; \$3.50 in half morocco.” Thus, Eisenstein sent him the better-quality volumes as samples, driving Berdyczewski even further in to his debt.

²⁶⁵ He did so often, as can be seen in letters between them in the Berdyczewski Archive in Holon, Israel.

²⁶⁶ Eisenstein to Berdyczewski, August 30, 1908, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

²⁶⁷ Eisenstein to Berdyczewski, August 30, 1908, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel. See Ps 15:1 (the Psalm is devoted to honesty).

²⁶⁸ Eisenstein to Berdyczewski, October 18, 1908, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

²⁶⁹ The only other evidence that Eisenstein paid a writer is a letter Henry Malter sent to Micha Joseph Berdyczewski explaining that Eisenstein did not pay him directly. Rather, Dr. Judah Magnes, the well-known Reform rabbi who later became the first chancellor of the Hebrew University, had raised \$1200 to support the

examples of Eisenstein trying the same ruse with other writers. Berdyczewski's friend Henry Malter admitted in a letter to him:

I was unable to predict the crookedness of this Jew, for I am not accustomed to join with people like this ... One ought to write a warning to the Hebrew writers that in New York lives a Russian idler who has learned the ways of American fraudsters and is producing an encyclopedia of idlers by tricking people, but I am withholding myself from doing so because it is beneath my dignity.²⁷⁰

Indeed, Berdyczewski was not the only one to receive an unsolicited volume and then be coaxed into writing for the *Ozar Yisrael*. Eisenstein sent the first volume of the *Ozar Yisrael* to Ahad Ha'am, the father of the *Ozar* idea. He asked him to critique the work and also asked if he would like to write for the forthcoming volumes.²⁷¹ While not explicitly asking for payment, Eisenstein did mention that volume 1 was selling for \$3.00 and that the price for the Russian market had not yet been decided. Joseph Klausner, Ginzberg's disciple, also received a letter from Eisenstein, along with an offer to pay \$2.50 per column. Explaining that he was a "scientific man"²⁷² who did not wish to be beholden to the traditions of religion," Klausner refused to write for the *Ozar Yisrael* but did ask for a free copy.²⁷³ He probably

Ozar Yisrael for one year, and it was Dr. Magnes who paid Malter directly, \$100 per month, for his work (Malter to Berdyczewski, November 19, 1907, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel). Nothing else connects Dr. Magnes and the *Ozar Yisrael*, and while there is no reason to think Malter would lie about such a thing, later on he complained that Eisenstein was not paying him on time, which suggests that it was Eisenstein—and not Magnes—who was paying him (Malter to Berdyczewski, December 13, 1907, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel).

²⁷⁰ Malter to Berdyczewski, July 16, 2008, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

²⁷¹ Ahad Ha'am Archive, ARC. 4*791 1 717, NLI, Jerusalem..

²⁷² Underline in original.

²⁷³ This interaction with Klausner is known from Eisenstein's letter to Landau; see Eisenstein to Landau, November 22, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI. The underline appears in Eisenstein's letter, and I was

knew that Eisenstein tried to generate entries from well-known writers by simultaneously promising them payment and sending unsolicited copies of the *Ozar Yisrael*. Not wanting to choose between paying or writing his way out of debt, Klausner insisted on a complimentary copy.

If Eisenstein had offered to pay for entries, additional writers of a higher caliber would likely have come forward. The fact that he did not do so and still completed the encyclopedia makes his achievement more impressive. In 1909, Eisenstein told Israel Davidson:

I will be very happy if you participate in my work, however at the current time it is impossible for me to pay for assistors except in bartering the value of the books.²⁷⁴

While bartering the value of books had always been Eisenstein's only method of payment, it was not something he was initially transparent about. People did not always realize that the unsolicited volumes were not a gift but a way to encourage—that is, force—them to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. But having obfuscated his true intentions to Berdyczewski, Eisenstein still ended up paying him, so he learned that it was better to be transparent from the outset. One could not fool people and send unsolicited volumes forever. Eisenstein had learned his lesson and was transparent with Davidson, but to no avail. Davidson was looking for payment before entertaining the possibility of being a regular

unable to find anything to corroborate it in Klausner's archive. See Eisenstein to Landau, November 22, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

²⁷⁴ Eisenstein to Davidson, 1909, ARC.28, box 2, folder "Davidson, Israel Eisenstein, J. D, 1909–1913; 1935," Israel Davidson Papers, Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) Library, New York.

contributor, and this may have been true for others as well. After all, the standard practice was to pay contributors, and to buck that trend and write for someone who was perceived to be cantankerous and ignorant (as Malter portrayed Eisenstein) required a firm ideological commitment to the project or a rare level of altruism.

Eisenstein participated in the OSS, which did not pay people for their lectures, relying instead on their devotion to Hebraism. Following that path, he created an encyclopedia on the good will and literary charity of the Hebraist community. Eisenstein's unwillingness to pay for entries meant that the entries he received were submitted voluntarily, and this is one reason to view the *Ozar Yisrael* as an amateur project. The class of professional scholars that was emerging in America was unlikely to write for an encyclopedia without remuneration. A professional scholar expected payment; Jewish scholarship was not just his hobby but how he made his living. After decades of engaging with Hebrew culture and Jewish scholarship without ever being a "professional scholar," Eisenstein may not have understood, or may have simply refused to accept, this newly emerging attitude. And, long before the age of Wikipedia, he proved that one could produce an encyclopedia without paying contributors.

For Fame if Not Fortune

While Eisenstein did not offer cash for entries, money was not the only impetus to write for an encyclopedia. The title page of volume 2 of the *Ozar Yisrael* highlighted the scholar, rabbi, and Karaite expert Samuel Poznanski. Poznanski was a friend of Henry Malter, and Malter enlisted him to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*.²⁷⁵ Writing about Poznanski's

²⁷⁵ Malter to Berdyczewski, June 18, 1907, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

involvement with the *Ozar Yisrael*, Malter revealed to Berdyczewski:

The publisher of the *Ozar* did not at all ask Poznanski if he was allowed to place him among the editors on the title page. He wrote for him the entry *Afendopolo, Kalev ben Eliyahu ben Yehuda*²⁷⁶ because he wishes to be everywhere, like the celestial planets, and the publisher thought to do him a favor by mentioning his name on the *Ozar*, and one can do a favor for a person without their consent. I think Poznanski regrets this.²⁷⁷

Malter was wrong: Poznanski did not regret writing for the *Ozar Yisrael*, and from volume 2 onward he is listed as a contributor to every volume. Wherever in the world the *Ozar Yisrael* made its way, Poznanski's name was there too, and as Malter suspected, this publicity was enough remuneration for him. But seductive as it was, free publicity could not seduce everyone. Eisenstein relayed messages to Moses Gaster (Hakham of London's Spanish and Portuguese Community), saying that if he would agree to write for the last volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, his name would appear on the title page.²⁷⁸ Additionally, an entry on Gaster that included his photo was already in the encyclopedia.²⁷⁹ Gaster did not take the bait and is an example of someone who kept his distance from the *Ozar Yisrael* despite Eisenstein's puffy entreaties.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁶ S. A. Poznanski "Afendopolo, Kalev ben Eliyahu ben Yehuda," *OY* 2:172–74.

²⁷⁷ Malter to Berdyczewski, July 31, 1908, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel. Jacob Kabakoff wrote an article on the correspondence between Berdyczewski and Malter. See Jacob Kabakoff, "M. Y. Berdyczewski v'Tzi Malter: Parashat yehasim u'tzror mikhtavim," *Ginzei Miha Yosef* 7 (2016/17): 131–67. He also referenced the correspondence between them in "Darkho shel Hoker Yehudi b'Amerika," in Shlomo Nash, ed., *Ben Histroia l'sifrut: Sefer yovel l'Yitzcha Barzilai* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz Ha-Meuhad, 1997), 291–306.

²⁷⁸ Eisenstein to Landau, January 21, 1913, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

²⁷⁹ Joseph Massell, "Gaster, Moshe," *OY* 3:235–36.

²⁸⁰ Gaster's name appears a few other times, as a potential contributor, in the correspondence from Eisenstein to Landau: September 27, 1909; November 10, 1909; January 30, 1910; December 12, 1911. He is to be counted among those who chose to stay away from the project.

Perhaps Gaster did not regard a place on the *Ozar Yisrael*'s title page as an honor for a man of his standing; however, others hankered after such recognition. The relatively unknown Hungarian merchant Meier Rapaport-Hartstein was one such person. He was a contributor to volumes 4–10 of the *Ozar Yisrael*, and when Eisenstein was asked to explain why this obscure person was highlighted on the title page of volume 4, he bluntly explained that “Mr. Rapaport-Hartstein is an important merchant in Ujhely, and he beseeched me a number of times to include his name on the title page, and I was unable to turn him down.”²⁸¹ What benefit Eisenstein was able to procure from Rapaport-Hartstein remains unknown. From Eisenstein’s description of him as an “important merchant,” one can only surmise that the public honor of being mentioned on the title page was not given gratis.

The role that honor and publicity played should not be disregarded. Even writers who did not contribute much to the *Ozar Yisrael* were eager to appear in its pages. Israel Davidson (who sought financial remuneration) only ended up contributing to a single volume and wrote often to Eisenstein about the *Ozar Yisrael*. In one letter, he must have inquired about why an article of his was missing from an entry’s bibliography.²⁸² Eisenstein excused the omission by explaining that even Mr. Freidus, “whom no secret escapes,” failed to point

²⁸¹ Eisenstein to Landau, May 2, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

²⁸² Max Raisin, “Bahur, Eliyahu ben Asher ha-Levi,” *OY* 3:16–17. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* entry on “Levita, Elijah” (8:46–48), by Joseph Jacobs and Isaac Broyde, lists in its bibliography an article of Davidson’s that appeared in the second volume of *Ha-Modia La-Hadashim*, a short-lived Hebrew journal that Herman Rosenthal and Abraham Rosenberg published in New York between 1901 and 1902. Broyde was a contributor to vol. 1 of the *Ozar Yisrael*. Rosenberg is listed as a contributor to most volumes of the *Ozar Yisrael* (his name is highlighted on the title page of the first volume), and Rosenthal has already been mentioned as president of the OSS. Raisin was also a member of the OSS. This is an example of the network of Judaic American scholars of the age whose paths crossed through different projects and associations.

this out to him.²⁸³ The fact that Davidson, who held a PhD from Columbia University and was on the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary, sent a written complaint to Eisenstein about this oversight shows how keen people were to be included in the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Appearing on the title page, as a contributor, or in a bibliography were some of the ways to be included in the *Ozar Yisrael*, but having a dedicated biographical entry surpassed them all. Eisenstein explained that for a biographical entry to be accepted into the *Ozar Yisrael*, it needed to be important in one of three areas:

i) Jewish literature, ii) Jewish history, iii) communal activity. And even among these areas, he must still be famous in the entire Jewish world and not only in his city or country, and in this way I will reduce 90% of the biographical entries found in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.²⁸⁴

He also explained that he was generally opposed to biographical entries:

It is especially true that the nature of the *Ozar Yisrael* is to minimize biographical entries and to increase abstract entries.²⁸⁵

Yet despite all of this, in some instances—for special, favored people—Eisenstein made exceptions. One such person was Eisenstein’s devoted helpmate Judah Leo Landau:

Nonetheless, I will not leave out the entry of his honor under any circumstances. Therefore, I have given the entry “Landau” to his honor,²⁸⁶ and I will ask of him to prepare all the entries in this family, and also the entry for

²⁸³ Eisenstein to Davidson, May 9, 1909, ARC.28, box 2, folder “Davidson, Israel Eisenstein, J. D, 1909–1913; 1935,” Israel Davidson Papers. Abraham S. Freidus was born in Riga in 1866 and was the first head of the Jewish division of the New York Public Library. Richard Gottheil has a necrology about him.

²⁸⁴ Eisenstein to Landau, June 13, 1908, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

²⁸⁵ Eisenstein to Landau, May 21, 1909, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

²⁸⁶ Indeed, this is what happened; Judah Leib Landau wrote the entry “Landau,” see *OY* 6:52.

his honor I shall give to him,²⁸⁷ or he can write for me the topic heading and I will write it myself.²⁸⁸

In return for all his work on behalf of the *Ozar Yisrael*, Landau was bestowed with a measure of fame in its pages.

The promise of fame drove some people to join the *Ozar Yisrael*. Shlomo Berman, a published author whose *Mi'giborei ha-Uma: Toldot Gedolei Yisrael L'doroteiehem* would enjoy numerous reprints,²⁸⁹ wrote to Eisenstein asking to be allotted an entry, whether large or small, in the last volume.²⁹⁰ Since volume 3, he explained, he was listed as a contributor to every volume, and he had already sent in an entry for volume 9. Wishing to sustain his perennial presence among the list of contributors, he hoped Eisenstein would agree to his request. Thus, while Eisenstein did not offer payment, he was not without incentives, and people who fancied a little fame could find that elixir by appearing in the pages of the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Not everyone who worked for the *Ozar Yisrael* was mentioned by name. When one opens the last volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, one sees that Eisenstein did not honor Berman's request, and that even though he had submitted the entry "Zeitlin, Joshua," he was also

²⁸⁷ Judah Leib Landau had his own entry in *OY* 6:52–53, which was written by fellow South African Zvi Lifshitz, who is listed as prayer leader (*shliakh tzibur*) from Transvaal (*OY* 6:iii) and was likely subordinate to Landau.

²⁸⁸ Eisenstein to Landau, May 21, 1909, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI. Later in this letter, Eisenstein uses an English idiom to explain that he was only planning on including 10 percent of the biographical entries of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* that included every "Tom Dick + Harry."

²⁸⁹ The work first appeared in 1912 and was reprinted into the 1960s.

²⁹⁰ The letter is dated 18 Marheshvan 5672 (November 9, 1911). Judah David Eisenstein Papers, ARC. 32, box 1, folder 15, JTS Library, New York.

absent from volume 9.²⁹¹ There was an entry on the Zeitlin family, and it discussed Joshua Zeitlin, but instead of Berman, the author is the murky *Bet Mem: Ha-ozrim Be-veit Ha-ma'arechet*, the anonymous “helpers in the publishing house.”²⁹² The existence of this additional help was acknowledged from volume 4 onward, when among the list of contributors one finds the initials *Bet Mem*. Eventually, the number of anonymous workers helping to write the *Ozar Yisrael* became an open secret. In anticipation of Purim, one Hebrew newspaper included a humorous article wishing imaginary gifts of *mishloah manot*²⁹³ to various people and causes, and it wished the publisher of the *Ozar Yisrael* “another battalion of idlers (*batlanim*) to work as helpers to the encyclopedia.”²⁹⁴

On one occasion, Eisenstein used this murky group to take a swipe at someone. The entry on Joseph Klausner, written by one of the “helpers in the publishing house,” shows how much Klausner did not know and gloats over his ignorance:

The Messianic Idea in Israel (Krakow, 1908) is his most important work, and in its introduction he states that “a book like this does not yet exist, according to all that is known to me in any language in the world.” And he did not know that Dr. Julius Greenstone wrote a book twice as large as his, which was published by the Jewish Publishing Society in Philadelphia in 1906 under the title *The Messianic Idea in Jewish History ...* Klausner is regarded as the most “scientific” of the young maskilim, who follow the footsteps of Christian scholars. These “scientists” give no attention to the Jewish tradition and its literature when it comes to their investigation of the TaNaKh ... among his

²⁹¹ In the letter, the entry is spelled “Zeitlish, Yehoshua,” which is an alternate spelling for Zeitlin. A manuscript of the entry is attached to the letter mentioned in the previous note.

²⁹² B. M. “Tzaytlin, Mishpahat,” *OY* 9:38

²⁹³ These are gifts of food that Jews traditionally send to one another on the Purim holiday.

²⁹⁴ “U-Mishloah Manot,” *Ha-mitzpe*, March 12, 1914, 5.

other statements, he follows after and is jealous of the Arabs, who are now finishing an encyclopedia in Arabic, [saying that] we have nothing like this. He does not mention the *Ozar Yisrael*.²⁹⁵

Landau wrote to Eisenstein to say that he was unhappy with this personal attack on Klausner. Eisenstein explained that he regretted allowing it, since it was his policy to avoid discussing the *Otsar [hayahadut]* in the *Ozar [Yisrael]*. This time was an exception, he explained, because “I was unable to restrain myself when I read the lecture of Klausner, who bitterly lamented before the young ones that we have no Hebrew encyclopedia.”²⁹⁶

Three of the anonymous members of the *Bet Mem* are known, and they are men of some distinction. One was Abraham S. Freidus, the first head of the Jewish division of the New York Public Library. In a letter to Davidson, Eisenstein references Freidus and the role he had in the *Ozar Yisrael*, yet Freidus’s name does not appear in the *Ozar Yisrael*.²⁹⁷ In his memoir, the Philadelphia Hebraist Jacob Zausmer lamented that another Philadelphian, Phineas Mordell, worked on the *Ozar Yisrael* but was never recognized, adding that “Mordell was not the only one to be omitted.”²⁹⁸ The ellipsis is in the original and leads one to suspect that Zausmer was referring to himself. Any suggestion as to why these men were omitted is speculation. Considering Eisenstein’s eagerness to expand the circle of writers, he surely had

²⁹⁵ B. M. “Klausner, Yosef,” *OY* 9:186.

²⁹⁶ Eisenstein to Landau, March 19, 1913, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI. Where Klausner voiced the lament to which Eisenstein refers is not known.

²⁹⁷ Eisenstein to Davidson, May 9, 1909, Israel Davidson Papers, ARC.28, box 2, folder “Davidson, Israel Eisenstein, J. D, 1909–1913; 1935.”

²⁹⁸ Zausmer, *B’ikve ha-dor*, 15. The ellipsis is in the original. Zausmer, as will be seen below, also helped Eisenstein with the *Ozar Yisrael*, and he too is not mentioned anywhere. When he wrote “Mordell was not the only one to be omitted...,” he was politely referring to himself.

his own calculation for excluding some people from the list of contributors.

Connector par Excellence

Eisenstein had been involved in many organizations and projects. He was a skillful connector and leveraged his network to promote the *Ozar Yisrael*. This led him to many doors that would otherwise have been closed. For example, to David Philipson he wrote:

Encouraged by the Hon. Judge Sulzberger, whose endorsement you will certainly read with interest and sympathy, I beg leave to ask you for your support in the carrying out of my work. ... Believe me that without the indirect advice of Hon. Judge Sulzberger I never would have thought of approaching you on this matter.²⁹⁹

Featuring just two words of Hebrew—*Ozar Yisrael*—the letterhead carried endorsements from various people, including Sulzberger and two leading figures of the American Reform movement, Gotthard Deutsch and Max Heller.³⁰⁰ Thus, in his letter to Philipson, Eisenstein's letterhead presented the *Ozar Yisrael* as something that pleased leading figures of the Reform movement.

When he reached out to Berdyczewski, a man he had never met before and whose ideology was distant from his own, he used a similar tack:

On account of my dear friend Dr. Malter, I have sent you the first volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, and attached to it is an index from the letter *bet* ...³⁰¹

Malter led him to Berdyczewski, and Berdyczewski would lead Eisenstein and Malter to

²⁹⁹ Eisenstein to Philipson, April 7, 1907, David Philipson Papers, MS 35, box 1, folder 3, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

³⁰⁰ See previous chapter.

³⁰¹ Eisenstein to Berdyczewski, June 13, 1907, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

others who could collaborate on the *Ozar Yisrael*. Not only did Eisenstein approach the friends of his friends, but he was also reaching their friends, and as the degrees of separation from Eisenstein expanded, the circle of his influence kept widening.

When Henry Malter worked for the *Ozar Yisrael*, he understood that introducing writers to Eisenstein and the *Ozar Yisrael* was a central aspect of his job. As he wrote to Berdyczewski:

The editor is Eisenstein, a Russian who has read and learned a lot, and other people are helping him. I told him to send you the first volume ... He listens to all my advice with an eager attitude, and he only asks of me that I should try to secure for him helpers among my acquaintances and friends in Europe. Therefore, I am asking of you to also agree to be a help to us in the forthcoming volume.³⁰²

Later, Malter thanked Berdyczewski for “the names of writers that you sent me in your letter.”³⁰³ Eisenstein, in his first letter to Berdyczewski, added a postscript asking for help “to find for us a reputable agent in your city Breslau and its surrounds”,³⁰⁴ he later thanked Berdyczewski “for the addresses in your city.”³⁰⁵ No matter how distinguished a person was, Eisenstein invariably asked them to find additional subscribers or agents to sell the work. In one of his letters to R. Abraham Isaac Kook, then serving as the Chief Rabbi of Jaffa, he asked him to locate a reliable agent in Jaffa.³⁰⁶

³⁰² Malter to Berdyczewski, June 18, 1907, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

³⁰³ Malter to Berdyczewski, September 1, 1907, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

³⁰⁴ Eisenstein to Berdyczewski, June 13, 1907, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

³⁰⁵ Eisenstein to Berdyczewski, July 23, 1907, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

³⁰⁶ Judah David Eisenstein to R. Abraham Isaac Kook, July 7, 1908, Genazim Archive, Tel Aviv.

Eisenstein's gift of connecting with people and getting them to do his bidding can be seen from the great number of subscribers scattered throughout South Africa. This was accomplished through Judah Leo Landau, the Galician-born and Vienna-trained Chief Rabbi of South Africa. In one letter, Eisenstein told Landau that almost all of the South African subscribers came through his efforts and that he was beholden to him on account of his help.³⁰⁷ Eisenstein even discussed outstanding South African accounts with Landau,³⁰⁸ and while he insisted that Landau not go to the trouble of contacting people to collect monies, he did rely on him to confirm his own record of the accounts of South African subscribers.³⁰⁹

At times, Landau acted as an unofficial agent for the *Ozar Yisrael*, and his letters to Eisenstein included reports about subscribers and the amounts they had already paid.³¹⁰ In one of his earliest letters to Landau, Eisenstein was explicit about what he wanted:

I am requesting from his honor that he act to benefit the *Ozar* in South Africa and to find us a capable and trustworthy agent in his city.³¹¹

This is an example of Eisenstein's skill at networking; to him, everyone was a conduit for promoting the *Ozar Yisrael*. He understood that if it was difficult for a person to pay for the work, it would be easy to gain their goodwill and direct it at finding more subscribers. Rabbi Zvi Yehezkel Michelson, the well-known Rabbi of Plonsk, is listed as a subscriber to volume

³⁰⁷ Eisenstein to Landau, February 1, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁰⁸ Eisenstein to Landau, June 15, 1914; July 12, 1914, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁰⁹ Eisenstein to Landau, February 24, 1914, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³¹⁰ Eisenstein to Landau, August 1, 1913, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³¹¹ Eisenstein to Landau, Elul 1, 5667 (August 11, 1907), Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

5 of the *Ozar Yisrael* and was one of Landau's friends. Eisenstein told Landau that he had sent a copy of the *Ozar Yisrael* to R. Michaelson and that "if he's able to pay half the price on his own, then let him pay for it himself, yet it is better if he does not pay but instead gets me some subscribers or writes a few entries. I am ready to do the same thing for anyone else that his honor [Landau] asks, and also for other rabbis."³¹² Thus, at Eisenstein's urging, Landau, from his home in Johannesburg, triangulated a connection between Eisenstein in New York and Michelson in Plonsk. Person by person, Eisenstein built his network, as he thought of ways for individuals to contribute to the *Ozar Yisrael* by writing for it, paying for it, or promoting it.

Eisenstein was such a great connector that he even convinced those with whom he'd had serious disagreement to support the *Ozar Yisrael*. A few years earlier, in a controversy over English sermons, Gotthard Deutsch had publicly chided his "esteemed friend," telling him that "we may not like certain things, but by our dislike they do not cease to be facts."³¹³ Yet, he still lent his name and talent to the *Ozar Yisrael*. A more extreme example is Julius Greenstone, who is listed as a contributor to volume 2 of the *Ozar Yisrael*. Greenstone was the author of the entry "Get" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*,³¹⁴ which Eisenstein singled out for a harsh critique in the pages of the *American Hebrew*, and although he never mentioned

³¹² Eisenstein to Landau, January 6, 1910, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³¹³ Gotthard Deutsch, "The Theory of the Condition," *American Hebrew*, Dec. 30, 1904, 192.

³¹⁴ Julius Greenstone, "Get," *JE* 5:646–48.

Greenstone by name, he pointed to fifteen errors in the entry.³¹⁵ Greenstone responded to the critique and opened with the following paragraph:

It is not my intention to defend the editors of the Jewish Encyclopedia against the attacks of Mr Eisenstein, but only to show the gross injustice done to me in the scathing remarks that appeared in the last issue of THE AMERICAN HEBREW. Mr Eisenstein apparently starts with the assumption that the writers of articles for the Encyclopedia are ignorant not only of Rabbinic Law, but also of Talmudic phraseology. The scholarship of Mr Eisenstein in matters of Jewish lore and his acquaintance with modern culture, should have taught him to look upon the work of others with a more charitable standpoint.”³¹⁶

While Greenstone is only listed as a contributor to one volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, it is remarkable that after so public a tussle he could be convinced to assist the *Ozar Yisrael* at all. Eisenstein was persistent and a master of the art of persuasion. He tried to connect with everyone and found a way to overlook—and get others to overlook—past disagreements. For the sake of the *Ozar Yisrael*, almost anything and almost everyone was forgiven or made to forgive.

Preying on Vulnerabilities

Not only did Eisenstein possess a natural talent for leveraging and creating connections, but he also knew how to locate people’s weaknesses and find a way to direct them to the *Ozar Yisrael*. Eisenstein connected to Berdyczewski through his “dear friend” Henry Malter. Malter, a former professor of philosophy at Hebrew Union College, was a helpmate to Eisenstein and an early devotee of the *Ozar Yisrael*. However, this relationship

³¹⁵ Judah David Eisenstein, “‘Get’ in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*,” *American Hebrew*, February 12, 1904, 411ff.

³¹⁶ Julius H. Greenstone, “A Response to the Criticism on the Article Get, *American Hebrew*,” February 26, 1904, 467ff.

was unstable and did not last. In the second half of 1908, Eisenstein clarified to Berdyczewski what Malter's role was:

Dr. Malter was only a proofreader, who would correct language but nothing more.³¹⁷ And now I have others instead of him and a proofreader who is more of an expert than he.³¹⁸

Thus, by the end of 1908, the relationship among Eisenstein, the *Ozar Yisrael*, and Malter had come to an end. Everything could change so suddenly because Eisenstein enlisted Malter when the latter was desperate and without a position. In 1900, the Hebrew Union College appointed Malter to their faculty, but his work with the college ended in early 1907,³¹⁹ when he resigned—or was fired—from his position and left Cincinnati for New York. On March 25, 1908, he wrote to Cyrus Adler hoping to secure a faculty position at the recently opened Dropsie College, where he eventually began to teach in 1909.³²⁰ Thus, between leaving his position at HUC and starting work at Dropsie, Malter was without formal employment and

³¹⁷ Eisenstein underlined these words in the letter.

³¹⁸ Eisenstein to Berdyczewski, August 30, 1908, M. J. Berdyczewski Archive, Holon, Israel.

³¹⁹ A short biography of Malter appears Alexander Marx, *Essays in Jewish Biography* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1947), 255–64. Marx clearly admired Malter and wrote that “it would require a literary artist to write an adequate sketch of the silent martyrdom undergone by this sensitive personality in his struggle with the needs of daily life.” Glimpses of this silent martyrdom are seen above: an able scholar reduced to becoming Eisenstein’s agent after fleeing persecution the Hebrew Union College. Marx writes that “the bonds between him and such men as Samuel Poznanski, David Neumark and especially Micah Joseph Berdyczewsky lasted throughout their lives” (257). And indeed, it was these lifelong bonds that Eisenstein wanted to access. Short lived though it may have been, his relationship with Eisenstein was important or well-known enough that Marx referenced it too: “Being at variance with the leaders of the institution as to the fundamentals of the theology of Reform Judaism which the Hebrew Union College represented, Malter could not long remain a member of its faculty. In 1907, he resigned and came to New York where he devoted himself to literary work, collaborating for a while on J. D. Eisenstein’s Hebrew encyclopedia, to which he contributed a number of articles, including a comprehensive one on Aristotle in Jewish literature” (259).

³²⁰ Henry Malter Archive, ARC MS 28, folder “Miscellaneous Correspondence with Malter,” Katz Center, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

spent some time working on the *Ozar Yisrael*.

This was a difficult period for Malter, who had a wife and child to support and was between jobs. To Berdyczewski, a friend from his student years, he regularly unburdened his soul:

My mind is occupied, my heart is very confused, and I have no idea where to turn. The seminary, encyclopedia, and other proposals are all shaking up my heart, but behold, they are noise and nothing more. At the moment, I am living in one room with my household and await what the future will bring. On top of all of this, there is my sick eye, which has not completely healed.³²¹

When he had no stable employment, Eisenstein and his *Ozar Yisrael* appeared with a tantalizing promise that seemed like a lifeline to Malter. He wrote to Berdyczewski:

My main hope is that I will receive a position at the college that is going to be established in Philadelphia, which will be like a Hebrew university (not a rabbinical school) and will be named Dropsie after its donor. Maybe it will open next January or, at the very least, by September of 1908. However, now I accept what comes up in New York. For example, I agreed to supervise the Hebrew teachers in the orphanage once per week for \$50/month. Apart from this, I will receive \$100/month as an editor of the Hebrew encyclopedia [*Ozar Yisrael*] that is now appearing in New York. The money is promised to me for a whole year, from this September until September 1908.³²²

Malter's bad luck was leveraged by Eisenstein into a chance to hire someone well regarded in Hebraist and cultural Zionist circles. Seizing Malter's hour of desperation, Eisenstein transformed the hapless scholar into an early advocate of the *Ozar Yisrael*. Malter was the way to lead others—like Berdyczewski—to the *Ozar Yisrael* and win for it the respectability that Eisenstein knew it needed and understood that he could not deliver. A short while later,

³²¹ Malter to Berdyczewski, September 1, 1907, Berdyczewski Archive.

³²² Malter to Berdyczewski, May 13, 1907, Berdyczewski Archive.

Malter could no longer tolerate working for Eisenstein, and after the fiasco with Berdyczewski's payment, he ended their association. But by then it mattered little, for through Malter, Eisenstein had already achieved much. He had even used his name, along with Gotthard Deutsch's and Samuel Poznanski's, to feature on the title page of volume 2 of the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Judah Leo Landau, the chief rabbi of South Africa, was the closest Eisenstein got to having a partner in the *Ozar Yisrael*, and early on, both of them recognized the potential for mutual benefit. While Eisenstein could not prey on Landau's vulnerabilities, from afar, he understood what was driving him.

I have received your letter from Tammuz 27, and I am readily sending you the first volume. The next volume will be complete in three or four months, and the time between volumes will be six months.

The entry "Africa" will be in the second volume, and it was already decided to include South Africa in it, but now, after I received your letter, I will give it its own entry, "South Africa," and I will wait for it. I am requesting from his honour that he send me this entry and that he write other special entries relating to Johannesburg and everything relating to Judaism and South Africa.³²³

Landau often felt that another rabbi in Johannesburg, his nemesis Joseph Hertz (1872–1946), who later became chief rabbi of the British Commonwealth, overshadowed him. And in Eisenstein he saw the possibility of outshining Hertz by winning renown in the global Jewish community.³²⁴ Eisenstein saw Landau as a conduit to buyers and writers in South Africa.

³²³ Eisenstein to Landau, Elul 1, 5667 (August 11, 1907), Landau Archive, 798 2 42, NLI.

³²⁴ The issue of jealousy and the tense relationship between the rabbis cannot be overlooked. Indeed, Joseph Hertz had written the entry "South Africa" for the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (11:476–80) and mentioned his own expulsion from Transvaal. In Landau's article on South Africa (4:73–76), Hertz's name and activities are glossed over without mention. A fuller treatment of the relationship between the two men can be found in John Ian Simon, "A Study of the Nature and Development of Orthodox Judaism in South Africa to c. 1935 (master's

Each understood what the other wanted, and on this basis, a partnership was formed.

Knowing of the tension between Hertz and Landau, Eisenstein played it to his advantage. In one letter to Landau, he wrote:

I have left the entry “Johannesburg” for your honor. I will tell you the truth, that Dr. Hertz asked me to give him this entry and I replied that it was already given to his honor, and to Dr. Hertz I have given the entry “Transvaal” so that I may placate him.³²⁵

Yet, later he wrote to Landau to tell him that he had retracted his offer to Hertz, as he explained:

Today I wrote to Dr. Hertz asking him not to write the entry “Transvaal,” as it is included in the entry “Johannesburg,” which his honor is writing. Indeed, any entry that his honor wants me to impose on him to write, I will favor him first. Both because his honor is a more of an expert and also on account of his incredible efforts for the sake of the *Ozar*, which I recognize and greatly appreciate. To Dr. Hertz I have written in such a way that he will not know that his honor opposed him.³²⁶

Whether Eisenstein actually offered an entry to Hertz and then retracted it is immaterial. His ability to manipulate a situation to his benefit, as he did when Malter was between jobs, is evident. Eisenstein gave Landau the satisfying impression that through the *Ozar Yisrael* he deprived Hertz of something, and Eisenstein hoped that this would increase his appreciation of, and involvement with, the *Ozar Yisrael*. Despite the fact that for the duration of the *Ozar*

thesis, University of Capetown, 1996), 82–97. Simon described Hertz as Landau’s “bete noire” (87). As the *Ozar Yisrael* was starting, “Landau’s mind was turning frequently to the possibility of leaving Johannesburg,” and as such, the prospect of using the *Ozar Yisrael* to boost his reputation would have been particularly attractive to him.

³²⁵ Eisenstein to Landau, November 29, 1909, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³²⁶ Eisenstein to Landau, February 11, 1910, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

Yisrael project (and beyond) Eisenstein and Landau never met, they were kindred spirits who shared secrets and gossip and found mutual benefit in one another.³²⁷

Eisenstein also approached people whom he had helped in the past. He believed it would be easy to get them to work for the *Ozar Yisrael* because they owed him some loyalty, but this did not always work out. The Slutzker Rav, Rabbi Jacob David Willowski (Ridvaz), had made it a condition of his preaching at the 1904 High Holiday Services at Manhattan's *Kehillat Jeshurun* that there be no English sermon from anyone. Since this effectively excluded Mordechai Kaplan, then serving the congregation, from delivering an English

³²⁷ For example, Schechter had a daughter living in Johannesburg, and Eisenstein informed Landau that he was planning a sabbatical to visit his daughter. Eisenstein advised Landau that Schechter was shrewd and knew the art of mingling with wealthy people and that therefore he should see him and ask for any assistance he might need (Eisenstein to Landau, June 24, 1910, Landau papers, 798 2 42, NLI). In another letter, Eisenstein assured Landau that he would not reveal to anyone what he told him about Schechter, and he too asked Landau for the same assurance (Eisenstein to Landau, Oct. 31 1910, Landau papers, 798 2 42, NLI). When Solomon Schechter died, Eisenstein reported to Landau that despite the great mourning the Jewish newspapers displayed, "not a single one of the Orthodox Rabbis came to accompany him to the cemetery, and he is almost forgotten." Based on what he had heard, Adolf Buchler (who was serving as the principal of Jews' College) would not replace Schechter, since in London he had earned himself a quarrelsome reputation, and Samuel Poznanski spoke no English, so he would not be considered for the position, either. Therefore, at least for the time being, Eisenstein thought, JTS would remain satisfied with Cyrus Adler, who was Schechter's immediate replacement (Eisenstein to Landau, Jan 28, 1916, Landau papers, 798 2 42, NLI). Thus, for Landau, Eisenstein was a secret and loyal source of information about New York, and for Eisenstein, Landau was a tireless promoter of the *Ozar Yisrael* in his native South Africa and even, as will be seen in the next chapter, in the Hebrew press. Landau was also especially dear to Eisenstein and the one person Eisenstein felt truly supported him. As the *Ozar Yisrael* came to a close, Eisenstein tenderly let Landau know how much all his help meant to him:

I want to express to your honor my deep gratitude from the depths of my heart for his great participation and help, material and spiritual, more than what any other man did from among all my friends and acquaintances from near and far. Never will I forget this, and I will be grateful to his honor for the length of days.

Sending him the invitation to the celebratory meal in honor of completing the *Ozar Yisrael*, he told him how happy he would be if he could join the celebration. Alas, the invitation would have to suffice, as he offered a prayer: "let it be as if he [Landau] was there together with us" (Eisenstein to Landau, November 28, 1913, Landau papers, 798 2 42, NLI). The letter is addressed to Landau but addresses him in the third person, as this was the practice even among intimate colleagues who wished to demonstrate the esteem in which they held each other.

sermon during the High Holidays, there was an uproar.³²⁸ Many were outraged at Kaplan's having to submit to the Slutzker Rav, whom the *American Hebrew* now described as "a man whose sole career in America has been that of a mischief-maker. The sooner the *Slutzker Rav* gets out of America the better."³²⁹ Eisenstein was quick to write to the *American Hebrew* and defend Willowski. He did so in his typical manner of trying to make a traditional stance more palatable. He presented Willowski's view as pragmatic: most people in the congregation simply did not understand English. Gotthard Deutsch (who later lent his name to the *Ozar Yisrael*) responded by citing many examples of the Orthodox resisting sermons in the vernacular. His point was that for Willowski this was an ideological commitment and not just a pragmatic decision, as Eisenstein had craftily suggested.³³⁰

Having defended Willowski in the past—to the point of inviting an attack on himself from Gotthard Deutsch—Eisenstein now requested that he write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. Considering the heartache that he went through for Willowski, he may have been confident that he would receive a positive response, yet no such response was forthcoming. In a letter that mostly asked for Eisenstein's help with fundraising, Willowski wrote:

I received the *Ozar Yisrael* vol. 2—thank you. It has wisdom and it has insight. It is a beautiful treasured vessel for Israel, and I am very pained that I am unfit and unprepared to take part in it. May it be God's will that blessing will rest on your handiwork—Amen.³³¹

³²⁸ See Mel Scult, *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century: A Biography of Mordecai M. Kaplan* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 72–76.

³²⁹ Judah D. Eisenstein, "A Condition not a Theory," *American Hebrew*, Dec. 9, 1904, 93.

³³⁰ Deutsch, "The Theory of the Condition," 192.

³³¹ Ridvaz to J. D. Eisenstein, Judah David Eisenstein Papers, ARC. 32, box 1, folder 1/12, JTS Library.

This was a failure on the part of the Slutzker Rav, who was known to be difficult, to repay Eisenstein's loyalty. But since the *Ozar Yisrael* accepted entries from people whose ideological commitments were far removed Willowski's, it was easy for him to decline to participate. Yet, this rejection did not deter Eisenstein, and he still found a way to use Willowski's name to promote the *Ozar Yisrael*. On the last page of the last volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, there is a list of approbations, and the first one is from Willowski. Not far from Willowski's name was Simon Bernfield's. Below, it will be shown that Eisenstein considered Bernfield an arch-heretic and did not wish him to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. The irony of placing these two men on the final page of approbations is remarkable. Eisenstein could now rest, for he had produced the only modern work that both the learned reactionary sage and the proud heretic had at some point endorsed. Even when a person declined to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein did not give up and found a way to utilize them in the service of his encyclopedia.

The Virtue of Mediocrity

Since he was producing the *Ozar Yisrael* on his own, Eisenstein had limitless flexibility. Without layers of editors and proofreaders, he could quickly do as he wished. The disadvantage of so much freedom was that there was no oversight. And without oversight, anyone is prone to making mistakes. People regularly challenged Eisenstein about the sloppy and uneven character of the encyclopedia. Before agreeing to become a contributor, Berdyczewski wrote to Eisenstein with his reservations about the work. At this early stage, it

was important for Eisenstein to put Berdyczewski at ease. Addressing his concerns, Eisenstein did not deny that there were errors, but at the same time, he maintained that his approach to producing the encyclopedia was the correct one:

Concerning your comments, I knew from the outset that it would be impossible to do perfect work that is absolutely perfect, but it is enough for now if it will be as good as or better than the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which I also worked on a lot.³³²

In an apologetic tone, Eisenstein acknowledged that he was not going to create something perfect but said that that was fine, because perfection was not his aim. In any case, after he completed the encyclopedia, he could produce a second, improved edition. This line of reasoning was a mantra of sorts. One month earlier, Malter had promulgated it to Berdyczewski when he explained:

The first volume of the *Ozar Yisrael* is full of lacunae, but it is possible to improve the coming volumes, and they are also prepared to release a corrected edition of the first volume.³³³

In 1912, Eisenstein thanked Israel Davidson for buying volume 7 of the *Ozar Yisrael* and also for his many comments on the work.³³⁴ He also addressed Davidson's criticism:

I am very aware that there are things missing from the bibliography or arguments over the number of stories or poems or if one book was already published or another is still in manuscript. Mistakes such as these I find in every work or book, but who is free of mistakes? Nevertheless, I am sure that even in the small entry "Najara" you will find something new, even though you've already studied and investigated him and learned him well from other

³³² Eisenstein to Berdyczewski, July 23, 1907, Berdyczewski Archive.

³³³ Malter to Berdyczewski, June 18, 1907, Berdyczewski Archive.

³³⁴ Salomon Rosanes, "Najara," *OY* 7:1–2.

books. And so it is with each and every entry: even the generalist scholar is able to discover something new in them. Thank God, the *Ozar* books are now requested by real scholars and also by great and famous rabbis who *need* the *Ozar*.³³⁵

Eisenstein rarely denied that there were problems. He simply downplayed them and argued that the work was good enough. No book is free of error, explained Eisenstein, so it was unfair to expect the *Ozar Yisrael* to be free of errors or to dismiss it when some were found. After the printing of the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910–1911), he made the same point to Landau. It had errors, yet no one doubted that it was the best encyclopedia in the world. Similarly, the mere fact that the *Ozar Yisrael* had some errors should not detract from its overall value. Notwithstanding its errors, much good could be found in the *Ozar Yisrael*, and this, explained Eisenstein, was why the number of learned subscribers kept growing.³³⁶

After admitting that the work was mediocre, he portrayed this mediocrity as a virtue. He argued that the only way he could finish the work was by dint of its mediocrity. Explaining his approach, he wrote:

If I were to wait and only accept entries from well-known experts, I would not even be able to finish one volume in my lifetime, and if I were pedantic about the small-things that any person could later fix, then I would never ever finish my project. Therefore, in my opinion it is better to rush and complete the *Ozar* as it is and to leave the corrections for later to proofreaders, because it is very

³³⁵ Eisenstein to Davidson, April 18, 1912, Israel Davidson Papers, ARC.28, box 2, folder “Davidson, Israel Eisenstein, J. D, 1909–1913; 1935.”

³³⁶ Eisenstein to Landau, August 23, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI. See also Eisenstein’s letter to Landau from June 16, 1911, where he tells Landau that he has just ordered the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and would be very happy for him to compare the two works so that he might see that both had flaws.

easy to find proofreaders, but it is very difficult to find an editor even for a single volume.³³⁷

When, a few months later, Landau again complained about the quality of the work, Eisenstein sent him a similar response:

To fix the mistakes is something easy, and it is possible to do this at any moment and any time. However, to finish my work is something much harder, and therefore I will try with extra effort with the help of God to complete the work as it is.³³⁸

When Landau was unhappy with a mistake about a relative of his, Eisenstein apologized but also told him that “what is past, is past.”³³⁹

The lack of oversight was exacerbated by the pace at which Eisenstein was producing volumes. Ten volumes were published in a space of six years. In 1911, he explained why it was so important to keep moving at a quick pace, despite the inevitable mistakes that this would cause:

Do not forget that I am already advanced in my years. Behold, I am fifty-six, and my desire is to finish the work before my sixtieth year passes. I am ready to work without any disturbances all through the coming year, and maybe the following year I will rest a little, as I want to travel to Russia for the sake of the *Ozar*.³⁴⁰

Three years later, when the work was finally completed, he apologized once more to Landau:

Believe me, my friend, that the responsibility that was placed on me to finish my project and to complete the ten volumes did not allow me to rest, and it

³³⁷ Eisenstein to Davidson, April 18, 1912, Israel Davidson Papers, ARC.28, box 2, folder “Davidson, Israel Eisenstein, J. D, 1909–1913; 1935.”

³³⁸ Eisenstein to Landau, July 5, 1912, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³³⁹ Eisenstein to Landau, January 12, 1914, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁴⁰ Eisenstein to Landau, May 2, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

stole my sleep. Also afterward, my soul did not rest until the books left the printer and the binder and were sent to the subscribers. Thank God, everything was completed in the best possible way. From this his honor should understand my worries and my scatterbrain and forgive me for the deficiencies, which also did not escape me.³⁴¹

Whether it was because of his advanced years, the desire to promote the *Ozar Yisrael* in Europe and get away from his grueling work schedule, or a belief that the only way to finish was to disregard errors and keep publishing, he hurried the work along. Rushing to finish invited sloppy errors and engendered an amateurish mindset that was at times more concerned with completing and promoting the project than with its quality.

Between Entries and Contributors: The “What” and “Who” of the *Ozar Yisrael*

Eisenstein was learned and an amateur scholar, but these were not the primary skills he used to produce the *Ozar Yisrael*. The real reason he could produce the encyclopedia was his aptitude for leveraging a wide network of people that he already knew and came to know. He was always open to editorial suggestions, as long as the person making the suggestion could be leveraged for the work. However, if they ended their involvement, their suggestion was ignored. Berdyczewski raised two concerns about the first volume: there was no entry for the city of Uman (which, he argued, had played an important role in the Khmelnytsky Uprising), and the entry “Abba Shaul” failed to mention the “Mishna of Abba Shaul.”³⁴² Eisenstein suggested that Uman could be included in the entry “Khmelnytsky” and that

³⁴¹ Eisenstein to Landau, December, 17, 1913, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁴² The entry “Abba Shaul” was written by Abraham Hayyim Rosenberg (*OY* 1:11). What Berdyczewski probably meant was that there was no mention of the findings of a seminal article by Israel Levy entitled “Über einige Fragmente aus der Mischna des Abba Saul” (Berlin, 1876) that argued that Abba Shaul was the teacher of a (mostly lost) Mishna collection.

additional information regarding Abba Shaul could be added to the entry “Mishna.” But by the time these entries appeared, Berdyczewski had long since ended his involvement with the *Ozar Yisrael*, and so neither suggestion was carried out.³⁴³ This was one of the many times that Eisenstein hedged between including and dispensing with an entry or part of an entry. Whether an entry was included or excluded was decided not only on its merits but also on the basis of the utility of the person proposing it. Once Berdyczewski was no longer connected to the *Ozar Yisrael*, any commitment Eisenstein had made to him was no longer relevant. This is an example of how Eisenstein made decisions and promises about the encyclopedia with the sole intent of currying favor with someone. Once that person was no longer connected to the *Ozar Yisrael*, there was no longer a compelling reason to please them, and therefore, their editorial comments were pushed aside. Now that Berdyczewski was no longer going to promote the *Ozar Yisrael*, whatever good suggestions he made in the past could be forgotten.

