

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**Doctoral thesis**

**2021**

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**Faculty of humanities**

**Historical sociology**



**The Myth of the Hebrew Sea:**  
**An aspect of the Zionism of Ze'ev Jabotinsky**

Doctoral thesis

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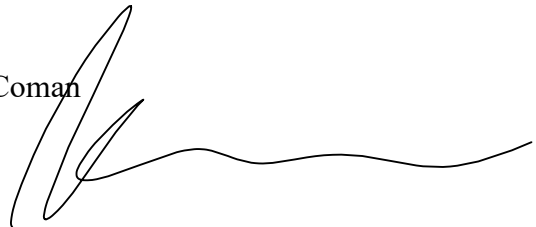
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Adam Coman

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### **Abstract:**

The following dissertation studies the idea and mythologization of the “Hebrew Sea” in the writings and political activity of Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky (1880–1940), the leader of the Zionist Revisionist movement, developed the concept of the “Hebrew Sea” as an ideal that was used in various fields of his Zionist activity. Within inter-Zionist politics it was utilized as a means of competing with the dominant ideological faction, labor Zionism, over contribution to the national revival and Zionist youth, and its greatest achievement was the establishment of the Civitavecchia Naval Academy in Italy. On the international-diplomatic level the “Hebrew Sea” was used in order to advance closer political relations between Revisionism and Italy – an endeavor Jabotinsky was interested in from an early stage of his Zionist career. The “Hebrew Sea” also played an important role in the development of Jabotinsky’s unique ideal of national identity, which sought to depict the Jewish people as a Mediterranean, and not a desert or Middle Eastern people. This vision drew from contemporary theories about Hebrew identity, which associated the Hebrews with the Phoenician empire and not necessarily with Jewish monotheism. Finally, economically this ideal supported the socioeconomic vision of Revisionism, which emphasized the role of international trade and the middleclass in the nation’s future, over agriculture, industry, and the proletariat. In addition, this dissertation studies the ways in which Jabotinsky sought to mythologize the “Hebrew Sea” as a means of stimulating political activity and the masses, by creating objectives such as the “conquest of the Hebrew Sea”, and associating this ideal with already established Zionist myths, such as “the cult of the fallen” and the Jewish Legion which fought alongside the British army during the First World War. The “Hebrew Sea” was consequently a multifaceted ideal in Jabotinsky’s Zionism, serving different policies and agendas, and representative as such of Jabotinsky’s and Revisionism’s ideology.

**Keywords: Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky; Revisionist Zionism; myths; national identity; Zionism; Mediterranean**

### **Abstrakt**

Předkládaná disertace zkoumá ideu tzv. Hebrejského moře a proces její mytologizace v díle a politické činnosti Vladimira (Ze’eva) Žabotinského. Žabotinskij (1880–1940), vedoucí představitel sionistického revizionistického hnutí, rozvinul koncept Hebrejského moře, který dále uplatňoval v různých oblastech svých sionistických aktivit. V rámci vnitřní sionistické politiky

tato idea sloužila jakožto prostředek ke zvýšení vlivu na sionistickou mládež a na průběh formování nového Židovského národa, a to zejména vůči sionismu dělnickému, hlavnímu ideologickému směru tehdejšího sionismu. V tomto ohledu bylo největším úspěchem tohoto konceptu založení námořní akademie Civitavecchia v Itálii. Na mezinárodně-diplomatické úrovni byla myšlenka Hebrejského moře využita k upevnění politických vztahů mezi revizionismem a Itálií, o což Žabotinskij usiloval již od počátků své sionistické kariéry. Koncepce Hebrejského moře taktéž přispěla významnou měrou při formování Žabotinského osobité představy národní identity, podle které byli Židé vnímáni jakožto obyvatelé Středomoří, a nikoliv jakožto pouštní, či blízkovýchodní národ. Tato představa vychází z tehdejších teorií o hebrejské identitě, podle kterých je nutné Hebrejce primárně spojovat s Fénickou říší, a ne nutně s židovským monoteismem. Z ekonomického hlediska podporovala idea Hebrejského moře socioekonomické vize revizionismu, podle kterých byly pro budoucnost národa důležitější prosperující mezinárodní obchod a střední třída než zemědělství, průmysl a proletariát. Tato disertace se také zabývá způsoby, kterými se Žabotinskij snažil ideu Hebrejského moře mytizovat, aby tak podnítil politickou aktivitu a masy. K tomu mu posloužilo například stanovení úkolu „podrobení si Hebrejského moře“ a spojení tohoto cíle s již existujícími sionistickými mýty, například kultem padlých, a s Židovskou legií, která bojovala po boku britské armády za první světové války. V rámci Žabotinského sionismu se z koncepce Hebrejského moře stala mnohostranná idea sloužící k prosazení různých cílů a programů, a jako taková představuje jak Žabotinského ideologie, tak ideologie revisionismu.

**Klíčová slova: Vladimír Ze'ev Žabotinský, revizionistický sionismus, mýty, národní identita, Sionismus, Středomoří**

## Contents

Introduction.....	8
1. General introduction to the topic.....	11
2. Review of literature and sources .....	16
2.1 Introduction .....	16
2.2 Zionism and the sea.....	18
2.3 National identity and the Mediterranean.....	21
2.4 Politics and mythology.....	25
2.5 International relations.....	29
2.6 Primary sources .....	31
3. Party politics: the struggle against labor Zionism .....	33
3.1 Introduction .....	33
3.2 Deprived from the land – conquering the sea .....	33
3.3 Summary .....	46
4. The Italian option.....	48
4.1 The Italian affairs: Mazzini, Mussolini, etc. etc.....	48
4.2 A Jewish-Italian Legion? .....	48
4.3 The 1920s: Mussolini’s appetite .....	51
4.4 The 1930s: a <i>Beitar</i> school and the search for a Zionist ally .....	55
4.4.1 The Civitavecchia Naval Academy.....	56
4.4.2 An Italian Mandate?.....	61
4.5 Summary .....	70
5. Mediterranean identity: Hebrews and Jews, old and new .....	71
5.1 Race, language .....	71
5.2 Races of sea and desert, the west and the east .....	77
5.3 Latinization.....	84

5.4	The Hebrew merchant .....	87
5.5	Horon: influence and break .....	92
5.6	Summary .....	102
6.	Mythologizing the conquest of the Hebrew Sea: article analysis.....	104
6.1	Myths, mythologizing, and politics.....	104
6.2	The Mythology of Ze'ev Jabotinsky .....	106
6.3	Iron .....	109
6.4	A Revisionist Odyssey: Civitavecchia and Sarah the First .....	113
6.5	The Hebrew Mediterranean.....	115
6.6	Summary .....	117
7.	Conclusion.....	118
	Bibliography .....	126
	Primary sources.....	126
	Secondary sources.....	129
	Index .....	135

## Introduction

This thesis studies the idea and the myth of the “Hebrew Sea” as developed and promoted by the Revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky. The idea of a “Hebrew Sea” and “Hebrew seafaring” was held by various Zionists during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as journalist Itamar Ben-Avi, poet Shaul Tchernichovsky, archaeologist and traveler Nahum Slouschz, and “Canaanite” historian Adya Gur Horon. Although these men found inspiration for these ideas in similar sources, including a number of Biblical verses, the theories of French scholar Victor Bérard on the Semitic origins of the Odyssey, and the linguistic proximity between Hebrew and Phoenician, each of them emphasized different aspects of this view and employed it in his own field of work, albeit occasional collaborations. Jabotinsky’s ideas, as we shall see, developed with relation to his “Italophilia”, the political and ideological rivalry with mainstream labor Zionism, and his distinct national, racial, and geopolitical views. Although Jabotinsky did not always initiate seafaring ventures, he was able to contextualize these activities with relation to the “Hebrew Sea” and Revisionist ideology. The 1934 establishment of the Civitavecchia Naval Academy in Italy, for example, was only possible through the efforts of Italian Revisionists Yitzhak Sciaky and Leone Carpi who purposefully precluded Jabotinsky from the bureaucratic and diplomatic processes that led to its formation. It was, however, Jabotinsky’s desire to establish closer political and cultural relations with Italy that made it an object of Revisionist interest in the first place, and his subsequent articles on the school that associated seafaring with established Revisionist ethe, such as militarism and the Jewish Legion. The foundations for the school were set in the principle of “conquering the sea”, both as a Zionist ideal in itself and as an original venture that could compete with socialist ideals such as “conquering of labor”, an original initiative of Jabotinsky. With the mention of his personal attachment to Italy, Jabotinsky instilled the “conquest of the Hebrew Sea” as an original Revisionist ideal, with an ancient and glorious history (the Phoenician merchants), mythological heroes (Captain Fusco and Jeremiah Halpern, the school instructors), events (the sailing of Sarah the First to Palestine) and rituals (the commemoration of the first “sacrifice” to the conquest of the sea, Avraham Strausberg).

This research employs a theoretical and methodological framework that stresses the role of myth making and usage among modern national movements. Historians of nationalism such as



Anthony Smith<sup>1</sup>, Ernest Gellner<sup>2</sup>, Miroslav Hroch<sup>3</sup>, and Eric Hobsbawm<sup>4</sup> have shown how national movements have employed myths – i.e., real or invented epics, traditions, ancestries, histories, and rituals – in order to establish a collective sense of a national identity on the one hand, and to legitimize the nation’s position on various political issues vis-à-vis the international community, on the other. Due to their important role in nation building, myths were (and still are) seen as an invaluable asset among public figures who sought to influence various national attributes. Rival political parties, for example, are likely to compete over the commemoration and interpretation of national myths in the attempts to justify political or economic policies, validate a specific national identity, and placate or exacerbate a social conflict. The vast potential of myths has made them the subject of much aggrandizing and manipulation. Using a methodological assumption that emphasizes the subjective and even artificial nature of national myths, this dissertation will study Jabotinsky’s attempts to use the “Hebrew Sea” as an original Revisionist myth in various aspects of Revisionist politics and ideology. This methodological assumption will also be useful in illuminating the important role Jabotinsky ascribed to mythologies in general. As we shall see, Jabotinsky’s Hebrew Sea combined the pathos of ancient and contemporary mythologies, which harmonized with Revisionist aesthetics and discourse, as well as social, political, and economic implications, which served Revisionist ideology. Jabotinsky’s ideas and his interest in myths were not strictly political or opportunistic, however, but possessed deep cultural and intellectual roots. Consequently, this research also makes use of the intellectual history approach. This approach highlights the historical evolution of ideas and views throughout time and across different disciplines. By employing this approach this research will also study the deeper origins and history of Jabotinsky’s ideas.

The goal of this research is to study what roles the concept of the Hebrew Sea played in Jabotinsky’s Zionist ideology, and in what ways he contributed to its mythologization. As we shall see, Jabotinsky’s Hebrew Sea played a constructive role in a number of political and ideological fields. On the immediate political level, this ideal was utilized in the fight against mainstream labor Zionism, offering members of the Revisionist youth movement, *Beitar*, the ability to take part in

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “National Identity and Myths of Ethnic Descent,” in *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge University Press, 1990). Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

the Jewish national revival without immigrating to Palestine. Economically, it served to strengthen Jabotinsky's ideal of the Jewish merchant as an alternative to the socialist Jewish worker and cultivator. Culturally, it helped to distance Jewish identity from the Arabs and "eastern culture". Politically, shifting the territorial focus to the Mediterranean contributed to a Western European geo-political vision. The Hebrew Sea was consequently an adaptable concept that served a number of Revisionist goals and ideals, either intentionally or through developing circumstances.

The Hebrew Sea will also be studied with relation to Jabotinsky's evolving ideological beliefs and the actual changes that took place in political circumstances. Jabotinsky's attempts to tighten relations with Italy, for example, were not only the result of his "Italophilia" or his Mediterranean vision, but also of his disappointment with Great Britain. The eventual rejection of the Italian option, on the other hand, was most likely the result of Mussolini's decision not to meet with him, but not least of all, the objection of fellow Revisionists to a Revisionist-Italian pact. Politics and ideology consequently influenced the evolution of the ideal of the Hebrew Sea, but also the abilities to pursue and realize its various facets. This research will therefore study the evolution, but also the perseverance, of this ideal, with relation to the changing historical circumstances.

Finally, this research seeks to illuminate the ways in which Jabotinsky actively mythologized the Hebrew Sea. As we shall see, Jabotinsky used his own mythologized image, as well as key terms from his own literary work, in order to implant the Hebrew Sea in established Revisionist discourse. References to the Jewish Legion, for example, served not only to aggrandize the "conquest of the Hebrew Sea", but also to present it as a continuation, or recurrence, of one of the most potent Jabotinsky myths. This research will consequently study how Jabotinsky actively utilized his biography, as well as accepted Revisionist mythologies as a political tool.

## 1. General introduction to the topic

The Zionist movement – the Jewish national movement – emerged in Europe during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Two main forces contributed to the development of Zionism: the national revival of peoples in Europe, and especially in east- and central-Europe, on the one hand, and the Jews’ precarious existence in the diaspora, on the other. Like other contemporary national movements, Zionist thinkers and ideologues identified three main pillars of their national identity: the people’s shared history and culture, territory, and language. Unlike other national movements, however, the Jewish people were dispersed across the world, the absolute majority living away from their designated “homeland”, speaking either local dialects or the languages of the surrounding population. Although the question of a shared history and culture was also unresolved – considering the different traditions Jewish communities have adopted throughout the centuries – the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible), the people’s ancient canon and main religious text, was an important source of common identity. In the most ancient form of Hebrew preserved, the Bible tells – among other things – the story of the Israelite tribes, their formation, adventures and misfortunes, and their kingdoms in their land, *eretz israel*. To the Zionists, reviving the Jewish nation consequently meant returning to the land (Palestine) and language (Hebrew) of the forefathers, before the people was exiled to all corners of the world by the Roman Empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. Nonetheless, questions of exact territorial borders, contradictive interpretations of Jewish history and the Bible, different forms of Hebrew and foreign linguistic influences, compelled Zionist thinkers to argue and formulate what exactly Jewish identity and the vision of the nation’s future state were. Fantasizing about returning to a celebrated past is one thing, creating a nation from a scattered and diverse mass of people, quite another. The different views on these issues, as well as historical circumstances, inspired the formation of several currents within the movement, such as labor Zionism, which sought to synthesize socialist and national ideologies, and cultural Zionism, which emphasized the spiritual role of the national revival, and religious Zionism, which focuses on the religious aspect of the national movement.

The return to the land and language of the forefathers was not just a practical means of reviving the nation and fleeing the difficulties of the diaspora, but also possessed an important ideological meaning. An essential element in Zionism was the axiom that Jewish existence in exile was unnatural and unhealthy: one of the prerequisites of a national state was congruence between the people and its homeland – an exiled, dispersed nation was an unviable mutation, bound to

remain “out of history”<sup>1</sup>. A “return to history” was needed not only for the sake of the nation’s “normality” and “wellbeing” but also its people as individuals. The Zionist image of the exilic Jew was strongly influenced by prevalent antisemitic stereotypes of Jews as rootless, cowards, superstitious and averse to manual labor<sup>2</sup>. The recurring pogroms and violence inflicted towards Jews in eastern Europe further enhanced their self-perception as weak and defenseless outsiders, always at the mercy of foreign rulers and hostile neighbors. Zionist thinkers who wished to contrast the new Jewish identity they championed with the image of the “old” diasporic Jew, consequently emphasized the need for Jewish physical labor, manual work, corporal strength, and heroism. The desire to cast the new Jew in the image of a hardworking agriculturalist, or otherwise as a strong and healthy individual, was expressed in the works of theoreticians such as A.D. Gordon and Max Nordau who inspired the formation of associations and organizations which promoted the establishment of agricultural settlements in Ottoman Empire *eretz israel* and sports clubs around the world.

The year 1882 saw the beginning of Zionist immigration waves (i.e., *aliyot*) to Palestine. Each *aliya* was characterized by the immigrants’ different ideological, socio-economic, and cultural background: whereas the first *aliya* (1882–1903) was largely made of conservative families whose Zionist conviction was motivated, not least of all, by the need to flee the violence and dangers of daily life in east Europe, the second *aliya* (1904–1914) was made mostly of young idealists whose national vision was strongly influenced by socialist ideology. Indeed, the two groups of settlers often clashed over social, economic, and political dilemmas, such as their relation towards the local Arab population and labor: while the first *aliya* employed the cheap and efficient Arabs in their fields, the second *aliya*, while supporting class solidarity with the Arab worker and agriculturist, sought to promote Jewish labor as a means of reviving the nation and reconnecting with the land<sup>3</sup>. Not long after its beginning, the idealism of the second *aliya* and its members’ dedication to their cause were celebrated as ideals to be admired and imitated by future *aliyot*. Consequently, many of the second *aliya*’s ideals, such as egalitarianism, socialism, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Eran Kaplan, *The Jewish Radical Right* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 139.

<sup>2</sup> These traits were specified, among others, by the Jewish-German *maskil* Leopold Zunz in his 1819, “Outline of Matters in Need of Improvement among Jews”. Cited in Amos Elon, *The Pity of it All* (London: Picador, 2002, eBook edition 2013), 106–107. See also Anita Shapira, “Antisemitism and Zionism,” in *New Jews, Old Jews*, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), 175–191, and especially 177–178.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 35–37. The term Arab, and not Palestinian, is used to reflect the contemporary discourse and to avoid confusion with the term Palestine, which in this dissertation refers to British Mandate *eretz israel*.

laboring pioneer (*chalutz*), became recognized as symbols of Zionism, in spite of the existence of rival currents to that of labor Zionism<sup>1</sup>.

Zionists also promoted their vision in the diplomatic arena. In 1897 the First Zionist Congress convened in Basel. The congress was initiated by Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), a lawyer and journalist who came from an assimilated Jewish family in Austro-Hungarian Budapest. In 1894, while reporting from Paris for the *Neue Freie Presse*, Herzl covered the Dreyfus affair, during which the French-Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus was unjustifiably accused of treason. After witnessing the wave of antisemitism the Dreyfus affair instigated in the seemingly enlightened French, Herzl became disillusioned with the idea of Jewish assimilation and turned to Zionism<sup>2</sup>. Although Zionist thinkers and movements were already active, especially in east Europe, Herzl's political and diplomatic activism, as well as his western-European orientation, made Zionism a more organized international movement that was steadily growing and gaining recognition. The movement made an important achievement in 1917, towards the end of the First World War, when it was granted the Balfour Declaration from the British government. The Declaration, which was granted to Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann in exchange for his contribution to the British war efforts, promised the Zionists British support for establishing a “national home for the Jewish people”. In spite of the Declaration however, during its Mandate over Palestine the British government was ambivalent towards Zionism, and often acted to limit Jewish immigration to the land and to restrain the Zionists' activities there. The Zionist Organization's unstable relations with Great Britain and other foreign powers consequently became an additional dimension in post-World War I Zionism.

Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880-1940) was born in Odessa, then part of the Russian Empire, to a secular Jewish family<sup>3</sup>. Before turning to Zionism, Jabotinsky was immersed in Russian literary and journalistic activity, contributing regularly to Odessan journals, staging plays, and publishing his own verse and translations into the Russian language. Jabotinsky's interest in literature persisted even after he became politically active, and he continued writing and publishing poems, stories, novels, and translations throughout his life. In 1898 Jabotinsky went to Rome as a law student, where he was engrossed in Italian intellectual and student life for three years, an

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<sup>1</sup> Menachem Brinker, “*chalutzit*,” *New Jewish Time Vol. I*, ed. Yirmiyahu Yovel (Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), 38–39.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Beller, “Theodor Herzl,” *New Jewish Time II*, ed. Yirmiyahu Yovel (Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), 129–130.

<sup>3</sup> This brief biographical sketch focuses on events and aspects that pertain to the topic of this dissertation.

experience that strongly influenced his political and ideological views. In 1901 Jabotinsky returned to Odessa where, in spite of his literary success, he became increasingly involved in Zionist activity, especially after the 1903 Kishinev Pogrom. The following year he translated into Russian Haim Nahman Bialik's poem *beir haharega* (in the city of slaughter), a famous and influential reaction to the pogrom and a denunciation of the passivity of Jewish existence in the diaspora. Jabotinsky's co-organization of the 1906 Helsingfors conference of Russian Zionists, as well as his role in the establishment of the Jewish Legion that fought alongside the allied forces during the First World War, established him as a prominent Zionist activist. In 1920, facing the Nebi Musa riots in Jerusalem, Jabotinsky organized a Jewish defense group. The British authorities arrested Jabotinsky and sentenced him to 15 years in prison but following international protest he was released shortly after. Nonetheless, the short arrest further enhanced Jabotinsky's prestige in the Jewish world. In 1923, following escalating disagreements with the policies of the Zionist organization, led by his former friend and associate Chaim Weizmann, Jabotinsky resigned from the Zionist Executive Committee. In the same year, inspired by Jabotinsky's rhetoric and militant ideals the *Beitar* youth movement formed in Riga. In 1925 Jabotinsky formed the Union of Revisionist Zionists (*brit hatzohar*). The new organization differed from the central Zionist organization mainly on the question of Zionist policy vis-à-vis the British Mandate, believing a more forceful approach was needed to realize the Balfour Declaration's promise of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. Gradually, however, the Revisionists developed a distinct ideological and political platform that differed from mainstream Zionism also on economic, cultural, and national questions. Under Jabotinsky's leadership, Revisionist Zionism developed a nationalist, economically liberal and militant platform in opposition to the proclaimed socialist and egalitarian ideology of labor Zionism. The movement also possessed a number of ideals such as *hadar* (which can be roughly translated as beauty, grace) and *had-ness* (monism, i.e., loyalty to the idea of Zionism and not socialism). The movement's emphasis on militarism, however, alongside Jabotinsky's position as the undisputable leader of the movement, frequently won it associations with other fascist movements, both among its supporters and detractors<sup>1</sup>. Although Jabotinsky immigrated to Palestine in 1928, the following year, while touring South Africa, he was banned from returning to Palestine. The rivalry between the Revisionists and labor Zionism deteriorated severely during the 1930s: in 1933 the Revisionists were accused of

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<sup>1</sup> Eran Kaplan, "Ze'ev Jabotinsky," *New Jewish Time II*, 135–137.

murdering labor Zionist Haim Arlosoroff following his negotiations with Nazi Germany, which sought to facilitate the immigration of Jewish Germans to Palestine and to which the Revisionists objected; in 1935 the Revisionists quit the World Zionist Organization and formed the New Zionist Organization (N.Z.O., or *hatzach*). One year earlier the Revisionists established the Civitavecchia Naval Academy in Italy, a major step in advancing the organization's ideal of "conquering the sea". In 1937, while testifying before the Peel Commission, Jabotinsky objected to the plan to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Jabotinsky died in 1940, while visiting a *Beitar* camp in New York.