After Eisenstein received a cable from Landau asking if he could write the entry “Resurrection of the Dead” (*Tehiyat ha-metim*),³⁴⁴ he immediately responded by cable stating that he would prefer Landau’s entries “even if I have a similar entry from someone else.”³⁴⁵ And when he did not receive the entry, he let him know that he would continue to wait and leave some space for it.³⁴⁶ Over and over again he showed the same courtesy to Landau and

³⁴³ There was no mention of Uman in the entries “Khmelnysky, Bogdan” (*OY* 4:295) or “Kozakim, Meridat” (*OY* 9:126–29). The entry “Mishna” (*OY* 6:317) directs one to the entry “Talmud” (*OY* 10:260–67), which Eisenstein wrote, and while its bibliography included works by critical scholars, there is no mention of the theory of Abba Shaul’s Mishna collection.

³⁴⁴ *OY* 10:245–48.

³⁴⁵ Eisenstein to Landau, July 11, 1913, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁴⁶ Eisenstein to Landau, August 1, 1913, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

waited for him on many other entries, including “Spinoza”³⁴⁷ and “Zionism.”³⁴⁸ But sometimes Landau’s entries arrived so late that Eisenstein could no longer use them, and this created an awkward situation.

This is what happened with the entry “Soul” (*Nefesh*): Landau sent it to Eisenstein, but it arrived so late that Eisenstein ended up writing the entry himself.³⁴⁹ Landau was annoyed that he had wasted his effort, and so Eisenstein promised him to find some other way to include the entry³⁵⁰—and he did, for under the heading “Spirit” (*Ruah*),³⁵¹ there is a subheading for “Soul” (*Nefesh*). To the uninformed eye, nothing is amiss, but this addition was only included to appease Eisenstein’s dearest colleague, who by dint of geographical distance or difference of temperament was unable to keep up with Eisenstein’s breakneck pace. Something similar happened to the entry “Christianity” (*Notzrut*): Eisenstein wrote the entry,³⁵² but it ends with a long excursus on the Crusaders (*Nos ’ey ha-tzlav*) that Landau wrote.³⁵³ Originally, the latter was meant to stand as its own entry, but after it arrived too late, Eisenstein had to either discard it and risk disappointing Landau or attach it to some other entry with which it had a tenuous link, and he chose to do the latter.³⁵⁴

³⁴⁷ Eisenstein to Landau, June 25, 1913, Landau papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁴⁸ Eisenstein to Landau, September 11, 1912, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁴⁹ OY 7:90–92. See Eisenstein to Landau, December 12, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁵⁰ Eisenstein to Landau, January 23, 1912, Landau papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁵¹ OY 9:273–75.

³⁵² OY 7:95–100.

³⁵³ OY 7:98–100.

³⁵⁴ Eisenstein to Landau, December 12, 1911, Landau papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

Variations on this type of favoritism and ad hoc decision-making are apparent throughout Eisenstein's correspondence. Davidson received a postcard from Eisenstein saying that he would gladly accept the entry "Pseudonyms" (*Shmot B'duyim*) from him. He requested that it be "as short as possible, because this is the last volume and there still remain a number of entries."³⁵⁵ However, while the last volume contains the entry "Names" (*Shmot*), Eisenstein wrote it, and there is no subtopic, discussion, or placeholder for *Shmot B'duyim*.³⁵⁶ When Eisenstein asked Davidson to write the entry, he did not truly believe that it was important for the encyclopedia to include it, and it was in any case to be "as short as possible." Rather, he thought it would be good for the *Ozar Yisrael* to include Davidson in the final volume and was enticing him with the offer to write this entry. When Davidson was not forthcoming, the entry was simply left out. Eisenstein elevated *who* wrote for the *Ozar* over *what* was written for the *Ozar*. Based on the importance of the person writing it, an entry could appear or disappear. And while not every amateur project is amateurish, on this account the *Ozar Yisrael* was not just an amateur project but also amateurish.

Josef Umanski, the director of the Safah Berurah Hebrew school in Tarnow (Galicia), wrote to Eisenstein asking for permission to shorten his entry on the Babylonian Amora Rav.³⁵⁷ He was also planning to send him the entry on the Babylonian Amora Shmuel, and so he asked when Eisenstein would start printing the letter *shin* in volume 10. Eisenstein was

³⁵⁵ Eisenstein to Davidson, April 27, 1913, Israel Davidson Papers, ARC.28, box 2, folder "Davidson, Israel Eisenstein, J. D, 1909–1913; 1935.

³⁵⁶ Eisenstein, "Shemot," *OY* 10:157–63.

³⁵⁷ Josef Umanski to J. D. Eisenstein, 8 of Kislev, 5672 (November 29, 1911), Judah David Eisenstein Papers, ARC. 32, box 1, folder 13, JTS Library, New York.

not interested anymore and appointed himself to write the entries “Rav”³⁵⁸ and “Shmuel,”³⁵⁹ and he did not list Umanski as a contributor to any volume. Perhaps the entry on Shmuel arrived too late, and Eisenstein’s impatience led him to write it himself. However, not everyone was so easily ignored. The Hungarian Wilhelm Bacher was a serious scholar, and from volume 3 onward he contributed to every volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*; Eisenstein highlighted his name on the front cover of volume 10. He wrote to Eisenstein and asked that an addition be made to his entry “Meir, Rabbi.”³⁶⁰ The requested change was minor; he wished to mention that in some sources a statement was erroneously attributed to Rabbi Yehuda and not to Rabbi Meir.³⁶¹ And yet for this pithy addition, Eisenstein made whatever adjustments were necessary. The final version of the entry “Meir, Rabbi,” reflected Bacher’s updated emendation, and he continued to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. When someone (such as Umanski) brought little prestige to the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein did not allow their wishes or efforts to interrupt his progress. However, if the person was someone like Judah Leo Landau, who worked hard for the *Ozar Yisrael*, or someone like Israel Davidson or Wilhelm Bacher, whose reputations added gravitas to the encyclopedia, then he became flexible and would add entries and make changes to satisfy them. And if they were a fine scholar who had made good suggestions (like Berdyczewski) but were no longer involved in the work, then there

³⁵⁸ *OY* 9:254–55.

³⁵⁹ *OY* 10:146–49.

³⁶⁰ *OY* 8:72. The letter, along with drafts of Bacher’s articles, are in the Judah David Eisenstein Papers, ARC. 32, box 1, folder 18.

³⁶¹ The addition can be found in *OY* 6:74, and is the few lines: *aval b'tosefta ... bimkom R. Meir*.

was no reason to heed their advice. Thus, for Eisenstein, the encyclopedia was not only about the entries it included but also about the contributors he could attract. Not because “better” contributors would lead to a better encyclopedia but because from a marketing perspective, “better” contributors could, in the eyes of the public, increase the project’s value.

Testing the Limits of Ideological Openness

Eisenstein was a traditionalist at heart, and the task of recruiting academicians while maintaining the encyclopedia’s Orthodox perspective was his greatest challenge. To his confidante Landau, he wrote that it was “better that young ones laugh at me than I be a laughingstock in the eyes of the best of the rabbis who know the Torah and the traditions (*mesorah*).”³⁶² Never did he waiver from this position, continuing to abide by it while he developed the *Ozar Yisrael*. In a candid public letter about the need for another encyclopedia, David Neumark deflected the charge that the *Ozar Yisrael* was unscientific. This was not completely accurate, he wrote, for in many cases, entries had found their way to suitable scholars. However, “the *Ozar Yisrael* is a *conservative* work and therefore it abandoned scientific precision and scientific truth in a great many topics (this was the reason why, after much back-and-forth with the editor I was unable to reach an agreement with him and partake in his project).”³⁶³

Eisenstein had no problem with Neumark writing for the *Ozar Yisrael*; he wanted him to do so and approached him. Neumark was responsible for the most radical article in the

³⁶² Eisenstein to Landau, April 12, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁶³ David Neumark, “*Shifat Kalgasim* – Letter to the Editor,” *Ha-Olam*, May 16, 1913, 10.

sample volume of the *Ozar hayahadut*, and now he was professor of philosophy at the Hebrew Union College. If Eisenstein was comfortable asking a known “heretic” like Neumark to contribute to the encyclopedia, then he was willing to allow anyone to write for it. Indeed, no one was excluded from the *Ozar Yisrael* because of what they believed or on account of their academic or denominational affiliation. The reason why this open attitude worked for a traditionalist encyclopedia is because Eisenstein insisted on total editorial control.

The only reason Neumark did not write for the *Ozar Yisrael* is that Eisenstein insisted on retaining the right to alter his entries. What would have been the point of accepting Neumark’s entries and then altering them? The correspondence between Malter and Berdyczewski demonstrates that in order to give the impression that it was a scholarly work, Eisenstein wanted Neumark to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. However, Eisenstein’s wish for the *Ozar Yisrael* to glisten with the veneer of scholarship never overpowered his ideological principles. To have coopted Neumark would have been a great coup. He was one of the four contributors to the sample volume of the *Otsar hayahadut*, to which Eisenstein responded with the *Ozar Yisrael*. Even so, he never allowed his reactive dream to dictate the ideological contours of the *Ozar Yisrael*. Ultimately, Eisenstein was not prepared to grant people—no matter how much prestige they could bring to the *Ozar*—absolute freedom to write whatever they wanted to write. And so Neumark declined to write for the project, but not because he thought it had no redeeming qualities.

Ideological control remained strictly in Eisenstein’s purview, and people who wrote for the *Ozar Yisrael* had to accept this arrangement. Sometimes a writer only learned about

Eisenstein's ideological policing after their entry was altered and published, and even then, they continued to write for the work. When the *Ozar Yisrael* appeared, Jacob Raisin, a Reform rabbi and contributor to the *Ozar Yisrael*, wrote a generally positive review but also elaborated on his experience of writing for the encyclopedia. Apparently not everything he had written was printed, and Raisin described Eisenstein as

not only projecting and managing, but also literary editor, he sometimes assumes the office of censor and removes what to him appears to savor of radicalism without hesitancy. The writer having been asked to contribute an article on "Folklore" (*Agadath Hol*) ventured to point out some traces of popular fables, ballads and tales in the Bible, but when it was published he found, to his surprise, that these references have been carefully expurgated.³⁶⁴

This editorial oversight did not discourage Rasin, and after his altered entry "Secular Folktales" (*Agadat Hol*) appeared in volume 1, he remained a loyal contributor, writing entries for other volumes as well.³⁶⁵ Thus, from the first volume onward, people writing for the *Ozar Yisrael* knew that their entries might be "sanitized" for a more traditional palate.

From the start, Eisenstein was open to allowing and encouraging anyone to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. In a 1908 postcard to Landau, he explained, "I cite a variety of opinions from different writers as long as they don't contradict the religion of Israel."³⁶⁶ However, there was one instance in which he did not want someone to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*. In a December 1911 letter to Landau, he told him that he had originally written to the rabbi, scholar, and popularizer Dr. Simon Bernfeld (1860–1940) and to the Orthodox historian and

³⁶⁴ Jacob Raisin, "Ozar Yisrael: The New Hebrew Jewish Encyclopedia," *American Israelite*, May 30 1907, 5.

³⁶⁵ He is listed as a contributor to vols. 1, 2, 6, and 10.

³⁶⁶ Eisenstein to Landau, December 11, 1908 (Kislev 17, 5669), Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

Zionist writer Zev Yavetz (1847–1924) asking them to contribute entries and had even offered them payment.³⁶⁷ Bernfeld promised to write but never did,³⁶⁸ and Yavetz ignored the request altogether.³⁶⁹ While he was willing to approach Yavetz again, he could not bring himself to ask Simon Bernfeld again.³⁷⁰ According to Eisenstein, the latter was to be counted as a *mumar le-hachis* (an apostate who acts out of ideological spite) because he had recently asserted in *Ha-zfira*: “I am a complete *apikorus* (heretic) and will remain an *apikorus* until I die.”³⁷¹ After Bernfeld publicly denied the divinity of the Bible in so barefaced a manner, Eisenstein’s tolerant ideological framework could no longer offer Bernfeld the chance to participate in the *Ozar Yisrael*. This interaction suggests that by this time, Eisenstein was not willing to approach absolutely anyone. In the project’s earlier years, he showed more flexibility (and approached men like Neumark), but by the end of 1911, his confidence in the *Ozar Yisrael* was secure. No longer was he so driven to attract academic scholars, and now he could afford to decline an entry based on ideological commitments that its writer expressed elsewhere—even if those commitments were never going to appear in the entry.

³⁶⁷ Eisenstein to Landau, December 12, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁶⁸ In another letter, Eisenstein stated that at the outset of the *Ozar Yisrael* he asked him to write numerous times. See Eisenstein to Landau, November 22, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁶⁹ In a 1925 letter to JTS librarian Isaac Rivkind (of Mizrahi identity), Yavetz heaped scorn on Eisenstein about the *Ozar Ha-drashot*, stating that it was a scandal and that it should have earned Eisenstein lashes. See Isaac Nissenbaum, *Igrot Ha-Rav Nissenbaum* (Jerusalem: 1955), 212.

³⁷⁰ Eisenstein to Landau, December 22, 1911, Landau Papers, 798 2 42, NLI.

³⁷¹ The article Eisenstein was referring to was Simon Bernfeld, “Ekh melamdim kitve ha-kodesh,” *Ha-Zfira*, November 1, 1911, 1ff; the relevant quote appears on p. 2.

Neumark's unwillingness to censor himself and Raisin's experience of having his articles censored shows that Eisenstein policed the ideological purity of the encyclopedia from the outset. As mentioned earlier, in the early years of the *Ozar Yisrael*, Joseph Klausner received a request from Eisenstein to write for the encyclopedia, along with an offer of \$2.50 per column. However, Eisenstein had made this conditional on his not writing "something that contradicts Judaic tradition."³⁷² Klausner responded by saying that he was a "scientific man"³⁷³ and did not want to be a "prisoner to religious tradition."³⁷⁴ Paid or unpaid, Klausner's ideological dignity remained paramount, and he understood precisely what was being asked of him. Under such circumstances, there was no way for Eisenstein to procure an article from Klausner, if only because for Eisenstein every entry was to remain, as Klausner correctly surmised, "a prisoner to religious tradition."

Earlier, it was shown that although Willowski (the Slutzker Rav) declined to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein still used his name to promote the work. Not only did he do this to someone who was unwilling to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*, he also did it to Bernfeld, from whom he had refused to solicit an entry (on account of his brazen denial of the divinity of Bible). Bernfeld, whom in 1911 Eisenstein privately described as an arch-heretic who was unfit to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*, was still good enough to be used to promote the work in 1913. On the final page of the final volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, under the heading

³⁷² The Hebrew is דבר המתנגד למסורת היהדות.

³⁷³ The original, איש מדעי, is underlined.

³⁷⁴ The episode is based on Eisenstein's account to Landau (Eisenstein to Landau, November 22, 1911, Landau Papers, ARC 798 2 242, NLI).

“Approbations from All the Camps,” was a list of quotations from well-known figures in praise of the *Ozar Yisrael*,³⁷⁵ and the same page contained quotations from the reactionary Willowski and the unrepentant Bernfeld. These men were approached to write for the *Ozar Yisrael*, and neither did, yet Eisenstein found a way for both of them, on the very last page, to lavish praise on the *Ozar Yisrael*.

In one instance, someone wrote an entry for the *Ozar Yisrael* in order to illustrate their approval of the work. After the appearance of the first volume, R. Kook wrote to Eisenstein and expressed some disappointment.³⁷⁶ Specifying problems with three different entries, what aggrieved him most was a physical diagram of a human being that was included in the kabbalistic entry “Primordial Man” (*Adam Kadmon*),³⁷⁷ which he thought was too anthropomorphic. In the letter, R. Kook rebuked Eisenstein, telling him that this

brings great damage, and darkens the splendorous light of the pure faith of Judaism. I hope that his honor will no longer do things like this, and how good it would be if he could fix the past. And his honor should in his goodness forgive me if my heart is heated up about this.

Even though the *Ozar Yisrael* was an aesthetically pleasing work that Eisenstein filled with diagrams and art, he heeded the sage’s warning, and after the first volume, no diagrams accompanied the kabbalistic entries. Despite R. Kook’s unhappiness with the diagram, he

³⁷⁵ Most of these must have come from correspondence between these people and Eisenstein. No correspondence between Bernfeld and Eisenstein is extant.

³⁷⁶ R. Abraham Isaac Kook, *Igrot Ha-riya* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1985), 1:161–63.

³⁷⁷ Eisenstein, “Adam Kadmon,” *OY* 1:138–39.

fulfilled Eisenstein's request to write an entry for the *Ozar Yisrael*, writing the entry "*Bar Metzra*,"³⁷⁸ which appeared in volume 3 and was his sole contribution to the project.

R. Kook was so harsh in his critique that he felt it necessary to apologize for his blistering reprimand, yet he still sent an entry to Eisenstein. This was his way of showing that he supported the endeavor. In a letter, he described his joy at receiving the first volume of the *Ozar Yisrael* and added:

more than anything I was happy to see the moderate spirit and calmness of mind that accompanies the general editing of the *Ozar Yisrael*, which has brought to its editors the blessed knowledge not to become overly excited by the many new streams that have come to destroy and not to build.

R. Kook recognized that despite the work's failings, it was (from his standpoint) a far better work than Eisenstein's rivals planned to produce. This was a Hebrew encyclopedia that accepted the sanctity of the Bible and was sympathetic to tradition. Keeping this bigger picture in mind, R. Kook viewed it as a blessing and sent an entry, not because Eisenstein needed the entry but because this was his way of communicating approval:

Regarding his honour's request that I participate with some entries, the truth is that I am already very occupied with a variety of work and different jobs. Nonetheless, since his esteemed work is very precious in my eyes, as it is for the good of true Judaism and the expansions of its knowledge in Israel in a respectable manner, I hope—but do not promise—to prepare a topic or topics, whether short or long, according to my available time.

R. Kook's modest contribution to a single volume was different from the small contributions that Berdyczewski and Malter made to the encyclopedia. They, after writing for one volume,

³⁷⁸ *OY* 3:170–74. A *bar metzra* is an owner of a neighboring property who is automatically granted prior purchase rights.

changed their minds about Eisenstein and wanted nothing to do with the project. From the outset, R. Kook explained that despite the burdens of his hectic schedule, he would still participate in the *Ozar Yisrael* to show his approval of what Eisenstein was trying to achieve. After writing one entry, R. Kook did not write again for the work but kept in touch with Eisenstein and continued to send him comments on the *Ozar Yisrael*.³⁷⁹

Because the *Ozar Yisrael* was a one-man operation, Eisenstein did not have the luxury of only worrying about procuring entries; as soon as he completed a volume, he would also need to sell it. Writers were not just there to write entries, they were also there to make the work attractive to customers. This explains why Eisenstein was eager to have academicians and famous rabbis writing for the *Ozar Yisrael*: it made the work easier to market. For Eisenstein, getting entries written was the easier part of his job, for if need be, he could always write the entries himself—as he often did. Writers were not only needed for what they could write but for the influence and power of their names. This is why he pursued people to write for the *Ozar Yisrael* only to then insist—to scholars who were greater and more learned than he—on retaining editorial control. This was his way of brokering the balance between producing a strictly traditionalist encyclopedia that would only accept entries from people whose religious ideology was beyond reproach and producing an encyclopedia that was an heir to the Hebraist *Otsar hayahadut*, which appeared to have no religious litmus test.

³⁷⁹ Two letters (July 17, 1908 and February 9, 1911) from Eisenstein to R. Kook are preserved in the Genazim archive in Tel Aviv. It is clear from the contents of the letter that the two regularly communicated.

Because he possessed a superior level of self-confidence, Eisenstein could pursue this path doggedly. When his work was attacked, his self-confidence emerged and allowed him to hold steadfastly to his position. Another entry that R. Kook expressed some unhappiness with was the entry “Fire” (*Dleka*).³⁸⁰ The reason for R. Kook’s displeasure is not clear, but in this entry, Eisenstein had devoted a paragraph to a primitive talisman against fire. R. Kook seemed to think that it was unwise to include spurious elements of Jewish lore in the encyclopedia.³⁸¹ The chief Rabbi of Jaffa did not intimidate Eisenstein, and in a letter to him, Eisenstein begged to differ:

In my opinion, it is proper for us not to deny anything found in our literature, for we should not hide anything, for also our sages of blessed memory did not believe in a number of talismans and nonetheless they mentioned them, and my heart is confident and secure that to the believers mentioning them won’t hurt, and to the unbelievers even the scientific things in the words of our sages of blessed memory will make no impact on them.³⁸²

Here Eisenstein’s strong independent streak made another appearance. It was important to him that rabbis approve of the work, and he did not wish to be a “laughingstock in the eyes of the best of the rabbis who know the Torah and the traditions,” yet they did not intimidate him. He was confident enough to disagree with them and lead the encyclopedia in its own direction.

³⁸⁰ Eisenstein, “D’leka,” *OY* 4:54–55.

³⁸¹ The talisman being that a garment soiled with menstrual blood could protect a home against a fire. Eisenstein admitted to finding this talisman in the writings of the Italian encyclopedist R. Isaac Lampronti (1679–1745), who claimed to have heard it from a kabbalist. See Isaac Hezekiah ben Samuel, *Pahad Yitzhak: Shorshe ha-dinim u-mekorotam ba-Shas b’seder alef bet* (Venice, 1750–1813), 2:97d.

³⁸² Eisenstein to R. Kook, February 9, 2011 (Thursday, Parashat Beshalach 5671), Genazim Archive, Tel Aviv.

The Unrecruitables

Eisenstein recruited people across the ideological spectrum. And yet, those geographically closest to him—the scholars of New York City, many of whom were members of the OSS or on the JTS faculty—kept their distance from him. The small world of Hebraic scholarship in New York City was intimate, and Eisenstein was resourceful, so he surely asked them to contribute, and they must have declined. These were men who Eisenstein knew and communicated with, and it is glaring to see them absent from this project.

When Eisenstein was vice-president of the OSS, Herman Rosenthal, Zvi Masliansky (1856–1943), and Pinchas Turberg (1875–1952) occupied the roles of president, treasurer, and secretary, respectively.³⁸³ Masliansky was a prominent Zionist preacher and published a Yiddish newspaper in New York with his son-in-law Turberg, who was part of a circle of maskilim at the yeshiva at Volozhin.³⁸⁴ They were both capable of writing for the *Ozar Yisrael*, yet none of them did. Israel Friedlander (1876–1920) and Solomon Schechter were in New York City and affiliated with JTS, and they are not counted among the contributors to the *Ozar Yisrael*, either. Furthermore, no one affiliated with JTS contributed to more than one volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*. The sheer force of Eisenstein’s personality must have coaxed entries from them almost against their will. This was true of Israel Davidson,³⁸⁵ Louis

³⁸³ Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronotay*, 80.

³⁸⁴ Masliansky’s memoirs and Turberg’s collected writings are available at Harvard’s Widener Library. See *Maslianski’s zikhroynes* (New York: Zrubavel, 1924/5) and *Kitve Pinhas Turberg* (New York, 1952/3).

³⁸⁵ He is listed as a contributor to vol. 5.

Ginzberg,³⁸⁶ and George Alexander Kohut:³⁸⁷ Eisenstein communicated with these men, yet none of them contributed anything beyond volume 5. When Louis Ginzberg arrived in New York to join the faculty of JTS, Eisenstein sent him a congratulatory note, writing that the “appointment reflects honor on both sides.”³⁸⁸ Eisenstein would have been very satisfied for him to be a regular contributor to the *Ozar Yisrael*, yet this did not happen. Eisenstein corresponded with Israel Davidson into the 1930s,³⁸⁹ yet he only contributed to volume 5. Eisenstein dedicated volume 9 of the *Ozar Yisrael* to the memory of Alexander Kohut, the father of George Alexander Kohut.³⁹⁰ One can assume that Eisenstein communicated with the deceased’s son about dedicating a volume to the memory of his father, yet he too only contributed to a single volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Suspicious of what seemed to be an almost conspiratorial decision not to assist in the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein wrote to Davidson to share his frustration:

“Our giants” keep their distance “and are seeking” on behalf of aesthetic language (*hasafa ha-yafa*), literature, and Judaism, etc., but they will do nothing. If only they don’t set up stumbling blocks on my path, I will be most grateful to them.³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ He is listed as a contributor to vol. 2.

³⁸⁷ He is listed as a contributor to vol. 3. YU MS 258 has an undated address list of OSS members, which includes Davidson, Eisenstein, Ginzberg, Kohut, Schechter, and Tuborg.

³⁸⁸ Eisenstein to Ginzberg, Louis Ginzberg Papers, ARC. 42, box 4, folder “Eisenstein J.D. – L.G.,” JTS Library, New York.

³⁸⁹ Israel Davidson Papers, ARC. 28, box 2, “Eisenstein, J.D.; 1909–1913; 1935,” JTS Library, New York.

³⁹⁰ OY 9:72. While Alexander Kohut had passed away in 1894, the dedication page explains that his biography is in vol. 9, which is why that volume is dedicated to his memory.

³⁹¹ Eisenstein to Davidson, May 9, 1909, Israel Davidson Papers, JTS Library, ARC.28, box 14, folder 41.

This theme is one that Eisenstein returns to in other letters and that his defenders voice as well. He was always looking for people to write for the encyclopedia, and he was always disappointed that more people were not willing to contribute articles. It is plausible that people living in New York City stayed away from Eisenstein because they already knew what Malter learned of the man through working with him: he could be a difficult person. Writing in *The Federation Review* in October 1909, Isidore Singer lamented that New York City's most famous Jewish scholars kept their distance from Eisenstein's project:

One splendid opportunity, among others, offered itself to President Schechter and his assistants, to show their personal scholarship and genuine enthusiasm for Jewish science: to take up the Hebrew Encyclopedia plan which J. D. Eisenstein laid before them. They smiled, shrugged the shoulders, and made vague promises, the result of which was that this tremendous enterprise was placed upon the shoulders of one man. Fortunately, Mr Eisenstein is not only a scholar and an enthusiast, but also a man of some means.³⁹²

Although Isidore Singer never contributed to the *Ozar Yisrael*, he and Eisenstein felt a kinship: they were both visionaries, if not professional scholars, who midwived encyclopedias. They also had something else in common: visceral disdain for Solomon Schechter. Singer attacked Schechter from the left and Eisenstein attacked him from the right.³⁹³ In the entry "Geniza," which Eisenstein wrote for the *Ozar Yisrael*, he was dismissive of the Cairo Geniza,³⁹⁴ accusing scholars of "raising a storm of empty casuistics

³⁹² Isidore Singer, "Chips from an Independent Literary Workshop," *Federation Review*, October 1909, 222. Nissim Behar, who was mentioned earlier in connection with the Ohole Shem Society, published this journal. Only one copy of this volume is extant, and it is available at the Harvard Library.

³⁹³ Schwartz, *Jewish Scholarship*, 94–95. Schwartz also shows that Singer and Eisenstein clashed at times during the production of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

³⁹⁴ Eisenstein, "Geniza," *OY* 3:304–5.

from each and every dot that is upon each letter” in the Genzia. While he did not name Schechter in the entry, such language could hardly have won over Schechter, who was then bringing the Cairo Geniza to the attention of the world. After the completion of the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein and Singer continued their relationship. Eisenstein’s memoirs recalled that Singer was among the guests who attended the festive meal, held at Eisenstein’s Bronx home, to celebrate the completion of the *Ozar Yisrael*.³⁹⁵

As great as his achievements were, in his time, Eisenstein had been a thorn in the side of many. He had attacked the *Jewish Encyclopedia*,³⁹⁶ he had attacked JTS,³⁹⁷ and he had defended the unpopular Rabbi Willowski, who had essentially blocked Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan from preaching in English from his pulpit. In the not-too-distant past, the “giants” whose help Eisenstein now sought were often his opponents. To expect them to suddenly help him was unrealistic, especially since he insisted on retaining editorial control. And the fact that Eisenstein refused to pay people to write for the *Ozar Yisrael* only diminished his chances of convincing them.

Eisenstein understood that the best way for the encyclopedia to succeed was for its writers to be figures the Hebraist diaspora recognized and respected. To recruit such people

³⁹⁵ Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronotay*, 128.

³⁹⁶ See the installments of his article “The Legal Articles in the Jewish Encyclopedia” in *The American Hebrew* during the months of August to October 1901. Later, this was published as a pamphlet entitled “Critical review of the legal articles of the Jewish encyclopedia, volume I,” which included some responses to Eisenstein’s criticism.

³⁹⁷ When the *American Hebrew*, to defend Solomon Schechter, attacked the Agudath Ha-Rabbonim (Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada), it was Eisenstein who launched a counterattack on JTS. Judah David Eisenstein, “The Orthodox Rabbis and the Seminary,” *American Hebrew*, July 1, 1904, 180. See also Zev Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism: A Documentary History* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 124–39.

to work under him was a challenge, since their scholarly accomplishments and respectability exceeded his own. Gotthard Deutsch wrote, “I do not wish to offend Mr Eisenstein whose knowledge and idealism I duly admire, but when it comes to choosing between him and the scholars whom I have mentioned, I say with the Talmud לא כל כמיניה דכסיל דייני [not every type of fool is a judge].”³⁹⁸ Eisenstein was an amateur, and with this project, he was trying to draw professionals (be they writers, academicians, or rabbis) into an amateur project. So grand a task would have caused a lesser person to hesitate, but Eisenstein’s self-confidence and determination propelled him forward. What transformed this grit into tangible success was an entrepreneurial sensibility, for without money to offer, Eisenstein attracted an impressive cadre of writers.

Beyond financial remuneration, Eisenstein found ways to reach people and persuade them to join his project. The prospect of varying degrees of fame—being listed as a contributor, appearing on the title page, or having one’s own entry—was one lure that Eisenstein used. He also located people’s sensitivities and tried to press them into the *Ozar Yisrael*’s service. When Malter was desperate for work, he reached out to him, and when Landau was looking to outshine Hertz, he offered him an arena in which to do so. To people who interacted with him in the American context, his strong Orthodox bias was known, and they had occasion to witness it emerge in a polemical fashion. But battles over the direction of JTS or the intractability of the émigré East European rabbinate did not cast the same shadow overseas, and from there, it was easier for him to draw contributors.

³⁹⁸ Deutsch, “Last Word,” 591. I have not been able to locate this phrase in the Talmud.

While Eisenstein was successful in recruiting an array of people, some of whom were top-tier scholars, not everyone responded to his entreaties, and many remained immune to—or too well aware of—his tactics. Most striking is that the people geographically nearest to him, those in New York City, who could be engaged in a face-to-face dialog, are barely found in the pages of the *Ozar Yisrael*. The fact that the people who knew him best were unlikely to write for him suggests that he was not readily liked or respected. This assessment is supported by a Hebrew letter to Judah Landau, dated 11 Cheshvan 5690 (November 14, 1929), from the head of the Jewish division of the New York Public Library, Dr. Joshua Bloch. Bloch was soliciting an article for an upcoming Festschrift in honor of Eisenstein’s seventy-fifth birthday.³⁹⁹ The letterhead was titled “Eisenstein Jubilee Volume” and listed its address as 3 West 40th Street, New York, which remains the location of the Jewish division of the New York Public Library. Landau’s response could not be located, but in any case, no such volume materialized. This failed attempt to honor a man whom the letter described as “a learned Hebraist who enriched Hebrew literature (*sifrut yisrael*) with a number of anthologies (*ozarot*)” is another indication of how few admirers and friends Eisenstein earned over his lifetime, at least from the scholarly community.

Eisenstein built his network by utilizing all his connections, and once someone was involved in the encyclopedia, he encouraged them to convince others to share his work in some way. Every person he knew became a potential launching pad to meet new people who would work for the *Ozar Yisrael*. In his entrepreneurial way, he ensured that even those who

³⁹⁹ Josua Bloch to Judah Leo Landau, Landau Archive, ARC.4*798 03 36.1, folder B, NLI.

did not write entries still ended up promoting the *Ozar Yisrael*. The *Ozar Yisrael*'s stationary, with its glowing recommendations, and the final page of the *Ozar Yisrael*, with its endorsements from across the ideological spectrum, are testimony to Eisenstein's willingness to use anything that anyone said at any time to benefit the encyclopedia.

Eisenstein's entrepreneurial mindset extended to what entered the encyclopedia. He was not only looking for entries, he was looking for well-regarded writers, men whose names could be used to promote the *Ozar Yisrael*. To that end, entries were suggested to lure writers and changed to keep writers, and suggestions were accepted or discarded based on a person's utility. The furious pace that Eisenstein kept up—producing ten volumes in less than a decade—is also a symptom of his entrepreneurial mindset. He believed that if he waited for everything to be done properly, the project would never end, and this pushed him to produce more material in a shorter time. In the war between quality and quantity, he was on the side of quantity. When questioned about the project's quality, he admitted that it was mediocre but insisted that this was the surest way to deliver a complete encyclopedia.

Eisenstein worked to attract writers of a higher caliber but was not willing to do so at any price. Editorial control remained firmly in his hands. Anyone who even thought of writing for the *Ozar Yisrael* knew that Eisenstein could stamp their entries with his perspective. This made his task harder but renders his accomplishment more impressive. For not only was he trying to attract writers who outclassed him, he also had to convince those same writers to accept an ideological contract, one where he could censor their entries according to his religious sensibilities. Thus, while an entrepreneurial mindset animated every nook and cranny of the encyclopedia, it seems to have had no impact on its ideological

framework. Eisenstein's tactics veered deep into entrepreneurial quid pro quo territory but stopped short of affecting the work's ideological timbre—that was Eisenstein's red line. The reason for producing the *Ozar Yisrael* was to deliver a pristine alternative to encyclopedias that would “tarnish” the Hebraist community with unorthodox ideas. Regardless of the benefit it could accrue, he would not allow the *Ozar Yisrael* to become a disseminator of unorthodox ideas. Using the example of biblical criticism, the next chapter tells the story of how the *Ozar Yisrael*, while remaining within the boundaries of traditional Jewish belief, tried to meet the expectation to be a disseminator of objective scholarship. It also tells the story of where the *Ozar Yisrael* positioned itself regarding two contemporary questions: cultural nationalism and the promise of Jewish life in America.

Chapter IIIA: America in the *Ozar Yisrael*

Introduction

The *Ozar Yisrael* was an American work for people who could read Hebrew. Many of them lived in eastern Europe during the greatest influx of Jewish emigration to the United States. America for these people was not an abstract concept from the past or a faraway land in the present. It was a living place that gave refuge to family and friends seeking a better life, and it beckoned them too. If these people opened the *Ozar Yisrael* to find some authoritative information about a new land of promise, they would not have been disappointed. Entries that related directly to the United States were full of practical knowledge, and entries that had no direct connection to the United States quickly offered an American nexus. Additionally, there were many entries that would only appear in an American encyclopedia. Thus, a portrait of Jewish life in America emerged from the *Ozar Yisrael*. It depicted America as a place that was good for the Jews, where they could advance and become powerful. At the same time, in their new homeland, the Jews were a force for good, remaining moral and helping America become more moral.

This aspect of the *Ozar Yisrael* emerges particularly clearly when it is contrasted with the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Both encyclopedias were American works, and the *Ozar Yisrael* often relied on the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, sometimes appropriating its material, as the next

chapter demonstrates. However, on the topic of America, the two works diverged on account of their different audiences.

In the introduction to his memoirs, Eisenstein argued that the Jewish people had three centers: a population center, an economic center, and a spiritual center.

These centers were uprooted from location to location, starting in Babylon, from there to Spain and France, from there to Germany, and from there to Russia and Poland. In our times, although the population center has remained in Russia and Poland, behold: the spiritual center is in Eretz Yisrael and the economic center is in America, in the United States. In a place where the Jew stands tall and is awake to a new life, and where he is free to serve God according to the tradition of his fathers—freedom to support himself in every way and work, to live a life of pleasantness and freedom, to learn and to teach Torah and every wisdom and knowledge with no disturbance. In this way, America is the financial and spiritual center that outweighs everything else.⁴⁰⁰

Throughout the *Ozar Yisrael*, America is presented, directly and indirectly, as the economic center and even the population center of Jewish life. New York, the encyclopedia boasted, contained 1,200,000 Jews, and “aside from Jerusalem during the pilgrimage season when the Temple stood, a city with so large a Jewish population is not to be found anywhere else on earth.”⁴⁰¹ America was a place with a Jewish past and a Jewish future. Writing about New York’s Jewish laborers, Eisenstein described them as “a large group with a big future in the history of Israel.”⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ *Ozar Zikhronotay: Autobiography and Memoirs* (New York, 1929), 4. The similarity to Dubnow’s theory of shifting hegemonic centers throughout Jewish history is striking. The anonymous “helpers in the publishing house” wrote the short entry on Dubnow in the *Ozar Yisrael* 4:19 and are aware of his most important works. See Simon Rabinovitch, *Jews and diaspora nationalism: writings on Jewish peoplehood in Europe and the United States* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press), 23–44.

⁴⁰¹ Eisenstein, “New York,” *OY* 7:31.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.* 37.

The *Ozar Yisrael* did not explicitly promote immigration to America, but its portrayal of Jews in America would have been enticing to anyone who wanted to live in a place where Jews would be treated like anyone else.

The laws of the United States do not distinguish between Jews and other people in any way. The government is almost unique on the planet in that it has not pursued the Jews and did not decree evil decrees against them. The fathers of the Republic, from Washington to Roosevelt, always sought the welfare of the Jewish citizens and also the welfare of [Jewish] immigrants into foreign lands at every opportunity they had to intervene for their benefit.⁴⁰³

Not only did America treat its Jews fairly, but it was also a place where Jews could expect to advance. The *Ozar Yisrael* dispensed practical advice to immigrants, explaining how Jews had built wealth in America and how the reader too could gain economic mobility. Even if they worked the same jobs as they did in the “old world,” their material existence would be better in America.

The material situation of Jews in America is better than in other countries. They began their work as peddlers, and from peddlers they became merchants and factory owners, and industrialists and landowners. The situation of Jewish workers is also better than it was in the old world. In general, the material existence of Jews in America is no different from the existence of the Gentiles.⁴⁰⁴

As an immigrant, Eisenstein had always supported immigration to America. When he was a correspondent for *Ha-Tzifira* and *Ha-melitz*, he regularly wrote about the advantages of life in America. In Nahum Sokolow’s yearly almanac (*Ha-Asif l’tkufat ha-shana*) for 1885,

⁴⁰³ Eisenstein, “Artzot Ha-Brit b’Amerika,” *OY* 2:241

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 242.

Eisenstein published an article on “The Jews in the New Land.”⁴⁰⁵ In it, he reported that “the financial situation of the Jews in the Western half of the globe is generally very good.”⁴⁰⁶ He suspected that the Jewish population was higher than the numbers often cited because they were “the same in their dress and manners as the nation in whose midst they dwell ... also the immigration officials do not ask immigrants arriving here about their religion, but only the land from which they emigrated.”⁴⁰⁷ Here too, much of the article was advice to potential immigrants about the best way for them to earn a living. He recommended that they go into business and that while they might start small, this path could lead them to great wealth.

Not all the peddlers remain peddlers all their days, for when they gather enough money, in one day they become shop owners and merchants selling to individuals or to peddlers, and almost all the great Jewish merchants used to be peddlers. A reliable person told me that he even witnessed the banker Joseph Seligman,⁴⁰⁸ the richest among our brethren in America, peddling in villages for forty years.⁴⁰⁹

Twenty years earlier, Eisenstein had come to America with the belief that economic advancement was possible there. In the intervening years, he had had a number of ventures, but he failed to become the kind of great financial success he loved to describe. On the contrary, he admitted that had he not failed in business, he might never have entered the field

⁴⁰⁵ Judah David Eisenstein, “The Jews in the New Land,” *Ha-Asif li-ikufat ha-shana*, 1885, 214–19.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁴⁰⁸ Joseph Seligman died in 1880.

⁴⁰⁹ Eisenstein, “New Land,” 219.

of writing, and he saw divine providence in this change of fortune.⁴¹⁰ Yet despite his personal experience, his core belief had not changed: America was a land of economic opportunity.

History of Jews in America

The entry on “America” begins by informing the reader where America is:

America is the Western half of the globe that is divided into North America and South America as well as a narrow strip between them called Central America, and the adjacent islands.⁴¹¹

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* opens with an almost identical paragraph:

The name “America” is used in this article with its broadest meaning, as applied to the entire Western world; that is, North and South America and all the adjacent islands.⁴¹²

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* assumes its readers know that the term “America” has several different meanings, so it tells them which definition the entry will follow. The *Ozar Yisrael* takes this opening sentence and adapts it to an audience that may not be familiar with America, informing them that “America” encompasses several different lands.

Volume two contains the entry “America” and the entry “United States” (*Artzot Ha-Brit b’Amerika*). The latter begins by telling readers that the “first to come to the United States was Jacob Barsimon, who descended from the vessel “the Pear Tree” on July 8, 1654.”⁴¹³ Barsimon was obviously not actually the first settler in the United States, nor was

⁴¹⁰ *Ozar Zikhronotay*, 53. Despite writing what some may describe as “Orthodox” history, this is one of the very few times he attributes a historical event to divine providence.

⁴¹¹ Gottard Deutsch, “America,” *OY* 2:101.

⁴¹² Cyrus Adler, “America,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1:492.

⁴¹³ Eisenstein, “Artzot Ha-Brit b’Amerika,” *OY* 2:239.

this what Eisenstein was claiming. Rather, Barsimon was among the first Jews to arrive in the United States.⁴¹⁴ The *Ozar Yisrael* is concerned with the Jewish side of life in the United States, and therefore the history of the United States does not begin with the *Mayflower* but with the arrival of the first Jew.

Part of this entry was copied from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. To demonstrate that “the growth of the Jewish population in the United States has been quite extraordinary,”⁴¹⁵ the *Jewish Encyclopedia* employed a table showing the Jewish population of every state in 1877 and again in 1905.⁴¹⁶ The *Ozar Yisrael* quoted the same figures for 1905. The copying is so apparent that the *Ozar Yisrael* simply admits that the figures “from 1905 are in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* in the English language.”⁴¹⁷

It is instructive to compare the *Jewish Encyclopedia*’s entry on the United States to that of the *Ozar Yisrael*, for not only did Eisenstein write the latter, he also wrote the section on “Russian Immigration” in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*’s entry on the United States.⁴¹⁸ In the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Eisenstein portrayed Russian Jews as hard-working, law-abiding people who were eager for an education. He included statistics about their low level of incarceration and their involvement with various unions, asserting:

⁴¹⁴ See Samuel Oppenheim, “More about Jacob Barsimon, the First Jewish Settler in New York,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 29 (1925): 39–52, and Leo Hershkowitz, “By Chance or Choice, Jews in New Amsterdam 1654,” *American Jewish Archives Journal*, 57, no. 1–2 (2005): 1–13.

⁴¹⁵ Joseph Jacobs, “United States: Statistics,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 12:370.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 371.

⁴¹⁷ Eisenstein, “Artzot Ha-Brit b’Amerika,” *OY* 2:241.

⁴¹⁸ Eisenstein, “United States: Russian Immigration,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 12:367–70.

These statistics, from the densest and most crowded Jewish population in the Union, are the best evidence of the moral and law-abiding character of the Jews in general and of the Russo-Jewish immigrants in particular.⁴¹⁹

None of these statistics appear in the *Ozar Yisrael*, which does not even entertain the possibility of Jews being incarcerated. Instead, the entry in the *Ozar Yisrael* features a table listing the number of Jews who arrived in the United States via different ports of entry: New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. This information is not supplied by the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.⁴²⁰

Instead of telling readers about incarceration, the *Ozar Yisrael* focuses on what disqualified one from immigrating to America, listing six categories of people whom “the immigration laws in the United States prevent from entering.”⁴²¹ Lest any reader be dissuaded from entering on their account, Eisenstein explains that these “laws are not aimed against any special group or faith, for only against the Chinese and Japanese have special laws been established.”⁴²² Beyond telling the reader that there was no legal discrimination against Jews, Eisenstein also asserted that the popular dislike of immigrants was not directed toward Jews:

The hatred of the people of the United States toward new immigrants was inclined more toward the Italians, who lower the price of labor, are frugal, and whose only goal is to save money and return to their land, than against the

⁴¹⁹ Eisenstein, “United States: Russian Immigration,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 12:369.

⁴²⁰ Eisenstein, “Artzot Ha-Brit b’Amerika,” *OY* 2:241.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² *Ibid.*

wandering Jews who have come to settle here, and against whom there is not much competition over employment.⁴²³

The *Ozar Yisrael* does not deny incidents of anti-Semitic behavior, but it downplays them. One of the most famous examples of anti-Semitism mentioned in the encyclopedia is the outbreak of violence that took place during the funeral of New York's chief rabbi, Jacob Joseph.⁴²⁴ The *Ozar Yisrael* regards this as an exception to the rule that America harbored no anti-Jewish feeling.

In particular, there was a shock when some unstable people disturbed the funeral of Chief Rabbi Jacob Joseph on July 30, 1902, but on the other hand, we must be grateful that the majority of the American people have no part in this wickedness, even if they don't love the Jews.⁴²⁵

Anti-Semitism in American life, whether past or present, is excused and explained away. For example, in 1737, the New York assembly revoked the acceptance of Jewish testimony, which was a step backward for Jewish life, since until then Jewish testimony had been accepted in the colonies. The *Ozar Yisrael* filled in the historical background to this decision. Elections were held in 1737, and since English Jews did not have the right to vote, it was decided that the Jews of New York (an English colony) also could not vote. Simultaneously, it was decided that Jewish testimony would not be admitted in a court of law. Eisenstein adds

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ In his memoirs, Eisenstein recalls the failed attempt to institute a chief rabbi in New York, and the *Ozar Yisrael* narrates this episode in the entry on New York (*OY* 7:35–36). Abraham J. Karp drew heavily on Eisenstein for his seminal article “New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi,” *PAJHS* 44, no. 3 (1955): 129–98, but only quotes the *Ozar Yisrael's* entry on the Malbim (Yekutiel Yehuda Greenwald “Malbim, Meyer” in *OY* 6:214; Karp, “Chief Rabbi,” 5). Eisenstein's discussion of this issue in the entry on New York may have hidden it from his view.

⁴²⁵ Gottard Deutsch, “America,” *OY* 2:105–6.

that “the regional minister [i.e., senator] Seward said that this event was a ‘stain’ on the freedom and tolerance that existed in those days.”⁴²⁶ The commentary from Senator Seward indicated to Eisenstein’s readers that only isolated incidents of anti-Semitism existed and that they were from a past that the country’s leadership regretted.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* admits that there was “a very considerable antipathy in the colony both to Catholics and to Jews”⁴²⁷ but disposes of the incident in a single sentence: “In 1737, however, the Assembly of New York decided that no Jew might vote for a member of that body.”⁴²⁸ It does not mention the inadmissibility of Jewish evidence or Seward’s comment.

The bibliography for the *Ozar Yisrael*’s entry on New York includes the “Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society,” although it does not specify any particular article or even volume.⁴²⁹ One article that may have guided Eisenstein is Max J. Kohler’s “Civil Status of Jews in Colonial New York,” which appeared in 1897. In this article, Kohler refers to both the restriction on voting and the admissibility of Jewish testimony, and a different quotation from William Seward also appears.⁴³⁰ Kohler, while

⁴²⁶ Eisenstein, “New York,” *OY* 7:32.

⁴²⁷ Cyrus Adler, “America,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1:496.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ Eisenstein, “New York,” *OY* 7:38.

⁴³⁰ Max J. Kohler, “Civil Status of the Jews in Colonial New York,” *PAJHS* 6 (1897): 99.

admitting that “this case appears to have been a hasty and incorrect adjudication, as well as markedly exceptional,”⁴³¹ wanted his reader to know how unfair this outcome was, for

many other voters should have been barred, for it was well known that in English colonies there was a much closer approximation to manhood suffrage than prevailed at the time in England. Furthermore, the whole matter was regulated by colonial statutes and special grants, and there was no reason for departing from these to apply English standards instead.⁴³²

When Eisenstein reframed the issue, this additional context was absent. This is another example of the work’s general orientation toward America, which was generally positive and overlooked or downplayed the occasions when the country disappointed its Jews.

The *Ozar Yisrael* luxuriated in American Jewish magnates and portrayed them as men who contributed greatly to American civil society. For example, the Straus family has its own entry,⁴³³ written by Eisenstein, the sole bibliographic reference in which is the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.⁴³⁴ In structure and content, the entry relies on the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, but Eisenstein adapted it to his audience, which had much to learn about America. While the *Jewish Encyclopedia* states that Lazarus Straus, the patriarch of the family, funded Meyer Kayserling’s work on Christopher Columbus, Eisenstein explains that Kayserling’s work was significant because it uncovered the Jewish involvement in the discovery of America. The *Ozar Yisrael*’s audience learns, if only in an indirect manner, that Jews were present at the

⁴³¹ Ibid., 97.

⁴³² Ibid., 98.

⁴³³ Eisenstein, “Straus, Brothers,” *OY* 10:91–92.

⁴³⁴ The entry in the *Ozar Yisrael* cites the *Jewish Encyclopedia* 9:566. This is (another example of) a careless error; the entry on the Straus family (Isidor, Nathan, and Oscar Solomon) is found in 11:566–67.

discovery of America and that wealthy Jews would pay to ensure that the Jewish connection to America was not forgotten.⁴³⁵

The extent of Jewish integration in America is another theme of the *Ozar Yisrael*, and if Eisenstein could include a magnate, all the better. Since the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was published before the *Titanic* sank in 1912, it did not retell the drama of the fateful, romantic drowning of Isidor and Ida Straus. Ida had refused to leave the sinking ship without her husband, and this story left a strong impression on the country. Eisenstein, however, recalled this episode in both his memoirs⁴³⁶ and his encyclopedia. In elegiac tones, he compared the devoted Ida to the biblical figure Ruth, who said, “Wherever you die, I will die, and there will I be buried” (Ruth 1:17). This inspired turn was not from Eisenstein’s poetic pen but from the eulogy that the Right Rev. Thomas H. Gailor, the Bishop of Tennessee and Chancellor of the University of the South, delivered at a memorial service for Isidor Straus.⁴³⁷ While Eisenstein deprived his readers of the source of the comparison, he did inform them that Gailor, as well as New York City Mayor William J. Gaynor and the industrialist tycoon Andrew Carnegie, all eulogized Straus. The mere fact that in the United States a Jewish man could climb such heights would have been remarkable enough for many

⁴³⁵ For more on the Jewish claim to Columbus, see Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Mythical Jewish Columbus and the History of America’s Jews,” in *Religion in the Age of Exploration: The Case of Spain and New Spain*, ed. Bryan F. LeBeau and Menachem Mar (Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 1996), 81–95.

⁴³⁶ Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronotay*, 122.

⁴³⁷ June Hall McMash, *Titanic Love Story: Ida and Isidor Straus* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2012), 14.

readers. This is an example of the promotion of America that is pervasive throughout the *Ozar Yisrael*.

The promotion of America throughout the *Ozar Yisrael* is one sign of Eisenstein's abiding belief that the United States was a good place for Jewish life. The other sign is his absolute silence about the very real possibility that Jews might assimilate or become less religious in their new country.⁴³⁸ For Eisenstein, this was not a concern at all, yet it was a perennial concern for the Rabbinic class in eastern Europe, who warned that America would weaken the religious practices of her immigrants. Jacob Kabakoff points out that almost immediately after arriving in New York, when he was still a correspondent for various Hebrew newspapers, Eisenstein promoted emigration to the United States.⁴³⁹ In 1893, Rabbi Israel Meir ha-Kohen (Kagan) of Radun, known as the Hafez Hayyim, "the seeker of life," wrote a guidebook for immigrants in which he advised them against settling in countries like America and warned them not to allow the promise of wealth to blind them to the spiritual pitfalls that would await them.⁴⁴⁰ When Rabbi Willowski, the Ridbaz, visited the United States in 1900, he declared even the stones of the *trefa medina*, the "unkosher country," to be

⁴³⁸ Gerald Sorin's *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) argues that acculturation, rather than assimilation, is the correct way of viewing the American experience. Many of the Rabbis cited below also opposed acculturation.

⁴³⁹ Jacob Kabakoff, "The View from the Old World: East European Jewish Perspectives," in *The Americanization of the Jews*, ed. Robert M. Seltzer and Norman J. Cohen (New York: NYU Press, 1995), 44–45.

⁴⁴⁰ Israel Meir ha-Kohen, *Nidhe Yisrael* (New York, 1951), 316–17.

impure.⁴⁴¹ These statements add context to Eisenstein’s confident endorsement of America and render it even more vigorous and they also point to his independence of mind.⁴⁴²

Help on Arrival

An oft-repeated rabbinic teaching states the world stands on three pillars and that “acts of kindness” are one of them.⁴⁴³ Whereas the *Jewish Encyclopedia* does not have an entry with this heading, it does have a ten-page entry on “Charity and Charitable Institutions,”⁴⁴⁴ and the *Ozar Yisrael* also deals with this topic but does so under the entry “Acts of Kindness” (*Gemilut Hasadim*).⁴⁴⁵

The entry on “Acts of Kindness” in the *Ozar Yisrael* is just one column and is divided into two sections. The first section is an overview of the concept in Judaism. The second is titled *Hevrot Gemilut Hasadim*, “Organizations of Acts of Kindness.” After stating that “it is almost impossible to find an important community in the Jewish diaspora where such an organization has not been established, whose purpose is to loan money interest-free to any

⁴⁴¹ Aaron Rothkoff, “The American Sojourns of Ridbaz: Religious Problems within the Immigrant Community,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (1968): 560.

⁴⁴² Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 154–55. Sarna also cites examples of rabbis who were more enthusiastic about immigration to America. Arthur Hertzberg explains them as evincing a “mood of grudging acceptance” and many still opposed this pragmatic stance. See Arthur Hertzberg, “Treifene Medine: Learned Opposition to Emigration to the United States,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1981): 1–30, esp. 19–20.

⁴⁴³ *Pirke Avot* 1:2.

⁴⁴⁴ Joseph Jacobs, Kaufmann Kohler, Cyrus Adler, A.M. Friedenberg, Lee K. Frankel “Charity and Charitable Institutions,” *Jewish Encyclopaedia* 3:667–76.

⁴⁴⁵ Aaron Dobrzynski, “Gmilut hasadim,” *OY* 3:297–98.

person who extends his hand,”⁴⁴⁶ it states that the one organization that is “worthy of mention” is the Hebrew Free Loan Association of New York.⁴⁴⁷ Only once does the *Jewish Encyclopedia* make reference to a free loan association, and that is to say that such an organization existed in Baltimore.⁴⁴⁸

Wherever there were Jewish immigrants, one could be sure to find Hebrew free loan associations.⁴⁴⁹ These societies were modeled after welfare organizations in eastern Europe, yet the entry in the *Ozar Yisrael* focuses exclusively on the New York-based Hebrew Free Loan Association. This is not just another example of how the *Ozar Yisrael* was an American work but also of how it imparted practical knowledge about America to immigrants.

The entry informs prospective immigrants on the assistance they would find in New York. In addition to the history of the Hebrew Free Loan Association of New York and how it was funded, the reader is also told that loans ranging from \$25 to \$200 required two guarantors and that 5% of the loan must be repaid on a weekly basis. The reader learns that in 1898, there were forty-seven thousand people who borrowed \$92,000.⁴⁵⁰ The author of this entry is Aaron Dobrzynski, a rabbi who emigrated to the United States in 1900 and was a

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 298.

⁴⁴⁷ For a history of this organization, see Jenna W. Joselit, *Lending Dignity: The First One Hundred Years of the Hebrew Free Loan Society of New York* (New York: Hebrew Free Loan Society of New York, 1992).

⁴⁴⁸ Cyrus Adler and Heniretz Szold, “Baltimore,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 2:480.

⁴⁴⁹ For more on this phenomenon in the United States, see Shelly Tenenbaum, *A Credit to Their Community: Jewish Loan Societies in the United States, 1880–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993).

⁴⁵⁰ This information is probably incorrect. See Andre Godley, “Jewish Soft Loan Societies in New York and London and Immigrant Entrepreneurship, 1880-1914,” *Business History* 38, no. 3 (1996): 108.

contributor to various publications in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English.⁴⁵¹ Even if he was not a beneficiary of this Hebrew Free Loan Association, he would have known beneficiaries of this organization and was signaling to potential immigrants that if they chose to move to America, they would be moving to a place with infrastructure in place to support them. From reading the entry, they could get a sense of how to qualify for a loan and how much money they could hope to borrow.

The entry “New York” also has a section on the city’s Jewish charitable organizations, which includes the different hospitals that Jews helped to establish.⁴⁵² The entry also lists the city’s educational facilities, and in addition to listing the religious schools, the *Ozar Yisrael* mentions the “Educational Alliance,” where “different groups gathered in rooms designated for education and study, particularly for immigrants, to teach them the language and customs of the country.”⁴⁵³ When the *Jewish Encyclopedia* refers to the Educational Alliance, it describes how it improved immigrant neighborhoods by

giving instruction to both the younger and the older element, and by developing the social characteristics of the vicinity along educational lines. ... They give instruction in various trades, conduct boys’ and girls’ clubs, and by carefully arranged entertainments develop the social side of the neighborhood.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Some of Dobrzynski’s articles were collected in Aaron Dobrzynski, *Pirhei Aharon* (Piotrkow, 1928). For his biography, see p. 24.

⁴⁵² Eisenstein, “New York,” *OY* 7:35.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ Lee K. Frankel, “Charity and Charitable Institutions: Immigration,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* 3:676.

The general American population believed that immigrant neighborhoods were hotbeds of undesirable activity and illness that desperately needed improvement.⁴⁵⁵ The *Jewish Encyclopedia* did not explicitly recognize this problem, but it did stress that Jewish communal organizations took the initiative to improve Jewish immigrant neighborhoods. The *Ozar Yisrael*, however, was not interested in telling readers that immigrant neighborhoods were somehow deficient. Instead, it answered a question that was on the mind of every immigrant: how to learn the language of the land. The *Ozar Yisrael* also explained that the Educational Alliance was founded “to teach Jews who live here about the ways of the land, the working of its government and other knowledge.”⁴⁵⁶

The *Jewish Encyclopedia*’s entry on “Charity and Charitable Institutions” informs its audience that Jews know how to take care of their immigrants. And although its final section is on immigration, a potential immigrant to New York would not have learned much that could be of practical use to him or her. The entry simply states that “in connection with the work of relief societies in the United States, the United Hebrew Charities of New York has a special representative at the immigration bureau, who looks after the welfare of Jewish immigrants.”⁴⁵⁷ This is unlike the *Ozar Yisrael*, which goes into detail about the sort of help that was available to the immigrant. While the *Jewish Encyclopedia* focuses on

⁴⁵⁵ This gave rise to “settlement houses” in immigrant neighborhoods at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. On how outside efforts to improve Jewish immigrant neighborhoods could be complicated, see Jeffrey Gurock, “Jacob A. Riis: Christian Friend or Missionary Foe; Two Jewish Views,” in *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective* (New Jersey: Ktav, 1996), 135–52.

⁴⁵⁶ Eisenstein, “New York,” *OY* 7:35.

⁴⁵⁷ Frankel, “Charity and Charitable Institutions,” 676.

neighborhoods and relief organizations, which were of concern to its American audience, the *Ozar Yisrael* focuses on the amount of help available to immigrants who sought to become Americans. The *Ozar Yisrael* stresses to potential Jewish immigrants that on these shores they will find the help they need. However, it was not just the Jews who immigrated to America who would be helped. According to the *Ozar Yisrael*, the benevolence of America and the standing of its Jews were robust enough to counter the Russian state.

Jews and Other Americans: The Passport Question

“Passport” is one of the few entries in the *Ozar Yisrael* to have an English name (transliterated into Hebrew).⁴⁵⁸ The entry is an example of a “Jewish exceptionalism” that the *Ozar Yisrael* favors (and the reviewer Abraham S. Waldstein decried).⁴⁵⁹ It claims that

the Children of Israel were the first to recognize and request the right to pass from place to place even in foreign lands, on the condition that they do no damage to that place or its inhabitants ... and in this way the Children of Israel taught this insight, that the whole earth belongs to God and each human has the right—by dint of being human—to pass through any place on the condition that he does not cause any damage in his journey.⁴⁶⁰

Eisenstein, however, was not only interested in showing that the ancient Hebrews recognized the need for passports. In his day, the passport was a contemporary topic, an “absorbing story of pressure politics.”⁴⁶¹ The story was about the power of the American Jewish community and its ability to change the policy of the US government. And it stood in contradistinction to

⁴⁵⁸ J. D. Eisenstein, *Passport*, *OY* 8:280–83.

⁴⁵⁹ Abraham Waldstein’s review of the *Ozar Yisrael* is discussed in the final chapter.

⁴⁶⁰ *OY* 8:280.

⁴⁶¹ Naomi Cohen, “The Abrogation of Russo-American Treaty of 1832,” *JJS* 25, no. 1 (1963): 3.

the story of Russian Jewry, which American Jewry was trying to help, and which was in an increasingly perilous situation.

Taking up seven columns, this entry is longer than most, and unlike most entries, it has no bibliography.⁴⁶² The combination of a lengthy entry and the absence of a bibliography suggests that this column is akin to a lengthy editorial comment or opinion piece. Published in volume 8 of the *Ozar Yisrael*, which appeared in 1912, the entry was written in the middle of a controversy largely manufactured by Jewish organizations that American newspapers had labeled “the passport question.”⁴⁶³

In 1911 the American Jewish Committee orchestrated a campaign against the Russian policy not to accept U.S. passports presented by Jews, thus denying them entry to Russia. More precisely, the campaign was the culmination of dissatisfaction with a 1907 State Department decision not to issue passports to Jews to travel to Russia unless they had written assurance from Russian authorities that they would receive a visa. In response to this campaign, at the end of 1911 the U.S. government decided to formally and publicly annul the treaty Russia had used to justify its actions.⁴⁶⁴

Between 1907, when the State Department announced that it would “not issue passports to former Russian subjects or Jews who intend going to Russian territory without the consent of the Russian Government”⁴⁶⁵ and December 17, 1911, when “the United States officially

⁴⁶² Countless newspaper articles were written about this episode, and it is difficult to know which of them Eisenstein consulted. The *American Jewish Year Book 1911-1912*, 19-128 contains a large excerpt on “The Passport Question.” It begins with the United States’s Consul General to Russia (later President) James Buchanan’s 1832 negotiation of the Russo-American Treaty. Eisenstein begins his discussion with the same detail, and it is likely that this was his major source for his entry.

⁴⁶³ For more on this topic see Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 21.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁶⁵ Cohen, “Russo-American Treaty,” 6.

notified Russia of her decision to terminate the treaty,”⁴⁶⁶ the power of American Jewry was revealed. Never had the American Jewish Committee (AJC) “conducted a public campaign ... and, in fact, the pattern of Jewish petitions to the government, whether in the interests of American or European Jewry, was generally that of secret diplomacy.” But as secret diplomacy gave way to public pressure, Eisenstein wanted his readers to know the extent of Jewish power and self-confidence in America.

In Eisenstein’s account, not only did America eventually do the right thing, but America had always done the right thing. Yet, this was not completely accurate.⁴⁶⁷ Many dates and events are mentioned, but nothing is told of what precipitated the crisis, namely the State Department’s 1907 decision to stop issuing passports to Jews travelling to Russia. There is also no mention of President Taft or the State Department’s opposition to the abrogation of the treaty. Instead, the reader is told that

The general press began to write lead articles, and all of them agreed that the passport question must be resolved, and if it is impossible to influence the position of the ministers of the Russian government to be in accordance with our view, then there will be no option other than to abrogate the treaty.⁴⁶⁸

While the entry indicates that a presidential election was afoot, the impression given is that the Jewish vote was a negligible factor. However, this was not the case, for while the AJC had tried to remain apolitical and garner support from all quarters, such a policy was not

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁶⁷ For an overview of the forces opposing abrogation and the lingering unhappiness at the emergence of Jewish power politics that reemerged during the issue of Soviet Jewry, see Clifford L. Egan, “Pressure Groups, the Department of State, and the Abrogation of the Russian-American Treaty of 1832,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 115, no. 4 (1971): 328–34.

⁴⁶⁸ OY 8:282.

always pragmatic or even possible. The AJC brought their case before important political figures, especially Governor Woodrow Wilson. They were aware that the Democrats were ready to weaponize abrogation against the administration and Jacob Schiff advised the Republican leader Herbert Parsons that if his party would not take up this cause, then the Democrats would. Nobody wanted anyone to think that there was such a thing as a “Jewish vote” but at the same time, it was clear that this issue could sway one hundred and fifty thousand votes in New York City.⁴⁶⁹

Naomi W. Cohen made the point that when Congress convened in 1911, there were five resolutions advocating abrogation, but the AJC favored Congressman William Sulzer’s because “he phrased the question as an American rather than Jewish one.”⁴⁷⁰ Sulzer’s resolution was printed in an article on “The Passport Question” that appeared in the *American Jewish Year Book*, 1911–1912.⁴⁷¹ Eisenstein also quoted Sulzer’s resolution and in brackets added that Sulzer was a Christian. This was done for the benefit of overseas readers who were unfamiliar with the Congressman. Eisenstein did not want them to assume that Sulzer was a Jew fighting for a Jewish cause and that this was a partisan effort.⁴⁷² Eisenstein followed the example of the AJC and presented this as an American issue and not a Jewish issue.

⁴⁶⁹ Cohen, “Russo-American Treaty,” 32.

⁴⁷⁰ Cohen, “Russo-American Treaty,” 28. Sulzer’s resolution was printed in an article titled “The Passport Question” that appeared in the *American Jewish Year Book*, 1911–1912, 57ff.

⁴⁷¹ Sulzer, “The Passport Question,” 57–58.

⁴⁷² *OY* 8:282.

On Dec 6, 1911, there was a large gathering in Carnegie Hall in New York. The gathering numbered five thousand people, and their goal was to request that President Taft abrogate the treaty. Jews and non-Jews joined in this cause. Among the speakers was the governor of New Jersey, Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic candidate for 1912 presidential election, who said that this topic concerns the overall honor of America and not just the Jews. The Russian government has stiffened its neck and did not fulfill our request because it thinks this treaty is a commercial and industrial treaty (*brit mishar v'kinyan*). And certainly the United States will not want to cause great damage to itself through the abrogation of this treaty for the sake of the Jews, who are a small number relative to the population ... Speaking for himself, the governor said that he does not fear commercial loss that is not based on friendly, close, or dignified relations between two governments but only on an economic and profit basis of individuals involved.⁴⁷³

Overseas readers often believed that the United States was a land where the dollar and business interests reigned supreme. By highlighting the willingness of the United States to confront Russia without regard for financial loss, the *Ozar Yisrael* gave readers a different perspective. America was a land of opportunity where people could make money and win the esteem of the broader society, and Jews were able to advance and climb an economic ladder. However, this did not mean that it was a land where financial success was the only value. America was rooted in justice and morality, and Jews were not only beneficiaries of this ethos but also contributed to it.

Jews as Model Citizens

The entry “Eved” (Slave), is another example of the American focus of the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁴⁷⁴ Per the bibliography, the entry draws mostly on Zadoc Kahn’s work,⁴⁷⁵ but the last

⁴⁷³ *OY* 8:282.

⁴⁷⁴ Eisenstein, “Eved” (Slave), *OY* 7:290–94.

⁴⁷⁵ For example, most of the opening paragraph is lifted from p. 3 of Kahn’s work.

section, “Opposition to Slavery,” concerns the abolition of slavery in the United States. In addition to Kahn, the bibliography lists two other works: Simon Wolf’s *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*⁴⁷⁶ and volume 5 of the *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (1897), which featured Max J. Kohler’s article “The Jews and the American Anti-Slavery Movement.”⁴⁷⁷

Unable to deny that Jews had been slave traders, Eisenstein explained that in the past this was an ordinary occupation and that in any case, Jews were among the first to oppose slavery.

The trade in black slaves began in the sixteenth century. The Jews in Holland and Portugal also took part in this trade, like the other nations, but the Jews were also among the first groups to establish organizations to put a stop to slavery in general.⁴⁷⁸

If there is a basis for this assertion, it is not cited in the bibliography. Eisenstein also claims that Jews treated their slaves better than the general population, for while “Jews also bought slaves, they did not work them relentlessly.”⁴⁷⁹ The general thrust of the entry is that while the Jewish tradition accepted slavery in practice, Jews and Judaism looked down on keeping slaves, and in the entry’s last section, Eisenstein argues that most Jews fought against slavery

⁴⁷⁶ Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* (Philadelphia: Levytype, 1895). The entry seems to quote nothing of this work, and Eisenstein must have included it because it is the first source that Kohler’s article quotes (p. 138).

⁴⁷⁷ Kohler also wrote the entry “Antislavery Movement in America” for *JE* (1:649–50).

⁴⁷⁸ Eisenstein, “Eved,” 294.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 294.

in the United States. This is Eisenstein engaging in apologetics, for the sources cited in the bibliography do not support this argument.

Kohler ends his article by concluding that “Judaism contributed its share to the awakening and development of [the] moral forces and sentiments”⁴⁸⁰ that led to the abolition of slavery. However, his article oscillates between portraying Jews in a positive light and admitting the unpleasant truth that some Jews played a prominent role in defending slavery. The first openly Jewish senator, Judah P. Benjamin (1811–1884);⁴⁸¹ Pennsylvania’s first Jewish congressman, Henry M. Philips (1811–1884); and former diplomat and Jewish leader Manuel M. Noah (1785–1851) are all mentioned as defenders of slavery. The *Ozar Yisrael*’s entry mentions none of them. And while Judaism may have “contributed its share” to the abolition of slavery, Kohler believed that by nature, Judaism was sympathetic to slavery and that for those Jews who took all their instruction from religious texts “there was nothing inherently wrong in slavery”:

Oriental customs and antecedents did not tend to make the Jew an enemy of slavery. Together with other Oriental nations, the Jews had possessed slaves, and regarded slaves as property. Moreover, the ideas of caste were strongly developed among Oriental nations, and accordingly among the Hebrew we find different modes of treatment prescribed for the Hebrew slave and for the slave of alien birth ... It was the influence of Occidental culture, rather than religious code, which was responsible for the abolition of slavery. To such Jews, then as found all moral and ethical principles embraced within the Book of Law, there was nothing inherently wrong in slavery.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸⁰ Max J. Kohler, “The Jews and the American Anti-Slavery Movement,” *PAJHS* 5 (1897): 155.

⁴⁸¹ Benjamin was a Confederate who was served as a Louisiana Senator from 1854 to 1861. See Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 200), 62–64.

⁴⁸² Max J. Kohler, “The Jews and the American Anti-Slavery Movement,” *PAJHS* 5 (1897), 145–46.

On the issue of slavery, Kohler maintains that Jews were neutral:

As a body ... the Jews in America took no action, either *pro* or *con*, on the slavery question.⁴⁸³

The *Ozar Yisrael* does not accept that on the question of slavery, most Jews were neutral or indifferent. While admitting that Jews in the South believed in slavery and “found permission to do so from the laws of the Torah regarding Canaanite slaves and in particular blacks, who descend from Ham, the son of Noah,”⁴⁸⁴ the *Ozar Yisrael* notes that a number of Jewish slave owners, including Judah Touro, emancipated their slaves.⁴⁸⁵ It also claims that “the majority of Jewish sages, particularly those living in the North, opposed slavery.”

The possibility that Judaism is naturally sympathetic to slavery is completely rejected by the *Ozar Yisrael*, which instead claims (with no supporting evidence) that Jewish texts were key in the fight to abolish slavery. Eisenstein goes so far as to state that “Christians who rebuked and preached to the nation and waged war against this wickedness were forced to use as their weapon the Torah of Israel.”⁴⁸⁶ This differs sharply from Kohler’s article, which presents Jews as agitators who supported slavery and whose writings were used to support the cause of slavery:

[President James] Buchanan issued a proclamation in December, 1860, appointing January 4th, 1861, as a national fast day, on which prayers for the

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 143. A similar line appears in his article in the *JE*: “As a body, the Jews in America took no action either for or against the slavery question” (*JE* 1:649).

⁴⁸⁴ Eisenstein “Eved,” 294.

⁴⁸⁵ Kohler article also cited the example of Touro (Kohler, “Anti-Slavery Movement,” 142).

⁴⁸⁶ Eisenstein, “Eved,” 294.

preservation of the Union were to be offered throughout the country. Jews joined their Christian fellow-citizens in the observance of the day, and conditions were everywhere discussed. It was this opportunity which Rev. Dr. Morris J. Raphall of New York seized, to proclaim on behalf of Judaism that slavery had the divine sanction of the God of Israel, and that those were ignorant babblers who invoked the higher law against slavery, since there could be no higher law than the Bible, and this ordained slavery. The lecture made a great sensation and was widely printed in the daily press and in pamphlet form. In a work now before me, entitled “Fast Day Sermons,” the leading discourses of the day are collected, but unfortunately for the good name of Judaism, Dr. Raphal’s sermon alone is printed as expressing the Jewish view of the subject. Dr. Raphal’s remarks were not apologetic, but he took the square stand that Judaism sanctioned slavery and that the institution was morally right.⁴⁸⁷

As noted above, Kohler’s article is the only source on slavery in America that Eisenstein listed in his bibliography. And while an encyclopedia entry cannot be as detailed as an article, it is strange that on a topic dealing with such recent—and verifiable—history one finds such differences between the two. If Eisenstein engaged in revisionism, it was because he wanted to portray the American Jew as an elevated person—indeed, for him Jews and Judaism were always elevated. Eisenstein did not wish to show the unpleasant side of American Jewish history, even if his work was for internal Jewish consumption. Just as America had always been good to her Jews, in Eisenstein’s portrayal, so too were America’s Jews model citizens who contributed to America’s moral development.

There was another dimension to this topic that made it challenging for Eisenstein. The greatest and most famous Jewish abolitionist was a Reform rabbi, David Einhorn, whereas the most famous Jewish pro-slavery voice was a traditionalist rabbi, Morris J. Raphall.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ Kohler, “Anti-Slavery Movement,” 149.

⁴⁸⁸ For an overview of the debate between these two rabbis, see Robert F. Southard, “The Debate on Slavery: David Einhorn and the Jewish Political Turn,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 64, no. 1–2 (2012): 137–55.

And while both are briefly mentioned in this entry, Raphall has no entry in the *Ozar Yisrael*, and Einhorn's entry completely omits his battle against slavery. One suspects that Eisenstein deliberately withheld this information from his reader, not wishing to give the impression that a Reform rabbi led the Jewish battle against slavery and a traditionalist endorsed it.

Chapter IIIB: Biblical Criticism

Where Biblical Criticism is Found in the Ozar Yisrael

Biblical criticism captivated Eisenstein. His only work published posthumously dealt with it, and more than any other topic, biblical criticism challenged the *Ozar Yisrael*. Eisenstein regarded the treatment of this topic in the sample volume of the *Otsar hayahadut* unsatisfactory, and this was one of his motivations for creating his own encyclopedia.⁴⁸⁹ Eisenstein saw it as a great weakness that academic scholars promulgated competing theories about the Bible, and in the entry on the book of Isaiah he wrote:

And to these [biblical] critics we are able to say: regarding your theories that are taken from [thin] air, first you must all arrive at the same conclusion, and then we can make space to listen to what you are stating.⁴⁹⁰

But Eisenstein also acknowledged that academic scholars were unanimous in their belief that the Bible was a composite of different texts from different eras, often later than those the texts describe. This conclusion was, in Eisenstein's view, incompatible with traditional Judaism.

⁴⁸⁹ As discussed in chapter 1, in his talk on "Various Jewish Encyclopedias Compared," presented to the *Ohole Shem Society* on January 25, 1907, Eisenstein expressed disapproval of the inclusion of biblical criticism in the *Otsar hayahadut*.

⁴⁹⁰ J. D. Eisenstein, "Yeshayahu," *OY* 5:238–42, quotation at 240.

There is a dispute among the critics about the details of different ideas: this one builds and this one destroys. However, all of them agree that [Prophets] was not written by the prophets in their time and that the book of Psalms was not written by David or when the temple stood but in exile. According to them, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes were written in the times of the Persians and Greeks, and the book of Daniel in the Maccabean period. Consequently, they “prove” that the events described in them, especially in the Book of Esther, are empty [איבנה] words and legends in the mouths of the masses that have no historical foundation.⁴⁹¹

For the *Ozar Yisrael* to have ignored the topic of biblical criticism completely would have invited accusations of intellectual cowardice, but to allow it to color every entry on the Bible was unthinkable to Eisenstein. An ingenious solution was to isolate the topic under one entry, “Criticism of the Biblical Writings” (*Bikoret Kitve Ha-Mikra*).⁴⁹² This way, Eisenstein could simultaneously sterilize the *Ozar Yisrael* of heretical ideas and boast that he did not retreat from this most problematic topic. So, for example, the entry on biblical criticism presented the critics’ views of the Pentateuch as well as Psalms, Proverbs, and Esther, but in the entries on these books, only traditional views are cited. Although the *Ozar Yisrael* is not completely consistent in this regard—a smattering of biblical criticism is found outside the entry *Bikoret kitve ha-mikra*⁴⁹³—having a dedicated entry enabled Eisenstein to handle the topic in a controlled manner.

⁴⁹¹ *OY* 3:164.

⁴⁹² *OY* 3:157–67.

⁴⁹³ In addition to the entries on Isaiah and Ezekiel, discussed below, see J. D. Eisenstein “Joshua,” *OY* 6:81–85, esp. 83; and Judah David Eisenstein “Kohelet,” *OY* 9:120–24

The entry “Yeshayahu” (Isaiah),⁴⁹⁴ written by Eisenstein, is one case in which critical approaches to the Bible are addressed outside the confines of the main entry. This entry, which conflates the prophet and his eponymous book, contains a section titled “The Consolations of Isaiah,”⁴⁹⁵ which gives an overview of the views of critics—Jewish and Christian—who do not see the book as a single integral unit. Here, around the midpoint of the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein makes his faith commitment fully transparent to his readers:

In general we must admit—we who believe in prophecies spoken with divine inspiration—that all the prophets, including Isaiah, also prophesied about the future ... and behold, our sages of blessed memory, who lived two thousand years before our time and were close to the time of writing the Holy Scriptures, certainly knew more than the new researchers whether there was one Isaiah or two or three Isaiahs—which the new researchers, whose entire purpose is only to negate and destroy our tradition and to profane the holy, have fabricated.⁴⁹⁶

In the entry on Isaiah, Eisenstein shows some willingness to voice that which he never fully verbalizes, namely that there are times when arguments fail and faith is the only recourse. The corollary that Eisenstein does not accept is that since faith is sometimes the only recourse, there should be no engagement with biblical criticism. *Ozar Yisrael* did seek to engage biblical critics, but mainly in order to show them their mistakes.

To the general phenomenon of biblical criticism, Eisenstein has an immediate response, which the entry on Ezekiel presents most robustly.⁴⁹⁷ The book of Ezekiel is

⁴⁹⁴ *OY* 5:238–42.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 240. This refers to Isaiah 40–66.

⁴⁹⁶ *OY* 5:240.

⁴⁹⁷ J. D. Eisenstein, “Yehezkel,” *OY* 5:142–47.

problematic because some of its laws contradict the Pentateuch. Eisenstein wrote most of the entry on Ezekiel for the *Ozar Yisrael* and included some of these contradictions under the heading “Ezekiel as an Expounder of the Torah.”⁴⁹⁸ The entry presents the rabbinic view that Ezekiel did not legislate new laws, as a prophet has no right to do so, but did expound on preexisting laws. After listing contradictions between Ezekiel and the Pentateuch, Eisenstein explains that biblical criticism uses these contradictions to demonstrate “that Ezekiel was composed prior to the Pentateuch.”

This is the path of these “critics,” to postdate the Pentateuch, which is the foundation of the Torah, so that they may negate the tradition and what has been accepted among us, and then the structure of Judaism will fall. Anyone who reads their words attentively recognizes their hate for religion and their hate for the Jewish people, the treasured nation.⁴⁹⁹

Eisenstein’s general response to the entire project of biblical criticism is that it is driven by hate for Jews and Jewish life. This alone should render it unacceptable to Jewish people. And yet, he laments:

To our shame, we now have teachers in seminaries who bow their heads before these critics and accept their words, and they are unknowingly caught in the trap that the haters of the Torah of Israel have prepared for them.⁵⁰⁰

In addition to allowing Eisenstein to avoid biblical criticism elsewhere in his encyclopedia, the entry *Bikoret Kitve Ha-Mikra* gave him an opportunity to engage with the topic in a sustained way. He could point out certain instances in which, in his view, the critics

⁴⁹⁸ *OY* 5:147.

⁴⁹⁹ *OY* 5:240.

⁵⁰⁰ *OY* 5:240.

were correct but were anticipated by the ancient rabbis and later Jewish exegetes, and he could also present a sustained argument against the major critical theories, which he viewed as threatening to Jews and Judaism.

The Entry on Biblical Criticism

At twenty-one columns, the entry on biblical criticism is one of the longer entries in the encyclopedia. Its bibliography includes works by modern Jewish and non-Jewish authors, including Joshua Heschel Schorr's *He-Halutz*, Abraham Geiger's *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel*, T. K. Cheyne's *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*, and Frant Buhl's *Kanon und Text des Alten Testamentes*. With the exception of an article by Richard Gottheil, the bibliography only cites European works, but the entry is also influenced by American scholarship; it ends with a discussion of Paul Haupt's *Polychrome Bible* (1896).

The entry on biblical criticism has eighteen sections:

- i. Criticism in the Talmud
- ii. Distinctiveness of Books [of the Bible]⁵⁰¹
- iii. Closing of the Canon⁵⁰²
- iv. Style of Language
- v. Scribal Corrections
- vi. Sections not in their correct place and additions
- vii. The Thirty-Two Laws of R. Eliezer

⁵⁰¹ The Hebrew is "מעלות הספרים." This section discusses the difference between Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch.

⁵⁰² The Hebrew is *hatimat ha-TaNaKH*.

- viii. Textual Variations
- ix. Variations in the *Targum*
- x. Substitution⁵⁰³
- xi. Ibn Ezra as a Critic
- xii. Composite Texts⁵⁰⁴
- xiii. Mistakes
- xiv. Biblical Criticism in Light of Assyria and Mesopotamia⁵⁰⁵
- xv. Higher Criticism
- xvi. TaNaKh according to the New Criticism
- xvii. The Latest Approach
- xviii. Holy Scripture in Different Colors

The entry discusses both lower (textual) criticism and higher (source) criticism. In the first few pages of the entry, Eisenstein argues that there is precedent and justification for some forms of criticism. He shows how earlier sages engaged this topic and writes that therefore, when undertaken properly, biblical criticism is legitimate. By extension, this implies that the *Ozar Yisrael's* presentation of this topic is legitimate as well.

⁵⁰³ The Hebrew is *hilufim*. This section discusses “this most daring of all the contributions of ibn Janach. This assumes that the biblical writer ‘intended one thing, but wrote another.’” See Nahum M. Sarna, “Hebrew and Bible Studies in Medieval Spain,” in *The Sepharadi Heritage*, ed. R. D. Barnett (New York: Ktav, 1971), 1:347.

⁵⁰⁴ The Hebrew is *eruve nusha'ot*.

⁵⁰⁵ The Hebrew is *bikoret kitve ha-kodesh al pi tziyune Ashur u-Bavel*.

As for these pathways of criticism, scholars who seek the truth walk in them, and the haters of Jewish literature [*sifrut yisrael*] stumble in them.⁵⁰⁶ For regarding biblical criticism there are many topics that talmudical figures [*ba'alei ha-Talmud*] and true sages of Israel agree with; however, the new critics have exceeded the limits and breached the boundary.⁵⁰⁷

Using the English terms “lower criticism” and “textual emendation,”⁵⁰⁸ the first section of the entry, “Criticism in the Talmud,” shows that the Talmud was open to the possibility that Moses did not receive the whole text of the Pentateuch. Eisenstein points out that over time, the answer to the question of who wrote the Bible changed.

One of the thirteen principles of faith that Maimonides enumerated, which was accepted throughout the Jewish diaspora, is that “the entire Torah that we now possess was given to Moses.”⁵⁰⁹

And yet, Eisenstein notes that there is a rabbinic tradition that Joshua wrote the last eight verses of the Pentateuch.⁵¹⁰ On its own, this is an insignificant crack in the belief that God delivered the Pentateuch to Moses, but Eisenstein presents a catalog of such cracks. For example, while Eisenstein maintains that Moses recorded the first four books of the Bible directly from God, he notes that Deuteronomy is Moses’s retelling of these earlier books.⁵¹¹ Similarly, there is a difference between the first two of the ten commandments, which the

⁵⁰⁶ Paraphrase of Hos 14:10: “He who is wise will consider these words, He who is prudent will take note of them. For the paths of the LORD are smooth; the righteous can walk on them, while sinners stumble on them.” Adapting such a verse to this topic lends the entry a religious overtone.

⁵⁰⁷ Ecc 10:8. See the context in which this verse is quoted.

⁵⁰⁸ Both of these terms are quoted in English.

⁵⁰⁹ *OY* 3:157.

⁵¹⁰ Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11a, cited in *OY* 3:158.

⁵¹¹ *OY* 3:158. See also b. Meg. 31b, where a similar idea is recorded.

people heard directly from God, and the rest of the commandments, which Moses spoke.⁵¹²

This catalog of cracks has a twofold effect: it gives the traditionalist a modicum of flexibility and demonstrates that the rabbinic tradition uncovered different strata within the Pentateuch. Eisenstein wanted his readers to conclude that the rabbis' minds were open to the possibility of biblical criticism. The reason they held back from robust biblical criticism was because of insufficient evidence, not because they were afraid of doing so.

The rabbinic tradition was, Eisenstein argued, not alone in eschewing the solution that modern critics favored. For most of history, no one questioned the unity of the Pentateuch and the individual books of the Bible, and this change of direction placed a very high burden of proof on modern critics.

Generally, in any books of the ancients, even those written by gentiles, one does not find denial of the Torah of Moses or the books of the Prophets or claims that they were written or edited in a way that is contrary to the accepted tradition. It is for less than two centuries that people have begun to question them. However, the ancient claims that were unchallenged for more than two millennia cannot be undone without strong proofs that leave no questions, and the new critics have no proofs at all, just flimsy suggestions.⁵¹³

Eisenstein argued that the rabbinic tradition contained the discoveries and even methods of modern critics. For example, tractate *Soferim* asserts that the three copies of the Pentateuch housed in the temple were not identical. On the basis of a majority (two of three), emendations were made.⁵¹⁴ By recounting this detail, the rabbinic tradition admitted that the

⁵¹² *OY* 3:157.

⁵¹³ *OY* 3:158.

⁵¹⁴ *Soferim* 6:4. Various differences are cited, but in all cases, it was discovered that two of the scrolls had one version of the text and the third had a different version. This made emendation a relatively easy process, as one

text we possess is imperfect. This and phenomena such as *qere* and *ktiv*,⁵¹⁵ and rabbinic literature citing nonexistent biblical verses,⁵¹⁶ show that over time mistakes entered the biblical text.⁵¹⁷

Jacob Reifmann: Traditionalist Proponent of Textual Emendation

Jacob Reifmann (1818–1894) was an idiosyncratic scholar.⁵¹⁸ Born in Poland, he was an autodidact who wrote in Hebrew and maintained contact with the entire spectrum of maskilim and practitioners of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. German publications reviewed his scholarship, and he won recognition beyond the world of Hebrew letters. Reifmann was an original thinker, and the nature of his theological commitments remains enigmatic. His writings captivated Eisenstein, who found in them a method of dealing with difficult questions. Although Eisenstein was not explicit about his debt to Reifmann, the entry on biblical criticism quotes Reifmann liberally, and it is easy to see how much Eisenstein relied on him.

simply followed the majority of texts. Had the three scrolls had three different versions, emendation would have been more difficult.

⁵¹⁵ This refers to words that are read but not written or written but not read. See Aron Dotan, “Masorah,” *EJ* 13:603–56.

⁵¹⁶ See Yeshayahu Maori, “Rabbinic Midrash as Evidence for Textual Variants in the Hebrew Bible: History and Practice,” in *Modern Scholarship in the Study of Torah: Contributions and Limitations*, ed. Shalom Carmy (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 101–29.

⁵¹⁷ *OY* 3:162. In the thirteenth section, “Mistakes,” Eisenstein asserts that “regarding the Masoretic [להמסורה] Text, whether regarding vowels, letters, or words, there is no doubt that over time some changes regarding defective and plene spelling, and substitution occurred.”

⁵¹⁸ See *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews of Eastern Europe*, s.v. “Reifman, Ya’akov,” https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Reifmann_Yaakov; and Meir Hershkovitz, “*Titen emet le-Ya’akov*,” *Ha-Darom* 18 (1963): 35–78.

One section of that entry is devoted to “the thirty-two hermeneutical laws of R. Eliezer,” sometimes referred to as the “baraita of the thirty-two laws,” which is used to interpret scripture.⁵¹⁹ A rabbinic midrash would seem out of place in an entry on biblical criticism, but Eisenstein included it, making the remarkable claim that

R. Eliezer the son of R. Jose the Galilean was the first to pay attention to expound Holy Scripture according to thirty-two laws of criticism⁵²⁰ that he established as a strong foundation.⁵²¹

Eisenstein posited that the laws found in the midrash were *midot shel bikoret*, “rules of criticism.” This reframing imbued them with contemporary significance and suggested that long ago the rabbinic mind had offered biblical criticism to the world.

One of the midrash’s rules was *b’derech k’tzara*, or ellipsis. The midrash claims that the Bible sometimes uses ellipsis, giving two examples. The first example is taken from 1 Chr 17:3–5:

And it happened on that night that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, “Go and say to David My servant, Thus said the LORD: It is not you who will build Me a house in which to dwell. For I have not dwelled in a house from the day I brought Israel up till this day, *but I have been from tent to tent and from tabernacle.*”

The verse should have read:

*but I have been from tent to tent and from tabernacle to tabernacle.*⁵²²

⁵¹⁹ Barnet David Klein, “Baraita of 32 Rules,” *EJ* 2:129. See also H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis, 1996), 22–30.

⁵²⁰ Hebrew *middot shel bikoret*.

⁵²¹ *OY* 3:158.

⁵²² See also 2 Sam 7:6.

The Midrash of R. Eliezer makes this point:

It should have stated “and from tabernacle to tabernacle,” but the verse used an ellipsis. When may one use an ellipsis? When the subject definitely needs it.”⁵²³

The one additional example of ellipsis that the midrash provides is 2 Sam 13:39, which is a problematic verse, since it contains a feminine verb and no feminine noun.⁵²⁴

While the midrash offers only two examples, it leaves open the possibility that there are other verses that can only be properly understood via ellipsis.

Eisenstein pointed out that others used this method, most notably the medieval grammarian Ibn Janah. The twenty-fifth chapter of Ibn Jannah’s *Sefer ha-rikmah* is devoted to ellipsis, and he lists some two hundred instances where this method is needed to understand the biblical text.⁵²⁵

Ibn Jannah’s pedigree was unassailable, for from the twelfth century on, all great Jewish commentators, with the exception of the school of Rashi, had relied on him.⁵²⁶ If he

⁵²³ Hebrew *misheyitztarekh lo ha-inyan vaday*.

⁵²⁴ See Robert Alter’s comment: “The received text is either defective or elliptical at this point. The verb *watekhal* is feminine, though there is no feminine noun in the clause. Many have construed it as the predicate of an omitted noun, *nefesh*, which coupled with this verb would yield idiomatically “David pined after Absalom.” Such paternal longings scarcely accord with David’s refusal to see his son once he has returned to Jerusalem, or with the very necessity of elaborate manipulation in order to get him to agree to rescind Absalom’s banishment. The Qumran Samuel scroll, though incomplete at this point, appears to have the feminine noun—*ruah*—“spirit,” “impulse,” “urge”—as the subject of the verb. An abatement of hostility against Absalom rather than a longing for him makes much more sense in terms of what follows. See also Rashi and R. Yosef ibn Kaspi ad loc. The former accepts that there is some type of ellipsis and the latter does not.” Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, Kindle ed. (New York: Norton, 2019) loc. 35242. Midrash R. Eliezer is one of the “many” that “have construed it as the predicate of an omitted noun.”

⁵²⁵ Ibn Janah, *Sefer ha-Rikmah* (Frankfurt, 1856), 150–68.

⁵²⁶ David Tenne, “Ibn Janāḥ Jonah,” *EJ* 9:680-683.

was allowed to generate examples of ellipsis, then doing so was acceptable. Eisenstein was trying to show that great figures from the past engaged in some form of textual criticism, but his quotation of Ibn Janah to further this argument needs to be explored. Either Eisenstein did not understand Ibn Janah, or he pretended not to understand him. Despite the *Jewish Encyclopedia*'s describing ibn Janah as the "greatest Hebrew philologist of the Middle Ages,"⁵²⁷ the *Ozar Yisrael* has no entry on him, suggesting that Eisenstein in fact knew very little about him. He linked Ibn Janah's method of ellipsis to the "thirty-two hermeneutical laws of R. Eliezer" because Jacob Reifman, an obscure nineteenth-century maskil, had already done so.