## 2. Review of literature and sources

### 2.1 Introduction

The past two decades have seen a growing interest in Jabotinsky, both in academic and non-academic circles. This interest is motivated not least of all by the enduring dominance of the Israeli right wing and especially the *Likud* party, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, which is associated with Jabotinsky's legacy and the Revisionist party. The fact that Netanyahu's father, the historian Benzion Netanyahu, had briefly served as Jabotinsky's personal secretary, further increases the desire of Israelis and Israel scholars to discover the roots of the state's policies and outlook. Significant attention is given in these attempts not only to Jabotinsky's political activities, but perhaps even more so to his political, literary, and even personal writings. Academics, journalists, politicians, and other public figures all study and rummage in Jabotinsky's writings in order to find alleged justification for or condemnation of Israel's current state and actions. While some use Jabotinsky's writings to excuse controversial political policies, others accuse the right wing and its leaders of having betrayed their forefather's ideals, based on Jabotinsky's own words<sup>1</sup>. More often than not, however, the absolute majority of commentators who "harness" Jabotinsky's words in order to comment on current affairs, seem to be cherry picking singular statements from a vast oeuvre of writings of a complex personality whose ideas, moreover, have changed over time and with relation to the fluctuating realities of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Academic research of Jabotinsky has also suffered for a long time from Jabotinsky's imposing status in the Zionist-nationalist camp, and controversial position in Zionist politics. Until recently, the majority of Jabotinsky studies were conducted by Revisionist scholars who, overall, tended to idolize, or at least embellish, the image of the Revisionist leader<sup>2</sup>. The little attention non-Revisionist scholars dedicated to Jabotinsky, either peripheralized his contribution to Zionist nation building, or presented him as the nationalist leader of a semi-fascist movement.

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<sup>1</sup> For a survey of Jabotinsky's multifaceted image in contemporary Israel see Arie Dubnov, "Jabotinsky's Comeback," *Hazman Hazeh 2*, (2020): 10–17. Ironically, left wing voices, who supposedly succeed the harsh socialist rivals of Jabotinsky and Revisionism, seem to rediscover Jabotinsky as a secular and cultured intellectual, a progressive feminist, a tolerant cosmopolitan, and a supporter of a "capitalism with a human face".

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Joseph Nedava, *Vladimir Jabotinsky, the Man and his Struggles* (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 1986); Hillel Halkin, *Jabotinsky* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014). For a review of this issue see also Zeev Tsahor, "Jabotinsky and Jabotinkyism," in: *In the Eye of the Storm*, eds. Avi Barely and Pinhas Ginossar (Iyunim bitkumat Israel, 2004), 39–50; Svetlana Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2015), 6. In spite of the rise of critical studies, idolizing texts still appear in scholarly printings, e.g., Yoram Aridor, "Ze'ev Jabotinsky – His Jewish Thought," *New Jewish Time I*, 76–78.



Characteristic of these studies was the tendency to present Jabotinsky as a consistent “monolithic” thinker, in spite of his changing views and his vast scope of interests and activities<sup>1</sup>. A marked exception among these studies is the research of Yaacov Shavit, who critically studied various aspects of Jabotinsky and his influence on the Israeli right, and whose work will be discussed below. Shavit’s work is important not only for laying the groundwork for future Jabotinsky studies in a number of fields, but also for emphasizing Jabotinsky’s versatile public image. The “public Jabotinsky”, Shavit has shown, changed over time, but also across social, political, cultural, and linguistic contexts. As Shavit has put it, readers should distinguish between “the young Jabotinsky – writing mainly in the Russian, liberal press, polemicizing with the *Bund*, communism, and the territorialism – and the Jabotinsky writing in Party press; Jabotinsky in Russian is different from Jabotinsky in Yiddish; the “intimate” Jabotinsky, writing on Russian and world literature, on theater and art, on Nietzsche, Spencer, and Darwin, is not the Jabotinsky writing in *Beitar* newspapers during the 1930s...”<sup>2</sup>

The rising interest in Jabotinsky has produced a torrent of academic studies that seek to illuminate various aspects of his life and work. While some, such as Svetlana Natkovich<sup>3</sup>, study the social context of Jabotinsky’s literary works, others, such as Arie Dubnov<sup>4</sup> and Dmitri Shumsky<sup>5</sup>, focus on Jabotinsky’s political views within the context of the changing international arena. What these scholars share is both a recognition of Jabotinsky’s multifaceted views, as well as a renewed interest in the political, cultural, and social climate in which the “early” Jabotinsky developed his thought. Natkovich and Shumsky especially have reinterpreted Jabotinsky’s views on politics and culture in light of his earlier publications in Russian, many of which have been unavailable until recently.

The present research focuses on the ways in which Jabotinsky utilized the Mediterranean and the myth and idea of a Hebrew Sea in different times and contexts. It seeks to trace the evolutionary development of the concept of the Hebrew Sea, but also the different roles it played in different arenas, including party politics, international diplomacy, national identity, and national mythologies. Consequently, the review of secondary literature will be divided to works that study

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<sup>1</sup> Yaacov Shavit, *The Mythologies of the Zionist Right Wing*, (Emda Library, 1986), 207–211. See also, Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 5–7.

<sup>2</sup> Shavit, *The Mythologies of the Zionist Right Wing*, 208.

<sup>3</sup> Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*.

<sup>4</sup> Arie Dubnov, “Jewish Nationalism in the wake of World War I”, *Israel* 24 (Autumn 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Dmitri Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation State* (Yale University Press, 2018).

the different facets this dissertation touches on, beginning with research of Zionism and the sea, and following with studies of Jabotinsky's thought on Jewish national identity, politics and mythology, and international relations.

## 2.2 Zionism and the sea

The relation of the Zionist movement to the sea has received relatively little attention from scholars, although a small number of studies is nonetheless devoted to this topic. The earliest and most significant work on the topic is Jeremiah Halpern's *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*<sup>1</sup>. Halpern (1901–1962), the son of the renowned pioneer Michael Halpern, was a devoted follower of Jabotinsky and a famous *Beitar* instructor who encouraged the movement's militant tendencies and played an important role in the movement's naval activities. In 1961 he published *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring* which depicted the history of Hebrew seafaring from Biblical times to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the main focus being Revisionist seafaring ventures. Halpern's monograph is an important source for several reasons. To begin with, the monograph offers a firsthand account of Revisionism's attitudes towards seafaring: its sources, activities, and goals. It illuminates, for example, seafaring entrepreneurs used the works of scholars such as Nahum Slouschz, which depicted the Jews as a historically seafaring people, in order to legitimize the movement's seafaring activities<sup>2</sup>. Halpern's work is also important for emphasizing the role the rivalry between labor and Revisionist Zionism played in Revisionist seafaring. The recurring denigrations of labor Zionists for having ignored the sea and stolen the fruits the Revisionists' efforts in the field are an important testimony to the political dimension of the Revisionist conquest of the sea. Due to Halpern's role in the events, however, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring* is far from balanced, aggrandizing almost every Revisionist dinghy and mocking all labor Zionists as corrupt and ignorant. In addition, Halpern's work is limited to actual seafaring activities, and consequently touches only briefly on other issues, such as the Jewish-Mediterranean identity Jabotinsky envisioned or Revisionist-Italian relations.

A more recent study on Zionism and the sea is Hannan Hever's 2007 *Toward the Longed-for Shore*<sup>3</sup>. In the monograph Hever analyzes Zionism's relation to the sea through literary works

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring* (Tel Aviv: Hadar, 1961).

<sup>2</sup> Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 15–16, 26–27. Interestingly, Jabotinsky himself never acknowledged Slouschz's influence, although he was doubtlessly aware of his work. See section 5.2 in this dissertation.

<sup>3</sup> Hanan Hever, *Toward the Longed-for Shore* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2006).

of prominent Hebrew writers such as Natan Alterman and Shmuel Yosef Agnon. In spite of the literary prism Hever employs, his research touches on political issues such as Zionist nation building, colonialism, social hegemony, and cultural exclusion in Israel. According to Hever, “the Zionist story is mostly a Eurocentric story of immigration [...] a teleological voyage to the national territory via the sea, which serves only as a vehicle of transfer”<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, a “political reading exposes the power mechanism of the Zionist immigration story: it shows how the Zionist narrative uses the Mediterranean as a tool to strengthen and fortify its own national narrative [...]. Zionism used the Mediterranean as a mechanism of diffusion in order to obfuscate the violence in which territorial representations were steeped.”<sup>2</sup> Hever’s work consequently studies the relation of Zionism to the sea in order to implicate the national movement with crimes against humanity and geography. In spite of the accusations directed towards Zionism, Hever concedes that the Revisionists, unlike the socialists, did in fact embrace the sea. Hever briefly reviews the Revisionists’ interest in the sea, from Jeremiah Halpern’s dedication to the sea and his attempt to depict a long history of Jewish seafaring in his *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, to Adya Horon’s centering on the sea as a means of developing a right-wing imperialistic Zionist vision (before his break with Zionism). Alas, Hever concludes that even the Revisionists were only interested in the sea as an instrumental means of expanding the borders of the national territory. Hever thus condemns the Zionists either for “negating” or objectifying the sea, unpardonable offences indeed<sup>3</sup>.

Unlike Hever, who focused on labor Zionism, Gish Amit studied the ethos of the “conquest of the Hebrew Sea” in Revisionist thought<sup>4</sup>. Amit discusses several aspects of Revisionist naval myth making, such as the attempted mythologization of Avraham Strausberg (see chapter 3 in this dissertation), but the paper focuses on the *Etzel* (Irgun) museum in Tel Aviv which, according to Amit, symbolizes the “Revisionist cultural practice [...] that favors, when it recognizes a conflict or contradiction between the sea and nationality, nationality to the sea, and chooses to distance the

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<sup>1</sup> Hanan Hever, “The Zionist Sea: Symbolism and Nationalism in Modernist Hebrew Poetry,” *Jewish Culture and History* 13, no. 1 (2012): 27. For the reader’s convenience references are to Hever’s English-language article that summarizes the book’s main argument.

<sup>2</sup> Hever, “The Zionist Sea,” 31.

<sup>3</sup> The expression *shlilat hayam*, “the negation of the sea”, is intended by Hever to echo the controversial Zionist ethos “the negation of the diaspora”, consequently convicting Zionism not only of denigrating diasporic existence but also the territory to which they have immigrated.

<sup>4</sup> Gish Amit, “The Conquest of the Hebrew Sea,” *Theory and Criticism* 24, (Spring 2004): 113–131.

sea in order to not interrupt the establishment of the national narrative.”<sup>1</sup> Although Hever and Amit raised awareness to the practical and symbolic relations between Zionism and the sea, which indeed has been under researched, they are more concerned with the anthropomorphism of the sea as a means of adding another victim to Zionism, and less with the role of the myth of the Hebrew Sea in Jabotinsky’s ideology and political activity. In addition, their works treat both the Revisionist and labor Zionist perceptions of the sea as fixed, and do not study their evolution during the 1920s and 1930s.

Another approach to the study of Zionism and the sea can be found in Kobbi Cohen-Hattab’s *The Maritime Revolution*<sup>2</sup>. The title’s “revolution” refers to the early stages of Zionist maritime activity, up until the formation of the State of Israel. Although Cohen-Hattab’s work is dedicated to the actual activities of the Zionists in this field, he also discusses the political rivalry between socialist and Revisionist Zionism, the Civitavecchia Naval Academy, and the visit of its training ship Sarah the First to Palestine in 1938<sup>3</sup>. Unlike Hever and Amit, who readily accept the Revisionists’ claim (expressed most often by Halpern) that labor Zionism neglected the sea, Cohen-Hattab documents the self-justifications of labor Zionists who blamed British Mandate policies for obstructing the development of the sea for fear that the Zionists would use it for illegal immigration to Palestine<sup>4</sup>. By writing from the perspective of naval development, however, Cohen-Hattab’s work also demonstrates that in spite of the Revisionists’ combative rhetoric and victimized narrative – of having pioneered Zionist seafaring only to be excluded from its development by labor Zionism’s hegemony – a number of seafaring initiatives did take place in the *Yishuv* (the Jewish settlement in Palestine), even before the Revisionists turned the “conquest of the sea” into a Zionist ideal<sup>5</sup>. Admittedly, although labor Zionists did initiate some maritime ventures, as opposed to Halpern’s and Hever’s narratives, the sea was not emphasized in labor Zionist ideology and rhetoric, nor was it framed as a Zionist ideal in itself, as much as it was by the Revisionists. Consequently, until the foundation of the Civitavecchia Naval Academy, it was mainly a difference of ideology, rather than one of actual activity. But by refuting the Revisionists’ claim to have initiated Zionist seafaring, *The Maritime Revolution* inadvertently illuminates the

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<sup>1</sup> Amit, 129.

<sup>2</sup> Kobi Cohen-Hattab, *The Maritime Revolution* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Cohen-Hattab, 215–225.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen-Hattab, 217.

<sup>5</sup> See especially Cohen-Hattab, *The Maritime Revolution*, 52–70.

ideological and political role the Revisionists attributed to the conquest of the Hebrew Sea. As we shall see, an important aspect of Revisionist seafaring was the fight against labor Zionism, which explains why the Revisionists sought to present seafaring as an original Revisionist ethos. In spite of such illuminations, however, Cohen-Hattab's book focuses on the actual development of seafaring in Palestine, and not on the greater role of the sea in Revisionism.

### 2.3 National identity and the Mediterranean

An important aspect of Jabotinsky's Hebrew Sea concerns national identity. For Zionists, national revival implied not only the return to the nation's ancient homeland, *eretz israel*, but also the fashioning of a new Jewish identity, typified in the ideal of the "new Jew". Jewish diasporic existence was seen as disastrous not only to the nation as a whole, but also as having corrupted the Jewish individual. Consequently, the Zionist ideal of the return to the homeland was part and parcel with the ideal of the "negation of the diaspora" and the exilic Jew. While the exilic Jew was depicted, not unlike antisemitic stereotypes, as a physically deformed individual who eschews physical labor, earning a living through commerce, trade, and other supposedly "non-productive" jobs, the "new Jew" was idealized as a physically healthy individual who contributes to society through hard and productive work. The materialist convictions of labor Zionism designated agriculture and industrial labor as imperative for the creation of the "new Jew".

The split with labor Zionism drove Jabotinsky to develop, among other things, a new national identity ideal. The Revisionist "new Jew" differed from its socialist counterpart not only in relation to socioeconomic attributes, but also by introducing racial ideas into the discourse. Various studies have addressed Jabotinsky's ideal of national identity, including those by Arye Naor<sup>1</sup>, Raphaella Bilski Ben-Hur<sup>2</sup>, and Shalom Ratzabi<sup>3</sup>. These studies have illuminated various aspects of Jabotinsky's "ideal Jew", such as its romantic and Nietzschean roots as well as residues of Jabotinsky's Marxist education. These important influences, which Jabotinsky absorbed during his studies in Italy, were expressed, among other ways, in the emphasis on the antirational nature of society, as well as Jabotinsky's evocation of a "proud and generous and cruel" race<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Arye Naor, "Jabotinsky's New Jew: Concepts and Models," *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture* 30, no. 2 (2011): 141–159.

<sup>2</sup> Raphaella Bilski Ben-Hur, *Every Individual a King* (Washington D.C.: B'nai B'rith Books, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Shalom Ratzabi, "Race, Nation and Judaism," in Barely and Ginossar, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 121–157.

<sup>4</sup> Naor, "Jabotinsky's New Jew," 144–145; Ratzabi, "Race, Nation and Judaism," 130–131.

Researchers have also noted Jabotinsky's ambivalence towards Judaism<sup>1</sup>: although Jabotinsky was initially hostile to religion, in light of his secular and assimilated upbringing, later in life he came to appreciate the constructive role of Jewish religion in the national identity of the Jewish masses in Poland.

An additional important aspect of Jabotinsky's national ideal concerns his views on race. Bilski Ben-Hur<sup>2</sup> has tried to explain Jabotinsky's racial-ethnic views by studying the contradictory sources that influenced his views on race, including Johann Gottfried Herder, Mazzini, Marx, and British historian Henry Thomas Buckle. It was under the influence of Buckle, who emphasized the fundamental role of geography and climate in shaping the nation's character, and Mazzini, who stressed the role of national distinction as a means of varied contribution to humanity, that Jabotinsky came to appreciate the importance of nationalism and the nation's return to its original homeland<sup>3</sup>. According to Bilski Ben-Hur, in spite of his rejection of Marx, Jabotinsky retained some Marxist ideas, especially the "emphasis on socioeconomics as the means by which the nation expresses its uniqueness"<sup>4</sup>. This tension drove Jabotinsky to accept the organic, deterministic role of "blood" in the nation's psychic structure, but to avoid the racist consequences a "pure race" vision would entail. Although Bilski Ben-Hur's work contributes to illuminating some of Jabotinsky's thoughts and their intellectual roots, it does not study the way in which Jabotinsky sought to associate the Jewish identity with the Mediterranean, and thereby European world. More importantly, however, the main defect of *Every Individual a King* is treating Jabotinsky as a thinker who held a consistent ideology. More than a theorist isolated from worldly occurrences, however, Jabotinsky was a political activist who reacted to changing circumstances, and who often adapted his ideas to these changes. Bilski Ben-Hur's treatment of Jabotinsky's texts according to themes, and not chronologically, as Jan Zouplna has shown, creates the illusion that Jabotinsky was a scholar with a clear and stable world view, and ignores the temporal and contextual nature of his work<sup>5</sup>. This problem, which Naor's and Razabi's analysis also share to

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky's son Eri, a staunch atheist, especially emphasized his father's hostility towards Jewish religion, see his *My Father, Zeev Jabotinsky* (Tel Aviv: Steimatzky, 1980), 95–106. See also, Shlomo Avineri, *Varieties of Zionist Thought* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1980), 182–184; Shavit, *The Mythologies of the Zionist Right Wing*, 216–218.

<sup>2</sup> Bilski Ben-Hur, *Every Individual, A King*. Unlike Bilski Ben-Hur, Naor argues that to Jabotinsky race was essentially a cultural question, see Naor, "Jabotinsky's New Jew," 156, endnote 17.

<sup>3</sup> Bilski Ben-Hur, *Every Individual, A King*, 104–105, 124.

<sup>4</sup> Bilski Ben-Hur, 153.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Zouplna, "Revisionist Zionism: Image, Reality and the Quest for Historical Narrative," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 1 (2008): 22.

some degree, does not mean scholars should not analyze Jabotinsky's theoretical views on race and nationalism, but rather that the context of their writing and publication should also be taken into consideration.

Yaacov Shavit<sup>1</sup> has also studied Jabotinsky's views on the Jewish race, and its relation to the national identity he was advocating, while emphasizing the interests that guided Jabotinsky in establishing these views. In his research on the Canaanite movement, and especially its founders Adya Horon and Yonatan Ratosh, Shavit studied the origins and the development of the Canaanite idea. An important force in the ideology's development was Horon's historical research, which emphasized the common identity of the Hebrew peoples in Canaan and the Mediterranean world, while minimizing the historical role and significance of the Jews among the "Canaanites". As Shavit has shown, both Horon and Ratosh were initially Revisionists, but their developing ideas gradually pulled them away from the movement, towards an anti-Zionist ideology<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, Horon, a close friend of Jabotinsky's son Eri, discussed his theories with the Revisionist leader throughout the 1930s, and even after he parted with the movement. According to Shavit, Jabotinsky regarded one aspect of Horon's theory as especially valuable: the idea that the Israelite nation developed its distinct characteristics only during the United Monarchy of Israel was instrumental in emphasizing the different origins of the Israelites and the Arabs<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky consequently endorsed Horon's assumption that the Israelites, Carthaginians, and Phoenicians were all part of a great kingdom as a way of associating Jewish history with the Mediterranean world, but rejected Horon's attempt to diminish the cultural and religious distinctiveness of Judaism. Jabotinsky was consequently interested in the possibility of "Europeanizing" the historical identity of the Hebrews, but not at the cost of renouncing Judaism, as Horon had aspired. Shavit also recognized, albeit briefly, other appeals of the Canaanite world view, such as the historical maritime vision, which offered an alternative to the socialist Zionist ideal of agricultural work<sup>4</sup>.

As mentioned above, Shavit is an important pioneer in the study of the Revisionist and Canaanite movements. Shavit's contribution to these topics goes beyond the publication of topical

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<sup>1</sup> Yaacov Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite* (Jerusalem: Domino, 1984). For an English version see: "Hebrews and Phoenicians," *Studies in Zionism* 5, no. 2 (1984).

<sup>2</sup> Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*.

<sup>3</sup> Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 56–57.

<sup>4</sup> Shavit, 82.

studies, but also includes his personal engagement in editing and compiling primary and secondary sources relevant to them, such as the biography of Eri Jabotinsky<sup>1</sup>. Nonetheless, this dissertation will discuss the broader vision of Jabotinsky's Hebrew Sea, in which Horon plays an episodic, albeit substantial role.

A recent attempt to establish the role of the Mediterranean in Revisionist ideology was made by Eran Kaplan. In "The Jewish Radical Right" Kaplan dedicates one chapter to "Revisionism and the Mediterranean World"<sup>2</sup>. Kaplan recognizes the Revisionist attraction to modern Italy and discovers several points that served as a basis for this affinity. Firstly, the Revisionists admired Italy, both for its history as well as for its unabashed attempt to reclaim its status in world politics. Italy consequently served as the preferred model of national revival, which militant Revisionism sought to emulate vis-à-vis Zionist supporters (by presenting a grandiose alternative to the more compliant socialists), and the international political arena (by assuming a brazen and confrontational approach)<sup>3</sup>. Secondly, Italy was perceived as the preferred cultural model within the cultural possibilities of the east-west south-north axes. The Revisionists rejected the "orientalist" approach of Zionism, which emphasized the eastern and Semitic origins of the Jews, but also the "occidental" alternative which highlighted the Jews' cultural contribution to the western world, unlike the militant and territorial power which the Revisionists sought to focus on. In the 1930s, Kaplan claims, Jabotinsky decided to abandon the movement's "Nordic" orientation in favor of a Latin one<sup>4</sup>. The "Latin orientation" consisted of the attempts to tighten the political relationship with Italy, especially through the Civitavecchia Naval Academy. Kaplan's analysis is logical and coherent, although several of his claims are unfounded. To begin with, Jabotinsky himself stressed time and again the *cultural* contribution of the Jews to the West with relation to national identity and national claims. The Revisionists' undeniable militarism, consequently, in no way came at the expense of emphasizing the Jews' cultural capital. The rejection of the "occidental" identity is also exaggerated, along with Jabotinsky's desire to adhere to a "Latin" orientation instead of the "Nordic" one. Jabotinsky saw Latin culture as Western, and his quoted

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent critique of Shavit with relation to Canaanism see, Roman Vater, "'A Hebrew from Samaria, Not a Jew from Yavneh': Adya Gur Horon (1907-1972) and the articulation of Hebrew nationalism," (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2015), 32–33. In spite of the criticism, his research still remains valuable for establishing several connections between Revisionist and Canaanite ideology.

<sup>2</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Radical Right*, 138–158.

<sup>3</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Radical Right*, 139–140.

<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, 148.



pronouncement refers more to – ultimately unfulfilled – political aspirations, rather than a concrete shift in the movement’s cultural program<sup>1</sup>. For example, although Jabotinsky desired to “Italianize” Hebrew, as a way of emphasizing the Jews’ Mediterranean Identity, as Kaplan correctly claims, Jabotinsky’s booklet “Hebrew Pronunciation” contains just as many references to the English language – if not more than – Italian. The desire to “Latinize” Revisionism should consequently be reexamined.

By using the Hebrew Sea as the focal point of Jabotinsky’s views and ideas, this study will illuminate additional aspects that are related to Jabotinsky’s national identity ideal, such as the archetype of the “merchant”.

## 2.4 Politics and mythology

Literature on the role of myths in political and social movements can be divided into theoretical studies, particular research on Zionism, and more specifically on Jabotinsky’s relation to the topic.

An important contribution to the study of the role of mythologies in national revival movements was made by Anthony Smith<sup>2</sup>, who has studied how myths of descent influenced the nation’s understanding of its heritage and identity. Smith has differentiated between myths of genealogical and ideological ancestry: while the former emphasize the ancestral and biological connection to a mythological figure, and consequently highlight the “blood” association between its members, the latter are based on a “spiritual kinship”, exhibited through “language, customs, religion, institutions, or more general personal attributes.”<sup>3</sup> Although these myths differ in various qualities, both kinds serve to strengthen the collective solidarity and territorial claims. Smith has also studied other national historical myths and their role in national revival, the most relevant of which for this study being the “myth of the heroic age” and the “myth of regeneration”. These myths, which the nation preserves in sagas and collective memory, offer models of grandeur and heroic archetypes which the nation uses as inspiration for regeneration<sup>4</sup>. As Smith shows later in his study, these myths were used in various ways by different ideological and political strands within the Zionist movement. In his study of Zionism Smith differentiated between a secular and

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 4, and especially section 4.4.2 in this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, “National Identity and Myths of Ethnic Descent,”.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, 57–58.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, 63–68.

liberal program, espoused by the “Western” wing of Zionism, envisioning a territorial solution to the Jewish problem, and a “socio-cultural” agenda which emphasized Jewish identity and the importance of the return to the nation’s historical land, espoused by the Eastern Jews of Russian and Poland. The socio-cultural agenda in turn, inspired two opposing movements: religious Zionism, which emphasized the religious myth of Jewish descent, and the secular myth of labor Zionism, which saw the return to the homeland as the people’s return to history and original identity<sup>1</sup>. Smith thus delineates some of the historical myths that were used by various Zionist strands in the formation of a national identity ideal and a political vision. As we shall see, myths of descent and myths of regeneration played a central role in Jabotinsky’s ideal of the Hebrew Sea.

In addition to the theoretical and general study of myths and national movements, scholars have studied the role of myths – either ancient or modern – in Zionism, Revisionism, and Jabotinsky’s work. Ancient myths, such as the grandeur of the Israelite kingdoms and the rebellion of Bar-Kochva, and modern myths, such as Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the “reviver” of the Hebrew language, the pioneers’ rehabilitation of the land, and the fall of Tel Hai, were purposefully used by Zionist activists in order to create ideals of national identity, and to create effective, motivating symbols for the *Yishuv*. Benjamin Harshav has emphasized the deliberate idealization of Ben-Yehuda as the reviver of Hebrew, which infuriated national poet Bialik and Agnon, prompting Zionist activist Menachem Usishkin to admit that “the people seek a hero, and we give them the hero”<sup>2</sup>. The death of the Joseph Trumpeldor while defending Tel Hai, a secluded Jewish settlement in the north of *eretz israel*, is another illustrative example. To start, Trumpeldor was already idolized during his lifetime: during the Russo-Japanese War, Trumpeldor lost his left arm, volunteered to return to the front, and was later capture by the Japanese. In captivity, Trumpeldor developed Jewish national awareness, and following the war became active in Zionism. During the First World War was interested, alongside Jabotinsky, Pinhas Rutenberg, and Dov Ber Borochoy in the establishment of Jewish battalions. Trumpeldor accepted the British proposal to establish the Zion Mule Corps (which Jabotinsky rejected, hoping for a more heroic opportunity), and served in the Battle of Gallipoli. After the war Trumpeldor dedicated himself to Zionist activism, when he was not busy toiling the land with one arm. In December 1919 Trumpeldor went to Tel Hai, a Zionist settlement in the north of *eretz israel* in order to support *chalutzim* who were

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, 81–82.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Harshav, *Language in the Time of Revolution*, (University of California Press, 1993), 87–88.

being harassed by the local Arab population. The conflict between the *chalutzim* and the Arabs gradually deteriorated, and on March 1, 1920, Trumpeldor fell in battle. According to historian Tom Segev, after the fall of Tel Hai the Zionist establishment sought to obscure its failure to defend the settlement by mythologizing its fall and emphasizing the ethe of heroism and martyrdom. This mythologization was expressed in the commemoration of Trumpeldor's dying words: "It's good to die for our country", as well as in the adaptation of the *yizkor* prayer, an ancient religious lamentation, to the modern, secular realities of Zionism<sup>1</sup>. Zionist leaders consequently established modern myths that served as ideals and symbols the *Yishuv* could adhere to.

Although the myths of labor Zionism have received most of the attention of scholars, Revisionist myths have also been studied. In 1986 Yaacov Shavit published a collection of essays which studied how and why Revisionist mythologies were constructed and used between the 1930s and the 1980s<sup>2</sup>. These myths included the repeated declaration that Jabotinsky predicted the Holocaust, and that his "evacuation plan" to save the Jewish masses of Poland was unrightfully rejected by the blind Zionist leadership; the portrayal of *Herut* leader Menachem Begin as Jabotinsky's natural successor; and the presumed harmony between Jabotinsky's cultural values and those of his followers<sup>3</sup>. Against these myths Shavit disclosed Jabotinsky's misreading of contemporary international politics and the impracticality of the "evacuation plan"; Begin's portrayal of himself as Jabotinsky's successor as a means of securing and legitimizing his leadership, in spite of the sharp discord between the two; and finally, the vastly different social and cultural ideals Jabotinsky and his followers adhered to. Shavit consequently debunked several Revisionist mythologies, by studying their purpose and origins. Recently, Ofira Gruweis-Kovalsky has continued the unveiling of Israeli right-wing myths in her study of the *Herut* party, examining the further mythologization of Jabotinsky during the 1950s, and the increasing conflicts between Eri Jabotinsky and *Herut* over the party's attempt to religionize his father and his legacy<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete* (London, Abacus: 2001), 123–126. A collection of studies on the myth of Tel Hai has recently appeared in Yael Zerubavel and Amir Goldstein, eds., *Tel Hai 1920–2020: Between History and Memory*. (Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben-Zvi, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Shavit, *The Mythologies of the Zionist Right Wing*.

<sup>3</sup> Many of these mythologies, especially Jabotinsky's alleged prediction of the Holocaust, are still commonly accepted within the Israeli right wing, in spite of extensive evidence to the contrary.

<sup>4</sup> Ofira Gruweis-Kovalsky, *The Vindicated and the Persecuted: The Mythology and the Symbols of the Herut Movement, 1948-1965* (Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, 2015), 283–275.

Beyond the political mythologizations of the Revisionists during and after Jabotinsky's life, Svetlana Natkovich<sup>1</sup> has studied Jabotinsky's relation to mythologies, within her research on the development of Jabotinsky's literary and political writings. Natkovich's research is noteworthy, among other things, for examining Jabotinsky's early literary and journalistic works in Russian, which have previously been relatively inaccessible. Through these early texts, which include his Russian reports from Italy, Natkovich was able to assess much more deeply than previous researchers the extent of the intellectual impact Italy had had on Jabotinsky. Natkovich has recognized several aspects and stages of development of Jabotinsky's "turn to the myth", of which we will review those most relevant to this research.

According to Natkovich, Jabotinsky became interested in the literary, political, and social prospects of the myths during his study in Italy, under the influence of Benedetto Croce and Georges Sorel. Natkovich has traced several important stages of Jabotinsky's intellectual developments in Italy: his initial infatuation with orthodox Marxism, followed by disillusionment and the turn towards nationalism and romanticism. It was in the later stage of these developments that Jabotinsky came to romanticize the premodern past, by envisioning an epoch in which the predominance of myth and fantasy instilled social order and economic security. In the Russian Middle Ages and Russian mythology Jabotinsky found both the adventurism and the social-economic stability he championed, while the Homeric epos exemplified the "organic connection between the present and the mythical past"<sup>2</sup>. Jabotinsky thus came to appreciate the role of the mythical in influencing and changing political reality. Jabotinsky's first attempt to utilize myths for "actual" purposes was the translation of Bialik's *beir haharega* ("In the City of Slaughter") into Russian. According to Natkovich, Jabotinsky recognized the potential of the poem, an evocative lamentation over the Kishinev pogrom, to turn Zionism from a marginal dream of the few into a political ideal of the Jewish masses. The translation, which Natkovich describes as a rendering of Bialik's poem into a detailed political program, was consequently Jabotinsky's first experiment in the harnessing of the mythical to the political<sup>3</sup>. As Natkovich has shown, the intricate role of myths in Jabotinsky's literary and political careers can also be found in his novel *Shimshon*, his Jewish Legion memoir (*megilat hagdud*), the screenplay *Ganzori*, and his autobiography. As

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<sup>1</sup> Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*.

<sup>2</sup> Natkovich, 61 and 55–59.

<sup>3</sup> Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 112–113.

we shall see, Jabotinsky's attempt to infuse the mundane present with the glorious myths of the past, played a central role in the construction of the ideal of the Hebrew Sea.

## 2.5 International relations

Parallel to the growing interest in Jabotinsky and Revisionism, academics have recently shown interest in alternative visions of state Zionists leaders held prior to the formation of the State of Israel<sup>1</sup>. Dmitri Shumsky and Arie Dubnov have both studied the works of leading Zionist thinkers and activists such as Herzl, Ben-Gurion, Arlosoroff, and Jabotinsky, suggesting that even such prominent Zionist leaders did not necessarily envision a “Jewish state” in today's capacity. With relation to Jabotinsky, these scholars highlight how the consolidation of his political and national views during the “age of empires” (i.e., before the end of the First World War) deeply affected his views on these subjects throughout his life. According to Shumsky, although Jabotinsky advocated rights and autonomy for all nations, he still saw empires as acceptable, if not desirable frameworks of political administration. Commenting on national tensions between Jews, Poles, and Russians in the Polish regions of the Empire, Jabotinsky called for “establishing Russia as a union of nations” but not for “dismembering” Russia<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, Jabotinsky was full of admiration for the Young Turk Revolution in the Ottoman Empire, both for its peacefulness, and for its tolerant treatment of the Jews and other minorities. Indeed, Jabotinsky felt the European empires could learn from the Ottoman Empire's legal and social acceptance of its minorities: the state's official recognition of national, religious, and ethnic groups, Jabotinsky believed, encouraged members of such minorities to integrate in state and society much more organically than their European counterparts<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky believed the Jews' legal status in the Ottoman Empire would comply with the Zionists' aspirations, and consequently lead to the creation of a Jewish federation within the Empire. Following the political view that led Jabotinsky to object to Polish separatism in the Russian Empire, he objected to the hypothetical separatism of Zionism within the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>1</sup> For a general review of the topic, see Arie Dubnov and Itamar Ben-Ami, “Did Zionist Leaders Actually Aspire Toward a Jewish State?” *Haaretz*, June 1, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-did-zionist-leaders-actually-aspire-toward-a-jewish-state-1.7308427>.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-State*, 133.

<sup>3</sup> Shumsky, 141–143.

According to Shumsky, up until the dissemination of the empires during the First World War Jabotinsky supported a “nationalities state”, or a multinational federative state, in which nations would enjoy national and cultural autonomy, but would be “spared” the hassle of political administration. Shumsky’s main argument, however, is that even after the war Jabotinsky continued to adhere to some of his pre-War views, particularly the idea that both the Jews and the Arabs could enjoy equal rights and status in one state, so long as the Jewish people would constitute a majority.

Arie Dubnov has also studied different Zionist visions between the world wars, such as the interest Zionist leaders showed in Josiah Wedgwood’s “Seventh Dominion”. In 1927 Wedgwood, a Labor politician and supporter of Zionism, initiated a campaign to abolish the Mandate and to turn Palestine into the seventh British dominion<sup>1</sup>. Although popular among several Zionist leaders, Dubnov claims Jabotinsky embraced the plan so enthusiastically, other potential supporters of the plan, such as Weizmann, ultimately rejected it<sup>2</sup>. Jabotinsky was extremely supportive of Wedgwood’s plan, planned to translate his booklet, *The Seventh Dominion*, into Hebrew, and the Revisionists even established the Seventh Dominion League. The plan appealed to Jabotinsky not least of all for its audacity, and for Wedgwood’s ability to “dream”, which he contrasted with the satiated smugness of the British aristocracy. Dubnov has also emphasized the vagueness of Jabotinsky’s definition of state, which prompted him to declare that the ‘the Jews’ state’ essentially meant a Jewish majority and self-rule, and to question the significance of the extent of the state’s sovereignty<sup>3</sup>. This view of the state, Dubnov argues, goes hand in hand not only with Wedgwood’s Seventh Dominion plan, but with the general vision of imperial federalism.

For the purpose of this paper, Shumsky’s and Dubnov’s studies illuminate the hopes Jabotinsky vested in foreign powers for the realization of Zionism. Jabotinsky’s interest in the possibility that Italy could serve as a “patron empire” to Zionism, will consequently be studied in the fourth chapter of this paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Dubnov, “Jewish Nationalism in the Wake of World War I,” 20. The six other dominions were Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Newfoundland, and Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> Dubnov, “Jewish Nationalism in the Wake of World War I,” 28.

<sup>3</sup> Dubnov, 34.

## 2.6 Primary sources

Jabotinsky's personal and public writings have been published in several editions over the years, although an organized edition of all his writings has yet to be published. Nonetheless, through the efforts of Eri Jabotinsky, Daniel Carpi, Aryeh Naor, and the Jabotinsky Institute in Tel Aviv, several editions of selected writings are available. The main primary sources used in this research can be divided in two: Jabotinsky's correspondences and his public writings. Each group has been organized and treated differently by the Jabotinsky Institute, which has affected their availability. An important aspect of this organization concerns translation of texts: a polyglot, Jabotinsky wrote in at least seven languages: Russian, Hebrew, English, French, Italian, German, and Yiddish. Jabotinsky's personal correspondences have been assembled, translated, annotated, and published in ten volumes by Daniel Carpi<sup>1</sup>. The digitalized archive has made available both the translated texts in Hebrew, as well as scans of the original letters, which facilitates comparison of the translated version with the original wording. Consequently, in this dissertation letters are cited according to recipient and date, and can easily be found accordingly on the Jabotinsky Institute website<sup>2</sup>. Jabotinsky's public works, however, have yet to be assembled as meticulously, with three Hebrew collections being published over the years: an 18-volume edition of selected writings, edited by Eri Jabotinsky (1947-1959)<sup>3</sup>; a four-volume edition of selected articles from the Russian weekly *razsvet* (1984-1986)<sup>4</sup>; and most recently, an ongoing publication of his ideological texts, edited by Aryeh Naor<sup>5</sup>. Due to the increasing difficulty to travel and the repeated lockdown of libraries and archives on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, I have attempted to cite available online sources. The *razsvet* articles are available on the Israeli online library *Kotar*, and texts from the Naor edition are currently being uploaded to the Jabotinsky Institute website. Other articles, and especially those that were published in *hayarden*, *Haaretz*, *hazit ha'am*, *ha'am*, and *doar hayom*, are available at the Historical Jewish Press website, and are cited accordingly<sup>6</sup>. A comprehensive bibliography of Jabotinsky's publications, compiled by Carpi and Mina Graur<sup>7</sup>, is

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, *Letters*. Editor: Daniel Carpi, (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 1992), 10 volumes.

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://en.jabotinsky.org/archive/search-archive/>

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, *ktavim* (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv: Eri Jabotinsky, 1947–1959).

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, *The Road to Zionist Revisionism* (1984); *Zionist revisionism: The Years of Consolidation* (1985); *The Struggles of Zionist Revisionism* (1986); *Zionist Revisionism Towards a Turning-point* (1986). All published by Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute and edited by Joseph Nedava.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, *Ideological Writings*, (Tel Aviv, Jabotinsky Institute, 2013 and ongoing).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/titles>

<sup>7</sup> Mina Graur, *The Writings of Ze'ev Jabotinsky – A Bibliography* (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 2007).

invaluable not only as a means of orienting in the themes and chronology of the publications, but also for comparing publications of articles in different languages and platforms and over the years. When English versions of papers, articles, or books are available, either in the original or through translation, they are cited throughout, unless they diverge significantly from Hebrew or the original.



### 3. Party politics: the struggle against labor Zionism

#### 3.1 Introduction

1923 was a landmark year in Jabotinsky's political biography. That year Jabotinsky resigned from the Zionist Executive Committee, became chief editor of the Russian-language weekly, *razsvet*, and published the seminal paper "Iron Wall" on the Zionist-Arab conflict. Jabotinsky's break with the Zionist Organization was instigated by disagreements with Weizmann's policy of appeasement vis-à-vis the British authorities and the Arabs, although many biographers and scholars agree that, initially at least, the resignation was more an act of individual, rather than ideological, dissatisfaction with the Zionist Organization<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, for two years after the resignation Jabotinsky was mainly preoccupied with literary and linguistic ventures, and only in 1925 did he officially return to politics with the establishment of the Union of Revisionist Zionists (*hatzohar*). Because the ideological differences between Revisionism and mainstream Zionism were initially rather ambiguous, the formation of the new Zionist party compelled Jabotinsky to formulate a distinctive ideology and to emphasize the differences between the Revisionists and their Zionist adversaries<sup>2</sup>. As we shall see, naval activity was initially conceived as a means of creating new fields of activity, new ideals, and honing a distinctive ethos for the nascent movement. Gradually, however, it was used in the inter-Zionist struggle, with the Revisionists boasting their naval exploits and their predominance in the field. Their greatest achievement took place in 1938 when the *Beitar* sailing ship, Sarah the First, sailed to *eretz israel* from Italy. Although Jabotinsky did not always initiate the movement's naval activities, he furnished them with slogans, symbols, and the general framework which transformed them from marginal or local achievements to an original and enduring part of the Revisionism. The following part will study how seafaring was used to bolster Revisionist Zionism, both among the Revisionists themselves and against labor Zionism.

#### 3.2 Deprived from the land – conquering the sea

One of the fiercest conflicts between labor and Revisionist Zionism was about obtainment of immigration permits to Palestine from the British authorities. It was, moreover, a battleground

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<sup>1</sup> See Nedava, *Ze'ev Jabotinsky*, 48; Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 162–164.

<sup>2</sup> Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 162–3.

in which the Revisionists were extremely disadvantaged, considering the hegemonic position of labor Zionism in the political and diplomatic arenas<sup>1</sup>. This disadvantage was expressed in the significantly smaller number of immigration-permits the Revisionists were given in comparison with socialist Zionists. In order to understand the political and ideological significance of this disadvantage and its relevance to the Hebrew Sea, we must first study the importance of immigration to Palestine and agricultural work in the Zionist program.

The ideal of toiling the land was a fundamental pillar of pioneer Zionism. This ideal had its roots in 19<sup>th</sup> century movements, such as the Russian *narodniks*, but found its apogee in the writings of A.D. Gordon and in the settlements of the Second Aliyah in *eretz israel* during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. The cult of the land was expressed in several Zionist principles such as *kibush hakarka* (conquest of the land), *kibush ha'avoda* (conquest of labor), *ge'ulat ha'adama* (redemption of the land), and *kibush hashmama* (conquest of the desert). These principles represented Zionist attempts to contend with several problematics of Jewish nation building, of which we shall focus on two. The first problem was geographical: considering the absolute majority of the Zionists were European, or at least were not originally from *eretz israel*, a fundamental aspect of Zionism's fulfillment was the immigration to the nation's land and its possession. The first step in the Jews' becoming a "normal" nation was ending the "abnormality", or "perversion", of exilic existence and dispersion, and returning to their historical homeland, *eretz israel*. The second problem concerned Jewish identity and the Zionist attempt to create a "new" Jew. Part of the criticism of Jewish existence in the diaspora focused on the image of the exilic Jew, both as an individual, and as a social element. This criticism, which often echoed antisemitic stereotypes, depicted the Jewish individual as weak, sickly, and physically deformed, while socially it criticized the Jews' aversion to manual labor and intuitive preference for supposedly "non-productive" professions, especially trade and commerce. The ideal of physical labor – and especially that of toiling the land – was meant to replace the "old" exilic Jew with the "new Jew": a physically healthy individual, an honest, productive farmer, whose contribution to society is discernible and material<sup>3</sup>. The corporal aspect of the Jewish individual was epitomized in the ideal of *Muskeljudentum* (*yehadut hashririm*, muscular Judaism), which exalted the "new Jew's"

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<sup>1</sup> See, Haim Lazar-Litai, *Af-Al-Pi* (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 1957), 52–60.

<sup>2</sup> Brinker, "chalutzit," 38–39.

<sup>3</sup> Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution*, 48.

physical and spiritual health and endurance, an ethos advocated by Max Nordau, a dominant Zionist thinker who exerted considerable influence on Jabotinsky, among others<sup>1</sup>. Unlike labor Zionists, Nordau did not promote agricultural work as much as he championed Jewish historical fighters, such as the Maccabees and Bar Kochba, who indeed inspired the formation of Zionist youth and sports clubs. Nonetheless, pioneer Zionism incorporated Nordau's Muskeljudentum into the ideal of agricultural work in *eretz israel*, creating one of the loftiest Zionist ideals: to reconquer the ancient homeland not through purchase, but by toiling its soil, to become intimate with the landscapes of the coveted land, but also to rehabilitate oneself by revitalizing the desert and drying swamps, all with one's bare hands<sup>2</sup>.