Ibn Janah himself did not link ellipsis to the thirty-two hermeneutical laws of R. Eliezer or see it as a way to expand a midrashic rule. Rather, as will be shown below, he treated ellipsis as a function of the Hebrew language. Furthermore, Ibn Janah wrote in Arabic, so he never used the Hebrew phrase *derekh k'tzara*. And the translation of the work into Hebrew by Judah ben Saul ibn Tibbon (first printed in 1856) did not use the phrase *derekh k'tzara* in the twenty-fifth chapter. (The Hebrew title of that chapter is *Mah Sh'shimshu Bo B'hisaron*, "How they Used Ellipsis.")⁵²⁸

Jacob Reifmann linked Ibn Janah to the the "baraita of the thirty-two laws." He did so because two of the many examples of ellipsis that Ibn Janah provides are identical with the

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 680.

⁵²⁸ *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, s.v. "Ibn Tibbon, Judah Ben Saul," https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/ibn-tibbon-samuel-ben-judah-COM_0011210?s.num=0&s.rows=20&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world&s.q=Ibn+Tibbon.

two examples of *derekh k'tzara* that are found in the baraita. Reifmann writes: “The *Sefer ha-rikma* is similar ... and it appears to me that he [Ibn Janah] took these examples from what the Baraita [of the Thirty-Two Laws] explained.”⁵²⁹ And while Ibn Janah does not reference the baraita of the thirty-two laws and his understanding of ellipsis was probably driven more by Islamic hermeneutics than a rabbinic midrash, Jewish authors in the islamicate world who were influenced by Muslim scholarship did not want to admit to this foreign influence and therefore sought precedents in rabbinic literature. Reifman’s linking of ibn Janah and the baraita was likely also meant to show that what ibn Janah had done had precedent in the rabbinic tradition.

A much larger issue is that there is no indication that Ibn Janah used ellipsis as a method of textual criticism, as Eisenstein suggested.

Mordechai Cohen makes this point:

When presenting his examples, Ibn Janah uses another term that had become common by his time in qur’anic hermeneutics: *TAQDIR* [*long i*] “reconstruction” or “textual restoration” i.e., a literal equivalent of the language of Scripture that cannot be taken as is, i.e., as *ḥaqīqa*. This is not a method of textual emendation, but rather an interpretive technique made necessary because the language of Scripture is sometimes used in an unusual way that must be “decoded” and presented in a more natural way in order to be understood properly.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ *Mayshiv davar*, 27. For the relevant examples, see *Sefer ha-rikma*, 150. At the beginning of *Mayshiv davar* (5ff), Reifmann quotes fifteen authors who quote the Baraita of the Thirty-Two Laws. The second author is ibn Janah, although he concedes that he never explicitly mentions the Baraita or its author.

⁵³⁰ Mordechai Z. Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation: Maimonides' Biblical Hermeneutics in Light of His Geonic-Andalusian Heritage and Muslim Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 58.

From the early 1860s, Reifmann showed interest in the Baraita of R. Eliezer, and in 1866 he published a study on it, *Meshiv Davar*. It was in that work that Reifmann linked Ibn Janah's method of "ellipsis" to the baraita's *derekh k'tzara*.⁵³¹ Reifmann argued that the change the baraita suggested was not comprehensive enough. According to the baraita, 1 Chr 17:5 should read "but I have been from tent to tent and from tabernacle to tabernacle."⁵³² Reifmann improved on the change that the baraita had offered:

I have no doubt that the first example [of the baraita] needs to say *I have been GOING*⁵³³ *from tent to tent and from tabernacle to tabernacle*. For also the word GOING is missing.

This emendation was radical. The baraita discovered a problem with the verse and had already provided a solution, but for Reifmann, its solution was not comprehensive enough. However, as he pointed out, he was not the first to suggest this improvement, for Ibn Janah had preceded him.

And also in the Sefer ha-rikma ... I have been from tent to tent and from tabernacle, the correct reading is⁵³⁴ I have been going from tent to tent and from tabernacle to tabernacle.

Reifmann ended up counting a hundred instances where the method of *derekh k'tzara*, ellipsis, was required to understand the biblical text, and in 1881 he authored a work, *Minhat*

⁵³¹ Jacob Reifman, *Meshiv davar*, 27.

⁵³² See also 2 Sam 7:6.

⁵³³ Reifman adds the Hebrew *mithalekh*. The emphasis is in the original.

⁵³⁴ The Hebrew used is *ha-she'or*.

zikaron, on this rule. Here he elaborated on the connection between Ibn Janah and the baraita of the thirty-two laws:

This small seed [of *derekh k'tzara* found in the baraita of the thirty-two laws] R. Jonah ibn Janah made fruitful and it multiplied, and grew until it became a mighty cedar with many branches and long vines, and behold: it is planted in his book *Ha-rikma* ... Place a focused eye on it and on the twenty-fifth chapter, and be amazed at how powerful this criticism (*bikoret*) of the TaNaKh in Spain was as early as 4800 [the eleventh century].⁵³⁵

Reifmann is referring to chapter 25 of the *Sefer ha-rikma*, “The Use of Ellipsis,” which begins:

Know that the Hebrews often elide and shorten language, such that the language is not complete as *haqīqa*⁵³⁶ but rather has in it [something said] lightly and briefly, since the addressee knows what they mean.⁵³⁷

Eisenstein did not publicize that Reifmann taught him to connect Ibn Janah and the baraita of thirty-two laws, but he did not hide this fact either, and he listed both the *Meshiv davar* and the *Minhat Zikaron* in his bibliography.⁵³⁸

Eisenstein began his entry on biblical criticism by stating that there are two forms of criticism, higher criticism and lower criticism. Beginning with lower criticism, he argued that at least in theory it was acceptable because, whether by design or through sloppy transmission, the biblical text was deficient. Eisenstein showed that rabbinic literature had recognized these deficiencies and that later scholars expanded the repertoire of textual

⁵³⁵ Jacob Reifman, *Minhat zikaron* (Breslau, 1881), 4.

⁵³⁶ Defined below as “‘proper’ or ‘literal’ language.”

⁵³⁷ Cohen, *Opening Gates of Interpretation*, 57.

⁵³⁸ *OY* 3:167.

deficiencies in both quantity and quality. Such criticism was legitimate because it was rooted in tradition and necessary for understanding the biblical text. However, after validating the need for textual emendation, Eisenstein also explained why, as a practical matter, he was opposed to doing so.

Eisenstein believed that the Masoretic Text contained mistakes in plene and defective spelling as well as other textual variants (*hiluf*), “for there is no doubt that over time some mistakes crept in.” But still, he opposed textual emendations:

Nonetheless, we should not dare (*halila lanu*) to change the text from the Masoretic Text we received into our hands (*m’hamsorah ha-mekubelet b’yadenu*)—not even a small point of the letter *yud*—for if we were to change and to improve things, the task would be endless.

Thus, he admits that the text was corrupted, but this recognition is not powerful enough to erode his reverence for it. Like a masterpiece that could be improved, the text could be improved, but no one should be so foolhardy as to believe they were up to the task of improving it. Once some changes were made, there would be a temptation to keep making changes, and one would not know when to stop. Thus, after presenting the work of Reifmann, Eisenstein rejects textual emendations, not because of the sanctity of the text but because of concerns about a slippery slope. Eisenstein suggests allowing some emendations to appear in translations, but says that even these should be limited to cases where the verse’s practical significance would not change:

Only regarding translations into other languages is it possible for us to make small changes, and these should also not contradict a law or custom of the Jewish religion.⁵³⁹

A different problem was that rabbinic literature sometimes quotes verses that either do not exist or are variants of verses found in Scripture. Eisenstein explained that the rabbinic sages “relied on their memory for speed and did not check Scripture to cite verses in a precise way.”⁵⁴⁰ And yet he offered guidance on what to do when a rabbinic citation contradicted the Masoretic Text. He asserted that if such a difference impacts a point of Jewish law or practice, one should follow the rabbinic version.

The Inclusion of Reifmann and the Orientation of the *Ozar Yisrael*

The legacy of Reifmann is contested, and in the last decade, two articles have presented competing visions of his work. Chanan Gafni has argued that as the modern age dawned on him, Reifmann became aware of textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible and sought to grapple with the challenge it presented. He understood the need for textual emendation but wanted to ground his work in traditional Jewish precedent, and so he connected his work to Ibn Janah and the baraita of R. Eliezer. Not wanting to break with tradition, Reifmann found a continuum between what he was doing and earlier rabbinic writing. If this analysis is correct, one must conclude that Reifmann was engaging in a sleight of hand. He claimed that the text itself—not just the language of the text—was deficient. Ibn Janah’s claim was different. He argued that the Hebrew language sometimes uses a sort of shorthand, and

⁵³⁹ *OY* 3:162.

⁵⁴⁰ *OY* 159.

presumably this was also the claim of the baraita of R. Eliezer. What to Reifmann was a textual problem that called for a textual remedy was to Ibn Janah and the baraita of the thirty-two laws a language problem that called for an exegetical solution.

Eran Viezel challenged Gafni's understanding of Reifmann and argued that his

proposals are not suggestions for emendations to the traditional text but rather exegetical comments based on a number of fixed and proven key principles. It can be inferred from his methodology that the difficulty in understanding the Bible is not the result of corruptions which developed in the course of its long transmissions, but derives from the fact that the keys to understanding the Bible are no longer known to its readers. In this way Reifmann switched the discussion from the question of the text of the Bible to the question of language and style of the Bible.⁵⁴¹

However, Viezel recognizes that this understanding of Reifmann is unique. In modern times and during Reifmann's lifetime, "conservatives who rejected the possibility that the Bible included corruptions vehemently opposed Reifmann. In contrast, radical emendators of the text praised Reifmann as one of the trailblazers in the critical study of the biblical text."⁵⁴²

Therefore, even if Viezel is correct, Eisenstein would have only have known of Reifmann as a textual emendator. The fact that he nonetheless offered Reifmann's approach as a legitimate way of understanding the Bible must be explored.

The introduction to this dissertation argued that Eisenstein's Hebraist perspective was rooted in the East European Haskalah. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that his entry on biblical criticism draws on a nineteenth-century figure like Reifmann. However, by

⁵⁴¹ Eran Viezel, "Textual Criticism of the Bible in the Writings of Jacob Reifmann: A Re-evaluation," *JJS* 67, no. 1 (2017): 102.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 98.

Eisenstein's time, the Hebraist debate over the Bible had proceeded into new territory. Alan T. Levenson has argued that during the first decade of the twentieth century, Ahad Ha'am was embroiled in a series of controversies about the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁴³ In these controversies, he was consistently a conservative voice arguing for an unbreakable bond between the Jewish people and the Hebrew Bible, which remained the pinnacle of Jewish achievement and inspiration. In his essay "Moses," Ahad Ha'am rejected "critical Bible scholars as the ultimate deciders of Bible's importance for modern Jewish culture."⁵⁴⁴ But belief in the historical or literal truth of the Bible is not what drove this rejection.

As Ahad Ha'am stated with considerable sang-froid, he did not care whether the archaeologists concluded that there was or was not a historical Moses at all, since the Moses that mattered to Jewish culture (as always, his lodestar) had been established by the veneration of generations.⁵⁴⁵

Eisenstein could not abide by this perspective, however, and although he sometimes based his arguments on the sentimental attachment of the Jewish people to the Bible, as has already been demonstrated, he also insisted on traditional belief and all it entailed. In a 1911 article entitled "Torah from Zion" in *Ha-shiloah*, Ahad Ha'am argued that "an emotional link to the Bible constituted a sine qua non for the national Jew. Belief in God could no longer be expected, nor a traditional belief in Torah from Heaven."⁵⁴⁶ This was, of course, heretical

⁵⁴³ Levenson, "Ahad Ha'am's Bible."

⁵⁴⁴ Originally published in 1904 as part of *Al Parshat Derakhim*, Ahad Ha'am's three-volume collection of essays. An English version of this essay is found in Leon Simon, *Selected Essays by Ahad Ha'am* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1911), 306–29.

⁵⁴⁵ Levenson, "Ahad Ha'am's Bible," 243.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 247.

from the perspective of Orthodox Judaism, but Levenson shows that members of the new generation, like Yosef Hayim Brenner (1881–1921), had rejected any emotional link to the Bible and were “heretic[s] from the perspective of the national movement.” In this 1911 essay, Ahad Ha’am was battling a new generation whose reverence for the Bible was greatly reduced. At the Herzliyah Gymnasium, the school’s principal and Bible instructor, Benzion Mossinson (1878–1925), instituted a Bible curriculum that “prioritized prophets over Torah, its secular importance as literature and history over its religious content, and promoted source criticism.”⁵⁴⁷ Some of this infuriated Ahad Ha’am, who insisted on the sanctity of the text even as he accepted that it was a human creation.

In its discussions of the Bible, the *Ozar Yisrael* is completely removed from—apparently almost unaware of—these battles. Instead, Eisenstein quoted nineteenth-century figures like Jacob Reifmann, who to him represented the vanguard of Jewish approaches to the Bible. Thus, had the *Ozar Yisrael* been produced in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a progressive mind could have applauded Eisenstein for counting Reifmann as a traditionalist. The fact that he was doing so in the first decade of the twentieth century is only a sign of how detached he was from the debates that engulfed Hebrew nationalists.

Earlier, it was argued that Eisenstein learned about Ibn Janah from Reifman, but the question of how Eisenstein knew about Reifmann was not asked. Eisenstein and Reifmann were contemporaries of sorts, so it makes sense that Eisenstein knew about Reifman, who

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 249.

died in November of 1894. The first volume of *Ner HaMarabi*, the journal of the Ohole Shem Society, which appeared in January of 1895, spent three pages eulogizing him:

And you, cry not for the dead, for R. Jacob Reifmann has not died. Cry bitterly for those who walk in darkness and not light, those who did not know to value the wisdom of this sorrowful man, either in his life or in his death.⁵⁴⁸

Eisenstein heeded this warning. He valued “the wisdom of this sorrowful man,” and in his entry on biblical criticism, he promoted it. The journal’s first page mentioned that Eisenstein was the society’s treasurer, and Eisenstein himself has an article in the same issue.⁵⁴⁹ Surely Eisenstein would have known about Reifmann even without this eulogy appearing in *Ner Ma’arabi*, but its presence strengthens the argument that the Hebraic learning of the *Ozar Yisrael* flowed from an outdated maskilic learning that persisted in the United States. In 1896, the Ohole Shem Society lamented the pitiful publicity that Reifmann had received from “those who walk in darkness and not light, those who did not know to value” scholars of true learning. Eisenstein internalized this message and, slightly more than a decade later, turned Reifmann’s theories into a mainstay of his entry on biblical criticism.

Archaeology and Assyriology in the *Ozar Yisrael*

Archaeology in the nineteenth century was the exclusive domain of non-Jewish scholars, and into the twentieth century, even securing Jewish funding for it was considered controversial.⁵⁵⁰ Since Eisenstein promulgated an essentialist perspective on Jews and their

⁵⁴⁸ *Ner hamarabi* 1, no. 1 (1896): 33–36.

⁵⁴⁹ Eisenstein, “The Early Masorah,” *Ner hamarabi* 1, no. 1 (1896) (unnumbered pages).

⁵⁵⁰ Rachel Hallote, “Jacob H. Schiff and The Beginning of Biblical Archaeology in the United States,” *AJH* 95, no. 3 (2009): 225–47.

role as the authentic guardians of the Bible, it would be difficult for him to be enthusiastic about a field that non-Jews dominated. However, Eisenstein brought the same ingenuity and vigor to this topic that he brought to other aspects of the *Ozar Yisrael*. He acknowledged important new discoveries, such as the Code of Hammurabi, and discussed them, but he never allowed them to undermine Jewish tradition. This was his vision for the *Ozar Yisrael*. It was traditional, but its traditionalism did not automatically lead to the censorship of problematic information. Self-confident about his faith, Eisenstein was prepared to meet every challenge. He was transparent about his biases and admitted to giving dominion to the weight of tradition, yet he did not limit himself to its authority. Eisenstein could have ignored this topic, or he could have hidden behind the claim that Hammurabi was a forgery (which he did entertain).⁵⁵¹ Instead, he used these new discoveries to illuminate Jewish texts and practices and deflect the challenge they posed to the uniqueness of the Bible.

Wanting to be intellectually honest while upholding the Bible led Eisenstein to the position that new discoveries had to be consistent with the Bible:

Studies of Egyptian hieroglyphics have validated the stories of the Bible, such as the slavery of Israel in Egypt that critics used to deny. Also, via the tablets and prisms [*tzinuyim*] that excavators found by digging into the bowels of the earth [*ma'ave ha-adama*] in Babylonia and Eretz Yisrael, the hidden sources of Israel that critics believed to be just another legend have been revealed.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ This is reminiscent of Solomon Zeitlin's famous claim that the Dead Sea Scrolls were all forgeries. See Solomon Zeitlin, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Modern Scholarship* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning), 1956, and James C. Vanderkam, *The Meaning of Dead Scrolls* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 381–82.

⁵⁵² *OY* 3:163.

Many of the great archaeological advances of the nineteenth century, such as the decipherment of the Behistun inscription and the Amarna tablets, do not have their own entries, though they are discussed in the entry “Assyriology,” by Abraham Zarzovksy (1878–1914).⁵⁵³ Still, Eisenstein often offered some archaeological insights in the *Ozar Yisrael*. For example, the entries on the cities of Shushan⁵⁵⁴ and Nineveh⁵⁵⁵ mention that they were excavated, but aside from a sentence about what was found and who led the excavation, no additional information is offered. Interest in archaeology was commonplace, and from the middle of the nineteenth century, Hebrew journals had closely followed new archaeological discoveries and the emerging field of Assyriology.⁵⁵⁶

Around the time that Eisenstein was producing the *Ozar Yisrael*, archaeologists were excavating Gezer. In 1907, R. A. Stewart Macalister, the director of excavations for the Palestine Exploration Fund, published an account of the dig that included chapters such as “The Home of Rebekah,” “The Rebuilding of Jericho,” and “The Maccabean Conquest.”⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵³ Abraham Zarzovky, “*Ashurit*, (Assyrologie)” in *OY* 2:249–54. Zarzovky (1878–1914) was a scholar who wrote about the ancient near east and together with Isaac Dov Ber Markon (1875–1949) published a quarterly (in Hebrew and German) called *Ha-Kedem* (1907–1909). While he was a serious scholar, the entry is a defense of the historicity of the Bible. In it Zarzovksy writes “All these historical writings [from Assyria] contain much valuable material for the ancient history of the Hebrew nation from the day it trod across the lintel of history until the time of the redemption of the Babylonian exile. All the historical material that is found in Holy Scripture is not only understood in a new light through these documents but they also certify and verify these stories [of the Bible] that the writers of falsehood [ie some of the modern critics] deny and attribute to later times.”, Abraham Zarzovky, “*Ashurit*, (Assyrologie)” in *OY* 2:252. On Zarzosky see also <https://library.osu.edu/projects/hebrew-lexicon/03187.php>

⁵⁵⁴ This entry was written by the anonymous “helpers in the printing house” *Bet Mem: Ha-ozrim B'veit Ha-ma'arekhet* “Shushan,” *OY* 10:74–75.

⁵⁵⁵ Mordechai Seligson, “Nineveh,” *OY* 7:68–69.

⁵⁵⁶ See Shavit and Eran, *Hebrew Bible Reborn*, 167–91.

⁵⁵⁷ R. A. Stewart Macalister, *Bible Side-Lights from the Mound of Gezer: A Record of Excavation and Discovery in Palestine* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907).

The *Ozar Yisrael*'s entry "Gezer" contains some of the information that Macalister had reported, and the bibliography includes a volume of the *Palestine Exploration Fund Memoires*. In this short entry—just half a column—Eisenstein links what the excavation unearthed to Jewish law. The excavation uncovered markers inscribed "boundary of Gezer" (*t'hum gezer*), and Eisenstein theorized that these were meant to alert the town's inhabitants to the *t'hum shabbat*, the boundary beyond which a person was not permitted to walk on the Sabbath.⁵⁵⁸ Clearly, Eisenstein had no problem using studies about the biblical world that emerged from Christian scholars, and he enlisted their findings in support of Jewish law.

Eisenstein knew that Friedrich Delitzsch had used archaeology and Assyriology to assail traditional understandings of the Bible, but he did not view these fields as so "dangerous" that they needed to be quarantined in their own section. Findings from these fields appear throughout the encyclopedia, and in the entry on biblical criticism, Eisenstein gave Assyriology its own subheading, "Biblical Criticism in Light of Assyria and Mesopotamia." This heading is identical to the title of an 1886 article that Joachim (Hayyim) Oppenheim wrote for the annual *Ha'asif*.⁵⁵⁹ The previous year (1885), Eisenstein had written about the Jews of America for *Ha'asif*,⁵⁶⁰ so he probably saw Oppenheim's article. However, aside from sharing a title, there are no parallels between what Eisenstein wrote and Oppenheim's article. Under this subheading, Eisenstein mentions the Laws of Hammurabi:

⁵⁵⁸ See Exod 16:29; Eruv. 17b, 51a; *Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim* 397.

⁵⁵⁹ Hayyim Oppenheim, "Bikoret Kitve Kodesh al pi tziyune Ashur u-Bavel," *Ha'asif* 3 (1886): 167–73. Oppenheim served as the Rabbi of Toruń. See the entry on him in *EJ* 15:445.

⁵⁶⁰ J. D. Eisenstein, "HaYehudim b'Eretz HaHadasha," *Ha'asif* 2 (1885): 214–19.

Since they discovered Hammurabi, they have reversed the order of their criticism, saying that Moses copied most of his Torah from the laws of Hammurabi, yet also here they have missed the mark.⁵⁶¹

“Hammurabi” is also given its own lengthy entry,⁵⁶² written by Judah Landau and Eisenstein, which includes an illustration of the cuneiform text. Landau studied at the Israelitisch-Theologische Lehranstalt in Vienna, where David Heinrich Müller, an academic Assyriologist, was a faculty member.⁵⁶³ When the “Babel and Bible” controversy erupted over Delitzsch’s claim that some of the Hebrew Bible was adapted from Hammurabi’s code, Müller published a rebuttal, in which he admitted that the Hammurabi Code influenced the Mosaic laws. However, he claimed that Abraham possessed an even earlier source (*Urgesetz*) and this was handed down through the generations until it reached Moses, who completely transformed it.⁵⁶⁴

The entry on Hammurabi discusses this rebuttal and its claim that both the Bible and Hammurabi’s Code drew on an earlier code. Where he could, Landau endorsed Müller’s view:

Müller was very correct in saying that the main difference between the spirit of Israel and the spirit of Babylonia, which was immersed in idolatry, arises from these laws, because according to our teaching man is created in the image of God, and one who spills blood or kidnaps someone faces capital

⁵⁶¹ Eisenstein, “Biblical Criticism,” *OY* 3:162.

⁵⁶² *OY* 4:291–95.

⁵⁶³ In 1903, Müller translated Hammurabi’s code into Hebrew. See Shavit and Eran, *Hebrew Bible Reborn*, 287n290. Landau wrote the entry on Müller in the *OY*; see Landau, “Miller, David Zvi (Heinrich),” *OY* 6:172–73, where he credits him with producing “a valuable work” that tries to prove that Moses did not draw on Hammurabi’s code.

⁵⁶⁴ Shavit and Eran, *Hebrew Bible Reborn*, 345. See n488 for the view that “although Müller represented himself as an objective man of science, his statements are unintentionally apologetic in the full sense of the term.”

punishment, but one does not face capital punishment for stealing, theft or such things, as was the cruel and tyrannical law of that time.⁵⁶⁵

When Landau could not abide Müller's conclusion, he was willing to resort to any source that would support him.

Müller's opinion is that there was a different code of law, one more ancient than the code of Hammurabi, and that both the king of Babylonia and the lawgiver of Israel drew from it. The descendants of Abraham safeguarded it and transmitted it from generation to generation. But he has no clear proof, even according to the opinion of the sages of the nations (see the opinion of Kautzsch in vol. 3 of *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*).⁵⁶⁶

The Kautzsch referenced here is Emil Friedrich Kautzsch, a proponent of higher biblical criticism. (Kautzsch edited the text of the book of Proverbs for Paul Haupt's *Polychrome Bible*, which Eisenstein derided at the end of his entry on biblical criticism.) However, when Kautzsch assailed Müller's impious theory that the Torah drew on an earlier source, Landau did not hesitate to cite him. Clearly, for such a purpose a Christian Bible critic could enter the pages of the *Ozar Yisrael*.

At the end of this section, Landau argues that there is no relationship between Hammurabi's Code and the Pentateuch. There are some textual parallels between the works, yet when one assumes the rabbinic understanding of these verses, the parallels dissipate. One such example is the famous law "an eye for an eye," which appears in both codes. Landau forcefully rejects any possibility that the Pentateuch and Hammurabi developed in relation to one another:

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 292.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 292.

To conclude, there is no link of historical development between Hammurabi's Code and the laws of Moses's Torah. They are as distant from one another as the distance of east from west, and as the distance of the heavens from the earth.⁵⁶⁷

It was not just that there were no legal parallels between the two works. Landau posited that the spirit of Moses's Torah was absent from Hammurabi's code:

There is also not the slightest hint in Hammurabi's code or in any writing of the Assyrians or Babylonians of the foundations of the teaching of Israel *love your fellow as yourself*, upon which rest all the laws of justice and kindness.⁵⁶⁸

Before concluding, Landau turns to the followers of Friedrich Delitzsch and his work *Bible and Babel*. He accuses them as having

as their goal the destruction of the entire structure of the Law of Moses from its foundation and the removal of the religion of Israel from her mistress, in their desire to prove that the teaching of Israel is taken from the vanity of the nations and the teaching of Hammurabi.⁵⁶⁹

This explains why Landau did not completely reject Müller's theory that both the Torah and Hammurabi drew on an earlier source. It is true that he believed it was incorrect and quoted Kautzsch to support his position. Yet, for Landau, any repudiation of Delitzsch was welcome, and so, while he rejected Müller's theory, he appreciated his attempt to break the causal link between the Code of Hammurabi and the Bible and even sought to plant it firmly within the Jewish tradition.

One cannot deny that this approach is not a contradiction to the spirit of the midrash and aggadot of Israel that are found not only in the Talmud but also

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 293.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 293.

⁵⁶⁹ *OY* 4:293.

in books outside the Jewish canon [*sfarim ha-gnuzim*] that were written long before the destruction of the Talmud. For according to them, the Torah was already known in the period of Hammurabi, and Abraham learned it from the mouth of his grandfather, and Jacob studied in the tents of Shem.⁵⁷⁰

Knowing how damaging Delitzch's ideas could be to the Jewish conception of the Pentateuch, Landau believed that every attempt to curtail his influence deserved support. This convinced him that it was proper to present Müller's view that some earlier source inspired the Bible.

It is worth analyzing why Landau and Eisenstein wrote this entry together. The previous chapter showed that sometimes an entry arrived late and, not wanting to fall behind his self-imposed schedule, Eisenstein would simply write the entry himself. What happened next depended on the writer. If it was someone unimportant, then the late-arriving entry was discarded. However, if it was from a writer whose continued involvement was important to the *Ozar Yisrael*, then Eisenstein found a way to include the late entry. As Landau was Eisenstein's favorite contributor and strongest supporter, whatever he wrote, Eisenstein included in the *Ozar Yisrael*, no matter when it arrived. However, this time it was not tardiness on the part of Landau that caused the entry on Hammurabi to have two contributors.

The entry on Hammurabi is discussed in four letters that Eisenstein sent to Landau, which prove that Landau submitted this entry in a timely manner. Eisenstein thanks Landau for the entry and tells him that he has a nice image, "a copy of the text from the book that Harper published in Chicago," to go along with it. Indeed, the bibliography includes Robert

⁵⁷⁰ *OY* 4:292.

F. Harper's *The Code of Hammurabi King of Babylon*; an image of the cuneiform text and its transliteration into Hebrew are taken from this work.⁵⁷¹ The letter implies that Eisenstein expected this entry and was happy with it. Upon receiving it, Eisenstein thanked Landau and promised that he would publish it in full. Yet, for some reason, Eisenstein concluded that Landau's attempt was necessary but insufficient, and therefore he decided to supplement it.

The heading of Eisenstein's contribution to this entry is "Comparison of the Hammurabi Code and the Laws of the Mishna," and in it he challenges the antiquity of Hammurabi's Code. Eisenstein refused to accept that the Code of Hammurabi influenced the Bible or that there was any link at all between them. He also wondered whether Hammurabi's Code predated the Bible. Contemporary scholarship had dated Hammurabi to around 2250 BCE (the title page of Harper's book said "about 2250 B.C."). Scholars would later revise this date to around 1750 BCE, but Eisenstein was challenging the consensus of his time.

It is wondrous that all the scholars who are committed to biblical criticism and provide the latest date possible for the composition of the TaNaKh and use their assumptions, a weak straw,⁵⁷² to push aside our well-established tradition—among all of these one does not find a man who dares to open his mouth and to ask or question whether the date that is given for the beginning of Hammurabi's life, on the basis of broken tablets, is true or valid in any way.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷¹ See Judah Leo Landau and J. D. Eisenstein, "Hammurabi," *OY* 4:294 and Robert F. Harper, *The Code of Hammurabi King of Babylon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), 10, as well as col. 5 in the plates section at the second half of the book (unnumbered page). See Eisenstein to Landau, Nov. 29, 1909, ARC 798, sidra 2, folder 42, Landau Papers, NLI.

⁵⁷² A rabbinic phrase referring to a weak argument (see, e.g., Rashi Bereishit 38:11).

⁵⁷³ *OY* 4:293.

In a conspiratorial tone, he asks why scholars were so quick to date a piece of clay to ancient times but when it came to the antiquity of the Bible were unwilling to accept the weight of tradition. Because the tablets were not discovered until the twentieth century and there had been no record of these laws or a monarch with the name Hammurabi, Eisenstein wondered whether the discovery was a forgery.

It is known that scholars who investigate ancient artifacts are more suspect to forge things than those explorers who boast that they located the North Pole,⁵⁷⁴ and it is also clear that many “ancient” tablets and inscriptions are the handiwork of modern forgers.⁵⁷⁵

But ultimately, he settled on a different claim:

Were I not afraid⁵⁷⁶ (although I am not afraid of people mocking me), I would suggest that Hammurabi was not around until the end of the Babylonian Empire, and the emperor of Persia (maybe Cyrus) who captured Babylon transferred the stele to the capital city of Susa.⁵⁷⁷

This would date Hammurabi to some point in the sixth century BCE, when the Babylonian Empire fell. Hammurabi’s Code includes laws about leasing agricultural land, and under the heading “The Laws of Agricultural Tenants in the Code of Hammurabi and Jewish Law in the Mishna,”⁵⁷⁸ Eisenstein points to parallels between the two. For example, Eisenstein contrasts the following laws:

⁵⁷⁴ A widely reported feud over the discovery of the North Pole broke out in 1909. See Bruce Henderson, *True North: Perry, Cook, and the Race to the Pole* (New York: Norton, 2005).

⁵⁷⁵ *OY* 4:293.

⁵⁷⁶ The Hebrew text uses the Aramaic phrase *lule d’mistafaina*, “were I not afraid,” which is often found in rabbinic writing when the writer wishes to make a particularly novel or controversial suggestion.

⁵⁷⁷ *OY* 4:293.

⁵⁷⁸ *OY* 294–95.

If a man has rented a field to be cultivated but does not produce grain from the field, they shall charge him with not having worked the field, and he shall pay the same amount of grain to the owner of the field as his neighbour does. (Hammurabi's Code, law 42)⁵⁷⁹

If a man leased a field from his neighbor [as a share-cropper] and then let it lie fallow, they [the judges] should estimate how much it was likely to yield, and he [the negligent lessee] must give to him [i.e., the owner according to the calculation], because [in a lease like this one] the lessee customarily stipulated: "If I let [the field] lie fallow and do not work it, I will pay [compensation] according to its best [yield]." (Mishna Bava Metzia 9:3)

Whether Eisenstein himself identified this and other parallels with rabbinic writing or read about them elsewhere is unknown, and his contribution to this entry contains no bibliography.⁵⁸⁰

One argument that Eisenstein extracted from the parallel between Hammurabi and the Mishna was that while the former influenced Jewish texts, it failed to influence Judaism in a meaningful way.

The authors of the Mishna established laws of sharecropping and leasing (that have no effect on matters of faith) according to the custom of the place and the local laws (*dina d'malkhuta dina*).⁵⁸¹

While Eisenstein accepted that the Mishna incorporated laws from Hammurabi, he did not consider these laws to be matters that related to the fundamentals of Jewish belief or divinely

⁵⁷⁹ M. E. J. Richardson, *Hammurabi's Laws: Text, Translation and Glossary* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

⁵⁸⁰ Eisenstein argued that Hammurabi's laws were practiced in the greater Levant and were then adopted and adapted by the Mishna. This view anticipates Samuel Greengus's study of the influence of Babylonian law on biblical and rabbinic writing, which was published almost a century later: *We will see evidence that the "cultural dialogue" taking place between the Israelites and their neighbors was not always negative or oppositional, since many of the ancient Near Eastern "customary laws" continued unchanged even into rabbinic times.* (Samuel Greengus, *Laws in the Bible and Early Rabbinic Collections: The Legal Legacy of the Ancient Near East* (Cascade: Oregon, 2011), 6.

⁵⁸¹ *OY* 4:293–94.

ordained law. They were civil laws, and the Mishna upheld what Hammurabi had already put in place.

Eisenstein's contribution to the entry on Hammurabi focuses solely on its parallels to the Mishna. Considering that Hammurabi's code is famous for its parallels to biblical law, Eisenstein's focus on its parallels to the Mishna needs to be explained. He could have taken the approach of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and focused on how parallels between the Bible and Hammurabi's code demonstrate the Bible's superiority,⁵⁸² but this did not suffice for him.

Eisenstein's focus on the relationship between Hammurabi and the Mishna served to advance a radical thesis. If he could show that the Mishna reflected aspects of the Code of Hammurabi, it would support his view that Hammurabi was much later than the date of 2250 BCE that was accepted in his day. For "How is it possible that the laws of Hammurabi were practiced at the time of the Mishna if we believe that Hammurabi lived two thousand years earlier, at the time of Abraham?!"⁵⁸³ Implicit in this argument is that Hammurabi had could not have influenced the Bible and thus posed no threat to the Bible's sanctity.

Originally, Eisenstein did not explain this to Landau, who, like the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, had focused exclusively on the parallels between Hammurabi and biblical literature. Instead, Eisenstein innocently explained that he had a theory to put forward and that this was the reason for the excursus that he appended to Landau's entry. Still, Eisenstein's excursus surprised Landau, who thought his own entry was exhaustive enough.

⁵⁸² *JE* 6:198–200.

⁵⁸³ *OY* 4:294.

From his communication with Eisenstein, he had assumed that his entry would be the only treatment of this topic. To suddenly learn not only that his contribution was turned into merely one part of the entry but that what was added implicitly contradicted his contribution could not have been pleasant. Eisenstein was forced to explain what he had done:

Regarding Hammurabi, I am not claiming that with my theory I have uncovered its secret [*kalat'ti et ha-matarat*]; it is just a theory like all theories of scholars who theorize about ancient artifacts, and let each person make their own choice [*ve-ha-boher yivhar*].⁵⁸⁴

Eisenstein went to some length to explain—or excuse—himself to Landau, and it is doubtful that any other contributor could have expected Eisenstein to do the same. Nonetheless, this interaction also shows that Eisenstein remained fiercely independent. He acted as he saw fit, and any damage he incurred, he dealt with afterwards, a trait that befits entrepreneurs and trailblazers who have little patience for anything that blocks their way.

The Old “New Critics” of the *Ozar Yisrael*

Through careful phraseology, Eisenstein imparts the idea that the way the Bible was understood in the past remains relevant today. Eisenstein uses the phrase “new critics” (*ha-mevakrim ha-hadashim*)⁵⁸⁵ to describe scholars whose views he disputes. The word “new” could have evoked different reactions in readers. Whereas a “new” approach inspires excitement in some people, it incites suspicion in those with a more conservative disposition, especially when it is applied to the timeless biblical text. The opposite of “new critics”

⁵⁸⁴ Eisenstein to Landau, July 8, 1910, ARC 798 2 42, Landau Papers, NLI.

⁵⁸⁵ See “Bikoret Kitve HaMikra,” *OY* 3:158, 161, 162, 163.

should be “old critics” (*ha-mevakrim ha-yeshanim*), yet Eisenstein does not use this phrase. Instead, “new critics” are contrasted with “earlier critics,” *ha-mevakrim ha-kodmim*. The difference is that “old critics” sounds old-fashioned and stale, while the relevance of “earlier critics” or “ancient critics”⁵⁸⁶ persists into the present, when later scholars build on their discoveries.

What rendered the “new critics” new was that they promoted the idea that the Bible is an amalgamation of different texts. The perspective of these “new critics” is presented under the twelfth subheading, “Composite Texts.” Drawing on the biblical account of creation and the story of the flood found in Genesis, Eisenstein laid out the argument that these narratives are composites of different texts. Eisenstein never names the “new critics” who make these arguments, but he advises readers to see an article in the journal *He-Halutz*. This journal was mainly the literary output of Joshua (Osias) Heschel Schorr (1814–1895), a native of Brody. Schorr was a “radical maskil” whose

main objective was to challenge the authority of the Oral Law but [who] also engaged in lower Bible criticism. He pointed to hundreds of errors and authors’ corrections, since he believed there were errors in every book of the Bible. In three essays, he also engaged in higher Bible criticism.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁶ The Hebrew *kodmim* also recalls *kadmonim*, which means “ancient.”

⁵⁸⁷ Shavit and Eran, *Hebrew Bible Reborn*, 120.

Schorr was part of a “new generation” of radical maskilim in Galicia,⁵⁸⁸ and “older *maskilim* were undoubtedly shocked by the tone of *He-Halutz*.”⁵⁸⁹ The title of the article is “The Sefer Torah We Have in Our Possession Was Written and Arranged According to Different Texts...” Schorr wrote it to show how biblical stories are composites of different stories.⁵⁹⁰

After recounting some of Schorr’s arguments, Eisenstein offers a rebuttal. He admits that our knowledge is limited because

the methods of writing Holy Scripture are different from secular literature and the books of the Bible are not similar to books written in our day. It is also impossible to delve into the depth of the Hebrew style (*m’litza*) and to understand the method of ancient Hebrew or to compare literary ideas born two millennia ago in the ancient near east, with ideas and thinking that arise upon the new critics of the western lands in the nineteenth century.⁵⁹¹

One method of the “new critics” was to focus on the different names of God and on this basis divide the Bible into different texts. Eisenstein thought this

theory hangs by a thread with no true foundation, for the names *Elohim* and *YHVH*, as the kabbalists explain, refer to the attributes of judgment and mercy ... It is complete nonsense to say one text was written with the name *Elohim* and another text was written with the name *YHVH*. The names are mixed and entangled to the extent that it is impossible to distinguish between them, and sometimes they both appear, as it says *El Elohim YHVH knows* (Joshua 22:22) and *El Elohim YHVH spoke* (Psalms 50:1), and then the critics are forced to argue that regarding these names there is a mistake in one or another text and instead of *Elohim* it should have said *YHVH* or vice versa,

⁵⁸⁸ Abraham Krochmal (d. 1895), the son of Nachman Korchmal (1785–1840), was a disciple of Schorr and can also be considered part of this circle. For a discussion of the term “Galician Haskalah,” see Rachel Manekin, “From Johann Pezzl to Joseph Perl: Galician Haskalah and the Austrian Enlightenment,” in *Jews and Germans in Eastern Europe: Shared and Comparative Histories* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 61ff.

⁵⁸⁹ Ezra Spicehandler, *Joshua Heschel Schorr: The Mature Years*, *HUCA* (1969): 40–41, 516.

⁵⁹⁰ Part of the article appears in Eisenstein’s entry. See the discussion of the creation story and the flood in Bikoret Kitve HaMikra,” *OY* 3:161, and compare to Schorr’s *He-Halutz* 6:1-13.

⁵⁹¹ “Bikoret Kitve HaMikra,” *OY* 3:162.

and according to them one may forge a text to support their dishonest theory.⁵⁹²

The passage above repeats a trope that Eisenstein used in his discussion of textual criticism. He indicates that he understands the problem but insists that traditional interpreters have already noticed it and supplied a satisfactory solution. Furthermore, since the critics' answers are so unsatisfying, there is no reason to prefer their explanations and interpretations over that which was taught by the ancient rabbis and upheld by millennia of tradition.

Again, Eisenstein argues that the rabbinic tradition is reliable. The rabbis were intellectually honest, and if they detected a problem, they would have pointed it out without hesitation:

On account of this, should we decide that it [the Bible] is a composite of texts? If this were true, then our sages of blessed memory would not have been embarrassed to say so, just as they did not refrain from teaching that this or that passage is not in its correct place or that there is no chronological order in the Torah, or that there is a “merging of portions”⁵⁹³ (*eruvei parshiyot*) but not a composite of different texts.⁵⁹⁴

Eisenstein accused the “new critics” of following in the footsteps of Christian scholars who were constitutionally incapable of understanding the Hebrew Bible. For example, while he allowed for translators to make some minor changes to the Bible, he warned them against following the lead of Christian scholars:

⁵⁹² “Bikoret Kitve HaMikra,” *OY* 3:162.

⁵⁹³ The Hebrew is *eruvei parshiot*.

⁵⁹⁴ “Bikoret Kitve HaMikra,” *OY* 3:162.

The translators need to be very measured and protect the nature⁵⁹⁵ of the Hebrew language and not to rely on Christian scholars who know only the grammar of the Hebrew language while its nature (*t'khunata*) is foreign to them.⁵⁹⁶

The Hebrew Bible was the treasure of the Jewish people; it was a unique work and bestowed uniqueness on the Jewish people. To rely on non-Jewish wisdom or insight into the workings of the Bible was a mistake. Part of Eisenstein's disappointment with biblical criticism was not just that it undermined the sanctity of the Bible but that it undermined the sanctity of the Jewish people. He saw the two as intertwined and believed that the moment one granted any dominion over the Bible to non-Jewish critics one automatically undermined the unique gifts of the Jewish people. These "new critics" often saw themselves as defending Judaism against Christian attack. Schorr argued that "it was legitimate to engage in Bible criticism because only Jewish biblical criticism could overcome the danger of Christian criticism,"⁵⁹⁷ but this did not prevent Eisenstein from portraying Jewish biblical critics as being under the influence of Christian critics.

The fact that Eisenstein saw Schorr as one of the "new critics" fits the thesis that the *Ozar Yisrael* was out of step with the rest of the Hebraist world. Ezra Spicandler ended his two-part monograph on Schorr by pointing out that

Schorr lived beyond eighty. By the time of his death in 1895, the reformist *haskalah* was no longer a major factor in the Jewish life of Eastern Europe. The religious question had been by-passed, for the time being, by the new generation of Hebrew writers. Religious reformation no longer interested an

⁵⁹⁵ Hebrew *tehunat*.

⁵⁹⁶ "Bikoret Kitve HaMikra," *OY* 3:162.

⁵⁹⁷ Shavit and Eran, *Hebrew Bible Reborn*, 120.

intellectual community which felt that religion itself had become obsolete, and which turned to the new secular solution of the Jewish problem whether they were Zionist, Socialist, or Yiddish-nationalistic.⁵⁹⁸

And so it was that the scholarly activity of Schorr remained “new” to the *Ozar Yisrael* even when to many what he represented had stopped being relevant. Despite writing in Hebrew for a Hebraic audience, when it came to biblical scholarship in Hebrew, Eisenstein remained decades behind. It is ironic that when it came to biblical scholarship undertaken in English, Eisenstein was much more up-to-date than he was regarding biblical scholarship that was undertaken in Hebrew.

T. K. Cheyne and the “Jerahmeel Theory”

One of the few times the *Ozar Yisrael* discussed biblical criticism outside the specially designated entry on the topic was in the entry “Yerahmiel.”⁵⁹⁹ Yerahmiel was an obscure biblical figure, a great-grandson of Judah (1 Chr 2:3–9) and brother of Caleb (1 Chr 2:42). The Bible tells of David sending spoils of war to the cities of the Yerhamielites (1 Sam 30:26–29). There was no obvious reason for the *Ozar Yisrael* to have an entry on Yerahmiel, and yet it and the *Jewish Encyclopedia* both included entries about him.⁶⁰⁰ This is because a non-Jewish biblical critic of some renown, Thomas Kelly Cheyne (1841–1915), had a peculiar theory about the presence of a “Yerahmielite” tribe that warred with ancient Israel.

⁵⁹⁸ Spicehandler, *The Mature Years*, 527–28.

⁵⁹⁹ This entry was written by the anonymous *Bet Mem: Ha-ozrim b'veit ha-ma'arekhet*. “Yerahmiel,” *OY* 5:222–23.

⁶⁰⁰ Emil G. Hirsch and George A. Barton, “Jerahmeel,” *JE* 7:95–96.

Cheyne believes that echoes of these conflicts once reverberated throughout the Old Testament but that, owing to the corruption of the Masoretic text, they must now be revived by conjectural emendation of the text.⁶⁰¹

The *Ozar Yisrael* was aware of Cheyne's stature, and Eisenstein also knew that his "Jerahmeel Hypothesis" was an object of ridicule. To him, the combination of an outlandish theory and the esteem in which its author was held was a gift to assail the adherents of biblical criticism. It allowed him to show the extent of silliness that gripped the non-Jewish world of biblical.

After presenting more than ten of Cheyne's emendations, including *Therefore is the well called Yerahmiel* in place of the Masoertic *Therefore is the well called Beer-Lahai-Roi* (Gen 16:14), the *Ozar Yisrael* proclaimed that Cheyne's

main intention is to show, as he himself explained, that the children of Israel learned their Torah and faith from an Arabian tribe that they warred with and into which many assimilated.⁶⁰²

The *Jewish Encyclopedia*, in contrast, regarded this theory as brilliant, but it too concluded that unlike Cheyne's other contributions to the field of biblical studies, it must be discarded.

The ingenuity of Cheyne's method may be admitted; but the thesis must be rejected as altogether arbitrary. That it has received serious attention is owing solely to the great service rendered by its sponsor in other departments of Old Testament research.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰¹ "Jerahmeel," *JE* 7:6.

⁶⁰² "Yerahmiel," *OY* 5:223.

⁶⁰³ "Jerahmeel," *JE* 7:95–96.