The ideal of toiling the soil as a way of reviving the nation was not confined to labor circles. By establishing successful settlements in Palestine, for all their social, economic, and cultural viability, nearly all Zionist factions sought to establish their bond to, and thereby their ownership, of the land vis-à-vis the Jewish and Zionist worlds, the international diplomatic arena (and most importantly the British Mandate) and the Arabs. In this struggle for national legitimacy the Revisionists were extremely disadvantaged, for several reasons: first of all, due to being a smaller and newer party in the Zionist political arena; secondly, because of the active competition with the hegemonic faction; and thirdly, through the barring of Jabotinsky's entry to Palestine at the end of 1929 by the British. This marginalization was expressed in several issues, including Jabotinsky's difficulty to realize his political plans in Palestine<sup>3</sup>, but most importantly in limiting the number of permits granted to Revisionists wishing to immigrate there.

The publication of the so-called White Book by the British Mandate in 1922 effectively limited Jewish immigration to Palestine, regulating that only certified Jews could immigrate to Palestine. The political and social dominance of labor Zionists was expressed, among other ways, in their ability to secure more immigration certificate (or *sertifikat* as they were colloquially called) for their own party members, and the fight between Zionist factions over these coveted permits became a crucial point of contention. Jabotinsky framed the Revisionists' disadvantage in this struggle in a way that connected to two important Revisionist principles: the movement's middleclass, and anti-socialist socio-economic profile, on the one hand; and, among its younger

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<sup>1</sup> Presner, *Muscular Judaism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 1–2.

<sup>2</sup> Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 2–4.

<sup>3</sup> Kaplan, *The Jewish Radical Right*, 6.

supporters especially, the romantic and nationalistic ethos<sup>1</sup>. The first principle was expressed in Jabotinsky's attack against labor hegemony and the socialist preference for "workers" at the expense of middleclass immigrants to Palestine: "an entire nation fights and contributes in order to enable the workers to immigrate to *eretz israel*. Because there is no free entry to *eretz israel*, and it is impossible to immigrate without a *sertifikat*, they artificially create an enormous amount of "proletariat" elements and a miniscule, lilliputian amount of bourgeoisie – a strange division, unprecedented in world Judaism, of which eighty percent belong to the middle class"<sup>2</sup>. The romantic ethos was articulated in the 1932 paper "On Adventure", in which Jabotinsky urged Revisionists who were denied permits to immigrate illegally<sup>3</sup>. The paper was the opening shot in illegal immigration operations to Palestine throughout the 1930s, and "Adventurism" became a key term among Revisionists.

At the same time Jabotinsky repeatedly and mercilessly reproached *Beitarists* who defected from the party or applied for certificates individually (and not through Revisionist or *Beitar* applications), contrasting them with "true" Revisionists, strong and determined men of iron<sup>4</sup>. The fight over *sertifikats* worsened as European antisemitism was becoming increasingly repressing and violent, culminating in the tragedy of Simcha Pluschnitzki, a young Polish Jew who committed suicide after his *sertifikat* application was rejected for being a *Beitarist*<sup>5</sup>. Jabotinsky wrote a poem, *kula sheli* (she is all mine), and dedicated it to Pluschnitzki, expressing the rage many Revisionists felt towards labor Zionism. The poem, which was published in different versions since its original print and acquired an anthemic status, like many Jabotinsky poems, lamented: "The Sharon and Emek are not for us / neither crop, nor pickling, nor / building: God, for sorrow you have / chosen us, and you have chosen my / brother to be my hangman [...] For we have planted your fields – / in the Diaspora, From Acre, on the / gallows, God, to rule you have / chosen us: over white-and-blue / and red."<sup>6</sup> As Dan Miron has shown, the poem borrows key socialist terms, (crop, pickling, building), "in order to turn upside down the left's claim for hegemony, following its commitment

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<sup>1</sup> The Revisionists also complained the distribution of *sertifikats* did not reflect the ratio of labor and Revisionist immigration candidates, see Jabotinsky, "*keur*," *doar hayom*, May 8, 1933, 2; "*chaimson bilshon rabim*," in *Zionist Revisionism Towards a Turning-point*, ed. Joseph Nedava (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 1986), 71–72.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, "*eretz israel haovedet*," *doar hayom*, December 4, 1932, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, "*al haaventurism*," *hazit ha'am*, March 11, 1932, 1. The article was published in numerous newspapers and languages, see Graur, *Bibliography*, 376–377.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, "*barzel*," *hazit ha'am*, March 21, 1934, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Dan Miron, *The Focalizing Crystal* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2011), 156.

<sup>6</sup> Jabotinsky, *kula sheli*. For this translation, apparently by Jabotinsky, see *Jl*, A1–1/10.

to cultivate the land. This claim is presented as illegitimate because the left has actually harmed this cultivation by preventing young *Beitarists* [...] from participating in it.”<sup>1</sup> The Revisionists’ contribution to national rebuilding is thus paid in blood rather than agriculture, and consequently, labor Zionism’s claim to the land is invalidated, for it is the *Beitarists*’ self-sacrifice that will ultimately win them the land<sup>2</sup>. In order to present a viable alternative to labor Zionism, however, Jabotinsky and the Revisionists had to offer more than newspaper articles and poems. The reduced ability to immigrate to Palestine and reconquer the homeland, as well as the need to hone Revisionist Zionism and to differentiate it from labor Zionism, compelled the Revisionists to find alternative ways to assert their relevance in the process of national revival on the one hand, and their superiority to labor Zionism on the other.

At the end of 1926 Jabotinsky made his first attempt to offer an aquatic alternative to already established Zionist ideals. At the second conference of the Revisionist Zionists Jabotinsky introduced a new slogan: *geulat hamaym* (the redemption of water), that is “the research and utilization of *eretz israel*’s water sources”<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky argued that the main problem of *eretz israel*, was not land but water shortage, which was responsible for three fourths of the land problem. Although alternative water sources, such as groundwater and rainwater, could be found, the British government, the World Zionist Organization, and the Jewish National Fund (KKL) – which was literally created to “redeem the land” (*geulat haaretz*) – have all neglected this topic through inefficiency and disinterest. It was consequently up to the Revisionists to remedy this defect and make more land arable by utilizing potential water sources. In a letter to friend and colleague Michael Haskel Jabotinsky mentioned the benefits of *geulat hamaym*: “it is a field of action neglected by other funds; water is the main problem of Palestinian economy; the idea of ‘Geulat ha-maim’ would strongly appeal to the Jewish public; many of our workers could be employed; and it would be commercially sound as people – no matter how unpunctual in paying other obligations – always pay for their water”<sup>4</sup>. Although the initiative ultimately dissolved, many

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<sup>1</sup> Miron, *The Focalizing Crystal*, 167.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that Jabotinsky’s preference for a militant, “bloody” conquest of *eretz israel* over an agricultural one was not solely the result of the rivalry with labor Zionism. As we shall see later, this preference was already manifest in the desire to establish the combative Jewish Legion and became a staple Revisionist ethos.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “*hartzoot baveida hashniya*,” in *Zionist Revisionism: The Years of Consolidation*, ed. Joseph Nedava (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 1985), 198.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to Haskel, August 17, 1934.

of its benefits, especially the socialists' neglect of the field and consequently its enhanced potential, also applied to seafaring.

Before the British barred Jabotinsky from entering the country, *Beitar* made a number of attempts to establish naval activities in Palestine. In 1927 the first *Beitar* naval association, *hagdud hayami harishon shel beitar* (The First Marine Battalion of Beitar) was established, as part of the 41<sup>st</sup> Naval Battalion of Beitar. The name symbolically represented a continuation of the Jewish Battalions – which were numbered 38, 39 and 40 – thereby hailing one of Jabotinsky's most renowned achievements<sup>1</sup>. The name and its association with the Jewish Legion also alluded to the militant and combative aspirations of the association, characteristic of *Beitar*. A year after its formation the Battalion launched its first sailboat. As head of *Beitar* Jabotinsky participated in this ceremonial launch, as well as those that followed. These launches, however, did not always go smoothly: at least one of them was marred by a group of young hoodlums, wearing blue shirts with the hammer and sickle insignia against a red background who laughed wildly while mocking “Jabotinsky's dreadnought” and the “*yidische admiraln*” (“Jewish admirals” in Yiddish)<sup>2</sup>. The socialists' scorn was not unfounded: not only was connecting to the land one of Zionism's most celebrated endeavors, but Jewish seafaring was probably a ridiculous vision in light of the prevalent stereotype of Jewish aversion to the sea.

Among the many negative stereotypes of the exilic Jew, the fear of the sea has been a persistent one. This stereotype can be seen as an offshoot of two more common antisemitic stereotypes: Jewish urbanism and aversion to nature, on the one hand, and Jewish cowardice on the other. As in other cases, Jews and Zionists seemed to internalize the anti-Semitic stereotype and acknowledge it. “The Jewish people was not a nautical people, neither in the period of the First Temple, nor during the Second Temple,” Ben-Gurion observed in 1950, adding “our country lies on two seas, the Mediterranean in the west and the Red Sea in the south, and never did our ancient forefathers reach both seas at once [...] Our forefathers called the Mediterranean Sea ‘the Great Sea’ because they never reached beyond the sea as their Sidonite kin had. But the Mediterranean is in fact nothing but a lake, one of the closed lakes with a narrow outlet to the Atlantic Ocean, which the ancient Jews never reached.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, the habitual reference to the Bible

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<sup>1</sup> Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 54.

<sup>2</sup> Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 56. Yiddish was used to emphasize the grotesqueness of Jewish seafaring.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 7.

as the highest authority on authentic Jewish history and identity, could not, in the eyes of Ben-Gurion, absolve the people from the accusation. The fear of the sea was attested to also by non-Zionist Jews, such as the Odessan writer, Isaac Babel. In “Awakening”, a coming-of-age story of a young Jewish Odessan, the protagonist is forced to take violin lessons, as his parents, like most Jewish parents, expect him to become a violin prodigy and bring fame and fortune to the destitute family, following the model of Jascha Heifetz. The protagonist however, wishing to join the other Odessa children swimming in the sea, abandons the violin on the banks of the Black Sea, turning his back to the Jewish stereotype, only to find a different one catches up with him at sea:

The ability to swim proved to be beyond my reach. The fear of water that had haunted all my ancestors – Spanish rabbis and Frankfurt money-changers – pulled me to the bottom. The water would not support me. Exhausted, saturated with salt water, I would return shoreward to my violin and music. I was attached to the instruments of my crime and dragged them about with me. The struggle of the rabbis with the sea continued [...]<sup>1</sup>

If Babel had to struggle with the sea in order to liberate himself from his ancestors’ legacy, Zionist writers fared even worse. As Hever has shown in *Toward the Longed-for Shore*, writers such as Bialik and Agnon often chose to ignore the sea altogether, briefly mentioning it as an obstacle that had to be crossed when travelling to *eretz israel* from Europe: “[the sea itself is negated], its main purpose is to be an instrument in the process of immigration [...] Hebrew literature positioned at its core not the sea, but Zion, as the desired territory”<sup>2</sup>. Hever’s analysis of the Hebrew writers’ aversion to the sea followed that of Gideon Ofrat’s study of Israeli painters: “the visitor coming [...] from planet Mars to the galleries and studios of our present art will not be able to guess he’s landed at a state lying to the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea.”<sup>3</sup> If mainstream, labor Zionism emphasized agricultural work as the quintessential return to the homeland and healthy Judaism, it still wasn’t able to contend with a peril as terrible as the sea. The non-nautical stereotype of the Jewish people was thus corroborated by most Jews and Zionists<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Babel, “Awakening,” in *Red Cavalry and Other Stories* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005), 71.

<sup>2</sup> Hever, *Toward the Longed-for Shore*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Gideon Ofrat, “With the Back to the Sea,” in *Within a Local Context* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2004), 37.

<sup>4</sup> Yaacov Shavit objects to the claim that the Jews and the Zionists had a primordial aversion to the sea, see Shavit, “Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean – Between a Coastal City and a Port City,” in *Studies in the History of Eretz Israel*, eds. Yehoshua Ben-Arie and Elchanan Reiner (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2003), 601–602.

In 1931, however, the *Beitar* sailors gave the socialists ample reason for envy, as they sailed to Beirut on the same rickety sailboat that was mocked three years earlier. The *Beitarists* were greeted with enthusiasm by the local Jewish community, inspiring the establishment of local Zionist and maritime organizations. The sailors, however, loyal to the view that love of the sea obligated scorning the land, were unruly in the city, resulting in their penalizing once back in Tel Aviv<sup>1</sup>. *Beitar*'s First Marine Battalion soon joined *agudat yordei yam zevulun* (the Zebulun Palestine Seafaring Society) which, although associated with *Beitar* through its members, was not a purely Revisionist association<sup>2</sup>.

The Revisionists explained the failure to establish a substantial marine organization or school in Palestine first of all by the need for foreign naval instructors, given the Jews' lack of experience in the field; secondly, by the expected interference of the British authorities; and thirdly, by labor Zionism's disinterest in naval activity and derision towards Jabotinsky's "*yidische admiraln*"<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the brunt of the criticism was not directed towards the British, but labor Zionism. Revisionist and *Beitarist* accounts of Revisionist seafaring are rampant with criticisms and accusations of labor Zionists, their initial disregard for the field, but especially their consequent copying and appropriating of the ethos of conquering the sea. While the *Beitar* book mocks labor Zionism's envy of the Civitavecchia Naval Academy, Jeremiah Halpern in *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring* settles accounts time and again with petty and corrupt labor officials<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, Halpern's account has been criticized for its one-sidedness and partiality, especially with regard to the parties' rivalry<sup>5</sup>. Nonetheless, given Halpern's centrality in Revisionist naval revival, his perpetual criticism of labor Zionism attests to the centrality of party politics and competition in these ventures.

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<sup>1</sup> Tuvim, "*lebeirut bayam*," *ha'am*, June 3, 1931, 3; Ch. Ben-Yerucham, *Book of Bethar Volume 1* (Tel Aviv: Publishing Committee of Sepher Bethar, 1969), 362.

<sup>2</sup> Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 58–63.

<sup>3</sup> Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 170; Ch. Ben-Yerucham, *Book of Bethar Volume 2 Part 1* (Tel Aviv: Publishing Committee of Sepher Bethar, 1973), 169–170.

<sup>4</sup> See Ch. Ben-Yerucham, *Book of Bethar Volume 2 Part 1*, 425–426; Ch. Ben-Yerucham, *Book of Bethar Volume 2 Part 2* (Tel Aviv: Publishing Committee of Sepher Bethar, 1975), 684–687. Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Carpi, "The Political Activity of Chaim Weizmann in Italy During the Years 1923–1934," *Zionism* 2, (1971): 190. Contemporary critics of Zionism, however, have taken Halpern's narrative, and especially his criticism of labor Zionism, at face value, see: Hever, *Toward the Longed-for Shore*, 18 and David Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 365. The Revisionists' bitterness towards labor Zionism was exacerbated by several events, most notably the Holocaust and the bombing of *Altalena* in 1948.



After the aborted attempt to pursue *geulat hamaym*, in the early 1930s Jabotinsky came up with a brand-new Zionist ideal: *kibush hayam* (the conquest of the sea). In more ways than one, the conquest of the sea served as a substitute to the conquest of the land. What was to be conquered was not just any sea, but the Hebrew Sea which, based on Horon's theories, Jabotinsky convinced his readers had been ruled by Hebrew seamen since the Phoenicians<sup>1</sup>. Horon's theories were thus utilized to provide historical legitimization to the conquest of the sea, in the same way the Bible legitimized the conquest of *eretz israel*<sup>2</sup>. The originality of this notion was undeniable, considering labor Zionism's focus on conquering and reviving the land, and its general disregard for the sea<sup>3</sup>. The Revisionists presented the sea not as a barrier, land's natural border, but a natural continuation of the nation's homeland, an integral part of the territory of the future state. To reconnect with the nation and the territory, Zionists could now sail and fish and trade with neighboring ports; the nation's symbolic territory was relocated from the desert to the sea; pioneers could now *rule* not just dunes and swamps, but waves and storms<sup>4</sup>; and finally, competition with the Arabs was not only over the natural resources of the land, but also over those of the sea. The extension of the national territory to encompass the entire Mediterranean Sea – not necessarily politically, but at least symbolically – was useful in bypassing the difficulties of Revisionist activities in Palestine. Thus, the *Beitar* students at the Italian naval academy were “conquering” Hebrew territory, mastering a Hebrew trade, and uniting with the nation's territory, a task at least equal to the pioneers' conquest of the land, while Horon's Hebrew “mare nostrum” served to shift the territorial focus from land to sea. The turn to the sea had additional benefits: like agriculture and labor it was a physical endeavor that implied individual and national rejuvenation through hard work. Moreover, as Todd Presner has shown, since the advent of modernism seafaring was perceived as an important form of exploring the world and spreading civilization among uncultured barbarians<sup>5</sup>. European colonization of faraway countries, formerly unknown to Western civilization, was seen as white man's benevolent “burden”. While great powers such as Britain, France and Germany were competing for a “place under the sun”, justifying colonization not only economically but also morally through the distribution of civilization, the supposed absence of a Jewish seafaring

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “Civitavecchia,” *hayarden*, December 10, 1935, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Anita Shapira, “Ben-Gurion and the Bible,” in *New Jews, Old Jews*, 219.

<sup>3</sup> Hever, *Toward the Longed-for Shore*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> This was probably the inspiration for the name of Horon's sea association *rodei-gal* – “Wave Rulers”.

<sup>5</sup> Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, pp. 165-166

tradition aggravated by their sea-fearing, were taken as additional signs of Jewish redundancy and lack of contribution to world history. The turn towards seafaring was consequently consistent with the Zionist aspiration to be a “nation like all others” (here in the sense of contribution, and not just “normality”), but also with Jabotinsky’s fascination with Britain and Western culture.

Unlike purely Revisionist ideals such as *hadar* and *had-ness*, *kibush hayam* was presented as a universal Zionist ideal, ostensibly transgressing party politics. Just like the “Hebrew language” and the “Hebrew state”, the “Hebrew Sea” was an ideal to be fought for and mastered by all Zionists. When Sarah the First came to Palestine, Revisionist organizers attempted to present the event as an all-Zionist feat, that transcended political divisions<sup>1</sup>. Presenting the conquest of the sea as a universal Zionist ideal was useful, however, in highlighting the Revisionists’ primacy in this field by boasting *Beitar*’s naval academy in Civitavecchia, Sarah the First, and *Theodore Herzl*, the *Beitar* ship in Riga<sup>2</sup>. To make the ideal truly desirable, Jabotinsky and the Revisionists depicted the conquest of the Hebrew Sea as an arduous task, not necessarily rewarding in terms of employment, but perilous and demanding of sacrifice: “there is nothing tougher, more romantic, loftier, and especially more Trumpeldorian – than the idea of conquering the Hebrew Sea”; “the main purpose of training [sailors] is not to create *sea-people*, but *sea-conquerors*”; “as with other conquests[...]: it is not a ‘career’, it is not the Kings Highway [...] it is a path for strong people with broad shoulders, and healthy body and soul.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, the mission was so dangerous, that by 1935 it had already taken its first victim: the “young *Beitarist* from Danzig, Avraham Strausberg, who drowned at sea [...] a sacrifice on the altar of conquering ‘the Hebrew Sea’”<sup>4</sup>.

Fallen pioneers have played an important role in Zionist nation building ever since the first *aliyot*, their sacrifice romanticized “both as a necessary condition to realizing [Zionism] and as an expression of the willingness to sacrifice everything for this realization.”<sup>5</sup> An important landmark in the development of this ethos played the fall of Tel Hai, during which Joseph Trumpeldor, Jabotinsky’s close friend and colleague in the establishment of the Jewish Legion, died while protecting the settlement from the Arabs, his last words being “*ein davar, tov lamut be’ad artzenu*”

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<sup>1</sup> See the February 25, 1937, Tel Hai Fund memorandum for the plan for the reception of Sarah the First, II, L21-5/33, 22, as well as the proposed list of dignitaries to attend such receptions, *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah Halpern, “*hamachzor hashlishi beCivitavecchia*,” *hayarden*, February 26, 1937, 6; Ruper, “*lean?*,” *hayarden*, November 6, 1936, 6; Jabotinsky, “Civitavecchia,” 2.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Alon Gan, *From Victimhood to Sovereignty* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute: 2014), 20. Gan also surveys several studies on the topic.

(never mind, it's good to die for our country). This event became a cornerstone of Zionist mythology, inspiring the creation of the modern Zionist eulogy *yizkor*, originally a 12<sup>th</sup> century Jewish prayer recited in memory of the Crusaders' victims, which socialist Berl Katznelson adapted to honor the fallen heroes of Tel Hai<sup>1</sup>. The Revisionists particularly idealized Tel Hai and Trumpeldor not only in commemorative events, but also in daily life in *birkat tel hai* (the Tel Hai greeting) and *keren tel hai* (the Tel Hai Fund). The death of Avraham Strausberg, who drowned at sea, was consequently included in the Revisionist cult of the fallen, mythologized through annual ceremonies, eulogies, articles, and habitual mentions as "the first sacrifice on the altar of conquering the Hebrew Sea"<sup>2</sup>. Two years after his death Zvi Kolitz, the commander of Strausberg's class, recounted the story of the death in an article titled *Yizkor in hayarden*, while *Beitarists* all over the world commemorated him: "everything, each conquest small or great demands its sacrifices. We have also offered the first sacrifice to conquering the sea"<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky himself visited Strausberg's solemn grave in the Christian plot in Civitavecchia and mused on the ominous mission of conquering the Hebrew Sea<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, Jabotinsky esteemed personal sacrifice, especially through battle, much more than agricultural pioneering: "to me, greater and worthier than the pioneers' deeds were those of the Jewish Legion during the war"<sup>5</sup>. The Hebrew Sea was thus portrayed as a dangerous yet glorious ideal each young *Beitarist* would yearn to achieve. It was, literally, an ideal worth dying for, in the nation's revival and rejuvenation. This romantic rhetoric, characteristic of *Beitar* and consistent with its militarism, the cult of the Jewish Legion, and the semi-aristocratic concept of *hadar*, served to enhance the value of the Hebrew Sea in comparison with the mundane realities of agricultural work, while emphasizing the role of the Revisionists in the national revival.