Cheyne's theory, which was known as "the Jerahmeel theory," was never accepted and was the cause of some jest and even ridicule. In a 1905 interview in the *Bible World*, Professor Willis J. Beecher⁶⁰⁴ was asked what he thought of Cheyne's Jerahmeel hypothesis and admitted that some men "like to poke fun at Jerahmeel."⁶⁰⁵ An article in the *American Journal of Theology* in 1907 introduced the theory this way:

It is somewhat startling to meet a new theory, both of the geography and of the history, a theory which is urged (we are tempted to say) with a courage and persistency worthy of a better cause.⁶⁰⁶

It concluded:

The Jerahmeel theory fails to approve itself to the textual critic, to the higher critic, to the geographer, and to the historian. It asserts an underlying text for which there is no adequate evidence; it assumes a violent reconstruction of the documents for which there is no adequate motive and which is against all analogy; it constructs an intermediate text which is a monstrosity; it locates the history of Israel in a region where such a history is inconceivable ... the Jerahmeel theory has made no substantial contribution to Old Testament science.⁶⁰⁷

The *Ozar Yisrael* did not only delight in ridiculing Cheyne's theory, it also saw it as something sinister. In Eisenstein's view, the engine that was driving biblical criticism was

⁶⁰⁴ It is not clear whether he was related to the more famous Beechers, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher. For his obituary, see Ira M. Price, "Willis Judson Beecher," *Biblical World* 40, no. 1 (1912): 65–67.

⁶⁰⁵ Willis J. Beecher and George F. Moore, "Interviews with Old Testament Scholars on Living Problems," *Biblical World* 25, no. 6 (1905): 439.

⁶⁰⁶ Henry Preserved Smith, "Israel or Jerahmeel," *American Journal of Theology* 11, no. 4 (1907): 554.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 568.

hate for the Jewish people, and as this hatred was irrational, leading even clever people to ever more farfetched conclusions.

For it has already become sickening to the anti-Semitic critics of the TaNaKh to always say that the Jews stole and took their literature from the Assyrians and the Babylonians. It is easier for them to make changes and “fixes” in the TaNaKH to uphold their “theories” that hang in the air, if only to aim against the Jews to shoot arrows at their literature—and these “theories” they refer to as “the science of criticism.”⁶⁰⁸

One of Cheyne’s theories demonstrated all that was wrong with biblical criticism, and for this reason, he was granted an entry in the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Paul Haupt: From the Ohole Shem Society to the *Ozar Yisrael*

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there was a “dethroning of biblical authority” in the United States⁶⁰⁹ and a desire to change how the Bible was viewed. Robert Ingersoll challenged the Bible outright⁶¹⁰ and awoke controversy wherever he lectured.⁶¹¹ Charles Augustus Briggs faced a much-discussed heresy trial for his lecture “The Authority of Holy Scripture,” which he delivered in 1891 when he assumed the newly created chair of Biblical Theology at Union Theological Seminary.⁶¹² The suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton

⁶⁰⁸ “Yerahmiel,” *OY* 5:223. The charge that Cheyne is an anti-Semite is without any basis, and he is regularly quoted in the Hertz humash.

⁶⁰⁹ Mark A. Noll, “Nineteenth-Century American Biblical Interpretation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in America*, ed. Paul Gutjahr (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 122.

⁶¹⁰ Eric T. Brandt and Timothy Larsen, “The Old Atheism Revisited: Robert G. Ingersoll and the Bible,” *Journal of the Historical Society* 2 (2011): 211–38.

⁶¹¹ Susan Jacoby, *The Great Agnostic: Robert Ingersoll and American Freethought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

⁶¹² Harvey Hill, “History and Heresy: Religious Authority and the Trial of Charles Augustus Briggs,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 20, no. 3 (2002): 1–21.

led a committee that published *The Woman's Bible*,⁶¹³ and African-Americans sought to create a new translation of the Bible for use in their churches.⁶¹⁴ It was at this time that Paul Haupt, a German-born Semitics scholar at Johns Hopkins University, began a new series called *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament: A Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text, Printed in Colors, with Notes, Prepared by Eminent Biblical Scholars of Europe and America under the Editorial Direction of Paul Haupt*. Starting in 1893, sixteen volumes of this ambitious project eventually appeared, and it came to be known as *The Polychrome Bible*.⁶¹⁵ Eisenstein chose this most American work to end his entry on Biblical criticism.

Haupt was a proponent of biblical criticism, and although a more complex portrait of him has subsequently emerged,⁶¹⁶ in Eisenstein's time he was widely believed to be friendly to Jews⁶¹⁷ and sympathetic to Jewish causes.⁶¹⁸ Jews generally, and Eisenstein in particular, lamented the anti-Semitism that often animated biblical criticism, but Haupt proved that not every biblical critic was an anti-Semite. Eisenstein pointed out that the first volume of *Ner*

⁶¹³ Christiana De Groot, "Contextualizing 'The Woman's Bible,'" *Studies in Religion* 4 (2012): 564–77.

⁶¹⁴ Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 392–94.

⁶¹⁵ Alec Gilmore, "Polychrome Bible," in *A Concise Dictionary of Bible Origins and Interpretation*, rev. ed. (T&T Clark, 2006), 1:154.

⁶¹⁶ Susannah Heschel has identified a lecture Haupt gave in 1908 on the Aryan ancestry of Jesus. See Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 57.

⁶¹⁷ Cyrus Adler, the first Jew to earn a PhD in Semitics in the United States, was his student at John Hopkins University. See Ira Robinson, *Translating a Tradition: Studies in American Jewish History* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008), 67.

⁶¹⁸ Moshe Perlmann, "Paul Haupt and the Mesopotamian Project, 1892–1914," *PAJHS* 47, no. 3 (1958): 154–175.

Ha-marabi, the journal of the *Ohole Shem Society*, included one of Haupt's essays, translated into Hebrew by his student Caspar Levias.⁶¹⁹ Zvi (Henry) Gersoni, a fascinating figure with an interesting past,⁶²⁰ introduced the essay:

Behold the famous scholar, Professor Paul Haupt, who lives among the wise of John Hopkins [University] in the city of Baltimore ... he has written an essay to express the opinion of those who follow [Higher biblical] criticism with the title "The History of the sources of the Torah," and he wished for one of his students to translate this essay into Hebrew and place it before the readers of *Ner Ha-marabi*. By doing this, the scholarly professor has done us and the readers of this organ a good turn, for he has proven that Hebraic readers⁶²¹ are important in his eyes and worthy of having his words placed before them.⁶²²

The essay is twenty pages long, and the next article in the journal is on the history of Beth Midrash HaGadol and written by Eisenstein. This is another example of the *Ohole Shem Society's* sustained influence on the *Ozar Yisrael*. Eisenstein's early, if not first, exposure to the writing of Haupt was through the OSS. The impact it made on him was strong enough that a decade later, when he wrote an entry on biblical criticism, a portion of it was devoted to Haupt.

⁶¹⁹ Caspar Levias was a faculty member at the Hebrew Union College. Cyrus Adler, another of Haupt's students, wrote the entry on Haupt in the *JE* (8:37). Eisenstein in *OY*, and not *Ner hamarabi*, identifies the translator of the essay. Joshua Bloch of the New York Public Library wrote a biography of Levias that appears in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: 1939–1943), 6:628. (Bloch had also tried to arrange a Festschrift for Eisenstein).

⁶²⁰ Gersoni was an apostate who moved to the United States and served as a rabbi for a time. See Jacob Kabakoff, *Halutze ha-sifrut ha-ivrit b'Amerikah me-mehkarim u-te'udot* (Yavneh, 1966), 77–130.

⁶²¹ The Hebrew is *kor'im ivrim*, which could refer to Hebrew readers or Jewish readers. The translation upholds this ambiguity.

⁶²² Zvi H. Gersoni, "Habikort hana'aleh," *Ner hamarabi*, 1, no. 2 (1895?), 1.

Cultural nationalists in Ahad Ha'am's circle debated biblical criticism, but Eisenstein did not subordinate the *Ozar Yisrael* to their orientation or natural interests. He could have ended the entry with an evaluation of some Jewish proponents of biblical criticism, but instead he chose the *Polychrome Bible*, a project that was unfamiliar to an audience that lived overseas and was not fluent in English. This is yet another example of how the *Ozar Yisrael* was an American work. American Jews, especially those in Eisenstein's circle, were aware of Haupt, and they certainly knew Cyrus Adler, who was his student at John Hopkins, the first Jew awarded a PhD in Semitics in the United States and the founder of Dropsie College.

The reason Eisenstein concluded the entry with Haupt's *Polychrome Bible* is that there was something unsettling about a color-coded Bible. To highlight verses with different colors eroded the gravitas that belongs to the word of God or to any great work of literature. The *Polychrome Bible* alarmed readers who, long after their freethinking minds had released them from any ostensibly irrational commitment, retained an emotional bond to the sanctity of the Bible. Earlier in the entry, Eisenstein used the slippery-slope argument to discourage making changes—even ones that might be justified—to the biblical text. A superlative way to articulate this argument was to present the *Polychrome Bible* as the final destination of that slippery slope. Eisenstein did not make this point directly, but by the time he presented the *Polychrome Bible*, he did not need to. The entry's structure, what he discussed and where he discussed it, made the argument for him.

To the traditional Jew, textual criticism does not present the same threat as source criticism, which is the treacherous heart of biblical criticism.⁶²³ This is why Eisenstein did not discuss source criticism first, instead allowing the entry to ease readers into this “danger” to their faith. First it discussed less problematic topics, such as lower criticism, rabbinic precursors to biblical criticism, and the emerging field of Assyriology, and only then did it turn to this most intractable challenge. Three-quarters of the entry pass before Eisenstein is ready to engage with source criticism. In the fifteenth section, “Higher Criticism,” he names the different strata that comprise the Pentateuch in a most detached manner:

The Priestly Code [*torat kohanim*] that is found in the Pentateuch, or more correctly the Hexateuch⁶²⁴ together with the Book of Joshua, which is considered to be part of the Torah, is the latest section of all the parts of the Torah, and scholars refer to this this section with the letter *kaf* = *kohanim* [meaning P = Priestly]. However, in the Priestly Code there is one section that is more ancient (Lev 12–26) and is known as the Holiness Code marked by the letter *kof* = *k'dusha* [meaning H=Holiness].⁶²⁵

The entry is structured so that the Documentary Hypothesis introduces Haupt’s *Polychrome Bible*. This way, the Documentary Hypothesis is presented not just as a theory of how to make sense of the Bible but as a station on the road to the *Polychrome Bible*.

The section “Higher Criticism” introduces early modern Bible critics such as Jean Astruc, Carl David Ilgen, Robert Lowth, and W. D. L. de Wette and discusses the

⁶²³ This may explain why Jews tended to have more of an affinity for textual criticism over source criticism. See Max Soloweitschik, *Toldot Bikoret HaMikra* (Berlin: Hotza’at D’vir-Mikra, 1924/5), 142.

⁶²⁴ The Hebrew is *b’shisha sifre tora*. Elsewhere in the entry (p. 164), Eisenstein uses the word “Hexateuch.” The Hexateuch refers to a theory that the Pentateuch and Joshua originally formed part of the same work. See Stephen Germany, “The Hexateuch Hypothesis: A History of Research and Current Approaches,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 2 (2018): 131–156.

⁶²⁵ *OY* 3:164.

Fragmentary Hypothesis.⁶²⁶ Also presented here are the four sources (J, E, P, D) of the Documentary Hypothesis.⁶²⁷ Then comes the sixteenth heading, “TaNaKh according to the New Criticism,” where Eisenstein introduces Paul Haupt and his colorful Bible project (although its popular name, *Polychrome Bible*, only appears in English in the entry’s eighteenth and final section, “Holy Scripture in Different Colors”). The seventeenth heading is “The Latest Approach,”⁶²⁸ and here Eisenstein recounts a critical theory of how different sources came together to create the final text of the Bible.

Whereas “earlier critics” dated the P source to the tenth century, “the new critics” claimed that it could be no earlier than the sixth century. According to this theory, the J and E sources emerged from Judea and Ephraim respectively, and at some point in the seventh century (BCE), an anonymous redactor merged them into a single work, JER.⁶²⁹ The D source originally circulated in two different versions and was redacted some time in the sixth century, during the first part of the Babylonian exile. Around the year 550, the D and JER sources merged to create a new text, JED. On their return to the land of Israel, it was this new text that the Babylonian exiles brought with them. During the period of Ezra, the JED source

⁶²⁶ An alternative theory to the Documentary Hypothesis, the Fragmentary Hypothesis, “questioned whether continuous themes could be identified in sources that run throughout the Pentateuch.” It posited that it was more correct to assume that multiple units “were woven together to form the larger story of the Pentateuch.” Typical of Eisenstein was his claim that the rabbinic statement “The Torah was given scroll by scroll” (b. Gittin 60a) could be used to support the Fragmentary Hypothesis (OY 3:164).

⁶²⁷ OY 164.

⁶²⁸ The Hebrew reads *ha-shita ha-yoter me’uheret*. While I have understood this to mean it is a presentation of the latest critics, the Hebrew is imprecise, and it could be referring to an approach that dates the Bible very late. This dissertation has not dealt with Eisenstein’s Hebrew style, which is often clumsy.

⁶²⁹ JER=Judea, Ephraim, Redactor.

merged with the P source, and this is how the Hexateuch (Pentateuch and Joshua) emerged in the fifth century. This was a winning combination, because JER had captivating stories that led the masses to accept the dry legalism of P. An excellent pedigree was needed to give credence to this, and what could be better than it coming to the people from God and via Moses? To make this point, in a public event that Nehemiah led in 444 CE, the Book of Joshua was removed from the Pentateuch. This created a link between the personhood of Moses and the Torah.

Having given this uncharacteristically detached overview of the Documentary Hypothesis, Eisenstein begins to chide Haupt and characterize him as a man who is capable of casuistic reasoning (*pilpul*), “as one of the casuists in the generation of R. Jacob Pollak”⁶³⁰ (165). *Pilpul*, related to the Hebrew word for pepper, was a method of Talmud study that was very sharp and clever but often derided for being “empty dialectics” that are distant from life and the truth.⁶³¹ Such language resonated with maskilim, who had a natural disdain for *pilpul*. There is a measure of irony in accusing biblical critics, who were supposed to be hyper-rational and committed to understanding the true nature of the text, of being practitioners of *pilpul*. Eisenstein claims that a careful reading of Haupt’s *Polychrome Bible* shows that it often lacks adequate solutions to the problems it raises.⁶³² On occasion, Haupt is

⁶³⁰ *OY* 3:165. Pollak (d. 1541) is recognized as the founder of this mode of talmudical study.

⁶³¹ See Alan L. Mintz, “Guenzburg, Lilienblum, and the Shape of Haskalah Autobiography,” *AJS Review* 4 (1979): 78.

⁶³² Haupt’s most famous student was W. F. Albright. James Kugel suggested that over time, he too became unconvinced by “the methodological fuzziness and subjectivity” of Haupt’s approach. See James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 98–99

forced to admit that it is impossible to demarcate different sources, which leads Eisenstein to ask sarcastically whether “the ability of the critics is limited.” Now Eisenstein assails the Documentary Hypothesis, which he has just summarized so dispassionately, with a series of troubling questions. He quotes Haupt, who claimed that

several times his soul sought to solve the riddle of why the six aforementioned books were plucked from different authors. Why didn't the last editor write all the books in the style that was uniquely his own so that it would be impossible for us to know that ancient works were before him and entered into his own work?⁶³³

To solve this riddle, Eisenstein allows, is “difficult as it is to split the sea.” The easiest answer is to acknowledge that the Bible is a unified document and not a composite of multiple sources. Yet Eisenstein knows that “such an answer is unacceptable to a critic like” Haupt. And this is what forces Haupt to employ “empty casuistics” and enlist all manner of suggestions.

Haupt claimed that individual texts had gained such deep traction in the life of the general population that to rid them of their identifying features was impossible. Since the final editor was unable to sublimate the different styles of the various sources into a uniform text, vestiges of their past lives persisted. To Eisenstein, this explanation was unconvincing. If the modern critic theorizes that the general population had not allowed their most cherished stories to assimilate fully into a new text, then how likely is it that this same

⁶³³ *OY* 3:164.

population allowed “an anonymous editor to emerge from the marketplace and to do to them as he wished and nobody protested?”⁶³⁴

After explaining Haupt’s theory and what he perceived to be its irredeemable failings, Eisenstein moved on to the entry’s final section, “Holy Scripture in Different Colors.”⁶³⁵ It was rare for the *Ozar Yisrael* to use English words in Roman letters to describe something, yet to properly describe the *Polychrome Bible*, Eisenstein felt that it was necessary to use an English phrase. He described the work as a “crazy quilt”⁶³⁶ “which was something that Americans make from different colored pieces of cloth to cover their beds.” He described the color scheme used for Leviticus, explaining that the Holiness code (H) was yellow and the Priestly code (P) brown and that most of the text that was left uncolored was supposedly created around 500 BCE, during the Babylonian exile.

For Eisenstein, this was the quintessential example of “the American humbug,”⁶³⁷ designed to

blind the eyes, as if divine inspiration rested on them [the editors] so they may know which year, and month, and day, the different texts were written, as if they were eyewitnesses at that event and marked everything exactly on the book as a remembrance so that future generations may know what was revealed to them.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 166.

⁶³⁵ The Hebrew reads *kitve ha-kodesh bitzva'im shonim* (ibid., 166).

⁶³⁶ He translated the phrase as *aderet meshuga'im*.

⁶³⁷ The Hebrew is *ve-khol ze hu min "humbug" amerikani*.

⁶³⁸ *OY* 3:166. From the nineteenth century, the word “humbug” was used to refer to a deception or fraud. A good explanation of how this word entered the English language and what it denoted is found here: <https://www.thoughtco.com/humbug-definition-1773291>.

It is interesting that the word “humbug” is used here. Earlier, it was shown that Tawiw tried to discredit the *Ozar Yisrael* by referring to it as a work from “the land of the humbug.” Eisenstein, who was a great defender of immigration and all things American, made recourse to labeling the *Polychrome Bible* as “American” in order to denigrate it. The message was clear: all who treaded the path of biblical criticism would find themselves at this destination.

Chapter IV: A Measure of Success: the *Ozar Yisrael* in the Hebrew Press

The Promise of a Prospectus

An interesting document found in the archive of Jacob Kabakoff is a *kol koreh*, an “announcement,” about the *Ozar Yisrael* that was issued by the “Hebrew Encyclopedia Publishing Co.” The four-page prospectus⁶³⁹ is undated but seems to be from the very beginning of the project. It sets out what Eisenstein hoped to do with the encyclopedia, and it was sent along with an excerpt (*gilyon*) of volume 1. Regarding the idea to create an encyclopedia, the prospectus correctly claims that “until now the scholars who devoted energy to this project have not succeeded in moving it from idea to action” and that “Europe is unable to actualize this important project.” It cites the example of

Dr Isidore Singer, who traversed all the countries but found no publisher wishing to accept upon himself the responsibility of publishing the work, until he appeared in a new land, a land of wonders, that in the future will be the center of our brethren of Israel, and as an eagle renews its youth,⁶⁴⁰ so too in the future will Hebrew literature renew her days as of old in the United States

⁶³⁹ Brisman references a sixteen-page prospectus that was issued by the Hebrew Encyclopedia Publishing Co. with forty sample entries and twelve main areas of Jewish interest, the prospectus in the Kabakoff file provided no sample entries and had sixteen main areas of Jewish interest. According to Brisman, Hirsch Bernstein was the main investor in the aforementioned company and when he died Eisenstein took it over. See Brisman, *History and Guide*, 38–39.

⁶⁴⁰ See Psalms 103:5.

Confidence in the United States as a future home for Hebrew literature extended to the *Ozar Yisrael*. While the *Jewish Encyclopedia* had succeeded in some measure, “for the entirety of the nation that is scattered and divided in different lands it is a like a sealed book.” America was the guarantor of the *Ozar Yisrael*’s success, but the work intended to reach a nation that was dispersed across the globe.⁶⁴¹

On the ideological inclination of the *Ozar Yisrael*, the prospectus is almost silent. All it offers is: “We need to edit a Hebrew encyclopedia, for Hebrew readers and according to their spirit ... It will be a new and original work, even for readers of the English encyclopedia.” What that spirit is exactly, the prospectus does not say. There is a vague commitment that everyone, “the rabbi, the sermonizer (*ha-matif*), the preacher, the lawyer, the translator, the writer busy with literature, the researcher, and the critic” will find what they are looking for in the work. The only hint of the work’s conservative stance comes from a letter of support from Henry Pereira Mendes (rabbi of the historic Congregation Shearith Israel and president of the Union of Orthodox Congregations of the United States and Canada) that is included in the prospectus. Writing to Eisenstein, he asserts: “Your own [encyclopedia] is strictly conservative. The Jewish Encyclopedia is unfortunately too often the vehicle for the expression of much that is un-Jewish and anti-Jewish.” Mendes’s letter is counterbalanced with the information that “Rabbi Joseph Stolz, President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, in his message to the annual convention ... on July 2, 1906,

⁶⁴¹ Eisenstein told Landau that he wanted to complete the *Ozar Yisrael* before he turned sixty (1914) and planned to travel to Russia in 1913 in order to promote the work. had planned to travel to Russia on behalf of the *OY*. See Eisenstein to Landau, May 2, 1911, Arc 798, box 2, folder 42, Landau Papers, NLI.

recommended the Hebrew Encyclopedia ‘*Ozer [sic!] Yisrael.*’⁶⁴² Aside from these hints on the third page, there is no projection of the work’s ideological timbre.

Eisenstein did not sign his name to the prospectus, and his name is not mentioned, other than in Mendes’s letter to him. Indeed, the prospectus does not say who was organizing the encyclopedia. All it says is that “to fulfil this palpable lacuna certain people of our brethren arose,” giving no information about the identity of those people. Because an anonymous encyclopedia project did not inspire confidence, the prospectus provided other information intended to assure potential subscribers. This group of people had registered a “local organization via the government in the region of New York” and twenty-five thousand dollars, to be divided among shareholders at a price of ten dollars per share.

Some of what the pamphlet promised it delivered. It envisioned ten volumes, with each volume being 320 pages, and this came to fruition. The prospectus promised that the set would cost \$2.50 per volume, and while the price rose over time, it remained in that range. It was promised that writers and subscribers would be included at the end of the first volume, and while the first volume only listed writers, every subsequent volume included lists of writers and subscribers at the front of the volume. The prospectus also listed sixteen headings that would be used to divide the encyclopedia, but this schema was not carried out. Beyond

⁶⁴² In the 1906 convention of the (Reform) Central Conference of American Rabbis, it was accepted that “for the encouragement of Jewish scholarship and in accordance with the President’s suggestion, we recommend the following: *a* That this conference subscribe to three sets of Eisenstein and Broyde’s Hebrew Encyclopedia “Ozar Yisrael” of which one set shall be presented to the Hebrew Union College library and two be used as prizes for worthy students of that institution.” *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 16 (1906): 181. The subscription is mentioned again in subsequent years. Isaac David Broyde (1867-1922) was a contributor to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and had published articles in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* and *Revue des Etudes Juives*. He is listed as a contributor to the first volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, although it is not clear why he is specifically mentioned.

these technical expectations, there were two much larger expectations that the *Ozar Yisrael* hoped to meet. It wanted to be a work that would benefit everyone, regardless of their religious outlook or profession, and in doing so, it hoped to showcase to the world how America could become a home for Hebrew literature. Whether the work succeeded in its plan can be analyzed from the way the Hebrew press received it.

A Pugnacious Purist: Tawiw's Truths and Half-Truths

The *Ozar Yisrael* had a variety of critics, but no one was more hostile to it than Israel Hayyim Tawiw. Born in 1858 and living in Russia, Tawiw was a zealous agitator who had “acquired a reputation as a brilliant essayist ... displaying both erudition and acuity.”⁶⁴³ He was on the editorial staff of the daily *Ha-Zman*, and in 1907, he reviewed the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁶⁴⁴ This review, in the only Hebrew daily to appear regularly in tsarist Russia, was akin to a battle cry against the *Ozar Yisrael* and a clarion call to revive the dormant *Otsar hayahadut*. Tawiw complained that he was singlehandedly leading the charge, but his lone voice resonated with passionate enthusiasm and a measure of nastiness.

The review shows that no one in Europe knew what to expect from the *Ozar Yisrael*. Tawiw was among those who thought the *Ozar Yisrael* was going to be a Hebrew translation of the English-language *Jewish Encyclopedia*. And since that work was “very distant from the desirable ideal,” he was disappointed. But this disappointment was only a

⁶⁴³ “Tawiw, Israel Hayyim,” *EJ* 19:531.

⁶⁴⁴ Tawiw, “*Ozar Yisrael*,” 1–2. The newspaper relocated from Saint Petersburg to Vilna in 1904 and was a daily from 1907 to 1911. It had a “particular emphasis on developments in the world Zionist movement” and “became the central Hebrew literary forum.” See *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, s.v. “Zeman, Ha-,” http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Zeman_Ha-.

prelude to what happened when he saw the *Ozar Yisrael* and realized that it *was* going to be an original work. An original Hebrew encyclopedia needed excellent literary and scientific resources, which the *Ozar Yisrael* lacked. Among the thirty contributors to the first volume, Tawiow counted only two “academic” contributors. Without revealing their identities, he said that they had made a minimal contribution.

Upon reading the *Ozar Yisrael*, Tawiow discovered that

this *Ozar Yisrael* is not that *Otsar Hayahdut* that the best of our writers and maskilim dreamed about in Russia. If the coming volumes of the *Ozar Yisrael* resemble this first volume ... then there is no need for the dreamers of the *Otsar Hayahdut* to forget their dream. The American *Ozar Yisrael* is not a solution to the beautiful dream of ours.⁶⁴⁵

Two lines from the *Ozar Yisrael*'s introduction stirred his ire and convinced him that “this” *Ozar* was no replacement for “that” *Otsar*. These two lines stated:

Concerning things and people mentioned in the biblical text, the tradition will be a candle before our feet, for the higher criticism is at this time like a child that was born, and its future is still covered in clouds.⁶⁴⁶

This clever formulation gave the impression that the encyclopedia was neutral about biblical criticism. On the one hand, it acknowledged the existence of biblical criticism, but on the other hand, it supplied a non-religious, academic reason not to allow it to permeate the *Ozar Yisrael*. This formulation had thus far been followed loyally. The *Ozar Yisrael*'s first volume did not offer the smallest iota of biblical criticism, and to Tawiow, this alone was a problem. Amplifying the problem was the copious number of what he regarded as silly legends

⁶⁴⁵ Tawiow, *Ozar Yisrael*, 1.

⁶⁴⁶ Judah David Eisenstein, “Tokhnit ‘Ozar Yisrael’ v’tzurato,” *OY* 1 (unnumbered page).

presented to the reader as real history, including “all types of suppositions (*k'vetcherai*)⁶⁴⁷ that I did not dream of finding even in an Orthodox encyclopedia.”⁶⁴⁸ The lack of biblical criticism together with the spurious information found in many of the entries led Tawiw to invalidate the encyclopedia’s right to serve the Hebrew reading public.

“Orthodox” was a label that Eisenstein and the encyclopedia’s fans had carefully eschewed. Tawiw cuffed it on the *Ozar Yisrael* and declared it an “Orthodox encyclopedia.” Such an encyclopedia was automatically partisan, he explained, because scientific truth, and by extension the Hebrew reading public, were no longer compatible with the Orthodox approach to the Bible. For him and the Hebrew reading public, beliefs that could not be demonstrated were to be abandoned. No longer was the natural posture of the Jew to be respectful of the traditions and beliefs that he inherited; his natural posture was to be a “freethinker.” Remaining committed to Orthodoxy meant that the encyclopedia had not carried out objective research, for free inquiry would have led it in another direction.

The Orthodox approach of the *Ozar Yisrael* revealed something about “the type of, and makeup of, the community on whose behalf the publishers and editors had worked,”⁶⁴⁹ the inference being that it was for the Orthodox community. Yet this community, Tawiw

⁶⁴⁷ In this context, *kvetcheray* seems to denote “suppositions.” Michael Wex, *Born to Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All Its Moods* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2005), 118, reflects on the difficulty of translating this word. For Jews “kvetching becomes a way of exercising some small measure of control over an otherwise hostile environment,” 2 and “conveys disapproval, but does nothing to alter or eliminate the cause of that disapproval.”

⁶⁴⁸ Tawiw, *Ozar Yisrael*, 1. The Hebrew is *afilu b'intzeklopedia ortodoksit ka-zo*.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 1.

believed, no longer represented the Hebrew reading public. Indeed, since this encyclopedia was catering to the Orthodox community, there was still room for another encyclopedia to serve the Hebrew reading public, and Tawiw argued that there was “no need for the dreamers of the *Otsar Hayahdut* to forget their dream.”⁶⁵⁰ From his perspective, the struggle over the *Ozar Yisrael* was not just about the nature of an encyclopedia but about the very character of the Hebrew reading public—to whom they belonged and to which ideology they swore allegiance. Tawiw argued that they did not belong to Eisenstein’s Orthodox ideology.

To showcase all that was wrong with the *Ozar Yisrael*, Tawiw tuned to the entry “Abraham” and found three problems: It contained ridiculous legends, these legends were presented as historical fact, and a coating of homiletics smothered the entry. Legends upset Tawiw; the legend that Abraham taught various sciences to the Egyptians was something Josephus had written about, and it displeased Tawiw to find it in the encyclopedia. The entry admitted that not everyone accepted this legend, and Tawiw poked fun at this bold “heretical note.” Peppered with sarcasm, the paragraph below shows that Tawiw could be a merciless critic:

In the section “Opinions, Character Traits and Psychological Makeup (of Abraham)” you find this gem: “Our sages had a tradition that the Torah was hidden from the time of creation until Abraham, and he was the first who fulfilled it in all its details and minutiae, and even *eruv tavshilin*⁶⁵¹ and *eruv hatzerot*.”⁶⁵² Of course, he brings a source for this, a trustworthy source, “Tanhuma, and Bereshit Rabbah.” But what is completely unintelligible is that

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid, 1.

⁶⁵¹ This is a rabbinic procedure that permits one to prepare food on a festival day for the Sabbath that is adjacent to it.

⁶⁵² This is a rabbinic procedure that allows one to carry in a shared space on the Sabbath.

beside this there is also a homiletic inquiry: “Maybe they extracted this from the character of Abraham, who was a seeker of peace and knew the greatness of unity, for the conception of *eruv hatzerot* demonstrates the power of peace and unity.”⁶⁵³

Knowing that midrashic views had to be included in a Jewish encyclopedia, he accused the *Ozar Yisrael* of including midrashim that lacked value:

The “encyclopedia” does not give up on a single talmudical exegesis in its biblical “entries,” even if the exegesis has no value as “folklore” (popular legend) but is just tasteless *pilpul*. With such *Hokhmat Yisrael*, it is not difficult to fill ten large volumes ... Again I am ready to explain myself: I understand the desire of the owners of the encyclopedia to include in the biblical entries all the legends that can be viewed as “folklore” (although it is doubtful if an encyclopedia, in its modern sense, is the correct place for this; it is certainly undesirable to weave legendary tales into the biographical-historical material or the scientific explanation).⁶⁵⁴

Turning to the talmudical entries, Tawiw claimed that they were copied from Yechiel Heilpirn’s *Seder Ha-Dorot* and then incrustated in a layer of homiletics “that is

⁶⁵³ Tawiw, *Ozar Yisrael*, 1. The entry “Abraham” in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* included a section on midrashic teachings and also cited Josephus’s view that during his time in Egypt, Abraham had

entered into disputes with all the priests and the wise men, and won their admiration and, in many cases, their assent to his higher views. He imparted to them the knowledge of arithmetic and astronomy, which sciences came to Egypt from Chaldea only in the days of Abraham. (*JE* 1:85)

A Jewish encyclopedia could not discuss Abraham without referring to the rabbinic presentation of his biography. This remains true. The entry “Abraham” in the current *Encyclopedia Judaica* has a section entitled “In the Aggadah” whose very purpose is to give readers the aggadic portrayal of Abraham. *EJ* s.v. “Abraham,” accessed January 15, 2019, Gale Virtual Reference Library, http://yulib002.mc.yu.edu:2203/apps/doc/CX2587500182/GVRL?u=nysl_me_yeshival&sid=GVRL&xid=7d8e729 However, Tawiw’s point is that there is a blurring of categories. Eisenstein blurred the Biblical figure of Abraham and his rabbinic image, something which other encyclopedias did not do. It was this lack of distinction between the rabbinic portrayal of Abraham and the search for a historic Abraham that troubled Tawiw.

⁶⁵⁴ Tawiw, *Ozar Yisrael*, 1.

sermonic material for some ‘reverend.’”⁶⁵⁵ The *Ozar Yisrael* cited the rabbinic legend that God held Mount Sinai over the people and forced them to accept the Torah⁶⁵⁶ to justify “those of our people who do not fulfill the Torah according to halakha because they did not accept it willingly but under duress.”⁶⁵⁷ It was easy to target homiletics in the encyclopedia, and Tawiw contrasted their ubiquity with the exclusion of any contemporary critical scholarship, “even what Jewish scholars discovered after deep analysis.”

Occasionally, Eisenstein included scientific scholarship in talmudical entries, but then he was “not lazy about fighting a defensive war with those ‘academicians’ (*hokrim*) who dared to ‘criticize’ (*l’vaker*) the words of some Tanna or Amora.” As an example, Tawiw quotes the entry “Abaye,” where Jost’s opinion is quoted, and, Tawiw claims, duly rejected.⁶⁵⁸ Tawiw’s assessment that the *Ozar Yisrael* was a partisan work is correct; however, he was not always an honest critic. The way he claimed that the entry “Abaye” discarded Jost’s opinion is an example of his craftiness. To make his point, Tawiw quoted the words of the *Ozar Yisrael*:

“Jost renders Abaye guilty of folk faith and popular superstition (Gesch. D. Judenthums 9.ii.191), but if we view with a critical eye many of the statements made in his name, it is can be proven that Jost was not correct in

⁶⁵⁵ Yehiel Heilprin (1660–1746) was a European Rabbi and the author of a chronological work called *Seder Hadorot*. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi places this work in the genre of the “so called ‘chain of tradition’ of the Oral Law.” See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 31–32.

⁶⁵⁶ b. Shabbat 88a.

⁶⁵⁷ Abraham Hayyim Rosenberg, “Avdidim bar Hama bar Hasa,” *OY* 1:13.

⁶⁵⁸ Abraham Hayyim Rosenberg, “Abaye,” *OY* 1:38.

his assessment of him.” [Thus far is a direct quotation from the *Ozar Yisrael*.]
Happy is the believer!

After finishing the quote, Tawiow moves into sarcasm: “Happy is the believer!” This gives the impression that the *Ozar Yisrael* offered no rebuttal to Jost’s claim. However, if one turns to the *Ozar Yisrael*, one sees that it did not expect the reader to happily accept—on blind faith—that Jost’s judgment of Abaye was wrong. Tawiow cut short his quotation prematurely, for where Tawiow digressed to sarcasm the *Ozar Yisrael* continued:

Jost was not correct in his assessment of him. Abaye expressed his view that in his day the era of miracles and wonders had already passed, and that the laws of nature were sufficient for the happiness and success of a humankind, and when they told him the story of a man whose wife had died during his lifetime, and he was poor and unable to pay the salary of wet-nurse to nurse his son, and a miracle was made for him and he developed two breasts, Abaye said about him: how disgraceful is this man that for him the order of creation changed (Shabbat 53a) ... although the practice of the masses was also very holy in his eyes, and about things that he was unsure about he used to say, “go out and see what is the practice of the people” (Berakhot 45a and other places).⁶⁵⁹

Perhaps the *Ozar Yisrael*’s rebuttal of Jost should have been stronger, but it is simply untrue that it rejected Jost on faith alone, as Tawiow implied.

Tawiow’s claim that the talmudical entries quoted critical scholarship for polemical purposes is important. This meant that he recognized—implicitly—that the *Ozar Yisrael* distinguished between biblical and talmudical entries. Biblical entries never cited any critical scholarship, even for the sake of rebuttal, whereas the talmudical entries included critical scholarship. This difference in attitude was apparently lost on Tawiow.

Tawiow complained that the legal entries lacked a comparative law approach. To

⁶⁵⁹ Eisenstein, “Abaye,” *OY* 1:38–40.

prove his point, he quoted three entries: “Avot Nezikin” (Fathers of Damage),⁶⁶⁰ “Aveda U-Metzia” (Lost and Found),⁶⁶¹ and “Ona’a” (Deception).⁶⁶² About the first two entries he was correct: a comparative law approach was absent. Hayyim Hirschensohn wrote the entry “Avot Nezikin”; he relied wholly on traditional sources and did not include a bibliography. Eisenstein wrote the entry “Aveda U-Metzia,” and in his bibliography, he referenced the entry “Finder of Property” in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.⁶⁶³ While the *Jewish Encyclopedia* had a fuller treatment of the subject, it did not offer a comparative approach, either. This was among the many legal entries that Lewis N. Dembitz wrote for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Trained as an American lawyer, Dembitz was capable of discussing comparative law but refrained from doing so. His bibliography was limited to rabbinic literature and cited nothing later than the sixteenth-century *Shulhan Arukh*. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* had the additional burden of catering to a non-Jewish audience, and if it had omitted a comparative law approach from this entry, then why should the *Ozar Yisrael* be different?

In principle, Eisenstein was not opposed to offering a comparative law approach, and in the entry “Ona’a,”⁶⁶⁴ which he wrote, he did so. Tawiw admitted as much: “only in one entry on the subject of *halakha*, in the entry “Ona’a,” I found a small attempt at comparison

⁶⁶⁰ *OY* 1:30–31. This refers to the Talmud’s classification of torts.

⁶⁶¹ *OY* 1:12–13.

⁶⁶² *OY* 1:191–92. This rabbinic term describes a degree of overpayment or underpayment such that it renders a transaction fraudulent and invalid.

⁶⁶³ Solomon Schechter and Lewis N. Dembitz, “Finder of Property,” *JE* 5:385–86.

⁶⁶⁴ Unfair pricing.

to Roman law.”⁶⁶⁵ What Tawiw did not realize was that Eisenstein’s “small attempt” at comparative law was taken directly from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. In the entry “Ona’a,” Eisenstein wrote: “In the laws of the Romans the prohibition of *ona’ah* is known by the name *laesio major*, and the limit for each item is set at a half.” This was the full extent of Eisenstein’s “small attempt” at comparative law. The entry’s bibliography cites the entry “Ona’a” in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and the full extent of comparative law found therein is:

The doctrine of *ona’ah* answers to the *laesio major* of Roman law. But while such *laesio* in that law covered much broader ground, it interfered only when the disproportion between price and value exceeded two to one.⁶⁶⁶

True, Eisenstein offered comparative law—but only to the extent that he could copy it (up to the ligature in *laesio*!)—from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

The legitimate criticism that Tawiw missed is that the *Ozar Yisrael* was translating entries from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. It is possible that the number of people who accessed both the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and the *Ozar Yisrael* and would have been bothered by this plagiarism was small. Ultimately, very few people noticed or cared that one encyclopedia was copying copious amounts from another encyclopedia.

Tawiw complained about the lack of balance between entries. The *Ozar Yisrael* omitted the recently deceased Italian minister of war Giuseppe Ottolenghi (1838–1904) yet included his ancestor Rabbi Joseph ben Nathan Ottolenghi (d. 1570). Both entries were

⁶⁶⁵ Tawiw, “Ozar Yisrael,” 2.

⁶⁶⁶ *JE* 9:402–3.

featured in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*,⁶⁶⁷ but only the latter appeared in *Ozar Yisrael*.⁶⁶⁸

Encyclopedias will always be accused of lacking balance, for they can never include everything, but again, in this instance there was a more serious problem that did not get attention. Had Tawiw compared the entry “Joseph Ottolenghi” in the *Ozar Yisrael* to the one in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, he would have seen that the former copied the latter.⁶⁶⁹

There was, however, one important exception: the academic entries from the *Jewish Encyclopedia* were “lost in translation” and are missing.⁶⁷⁰ Julius Furst’s *Bibliotheca Judaica*, Moritz Steinschneider’s periodical *Hebraische Bibliographie*, and the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* are cited in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*’s bibliography but never made it into the bibliography in the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁶⁷¹ Thus, this entry that Tawiw cited carried the twin sin of copying entries from the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and omitting their academic sources, but these flaws were not mentioned by Tawiw.

It is unclear why Tawiw skipped over the issue of plagiarism. He probably did not notice it, possibly because of limited facility in the English language. It is also possible that

⁶⁶⁷ “Ottolenghi, Giuseppe” and “Ottolengo, Joseph,” *JE* 9:449–50.

⁶⁶⁸ “Ottolenghi, Joseph,” *OY* 1:173–74.

⁶⁶⁹ Umberto Cassuto wrote for volumes 2–4 of the *Ozar Yisrael*. Why he suddenly stopped contributing is unclear. He wrote the entry “Ottolengo, Joseph” for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and Eisenstein wrote the entry “Ottolenghi, Joseph” for the *Ozar Yisrael*.

⁶⁷⁰ A side-by-side comparison will demonstrate this point and also show that while the entry was copied, the more “academic” elements of the bibliography were not copied. All the *Ozar Yisrael*’s bibliographical sources appear in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, but the reverse is not true. Apparently (in this entry at least) Eisenstein excised bibliographical sources that were associated with *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Tawiw could have used this point to promote the view that the *Ozar Yisrael* was an Orthodox encyclopedia.

⁶⁷¹ Maurice Mortara’s Italian-language *Indice Alfabetice dei Rabbini e Scrittori Israeliti* (Padova, 1886) was also omitted, although this work contains only the scantest information on Ottolenghi (see p. 46).

he noticed it but chose to overlook it because his concerns were more fundamental. His goal was to keep alive the dream of the *Otsar hayahadut*, and for this goal to be met, people needed to disregard the *Ozar Yisrael*. He explained:

Were the encyclopedia edited in the spirit of Hebraist maskilim, I would see myself duty-bound to speak also about its language and style ... I would be able and obliged to remark on many other details, but who shall pay attention to details, if the entire makeup and spirit of the encyclopedia is not according to the taste or needs of true Hebraist maskilim. No! For such a Hebrew encyclopedia we did not pray! ... Let this encyclopedia stay in America! We, the Hebrew maskilim of Russia, will wait for the *Otsar hayahadut* that the best among our writers and scholars dreamed of. However, will this dream remain without a solution?⁶⁷²

For Tawiw, the whole enterprise of the *Ozar Yisrael* was wrong. Since the work's orientation was flawed, to dwell on its specific failings was to miss the point. The solution was for someone to step forward and create the *Otsar hayahadut*. He ended his review with a rhetorical question, wondering whether the dream of the *Otsar hayahadut* would come to fruition.

In his initial review, Tawiw had concluded that the *Ozar Yisrael* did not serve the Hebraist community, and so it was best to ignore it. However, ignoring the *Ozar Yisrael* did not make it go away, and with each passing year, the work became more established. Eventually, he had to pay attention to it once more, and five years later, a second review of his appeared. It was longer and nastier than his first review, and this time *Ha-Zfira* published it over two installments.⁶⁷³ The stillborn dream of an *Otsar hayahadut*, coupled with the

⁶⁷² Tawiw, "Ozar Yisrael," 2.

⁶⁷³ Israel Hayim Tawiw, "Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivriti," *Ha-Zfira*, February 13, 1912, 2; and February 14, 1912, 1.

success of its nemesis, filled Tawiow with a raging sarcasm that he unleashed on the *Ozar Yisrael* and its editor. Offering general complaints as well as citing specific examples of the work's shortcomings, the review showed Tawiow to be a creative essayist who could be economical with the truth.

In this second review, Tawiow found a plethora of problems.⁶⁷⁴ He complained that the work was sloppy and lacked attention to detail. For example, the brother of R. Judah Loewe of Prague is mistakenly listed as his son,⁶⁷⁵ the later R. Judah the Pious is confused with the earlier R. Judah the Pious,⁶⁷⁶ and a famous uncle of R. Joseph Karo, Isaac Karo of Toledo, is mistakenly listed as his father.⁶⁷⁷ He also raised the issue of what deserved an encyclopedia entry and what did not. No contemporary writers or academicians qualified for a space in the encyclopedia, and this disappointed Tawiow.⁶⁷⁸ The only Cohens to appear

⁶⁷⁴ Tawiow, "Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivrit," *Ha-Zfira*, February 14, 1912, 1.

⁶⁷⁵ Isaac Ewen, "Yehuda Loewe Ben Bezalel," *OY* 5:70–71.

⁶⁷⁶ "Yehuda Ha-Hasid," *OY* 5:66–67. This entry was written by the anonymous *Bet Mem: Ha-ozrim b'veit ha-ma'arekhet* that was mentioned in the first chapter. The earlier Judah the Pious (1150–1217) is associated with the medieval pietists of the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* movement, whereas the later Judah the Pious (1660–1700) was a revivalist preacher who led a return of Jews to Eretz Yisrael.

⁶⁷⁷ "Toldedo," *OY* 5:15–16. This entry was also written by the anonymous *Bet Mem: Ha-ozrim b'veit ha-ma'arekhet*.

⁶⁷⁸ This was not correct, as before this review, Eisenstein had already written entries on Hayim Nahman Bialik (*OY* 2:24–25) and Asher Ginzberg (Ahad Ha'am) (*OY* 3:283–84). Later volumes included entries on other writes; see, for example, "Katznelson, Yehudah Leib," *OY* 9:87. This entry was also written by the anonymous *Beyt Mem: Ha-ozrim b'veit ha-ma'arekhet*. Academicians were also included. Tawiow was focusing on vol. 5 of the *Ozar Yisrael*, and in that volume there is an entry on "Jellinek, Ahron (Adolf)" (*OY* 5:165–66).

were Abraham (Albert) Cohn⁶⁷⁹ and Jacob Cohen,⁶⁸⁰ even Hermann Cohen was excluded. He could not understand why minor Karaites were mentioned when other major figures were omitted. In an attempt to render the *Ozar Yisrael* the work of an unenlightened extremist, Tawiow falsely attributed to Eisenstein the peculiar claim that modern scientists based discoveries on talmudical tales. From this he concluded that only the stupidest of people would buy the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁹ *OY* 5:25–260. Cohn (1814–1877) was a French philanthropist and scholar.

⁶⁸⁰ *OY* 5:260. Jacob Da Silva Solis-Cohen (1838–1927) was the founder of laryngology in the United States. A descendant of Spanish-Portuguese Jews, his inclusion in the encyclopedia, especially in light of Hermann Cohen’s exclusion, is a sign of the work’s American bias.