The "conquest of the sea" was not just an ideological objective but possessed a military aspect as well. In 1931, during the first international *Beitar* convention in Danzig, Jabotinsky

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<sup>1</sup> Uzzi Ornan, "Who Revived the Hebrew Language?," in *Studies in Contemporary Hebrew and its Sources*, ed. Moshe Florentin (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2013), 81–82. A recent collection studies Tel Hai in Zionist memory and culture: Zerubavel and Goldstein, *Tel Hai 1920–2020*. For emphasis on Jabotinsky and Revisionism in the Polish press, see, Paweł Pokrzywiński, "Tel Hai and Trumpeldor in the Polish Revisionist Press in the 1930s," *ibid.*, 392–409. For Tel Hai as an arena of political conflict between the Zionist left and right see, Amir Goldstein, "The Pilgrimage to Tel Hai as a Contested Political Arena (1928–1947)," *ibid.*, 259–293.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Ben-Yerucham, *Book of Bethar, Volume 2 Part 1*, 423; Jabotinsky, "Civitavecchia", 2; Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, i19.

<sup>3</sup> Zvi Kolitz, "yizkor..." *hayarden*, May 21, 1937, 6; "Civitavecchia," *Chinuch vetegar*, JI, *Beitar*-23, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, "Civitavecchia," 2.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, "eretz israel haovedet, chelek 2," *doar hayom*, December 5, 1932, 2.

commented on *Beitar*'s failure in sports and military and defense techniques: "I have seen [*Beitar*] branches who, upon receiving the order "turn right!" turned left; which proves, they did learn something, that is, to turn, but they still haven't learned where to turn"<sup>1</sup>. Clearly, *Beitarists* had to become better sportsmen. It was in this context that Jabotinsky noted *Beitar* should turn its attention to naval defense. A group of young Jews has assembled in Paris, Jabotinsky informed the convention participants, who are practicing naval activities under the name *rodei-gal* ("sea rulers"). "Perhaps this establishment will produce a naval *Beitar*. In any case it is obvious *Beitar* should also begin with sea activity" Jabotinsky added, concluding *Beitar* might collaborate with the Parisian organization. *Rodei-gal* was established earlier that year in Paris by Adya Horon and was quickly joined by Halpern and Jabotinsky's son, Eri<sup>2</sup>. One of its first ventures was the publication of a *Beitar* sponsored quarterly titled "*Le Cran*"<sup>3</sup>. A year after its establishment, Jabotinsky entrusted his son with several hundred Francs and ordered him, Horon and other *rodei-gal* members to "prepare a detailed plan for *Beitar* maneuvers, which he hoped to perform on French soil"<sup>4</sup>. The conspirators purchased sea maps and studied the area, developing a plan to conquer *eretz israel* from the north coast of Saudi Arabia<sup>5</sup>, or, in the words of Eri Jabotinsky, "not [...] in the spirit of official Zionism, but from the south and the east, as Moses had done"<sup>6</sup>. Movement members even visited Tunis, "right next to Carthage", where they purchased a sailboat which was intended for training and smuggling arms to Palestine<sup>7</sup>. After two months of research, Eri Jabotinsky handed his father a detailed plan for a simulated amphibious seizure of a city in the south of France, with 1,000 participants. The plan, however, was buried, and although Jabotinsky occasionally mentioned *rodei-gal* throughout the 1930s, the venture ultimately dissipated. The failure of concrete naval military action aside, the Revisionist seafaring ethos, like Revisionist ethos in general, was saturated in militaristic discourse, from club names, such as "The First

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<sup>1</sup> Esther Ashkenazi, "The Charter of Brit Trumpeldor 1936 (*sic*)", *Zionism* 20, (1996): 320–1.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about Horon, see the section on Horon in chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup> According to Eri Jabotinsky the word means both "daring" and "a technical term for a kind of spike which used to be applied underwater to the bow of a battleship in order to drown enemy ships." Eri Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 128 (henceforth E. Jabotinsky).

<sup>4</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 130.

<sup>5</sup> Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 63.

<sup>6</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 13. Once again the emphasis on using a different approach than official (i.e., labor) Zionism illustrates how seafaring served to offer an alternative by the Revisionists.

<sup>7</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 128; Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 63. For more about the Revisionist movement in Tunis, see Haim Saadoun, *Zionism in Tunisia* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: 2019), 132–146. Saadoun notices the dominance of the Revisionist movement and *Beitar* in Tunis, as well as Jabotinsky's contribution to the Tunisian Zionist newspaper *Le Réveil Juif*, especially between 1925 and 1927.

Marine Battalion of Beitar” and *rodei-gal*, through the rivalry with labor Zionism, and culminating in the cult of the fallen.

The Revisionists also sought to exploit the sea’s economic potential. Parallel to the *rodei-gal* misadventure, Jabotinsky was examining other naval possibilities. In February 1932 Jabotinsky wrote to Jewish-Russian philanthropist, Grigori Vishniak, in the attempt to interest him in the establishment of a naval school in Haifa. In Jabotinsky’s vision, which he called “the Jews and the sea”, the projected school would offer courses in commercial geography of the Middle East and other economic topics. Jabotinsky observed two important benefits of the naval school: first of all, such a school would enable Jews to enter the area of sea commerce, which they have completely neglected, and thereby revolutionize Zionist economy. More importantly, however, “a naval school will heal our youth’s psychology, become a source of inspiration to all port cities, and within 10 to 15 years the sea will provide a new field of employment for thousands of Jews.”<sup>1</sup> The ideal of “the Jews and the sea” as presented to Vishniak exhibits two important aspects with relation to Zionist politics: first, the attempt to compete with labor Zionism by cultivating a new Zionist ethos and trade, echoing one of the benefits mentioned with relation to *geulat hamaym*; second, as a byproduct of this attempt, the desire to “heal” the “unhealthy” exilic nation through work. It was, essentially, an attempt to recreate mainstream Zionism, for its ideals of rehabilitating work and reconquering the territory of the homeland, in the sea, motivated, not least of all, by the need to offer an alternative to labor Zionism’s already established ethos. At the same time it contributed to the creation of the “new Jew” by “healing” the youth’s “psychology” through masculinization<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, the Haifa naval school project, like *rodei-gal*, also came to nothing. It was not until the foundation of the Civitavecchia school in 1934 that Jabotinsky would finally achieve something in his attempt to bring together the Jews and the sea.

The arrival of Sarah the First to Palestine provided the Revisionists an opportunity to boast their naval triumph. The voyage was carefully orchestrated to serve Revisionist propaganda, not only in Palestine, but also in the Mediterranean ports in which it anchored along the way. Before its arrival, Revisionist organs were concerned with questions such as local and international media coverage, which flag the ship will sail under, which dignitaries will attend welcome ceremonies in

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Vishniak, February 27, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> For the emphasis on masculinization in the ethos of the new Jew in Zionism see Hannah Naveh, “Gender and the Vision of Hebrew Masculinity,” *New Jewish Time Vol. III*, ed. Yirmiyahu Yovel (Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), 117–123.

Haifa and Tel Aviv, and the possibilities of organizing a “sailing exhibition”<sup>1</sup>. The Revisionists sought to present the ship’s arrival as the rebirth of Hebrew seamen, a Zionist feat that would transcend petty party politics. Obviously a “universal” Zionist accomplishment would attract attention to Civitavecchia and count as a Revisionist success, but the celebrations themselves ought to fill every Zionist with pride, regardless of political affiliation. In each of its destinations along the Mediterranean the sailors met with the local Jewish communities which reported the ship’s course in their local newspapers. Revisionist organs celebrated the Mediterranean tour and in spite of the conventional complaints about the socialists’ envy, pettiness, and dishonesty, hailed it as a great success and effective propaganda both among Jewish communities (including the *Yishuv*) and non-Jewish spectators<sup>2</sup>. Jabotinsky also dedicated a paper to the visit. In “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First”, which was published in five languages, Jabotinsky condemned the Haifa labor Zionists who refused to officially greet the ship crew “as being only an enterprise of a party and not of the nation as a whole”<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Jabotinsky emphasized, as was common in Revisionist rhetoric, the popular enthusiasm with which the ship was received, not only in Palestine (“the genuine attitude of the man in the street: he worshipped”), but by all Jewish communities on the Mediterranean: in Salonica, for example, the Sephardi community “wept and sang with joy in greeting an all-Jewish boat”; and in Tunis, although Arabs cut the ship’s ropes at night “the Jews took them to their hearts and dined and feted them”.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.3 Summary

The Hebrew Sea was utilized by the Revisionists in their struggle against labor Zionism on practical, ideological, and propagandic planes. In the first place, it served to circumvent labor Zionists’ advantage in conquering the land, by elevating the sea from its position as a natural border to a natural part of *eretz israel*. This reframing of the Mediterranean was accomplished by emphasizing the economic potential of the sea, but also the maritime history of the Hebrews, which will be analyzed in the third chapter. Secondly, it reproduced the Zionist desire to fashion a

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<sup>1</sup> JI, L21-5/33.

<sup>2</sup> See Halpern, *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 135–178, also with references to newspaper articles. See also dossiers JI, HT1-14 and HT1-45.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First”, JI, Taf-1938/203/EN, 4. For Hebrew see: “*nedudea shel sara a,*” *hayarden*, May 6, 1938, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First”, 5. On the tense atmosphere in Tunis before the ship’s arrival see Saadoun, *Zionism in Tunisia*, 198–200.

muscular, brave, and hardworking “new Jew” through the romantic depiction of life at sea and the utilization of the “cult of the fallen”, another trademark of pioneer Zionism. Finally, it offered a militant alternative to the ideal of conquering the land, as a feat to be accomplished through naval ventures and warfare.

## 4. The Italian option

### 4.1 The Italian affairs: Mazzini, Mussolini, etc. etc.

Italy has played several important roles in Jabotinsky's political, ideological, economic, and aesthetic views. The years he spent in Rome as a student deeply influenced Jabotinsky, as an overquoted yet revealing passage from his autobiography states: "If I have a spiritual homeland, it is Italy rather than Russia [...] My whole attitude toward the problems of nationality, state, and society took shape during those years under Italy's influence."<sup>1</sup> The influence of Italian thinkers on Jabotinsky will be discussed later with relation to his views on race and nationalism, while this chapter will focus on the actual attempts to establish political relations between the Zionist movement and Italy. As we shall see, throughout his Zionist activity Jabotinsky was interested in establishing such relations for various reasons, often corresponding to Zionist and Italian interests in the Mediterranean world.

### 4.2 A Jewish-Italian Legion?

Jabotinsky's first attempt to establish Zionist-Italian relations took place during the First World War. The outbreak of the war and the conviction that it will significantly alter the political world order inspired Zionist activists, like other national movements, to take advantage of these developments in order to promote their national aspirations. Among those activists was Jabotinsky, who sought to establish Jewish battalions that would serve alongside the armies of the major powers, as a means for promoting Zionism in the post-war world. Two great difficulties existed in realizing this vision. The first problem concerned "gambling" on which side would win the war. Fighting alongside the losing end would in no way promote the Zionist cause, and indeed Jabotinsky, who speculated on the Allies' victory, was snubbed by his native Odessans, who believed Germany would prevail<sup>2</sup>. The second problem concerned the nature of the Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Jabotinsky, *Story of My Life* (Wayne State University Press, 2015), 50. Most studies on the Jewish Legion follow Jabotinsky's narrative, for an account that downplays Jabotinsky's role in the formation of the Jewish Legion, see Mattityahu Mintz, "Pinhas Rutenberg's initiative towards the establishment of Jewish battalions in the beginning of World War I," *Zionism* 8, (1983): 181–194. Mintz emphasizes the role of Rutenberg, Weitzmann, and Dov Ber Borochov in preparing the groundwork for the establishment of Jewish battalions while criticizing the cult of Jabotinsky as the father of the idea. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this section, the main importance is Jabotinsky's portrayal of the events, more than historical accuracy.

<sup>2</sup> Shmuel Katz, "Jabotinsky, the Jewish Legion and the Beginnings of *Hagana*," in Barely and Ginossar, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 496.



battalion: Jabotinsky was interested in the creation of a combating unit, while the British, with whom Jabotinsky and Trumpeldor had been negotiating in Egypt, were only willing, initially at least, to support a transport corps. The unit carried the less than heroic name, “Zion Mule Corps”, which disappointed Jabotinsky who was interested in establishing combating units in order to emphasize the Jews’ actual contribution to the war’s efforts, but also in order to turn the Jews into a physically healthy and fighting people<sup>1</sup>. Jabotinsky believed that the current Zionist achievements were of little interest to international public opinion, but that significant Jewish participation in conquering Palestine, as well as a major Jewish military presence in Palestine during the carving up of the Ottoman Empire by the Allies, would contribute to advancing Zionist interests<sup>2</sup>. While Trumpeldor accepted the British offer, Jabotinsky was unsatisfied and traveled to Brindisi to meet Pinhas Rutenberg, an engineer and a Zionist activist who later founded the Palestine Electric Corporation. Jabotinsky knew Rutenberg was also interested in the possibility of establishing Jewish military units and hoped to utilize the political and diplomatic connections Rutenberg had established in the decade of living in Italy<sup>3</sup>. Using Rutenberg’s and his own contacts in Italy, Jabotinsky tried to persuade dignitaries and government officials to sponsor Jewish battalions. As he recounted in his autobiography, although he and Rutenberg agreed Britain would be the best partner for establishing the corps, it was not the only one: “Italy is burning inside,” he recalled, “soon it will explode – and Italy has a healthy appetite for conquests on the Mediterranean.”<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky managed to interest two people in his plan: socialist Leonida Bissolati and political scientist Gaetano Mosca, but ultimately the attempt to form a Jewish-Italian legion was a failure, if only because Italy was still undecided on the question of joining the war<sup>5</sup>. Jabotinsky then continued to France where he proposed the idea to publicist and activist Gustave Hervé, who immediately grasped its value for a state with an eastern “appetite”, but that was a failure as well. Eventually only Britain supported the plan.

Later in life, after the Jewish Legion had already been mythologized, Jabotinsky would refer to the short Italian episode as an attestation of his “Itaolophilia”. In 1936 Jabotinsky was asked by Yitzhak Sciaky, a leader of Italian Revisionism, to send him some biographical

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<sup>1</sup> Ze’ev Jabotinsky, *Autobiography* (Jerusalem: Eri Jabotinsky Publishing, 1947), 129–132.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to Victor Jacobson, May 25, 1915.

<sup>3</sup> See Jabotinsky to Tschlenow, December 18, 1914, and Jabotinsky to Gluskin, March 18, 1915.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, *Autobiography*, 137.

<sup>5</sup> See also, Jabotinsky to Amfiteatrov, April 1, 1915 and April 22, 1915.

information that was to be sent to Benito Mussolini in an attempt to arrange a meeting between the two. In a few short paragraphs Jabotinsky tried to highlight his lifelong devotion to Italy: starting from his student years in Rome, when he initiated among the Russian youth the fashion of studying at Italian universities, through his support for Italy in the 1911 Italian-Libyan conflict, culminating in the attempt to form the Jewish Legion, which was originally pursued in Italy<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, even the failed Italian-Jewish Legion symbolized to Jabotinsky his enduring interest in Italian-Zionist relations.

It is interesting to note that in Italy Jabotinsky was determined to negotiate only with non-Jewish Italians about the Jewish battalions, advising his colleagues not to turn to Jewish, but only to “real Italians.”<sup>2</sup> This approach was consistent not only with the desire to give the Jewish Legion the appearance of a unit acting under the auspices of the great power, but also with Jabotinsky’s emphasis on his own experience of Italian culture and life, which circumvented the Jewish community. This description reflects an important aspect of Jabotinsky’s identity, and especially his relation to the Jewish world: an undisputable leader of the Jewish masses, Jabotinsky was also repelled by them. In his autobiography, for example, Jabotinsky was careful to note that as a student in Rome he did not associate with any Jews whatsoever, intermingling only with “real” Italians: “In Rome there was no ‘Russian colony’ whatsoever. From the day I arrived, I became absorbed in the world of Italy’s youth, and I shared their life until the day I left.”<sup>3</sup> In personal letters Jabotinsky revealed a more spiteful tone. When asked to discuss literature in lectures in Italy, Jabotinsky flatly refused: “Perhaps I can still conquer the disgust the Jewish rabble raise in me when I must talk to them about their duties, but to talk about rhymes – no thank you.”<sup>4</sup> It is important to note how Jabotinsky utilized this tone as a political strategy on the one hand – in order to stress his own agency when dealing with non-Jewish states and organizations – and as an individual identity on the other – a means of separating himself from the “Jewish rabble” and assuming a cosmopolitan, semi-aristocratic image. As we shall see, this attitude was also manifest once the Civitavecchia Naval Academy was established: Jabotinsky hoped contact with Italian culture would “civilize” the *Beitarist* cadets, but at the same time he feared they would offend Italian sensibilities with their unrefined behavior.

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Sciaky, July 10, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to Tschlenow, December 18, 1914.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, *Story of My Life*, 50.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to Carpi, October 8, 1930.

### 4.3 The 1920s: Mussolini's appetite

In July 1922 Jabotinsky set out to Italy on Weizmann's request, in order to influence Italian public opinion to support the British Mandate of Palestine, which was to be voted on by the League of Nations. The Italians, however, seemed reluctant to support the Mandate: "3/4 of Italian press [are] against us" Jabotinsky wrote to Weizmann in despair, shortly after his arrival<sup>1</sup>. As Jabotinsky saw it, Italian objection to the British Mandate was mostly the result of Italy's political interests, especially the rivalry with Britain and resentment towards the British and French mandates in the Middle East, which Italy envied<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, Italy begrudged its treatment at the Versailles Peace Conference, its lack of colonies or mandates in the post war world, and its status in the Mediterranean, in comparison with France and Britain, but also in light of the historical grandeur of Rome<sup>3</sup>. Zionism was merely a pawn in Italy's rivalry with the great European powers. *Corriere della Sera*, for example, assured Jabotinsky "they had nothing against Zionism as such, and in case they had to take up a hostile attitude towards the Mandate, they would say that their hostility is due to neglect of Italian interests, not to Zionism"<sup>4</sup>. The Italians, however, were not beyond persuasion, as Jabotinsky reported four days later: Visconti Venosta, an important diplomat, confided in him that Italy would become friendlier to Zionism and the British Mandate in exchange for economic concessions, such as employing Italian work forces in the Jordan River<sup>5</sup>.

But the rivalry with England and France was not the only issue that came between Italy and Zionism: the second factor was Italy's potential alliance with the Pan-Arab movement. Following the end of the First World War, the Italians were racing against the British to gain control over Palestine. This was attempted through pro-Zionist, but also anti-Zionist policies. The pro-Zionist policy culminated in a plan to send a Jewish-led commission to inspect the economic potential of Palestine, while the anti-Zionist policy sought to "rally local anti-Zionist feelings, believing that this would increase Italy's popularity among the local population and further the internationalization of Palestine."<sup>6</sup> Both of these initial post-war plans eventually dissipated, although they did set the tone to the fluctuating policy that characterized the early years of the

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Weizmann, July 10, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky also discussed the Vatican's antagonism towards Zionism which carried significant influence in Italy.

<sup>3</sup> Nir Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East, 1933–1940* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to Weizmann, July 10, 1922.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky to Weizmann, July 14, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East*, 15.

Fascist regime. Notwithstanding the policy's ambiguity, the quantitative supremacy of Pan-Arabism to Zionism seems to have appealed to Italy's appetite in its search for an ally. Indeed, during his mission in Italy Jabotinsky had to contend both with Arab lobbyists who'd come to influence the Italian government, and with the pro-Arabic dispositions of the Italian press and politics<sup>1</sup>. As Jabotinsky informed Weizmann in his last report from Italy, the Fascists were among the fiercest objectors to Zionism in general and the British Mandate in particular. In his mission Jabotinsky naturally focused on pro-Zionists Italians and those that could still be persuaded to at least ignore the Zionist cause, if not actually support it. It was within this diplomatic mission that Jabotinsky also wrote a letter to Benito Mussolini, the Fascist leader who vocally objected to Zionism and the Mandate.

Writing to Mussolini, Jabotinsky attempted to stimulate his appetite for power and prestige across the Mediterranean through a Zionist-Italian alliance. Jabotinsky was doubtlessly aware of Italy's, and especially the Fascists', dream of restoring the historical grandeur of the Roman Empire and reclaiming its dominance over the Mediterranean – ideas that were expressed since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century by many national writers, including his idol, Gabriele D'Annunzio<sup>2</sup>. His strategy was to emphasize Jewish, and consequently Zionist, power in the world of commerce, on the one hand, and to dispute the Fascist reliance on Pan-Arabism, on the other. Jabotinsky began his letter with a provocation, declaring that, “since I am told that you are a violent adversary to our movement, I believe we are enemies.”<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky then challenged Mussolini's faith in the idea that the Arabs actually control the Mediterranean: “with regards to the Levantine Mediterranean, maritime trade is not governed by the Arabs but by others, maybe especially the Jews. Don't forget Odessa either, which, if dead today, tomorrow will be the gate to Eldorado. With regard to the overseas, in New York there are 1,500,000 Jews [...] in positions of great social and economic

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Weizmann, July 21, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East*, 8–9. Jabotinsky even believed D'Annunzio himself would support Zionism, see especially Jabotinsky to Gorky, September 8, 1915, and to Weizmann, July 14, 1922. Jabotinsky also translated two sonnets by D'Annunzio into Hebrew, and reported enthusiastically about the *Impresa di Fiume*, see “D'Annunzio, Fiume vezara,” *Haaretz*, November 25, 1919, 1–2, in which he expresses his admiration for D'Annunzio's poetry and politics, and falsely predicts that his occupation of Fiume will prevail. Based on letters to Sciaky in which he requested historical and literary information about Trieste, Fiume and the surroundings, Vincenzo Pinto deduces that Jabotinsky was planning to write a novel about the *Impresa di Fiume*, see Zeev Jabotinsky and Isaaco Sciaky, *Stato e libertà: il carteggio Jabotinsky-Sciaky: 1924-1939* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore, 2002), 162.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky to Mussolini, July 16, 1922. As we shall see later, this provocation reflects Jabotinsky's Nietzschean ideal of an open confrontation between equal adversaries, as opposed to the cunning, or duplicitous, tactic an inferior side must adopt in a conflict with a superior.

influence [...] 50 years ago Italian was the lingua franca of the Mediterranean. Do you know why? Because it was spoken by the Jews in various ports.” Jabotinsky thus depicted the Jews as the true rulers of the Mediterranean, but also of world commerce (stretching from Odessa to New York). The reason Italy lost its monopoly over Mediterranean trade, Jabotinsky revealed, was the rise of the French-Jewish organization, the *Alliance israélite*, which promoted French among the Jews, at the expense of Italian. While the Italians have done nothing to defend their language’s status, the Jews could take part in its Mediterranean revival. Jabotinsky consequently employed the antisemitic stereotype of Jewish economic power, in order to rouse Mussolini’s interest in establishing an alliance with Zionism. Jabotinsky then continued to discredit the Arab cause, challenging it on two planes: first of all, Jabotinsky argued, should Pan-Arabism prevail, its ultimate goal would be independence and the abolishment of all foreign powers, including Italy, from its territory. But Jabotinsky went on to doubt the actual maturity of Arab nationalism: “I don’t believe in Pan-Arabism, not in the second millennium, because it seems to me that today the first condition for political greatness is the modernization of the masses, intellectual awakening, painstaking work [...] This won’t be seen even by the grandchildren of today’s Arabs.” Jabotinsky did not question the ultimate revival of Arab nationalism, but assured Mussolini that the Arabs would actually achieve progress and development with the help of Zionism.