⁶⁸¹ In two instances, Tawiow made some confusing remarks about what Eisenstein wrote. The first concerns the entry “telegraph, telephone” (*OY* 5:23–24). This was a strange entry to find in an encyclopedia whose English title page advertised that it was about “all matters concerning Jews and Judaism.” The *Jewish Encyclopedia* had no such entry, but Eisenstein’s mindset was such that he believed that every invention or new social development had implications for “Jews and Judaism.” Contemporary accounts of magnets and electricity pointed to ancient sources that showed early awareness of such phenomena; see Paul F. Mottelay, *Bibliographical History of Electricity and Magnetism Chronologically Arranged* (London: Charles Grffiin, 1922), 1–27; and Gerrit L. Verschuur, *Hidden Attraction: The History and Mystery of Magnetism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8. Eisenstein wanted to prove that the ancient rabbis also knew of such things, and so he too cited rabbinic texts that described the magnetic phenomenon. Tawiow attacked the work for this:

When I saw the first volume, it seemed to me that the *Ozar* would be a type of strange encyclopedia for the Orthodox. However, about the fifth volume I must think that it is designed for idiots and crazies, for even the most passionate Orthodox person is not crazy enough to believe that that Edison and Marconi discovered their discoveries on the basis of a strange story in the Talmud. (Tawiow, “*Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivrit*,” February 13, 1912)

Was Eisenstein guilty as charged? What he did was quote an aggadic teaching in which God says:

Many thunderclaps have I created in the clouds, and for each clap a separate path, so that two claps should not travel by the same path, [since if two claps traveled by the same path they would devastate the world]. (b. Bava Batra 16a)

After quoting this, Eisenstein commented that “on this foundation Edison invented the telephone and Marconi invented the telegraph” (*OY* 5:23). One has to be very uncharitable to suggest that Eisenstein was arguing that the discoveries of Edison and Marconi arose from aggadic teachings. Rather, he was arguing for a congruence of some of their ideas. Earlier in the entry, Eisenstein made a similar point:

Also, that which Benjamin Franklin discovered in 1752 to draw electricity

Tawiw analyzed Eisenstein's entry on the Eretz Yisrael Amora R. Yohanan. The *Shalshet Ha-Kabbala* recorded that R. Yohanan lived for some three hundred years.⁶⁸²

Tawiw asserted that only the most rigid and dogmatic person would repeat such an outlandish claim and accused Eisenstein of doing so and of drawing his information about R. Yohanan from this work. On this basis, Tawiw discounted the talmudical entries.

It is self-evident that also among the biographies of the Tannaim and Amoraim one will not find any smidgeon of criticism or any historical understanding. Here is one small example of great value: "Rabbi Yohanan, the head of the Amoraim of Eretz Yisrael and the arranger of the Jerusalem Talmud" ... This is an encyclopedic inference! On almost every page of the Jerusalem Talmud one finds statements of Amoraim who lived two, three, and also four generations after R. Yohanan—and the encyclopedia of ours decrees authoritative that R. Yohanan authored and arranged the Jerusalem Talmud! As if there were no doubt whatsoever about this matter; as if even the perfectly pious Azulai⁶⁸³ did not question this, but an "encyclopedist" who believes in "hand wisdom" [palmistry]⁶⁸⁴ is also to believe the words of the *Shalshet Ha-Kabbala* that R. Yohanan lived three hundred years—and then perforce all the doubts are solved.⁶⁸⁵

to himself from lightning via a metal rod that was bent at the top and protruding at the front of the house: the foundation for this was already mentioned in Tosefta Shabbat (chapter 6): "Someone who places metal between chicks on account of the lightning and the thunder, this is permitted and not considered to be the "ways of the Amorites."

⁶⁸² *Sefer shalshet ha-akabbala* mentions this possibility under the entry "Rabbui Yehuda HaNasi"; see Gedalia ibn Yahya, *Sefer shalshet ha-kabbala* (Jerusalem, 1962), 73. *Sefer shalshet Ha-kabbala* is a sixteenth-century "chain of tradition" work that was authored by the Italian Gedalia ibn Yahya (1515–1587).

⁶⁸³ Hayim Yosef David Azulai (1724-1807), an itinerant bibliophile and prolific writer. He wrote an important bibliographical and biographical index, *Shem Ha-g'dolim*, that was first published in 1774. See Meir Benayahu, *Ha-hidah* (Jerusalem, 1959/60).

⁶⁸⁴ Palmistry is the practice of reading the creases in a person's palm to gain insight into their psychology and physiology. Eisenstein included an entry on palmistry in the *Ozar Yisrael*. See Eisenstein, "Yad," *OY* 5:49–51.

⁶⁸⁵ Tawiw, "Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivrit," *Ha-Zfira*, February 14, 1912, 1.

Eisenstein wrote the entry “Yohanan; ben Nafkha,”⁶⁸⁶ and based on Tawiw’s assertion, one would expect the entry to state that he lived three hundred years. Yet not only is such an opinion not cited, it is implicitly rejected.

Yohanan; ben Naphha (he is the usual R. Yohanan): the chief of the Amoraim of Eretz Yisrael and the arranger of the Yerushalmi; he was born in Sephoris around the year 180 and died in Tiberias in 279, according to the usual way of counting.⁶⁸⁷

The medieval tradition that R. Yohanan lived for several hundred years is not mentioned.⁶⁸⁸

As for relying on the *Shalshet Ha-Kabbala*, the entry never cites the work, even in its bibliography. Rather, the lifespan Eisenstein suggested for R. Yohanan is consistent with the scholarly consensus.⁶⁸⁹

Tawiw’s claim that Eisenstein presented R. Yohanan as the editor and author of the Jerusalem Talmud is worth exploring, for it may have impacted Eisenstein’s later treatment of this issue. In his introduction to the Mishna, Maimonides wrote that the author of the Talmud Yerushalmi was R. Yohanan.⁶⁹⁰ Zecharias Fraenkel modified this to mean that R. Yohanan began the editorial process and his school in Tiberias finished it.⁶⁹¹ Tawiw’s argument against the possibility of R. Yohanan editing the Jerusalem Talmud (“on almost

⁶⁸⁶ *OY* 5:103–4.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁸⁸ Ronald R. Kimelman, “Rabbi Yochanan of Tiberias: Aspects of the Social and Religious History of Third-Century Palestine” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1977), 36.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 3–10.

⁶⁹⁰ Yitzchak Shalit, ed., *Hakdamot ha-Rambam la-Mishna* (Shilat: Jerusalem, 1996), 61.

⁶⁹¹ He concluded that since a number of medieval authorities attributed the Jerusalem Talmud to R. Yohanan, they must have received such a tradition. See Zecharias Frankel, *Mevo ha-Yerushalmi* (Breslau, 1870), 47–48.

every page of the Jerusalem Talmud one finds statements of Amoraim who lived two, three, and also four generations after R. Yohanan”⁶⁹²) is consistent with Zecharia Frankel’s reasoning.⁶⁹³ It is a strong argument that cannot be dismissed.

Tawiow wrote this review in 1912, before the entry “Talmud” appeared in the final volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁶⁹⁴ However, in that entry, which Eisenstein wrote, one sees him following Frankel (and Tawiow) and attributing the editing of the Jerusalem Talmud to the students of R. Yohanan, not to R. Yohanan himself. Furthermore, the comparison below shows that Frankel’s *Mevo Ha-Yerushalmi* was a template—both its structure and wording were copied—for the entry that appeared in the *Ozar Yisrael*.

⁶⁹² Tawiow, “Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivriti,” *Ha-tzfira*, February 14, 1912, 1.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 47–48.

⁶⁹⁴ J. D. Eisenstein, “Talmud,” *OY* 10:260–67, esp. 264.

[מסדרו הירושלמי אמוראי איי] הרמב"ם בהקדמתו לפירוש המיטנה אומר: „וכן עשו חכמי איי מה שעשה רב אשי. כתבו התלמוד ירושלמי ור' יוחנן הוא המחבר“, וכן כתבו הראב"ד בס' הקבלה והרי"ש סקינן בס' בריתות. אולם אין הכוונה כי ר' יוחנן חתם הירושלמי, כי הרבה חכמים שנזכרים בירושלמי מאוחרים הם לר' יוחנן, אך ר"ל כי ר' יוחנן הסדיר את הירושלמי בטבריא ותלמידיו הבאים אחריו השלימוהו.

הרמב"ם כתב בהקדמתו לפירוש המשנה ח"ל וכן עשו חכמי ארץ ישראל מה שעשה רב אשי כתבו התלמוד ירושלמי ור' יוחנן הוא המחבר ע"כ, וכן כתבו הראב"ד בס' הקבלה והרי"ש סקינן בס' בריתות. וע"כ אין הכוונה שר' יוחנן חיבר הירושלמי עד נמירא דרוב החכמים הנזכרים בירושלמי מאוחרים לר' יוחנן והרצון בה' ר' יוחנן יסד התלמוד ירושלמי בלוי הוא התחיל לסדרו והכאים

אחריו השלימוהו, וכמו שהענינו לעיל בענין הסידור של הבבלי ע"י רב אשי. אבל גם בזה אין הדעת נוחה, הלוא ר' יוחנן חי ברוד הראשון וברוד השני של האמוראים וכאשר יבוא לקטן ס"ד, וא"כ אישוא המקום להסידור בכלל, וכי טעא ר' יוחנן כבר כבר מאמרי חכמים מוטן סוף התנאים עד זמנו אשר לחצרו לנשת אל טלאכת הסידור? אך טאחר שהגדולים אלה יחד עונים ואומרים שר' יוחנן חיבר הירושלמי מסתמא כן היתה קבלה בידם. והטראה להשוות הקבלה והסברה שאין הכוונה על ר' יוחנן דייקא כי אם על ישיבתו והישיבה נקראת על שם רבה ומיסדה, ור' יוחנן הוא אשר קבע ישיבתו בטבריא

[The redactors of the Jerusalem Tamud and the Amoraim of Eretz Yisrael:] Maimonides, in the introduction to his commentary on the Mishna, says: “The sages of Eretz Yisrael also did what Rav Ashi did. They wrote the Jerusalem Talmud, and Rabbi Yohanan was the author.” The Rabad wrote likewise in the *Seder Ha-kabbalah*, and the Rash

Maimonides wrote in the introduction to his commentary on the Mishna—this is his language—“The sages of Eretz Yisrael also did what Rav Ashi did. They wrote the Jerusalem Talmud, and Rabbi Yohanan was the author.” The Rabad wrote likewise in the *Seder Ha-kabbalah*, and the Rash mi-Kounina [Samson of Chinoun] in his *Sefer Krihut*. Perforce the meaning is not that R. Yohanan authored the Jerusalem Talmud completely, for most of the sages mentioned in the Yerushalmi are later than R. Yohanan ... The meaning is that R. Yohanan established

mi-Kounina [Samson of Chinoun] in his *Sefer Krihut*. However, the meaning is not that R. Yohanan was the end of the Jerusalem Talmud, for many sages mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud are later than R. Yohanan; rather, he wants to say that R. Yohanan arranged the Yerushalmi in Tiberias, and his students who came after him completed it, just as Rav Ashi arranged the Babylonian Talmud and the Savoraic Rabbis completed it.

the Jerusalem Talmud, meaning that he began to arrange it, and those who came after him completed it, just as we said earlier, when it came to the arrangement of the Babylonian Talmud by Rav Ashi. But even according to this our mind is not at rest, for R. Yohanan was in the first and second generation of Amoraim, as will be explained later in chapter 4, and if so, how could he have arranged it at all? Did R. Yohanan already find so many statements of the sages from the time of the end of the Tannaim until his time that pushed him to approach this task of arrangement? However, since these great ones all say that R. Yohanan was the author of the Jerusalem Talmud, they probably received such a tradition. To try and reconcile the tradition with what makes sense, the intention is not to refer to R. Yohanan himself but rather to his academy, and the academy is named after its master and founder, and R. Yohanan established his academy in Tiberias, and from the time of R. Yohanan onward, that was the central place of Torah [study]...

Frankel transferred the authorship of the Jerusalem Talmud from the person of R. Yohanan to his academy, and while he may have offered a gentler formulation, Eisenstein

did the same thing, attributing the work not to R. Yohanan but to “the students who came after him.” It is curious that in the entry on “Talmud,” Eisenstein essentially follows Tawiw’s endorsement of Frankel on this point. However, had Tawiw consulted Eisenstein’s sources, he would have known that even prior to his 1911 critique, Eisenstein copied the entry on R. Yohanan from Frankel’s *Mevo ha-Yerushalmi*. Since Eisenstein listed the work—along with the page that he copied—in the entry’s bibliography, it was apparent that Eisenstein had no reservations about citing Frankel or copying his work.⁶⁹⁵ But for Tawiw, it was more convenient to overlook this detail. The fact that Eisenstein copied entries from scientific works, like Zecharia Frankel’s *Mevo Ha-Yerushalmi*, undermined Tawiw’s desire to portray the *Ozar Yisrael* as a work designed for the most fanatic of Orthodox readers. This is a fair explanation for why Tawiw ignored the *Ozar Yisrael*’s plagiarism of scientific sources.

Hostility to American success became more pronounced in Tawiw’s second review. Calling America “the land of the humbug,” Tawiw was horrified that the pristine dream of an *Otsar* was tripped on a “trap set by American workers.”⁶⁹⁶ Palmistry won a place in *Ozar Yisrael*,⁶⁹⁷ he explained, to help a “reverend” supplement the meager income that came from his usual roster of weddings and divorces.⁶⁹⁸ Tawiw claimed that this was an American

⁶⁹⁵ A comparison of *OY* 5:104 and Frankel’s *Mevo ha-Yerushalmi* 96bff shows the extent to which Eisenstein “borrowed” the entry on R. Yohanan from Frankel.

⁶⁹⁶ Tawiw, “Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivriti,” *Ha-Zfira*, February 13, 1912, 2.

⁶⁹⁷ J. D. Eisenstein, “Yad,” *OY* 5:49–51.

⁶⁹⁸ Tawiw is referring to the institution of a freewheeling cleric who performed weddings and dissolved marriages, a well-known fixture on the American Jewish scene in this period.

product that was only good for the clerics of America, though he knew that this was not true.

According to Tawiw's own account, after he reviewed the first volume, he promptly forgot about the work, thinking it "left its soul at one,"⁶⁹⁹ and now it shocked him to see volume 5, hear that volume 6 was also available, and learn that volume 7 was being sent to the printer.⁷⁰⁰

Tawiw complained that instead of battling the *Ozar Yisrael*, too many writers stood back from the whole fracas. More deplorable were those who supported the *Ozar Yisrael*, reasoning that "it is better that we should have a bad Hebrew encyclopedia than that we should have no encyclopedia at all." Clearly, he had been following the trajectory of the encyclopedia and seeing it reach its halfway mark, and he could no longer follow his earlier advice to ignore the work. Now he was a purist with a problem, for the more successful the *Ozar Yisrael* became, the less likely it was for another encyclopedia to arise. Every new volume of the *Ozar Yisrael* answered the rhetorical question that ended his first review:

We, the Hebrew maskilim of Russia, will wait for the *Otsar hayahadut* that the best among our writers and scholars dreamed of. However, will this dream remain without a solution?⁷⁰¹

The dream remained elusive as ever, and not all the blame could be placed on Eisenstein or

⁶⁹⁹ This turn of phrase is a pun. Ber. 60b records that R. Akiva died a martyr with an affirmation of the Shema: "His soul departed on the [word] 'one'" of the phrase "Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is One." Tawiw is remarking that he thought the same had happened to Eisenstein's *Ozar Yisrael* and that after the first volume it too died. This is typical of Tawiw's wit, as he compared the *Ozar Yisrael* to R. Akiva, a figure who died for his religious commitments, implying that it too (should have) died because of its religious commitments. The review is full of learned intertextual Hebrew puns, and this is but one example of this phenomenon.

⁷⁰⁰ Tawiw, "Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivriti," *Ha-tzfira*, February 13, 1912, 2.

⁷⁰¹ Tawiw, "Ozar Yisrael," 1907, 2.

the flawed *Ozar Yisrael*. The Hebrew reading public that was buying the *Ozar Yisrael* was also at fault, and herein was a contradiction. Tawiw wanted to argue that the *Ozar Yisrael* was useful to only a very narrow group of (ignorant and Orthodox) people, but a different reality confronted him. Since, by his own admission, the Hebrew reading public was buying the *Ozar Yisrael*, this meant that they had decided that it was good enough for them. To explain this contradiction, Tawiw treated the *Ozar Yisrael* as a material object:

Behold, our community does not know and has no time to distinguish between indigo and turquoise.⁷⁰² If industrious agents and publishers will thrust the American Otzar-of-Darkness presented as a Hebrew encyclopedia, then the hope of the Hebraist maskilim will be lost for a long time, and maybe forever, for the small Hebraist community is not open to two encyclopedias, and since they will plaster the book markets with this encyclopedia, there will no longer be space or buyers for a good and proper encyclopedia.⁷⁰³

Tawiw argued that buyers do not have the time or ability to work out whether what they are buying is worthwhile or not, so they accept whatever is pushed on them.

The crux of this argument is that the buying public was not interested in knowing the exact nature of what was inside the *Ozar*; what they really cared about was acquiring a complete encyclopedia, the same way that they would acquire furniture or other home furnishings. If the Hebrew reading public truly cared about the quality of the encyclopedia, they would be willing to purchase a second one that was “good and proper.” The fact that they were not willing to do so proved that for many, a Hebrew encyclopedia was but a household item and not a source of information or learning. In a remarkable closing

⁷⁰² This is another rabbinic pun, as the Mishna uses the time of morning from when can distinguish between these colors as the earliest time to recite the Shema. See m. Ber. 1:2.

⁷⁰³ Tawiw, “Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivrit,” *Ha-Zfira*, February 13, 1912, 2.

paragraph, Tawiow resigns himself to the triumph of the encyclopedia qua material object:

And so it is in the end we merited a Hebrew encyclopedia. Soon vol. 7 will be published, and in a little more time we will have an encyclopedia complete in its beauty, in all its ten parts, and industrious agents will traverse the length and breadth of the earth to establish the beauty of the New York ghetto in the tents of our householders and our maskilim; they will speak to their hearts, they will seduce them—and they will succeed, and the ten parts of the *Ozar* will peek out from the midst of the book cabinets in the houses of Israel, for beauty and for decoration.⁷⁰⁴

The paragraph is sarcastic, but it describes a real phenomenon. The *Ozar Yisrael* was satisfying to people who were interested in an encyclopedia qua material object, almost as a home accessory. Tawiow realized that legitimate criticism, no matter how learned, could not outweigh an attractive, finished *Ozar* for Jewish homes to display. Eisenstein understood this too; he knew that people viewed books as material culture, and so he let readers know that a commissioned artist had worked on making the *Ozar Yisrael* an object of beauty⁷⁰⁵ and that subscriptions gave buyers the option of purchasing the work in three different bindings: paper, cloth, and half-morocco.⁷⁰⁶ However, as much as he capitalized on the work's aesthetic qualities, he was not willing for it to be viewed as nothing more than an

⁷⁰⁴ Israel Hayim Tawiow, "Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivrit," *Ha-Zfira*, February 14, 1912, 1.

⁷⁰⁵ "Shonot: Ha'encyklopedia Ha-Ivrit Ozar Yisrael," *Moria*, December 23, 1913, 3. This article was written after the last volume appeared, and it remarked on the aesthetic quality of the *Ozar Yisrael*. It describes the work as "full of beauty" (*kalul b'hadro*) and points out that "it too has, like the other volumes, illustrations and pictures that Ephraim Grawer made with instructions from the editor." Grawer produced a famous map of Eretz Yisrael that he published in Odessa in 1899, which can be seen here: http://web.nli.org.il/sites/nli/hebrew/digitalibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?presentorid=NLI_EDU&docid=NNL03_EDU700276096. No other information about him could be obtained. An index was placed on an unnumbered page at the beginning of every volume of the *Ozar Yisrael*, at the bottom of which the "illustrations and pictures" are listed along with a note stating that the "the illustrations were done by Ephraim Grawer according to plans given to him by the editor."

⁷⁰⁶Eisenstein Papers, ARC. 32, box 2, folder 2.

accouterment adorning a bookshelf. To this review, brimming with spite, he would have to respond.

Eisenstein Responds

A capable polemicist, Eisenstein had managed to avoid any public debate over the *Ozar Yisrael* until the enmity of Tawiw's second critique provoked a response from him. This response was among the handful of his earlier articles that he reprinted in the second part of *Ozar Zikhronotay* (1929), and this suggests that many years later, he was still proud of the way he handled his most vociferous critic.⁷⁰⁷ Three months after Tawiw's review, Eisenstein published a long response that also came in two installments. One would have expected it to appear in *Ha-Zfira*, where Tawiw had published his second critique. Indeed, Eisenstein had been a regular correspondent for *Ha-Zfira* in the 1880s and 1890s, but these were new times, and he lamented to Landau that *Ha-Zfira* refused to print his response to Tawiw.⁷⁰⁸ Since *Ha-Tzfira* refused to print his response, Eisenstein was forced to defend the *Ozar Yisrael* in *Ha-Modia*, a sectarian Orthodox paper with a small circulation.⁷⁰⁹ Thus, after the general Hebrew press published a crushing review of the *Ozar Yisrael*, only the Orthodox Hebrew press published Eisenstein's defense. Whereas its aim and claim was to serve every Jew, the *Ozar Yisrael* had in fact become a partisan project.

⁷⁰⁷ Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronotay*, 370–74. *Ozar Zikhronotay* is made up of two sections. The first section (7–200) is a memoir of sorts that goes up to 1927 (and includes almost no mention of the *Ozar Yisrael* or the process that created it). The second (200–380) is a reprint of some of Eisenstein's Hebrew articles.

⁷⁰⁸ Eisenstein to Landau, June 7, 1912, ARC. 4* 798 Section (Sidra) 2 Folder 42, Landau Papers, NLI.

⁷⁰⁹ Judah D. Eisenstein, "Teshuva l'Mevaker "Ozar Yisrael,"" *Ha-Modia*, May 17, 1912, 2–3 and May 21, 1912, 4.

Eisenstein replied to Tawiw's sarcastic review with his own caustic response. He noted that although Tawiw was not a young man (he was born in 1858), he could still be counted among the "young maskilim." This was a group that Eisenstein characterized as *mayufesnikim*, Jews who were servile to gentile conceptions of their heritage. This insult was interwoven with layers of meaning. In its original context, the *mayufes* is a Sabbath hymn. Later, it referred to Jews who performed Jewish culture for the entertainment and at the request of a powerful gentile. Jewish nationalists derided co-religionists who lacked a nationalist consciousness as being *mayufesnikim*: they were Jewish, but their Jewishness was but a performance for the gentiles around them.⁷¹⁰ Tawiw was a Hebrew nationalist who claimed to speak in the name of other nationalists. When Eisenstein charged Tawiw with being a *mayufesnik*, it was a double insult, for this was the unflattering epithet that nationalists like Tawiw directed at their opponents. Eisenstein claimed that Tawiw and his fellow "young maskilim" opposed the *Ozar Yisrael* because they were subservient to gentile ideas that were brimming with animus for Jews and Judaism. Tawiw and the "young maskilim" had become the true *mayufesnikim*.

Regarding the criticism, we see in it the image of a *mayufes* maskil who nods his head to every lord of non-Jewish literature and is always afraid lest the gods of science will suspect him of believing, God forbid, that there is wisdom also in the words of our sages of blessed memory, and they will laugh at him, saying that he is a fool who believes in everything, and they will loudly cry out after him that he is a "Jewish fanatic" who is not worthy of mingling in scientific circles. The young maskilim like Tawiw are

⁷¹⁰ See Gil Ribak, *Gentile New York: The Image of Non-Jews Among Jewish Immigrants* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 19–20. See also Chone Shmeruk, "Mayufes: A Window on Polish–Jewish Relations," in *Jews in Early Modern Poland*, vol. 10 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, ed. Hundert Gershon David by Barber Anna and Frank Esther (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 273–86.

particularly nervous about halakhah and pilpul, which for them is literally the elixir of death.⁷¹¹

Going on the offensive, Eisenstein referred to the *Otsar Hayahdut: Hoveret l'dugma* to showcase the type of freethinking encyclopedia that Tawiow wanted to see in circulation. Citing the *Otsar Hayahdut's* treatment of *brit mila* (circumcision), Eisenstein summoned this hallowed practice to prove that supporters of the *Otsar hayahadut* wanted to strip the Jews of their uniqueness and weaken their devotion to God and his commandments. The *Otsar Hayahdut: Hoveret l'dugma* presented circumcision as not unique to Israel and as something that may not have started with Israel. It argued that circumcision was not practiced in the times of the prophets, and that under the sway of female deities, Israel had practiced a form of female circumcision.

And other foolishness and lies like these that are revolting, and I would not raise them on my poor lips if it were not urgent to prove to the true community the contents of that encyclopedia that these reckless youngsters want to publish if they were able to carry out their scheme, and therefore for this reason they are sorry, worried, and mourning that the community did not stand behind their *Otsar Hayahdut* and instead it supports specially our *Ozar Yisrael*.⁷¹²

Eisenstein also addressed some of the issues that Tawiow raised. Regarding his allegation that the *Ozar Yisrael* believed that Edison and Marconi were inspired by talmudical tales, he countered that such a ridiculous charge only proved the dullness of his critic:

⁷¹¹ Eisenstein, "Teshuva l'Mevaker "Ozar Yisrael," *Ha-Modia*, May 17, 1912, 2.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

And all this shows clearly the extent to which the critic is himself an idler, a fool, and mad if he believes that the writer of the entry thought this. The truth is that the writer only wanted to show that the foundation was already there in Jewish literature and not the invention itself.⁷¹³

Another criticism he addressed was the authorship of the Jerusalem Talmud. He promised to discuss the topic in the entry “Talmud,” but for now, he agreed with Tawiw’s assessment that he had attributed the Talmud Yerushalmi to R. Yohanan.⁷¹⁴ He referred to Zecharia Frankel, who cited Maimonides’s position that R. Yohanan edited the Talmud Yerushalmi, yet he neglected to mention that Frankel distanced himself from this view.⁷¹⁵

The critic is alarmed at my statement that R. Yohanan authored the Jerusalem Talmud, although this is exactly what Maimonides wrote in his introduction to the Order of *Zeraim*. And R. Zecharia Frankel, in the introduction to his work *Mevo Ha-Yerushalmi*, said, “since these great ones all say that R. Yohanan was the author of the Jerusalem Talmud, they probably received such a tradition.” From this it is understood that R. Yohanan was the main author, although afterward statements from Amoraim that were later than Rabbi Yohanan were added, just as it is understood when it is said that Ravina and Rav Ashi authored or arranged the Babylonian Talmud, although the words of Amoraim that followed them and also the Rabbanan Savoraim were added afterward. In the entry “Talmud,” the entire topic and all the opinions concerning the writing of the two Talmuds will be explained.⁷¹⁶

Eisenstein’s defense on the divisive issue of biblical criticism took the form of scare-mongering and bifurcation, as he challenged readers to consider what sort of encyclopedia they would prefer: one that portrayed Jews and Judaism in a positive light, with something unique to contribute to the world, or one that hewed to the views of those who did not respect

⁷¹³ Eisenstein, “Teshuva l’Mevaker ‘Ozar Yisrael,” *Ha-Modia*, May 17, 1912, 3.

⁷¹⁴ Above, it was shown that in the entry “Talmud” in *OY* 10, he presented a more nuanced view.

⁷¹⁵ Eisenstein, Teshuva l’Mevaker “Ozar Yisrael,” *Ha-Modia*, May 21, 1912, 4.

⁷¹⁶ Eisenstein, “Teshuva l’Mevaker “Ozar Yisrael,” *Ha-Modia*, May 21, 1912, 4.

Jews or Judaism. This false choice was the only one Eisenstein presented. He avoided the issue of scientific truth by arguing that biblical criticism was still too immature for a serious discussion about its merits. It was best to focus on it at a later time, once biblical criticism arrived at a consensus. For now, it was much safer to rely on tradition.

We have already seen critics like him of the *mahyufes* variety who nod their heads at their [non-Jewish] historians who deny the story of Esther and Mordechai and Haman and deny with their mouth's breath the miracle of Purim, which is according to their opinion just nonsense because their historians did not mention this event. However, the one who knows the piles and piles of foolishness their critics raised about the name Artaxexes, besides the fact that they constantly contradict themselves, will see and understand how correct were the words of our sages of blessed memory that are founded on true and reliable criticism, and it is possible to always rely on their words on topics that are complicated and doubtful, when the opponents only muster false guesses ...⁷¹⁷

To invalidate their approach to the Bible, Eisenstein focused on the disagreements that divided scholars. This was the way to avoid the much more significant point upon which they all agreed: that the Pentateuch does not point to a single divinely inspired author. To entertain this possibility would jeopardize the traditional outlook Eisenstein wanted his encyclopedia to embody. However, by ignoring it, Eisenstein rendered the claim that the *Ozar Yisrael* was an objective work of scholarship a false pretension. Although the *Ozar Yisrael* had sequestered a space to entertain this possibility, in an article in the Orthodox press there was no reason to do so. Eisenstein had preferred to respond in the general Hebrew press, and if he had the opportunity to do so, his article might have been different. But now he was relegated to an Orthodox audience and portrayed the other side of this debate as riddled with

⁷¹⁷ Eisenstein, "Teshuva l'Mevaker 'Ozar Yisrael,'" *Ha-Modia*, May 17, 1912, 3.

disagreement.

Investor *and* Defender: Abraham Leib Shalkovitch

A master connector, Eisenstein was not wholly bereft of defenders. At the same time, those who took up his cause—like almost everyone who helped him—had some sort of ulterior motive. This certainly applies to the writer-cum-entrepreneur Abraham Leib Shalkovich (1867–1921), who used the pen name Ben Avigdor.⁷¹⁸ Described as “one of Hebrew literature’s most prominent bookmen,”⁷¹⁹ he was a figure with an interesting literary history: he was involved in earlier attempts to create an encyclopedia,⁷²⁰ was an early member of Ahad Ha’am’s circle⁷²¹ (although they later had a falling out⁷²²), and was even viewed by some as Ahad Ha’am’s successor.⁷²³ Hoping to find new opportunities for Toshiya (which later became Central press), his Warsaw-based publishing house, he visited the

⁷¹⁸ For the importance of Shalkovich as a publisher, see Zev Gries, “Abraham Leib Shalkovitz (Ben Avigdor) and the Revolution in the World of Hebrew Books at the Start of the Twentieth Century,” in *Yosef Da’at: Studies in Modern Jewish History in Honor of Yosef Salmon*, ed. Yossi Goldstein (Beersheba, Israel: Ben Gurion University, 2010), 305–29.

⁷¹⁹ Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, Kindle loc. 6504.

⁷²⁰ Tsahor, “Hebrew Encyclopedias,” 66. See chapter 2, “A Ring of Conspirators: The Bnei Moshe Society,” of Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*.

⁷²¹ See chapter 2, “A Ring of Conspirators: The Bnei Moshe Society,” of Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*.

⁷²² See chapter 6, “An Elusive Supremacy,” of Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*.

⁷²³ Admittedly, Zipperstein refers to this view as “a gesture of considerable generosity” (Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, Kindle loc. 6532).

United States in 1908,⁷²⁴ and in 1909 he wrote an article for the Warsaw daily *Ha-Boker*, in which he addressed Tawiw's criticism.⁷²⁵

Ben Avigdor agreed that as long as Eisenstein was still working on his Hebrew encyclopedia—and the work would take a few more years—it would be impossible to work on an “improved encyclopedia.”⁷²⁶ And yet he suggested that a great role awaited the *Ozar Yisrael*: “It will be a source of abundant and rich material for whoever edits a new Hebrew encyclopedia.” Eisenstein was deserving of applause, but he did not receive it, because “our power to be negative is greater than it is to be positive ... see how great is our courage when it comes to destroy, to demolish, to invalidate and how feeble we feel when it comes to build, to establish, and to enact.” He encouraged readers to ignore the shortcomings of the *Ozar Yisrael*,

for with all its failings and flaws, especially its extreme Orthodoxy on the topic of biblical criticism and other things, **ultimately it is our first Hebrew encyclopedia**,⁷²⁷ and the first encyclopedias in other languages are also far from perfect ... Behold, J. D. Eisenstein, with his own money and energy, without any help or support from others, established this encyclopedia and continues to publish it. He did not deserve all the mockery and derision from H. Tawiw.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁴ As Jewish printing houses began to discover America, such visits were not uncommon. See Hagit Kohen, *Nifle'ot 'olam ha-hadash: Sfarim ve-kor'im be-yidish be-artzot ha-brit 1890–1940* (Ha-universita ha-ptuha, 2016), esp. 66–69.

⁷²⁵ Ben Avigdor (Abraham Leib Shalkovich), “Ha-biblioteka ha-g'dola,” *Haboker*, vol. 1, 1909, 86–87. The article was in response to Tawiw's criticism of an anthology that Ben Avigdor was publishing, but he used the article to also address Tawiw's criticism of the *Ozar Yisrael*.

⁷²⁶ The Hebrew is *intzeklopedia ivrit metukenet*.

⁷²⁷ Bold in original.

⁷²⁸ Ben Avigdor, “HaBiblioteka HaGedola,” 86.

This practical perspective reflects the sensible approach of a book publisher and the interests of an investor, for Ben Avigdor was both these things. One outcome of his 1908 visit to the United States was that Toshiya opened a branch in New York City. Another outcome was that Eisenstein engaged Toshiya to sell the *Ozar Yisrael* in Europe. And so, when Ben Avigdor defended Eisenstein, he was not a disinterested party but someone who wanted the work to sell. This was no secret, for countless advertisements in the Hebrew press in Europe stated that the *Ozar Yisrael* could be procured through its official agent, Toshiya.⁷²⁹ Upon checking the *Ozar Yisrael*, one sees that Ben Avigdor⁷³⁰ and Toshiya⁷³¹ both have entries. Zvi Hirsch Bernstein, another Hebrew publisher and Eisenstein's early collaborator, wrote the entry on Ben Avigdor. Bernstein died in 1907, and the entry appeared in volume 3, which was published in 1909. This may suggest that from the beginning Eisenstein and/or Bernstein were hoping for some type of collaboration between Ben Avigdor's press and the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Ben-Avigdor's defense of the *Ozar Yisrael* was not an act of charity. A letter from Eisenstein recalls Ben Avigdor's insistence that the sluggish sales of the *Ozar Yisrael* were not on account of the price he was charging. Eisenstein added that even if sales were slow because the work was too pricey, Ben Avigdor wanted a large profit, and so he would not

⁷²⁹ Advertisements that linked the work to *Toshia* began as early as June of 1908. See *Hed HaZman* (June 30, 1908), 4.

⁷³⁰ Zvi Hirsch Bernstein, "Ben Avigdor (Avraham Leib Shalkovich)," *OY* 3:102.

⁷³¹ B. M., "Toshiya, Hebrat," *OY* 10:245. The author was listed as "B.M.," which was the anonymous team of helpers that Eisenstein used, discussed in chapter 2.

reduce the price.⁷³² Whatever differences they had, they managed to put them aside. Ben Avigdor visited New York City in 1913 and attended the festive dinner at Eisenstein's home that celebrated the completion of the *Ozar Yisrael*. Around that time, Eisenstein sold Ben Avigdor seven hundred sets of the encyclopedia. The pages were printed in New York City, and Toshiya would bind the work in its central office in Warsaw. Payment was in the form of a Bill for Collection. The advent of World War I complicated payment, but after the war they came to an agreement.⁷³³

Defending the *Ozar Yisrael*: America, Apologetics, and the Secret of Success

Tawiow complained about those who made a pragmatic decision to support the *Ozar Yisrael*, saying: "It is better that we should have a bad Hebrew encyclopedia, than that we should have no encyclopedia at all."⁷³⁴ The pragmatic decision to support the encyclopedia came in different hues. Subscribing to the work, advertising it, and writing for it were all ways for people to show their support. However, after the negative reviews that appeared, defending the *Ozar Yisrael* in the Hebrew press was the ultimate way to support Eisenstein's work.

The negative reviews were few. Tawiow, it has already been shown, published one in *Ha-Zman* (1907) and another over two installments in *Ha-Zfira* (1912). *Ha-shiloah* also published a negative review in 1907, which is discussed below. This does not seem like

⁷³² Eisenstein to Landau, May 30, 1911. ARC 798, box 2, folder 42, Landau Papers, NLI.

⁷³³ Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronotay*, 114–15.

⁷³⁴ Israel Hayim Tawiow, "Od al ha-Encyclopedia ha-Ivriti," *Ha-Zfira*, February 14, 1912, 1.

much, but it represented the full force of the Hebraist movement. Therefore, to defend the *Ozar Yisrael* was an act of solidarity with a beleaguered project that was disenfranchised from “the establishment.” The mainstream Hebrew press had not defended or endorsed the *Ozar Yisrael*.

In defending the *Ozar Yisrael*, Eisenstein was not alone. Others felt the same way, and they were not going to allow this traditional encyclopedia to be dismissed. Gripped by a polemical spirit, they attacked the band of “freethinkers” for whom the *Ozar Yisrael* would never be good enough. Yet, unwittingly, the defenders of the *Ozar Yisrael* proved Tawiw’s main point: the *Ozar Yisrael* was a sectarian work designed for the Orthodox segment of the Jewish community. The proof is that the Hebrew newspapers that reliably defended the *Ozar Yisrael* were *Habazeleth*,⁷³⁵ *Ha-mitzpe*,⁷³⁶ and *Ha-modia*.⁷³⁷ These papers were not prestigious, their circulation was low, and, most significantly, they were Orthodox. The one exception was a pair of articles that Judah Leo Landau, Eisenstein’s most trusted confidante, wrote for *Ha-tzfira* in early 1911.⁷³⁸

On November 13, 1908, a defense of the *Ozar Yisrael* appeared in *Ha-mitzpe*, when

⁷³⁵ See “Ozar Yisrael,” *Habazeleth*, April 15, 1908, 4. The article was signed “Ben Yair,” and the identity of this contributor is unknown.

⁷³⁶ See for example, Meir Eliezer Rapaport-Hartstein, “Iyyun b’Sefarim Hadashim,” *Ha-Mitzpe*, May 23, 1913, 5.

⁷³⁷ See, for example, the unsigned article “Takh Me’rot Eynehem” in *Ha-Modia*, March 21, 1912, 2. The title is taken from Isa 44:18: “They have no wit or judgment: Their eyes are besmeared, and they see not; Their minds, and they cannot think.”

⁷³⁸ Judah Leo Landau, “Ozar Yisrael,” *Ha-tzfira*, February 1, 1911, 1–2, and Judah Leo Landau, “Teshuva Ketzara,” *Ha-tzfira*, April 28, 1911, 3. Eisenstein was deeply grateful to Landau for these articles; see Eisenstein to Landau, April 1, 1912, ARC. 4* 798, section (sidra) 2, folder 42, Landau Archive, NLI.

its column on new books reported that volume 2 of the *Ozar Yisrael* had just arrived.⁷³⁹

Instead of telling readers something about the volume, the few short and unsigned paragraphs focused on attacking those who rejected the *Ozar Yisrael*. They were described as “the modern Hebrew masklim of Russia,” and the article derided them for wanting an encyclopedia that would use the lens of Voltaire, Adolf von Harnack, Friedrich Delitzsch, and Wellhausen to study Judaism and Jewish history. These men, the article asserted, wanted to undermine Christianity, but lacking the courage to attack it directly, they took aim at Judaism, hoping that by shaking her foundations they could also cause Christianity to fall.

The article argued that embracing their approach was a terrible mistake on two levels. As a rule, one does not embrace one’s detractors; additionally, the scholarship and conclusions of these detractors remained uncertain.

Not only is it shameful for us to cling to the approach of these haters of ours, who are intent on damaging and stealing everything from our hands and scorning all of our national assets, but there is also no agreement among them: What this one builds this one destroys, and every day there arises a new approach in Bible criticism, and how is it possible to include all this in an encyclopedia? Therefore, the author did well in that when it came to topics of Torah and history, he clung to the path of the tradition, and nonetheless he did not hold back from including also those opinions of the critics as a scientific concept that is relevant for us, and the one who sees it loses nothing.⁷⁴⁰

The new generation of Hebraists moved away from the enlightenment project to embrace a national identity. If the encyclopedia was to serve them, it could not side with those trying to strip away the unique genius of the Jewish people. No national project of the Jewish people

⁷³⁹ “Sefarim Hadashim,” *Ha-Mitzpe*, November 13, 1908, 5–6. The section that deals with the *Ozar Yisrael* is on p. 6.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

could embrace those who were trying to destroy its cultural heritage. This was a disingenuous argument, since it was the cultural nationalists themselves who were embracing biblical criticism.

None of the people mentioned above (Voltaire, Adolf von Harnack, Friedrich Delitzsch, and Wellhausen) have individual entries in the *Ozar Yisrael*, but in the entry on biblical criticism in volume 3, Eisenstein discusses their general view.⁷⁴¹ According to this review of volume 2, the main value of the *Ozar Yisrael* lay in the way it handled biblical criticism. The review presented the encyclopedia project as a battle between those who endorsed biblical criticism and those who rejected it and maintained that in rejecting it, the *Ozar Yisrael* had chosen the right side.

To reinforce this argument, the reviewer introduced the problem of competing and unstable theories of biblical criticism. The review argued that instability was ill-suited to an encyclopedia project, which had to summarize knowledge, and that something in a state of constant flux, like biblical criticism, cannot be summarized. At the same time, it recognized that what the biblical critics offered was a scientific view and that Eisenstein was to be praised for not ignoring it completely.⁷⁴²

The review never applauded Eisenstein for upholding religious principles. Instead, it couched its endorsement in language that was relatable to others. It claimed that the

⁷⁴¹ Eisenstein, "Biblical Criticism," *OY* 3:157–167.

⁷⁴² According to the review in *Ha-mitzpe* on November 13, 1908, Eisenstein released a special pamphlet defending his approach of including biblical criticism in a limited way. In that pamphlet, he characterized his opponents as the "truth seekers" for whom the most superficial line from some anti-Semitic critic was sufficient to destroy Judaism. This pamphlet has not been located.

encyclopedia did not accept unproven theories and that it eschewed an approach that minimized the unique cultural assets of Jewish national life. At the same time, it maintained that the work was balanced because it did not completely ignore academic approaches to the Bible. Never admitting that it backed the encyclopedia because of its traditional views, the review looked for neutral and objective reasons why the *Ozar Yisrael* deserved support. The result was that this review, like most others, was an exercise in apologetics.

When the second volume of the *Ozar Yisrael* appeared in 1908, it was again welcomed by apologists. They agreed that it had something for everyone—“rabbi, preacher, writer, critic, and lover of Hebrew literature”—and *Habazeleth* pronounced it to be “truly a popular work that must be found in each Jewish home.”⁷⁴³ But after the initial excitement over the work subsided, it was easier to evaluate it and perceive its faults. Even if no one protested its success, the work’s uneven quality was frustrating. As more volumes appeared, everyone saw the amateur nature of this enterprise, which one man was driving ferociously quickly: by 1910, four volumes had appeared in four years.⁷⁴⁴ Now people realized that Eisenstein had the mettle to finish the project, and they beseeched him to slow down and improve the quality of what he was producing. They wanted cosmetic changes: topics that were indexed and arranged more clearly, better balance between the entries, less sloppiness with dates and sources, and for Eisenstein to write fewer entries. However, they did not seek a reorientation of the work’s ideology. Quite the opposite: because of its traditional

⁷⁴³ “Ozar Yisrael,” *Habazeleth*, April 15, 1908, 8.

⁷⁴⁴ Vol. 1 (1907), vol. 2 (1908), vol. 3 (1909), and vol. 4 (1910).

framework, they wanted the work to succeed.

Reflecting this trend are the reviews written by Meir Eliezer Rapaport-Hartstein. A relatively unknown businessman-cum-scholar based in Satoraljaujhely, Hungary,⁷⁴⁵ he was a regular contributor to, and reviewer of, the *Ozar Yisrael* from the fourth volume onward.⁷⁴⁶ For example, in his first review, he discussed the entry “Zohar,” which Eisenstein wrote. After praising his scientific approach, which proved the antiquity of the Zohar and precluded the authorship of Moses de Leon, he showed that the entry was deficient.⁷⁴⁷ It had omitted important information, such as the fact that Nahmanides also mentioned the Zohar. On the big question—in this instance the antiquity of the Zohar—he wanted no change. At the same time, he still found a way to criticize the work—but the criticism was impotent. Eisenstein had defended the antiquity of the Zohar, and for him this was so important that any other criticism became limp. And the cosmetic criticism that he offered was bookended with panegyrics to the *Ozar Yisrael*. It ended on this positive note:

Most words in the book are full of pleasure, according to the style of his language, which is straightforward and crisp, and the conservative spirit hovers over the surface of the topics so that in this way it may be a popular work even for our brethren who are zealous and God-fearing.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁵ Shlomo Spitzer, ed., *The Jewish Communities in Hungary—1944: Orthodox Communities, Rabbis, Yeshivot* (Heb.) (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 2009), 400. A judge on the rabbinical court of the Status Quo community of Satoraljaujhely, Izidor (Israel) Goldberger, was a contributor to vols. 3–10, inclusive. It is plausible that he encouraged Hartstein-Rapaport to join him as a contributor.

⁷⁴⁶ Eisenstein included a list of contributors in the front of each volume; there is no list of what each contributor wrote. In every volume beyond volume 4, Rapaport-Hartstein is listed as a contributor. Rapaport-Hartstein was one of three names prominently displayed on the title page of vol. 5. Chapter 2 explains how this came to be.

⁷⁴⁷ Meir Eliezer Rapaport-Hartstein, “Iyyun b’Sefarim Hadashim,” *Ha-Mitzpe*, September 16, 1910, 6.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

His 1911 review of volume 5 opened with the realization that the *Ozar Yisrael* was going to survive:

The fifth volume that is placed before us, which is half the work of ten volumes, guarantees us that the destiny of this work will not be like the destiny of so many other anthologies, in which two or three letters of the alphabet were printed and then they ceased ... The succession of the last volumes shows us ... that the industriousness of the editor can be relied upon that it will not be too soon before all the volumes will appear one after the other in their correct order and full of majesty.

Only after expressing confidence in the work's viability does he state:

Even so, the truth is dearer to us than anything else, and we will also jot down the few deficiencies that arose before us when we read it.⁷⁴⁹

This review ended with Hartstein-Rapaport praising Eisenstein for defending scripture and rabbinic literature. Later that year, he received and reviewed volume 6,⁷⁵⁰ and in 1912, he reviewed volume 7.⁷⁵¹ By now, he had reviewed four volumes of the *Ozar Yisrael* in less than two years. Every review followed the same basic format: cosmetic criticism sandwiched between effusive praise. This review did not deviate from that format, except in the middle, when there was a desperate, shrill call for Eisenstein to slow down:

Certainly, we have already stated in our judgments of earlier volumes that a great amount the editor writes on his own to the point that because of the great burden and the great amount of material to work on he passes over some entries in a superficial manner, and similarly, other writers also sometimes write without appropriate seriousness. Were the editor to listen to our advice, he would slow down with the publication of the coming volumes and not go as fast as he has announced in his letter to his contributors, which stated that

⁷⁴⁹ Meir Eliezer Rapaport-Hartstein, "Iyyun b'Sefarim Hadashim," *Ha-Mitzpe*, March 3, 1911, 5.