The letter offers a revealing insight into several aspects of Jabotinsky’s evolving views on the Jews and the sea. In the first place, it provides an early, rather unheroic version, of the “mare nostrum” image Jabotinsky would later paint through Horon’s theories. It is perhaps the first time Jabotinsky expresses the outstanding idea that the Mediterranean is ruled by the Jews. But if Horon enabled Jabotinsky to envision the Jews as descendants of Hebrew-Phoenician conquerors, buccaneers, and Hannibal himself, the preliminary version of the Hebrew “mare nostrum” boasts a mob of shrewd and calculating Jewish merchants and clerks, evaluating their material interests in advancing the Italian language. Admittedly, Jabotinsky tried to improve Mussolini’s image of the Jews: “Signor Mussolini, it seems you don’t know the Jews. [You imagine them to be] docile, unctuous, cunning [...] If you wish to know how vital we are, study your Fascists, only add a little more tragedy, a little more tenacity – perhaps a little more experience.” The image which Jabotinsky himself painted in the letter, however, was closer to Mussolini’s supposed stereotype

of the Jews than to the heroic profile Jabotinsky would depict after his encounter with Horon<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, it is one of Jabotinsky's earliest attempts to establish a connection between Jewish nationalism and Italian language and culture, a connection he would increasingly espouse during the 1930s. At this stage, however, Jabotinsky offered Mussolini a rather crude, and not sufficiently developed bargain: the Jews would help Italy reassert its Mediterranean dominance in return for Italy's support of Zionism (instead of Pan-Arabism). Jabotinsky did not mention the cultural, social, and historical "Mediterranean world" view which would become predominant in his writings during the 1930s. In the letter to Mussolini, only the first stage of Jewish-Italian association is established: common interest in trade, and the Mediterranean. Eight years later, in Jabotinsky's booklet dedicated to Hebrew pronunciation, Hebrew and Italian will be grouped as Mediterranean languages, and a year after that, in his letters to Italian Revisionists, the connection between the nations will gain a substantial cultural dimension, which transcends the interests of realpolitik.

Jabotinsky failed, however, to rouse Mussolini's appetite, and Mussolini never replied to his letter. Three months after the letter, Mussolini led the Fascists on the March on Rome, and became prime minister of Italy. Although the British have already won the mandate, to the Zionists' satisfaction, Jabotinsky was still concerned about Italy's relation to Zionism. In a letter to Eugenio Coselschi, a writer, soldier, and political activist who was close to D'Annunzio, Jabotinsky wrote that "Now more than before I feel the need for a friendly intervention between us and the forces ruling Italy."<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky had already met Coselschi during his mission in Italy and had the impression that he supported Zionism<sup>3</sup>. In his letter Jabotinsky asked Coselschi to promote Zionism in Italy, wondering whether Italy's aspirations in the Mediterranean were necessarily bound with anti-Zionism, and entreating him to raise this question with D'Annunzio: "It is not about numbers [i.e., the Jews being fewer than the Arabs]" but about the strength that Jews acquired from millennia of exile. At the end of the letter, Jabotinsky attached the letter he'd sent Mussolini, perhaps with the hope that Coselschi would raise the issue with Italy's new prime minister.

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<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Jabotinsky also heralded the image of the "merchant", not unlike the image drawn for Mussolini, as we shall see in the appropriate section in chapter 5.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to Coselschi, November 21, 1922. Coselschi would later fulfill official posts in the Fascist government, but did not promote either Zionism or Revisionism.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky to Weizman, July 14, 1922.

#### 4.4 The 1930s: a *Beitar* school and the search for a Zionist ally

Jabotinsky did not return to the question of Revisionist-Italian relations until the 1930s. His renewed interest in Italy was the result of the political conditions of the 1930s, but also of a new cultural perspective. Politically, the increasing disappointment with the British Mandate led the Revisionists to declare in 1930 the end of British-Zionist cooperation. In 1932 *hatzohar* officially proclaimed that “England’s presence in Palestine has now become an unmitigated hindrance to the progress of Zionism [...]. Our only purpose at the present moment is to inform the governments and the peoples of the civilized world that the international position of Palestine can no longer be considered as something which ‘has been settled forever’; on the contrary, they should know that that position is unsettled, unsatisfactory, and likely to need thorough revision in a not too distant future [...] so that certain ‘appetites’ with regard to Palestine (which had been so pronounced in various capitals of Europe until 1917 [...]) may be revived.”<sup>1</sup> Looking to replace Britain, Italy was often considered the main alternative, mainly due to its position in the Mediterranean, but also because of the similar political and cultural interests Jabotinsky and other Revisionists believed to find between Revisionism and Italy, and to some extent, Fascism as well. From the cultural or ideological perspective, an influential factor was the encounter with Horon who, as Jabotinsky wrote, inspired him to imagine the Hebrew version of “mare nostrum”<sup>2</sup>. By imagining the Hebrews were once an important part of the Mediterranean world, and by emphasizing the number of Jews who still lived by the Mediterranean shores, Jabotinsky altered and enriched his vision of the future Hebrew state. Although Jabotinsky was aware of the importance of the Mediterranean to Zionism already in the 1920s, Horon’s historical image seems to have bolstered this evaluation. The political and cultural perspectives are both clearly expressed in a 1932 letter to Italian Revisionist Yitzhak Sciaky: “I would like [...] to initiate a mental orientation towards Mediterranean and Latin currents, eradicating the pro-Nordic spiritual fashion [i.e., the British orientation] which intensified during the past 15 years.”<sup>3</sup> The political disappointment with Britain was replaced with the desire for cultural rapprochement with Italy, hoping to ultimately produce a political alliance. Indeed, in all of his negotiations with the Italians

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to the secretariat of the *hatzohar*, April 12, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First,” 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky to Sciaky, February 26, 1932. Jabotinsky expressed similar ideas in his letter to the first *hatzohar* meeting in Milano, February 15, 1932.

– whether about establishing the *Beitar* school or in his second attempt to meet Mussolini – Jabotinsky emphasized the cultural importance he attributed to Zionist-Italian relations.

The Revisionist-Italian flirtations of the 1930s were complex, hesitant at times, and often duplicitous. The entire process, which culminated in nothing but the Civitavecchia Naval Academy, was affected by British-Italian and Italian-Arab relations, the Second Italian-Ethiopian War, and the Revisionist conflict with the British Mandate. The study of this affair will focus on the Revisionist perspective and will be divided into two parts: the first part will study the establishment of the naval academy, while the second part will be dedicated to the diplomatic arena.

#### 4.4.1 The Civitavecchia Naval Academy

Revisionism's greatest success in the realm of the Hebrew Sea was undoubtedly the establishment of the Civitavecchia Naval Academy. Jabotinsky, however, did not originally envision a naval academy, nor were his eyes set only on Italy: the naval academy was intended to be a school for *Beitar* instructors, while France, where Jabotinsky moved to after being barred from Palestine by the British in 1929, was also considered as an option. But while politics gave the school its naval character, culture made Italy the preferred destination<sup>1</sup>. Italian Revisionists also played a critical role in the school's establishment in Italy. Milanese Leone Carpi and Yitzhak Sciaky, a native of Thessaloniki who had immigrated to Florence, were two leading Italian Revisionists who came to play important roles in the movement's activities in Italy, including the founding of the Civitavecchia Academy. In 1927 Carpi and Sciaky formed the first Italian *Beitar* branch in Milan, and in 1930 they established the movement's journal, *L'Idea Sionistica*, which propagated Zionism among Italy's Jews, but also "emphasized the historical connection between Zionism and Italy" while taking a strong anti-British stance<sup>2</sup>. In October that year Jabotinsky contributed his first article to the journal, "A L'Idea Sionistica"<sup>3</sup>.

A year after publishing his first article in *L'idea Sionistica* Jabotinsky wrote Carpi about the possibility of establishing a central school for *Beitar* instructors in Italy<sup>4</sup>. Although other

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<sup>1</sup> Markovizky suggests Jabotinsky turned to the Italian option only after the French one failed. See: Jacob Markovizky, "The Forerunner of His People," in Barely and Ginossar, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 481, footnote 24.

<sup>2</sup> Markovizky, "The Forerunner of His People," 476–477.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky to Carpi, October 8, 1930. Jabotinsky described the article as "very Italian".

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to Carpi, October 7, 1931.



countries were open to the enterprise – France presumably – Jabotinsky preferred opening the school in Italy, wishing to nurture the *Beitarists*' and Revisionists' interest in Italy, while stressing the importance of Italian language and culture for the young *Beitarists*: "I am convinced that contact with Latin culture, whose benefit I have personally experienced, will be useful for our national revival."<sup>1</sup> Four months later Jabotinsky's dedication to Latin culture had considerably matured. Writing to Sciaky, a greater cultural vision had been formulated: "I would like to initiate a radical change in the international orientation of the Jewish attitude, starting with its youth. For now, it concerns their *mentality*, their cultural and ideological sympathies: I'm not posing for now the problems of the immediate, practical policies [...] I am sure that we can make it [...]"<sup>2</sup>. Jabotinsky expressed similar views on the cultural importance of Italy to Zionism in a letter to Angelo Donati, a Zionist banker who was influential in Italian government circles. The dominant, recurring theme in the letters to the Italians was that Jewish mentality would benefit from the contact with Latin mentality, while Hebrew would benefit from the existence of a number of languages in the Mediterranean geo-political sphere – an idea Jabotinsky already raised in 1920s articles, and in his letter to Mussolini<sup>3</sup>. In the 1930s, however, a new argument was added: "I find in the Italian language a special value for the harmonization of the pronunciation of Hebrew."<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky had already made a connection between Hebrew and Italian in his 1930 booklet "Hebrew Pronunciation"<sup>5</sup>, suggesting Hebrew and Italian were of the same Mediterranean family, but the linguistic reference in the letter to Donati demonstrates his determination to bring closer together Hebrew and Italian. His consolidating conviction that the Hebrews were a Mediterranean race, and consequently related to the Italians, led Jabotinsky to believe that spoken Hebrew, whose condition in the *Yishuv* he frequently lamented, could be improved through Italian influence.

The main idea that arises from Jabotinsky's letters to Carpi, Sciaky, and Donati, however, is Jabotinsky's interest in initiating his young *Beitarists* into Italian culture and mentality. What exactly were Italian culture and mentality in Jabotinsky's eyes? Several sources can shed light on this image. The first, almost obvious source, is the Italian chapter in Jabotinsky's autobiography, referred to above. Jabotinsky's Italy is that of the heroic and adventurous myths of Garibaldi,

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Carpi, October 7, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to Sciaky, February 26, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Jabotinsky, "Languages," in *Hebrew*, ed. Arye Naor (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, 2017), 153–156; "French," in *Hebrew*, 157–162; Jabotinsky to Mussolini, July 16, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to Donati, June 24, 1931.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, "Hebrew Pronunciation," in *Hebrew*, 116–117.

Mazzini, and D'Annunzio, the jovial, careless student life that combined passionate philosophizing and debates on current affairs and visits to the opera, where studies were held “outside the university more than inside”.<sup>1</sup> This is all very general, however, hardly concrete, and not unlike Jabotinsky’s vivid and nostalgic descriptions of Odessa. In any case, it is not a political or educational plan. Jabotinsky seems to have associated “Italian and Latin culture” with his ideal of *hadar*, and it is significant that he dedicated his letter to the first Civitavecchia class to this topic. In the letter, Jabotinsky cautioned the cadets that the success of Civitavecchia – for the cadets, Revisionism, Zionism, and the Jews – depends on the students’ behavior at the school and the town. After emphasizing the importance of *hadar* for *Beitarists*, Jabotinsky meticulously instructs the students on how to behave: “Be kind. [...] Learn to speak in a low voice, in the school, in the street [...] so as not to interrupt the townspeople’s rest. Strolling in the school courtyards or the city streets, walk in twos, not threes: so as not to obstruct the way.”<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky continues to refer to the students’ shaves, fingernails, and clothes, reminding them that “each stain is a stain on *Beitar* and a stain on Israel.” The entire letter to the cadets reads, in fact, as a guide to cultured behavior, suggesting Jabotinsky was ashamed of his *Beitarists*, the majority of whom were east-Europeans, worried they might embarrass him before the civilized Italians. As if the cadets were nothing more than a hazard in the Revisionists’ relations with Italy, Jabotinsky admonished them that if they did not behave properly, they would be responsible for “the creation of a new center for racism in a country that until now did not know this illness.” It is in the name of *hadar* that Jabotinsky guides the students’ behavior, aesthetics, hygiene, and morals, and entreats them to learn from their Italian colleagues. Based on the centrality of *hadar* in the Revisionist ethos and the numerous references to Italian culture, we can assume that Jabotinsky expected the contact with Italian and Latin culture to civilize the boorish, uncivilized Jews, and perhaps to infuse them with some *hadar*.

As Norbert Elias has shown in *The Civilizing Process*, so-called civilized behavior in Europe was associated with the rise of the middle-class, on the one hand, and the consolidation of the modern state, on the other. Indeed, as of the eighteenth century, daily, mundane expressions of civilized behavior were inseparable from the idea of the civilized nation and belonging to the civilized world. Civilized behavior “came to epitomize the nation, to express the national self-

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, *Story of My Life*, 48–55.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to *Beitar* company, naval school, Civitavecchia, November 20, 1934.

image.”<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that Jabotinsky’s instructions to the cadets are not unlike the educational and civilizing notes Norbert Elias quotes in *The Civilizing Process*. Compare, for example: “Do not occupy the first bench – even if you’re offered the first bench. [...] Physical cleanliness and the grace of clothes will be your law at all times. Every morning you will shave until not even a dark shade remains on the chin and the cheeks; every morning inspect your clothes and stitch every tear; check every hour if your fingernails are as clean as ivory; and when washing the ears, hands, and the entire body – remember each stain is a stain to *Beitar* and a stain to Israel”; and from *S’ensuivent les contenance de la table*: “Take care to cut and clean your nails [...]. Wash your hands when you get up and before every meal. [...] Do not be the first to take from the dish.”<sup>2</sup> Given Jabotinsky’s aversion to the behavior of the Jewish masses of eastern-Europe and the *Yishuv*, *hadar* can be seen a means of civilizing the Jews, and thereby turning them into a modern, European nation. *Hadar* was consequently not just an aesthetic principle, but an actual tool for nation building. This explains the central role *refined* Hebrew filled in Jabotinsky’s thought: “Language is the kernel and the base of national music. Like a violinist or a pianist works on a sonnet he will play tomorrow in public, so should each of us work to improve his pronunciation.”<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky’s favorite orchestra metaphor for the nation correlates to the idea that the cultivated behavior of the individual contributes to the civilizing of the nation. To Jabotinsky, a *Beitar* school for Jews from around the world in Italy, was a means of acculturating the Jewish rabble, and turning them into a nation. This explains the meaning of Jabotinsky’s assumption that contact with Latin culture will be useful to national revival: Jabotinsky wanted Italy to turn the backward Jews of east-Europe into a civilized nation.

A school in Italy was important to Jabotinsky for additional reasons. The letter to the cadets attests, as we have seen, to the potential benefit – but also harm – he expected from the school: “If you manage to win the sympathy and respect of the school’s Italian principals, teachers and students, you will pave a new way in the development of our nation, that will lead us in the future to conquer a crucial position at harbor and sea.”<sup>4</sup> Even before the projected school in Italy received its naval orientation, Jabotinsky was deeply involved in various aspects of its establishment, including the design of the curriculum and structure of the school, seeking funds for its foundation,

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<sup>1</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwall Publishing, 2000), 43.

<sup>2</sup> Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 75–76.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “Hebrew Pronunciation,” 115.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to *Beitar* company, naval school, Civitavecchia, November 20, 1934.

and negotiating with Italian state officials. The naval academy's final program testifies to some of the hopes Jabotinsky vested in the school. The first item in the study program is an Italian language course, followed by Hebrew, while the third item concerns sports and cultural education, but also "psychological-educational training towards the roles of conquering the Hebrew sea."<sup>1</sup> Following the establishment of the naval academy Jabotinsky was personally involved in economic and administrative issues, in the purchasing of Sarah the First and its sailing to Palestine, but also in securing the future of the cadets. In 1936, for example, Jabotinsky was hoping to guarantee academy graduates positions at the prestigious Lloyd Triestino shipping company, utilizing his most precious diplomatic contacts for this aim<sup>2</sup>.

Negotiating with Italian officials was especially important for Jabotinsky as a means for establishing a more effective relationship with the Italian authorities<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky's insistence to personally meet with Italian statesmen testifies to the venture's political importance, which surpassed that of other *Beitar* nests around the world. Thus, even before the projected school assumed its naval character, Jabotinsky saw in it an important tool for fortifying Revisionist-Italian relations. When Sciaky negotiated independently with Italian Foreign Ministry officials, Jabotinsky reminded him the Revisionists were not interested only in permission to form the school: "the permission will be valid if it will imply – even tacitly, but clearly – a general attitude that would justify, on our part, a step that in everyone's eyes will constitute an obligation to the future orientation of the Jewish-Zionist masses"<sup>4</sup>. The original plans to establish a school for *Beitar* instructors, however, failed, due to Mussolini's desire to appease the Arabs, with whom he was still hoping to establish a more fruitful alliance<sup>5</sup>. Mussolini was afraid the Arabs would see the school for *Beitar* instructors as a sign of Italy's support of Zionism's militarism. According to Jacob Markovizky, the establishment of the naval school took off after that failure, mainly through Halpern's and Carpi's efforts. By emphasizing the economic nature of the school and downplaying its military function on the one hand, and by excluding Jabotinsky from the official procedure on the other, Halpern and Carpi managed to obtain the needed permits, and presented Jabotinsky with

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<sup>1</sup> Naval school study programs, Hebrew naval league, JI, HT1-12, 5.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Jabotinsky to Fusco, May 9, 1936; to Mendes, May 27, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Markovizky, "The Forerunner of His People," 484.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to Sciaky, April 20, 1932.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Carpi, "The Political Activity of Zeev Jabotinsky in Italy during the Years 1932–1935," in *The Black Prince: Yosef Katznelson and the National Movement in the 1930s*, ed. Yosef Ahimeir (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 1983), 348–349.

a *fait accompli*, which the head of *Beitar* accepted after the fact<sup>1</sup>. Jabotinsky embraced the idea of the naval academy, valuing it as an important step in establishing Revisionist-Italian relations, in addition to civilizing the diasporic Jews, and turning them into able seamen. The Civitavecchia Naval Academy received its first class in November 1934, but closed after only three classes graduated in 1938, when Italy adopted the antisemitic racial laws following its pact with Nazi Germany.

#### 4.4.2 An Italian Mandate?

In 1936, while the Second Italian-Ethiopian War was raging in Ethiopia and destabilizing the fragile European power balance, Jabotinsky wrote several articles that defended Italy against the international criticism it was attracting. He ridiculed the “experts” who prophesized Mussolini’s defeat in Italy; mocked the economic sanctions which merely united the Italians and made them prouder; blamed the League of Nations for mishandling the situation in all possible ways; denied the Zionist accusation that Italy was financing the Arab national movement; and objected to the association of Fascism with Nazism, emphasizing that Fascism was a specific form of Italian rule, and that unlike other so-called fascist countries, in Italy all people, including Jews, still enjoyed equal rights<sup>2</sup>.

Jabotinsky’s articles were not motivated only by his Italophilia, but also by immediate, practical goals. In fact, the articles were not written just to influence public opinion in the Jewish world but were also supposed to gain favor among Italian politicians and diplomats, including the Marquis Alberto Theodoli, an Italian diplomat who presided as chairman of the Permanent Mandates Commission. Theodoli became a key figure in the Revisionists’ attempt to petition the League of Nations’ committee concerning the exact meaning of the Palestine mandate, a petition that was supposed to exert pressure over Britain’s handling of the mandate<sup>3</sup>. But through their negotiations with Theodoli, the Revisionists also sought to secure a meeting between Mussolini and Jabotinsky.

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<sup>1</sup> Markovizky, “The Forerunner of His People,” 488.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “*habaki*,” *hayarden*, May 8, 1936, 7; “*ofek bli ain hara*,” *hayarden*, April 24, 1936, 3; “*italia [michtav milago maggiore]*,” *hayarden*, August 21, 1936, 3. See also “*sikhot mediniot*,” *hayarden*, March 13, 1936, 3, and “*khever haleomim*,” *hayarden*, April 3, 1936, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Vincenzo Pinto, “Between Imago and Res,” *Israel Affairs* 10, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 101. Although the Revisionists put their faith in him, Theodoli turned out to be a duplicitous agent who contributed nothing to promoting the efforts against England or to arranging the Jabotinsky-Mussolini meeting, see Pinto, “Between Imago and Res,” 100–103.

The enterprise to set up the meeting was headed by Sciaky, who met Theodoli in January 1936. After several unsuccessful attempts to arrange the meeting through official state mechanisms, Theodoli finally offered to help the despairing Revisionists. In June Jabotinsky sent an urgent letter to the leading Italian Revisionists, including Carpi and Sciaky, trying to arrange a meeting in Geneva, probably in order to discuss the possible meeting with Mussolini<sup>1</sup>. A month later he sent Sciaky a short letter with his Italian-related biography, in an attempt to impress Theodoli with his lasting devotion to Italy. Jabotinsky described himself as a “propagandist” for Italy in his youth, and the initiator of the south-Russian fashion to study at Italian universities; boasted his public support for Italy during the 1911 invasion of Libya; mentioned the initial attempts to form the Jewish Legion in Italy as well as his translations from Italian to Hebrew (Giovagnoli’s *Spartacus* and Dante’s *Inferno*); finally, Jabotinsky emphasized his support for Italy in the Italian-British conflict<sup>2</sup>. The question is, why was Jabotinsky so anxious to meet Mussolini?