⁷⁵⁰ Meir Eliezer Rapaport-Hartstein, "Iyyun b'Sefarim Hadashim," *Ha-Mitzpe*, November 10, 1911, 6.

⁷⁵¹ Meir Eliezer Rapaport-Hartstein, "Iyyun b'Sefarim Hadashim," *Ha-Mitzpe*, July 5, 1912, 5–6.

he will finish all the volumes before Rosh Hodesh Elul 5673 [September 3, 1913].⁷⁵²

In previous reviews, Hartstein-Rapaport did not recommend to Eisenstein that he slow down. However, the archives demonstrate that Eisenstein maintained a web of communication with all manner of people, and it is likely that in some private communication he recommended a slower pace. The frustration expressed here was building up for some time, but only now did he share it with the public. For his part, Eisenstein let nothing slow him down, and by May of 1913, Hartstein-Rapaport wrote a review of volume 9.⁷⁵³ This was his final review, and he remained loyal to the *Ozar Yisrael*, praising Eisenstein as one who “recognized the truth and accepted it from whoever stated it.” Thus, by the end, the *Ozar Yisrael*’s defenders were satisfied with the work, although they knew that their champion had not delivered a flawless encyclopedia.

Landau’s reviews in *Ha-Zfira* did not engage in apologetics or appeal solely to the reader’s emotions. Without mentioning Tawiw’s name, he addressed the claim that the work was insufficiently scientific and that it was written for an Orthodox audience:

There are those who claim that the *Ozar* is designed specifically to please the wishes of the pious, that it clings to the faith and opposes the scientific investigations of the scholars of the contemporary period. Truly, this claim is a libel based on a wrong opinion regarding the concept “scientific.” Are essays by Bacher, Harkavy, and other such scholars not scientific? Are essays that deal with the Torah of Israel, the books of the Bible, and questions relating to religion and Judaism that do not follow the spirit of the scholars of the world, who are known to be anti-Semitic, not scientific?⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵² Ibid., 5.

⁷⁵³ Meir Eliezer Rapaport-Hartstein, “Iyyun b’Sefarim Hadashim,” *Ha-Mitzpe*, May 23, 1913, 5.

⁷⁵⁴ Judah Leo Landau, “Ozar Yisrael,” *Ha-tzfira*, February 1, 1911, 1–2.

Landau challenged the use of the term “scientific,” insisting that it not be reserved only for anti-Semitic scholars, and he readily pointed to the scientific scholars who wrote for the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Is it not a wonder that a time when some of the readers or random critics go looking for faults in the *Ozar*, well-known scholars come and commend and praise it? Well known scholars like Bacher,⁷⁵⁵ Harkavy,⁷⁵⁶ Poznanski,⁷⁵⁷ Guttman,⁷⁵⁸ and others ...

At the same time, he lamented the work’s lacunae, noting that Naphtali Hirz Wessely’s entry was far too small and that it was disappointing that a great scholar like Franz Delitzsch was completely omitted. However, there simply was not enough room in ten volumes, each being three hundred and twenty pages, to include everything. And he acknowledged that to enlarge the encyclopedia would be impractical, asking rhetorically, “Where are the Hebraist buyers prepared to pay for a larger edition?”⁷⁵⁹

In his correspondence, Eisenstein admitted that the *Ozar Yisrael* was not perfect. And, he noted, no reviewer argued that the work was perfect; they defended it because it was “good enough” and argued that for this reason alone it deserved support. Landau argued that the contemporary Jewish community was much smaller and of more modest means than that of Great Britain of 1771, when the *Encyclopedia Britannica* first appeared. Yet when the

⁷⁵⁵ Wilhelm Bacher contributed to vols. 3–10.

⁷⁵⁶ Albert Harkavy contributed to vol. 4.

⁷⁵⁷ Samuel Poznanski contributed to vols. 2–10.

⁷⁵⁸ Michael Guttman (1872-1942) contributed to vols. 4–6.

⁷⁵⁹ Landau, “Ozar Yisrael,” 2.

Encyclopedia Britannica was first produced, it only numbered three volumes, and now Eisenstein was producing an encyclopedia of ten volumes.⁷⁶⁰ Were the Hebraist community not so fickle and unreliable, they would be celebrating this feat. Nothing had really changed since his days in Vienna,⁷⁶¹ where he witnessed the humiliation that Salomon Mandelkern (1846–1942) endured to find subscribers to his *Heikhal Ha-Kodesh* (1896); and then there was Alexander Kohut (1842–1894), who also struggled valiantly to sell his *Aruk Ha-Shalem* (1878-1892). These two works, like the *Ozar Yisrael*, were reference works. *Heikhal Ha-Kodesh* was a biblical concordance that superseded previous concordances and followed new philological methods; Mandelkern worked some two decades on it.⁷⁶² The *Aruk Ha-Shalem* was a critical and updated edition of a medieval Talmudical dictionary.⁷⁶³ Both these works were exceptional achievements, yet the Hebraist community had not supported them—and now they were not supporting Eisenstein.⁷⁶⁴

Landau's review of the *Ozar Yisrael* occupied the front page of *Ha-Zfira* and opened with a grievance: there was a lack of interest in the *Ozar Yisrael*.

In a few more weeks there will be in our hands the fifth volume of the Hebrew encyclopedia, and with it half of this mammoth work will be completed and

⁷⁶⁰ Landau, "Ozar Yisrael," 1.

⁷⁶¹ Between 1899 and 1901, Landau studied in Vienna at the Israelitische-Theologische Lehranstalt, from which he was ordained. See Zvi Lifshitz "Landau, Yehuda Leib," *OY* 6:52–53.

⁷⁶² See Hans H. Wellisch, "Hebrew Bible concordances, with a biographical study of Solomon Mandelkern," *Jewish Book Annual* 43 (1985): 56–91, esp. 66–71.

⁷⁶³ Ismar Elbogen, "Alexander Kohut 1842–1942" *American Jewish Year Book* 44 (1942): 43–80, esp. 75–76 and n8.

⁷⁶⁴ Landau, "Ozar Yisrael," 1.

half of the alphabet—but among us there is no discussion and nobody writes anything about this project, whether for bad or for good. I remember the commotion that many stirred up, the shouts they raised in the English newspapers. At the time that the sixth volume of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was about to be finished, all the trumpets blasted a victory cry for the spirit and ethics. Why is that that only a Hebrew encyclopedia, the first that we have in our downtrodden literature, leaves no impression?⁷⁶⁵

This grievance stemmed from the fact that many writers simply ignored the *Ozar Yisrael*. For example, *Ha-Po'el Ha-Tza'air*, a paper aimed at the workers who arrived as part of the Second Aliyah to Palestine, published an article in 1912 entitled “The Needs of Hebrew Literature” that never mentioned the *Ozar Yisrael*. This omission was particularly egregious since the article raised the issue of a Hebrew encyclopedia:

We are reading in some newspapers that in some quarters there is an awakening, to grow our literature by establishing large funds and offering prizes to authors and similar things. There is no need to say that such things are able to bring a great benefit to our literature, to the creation of scientific Hebrew literature and particularly a Hebrew encyclopedia, for it is already the time to provide such an item in our national tongue with the assistance of expert scholars, after the creators of a Hebraic encyclopedia have shown the way in the English and Russian languages.⁷⁶⁶

At this point, the *Ozar Yisrael* was nearing completion, and there were a few newspaper articles about it, yet it made no impact on the writer. He assumed that there remained a need for a Hebrew encyclopedia and that no such “item in our national tongue” exists. This is exactly what Landau meant when he complained of people not paying any attention to the work.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁷⁶⁶ Alexander Ziskind Rabinovitz, “Tzorhei ha-sifrut ha-ivrit,” *Ha-po'el ha-Tza'air*, November 1, 1912, 15.

Landau's complaint that people were not paying enough attention to the *Ozar Yisrael* relative to its importance was something he had felt for some time. Ahron Leib Bisco, a Hebrew educator and author, wrote about a conference held on May 30–31, 1909, in Manchester to discuss the future of Hebrew literature. He was generally unhappy about that meeting and added that

all the speeches and arguments over the two days were pointless and thoughtless. However, of all of them, the final speech by Dr. Landau stands out for being so appalling. He spoke on the topic of the “new literature,” and since this fellow had already published a few books, we were hoping to hear an interesting speech—but our hope was for naught... He offered a full-throated pronouncement that in our new Hebrew literature there was not even one important work save the great Hebrew dictionary of Ben-Yehuda and the American *Ozar Yisrael*, which were both being published at present.⁷⁶⁷

Landau argued that there was nothing about the work that justified ignoring it; the fault lay with the Hebraist public, which was allowing it to go unnoticed. Proof of the Jewish community's lack of commitment to its own literature could be seen in the example of Isidore Singer, who could only find a Christian publishing house (Funk and Wagnalls) to publish the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. In this regard, Landau agreed with Tawiw: the Hebraist public was unreliable. But whereas Tawiw blamed them for buying the work and not thinking critically about it, Landau blamed them for not showing sufficient interest in or excitement about the work.

⁷⁶⁷ A. L. Bisco, “Ha-veda ha-Manchesterit,” *Ha-Zvi*, June 21, 2009. Herman Adler and Moses Gaster, two leading Rabbis of the United Kingdom, attended this meeting. Gaster is described as “one practiced in remaining silent,” who “said nothing also at this occasion.” Earlier, it was pointed out that Gaster had been approached on numerous occasions to contribute to the *Ozar Yisrael* but kept his distance.

Strange Partners: Defenders of the *Ozar Yisrael* and the Promotion of America

Defenders of the encyclopedia were put in an ironic position. They were celebrating a traditional encyclopedia that was born on a new and foreign shore. This led them to celebrate America's rising Jewish star and rejoice in the knowledge that it would bring all manner of gifts to Jewish life, including encyclopedias. People knew that through the *Ozar Yisrael*, America was supplying its second encyclopedia to the Jewish world.

American Hebraists were aware of this achievement. In April 1906, the American Hebrew paper *Ha-Leom* (The Nation) published a letter from Abraham Elijah Harkavy (1835–1919) in which he remarked that “whereas in the past we said about *Hokhmat Yisrael* that it is not found across the sea, for its inhabitants are dry bones and do not possess a Jewish spirit, at this time we see that a spirit of love for Israel and her language, her Torah, and her wisdom, has been breathed into them.”⁷⁶⁸ This letter was recalled in June 1906, when the same newspaper ran a front-page article on the *Ozar Yisrael*. It pointed out that the *Ozar Yisrael* is the sort of development that prompted Harkavy to recognize that Hebraism was growing in America and reminded its readers that only in “the land of shekalim” did Isidore Singer achieve his dream of a Jewish encyclopedia.⁷⁶⁹ Overseas, a keen eye observed that America's growing role in the global Jewish community was not limited to encyclopedias (which, one could argue, was a function of America's better financial situation). In an overview of world Jewry in 1906–1907, the *Ozar Yisrael* was presented as

⁷⁶⁸ Abraham Elijah Harkavy, letter to the editor, *Ha-Leom* (The Nation), April 19, 1906, 1. The letter, dated March 14, 1996(!) was addressed to Hirsch Bernstein, who is mentioned earlier as the treasurer of the *Ozar Yisrael*.

⁷⁶⁹ “Ozar Yisrael,” *Ha-Leom* (The Nation), June 7, 1906, 1.

just one of the achievements of Jewish life that had unfolded in America in the last year.

A happy vision in the last year was the diaspora of Ariel⁷⁷⁰ that is in America. The nationalist awakening in the center of the European diaspora passed there with wondrous speed, like an electric current, and is creating tremendous excitement.⁷⁷¹

A nationalist awakening was taking place in America, and this overview bore witness to it.

The number of Zionist organizations in America was growing, as was the number of her delegates to the Eighth Zionist Congress, and prominent American Jews like Solomon Schechter endorsed Zionism. In this land of business, American rabbis were willing to sacrifice their jobs rather than renounce their nationalist convictions,⁷⁷² Jewish pupils went on strike to protest the public schools,⁷⁷³ a unified and national Jewish political organization was created,⁷⁷⁴ and a Jewish University was founded in 1907.⁷⁷⁵ Against this backdrop of seemingly unrelated accomplishments, the *Ozar Yisrael* was also mentioned. The flowering of Jewish life in America showed that the *Ozar Yisrael* was not a fluke or some isolated incident of American wealth mimicking and outmaneuvering Europe on the field of literature; it was part of a series of events that showed a maturing of Jewish life in America.

⁷⁷⁰ A synonym for Jerusalem.

⁷⁷¹ Moshe Kleinman, "Shnat 5667," *Ha-Mitzpe*, September 20, 1907, 3. It is unclear whether the author is the same Moshe Kleinman (1870–1948) who wrote for *Ha-shiloah*.

⁷⁷² Henry Malter, Max Leopold Margolis (1866-1932), and Max Schloessinger (1877-1944) all resigned from the Hebrew Union College in 1907. See Herbert Parzen and Max Margolis, "The Purge of the Dissidents: Hebrew Union College and Zionism," *Jewish Social Studies* 37, no. 3/4 (1975): 291–322. See also Daniel P. Kotzin, *Judah L. Magnes: an American Jewish nonconformist* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2010), 70–72.

⁷⁷³ See Ribak, *Gentile New York*, 88–95 for a discussion of this episode.

⁷⁷⁴ The American Jewish Committee was founded in 1906.

⁷⁷⁵ Dropsie College was founded in 1907.

Before discussing what had taken place in Eretz Yisrael that year, the article predicted a rosy future for American Jewry:

All this shows us that in the near future, America will not only be a great political center for Jews but also a spiritual center. If in the meantime something also happens in Eretz Yisrael, then the Eretz Yisrael Hebrew culture will shine also on the nationalist work in America, and both will catch together into one great light.⁷⁷⁶

This is a vision of two spiritual centers. Predictably, one is Eretz Yisrael, but the other is America. Thus, as early as 1907, a religious newspaper predicted the Jewish world transforming into an ellipse that revolved around two focal points, Eretz Yisrael and—not Europe but—America. Simon Dubnow (1860–1941), a great Russian historian and writer, was promoting a similar vision at this time,⁷⁷⁷ and while it is difficult to know whether Dubnow’s vision was an influence, they both arrived at the same conclusion.⁷⁷⁸ The *Ozar Yisrael* was another sign that America was settling into its new role as a focal point of Jewish life. Thus, the work’s defenders viewed America and the *Ozar Yisrael* as intertwined, but unlike Tawiw, they did not think this was a bad thing. On the contrary, if America could create the *Ozar Yisrael*, then America’s growing role was a positive development for the global Jewish community.

⁷⁷⁶ Kleinman, “Sh’nat 5667,” 3.

⁷⁷⁷ See Simon Rabinovitch, “The Dawn of a New Diaspora: Simon Dubnov’s Autonomism, from St. Petersburg to Berlin,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 50, no. 1 (2005): 267–88.

⁷⁷⁸ The *Ozar Yisrael*’s entry on Simon Dubnow was short and the author was listed as “B.M.,” which was the anonymous team of helpers that Eisenstein used (as discussed in chapter 2). The entry praised Dubnow’s scholarly contributions but made no mention of his affirmation of diasporic Jewish life. See B. M., “Dubnow, Shimon,” *OY* 4:19.

Between Ideology and Success

Two reasons were given for why the *Ozar Yisrael* deserved support, one pragmatic and the other apologetic. The first reason was that this project was succeeding, and it made pragmatic sense to support a project that would succeed. The second reason was apologetic, namely, that although the *Ozar Yisrael* did not completely ignore new and untested theories about the Bible, it respected national Jewish culture. Between these two reasons there was a synergy, creating a cycle of cause and effect between the apologetic and the pragmatic.

Eisenstein's ability to get the job done worked in tandem with his ideology, as it was the work's traditional orientation that led Eisenstein to succeed where others failed. There are no tools to assess this argument, but an editorial footnote to Hartstein-Rapaport's 1911 review made such a claim:

In the Hebrew newspapers that are in Russia, the critics disdain the effort, because they found it edited according to the spirit of the sages who are orthodox in their religion, and because of their anger over this turn, they deny any value to the work and humiliate it to the earth. However, anyone who sees the volumes that have been published until now and places on his heart the sorts of conditions that the editor was forced to endure will find that the critiques have rendered a crooked ruling and did not judge fairly. It is true that the editor did not bring the work to complete perfection, but the one who denies, defames, and loathes every entry, behold, he is exaggerating because of jealousy in his heart and favoritism. Were the *Ozar Yisrael* edited according to the style of radical freethinkers, it would not be sold at all, and it has been a number of times that these have attempted to publish a type of encyclopedia, but they did not publish it, for they also know the truth, that from the maskilim there are no buyers, only writers and critics, smart at finding blemishes in others without fixing anything. All are writers, and in their opinion it is beneath their dignity to spend money. The editor has shown that he knows with whom he is dealing. However, its scientific value has not

been diminished at all just because he is careful about the sensitivities of the God-fearing.⁷⁷⁹

The editor argued that the *Ozar Yisrael*'s ideology and its success were interlinked, attributing the failure of other encyclopedia projects to the fact that they embraced the spirit of "radical freethinkers." Others had posited that success (in America) and failure (in Europe) was a function of geography.⁷⁸⁰ This interpretation argued that success and failure hinged on appreciating or neglecting the Jews who would buy the work, unlike the few freethinking maskilim, who were not going to pay for an encyclopedia, anyway. Eisenstein certainly believed this, for in writing to Landau about Abraham S. Waldstein, who was responsible for a devastating critique of the *Ozar Yisrael*, he described his opponents as poor people who could not afford to buy the *Ozar Yisrael*:

Believe me, my friend, that I am not so troubled by this,⁷⁸¹ for what are these young ones⁷⁸² worth? If his honor knew them, he certainly would not talk to them. I know this young man Waldstein over here, and I know what the nature of this fetus is,⁷⁸³ for he was expelled from the [Jewish Theological] Seminary, and he has absolutely no talmudical knowledge and a little bit of other knowledge. Aside from this, almost all of them are poor, and I am doubtful whether Waldstein can support himself properly. And so it is with all

⁷⁷⁹ Meir Rapaport-Hartstein, "Iyun b' sfarim hadashim," *Ha-Mitzpe*, March 3, 1911, 5.

⁷⁸⁰ Tawiw suggested this when he opened his first review with the words "What the Hebraic Maskilim of Russia achieved in thought but not action: to produce an encyclopedia of *Hokhmat Yisrael* was like pulling hair from milk for American contractors" (Tawiw, "Ozar Yisrael"). The image of pulling hair from milk is a rabbinic expression that describes an easy death (see b. Mo'ed Qat. 28a) and is another example of Tawiw's biting wit, for he is suggesting that America easily produced something that managed to kill any aspiration for a Hebrew encyclopedia.

⁷⁸¹ Eisenstein is referring to the fact that *Ha-tzfira* had declined to print his rebuttal to Tawiw.

⁷⁸² The term "young ones" is not a reference to physical age but to ideology. Let it be recalled that Eisenstein noted that although Tawiw was not young, he could still be counted among the "young ones." See Eisenstein, "Teshuva l'Mevaker 'Ozar Yisrael,'" *Ha-modia*, May 17, 1912, 2.

⁷⁸³ A phrase the m. Ket. 1:8 uses in questioning a pregnant woman about the provenance of her fetus.

the young ones who don't have enough money to buy the *Ozar* and whose only power is in their mouth to speak brazenly.⁷⁸⁴

This shows the extent to which Eisenstein understood the economics of producing an encyclopedia: Ultimately, it would have to be purchased, and he posited that the people who opposed the *Ozar Yisrael* could be ignored because they represented a class of people that could not afford to purchase the work.

The *Ozar Yisrael* was a coup for American Jewry, but for religious Jewry to produce a national work at this time was doubly impressive. While losing influence, religious Jewry still managed to actualize the dream of its ideological opponent. For religious Jews, an encyclopedia edited by a religious partisan like Eisenstein was an unexpected boon, and they rallied around him. In doing so, they unwittingly revealed the encyclopedia's weakness: it had succeeded because of its ideology, when what it had truly wanted to do was to succeed despite its ideology.

Ha-shiloah's *Hurban*⁷⁸⁵ and Hebrew Literature in America

Asher Ginzberg (Ahad Ha'am) had presented the idea for a national encyclopedia in the 1890s in *Ha-melitz*.⁷⁸⁶ Around the same time, he founded the Hebrew journal *Ha-shiloah*

⁷⁸⁴ Eisenstein to Landau, April 12, 1911, ARC. 4* 798, section (sidra) 2, folder 42, NLI. Eisenstein wrote this letter on Passover Eve, one of the busiest days for a traditional Jew, which offers a glimpse of Eisenstein's relentless work ethic.

⁷⁸⁵ The word *hurban* means "destruction" but has a particular connotation as the word used to describe the catastrophe that was the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

⁷⁸⁶ These articles were reprinted in Asher Ginzberg, *Kol Kitve Ahad Ha'am* (Devir, 1949), 104ff.

and stayed on as its editor until 1903,⁷⁸⁷ when Joseph Klausner, his disciple, succeeded him. *Ha-shiloah*'s audience consisted of those interested in Ginzberg's variety of Hebraism and cultural nationalism, and it was the natural heir of his original encyclopedia project. Indeed, it was while serving as the editor of *Ha-shiloah* that Klausner edited the sample volume *Otsar hayahadut: Hoveret l' dugma*. Therefore, how *Ha-shiloah* viewed the *Ozar Yisrael* was important, for without its blessing or tacit approval, Eisenstein would fail at his explicit mission of serving the entire Hebrew reading public and his implicit mission of duplicating the dream of the *Otsar hayahadut*.⁷⁸⁸ To meet this ambitious goal, the "official" review in *Ha-shiloah* would have to conclude, at the very least, that the American *Ozar* was better than nothing. *Ha-shiloah* would have to fall closer to the pragmatic—and mostly Orthodox—camp than to the pugnacious thinking of Tawiw.

Ha-shiloah published Tchernowitz's review of the sample volume of the *Otsar hayahadut*, in which he presented, in passing, a favorable outlook for the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁷⁸⁹ Tchernowitz predicted that the *Ozar Yisrael* would succeed. This meant that Eisenstein would complete the work and that it would have buyers. But this was not necessarily an endorsement of the work, which Tchernowitz had not yet seen. Another way to evaluate the *Ozar Yisrael* is to consider the extent to which it alleviated the need for another

⁷⁸⁷ Steven Zipperstein explained that *Ha-shiloah* and the proposed *Otsar* were "not mutually exclusive; both indeed addressed the same basic cultural concerns." Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, Kindle loc. 2995.

⁷⁸⁸ A prospectus, or *kol kore*, announced the formation of the *Hebrew Encyclopedia Publishing Co.*, which was going to publish the *Ozar Yisrael*. It repeatedly stressed that the work would serve the entire Hebrew reading public. The prospectus can be found in the Jacob Kabakoff Collection, MS-659, box 2, folder 1, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

⁷⁸⁹ This review is discussed in the previous chapter.

encyclopedia. Tawiw argued that a “real” encyclopedia was still sorely needed. However, the histrionic language that he favored—the very opposite of the refined and measured tone that was the hallmark of *Ha-shiloah*—made it easy to dismiss his opinion.

Ha-shiloah did not wait long to review the work, and in volume 19, which appeared in the second half of 1908, it delivered its verdict.⁷⁹⁰ If the review was solicited, then it was solicited wisely. It came from Abraham Samuel Waldstein, an American who was not unknown to the readers of *Ha-shiloah*.⁷⁹¹ He was a graduate of Harvard University and would (or already did) possess a PhD from Columbia University, under whose auspices he published *The Evolution of Modern Hebrew Literature, 1850–1912*.⁷⁹²

Whereas Tawiw’s review oozed bitterness about America and the *Ozar* she had produced, Waldstein was a graduate of America’s finest universities. If Waldstein could put aside his national pride and dismiss the *Ozar Yisrael*, then his verdict could not be belittled. Whereas Tawiw was jealous for the honor of the *Otsar hayahadut*, the dying dream of his Russian brethren, Waldstein, it seems, harbored no such jealousies—not once did he refer to the failed dream of the *Otsar hayahadut*. But for all the calmness of his review, he unflinchingly arrived at the same catastrophic conclusion as Tawiw: the *Ozar Yisrael* was a

⁷⁹⁰ A. S. Waldstein, “Ozar Yisrael: Bikoret,” *Ha-shiloah* 19 (1908): 59–70.

⁷⁹¹ He had previously written about America for the journal. See A. S. Waldstein, “Mi-Amerika,” *Ha-shiloah* 1, no. 12 (1903): 262–65 and 464–70. Interestingly, Waldstein also published an article, “Ha-Yesod ha-Leumi ve-Hayesod ha-Kosmopoloti b’Sifrut ha-Ivrit,” in *Yalkut maarabi: A Literary Annual Issued by the Ohole Shem Association* 1 (1904): 141–45. Eisenstein had an article in that same volume, “She’elah u’teshuvah,” which is a copy of a lengthy question he asked Willowsky on the topic of civil marriage and its implications for Jewish life in America, with Willowsky’s response. See *Yalkut maarabi: A Literary Annual issued by the Ohole Shem Association* 1 (1904): 123–27.

⁷⁹² Abraham S. Waldstein, *The Evolution of Modern Hebrew Literature, 1850–1912* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916).

failure.

He opened with a question: “What is an encyclopedia?”⁷⁹³ It is a work, he answered, that views historical truth as “absolutely necessary,” and therefore it does not display favoritism toward any one group. When an encyclopedia collates various opinions and then arrives at a definitive statement, its value grows. Waldstein contrasted historical truth with *agada*, which he termed “the art within history.” It was the role of *agada* to fill the gaps of history, and while *agada* was necessary, the boundary between historical truth and artful legend must be delineated clearly. Additionally, Waldstein argued that it was no longer possible for one person to be responsible for an entire encyclopedia. As knowledge expanded in the modern era, it was beyond the reach of any single person to master multiple branches of knowledge. Having set out his various criteria for an encyclopedia, Waldstein asked whether “the encyclopedia before us fulfills these demands” and concluded that on each count, the *Ozar Yisrael* failed.

Waldstein knew that a strong selling point of the *Ozar Yisrael* was the great number of important scholars associated with the work. After seeing these illustrious names, a person would automatically think that the *Ozar Yisrael* was a fine encyclopedia that operated according to scientific principles. For example, David Neumark cited the work’s impressive list of contributors as proof that the *Ozar Yisrael* could not be easily dismissed. Writing from Cincinnati, where he was a professor of Philosophy at the Hebrew Union College, Neumark admitted that the fact that many of the *Ozar Yisrael*’s contributors were recognized scholars

⁷⁹³ Waldstein, “Ozar Yisrael: Bikoret,” 59.

had moved him favorably toward the work. As he wrote about the need for another encyclopedia, he remarked:

Stop and consider: the truth is that we already have a Jewish encyclopedia in Hebrew: *Ozar Yisrael*, which is appearing in New York, is almost completely finished. However, people argue that this *Ozar* is not scientifically accurate, it is not *streng wissenschaftlich*. This claim is not completely correct. A number of topics found for themselves in the *Ozar Yisrael* [writers who are] loyal academicians.⁷⁹⁴

Waldstein claimed that of some 800 entries in the first two volumes, Eisenstein wrote exactly 372—almost half. And it was inconceivable for one person, an unknown entity in the literary and academic world, to write so much and so quickly in a variety of disciplines.⁷⁹⁵ Waldstein knew about the scholarly contributions of men like Gotthard Deutsch, Louis Ginzberg, Henry Malter, Isaac Dov Ber Markon, Max Margolis, and Samuel Poznanski. But he dug deeper and discovered that the actual contribution of well-known scholars whose reputations were used to promote the work was very small. They had contributed no more than 25 entries, and many had written barely one entry.

This review appeared in 1908 and only drew on the first two volumes, and it is possible that as time went on, the *Ozar Yisrael* changed its approach. But it is unlikely; Eisenstein never published a list of the contributors alongside the entries they wrote. He always presented two separate lists, one of contributors and another of entries. As a result, without going through the *Ozar Yisrael* page by page and tallying contributors and their

⁷⁹⁴ David Neumark, “Shifat Kalgasim,” *Ha-olam* 7:15 (Tuesday, May 6, 1913), 10.

⁷⁹⁵ Waldstein, “Ozar Yisrael: Bikoret,” 60. The extent to which Eisenstein was known in the academic and literary worlds is debatable. But as he was a prolific writer for *Ha-zfira* and a contributor of over a hundred articles to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, it is difficult to argue that he was unknown.

entries, it was impossible to know who wrote which entries. Waldstein’s allegation—or discovery—that prominent scholars wrote very few entries suggests that Eisenstein was trying to mislead the public about the academic fabric of his work. Since no subsequent review addressed this allegation, it seems that Waldstein uncovered an uncomfortable truth. But this was not the only uncomfortable truth that he uncovered.

Because of the language barrier, a large portion of people using the *Jewish Encyclopedia* could not comfortably use the *Ozar Yisrael* and vice versa. As a result, the extent of Eisenstein’s bald-faced plagiarism of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (among other sources) was not easily recognized. Waldstein was comfortable in both languages and devoted a paragraph to Eisenstein’s reliance on the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. After comparing entries from the two encyclopedias, Waldstein opined that it was apparent that the *Ozar Yisrael* was greatly helped by the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. The majority of the *Ozar Yisrael*, he claimed, was taken from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and without the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, it would have been impossible to create the *Ozar Yisrael*. This did not mean that there was no difference between the two works. Unlike the *Ozar Yisrael*, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* looked for historical truth. Consequently, for ideological reasons (and to hide its thieving tracks), the *Ozar Yisrael* often amputated the entries it took from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*—“sometimes a hand or a leg, or even the brain or the heart!”⁷⁹⁶

In Waldstein’s view, reluctance to engage with biblical criticism gave the *Ozar Yisrael* an Orthodox framework. This did more than just detract from its general worthiness;

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., 70.

it rendered it a pretender to the title “encyclopedia.” Waldstein wrote:

This fact, meaning, the exclusion of free criticism and the refusal of authors of the entries to deal with it even in a negative way, automatically impresses its stamp on the *Ozar Yisrael* and gives it a unique framework, an Orthodox framework. This detracts from the most fundamental characteristic of an encyclopedia: scientific, historical truth and an uncorrupted opinion.⁷⁹⁷

Waldstein did accept that some entries were written in a scholarly and serious manner, but he discounted them for two reasons. Firstly, there were too few of them, and secondly, they were entries that did not magnify the value of a Hebraist-nationalist encyclopedia; they were usually biographical entries or general entries, like “Aristotle,” which Henry Malter wrote.⁷⁹⁸

Waldstein also criticized the work’s emphasis on an ugly variety of Jewish exceptionalism.

Along with the omission of free criticism, in the *Ozar Yisrael* one particularly feels the flattery toward religious sensitivities and the chauvinistic feeling (not nationalism in its authentic sense) in the way that a number of the entries are written in the style of “you [God] have chosen us”⁷⁹⁹ that leads to falsification of historical facts.⁸⁰⁰

The *Ozar Yisrael* committed a double transgression: it disregarded biblical criticism and displayed a bias toward Jewish exceptionalism. These two offenses, overlooking biblical criticism and promoting Jewish exceptionalism, are interrelated. Those who accepted biblical

⁷⁹⁷ Waldstein, “Ozar Yisrael: Bikoret,” 60.

⁷⁹⁸ Zvi Malter, “Aristotle,” *OY* 2:206–16.

⁷⁹⁹ The Hebrew is *ata b'hartanu*, a refrain from many prayers, it is found in bYoma 87b. Secular Jewish nationalists, both Hebraist and Yiddishist, used this term when they wanted to label someone or something narrowly chauvinistic. See Joshua M. Karlip, “Introduction” to Oyf’n Sheydveg, *At the Crossroads: Jewish Intellectuals and the Crisis of 1939*, to be published by Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2020

⁸⁰⁰ Waldstein, “Ozar Yisrael: Bikoret,” 63.

criticism were less enamored by the idea of Jewish exceptionalism. And those who insisted that Jews are exceptional in some way had, at best, a frosty relationship with biblical criticism. Biblical criticism denuded Judaism of anything worthwhile, and it could also strip away the rights of living, breathing Jews. Even Jews who accepted biblical criticism believed that it was being used to corrode Jewish rights. American Reform rabbis struggled with this quandary. Naomi Cohen described their dilemma:

If higher criticism could prove that ... Judaism was one expression of legends and beliefs common to all mideastern cultures, then the primary reason for official ecclesiastical toleration of Judaism throughout the ages evaporated ... according to [Kaufmann] Kohler ... the possible practical application of academic Jew-hatred was frightening. "How much of the innocent blood that ran through the streets of Kishineff on the last Easter Days may be traced to such German professorial sham science, God alone knows." Much as they applauded the theory of critical Biblical study, Reform rabbis had to admit that in the hands of Christian scholars it more frequently than not became an anti-Jewish weapon.⁸⁰¹

Ultimately, Eisenstein had chosen to produce a traditional encyclopedia. From the prospectus onward, he had tried to make the work presentable to as wide an audience as possible. Waldstein was not seduced by the nonsectarian list of writers or apologetics. He understood that despite its modern trappings—he referred to it as a “true American product”⁸⁰²—the *Ozar Yisrael* was a step toward the past. In his concluding paragraph, Waldstein wrote that maskilim from the 1870s and 1880s created the *Ozar Yisrael* and that

⁸⁰¹ Naomi W. Cohen, “The Challenges of Darwinism and Biblical Criticism to American Judaism,” *Modern Judaism* 4, no. 2 (1984): 143–44.

⁸⁰² Hebrew *S'hora amerikanit amitit*. Waldstein, “Ozar Yisrael: Bikoret,” 70. Waldstein used this phrase as he summarized the work in the final paragraph of his review. It has the same ring of encyclopedia qua material culture that Tawlow evoked in his second review. The Hebrew word *s'hora* can be understood as either “product” or “business,” (in Yiddish it has an even more of a connotation of business) concluding that Eisenstein had created a product with which one engages in business.

the work added nothing to the “national capital.”⁸⁰³ To properly explain Waldstein’s conclusion, we must return to a theme that was discussed in the introduction.

Drawing on Shmuel Feiner’s work, the introduction described “maskilic history” as a break with older modes of Jewish historical writing that were subservient to a religious goal. Starting in the 1860s, there was a rebellion against maskilic history, from which “national history” emerged. A later strain of “national history” was “cultural nationalism,” which believed in rebuilding the spiritual capital and values of the nation, and often, this was a secular endeavor. The *Otsar hayahadut* was meant to be a secular work of “cultural nationalism,” and it inspired a response from Eisenstein that he called the *Ozar Yisrael*. This work was nationalist without being secular. Because it remained subservient to religious goals and did not seek a radical break with the past, it cannot be described as “maskilic history.” But it was also removed from secular nationalism in that it did not believe it was necessary to reimagine the spiritual capital of the nation or realign its values.

Part of what makes classifying this work so challenging is the multivalent use of the word “maskil.” By this time, the term had no stable meaning, with each side accusing the other side of being “maskilim.” Eisenstein and his defenders hurled this term at secular nationalists who embraced biblical criticism and discounted the *Ozar Yisrael* for not endorsing it. But secular nationalists also used this epithet to describe Eisenstein, who they saw as hopelessly old-fashioned and non-nationalist. In their eyes, a true nationalist understood that the nation needed to find a new path and dogged persistence in old truths

⁸⁰³ *Ha-rekhush ha-l’umi*.

harmful to the nation. At the same time, Eisenstein sometimes used this phrase approvingly to describe someone deserving of praise.

The easiest way to understand the *Ozar Yisrael* is to consider that it responded to the *Otsar hayahadut* by recreating its form but eschewing its content. The content it presented subscribed to an older set of commitments than those of the *Otsar hayahadut*. When Waldstein charges the *Ozar Yisrael* with not adding anything to the “national capital,” he is accusing it of not reeducating the public toward a new set of commitments. It was not a work of “cultural nationalism” but a work whose contents could have been drawn from writers of a previous generation. It was not a work of contemporary maskilim who counted themselves as the disciples of Ahad Ha’am but a work of maskilim of the previous generation.

A true yearning to delve into historical and scientific truth was not something Waldstein detected in the *Ozar Yisrael*. He ended with the devastating assessment that if the *Ozar Yisrael* was anything, it was sign of the destruction, the *hurban*, of Hebrew literature in America. America produced something that Europe could not have produced, but it was also something that Europe *would* not have produced. An old-fashioned Haskalah, long gone in Europe, had persisted in America into the first decade of the twentieth century, and from it Eisenstein had fashioned the *Ozar Yisrael*. And while the intellectuals resisted and condemned it, the demand for the work was such that it continued to be printed and reprinted deep into the twentieth century.

Lachower’s Lament: The “New Hebrew Literature” in the *Ozar Yisrael*

Whereas Tawiw and Waldstein both focused on the traditionalist orientation of the *Ozar Yisrael*, in his review, the literary critic Fishel Lachower was unfazed by the

encyclopedia's pious orientation.⁸⁰⁴ Instead, he was upset with the *Ozar Yisrael*'s treatment—or lack thereof—of new developments in Hebrew literature. He claimed that Eisenstein's only training for the task of editing an encyclopedia was that he was a “great writer”⁸⁰⁵ for the defunct Hebrew newspaper *Ha-melitz* and that he remained wholly uninterested in contemporary Hebrew literature. At a time when Hebrew literature was flourishing, the *Ozar Yisrael* chose to be a dumping ground—“everything one can find there”—for anything that was old and stuffy, but it failed to give due consideration to the new generation of writers. It skipped over, for example, the literary pioneer Yosef Hayyim Brenner, who was not allocated an entry, and remained faithful to “the gods of those ... who live on the other side of the Atlantic.” Therefore, one could only enter Eisenstein's encyclopedia if one could “reek like the stench of a graveyard.”

The decrying of the old and longing to find something new in the *Ozar Yisrael* was to be expected. Lachower published his review in the short-lived literary journal *Reshafim*, which David Frishman published in Warsaw in the years 1909–1911. The journal in which this review appeared, and the city of Warsaw in which Frishman and Lachower, his protégé, resided, and where *Reshafim* was based, are significant. Warsaw was a city that bestowed on Hebrew writers the freedom necessary to produce new forms of literature.⁸⁰⁶ Frishman

⁸⁰⁴ Yeruham Fishel Lachower, “Reshimot sifrutit II: Ha-sifrut Ha-tze'ira b'Ozar Yisrael,” *Reshafim* (1909): 27–32.

⁸⁰⁵ The Hebrew is *sifra raba*. See b. Sotah 13b, where Rabbinic literature describes Moses this way. Here is it used to mock Eisenstein, suggesting that he views himself as the lawgiver delivering a new Torah whereas all he has actually done is written some columns for the Hebrew press.

⁸⁰⁶ Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 49–50.

himself was such a writer, for “he greatly valued the aesthetic form, rejecting Ahad Ha-Am and Yosef Klausner’s idea that a good writer expresses the national spirit.”⁸⁰⁷ Lachower too is described as one whose “distinct preference is for the innovative literature of Micha Yosef Berdyczewski.”⁸⁰⁸

The preference for literature that stressed the aesthetic form over the national spirit relates to the famous fissure in Hebrew literature carried out in the 1890s in the pages of *Hashiloah*, between Ahad Ha’am and Berdyczewski. Berdyczewski argued that the time had come for a clean break, even rebellion, against the past. The Hebrew language needed to create a new secular world literature that was rooted in the present. Around him gathered a group of *tzeirim*, also known as “young rebels.” This group was diverse and included the poet Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875–1943) and the writers Gershon Shofman (1880–1972), Uri Nissan Gnessin (1879–1913), and Yosef Hayim Brenner. They saw themselves as rebels against Ahad Ha’am’s authority and vision. This debate went back to the beginning of *Hashiloah*, which Ahad Ha’am had wanted to serve as “an identification of continuity with the Jewish legacy.” Not only would Berdyczewski question whether there was such a thing as a continuous Jewish legacy, but his circle revolted against the declaration that “creativity in areas of universal human interest, and all the more so individual personal expression, would be ... off-limits.”⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁷ Hamutal Bar-Yosef, “Frishman, David,” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, accessed September 1, 2019, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Frishman_David.

⁸⁰⁸ Avner Holtzman, “Lachower, Yeruham Fishel,” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, accessed September 1, 2019, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Lachower_Yeruham_Fishel.

⁸⁰⁹ The bibliography on the Ahad Ha’am-Berdyczewski debate is large, and the topic is beyond the scope of this thesis. Here it is quoted to help the reader understand the context of Lachower’s review. The discussion here has

Lachower lamented the meagre space given to the new Hebrew literature in the *Ozar Yisrael*, but he also knew to expect this.

If the nations know not of our existence, it is not terrible, for in the end, they do not need our great wisdom; they have more than enough of their own. However, the young Hebrew literature has no luck— even within [our people]. The Hebrew readers who were raised on “maskilic” literature don’t need it at all, and “our sages” from the time of Ahad Ha’am to our own time only seek to curb its progress ...⁸¹⁰

Lachower here speaks of two camps who both reject the new Hebrew literature. Older maskilim, who certainly had no use for it, and those followers of Ahad Ha’am who ought to know better but still worked to prevent it. What is clear from the review is that the *Ozar Yisrael* was not even “modern” enough to polemicize against the new Hebrew literature. It was not counted among those followers of Ahad Ha’am who worked to prevent it. The new Hebrew literature was absent from the *Ozar Yisrael*, for like the maskilim of old, the *Ozar* simply had no need for aesthetic literature that was devoid of any attempt to uplift the nation.

Even those Hebrew writers lucky enough to be allocated an entry in the *Ozar Yisrael* should not be envied, Lachower explained, “for they all end up with broken bones.”

Eisenstein took these “men of stature” and flattened them, “bending their backs until the bones in their spine are squashed” and then forcing them into “a tight hole that the editor of

drawn on Eliezer Schweid, *The Crisis of Humanism. A Historical Crossroads*, vol. 3 of *A History of Modern Jewish Religious Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 359–85; Arnold J. Brand, “The Ahad Ha-Am-Berdyczewski Polarity,” in *Studies in Modern Jewish Literature* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 277–87; and Avidov Lipsker, “Revolt — An Invented Historical Narrative?” (Heb.) *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* (2008): 3–29.

⁸¹⁰ Lachower, “Reshimot Sifrutit,” 27.

‘the Ozar’ has allocated to them.”⁸¹¹ One of those (un)fortunate enough to enter the encyclopedia was Hayyim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934). By this time, Bialik had published some of his most famous poems, including *Metei Midbar* (1896), *Ha-Matmid* (1901), and *Ba’ir HaHarega* (1903), but Eisenstein’s analysis of Bialik was flat and consisted of comparing him to the earlier Hebrew poet Yehuda Leib Gordon (1830-1892). Done correctly, such a comparison could deliver a fruitful lesson in how Hebrew poetry changed during the nineteenth century. However, the comparison in the *Ozar Yisrael* was superficial and revolved around who was the better poet. Eisenstein explained that each poet excelled in their own way. Bialik was pronounced the more skillful poet, and Gordon was praised since “his purpose was to benefit his people.” To Lachower, this frivolous comparison between the two poets was distasteful—he wondered whether Eisenstein believed that Bialik’s goal was “to harm his people.”⁸¹²

Eisenstein’s preference for Gordon over Bialik is itself noteworthy, for it shows how “underdeveloped” his Hebrew palate was and the extent to which he identified with an older Haskalah. Lachower complained that Brenner was absent from the *Ozar Yisrael*. Although Bialik was just seven years older than Brenner, he still “belonged to the generation before Brenner’s from the standpoint of his Hebrew style and his status.”⁸¹³ Brenner represented the newest generation of Hebrew writers. In the debate that raged between Ahad Ha’am and

⁸¹¹ Ibid., 28.

⁸¹² Ibid., 29.

⁸¹³ Anita Shapira and Anthony Berris, *Yosef Haim Brenner: A Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 63.

Berdycewski, Bialik had aligned himself with Ahad Ha'am and Brenner with Berdycewski. It is not just that in the current debate Eisenstein preferred Bialik over Brenner but that he still maintained his preference for Gordon over Bialik. The old vision of Haskalah that knew nothing of murderous pogroms, such as the one at Kishinev in 1903, and believed that all that was needed was to improve the people via education is what remained sacred to the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁸¹⁴

Lachower offered a brilliant insight into Eisenstein's thinking. Eisenstein had vocalized Asher Ginzberg's pen name as *Ehad Ha'am* and not *Ahad Ha'am*, and Lachower supposed that this vocalization was deliberate. *Ahad Ha'am* means "one of the people," and by choosing it, Ginzberg intimated that he was a common sort of person, a member of the rank and file. However, it has another meaning that suggests something very different, as Steven Zipperstein explains:

A clue as to why Ahad Ha'am chose it may be gleaned from its use in the Pentateuch where it appears only once, in Genesis 26:10: "And Abimelech said, 'What is this that you have done to us? One of the people (ahad ha'am) might easily have lain with your wife and you would have brought guilt upon us.'" Rashi, the seminal medieval exegete, whose commentary adorns the bottom of the standard Jewish bible, explicates the biblical words "one of the people," as "the special one of the people, namely the king." Here Rashi draws on the second century exegete Onkelos whose Aramaic translation is identical. In effect, then, his choice of this pen name—whose initials were identical to those of his Russian name (the Russian "G" transliterates as an "H")—was itself a bid for leadership, for primacy, perhaps even a form of contemporary kingship.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹⁴ There is an entry on Kishinev in the *Ozar Yisrael*. It says nothing of what effect it had on the psyche of the Jewish people but does stress the response of Jews living outside of Russia and refers to President Theodore Roosevelt's efforts on behalf of the victims. See B. M., "Kishinev," *OY* 9:183.

⁸¹⁵ Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*. Kindle Loc. 1184

In other words, *Ahad Ha'am* carries two meanings: the common man and the elevated leader. However, only when the name is vocalized as *Ahad Ha'am*, and not *Ehad Ha'am*, does it carry both meanings.⁸¹⁶ Lachower explained that Eisenstein vocalized Ginzberg's pen name to *Ehad Ha'am* as a clever protest against his claim to leadership. However, the sly downgrading of *Ahad Ha'am* was not done because Eisenstein sided with the next generation, which was rebelling against him. It was done because his thinking was so far behind that he was not yet at the point where he was ready to accept *Ahad Ha'am's* ascendant trajectory.