To begin with, Jabotinsky was quite sensitive to the economic significance of the Mediterranean for the future Jewish state. Jabotinsky believed that *eretz israel*’s geographical location was critical for the future state’s economy, and that the state would act as an essential crossroad for international commerce. In Jabotinsky’s vision, its seat at the eastern end of the Mediterranean would enable the state to act as a crucial mediator in economic trade between east and west: “The Mediterranean is the most important lifeline for the entire European economy” he wrote in 1927<sup>3</sup>. Unlike labor Zionism, which did not emphasize the importance of international trade to economy, and based its economic program on agriculture and industry, Jabotinsky believed Palestine’s intermediary position would become an essential pillar of the state’s culture and economy: “We all recognize the importance of the agricultural settlement of the immigrants, both institutionally (although sentimentalists tend to exaggerate this matter) and materialistically [...]. But none of this allows the settlers to say urban settlement is artificial or minor. *Eretz israel* lies next to the arterial crossroads of the triple world transport: in the land, water, and air. Whether we like it or not – the future of *eretz israel* is also in trade.”<sup>4</sup> For this reason Zionism must integrate into the commercial world of the Mediterranean, make allies and find Zionist supporters among the Mediterranean-European states. In 1919 Jabotinsky used this axiom as a vote of confidence in

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Sciaky, June 13, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to Sciaky, July 10, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “*anglia vechamizrach hakarov*,” *hatzafon*, July 8, 1927, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, “*tel aviv zo – al shum ma?*,” *doar hayom*, April 10, 1929, 2.

Britain's support for Zionism: "England needs a Jewish strip of land on the Mediterranean: it is the only thing that will give it the *right* position on the road to India and Australia. [...] The Jewish land [...] should always rely on a great and free western kingdom, rather than stay alone with no protection against its rivels from north, east and south."<sup>1</sup> In the 1920s Jabotinsky used the same argument in order to advocate tighter relations between Zionism and France, the ruler of the Mediterranean, as he argued back then. If Zionism wished to utilize this important economic resource, the *Yishuv* must learn French: "The language of Mediterranean trade is French [...]. In Greece and Turkey, in Romania and Russia – for tens of French speakers you will not find one who knows English. It goes without saying for Tunisia and Algeria and Morocco and our neighbor Syria. *Half of our commercial future depends on these shores*"<sup>2</sup>. Jabotinsky was aware, however, of the fluctuating power balance in the Mediterranean world, predicting that French might be replaced by Italian in the future, especially if the Zionists supported Italy, as he suggested in his letter to Mussolini. The Second Italian-Ethiopian War also gave Jabotinsky ample reason to consider the changes in the region's power balance. Jabotinsky saw England's failure to manage the crisis as evidence of its loss of self-confidence and its declining position in the region, and he associated it with England's mishandling of the Palestine mandate: "England's psychology used to be that of Don Quixote, who fights for everyone and in the name of all truths. Now appears gentle Hamlet with no will to decide and perhaps worse – the fat gentleman that blocks Don Quixote's way – Sancho Panza. In 1917 we made a deal with Don Quixote and today we are facing Sancho Panza."<sup>3</sup> While England showed itself to be hesitant and incompetent in dealing with the Mediterranean world, Italy proved itself to be a country hungry for power and influence, which was just what Zionism needed. "Italy today is the strongest power in the Mediterranean. Should it become," Jabotinsky warned his readers, "an Enemy of the Hebrew *eretz Israel* it would be unpleasant, uncomfortable and dangerous for us."<sup>4</sup> The development and future of *eretz Israel* were thus closely tied with the political struggles of the great powers of the Mediterranean. It was

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, "*mitsraim*," *Haaretz*, November 23, 1919, 2. Jabotinsky uses the word "*chevel*" which commonly refers to a strip of land or a region, and not an independent state. The use of this term in 1919 verifies, to a degree, Shumsky's and Dubnov's claim that Jabotinsky was not necessarily interested in an independent Jewish state.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, "French," 161–162, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, "*searotai hilbinu bamilchama lema'an zchuyot hayehudim*," *hayarden*, September 30, 1936, 3. See also Jabotinsky to de Haas September 15, 1936 and July 30, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, "*italia*," 3.

for this reason that he repeatedly warned against burning diplomatic bridges with Italy over Fascism or the war with Ethiopia in his numerous 1936 articles on Italy.

If Jabotinsky's Italophilia is undeniable, the question of his relation to Italian Fascism is still a matter of dispute. While this question exceeds the topic of this dissertation, it is impossible to disregard it entirely. The association of Jabotinsky and the Revisionists with fascism began already in the 1930s, especially as a result of *Beitar's* militarism and the Jabotinsky's personality-cult among the Revisionists. Although Jabotinsky was careful to excuse Italian Fascism and to distinguish it from other fascist "brands", which he did not endorse, Jabotinsky adamantly objected to this association and to being labeled a fascist. When accused of fascism by his detractors, Jabotinsky emphasized his staunch liberalism and hostility to totalitarianism and oppression of any kind: "I am just the opposite [of a fascist]: am instinctive hater of all kinds of Polizei-Staat, utterly sceptical of the value of discipline and power and punishment etc. down to economic dirigee."<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky also opposed fascist tendencies among Revisionists, such as Abba Ahimeir, who was fascinated with fascism and wrote a regular column in *doar hayom* called "From the Diary of a Fascist"<sup>2</sup>. In his tireless fights against accusations of fascism on the one hand, and Revisionist fascists, on the other, the only similarity between Revisionism and fascism Jabotinsky was willing to concede, was the movements' objection to class war<sup>3</sup>. With regards to Italian Fascism, Jabotinsky saw it as a regime that was specifically Italian through its unique development in the country's specific social and political conditions, having little or nothing in common with other so-called fascist regimes<sup>4</sup>. Unlike other pseudo-fascist regimes, Jabotinsky observed, the Italians and the Italian fascists were untainted by antisemitism and were committed to protecting the equal rights of all citizens<sup>5</sup>. Although Jabotinsky admired fascism's order and militarism – ideals that were exalted not only in *Beitar*, but also in *Shimshon* – he disapproved of the cult of the leader: "This idea [of the leader] is now in fashion," he wrote Oscar Gruzenberg, "but I hate it and fear it. It is still fine, if Mussolini rides this horse, a great [крупный], practical man (although him too I

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Bartlett, December 9, 1938. "Am instinctive" and "dirigee" in the original. Cf., Jabotinsky to the editor of *poslednie Novosti*, September 9, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Jabotinsky to Grossman, November 28, 1928, Jabotinsky to Weinschel, December 29, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky to Jacobi, October 4, 1933, Jabotinsky to the editor of *poslednie Novosti*, September 9, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> In 1900 Jabotinsky made similar comments on the Sicilian mafia, arguing it was an expression of popular spirit, heroism, and justice in Sicily, but once exported elsewhere became a criminal and negative phenomenon, see Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, "italia," 3.



cannot stand)”<sup>1</sup>. Jabotinsky consequently appreciated Italian Fascism as a specific Italian phenomenon, valued its organization, aesthetics, and several ideological positions, such as the opposition to communism, but was careful not to associate his movement too closely with it.

With relation to Italy, however, Jabotinsky was interested in more than just securing amiable diplomatic relations across the Mediterranean. In 1930, the growing disappointment with the British, especially after the publication of the Passfield White Paper, drove the Revisionists to pronounce the mandate’s failure, the end of cooperation with the mandate authorities, and the need to bring the “Jewish charge against the mandatory before the whole world.”<sup>2</sup> The consequences of the declaration were far from clear, however, and two years after the declaration Jabotinsky defended himself against Alexander Kulischer, a fellow Revisionist who criticized the organization’s failure to improve the mandate. In his defense, Jabotinsky claimed Zionism had lost nothing in those two years, but on the contrary, merely exhausted the British possibilities<sup>3</sup>. Although Jabotinsky did take the blame for the movement’s inactivity, his future plans were much more radical than Kulischer’s: if Kulischer argued Revisionist policy should aim to improve the British mandate by sanctioning the British and influencing public opinion in Britain, Jabotinsky claimed Britain must be replaced altogether. Jabotinsky proposed to stimulate the “appetite” of new powers for Palestine and for cooperation with Zionism, based on the *Yishuv*’s rapid development and the public Zionist declaration that England is perceived as an obstructive, undesired conqueror.

Nonetheless, four more inactive years followed, and only in 1936 did the Revisionists present the ending of the British Mandate as an urgent problem. Jabotinsky enthusiastically informed fellow Revisionists about the upcoming steps: “Do you know [...] that a revolution is brewing in all Jewish camps – *los von England* (and where to – who knows)?”<sup>4</sup>; “If the word Revisionism ever had a meaning, it is going to have it now, because we are facing the need for the greatest Revision of all times.”<sup>5</sup> In articles and speeches from that year Jabotinsky repeated the argument in favor of “stimulating appetites”, often insinuating that Italy should replace England,

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Gruzenberg, October 30, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> To the Jewish Public, in: JI, Executive Committee of the World Union of Zionist Revisionists London, Declarations, G2-1/3, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “*al yachasenu le’anglia*,” in *Zionist Revisionism Towards a Turning-point*, 55–56.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to Akzin, July 28, 1936. The expression *Los von England*, i.e., “away from England” was common in Revisionist discussions on the topic that year.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky to de Haas, July 30, 1936.

usually by contrasting England's incompetence in the Italian-English conflict with Italy's "appetite" and initiative<sup>1</sup>. Jabotinsky did not deny rumors that he was interested in this barter but explained that this possibility still had to be established properly: "We still don't know who Italy will try to rely on in the eastern part of the Mediterranean: on us, or on our haters."<sup>2</sup> "Where are they [those who will help build the Jewish state instead of England]? Who knows! [...] Perhaps Italy – try!"<sup>3</sup> But was Jabotinsky really interested in abolishing the English mandate in favor of an Italian one? In spite of the strong pro-Italian and anti-English stance Jabotinsky took in public and the parallel attempts to secure a meeting with Mussolini, his personal correspondences reveal a more ambiguous approach.

In spite of the insinuations that Italy should replace England, the "reorganization program" was far from clear, even to Jabotinsky himself, who never revealed who would replace England or what this "*los von England*" would actually entail. In a letter to Jacob de Haas, Jabotinsky confessed that "(while I have the reorganization plan ready, and rather an efficient one) the 'organization' question is not yet clear to me, and I wouldn't promise that it will be clear to me in November. And I don't feel ashamed at all."<sup>4</sup> Only in September, possibly due to pressure to develop a plan before the November meeting of Revisionist leaders, did Jabotinsky discuss specific alternatives: "I also believe that the British stage of Zionism is virtually finished [...] the Jews must start looking for some *ersatz*" he wrote de Haas, listing the possible alternatives: the first, "logical option", was Italy, followed by three alternatives: a condominium "by the less-antisemitic states", a direct Geneva mandate, or a return to the Charter, passing the mandate to the Jews<sup>5</sup>. Of all four options, the Italian seemed the most desirable and reliable to Jabotinsky, who found serious fault in the remaining three. In spite of the frequent insinuations throughout the decade, however, this is perhaps the only explicit mention of Italy as a viable substitute to the English mandate.

Although Jabotinsky's determination to break with England intensified in 1936, in September began a steady dwindling of revolutionary fervor. In a press conference in Warsaw Jabotinsky once again criticized the British mandate: "Judaism no longer believes that the British Mandate is a *necessary condition* for the fulfillment of Zionism. Fundamental changes have taken

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Jabotinsky's speech in June 1936 in Prague, A1-8/47.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, "*italia*," 3.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, "*searotai*," 3.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to de Haas, August 31, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky to de Haas, September 15, 1936.

place lately both in England's objective condition (especially in the Mediterranean) and in its inner temperament. [...] it seems as if England cannot, but undoubtedly does not want to, carry difficult roles in the coming years.”<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky then presented England and the League of Nations with an ultimatum: England must help to realize the “Ten Year Plan” – the settling of masses of Polish Jews in Palestine and Transjordan within ten years – otherwise world Judaism would have to consider the Mandate's invalidation. Shortly after the press conference, however, Jabotinsky feared his militant attitude might have gone too far. In a letter to his close friend and Revisionist colleague Shlomo Jacobi, Jabotinsky tried to clarify his position: “I hope the ‘orientation’ formula I gave to the Press Conference in Warsaw on Sep. 9 has reached London without overmuch mutilation: it is not yet *Los von* England but it states that Jewry begins to doubt not only the will but even the might of the partner [England], and therefore the 10 yrs Plan must be the test, and in the mean time let's look for possible allies.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, the escalating build-up for a *los von England* turned out to be a mere warning, like the ones issued in 1930 and 1932, albeit through the international, non-Jewish press as well.

It is consequently clear that in 1936 Jabotinsky's dissatisfaction with the British mandate propelled him to consider replacing the British with an Italian mandate. The question remains how serious was this consideration? And if it was genuine, why was it shelved?

According to Yaacov Shavit, Jabotinsky's public interest in Italy and attempted negotiations were principally a way of exerting pressure on England<sup>3</sup>. Shavit acknowledges Jabotinsky's consideration of Italy's position in the Mediterranean but does not consider the Revisionist-Italian contacts consequential. In fact, most studies on Jabotinsky's relations with Italy either focus on the Civitavecchia academy and the attempts to establish a general school for *Beitar* instructors in Italy, or on the Revisionist infatuation with Italian Fascism, paying little attention to Jabotinsky's political interest in Italy in 1936<sup>4</sup>. Nonetheless, considering the recurring articles in favor of Italy, but also the strong interest Jabotinsky showed in meeting Mussolini and his letters to de Haas – which were not known to the general public – it seems unjustified to disregard Jabotinsky's interest in a deeper political engagement with Italy.

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “*likrat yetzia hamonit min hagola*,” *hayarden*, September 30, 1936, 5. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to Jacobi, September 25, 1936. English idiosyncrasies in the original.

<sup>3</sup> Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement* (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 369–370.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Carpi, “The Political Activity of Zeev Jabotinsky in Italy during the Years 1932–1935” and Kaplan, *The Jewish Radical Right*, 138–158. Pinto's “Between Imago and Res” is an exception to this trend.

Even if Jabotinsky was not determined to pursue an Italian mandate, his interest in this possibility attests to the centrality of the Mediterranean world in his geopolitical vision. In fact, it is fairly probable that Jabotinsky relinquished his political interest in Italy mainly because of Mussolini's refusal to meet him, which was given on July 18<sup>1</sup>. According to Vincenzo Pinto, a researcher of Revisionism and Italy, Mussolini had several reasons to reject the Revisionists' advances. The first reason was Mussolini's fear of alienating the Arabs, both in light of the intensifying relations between Italy and the Arabs and because of Jabotinsky's militant persona and attitude to the Arab-Zionist conflict<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the Fascist regime was not versed in the political differences between labor Zionism, Revisionism, and even the so-called "Jewish world". It was through this misunderstanding, for example, that Mussolini believed that by permitting the establishment of the Civitavecchia academy, he was indulging Weizmann, whose political influence he did value<sup>3</sup>. According to Vincenzo Pinto, Mussolini was disappointed with "international Jewry's" inability to end the economic sanctions on Italy, venting out his frustration on the Revisionists. Another possibility is that Mussolini finally realized that the Revisionists were not the dominant party in Zionism<sup>4</sup>. Finally, Fascist Italy's rapprochement with Nazi Germany, was a decisive factor in the refusal for the meeting. There exists, however, one more explanation. According to Eri Jabotinsky, Mussolini refused to meet Jabotinsky for a rather prosaic reason: in 1922, when Jabotinsky was on his Zionist mission in Italy, a meeting had actually been scheduled between the two men. Jabotinsky, however, failed to make the appointment because he had overslept, and Mussolini never forgave him the insult<sup>5</sup>.

It is also possible, however, that the Italian option was aborted because of the Revisionists themselves. At the end of July Jabotinsky was given the impression by Sciaky that his potential meeting with Mussolini would not take place, mainly because of the Fascist government's disinterest in such a meeting. Jabotinsky was even afraid that negotiations with the Lloyd Triestino shipping company, concerning the employment of Civitavecchia graduates, would fail because of the Italian officials' animosity towards him<sup>6</sup>. Nonetheless, he was still convinced that he would ultimately meet with Mussolini, assuring Sciaky that "[t]hose from Rome are wrong: the meeting

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<sup>1</sup> Pinto, "Between *imago* and *res*," 102.

<sup>2</sup> Pinto, 102.

<sup>3</sup> Carpi, "The Political Activity of Chaim Weizmann in Italy During the Years 1923–1934," 190.

<sup>4</sup> Pinto, "Between *imago* and *res*," 102.

<sup>5</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 74.

<sup>6</sup> Jabotinsky to Sciaky, July 25, 1936.

will take place.”<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, Jabotinsky wrote de Haas about the Italian possibility in mid-September, almost two months after he was informed the Italian officials rejected the application for the meeting. It seems that Jabotinsky was still entertaining the notion of a pact with Italy after the formal refusal. Consequently, we can assume other factors influenced the end of the “Italian dream”.

To recall, in November a conference of leading Revisionists was held in Vienna. The conference was originally intended to take place in Trieste, but under Mussolini’s orders the conference was prohibited and had to be relocated<sup>2</sup>. Arye Babkov, a Revisionist from Palestine and one of Jabotinsky’s Hebrew teachers,<sup>3</sup> could not participate in the conference but sent Jabotinsky an urgent letter. From the attempt to meet in Italy, Babkov deduced that the Revisionists were planning to break with England in favor of an Italian-Revisionist pact. Babkov was strongly against such a move: “I understand the sympathy many in our youth feel towards new Italy – but only feelings cannot influence the solution of such a problem. [...] there is no cultured nation in the world whose true colonial interests will go hand in hand with our Zionist aspirations in this country. And if the new Italian empire is interested in this country, then we do not want it to send here even one part of its excessive population instead of sending it to Ethiopia!”<sup>4</sup> Babkov also objected, however, to a possible Polish-Revisionist alliance: “I prefer the English administrator to the Polish...”. In fact, the only alternative to the English mandate Babkov would welcome was American, although he acknowledged this was a remote possibility. It is noteworthy that while Jabotinsky sought to solve the mandate problem from the diplomatic, European perspective, Babkov was writing from the perspective of the *Yishuv*, focusing on the actual administration of Palestine, dreading the arrival of Italian or Polish officials. This difference in perspectives demonstrates not only Jabotinsky’s detachment from the *Yishuv* as a result of his expulsion from the country, but also his preoccupation with the European arena and disregard for the mundane issues of Zionism in Palestine. In January Jabotinsky replied to Babkov, “As you know from the decisions of the Vienna council, we acted more or less in the spirit of your recommendations (with regards to the orientation).”<sup>5</sup> Although it is not likely that Jabotinsky gave up the Italian plan solely

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Sciaky, August 1, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Pinto, “Between *imago* and *res*,” 102.

<sup>3</sup> Shmuel Katz, *Lone Wolf* (New York: Barricade Books, 1996), 69.

<sup>4</sup> Babkov to Jabotinsky, November 3, 1936, JI, A1-3/24.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky to Babkov, January 8, 1937.

on Babkov's "recommendations", the general atmosphere among the older generation of Revisionists, such as Babkov, de Haas and the NZO presidency in London, was less enthusiastic about an Italian mandate than were the younger Revisionists, such as Ahimeir and Kolitz, who tried himself to meet with Mussolini in 1937. The November conference, nonetheless, marks the demise of the desire to revolutionize Palestine's mandate.

#### 4.5 Summary

As has been noted time and again Italy has always had an important role in Jabotinsky's national and political views. Starting with the First World War, and up until the outbreak of the Second World War, Jabotinsky attempted to tighten the relationship between Zionism and Italy. Besides his personal affection for Italy, Jabotinsky was interested in this relationship for political, economic, and cultural reasons. While culturally Jabotinsky appreciated Italy's ability to civilize the exilic Jews, he also valued the country's political and economic dominance in the Mediterranean world. In light of the growing disappointment with the British Mandate, Jabotinsky began to consider replacing Britain with an Italian mandate. This idea was also mentioned publicly as a means of exerting pressure over Britain, by emphasizing the independence and agency of Zionism. The establishment of the Civitavecchia Naval Academy was consequently a means of establishing closer relations with the Italian administration, in addition to the benefits Jabotinsky found in the cultural influence he hoped Italy would have over *Beitar*. Italian political interests, however, as well as objections from within the Revisionist movement, obliterated Jabotinsky's hopes that Italy would play a greater role in Zionism.

## 5. Mediterranean identity: Hebrews and Jews, old and new

In the previous section we have studied Jabotinsky's political and economic motivations for establishing ties with Italy. In addition to these realpolitik reasons, however, Jabotinsky also developed a cultural-historical vision of the Jews' relation to the Mediterranean world. Supported by his quasi-scientific views on race, as well as by Horon's extravagant historical theories, Jabotinsky envisaged an image of Jewish history and identity which harmonized with his pro-Western cultural orientation. An important aspect of Jabotinsky's Hebrew Sea thus concerns the correlation between what Jabotinsky termed the natural conditions in which races develop and what Jabotinsky termed races' "psycho-spiritual composition". After examining Jabotinsky's general theoretical conception of race and language, we will study his thought on the Hebrews and the Mediterranean world.

### 5.1 Race, language

Jabotinsky's view on race, language, and nationalism were strongly influenced by the intellectual currents and trends he encountered in his studies in Italy. What is unique about these views is that they supplement Marxist views on the historical development of societies with organicist, Herderian nationalism.

It was in the intellectual atmosphere of fin de siècle Italy that Jabotinsky was captivated by Marxist thought, which stood at the base of his views on the history of social development, even after he became a vocal critic of Marxism. In 1932, for example, years after turning his back on Marxism, Jabotinsky wrote that "[e]ven without being a Marxist, one can concede to a Marxist principle, namely; the main factor in all the historical phenomena is the state of the means of production."<sup>1</sup> As Natkovich has shown, however, in an intellectual atmosphere that was influenced by the non-conformist thought of Benedetto Croce and Georges Sorel, Jabotinsky's university professor Enrico Ferri and the revolutionary Arturo Labriola, Jabotinsky became disillusioned with several Marxist principles, convinced that Marxist materialism failed to explain the "true" nature of man<sup>2</sup>. An important aspect of the attempt to rectify the shortcomings of Marxist materialism was the search for additional factors that would explain society and the individual, such as psyche,

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, "A Lecture on Jewish History," *Nation and Society*, II, J-90, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 19.

unconscious instincts and urges, and humanities' primeval sources. It was in this intellectual climate that Jabotinsky adopted "the essentialist notions that connected between the biological, geographic, and historical origins and the character traits common to the entire population"<sup>1</sup>. This connection would become a central feature of Jabotinsky's Hebrew identity.