Although the *Ozar Yisrael* hardly discussed the next generation of writers, what it did say about them was even more troubling to Lachower. Micha Joseph Berdyczewski had been a contributor to the *Ozar Yisrael*, and chapter 2 describes the unhappy fallout he had with Eisenstein when their relationship ended in the middle of 1908. Volume 3 of the *Ozar Yisrael* was published in 1909, and that volume contains an entry on Berdyczewski.⁸¹⁷ Its appraisal of Berdyczewski is not glowing, and Lachower references it. To complicate matters, Zvi Hirsch Bernstein was the author of the entry, and he died in 1907, before the relationship between Eisenstein and Berdyczewski had soured. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Eisenstein would have accepted a negative entry about a contributor to the *Ozar Yisrael*. Either the entry found in the *Ozar Yisrael* is the original unedited entry that Bernstein wrote,

⁸¹⁶ See Siftei Hahamim's super-commentary on Rashi Gen 26:10.

⁸¹⁷ Zvi Hirsch Bernstein, "Berdyczewski, Micha Yosef," *OY* 182–83.

and Eisenstein was content to publish it after realizing that Berdyczewski would no longer assist in the *Ozar Yisrael*, or Eisenstein edited the entry after Bernstein died.

Regardless of the provenance of Berdyczewski's entry, Lachower understood that despite a mischievous misreading of Ahad Ha'am's name, the *Ozar Yisrael* showed him a level of respect that it was unwilling to bestow on "the master of *the young men*,"⁸¹⁸ as Lachower termed Berdyczewski. The young men to whom he refers were those, like Brenner, who sided with Berdyczewski in his feud with Ahad Ha'am over the direction of Jewish literature. However, the entry on Berdyczewski made no reference to this polemic that divided Hebraists. Instead, it drew attention to a stance of Berdyczewski's that was controversial but not directly related to his relationship with Ahad Ha'am.⁸¹⁹ When the Romans were destroying Jerusalem, the ancient rabbis favored safeguarding an academy in Yavneh over fighting for Jerusalem. Until Berdyczewski, this stance was viewed positively, for it represented the pragmatic nature of the ancient rabbis. Berdyczewski, however, viewed the Zealots, opponents of the rabbis who wished to save Jerusalem, as the true heroes, for they behaved as normal, healthy human beings who were at one with nature.

This stance is what caused the *Ozar Yisrael* to describe Berdyczewski as "one of the new maskilim, members of a certain known *kloiz*."⁸²⁰ What animated this *kloiz* was a

⁸¹⁸ Lachower, "Reshimot Sifrutit," 31–32.

⁸¹⁹ Berdyczewski rehabilitated a host of "neglected personalities in Jewish history such as the Zealots, Shammai, and Jacob Emden," which was part of his assault on "the tendency towards the imposition of authority over the individual throughout Jewish history." Some view his feud with Ahad Ha'am through this lens; see Band, *Studies in Modern Jewish Literature*, 280.

⁸²⁰ *Kloiz* is a Yiddish word that means synagogue or study house and in later times had the connotation of a Hasidic meeting place. See Adam Teller, "Hasidism and the Challenge of Geography: The Polish Background

disrespect for the exceptional nature of Jewish history and life, for they were all impatient with the rabbis of old. And suddenly, when it came to Berdyczewski, Klausner, the sample editor of the *Otsar hayahadut* who had cleverly asked for a free copy of the *Ozar Yisrael* and whose entry in the *Ozar Yisrael* was a staging ground for Eisenstein to exact a vendetta, became a reliable authority. In the pages of *Ha-shiloah*, Klausner described Berdyczewski as a sophist, and in the entry on Berdyczewski, that charge was repeated once more. Since the *Ozar Yisrael* used Klausner to disparage Berdyczewski, Lachower taunted Klausner and then compared him favorably to Eisenstein:

Therefore, here it is: Berdyczewski is the “greatest Jewish sophist of our day.” Obviously, the court has decided there is no room for questioning, and certainly not when that great man, that man Klausner, has testified. But for this we must be grateful to the author of the *Ozar*: the ruling he issued was short and sweet and he did not trouble us, like that great man, the doctor, to study a little on account of this important topic, the books of Plato, Xeonophon, Kant, Schulze, etc.⁸²¹

Lachower implied that whatever Klausner’s faults were, at least his analysis was grounded in deep learning. Not so the *Ozar Yisrael*, which rendered great people with short judgment that was taken from any source available.

Lachower’s disappointment with the *Ozar Yisrael* related to how disconnected it was from the new generation of Hebrew writers that rebelled against Ahad Ha’am. A rebellion assumes that at some point the target of the rebellion exercised influence, if not authority, over the rebels. (Indeed, originally Berdyczewski himself saw Ahad Ha’am as his mentor and

to the Spread of the Hasidic Movement,” *AJS Review* 30, no. 1 (2006): 1–29, esp. 15, 27. It is extremely ironic to refer to this Neizchian group as a *kloiz*.

⁸²¹ Lachower, “Reshimot Sifrutit,” 31–32.

guide.) This is why the nature of the differences between Berdyczewski's circle and Ahad Ha'am differed from the differences between Eisenstein's *Ozar Yisrael* and Ahad Ha'am. Whereas Berdyczewski rebelled, Eisenstein usurped, for he never accepted the influence or authority of Ahad Ha'am to begin with. To Eisenstein, Ahad Ha'am was just another "one of the people" and not "king of the people." But even so, as Lachower made clear, Eisenstein was closer to Ahad Ha'am's vision than he was to those who rebelled against that vision.

Although this would change when Klausner took over in 1903, under the editorship of Ahad Ha'am, *Ha-shiloah* published almost no Hebrew literature. It was devoted to commentary on either Jewish history or the Jewish condition, and as such, there was a continuum between it and the Haskalah that preceded it. The new Hebrew literature sought to break free from the past and produced modern Hebrew literature that was set in present times. Older Hebrew writers, like Abraham Mapu⁸²² and Yehuda Leib Gordon,⁸²³ had a place in the *Ozar Yisrael*. The most recent Hebrew writers were completely omitted. Just as Eisenstein's work did not penetrate their circles, their works did not penetrate his encyclopedia.

Not only did the works of the new Hebrew writers not penetrate the *Ozar Yisrael*, but it seems that Eisenstein had no desire to even pretend that he was interested in their works. Lachower's review was published in 1909, and in it he mentions that only three volumes had been published thus far.⁸²⁴ It is reasonable to think that Eisenstein was aware of Lachower's

⁸²² Eisenstein, "Mapu, Avraham," *OY* 6:83–84.

⁸²³ Eisenstein, "Gordon, Yehuda Leib," *OY* 3:236–37.

⁸²⁴ Lachower, "Reshimot sifrutit," 28.

review, and there was ample opportunity to exercise some “damage control.” The perfect opportunity presented itself in a lengthy entry on “the new literature,” *Sifrut Ha-Hadasha*, that Judah Leo Landau wrote for volume 7 of the encyclopedia, which appeared in 1912.⁸²⁵ However, even that entry skips over these writers. The final subheading is “The Latest Period” (*Ha-Tekufa Ha-Ahrona*), which does not discuss these new writers. Instead, it discusses the various changes that took place at Toshiya (through a series of mergers, it became Central Publishing in 1911), and what Ahad Ha’am tried to do with *Ha-shiloah* in the 1890s. Yet, toward the end, without mentioning anyone by name, Landau attacks “the young ones” and “the new approach.” He admits that they appear to work hard and publish much—“at the very least, they are tilling the soil to prepare fruit for the future, when there will be years of plenty.” But then he adds:

Despite all their work, this movement and this new period has not given rise to even a single great and lasting work, a book like Isaac Hirsch Weiss’s *Dor Dor v’Dorshov* or a great literary work like [Mapu’s] *Ahavat Zion* ... Sholom Yankev Abramovich [Mendele Mocher Sforim] or the deceased [Solomon] Mandelkorn ... or even writers such as Simon Bernfeld or Zev Wolf Yawitz cannot be counted as one of the young ones. All of these belong to the generation of [Peretz] Smolenskin.⁸²⁶

Even after Lachower decried the lack of attention, the preference for this older Haskalah persisted.

In their reviews, Tawiw, Lachower, and Waldstein critiqued the encyclopedia from different angles. Tawiw attacked it for being too Orthodox and American, Waldstein

⁸²⁵ Judah Leo Landau, “Sifrut ha-hadasha,” *OY* 7:266–73.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, 273.

attacked it for not being scientific enough and as being under the leadership of a single individual who wrote—and often copied—too many entries, and Lachower showed that the *Ozar Yisrael* was out of touch with contemporary Hebrew literature. As much as the possibility of a Hebrew encyclopedia excited these individuals, the *Ozar Yisrael* did not satisfy them. The *Ozar Yisrael* went through multiple printings, and there is anecdotal evidence that many a learned home and Jewish library carried the work. However, at the time it was produced, it failed to win the respect of those people for whom Eisenstein had rendered the *Ozar Yisrael* with a veneer of respectability. The names of scholars who wrote entries and whose names were highlighted as “editors” in the title page, the elegant binding, the many diagrams and pictures—none of these things had the power to sway Tawiw, Waldstein, and Lachower. For these arbiters and those who relied on them, Eisenstein’s lively and entrepreneurial *Ozar Yisrael* was a quiet ship that passed in the night. Instead of lighting the world with knowledge, as the image on the front cover promised, it rehashed old knowledge that had already lost the ability to illuminate. For many, this was good enough, but for many others it would not do. They were after something new, and this was something old covered in a new wrapping.

Good Tidings from Hungary: Michael Guttmann Defends the *Ozar Yisrael*

One of the editors that the *Ozar Yisrael* highlighted on its title page was Michael (Mihály) Guttmann (1872–1942).⁸²⁷ Starting in 1907, Guttmann was an instructor of Talmud at the

⁸²⁷ *OY* 4 (1910).

Budapest Rabbinical Seminary,⁸²⁸ and in 1932 he became its rector, in 1932, a position he held until his death. Guttman took up the cause of the *Ozar Yisrael* twice, once after the seventh volume appeared and once after the penultimate ninth volume appeared. He published the reviews in the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Tzofe Me-Eretz Hagar* (The Review from the Land of Hungary), a journal that Ludwig Blau (1861–1936), another Hungarian scholar, launched in 1911.⁸²⁹ This was a “forum for contributions by Hungarian Jews to worldwide Jewish scholarship,” but soon “Jewish scholars from all over the world began to publish their studies in it.”⁸³⁰ This journal was also important because it “redesigned the linguistic preferences of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* [away from German] in Hungary and elsewhere” and is described as the only Hebrew journal of its day that focused on *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.⁸³¹ Blau preceded Guttman as the rector of the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary, a position that he held from 1914 to 1923, and he too was a contributor to the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁸³²

In his reviews, Guttman had high praise for the *Ozar Yisrael*, which he described as “unparalleled in our Hebrew literature.”⁸³³ The first review focused on Eisenstein’s aim, which was to summarize Jewish history and aspirations. Eisenstein did this by presenting a

⁸²⁸ Tamás Turán, *Modern Jewish Scholarship in Hungary: The “Science of Judaism” between East and West* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2016), 13.

⁸²⁹ Yehiel Mihal HaKohen Guttman, “*Ozar Yisrael*,” *Ha-tzofe me-eretz Hagar* 3 (1913): 164–67; Yehiel Mihal HaKohen Guttman, “*Ozar Yisrael*,” *Ha-tzofe me-eretz Hagar* 4 (1914): 140–42.

⁸³⁰ Moshe Carmilly, ed. *The Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest, 1877–1977: A Centennial Volume* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press for the Alumni Association of the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest, 1986), 172.

⁸³¹ Tamás, *Modern Jewish Scholarship*, 20.

⁸³² He was a contributor to vol. 5, and his name is highlighted on the title page.

⁸³³ Guttman, *Ozar Yisrael* (1913), 164.

large number of biographies. Guttman advised that in order to properly cherish those “busy with the work of gathering and distilling”⁸³⁴ all the relevant information, one must consider “how vast the task is and that it continues to grow daily.”⁸³⁵

The work was not “a summary of that which had been said elsewhere” but an “original work” that “accorded with our current state of scholarship.” As an example of this, he cites the entry “China” in volume 4, which was published in 1910 and whose bibliography included works as recent as 1908.⁸³⁶ Volume 7 carried an additional entry on China.⁸³⁷ While Eisenstein was talented enough to find a way to insert an entry on any topic into any volume of the encyclopedia, the way he did it this time was to run roughshod over the orthography. In volume 6, which was published in 1908, China was spelled *Hina* (הינא), and in volume 7, published in 1912, the spelling changed to *Sinim* (סינימ). One can glean this detail from the review, but Guttman did not focus on this sudden change of orthography.

Earlier, it was shown that in order to please a person whose assistance he sought, Eisenstein would sometimes insert an entry somewhere unlikely or even duplicate an entry. This may be what happened here. The author of the first entry is listed as “N. Menderhowitz” from Stryi (today in Ukraine), and it is difficult to learn anything about him. S. P. Perlmann of London is the author of the second entry, and he was a preeminent Hebraic scholar of the Chinese in his time (not that there were so many). In 1909, he published a Hebrew language

⁸³⁴ Ibid., 165.

⁸³⁵ Ibid., 165.

⁸³⁶ N. Menderehowitz, “Hina” (China), *OY* 4:273–76.

⁸³⁷ S. M. Perlmann, “Sinim” (China), *OY* 8:186–91.

work on the Chinese and devoted a section to the Jews of China.⁸³⁸ Eisenstein may well have regretted giving the entry to Menderhowitz, and the possibility of securing an entry from Perlmann charmed him into duplicating the entry, but this is not what Guttman saw. To him, this duplication proved that Eisenstein was committed to keeping the encyclopedia as up-to-date as possible, and to some extent, these competing interpretations for why the entry was duplicated are not mutually exclusive.

If some reviewers dismissed the *Ozar Yisrael* as being outdated in its approach, Guttman stressed the work's uniqueness as an encyclopedia that was "Hebraic in all its details." Eisenstein had "bestowed on us a completely new encyclopedia, a Hebrew encyclopedia for a Hebraist audience."⁸³⁹ This was no small feat, since it would have been hard not to have been swayed by the English language *Jewish Encyclopedia* that preceded. Somehow, the *Ozar Yisrael* did not fall under its influence and emerged as an original work. In light of Waldstein's earlier review in *Ha-shiloah*, this sentiment is startling, for Waldstein had claimed that much of the encyclopedia was copied from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and this assessment is not incorrect. Indeed, it is not certain that without the *Jewish Encyclopedia* Eisenstein could have produced the *Ozar Yisrael*; he almost certainly could not have done so at the pace that he did. However, Guttman's claim that the *Ozar Yisrael* was independent from the *Jewish Encyclopedia* was not dogmatic, and he explained why he thought so.

⁸³⁸ S. M. Perlmann, *The Jews in China* (London: Probsthain, 1909).

⁸³⁹ Guttman, "Ozar Yisrael," 165.

The introduction to the *Ozar Yisrael* contained a faint comparison between it and the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. What it did not dwell on, Guttman pointed out, is the greater amount of space that the *Ozar Yisrael* devoted to legalistic topics, and this was a crucial difference. Since this area was covered more extensively in the *Ozar Yisrael*, Guttman argued that it was legitimate to view the *Ozar Yisrael* as not only unencumbered by the *Jewish Encyclopedia* but also a superior summary of Jewish life.

Guttman was a talmudical scholar and the rector of a rabbinical school. He believed that Jewish law was “a mirror of metal⁸⁴⁰ of our inner life, and there is no place that is removed or free from it in the Jewish cosmos.” Since Jewish law could only be fully described in a Hebrew encyclopedia, it was natural that the *Ozar Yisrael* outshone the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Furthermore, since a “Hebraist audience”⁸⁴¹ expected a fuller treatment of Jewish law, the *Ozar Yisrael* was more valuable to them than the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. At least as early as his time in the OSS, Eisenstein had been preoccupied with emerging issues and their relationship to Jewish law. When this interest spilled over into the *Ozar Yisrael*, Guttman noticed it and praised the work for dealing with “questions that are current and points of law that have roused the camps of Israel.”⁸⁴² Hungary’s Jewish community was the site of a bitter religious divide, so Guttman was no stranger to the denominational wars.⁸⁴³

⁸⁴⁰ See Job 37:18 and Robert Alter’s comment that in the ancient world mirrors were crafted from metal (bronze) and not glass. Alter Hebrew Bible Norton Kindle Ed. Loc. 96062

⁸⁴¹ The Hebrew is *kehal ivri*.

⁸⁴² Guttman, “Ozar Yisrael,” 166.

⁸⁴³ See Jacob Katz, *A House Divided: Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central European Jewry* (Hanover, NH: University Press, 1998).

He lived in a Jewish community that was split into various camps and taught in a seminary whose founding had elicited opposing reactions,⁸⁴⁴ but in Eisenstein he saw an objective presenter, one who was “ready at his post to present to the readers the different views without favoritism.”⁸⁴⁵

What marks Guttman’s review as different from some of the others is that he is completely silent on the American origin of the work. The elegant outward appearance of the encyclopedia, the artwork, and the inclusion of many statistical tables are all commented on favorably. Guttman clearly understood that the work also played the role of material object:

Also the outward appearance of the *Ozar [Yisrael]* adds beauty to its internal contents and accouters it to anticipate a distinguished place in every house that has a Hebrew bookshelf.⁸⁴⁶

But none of this led Guttman to view the *Ozar* as an “American product.” On the contrary, he described it as part of the renaissance that Hebrew was undergoing. It was created to serve a new generation and did so admirably.

In conclusion, the *Ozar Yisrael* is the most excellent work in our new literature and is the most needed for the new generation. ... encyclopedias are very much needed for the people of our generation and are greatly available in the languages of the enlightened people; only in our Hebrew language was such a work unavailable until now ... it is a good omen for our literature if the appearance of this great work is able to advance so much.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴⁴ See Joseph Schweitzer, “The Seminary in the Responsa Literature,” in *The Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest, 1877–1977*, ed. Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press for the Alumni Association of the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest, 1986), 95–106.

⁸⁴⁵ Guttman, “Ozar Yisrael,” 166.

⁸⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 167. The Hebrew of the final sentence is unclear: “(ל להתקדם)!(ל להקדם) אם חבור גדול כזה יוב) כל כך בהופעתו.”

For Guttman, the work was not out of touch with a new generation; on the contrary, it was exactly what was needed. Instead of claiming, as Lachower had done, that the work was dismissive of the “new literature,” Guttman described as “the most excellent work in our new literature.”

The next time Guttman reviewed the encyclopedia was after two more volumes were published. In this review, he gives examples of entries that discuss topics that were barely covered elsewhere. For example, a lengthy entry on the pilgrimage festivals⁸⁴⁸ that Eisenstein wrote is described as addressing “a topic that had not yet been covered so comprehensively, not even in the English-language *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which the editor mentions as a source in his bibliography.”⁸⁴⁹ Again, Guttman picks up on another duplicate entry. In the first volume of the encyclopedia, there was an entry on “the nations of the world” (*Umot Ha-Olam*), which Eisenstein and Abraham Hayyim Rosenberg wrote.⁸⁵⁰ Volume 8 contains an entry “Nations (Israel among the Nations)” (*Amim [Yisrael ben Ha-Amim]*).⁸⁵¹ Judah Leo Landau debuted in volume 3 of the *Ozar Yisrael*, and, as was shown earlier, Eisenstein allowed him to publish what he wanted whenever he wanted. This is the most likely explanation for why this entry was duplicated. Yet Guttman’s interpretation of the duplication assumes the best about the *Ozar Yisrael*: “In it we see how the editor sought to improve his work and to supplement entries that contain some lacunae.” But these duplicate

⁸⁴⁸ Eisenstein, “Oleh regalim,” *OY* 8:17–23.

⁸⁴⁹ Guttman, “Ozar Yisrael,” 140.

⁸⁵⁰ Eisenstein and Abraham Hayyim Rosenberg, “Umot ha-olam,” *OY* 1:199–203.

⁸⁵¹ Judah Leo Landau, “Amim (Yisrael ben ha’amim),” *OY* 8:92–96.

entries must have appeared glaring to him too, for he recommended that Eisenstein provide an addendum listing, at the very least, “those entries that for whatever reason were supplemented in an erroneous place.”⁸⁵²

Guttman went on to have a distinguished career as a talmudical scholar and leader of Hungarian Jewry, but when he wrote these reviews he was not yet quite so famous—he was barely forty. And yet a review such as this one would have raised Eisenstein’s spirits. Here was an academic who appreciated the work and wrote glowingly about it. The approximate equivalent of Guttman’s institution in New York would have been the Jewish Theological Seminary, whose scholars had stayed away from the project, but here was Guttman defending the work. It is true that as a contributor to three volumes (4–6), he was not a disinterested party. Furthermore, the *Ozar Yisrael* had given him a measure of honor, as Eisenstein listed him on the title page to volume 4. These snippets suggest that Guttman was biased toward the encyclopedia, but they should not be considered the cause of his bias. Other senior scholars in Hungary, such as Wilhelm Bacher and Ludwig Blau, had written for the encyclopedia. These were men cannot be described as fanatically Orthodox—on the contrary, they were representative of the more moderate religious communities in Hungary, and all “were and are counted in the innermost circle of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.”⁸⁵³ These moderates submitted entries to the encyclopedia, and Guttman even defended it, while other Hebraists heaped scorn and derision on it. This demonstrates the extent to which

⁸⁵² Guttman, “Ozar Yisrael,” 141.

⁸⁵³ Tamás, *Modern Jewish Scholarship*, 47.

the *Ozar Yisrael* became a point of division across the Jewish world. Some saw it as a double failure: not only did it fail to deliver the type of encyclopedia that they had wanted to produce, but it also highlighted their own failure to produce a proper encyclopedia. Yet others saw it as a wonderful achievement for American Jews and a herald of hope for Hebrew literature.

Guttman's review also demonstrates that "Hebrew literature" meant completely different things to different people. To the young Hebraists of Russia, it meant Brenner and Berdyczewski, and therefore the *Ozar Yisrael* was a woeful failure. However, to an adherent of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Hungary, far removed from the Russian center of secular cultural nationalist Hebraism, Hebrew literature meant scholarship on such topics as pilgrim festivals. Guttman's favorable view of the *Ozar Yisrael* is another indication of how Eisenstein was more aligned to a mid-nineteenth century maskilic, *Hokhmat Yisrael* ideology.

Conclusion

Isidore Singer's Prediction and the Problem of Neglect

At the *siyyum*, the festive meal celebrating the completion of the *Ozar Yisrael*, Isidore Singer predicted that Eisenstein's work would outlive his own *Jewish Encyclopedia*. This prediction was based on the *Ozar Yisrael*'s use of the Hebrew language, not its inherent value. This half-hearted compliment turned out to be prophetic. Reprinted as often as the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, for many decades the *Ozar Yisrael* continued to arouse interest around the world and was last printed in 1972.⁸⁵⁴

Eisenstein's presence continued to be felt through the many editions of the *Ozar Yisrael* and through his subsequent works. His memoirs, *Otzar Zizhronotay*, are a window into the life of a Jewish immigrant and a treasure trove that scholars continue to consult. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many learned Jewish households owned the *Ozar Yisrael* or knew of a library that did. The rise of his celebrated grandson Ira Eisenstein (1906–2011), a founder of Reconstructionist Judaism and son-in-law of Mordechai Kaplan (1881–1983), also helped to

⁸⁵⁴ The *Jewish Encyclopedia* was reprinted in 1907, 1912, 1916, and 1925 and enjoyed one major reprint when Ktav Publishing House printed two thousand copies of a "photographically reduced edition" in 1965. The *Ozar Yisrael* was reprinted in Berlin in 1924, London in 1935, New York (a new edition by Pardes Publishing House) in 1951, and Jerusalem in 1971 and 1972. See Brisman, *History and Guide*, 33, 39 and Schwartz, *Jewish Scholarship*, 99. In 1917 Eisenstein stated that having published the work twice, he would not be publishing it a third time, which suggests that the 1924 printing in Berlin was a third printing. See "Nishtabru ha-luhot," *Ha-ivri*, April 6, 1917, p.8.

sustain his memory.⁸⁵⁵ Nonetheless, Eisenstein's story has been mostly neglected and it is worth considering why this is so.

The *Ozar Yisrael* Broadens American Jewish History

Studying Eisenstein's path from immigrant, to leader within the Ohole Shem Society, and creator of a Hebrew encyclopedia opens new vistas in American Jewish cultural history. Jeffrey Gurock's seminal essay, *Resistors and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886-1983*,⁸⁵⁶ focused on social history and highlighted variety within the orthodox community. The *Ozar Yisrael* is an example of that same dichotomy from the vantage of cultural history. Within an orthodox framework, Eisenstein created a cultural work – the *Ozar Yisrael* - that accommodated new information, challenged sacred beliefs, and include Jewish scholars across the religious spectrum. Drawing on transnational bonds, the *Ozar Yisrael* remained loyal to an outdated mode of Haskalah, struggled with cultural nationalism, and remained committed to orthodox principles without restricting itself to orthodox writers and information.

This study of Eisenstein fits recent historiography. Annie Polland and Daniel Soyer's *Emerging Metropolis: New York Jews in the Age of Immigration, 1840–1920* argues that New York City was central to the Jewish world, an idea that this study supports.⁸⁵⁷ After

⁸⁵⁵ Mel Scult uncovered correspondence about the Kol Nidre prayer that Ira Eisenstein initiated in 1930 between his grandfather and Mordechai Kaplan. Scult, *American Judaism*, 289.

⁸⁵⁶ http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/1983_35_02_00.pdf, 100-187

⁸⁵⁷ See Annie Polland and Daniel Soyer, *Emerging Metropolis: New York Jews in the Age of Immigration, 1840–1920* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

reading their chapter “Capital of the Jewish World,” it is clear why New York, more than any other city, was home to an upstart effort to create a Jewish encyclopedia. The American promise of freedom led to a declaration of independence from traditional Judaism.⁸⁵⁸ This same promise gave Eisenstein license to believe that alone he could create a work that really ought to have been—and was—the prerogative of more than one person.

New York was capital of the Jewish world, Polland and Soyer argue, because it had more Jews than any other city and because it led relief efforts for Jews abroad. One can add to these hefty accomplishments the Jewish culture that New York’s Jews were exporting. Tony Michels has shown that in the realm of Yiddish Socialism, New York was not just an outpost of European Jewry but an exporter of Jewish culture to Europe.⁸⁵⁹ Yiddish Socialism, Isidor Singer’s *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and Eisenstein’s *Ozar Yisrael* leaven Polland and Soyer’s view of New York as “Capital of the Jewish World.” In a chapter on “Jews and New York Culture,” Polland and Soyer take note of the Hebraists and credit them with “exerting an influence on American Jewish culture—especially in education—disproportionate to their numbers.”⁸⁶⁰ Again the example of Eisenstein, and to some extent the *Ohole Shem Society*, prove how a handful of Hebraists were able to achieve something that defied their numbers.

More recently, Eli Lederhendler’s *American Jewry: A New History* explained the need for a new history of American Jewry.⁸⁶¹ In Lederhendler’s own words, his study is

⁸⁵⁸ Polland and Soyer, “Capital of the Jewish World,” in *Emerging Metropolis*, 137–71, at 138.

⁸⁵⁹ Michels, “Exporting Yiddish Socialism,” 2–3.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁸⁶¹ Eli Lederhendler, *American Jewry: A New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

driven by a vision of “America as part of the Jews’ historical experience—within a longer, larger, non-American canvas.”⁸⁶² The *Ozar Yisrael*, an American work that relied on Jews in overseas lands, supports this vision of American Jewry as part of Jewish history.

Lederhendler’s work transcends the common caricature of Jews as “creators and consumers of ideas and culture” in an array of secular fields, focusing instead on “analysis of Jewish self-representation.”⁸⁶³ He skillfully describes the many cultural achievements of this era, including the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.⁸⁶⁴ This study adds American Hebraists and learned maskilim present on the American scene to that “longer larger non-American canvas” for which Lederhendler searched.

Lederhendler alludes to a tension in the study of American Jewish history. While the rise of ethnic history has admitted Jewish history and culture into American history, Jewish history has not reciprocated and struggles to incorporate American history and culture. The *Ozar Yisrael* presents the opposite problem. Overseas, many immediately recognized it as an American work, but for the majority of Americans—including the majority of American Jews—any work in Hebrew, like the *Ozar Yisrael*, was a closed book. It is thus worth examining the extent to which the *Ozar Yisrael* is part of American History.

⁸⁶² Ibid., xi.

⁸⁶³ Ibid., xvii.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid., 127.

An Imported Seed Planted in American Soil

Despite its detractors, Richard Hofstadter's groundbreaking work *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* continues to offer a durable framework.⁸⁶⁵ Its grand theory easily plants the *Ozar Yisrael*, a seed imported from elsewhere, on American soil. Of the four areas Hofstadter examines—religion, politics, business, and education—three are intertwined with the *Ozar Yisrael*. Through his encyclopedia, Eisenstein took a religious stance, entered a business venture, and educated people.

Hofstadter blames Protestantism for allowing enthusiasm of the heart to sideline rationalism. Especially in the area of biblical criticism, Eisenstein's enthusiasm for the unique gifts of the Jewish people prevented him from internalizing the rationalist arguments of his opponents. He characterized patrons of biblical criticism as undervaluing—lacking enthusiasm for—the exceptional gifts of the Jews and thought this characterization could sideline their arguments. Regarding business, Hofstadter defines the American experience as one that values the practicality of business above all else. Eisenstein was a businessman, and the encyclopedia was a commercial venture. The true value of the scholars he drew to the *Ozar Yisrael* was practical: they would increase subscribers. In 1923, it was reported that for secret reasons, which he declined to disclose, Eisenstein had destroyed the printing tablets for the *Ozar Yisrael* and that additional copies could not be produced. Eisenstein said that there would be no new attempt at a Hebrew encyclopedia because whoever wanted one had

⁸⁶⁵ Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963). For an overview of how Hofstadter's work was received, see Tim Lacy, "Against and beyond Hofstadter: Revising the Study of Anti-Intellectualism," in *American Labyrinth: Intellectual History for Complicated Times*, ed. Raymond Haberski Jr. and Andrew Hartman (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2018), 268–72. This section draws on Lacy's article.

already purchased the *Ozar Yisrael*.⁸⁶⁶ He believed that once someone had bought one encyclopedia, they would not buy a second one, regardless of the first one's deficiencies. Owning a Hebrew encyclopedia was more important than its contents. This practical mindset favored completion over quality and allowed him to finish the work quickly.

This practicality extends to education, where utility and useful knowledge were prized. By its nature, an encyclopedia about Jews and Judaism would seem unlikely to be useful, but Eisenstein endowed entries with practical advice, and select entries gave prospective immigrants an idea of how to make their way in the United States. Beyond the practical advice that the *Ozar Yisrael* offered, its format was useful. Turning to Eisenstein's visionary speech to the *Ohole Shem Society*, one recalls that he favored encyclopedias because they were useful and imparted more information in less time than other sources of knowledge. The first sentence of the introduction to the *Ozar Yisrael* reads: "The purpose of the *Ozar* is to be a useful⁸⁶⁷ book to any person who wishes to know something about Jews or Judaism."⁸⁶⁸ The same introduction promises that the language will be simple and not require a dictionary. This contrasts with the sample volume of the *Otsar Hayahdut*, whose dizzyingly difficult Hebrew can be near-impossible to understand. Hofstadter's framework shows the extent to which even such a work, written in Hebrew and inaccessible to most Americans, is the product of a uniquely American climate.

⁸⁶⁶ "Nishtabru Ha-Luhot," *Ha-ivri*, April 6, 1917, p.8.

⁸⁶⁷ The Hebrew is *shimushi*.

⁸⁶⁸ Eisenstein, "Tokhnit 'Ozar Yisrael' v'tzurato," *OY* 1 (unnumbered page).

A Cause of Neglect: No Heirs

This study fits into recent scholarship. The idea for the *Ozar Yisrael* began overseas, but it was only actualized, albeit in a very different form, in New York. This accords with Polland and Soyer's argument that New York was an emerging metropolis and capital of the Jewish World. The transnational dialogue that the *Ozar Yisrael* created supports Lederhendler's point that American Jewish history need not be siloed from the rest of Jewish history. And yet, despite this, and despite the *Ozar Yisrael*'s American credentials, Eisenstein has remained an understudied figure. To understand why he has received such little attention is to understand something about his contribution to American Jewish culture.

In the introduction to her study of Julius Rosenwald (1862–1932), “The Forgotten Millionaire,” Hasia Diner explains why the tycoon philanthropist was forgotten so quickly.⁸⁶⁹ After his passing, what Rosenwald represented and what he was fighting for became less relevant. This made “his vision and his projects seem somewhat beside the point.”⁸⁷⁰ With his vision and project less relevant, he became a less interesting figure and it was easy to forget him.

Although these men lived through the same period, they lived different lives and moved in different circles. For Rosenwald, the Progressive ethos and activist philanthropy were extensions of his Reform Judaism. This was a different conception of Judaism from the one Eisenstein practiced. Still, when considering why neglect has been the inheritance of

⁸⁶⁹ Hasia R. Diner, *Julius Rosenwald: Repairing the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 1.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

Eisenstein and his circle, one arrives at a similar conclusion. Already in their lifetime, Eisenstein's circle had become a terminus ad quem: they lived to become old men with nowhere to go and nothing to contribute—that is, they stopped being relevant. They were autodidacts who were unwelcome in the nascent centers of professional Jewish studies. Working to become Americans had detached them from Hebraists who lived overseas, especially in Palestine, where a new center eclipsed them. So tightly were they tethered to traditional life that they were numb to the need to Americanize the synagogue and update religious practice. Consequently, the legacy they had accumulated could not be transmitted or transformed, and it simply vanished. In other words, the price of leaving no heirs is neglect.

When Eisenstein completed the *Ozar Yisrael*, plenty of people celebrated his achievement, but they understood that they were a dying breed. To mark the occasion, the *Yidishes Tageblatt* ran a lengthy laudatory article, written, of course, by a contributor to the encyclopedia⁸⁷¹:

Every American Jew must take genuine pride that such a massive undertaking, the first time in Hebrew, was led here in America by an old-fashioned maskil who has already lived here for over thirty years. When we refer to the editor of the *Ozar Yisrael* as an “old-fashioned maskil,” we do not mean it as an insult, heaven forbid—quite the opposite, that the first Hebrew encyclopedia was established by an old-school maskil and not by the self-declared “young ones,” the “young Turks” of Hebrew literature who only know how to criticize, to make fun of, to provoke.⁸⁷²

⁸⁷¹ Getsl Zelikovitsh (George Selikovitch, 1855–1926) was the author of the article and is listed as a contributor to vols. 2–4 of the *Ozar Yisrael*. A regular contributor to the *Yiddishe Tageblatt*, he is a very interesting figure in his own right who awaits study.

⁸⁷² “Endlikh der hadran nokh'n ‘Ozar Yisrael,’ *Yiddishe Tageblatt*, Monday, October 6, 1913, p. 5.

Eisenstein was beloved because he had lived in America for so long and remained old-fashioned, and yet it was precisely this attribute that prevented a new generation from building on his legacy.

The Forgotten Middle: Secondary Figures and American Jewish History

A lack of ideological heirs is an internal reason that so few have been moved to continue, or reflect on, the legacy of Eisenstein's circle. This neglect also has an external cause, which relates to history in general and American Jewish history in particular. If there are two poles of historiography, then one focuses on the "Great Man" and finds understanding of the past in his ideas and actions and another probes the lives of "ordinary" individuals and uncovers unknown vistas in prosaic places. American Jewish History has a strong record of celebrating these two poles. Studies of towering individuals who shaped American Jewish life, such as Naomi W. Cohen's *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership*⁸⁷³ and Mathew M. Silver's *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America: A Biography*⁸⁷⁴ are readily available. Works that find historical meaning in the lives of ordinary individuals, such as Deborah Dash Moore's *GI Jews: How*

⁸⁷³ Naomi W. Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, c1999).

⁸⁷⁴ Matthew Silver, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America: A Biography* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

*WWII Changed a Generation*⁸⁷⁵ and Adam D. Mendelsohn's *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire*,⁸⁷⁶ are at least as plentiful.

However, between the microhistories of ordinary people and the grand narratives about important men and women lie the neglected stories of secondary figures, figures a little removed from the masses, who not only consumed culture but also produced it. These figures touched “elites” and regularly interacted with “the masses,” but nobody would mistake them for either group. Put differently, the story of the *Ozar Yisrael* is neither a story told from above nor is it a story told from below, but rather, it is a story told from the middle.

American Jewish history is not wholly bereft of such studies; Jonathan B. Krasner's *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*⁸⁷⁷ and Michael R. Cohen's *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter's Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement*⁸⁷⁸ focus on secondary figures. But for American Jewish history, such studies remain atypical. Eisenstein and many in his circle are examples of such secondary figures.⁸⁷⁹ Thus, to outpace neglect, they needed to overcome the fact that they had no heirs

⁸⁷⁵ Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How WWII Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁸⁷⁶ Adam D. Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

⁸⁷⁷ Jonathan B. Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

⁸⁷⁸ Cohen, *Birth of Conservative Judaism*.

⁸⁷⁹ Another such figure is Michael Levi Rodkinson (1845–1904), who moved to New York in 1881 and who was crowned “the grandfather of the Russian Maskilim in New York.” See Jonatan Meir, *Literary Hasidism: The Life and Works of Michael Levi Rodkinson*, trans. Jeffrey G. Amshalem (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016), 81. Eisenstein clashed with Rodkinson and critiqued his writing in *Ner Ha-Marabi* (the journal of the *Ohole Shem Society*); see *Literary Hasidism*, 78. Although it does not attempt to explain the

and overcome a bias that prefers “Great Men” and “Everyday Men” to those who lived somewhere in the middle.⁸⁸⁰

An Heir Raising Neglect: The *Ozar Yisrael* and the Orthodox

The one place one would expect to find Eisenstein’s ideological heirs is in the Orthodox community, but even their ranks don’t agree on the *Ozar Yisrael*. To those who hanker for ideological purity, the work presents an interesting dilemma. On the one hand, it proudly associated with people who did not affiliate with orthodox opinion or practice. On the other hand, Eisenstein was a great champion of the East European rabbinate, and a reason he produced the work was to combat the heresy that he feared a successful *Otsar hayahadut* would promote. While it is true that he canvassed a wide array of writers, he was equally fastidious about acting as the work’s gatekeeper. In 2009, a lively debate between Professor Jacob S. Spiegel and Rabbi David Zevi Hilman erupted;⁸⁸¹ the topic was the *Ozar Yisrael*, and it was hosted by the journal *Yerushatenu*.⁸⁸² If Spiegel and Hilman were aware of the

American context, Meir’s work is meticulously researched. For example, although he is aware of the journal *Ner Ha-Marabi*, he does not mention the *Ohole Shem Society*, which produced it. Many examples of these secondary figures are found in Meir’s work.

⁸⁸⁰ Among the Jewish historians to explore the trope of “secondary elites” are Moshe Idel, Elchanan Reiner, and David B. Ruderman. For a parallel to Eisenstein from the early modern era see See Elchanan Reiner, “A Biography of an Agent of Culture: Eleazar Altschul of Prague and his Literary Activity,” in *Schöpferische Momente des europäischen Judentums: In der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Michael Graetz (Heidelberg: Winter, c2000), 229–47.

⁸⁸¹ Jacob S. Spiegel, “Al ha-yahas l’hiburav shel R. Aharon Virmash, u-mashehu al ha-yahas l’entzyclopedia Otzar Yisrael” [in Hebrew], *Yerushatenu* 3 (2009).

⁸⁸² This is the yearbook of the traditional publishing house *Mahon moreshes Ashkenaz*. David Zvi Hilman (1926–2010) was a traditionalist scholar with rigid ideological views. There is an incorrect rumor that despite writing intricate and learned entries for the *Encyclopedia Talmudit* (1942-), Hilman did not want his name to be associated with the project and therefore remained anonymous; see <http://forum.otzar.org/viewtopic.php?t=1834>. (Accessed July 17, 2020.) Professor Marc Shapiro has pointed out that his name and photo do appear in some volumes (Private communication, July 17, 2020). Hilman also

historical context of the *Ozar Yisrael*, they do not show it. Instead, they draw on competing notions of what renders a work “kosher,” and those preconceived notions are then applied to the *Ozar Yisrael*.

Spiegel argued that despite the spectrum of people who wrote for the *Ozar Yisrael*, it was essentially a “kosher” work, for what was found within it was consistent with orthodoxy.⁸⁸³ Hilman marshaled reasons, including many culled from *Ozar Zichronotay* about Eisenstein’s personal piety, why Eisenstein could not be trusted to, and did not, create a “kosher” work.⁸⁸⁴ However, without considering the work’s historical context, some of Spiegel’s arguments ring hollow. For example, he points to the many rabbis who wrote letters of support for the *Ozar Yisrael* and its editor.⁸⁸⁵ Nobody questions the veracity of these letters, but after knowing what a wily operator Eisenstein was, it is reasonable to assume that the esteemed Rabbis did not rush to compose these letters and that instead, our industrious editor extracted them. Furthermore, the work was such that for every illustrious rabbi who wrote a letter of support, one can find a supporting letter from an equally illustrious “heretic.”

defended the editorial decision of the Frankel edition of Maimonides’s *Mishneh Torah* to ignore, on ideological grounds, prominent rabbinic scholars such as R. Abraham Isaac Kook and R. Yosef Qafih (1917–2000). See <https://seforimblog.com/2008/01/forgery-and-halakhic-process-part-3-by/> (accessed July 17, 2020). Jacob S. Spiegel (1941–) is an emeritus professor in the Department of Talmud and Oral Law at Bar Ilan university and the author of important works. Despite having the hallmark of both these scholars.

⁸⁸³ Spiegel, “Al ha-yahas l’hiburav shel R. Aharon Virmash,” 306.

⁸⁸⁴ He disapprovingly cites twenty-one activities that Eisenstein engaged in and later wrote about. See Hilman, 326–27. He also cites many examples of Eisenstein providing incorrect information and interpretations that stray from normative orthodoxy.

⁸⁸⁵ See Spiegel, 307–8.

To use letters of support to evaluate the work is to behave as Eisenstein predicted. He had leveraged important personalities to promote the work, and a century later, sophisticated people were still using this metric to evaluate the encyclopedia. Spiegel's argument is that those who reject the work do not do so on the basis of what the work taught but on the basis of who wrote for it. He proves this by citing a regular column in the rabbinic journal *Beit va'ad le'hakhamim*⁸⁸⁶ that highlighted heretical works that should be destroyed.⁸⁸⁷ Counted among these works was the *Ozar Yisrael*:

Behold the giant work, the *Ozar Yisrael*, which was produced in ten volumes, that all the God-fearing newspapers pronounce and publicize as an Orthodox book ... on account of these God-fearing Jews⁸⁸⁸ who cooperated with freethinkers⁸⁸⁹ and insurrectionists,⁸⁹⁰ this book was sanitized and assumed to contain nothing problematic, despite the fact that the majority of those who worked on it were known sectarians and unbelievers.⁸⁹¹

Those "sectarians and unbelievers" were supposed to give the work a veneer of respectability and allow it to make inroads into places that may not have otherwise considered it; none of them influenced the work's ideological timbre. Waldstein had seen through this tactic and refused to treat the *Ozar Yisrael* as a scholarly work. How ironic that now Eisenstein's use of this tactic was turned against him and became the reason to strip the orthodox credentials

⁸⁸⁶ This was a rabbinic journal that Simon Pollak published between 1922 and 1939 in Satu-Mare, Romania.

⁸⁸⁷ The name of the column was "Teunim geniza," "In need of burial," and was signed "Ben Porat."

⁸⁸⁸ Hebrew *yere'im*.

⁸⁸⁹ Hebrew *hofshim*.

⁸⁹⁰ Hebrew *porke ol*.

⁸⁹¹ "Teunim Geniza," *Beit va'ad* 7:4, p. 69

from the *Ozar Yisrael!* What Eisenstein did to promote an Orthodox perspective was now the undoing of his own Orthodox status.⁸⁹²

The Orthodox are not monolithic, and a Torah journal produced by a reactionary community in Romania during the interwar years does not speak for all of Orthodoxy. However, together with the debate between Spiegel and Hilman, it explains why, even among the Orthodox, Eisenstein did not find heirs easily. He was an iconoclast and appeared to others as an unwieldy bundle of contradictions. He inhabited and promoted ideological rigidity, while at the same time not being rigid himself. He attacked the Jewish Theological Seminary—and cited Isaac Mayer Wise approvingly in the process⁸⁹³—but also recalled hearing a sermon on Saturday from Kaufmann Kohler (1843–1926), the Reform rabbi at New York’s Congregation Emanu-El.⁸⁹⁴ *Ozar Zichronotay* is rich with similar anecdotes that demonstrate Eisenstein’s personal flexibility. Many viewed this as cognitive dissonance that was incompatible with Orthodox Judaism, but to Eisenstein, this laissez-faire attitude was natural. When Hilman examined the memoirs of Eisenstein and uncovered all manner of behavior, it became unfathomable to him that such a person could be a defender of Orthodoxy or produce an Orthodox work. Even so, the closest Eisenstein came to being considered on his own terms was in the pages of traditional rabbinic journal. Here he may

⁸⁹² For a similar, although less severe, incident involving the writings of the orthodox historian Isaac Halevy (1847–1914), see Asaf Yedidya, *Bikoret nevukeret: Alternativot ortodokziot l’“mada ha-yehadut 1873–1956”* [in Hebrew] (Mosad Bialik, 2013), 349–50.

⁸⁹³ See Judah David Eisenstein, “The Orthodox Rabbis and the Seminary,” in Zev Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 132.

⁸⁹⁴ Eisenstein, *Ozar Zichronotay*, 52. This took place in 1884, when Kohler gave a guest sermon at a congregation in downtown Manhattan. Eisenstein records that Rabbi Abraham Joseph Asch (1813–1888), the rabbi of Beth Hamedrash Hagadol, was unhappy about the invitation to Kohler.

have found some heirs, but even they could not decide whether he deserved anything but neglect.⁸⁹⁵

This study has rescued Eisenstein from neglect and shown this undertaking to be important. American Jewish history is strongest when it relates to each of its three words—American, Jewish, and history—and draws them together to create a new compound, one that is stronger than the sum of its parts. This belief has guided this study. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the United States was home to a significant cultural achievement, one that was unmistakably Jewish and thoroughly American, that should continue to speak to us today.

⁸⁹⁵ Difficult as it is to establish a category for Eisenstein that continues, one possibility is the Hebraists that gathered around the American Hebrew publication, *ha-Doar*. Figures like Eliezer Raphael Malachi (1895-1980), Moshe Maisels-Amishai (1901-1984), Daniel Persky (1887-1962) and Menachem Ribalow (1895-1953). Even if it can be established that this group is heir to Eisenstein's legacy, they themselves left no heirs.

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