To Jabotinsky, Marxism's greatest defect was its disregard for the primary force in all human development: "the psyche, or intellect, or brain."<sup>2</sup> This mentality he saw as intrinsically connected with race. "Race" Jabotinsky maintained, "is a fundamental factor of all civilization and all history", playing an important role in national, ideological, and political questions. In Jabotinsky's view, nations and races are very similar: "race and nationality are almost synonymous; at any rate, it is perfectly correct to use both terms synonymously"<sup>3</sup>. Race, however, predates and defines national consciousness, character, and the desire for national sovereignty. Therefore, blood becomes the predominant factor in the development and character of human societies. Jabotinsky acknowledged the role the environment played in the development of primordial societies, but maintained these societies' racial psychology, or temperament, was more important in the development of their culture and technology. Consequently, the mental structure of races is superior to external circumstances in determining their historical development, or in other words, "psyche is the eternally paramount, the supremely dominating element among those means of productions"<sup>4</sup>. If two different races, such as the Bantu and Maya, were given the same time and tools to develop in identical natural conditions, "the result will [...] be two different civilizations"<sup>5</sup>. If the psyche is the defining element in racial groups, race is the central element in the nation. Once a race develops awareness to its uniqueness and dissimilarity to neighboring races, it seeks to become a nation and to realize its national identity within a state that would best suit its racial temperament<sup>6</sup>.

Jabotinsky might have believed in race and the important role "blood" played in national formations, but he was skeptical towards the notion of a pure race: "it is very questionable whether

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<sup>1</sup> Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, "Race and Nationality," *Jl*, A/1/7/2, 6. This article was published at least five times in Russian, Hebrew and English. For a bibliographical list of its publications see Graur, *Bibliography*, 150. This study relies on the Hebrew version from the 1941 booklet "The Hebrew Race", *Jl*, Beitar-31/1 and the typewritten English version from 1939, "Race and Nationality", *Jl*, A/1/7/2. The typewritten version includes Jabotinsky's notes which aim to distance his ideas on race from "the accursed and sinister significance [the term "race"] conveys to the present generation".

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, "Race and Nationality," 3.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Ratzabi, "Race, Nation and Judaism," 134.



the conception of a ‘pure’ race can be scientifically postulated at all”<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, we should not assume that the French or English or Germans or Polish or even the Jews for that matter are of pure race. On the contrary – it would be safe to assume that races have always been the product of some “racial-compound” or “recipe”. However, “what constitutes the individuality of a given race is the choice of these elements, their number, and the proportion in which they appear in the mixture: the ‘racial spectrum’”<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, the differences between “racial structures” are undeniable, and it is consequently futile to pretend they do not exist, or that lack of racial purity renders them meaningless.

Although Jabotinsky rejected the notion of pure races, he repeatedly emphasized the differences between races and objected to racial mixing. Jabotinsky used his views on race and nation to support a number of political ideas and policies. In the context of Jewish-Arab relations, Jabotinsky habitually referred to their different racial origin, in order to advocate distancing between the peoples, even in seemingly mundane issues such as joint Jewish-Arab service in the police: “Two races which do not have, and cannot have anything in common with each other, must not be mixed in one herd [...] A mixed police in *eretz israel* is an absolute absurdity, like a mixed school or a mixed house of worship.”<sup>3</sup> As we shall see later, the question of the Arab and Hebrew “races” played an even greater role in Jabotinsky’s ideas on language and his aspiration to draw Hebrew closer to European-Mediterranean languages. Interestingly, Jabotinsky also objected to Ashkenazi-Sephardic mixing for racial reasons: “I see and feel there are different tones in the Sephardic’s violin that are not in the Ashkenazi’s piano, and vice versa. Perhaps there is a slight difference in race, blood composition [...] I see no value in artificial mixing [...] on the contrary, it would be better for us if each kept to themselves [...]”<sup>4</sup> Thus, Jabotinsky even considered Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, two groups of the same nation and religion, who participated in Zionism and were intended to partake in Jewish nation building, “racial compositions” too different to allow mixing.

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “Race and Rationality,” 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “All Quiet on the Eastern Front,” *The Years of Consolidation*, 247–248.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, “The Jews of the East,” *Guidelines for Current Problems* (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 1981), 122. The first geographic atlas in Hebrew which Jabotinsky prepared with Shmuel Perlman in 1925, also states “there are also important racial characteristics between the “Ashkenazis” and “Sephardis”, especially in skull structure.” Quoted in Elisha Efrat, “Atlas Jabotinsky,” *kivunim hadashim* 33, (2015): 187. Emphasis added.

Like race, language also played a central role in Jabotinsky's views on nationalism. In line with contemporary national thought, Jabotinsky was influenced by the Herderian perceptions of language and national identity. Herder advocated the idea that language was a fundamental attribute of the nation. Language expresses the people's soul: "[t]he character, the temperament, the ways of feeling and thinking, the specificity and originality of a people are expressed within it."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, nations had to cultivate their language and protect it from external and internal threats. Several of Jabotinsky's texts attest to the important role he ascribed to the Hebrew language in nation building. In *haneder*, the movement's vow which Jabotinsky wrote in 1934, the Hebrew language is the third of seven principles to which *Beitarists* pledge their allegiance. At the same year Jabotinsky wrote *Ra'ayon Beitar* (The ideology of *Beitar*), the movement's credo and ideology. The text was written in Yiddish in order to ensure its comprehensibility among *Beitar* recruits but stressed that "a Jewish child who does not speak Hebrew is not a complete Jew [...] a 'national language' [...] cannot be a language which the nation received – during its historical development – from a foreign race and 'adapted' for its own purposes. A 'national language' is the same language which was born with the nation and which accompanies it, one way or another, throughout its long life".<sup>2</sup> Language, was thus seen as one of the most important links to the nation's glorious history, and potentially glorious, future. The central role Jabotinsky ascribed to language in Zionism was expressed not only in writing and propaganda but also in action, such as the writing and printing of the first Hebrew atlas with Shmuel Perlman, the writing of the pamphlet "Hebrew Pronunciation", and the composition of his own Hebrew learning book *taryag milim*. Jabotinsky also fought for the institutionalization and use of Hebrew in British Palestine, for more translations of world classic into Hebrew, and was adamant that *Beitar* members speak Hebrew<sup>3</sup>. Throughout his Zionist career Jabotinsky's asserted thought language is the most enduring connection between the individual and the nation: national values may change, younger generations will undoubtedly rebel against their ancestors' legacy, but language remains forever embedded in the individual, stronger than any national ideal<sup>4</sup>. Hebrew was thus perceived as a

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<sup>1</sup> Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition* (Yale University Press, 2010), 297–298.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, *The Ideology of Beitar*, II, Beitar-14, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, *The Ideology of Beitar*, 11. See also, Arye Naor, introduction to *Ideological Writings: Hebrew*, by Zeev Jabotinsky, 9–21.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, "The Language of Education," in *Hebrew*, 43–45.

basic element which encapsulates the nation's spirit and ideals, brings the nation together, and which consequently had to be nurtured and protected.

An important aspect of Jabotinsky's linguistic activism concerns its protection from harmful influence. In line with the essentialist, Herderian emphasis on language, many European national revival movements sought to protect and purify their national language from harmful influences<sup>1</sup>. Within the central- and eastern-European context especially, linguistic purism was tightly connected with questions of the nation's desired cultural and political orientations. Czech revivalists, for example, seeking emancipation from Austrian rule, tried to eradicate German influences, while Romanians, seeking to emphasize their relation to Latin history and culture, objected to Turkish and Slavic influences<sup>2</sup>. The most common way of "purifying" national languages concerned purging the vocabulary of foreign words and expressions, i.e., by eliminating "alien" elements and replacing them with indigenous, and more "authentic" equivalents. Hebrew revivalists also sought to purge the language of "harmful" influences, often depending on the cultural agenda they pursued. Scholar and linguist Joseph Klausner, for example, who sought to eliminate the "exilic" aspects of Hebrew, fought against Yiddish and Aramaic influences<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky also aspired to purify the reviving language, but unlike most contemporaries, to him the greatest threats resided not in vocabulary, but in pronunciation. Alarmed by the deteriorating articulation of Hebrew in the *Yishuv*, Jabotinsky fought to popularize what he considered was correct articulation, both in texts, such as the 1930 booklet "Hebrew Pronunciation", and in his work on articulation with the actors of the Hebrew theater group *hateatron haeretz israeli* ("the Israeli theater")<sup>4</sup>.

According to Jabotinsky, ancient Hebrew pronunciation must have been extremely precise: "[our ancestors] did not speak hastily, did not swallow syllables, did not mix vowels [...] our ancestors spoke a language rich in melodical hues, were meticulous in differentiating between sounds, emphasized each and every vowel"<sup>5</sup>. Contemporary Hebrew speakers, however, neglected the beauty of the exact pronunciation, slurring and smearing vowels. The corruption of Hebrew

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<sup>1</sup> Ilan Eldar, "Language Nationalism, Language Revival, and Language Planning," in *Studies in the Revival and Renewal of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2019), 70.

<sup>2</sup> Eldar, "Language Nationalism," 74–77.

<sup>3</sup> Benzion Netanyahu, "*bemilchemet hariformatsya shel halashon haivrit*," *hayarden*, September 6, 1935, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Naor, "Introduction," 23. For more about Jabotinsky's work with the theater see Sheli Zer Zion, "The Israeli Theater," *Zmanim* 99, (2007): 22–23.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, "Hebrew Pronunciation," 115.

was the result of two factors: the fact that most Hebrew speakers had to learn the language, which contaminated the language with foreign accents, and the careless speech of native speakers. Jabotinsky warned against the harmful influence of Russian, German and English accents among Hebrew speakers, but it was Yiddish, as always, which was considered the greater threat: “the most damaging influence is the jargon<sup>1</sup>, of course. It is the source of the wailing intonation, legacy of our slavery – which has no place among a liberated people; the guttural ‘resh’ that is completely unsuitable to an energetic, heroic language as ours.”<sup>2</sup> Considering Hebrew was an acquired language among the vast majority of the *Yishuv* foreign accents were not an individual, but social issue, and Jabotinsky lamented the destructive effect these accents had on Hebrew. Ironically, native speakers were corrupting Hebrew just as much as Hebrew learners: not only did they jumble grammatical genders, confuse *shva nach* and *shva na*, their *Het* sounded like a “bronchitis attack in a rhinoceros’s throat”<sup>3</sup>.

Jabotinsky was willing to accept some mistakes and deformations of Hebrew as part of the natural process which every language undergoes. Indeed, the simplifications of some grammatical forms were a “natural transition [...] a process which nearly all languages of the modern world underwent, especially those that came from the Latin race.”<sup>4</sup> With regards to articulation, however, Jabotinsky was unwavering in his call for improvement and refinement: “Particular caution is needed in our relation to this philosophy of the sanctity of the ‘natural process’. Should we accept it as a principle, we should not shave or cut our fingernails. There is no place for such a ‘principle’ in culture. The essential principle of culture is exactly the restraining of the ‘natural process’, its guidance and submission according to the demands of the thinking mind.”<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky’s emphasis on the importance of articulation at the expense of vocabulary was unusual among Hebrew revivalists, and stems from his aesthetical vision, expressed in the idea of *hadar*<sup>6</sup>. As we have seen, an important aspect of *hadar* was the refinement of the “external forms of our lives”<sup>7</sup>. “Each step we take, every hand gesture, each sound, every action and even every idea we must always and persistently execute with ‘*hadar*’” Jabotinsky instructed his *Beitarists*. If eloquent and precise

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<sup>1</sup> Jargon was the derogatory term for Yiddish.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “On Hebrew Pronunciation,” in *Hebrew*, 111.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “A Linguistic Theme,” in *Hebrew*, 342.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, “On Hebrew Pronunciation,” 107.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, “A Linguistic Theme,” 343.

<sup>6</sup> Naor, “Introduction,” 14.

<sup>7</sup> Jabotinsky, *The Ideology of Beitar*, 9.

expression of ideas facilitated their transmission, faulty expression harmed both their formulation and their communication. As Eri Jabotinsky observed, to his father “content is emphasized by form.”<sup>1</sup> Consequently, to Jabotinsky language was an essential and defining element of national identity; but while some aspect of language, such as grammar, might be allowed to develop naturally, articulation, its most important facet, had to be cultivated and directed. It is interesting to note that Jabotinsky contrasted the refined and tasteful articulation of Hebrew (read: *hadar*), with the “Jewish” emphasis on grammar and style: “A Jew sees language as something written, not something with sound, a matter for the eyes more than it is a matter for the ears. He has high regard high for grammar and style, but very little for articulation. [...] The Jew tends to disregard the entire question of correct articulation. A bank manager in Tel Aviv once told me: ‘when a customer comes in here and emphasizes *dagesh-ḥazak* in a letter [...], I know I should not give him a loan, because he is undoubtedly a bum’.”<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky’s emphasis on correct articulation was consequently not just an attempt to refine Hebrew, but moreover, to civilize the uncultured Jews.

Jabotinsky’s ideas on language and race were thus emblematic of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries national thinking. Language and race were seen as primordial attributes of nations, which both determine and reflect the nation’s character. As such, they had to be guarded from damaging influence and refined to express the nation’s noblest characteristics. Given their elemental quality, these two aspects played an important role both in understanding the nation’s history, and in influencing its future in an era of national revival.

## 5.2 Races of sea and desert, the west and the east

An important part of Jabotinsky’s views on race and language concerns the cultural notions of east and west. During the early stages of the Jewish national revival, several dominant Zionist leaders, especially Martin Buber, emphasized the movement’s “eastern” character, that is, Zionism as Jewish return not only to the geographical, but also to the cultural, spiritual, and psychological “east”<sup>3</sup>. Zionist “easternism”, however, also had a linguistic aspect. Many Hebrew revivalists,

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<sup>1</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 13. For more about Jabotinsky’s views on language see Svetlana Natkovich, “Jabotinsky’s Language Program,” *bikoret veparshanut* 45, (2017), 99–119.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “Zamenhof and Ben-Yehuda,” in *Hebrew*, 186.

<sup>3</sup> In this section the term “easternism” is used to avoid confusion with “orientalism” as understood by Edward Said. For more on Buber and the *Brit Shalom* movement with relation to easternism see Gil Eyal, “Between East and West: The Discourse about the Arab Village in Israel,” in *Coloniality and the Postcolonial Condition*, ed. Yehuda Shenhav (Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2004), 213–214.

including prominent linguists such as Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and David Yellin, advocated the use of Arabic as an inspiration and ideal for the Hebrew revival<sup>1</sup>. These linguists argued that because Arabic was the closest living relative of Hebrew, it should be used as the primary source in coining new Hebrew words and determining the correct Hebrew pronunciation.

Jabotinsky objected vehemently to the entire “eastern” orientation, repeatedly emphasizing the Jews’ historical connection to the occident, on the one hand, and Zionism’s strong Western orientation, on the other. As Jabotinsky poignantly wrote in the 1927 paper “The East”: “We are going to *eretz israel*, first of all for our national convenience, and second, as Nordau said, to ‘extend the border of Europe to the Euphrates’”<sup>2</sup>. In Jabotinsky’s thought, Zionism had a distinct western orientation in politics, culture, and language. To Jabotinsky the terms “east” and “west” were not geographical, but rather cultural or “mental” indicators: ironically, Jabotinsky argued, the further east one travels on the southern bank of the Mediterranean the more Western influence is felt<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky contrasted the conceptual east and west on psychological, political, religious, and social planes. Psychologically, Jabotinsky blamed eastern “serenity” for the social, economic, and political injustices eastern countries are notorious for. Politically, Jabotinsky censured the east’s autocracy which extends from the smallest family household to state institutions. The east, Jabotinsky maintained, seeks to fill every aspect of life with religion’s arbitrary laws. And finally, women’s oppression in the east is one of its worst, and “most tragic” attributes<sup>4</sup>. The west, on the other hand, while not devoid of faults and problems, is inherently committed to progress and improvement.

Jabotinsky’s rebuttal of Jewish easternism developed over time and revolved around historical, racial, and linguistic arguments. For this reason, we shall study his arguments against it chronologically and comparatively, based on three key texts: “On Hebrew Pronunciation” (1918), “The East” (1923), and “Hebrew Pronunciation” (1929-30). As we shall see, Jabotinsky’s struggle to distance Zionism from eastern inclinations involved disassociating Jewish identity from the Middle East and linking it to Europe through the Mediterranean. Although Jabotinsky’s earlier references to this issue attempted to circumvent or minimize Jewish-Arab proximity, later texts

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<sup>1</sup> Yair Or, *Creating a Style for a Generation* (Tel Aviv: Ov-Z.A.P., 2016), 222–227.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “The East,” *Guidelines for Current Problems*, 91.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “*mimaroko ad tunis*,” *herut*, December 25, 1957, 3. Originally published in Russian in 1914, see Graur, “Bibliography”, 155.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, “The East,” 92–93.

centering on the Mediterranean world enabled Jabotinsky to reposition the Jews in an entirely European context.

“On Hebrew Pronunciation” was Jabotinsky’s first important attempt to influence the linguistic development of the Hebrew language, but many of its points became staples of Jabotinsky language program: pronunciation (with an emphasis on the differences between European and eastern sounds), the defective articulation and grammar of the *yishuv*, the harmful influences of diasporic Hebrew, and the efficiency of language planning. In this text Jabotinsky expresses his westernism almost casually: “I believe we are European, and will forever stay European in the cultural sense” Jabotinsky remarks, before making suggestions to adapt Hebrew pronunciation “to the Western ear”<sup>1</sup>. Concerning gutturals, Jabotinsky warns against embracing an Arab sound, for “political and musical reasons”, considering Arabic will be Hebrew’s main competitor in the region, and also because it is useless to expect a native of Russia to express such sounds.<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky’s main concern in “On Hebrew Pronunciation” isn’t Arabic, however, but Yiddish and its “more damaging influence, [... producing] the yowling intonation, legacy of our slavery”. If Jabotinsky’s anti-Arabic, or eastern, argumentation is based mostly on taste, music and politics, Yiddish is depicted inherently dangerous to Hebrew and Zionism<sup>3</sup>. While Hebrew speakers must free themselves of the specter of Yiddish and the diaspora, Arabic is not considered a threat, but perhaps a nuisance to be dismissed.

Five years later, in “The East”, the eastern question becomes a burning issue<sup>4</sup>. As we have seen, “The East” contained Jabotinsky’s severest attack against cultural “easternism”. In this *razsvet* article Jabotinsky was willing to concede the Jews were an eastern race (although “many now dispute this”), but was quick to add that the absolute majority of the Jews have left the east 2,000 years earlier to the west, during which time they have discarded the “Asian” mentality and became integrated in Europe<sup>5</sup>. Moreover – the Jews have actually contributed to European culture just as much as the English, Italians, French and German: the Hebrew Bible is the moral source of European socialist movements; its economic affluence would not be possible without Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “On Hebrew Pronunciation,” 108.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “On Hebrew Pronunciation,” 112.

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Jabotinsky even uses the word “Allah” in Arabic in order to demonstrate how *dagesh-hazak* should be pronounced in Hebrew.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to emphasize that we are considering the cultural and racial aspects in which Jabotinsky opposed the east. Jabotinsky also formulated his political-military opposition in different papers, most notably “The Iron Wall” which was also written in 1923.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, “The East,” 95.

international trade and credit<sup>1</sup>; and finally, individual Jews from Ibn-Gabirol to Einstein have contributed to all areas of European and western life. European civilization owes the entire idea of “progress” to Jewish rebelliousness and discontent as they are depicted in the Bible. “Europe is ours” Jabotinsky summarizes, “we are among its primary creators [... to become eastern] would mean for us to renounce ourselves.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, the same Ashkenazi Jews, whose diasporic Yiddish Jabotinsky found so threatening in “On Hebrew Pronunciation”, became bearers and protectors of Westernism in “The East”. One could say the “east” became more intimidating to Jabotinsky once he saw it, like Yiddish and exilic Judaism, as a cultural threat. In these articles, however, Jabotinsky did not deny the eastern origin of the Jews but focused instead on *modern* Jewish western identity. Keeping in mind Jabotinsky’s views on race, nation, and language, in these papers the Jews are briefly and uncomfortably depicted as an originally eastern race who has, through historical circumstances, become a western nation. Consequently, and in the process of fashioning the “new Jew”, Zionists should protect Jewish culture, and its most important attribute, the Hebrew language, from damaging influences and remain European.

In “Hebrew Pronunciation” Jabotinsky for the first time offers a different racial and historical account. In the beginning of the booklet Jabotinsky argues that although Hebrew and Arabic are both Semitic languages, this does not imply the Hebrew “forefathers spoke with an ‘Arabic accent’”<sup>3</sup>. The great differences in articulation between French and Italian and Russian and Polish illustrate that “sister tongues” do not have to sound the same, especially because “there is nothing as unpleasant and grating as a Polish accent in the Russian language”<sup>4</sup>. The booklet’s introduction, however, quickly abandons the apologetic tone, and turns to instilling the reader with the image of the Mediterranean Hebrew race. Resorting to his ideas on the formation and development of races and nations, Jabotinsky contrasts the different climates and natural conditions in which the Hebrews and the Arabs formed: while Arabic developed in “unlimited spaces [...], in the planes [...], the tropical heat of Arabia [and] the solitude of the desert” Hebrew formed in a small territory, “in the valleys, [...] chilly Jerusalem, [...] and the narrow crossroads between Assyria and Egypt.”<sup>5</sup> The “racial compound” which Jabotinsky discussed in his 1913

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<sup>1</sup> The origins of this claim will be discussed in the section on the Hebrew merchant.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “The East,” 95–96.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “Hebrew Pronunciation,” 116.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, 116.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, 116.



“Race” is also different: the Hebrews were made out of a conglomeration of Canaanite tribes: the Jebusites, Hittites, Amorites, Philistines, some of whom were descendants of European and Anatolian nations. “Thus, the *Hebrew was created as a Mediterranean* [man], in whose blood and soul are joined some of the aspirations and tastes of the *northern and western peoples*.”<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky then discusses linguistic differences – vowels and prosody – that demonstrate the languages’ different origins, finding similarities between Hebrew and English, Italian, German and Russian. Should Hebrew revivers find linguistic inspiration in other languages, Jabotinsky adds, let them be Western languages, “and especially those that were *also* born or developed on the Mediterranean.”<sup>2</sup> Finally, Jabotinsky concludes the introduction, he is convinced the prosody of ancient Hebrew was much closer to the languages of Greece and Rome than to Arabic. The reference to Greece, Rome, and Arabic is significant: Jabotinsky juxtaposes Hebrew history, culture, and identity with the greatest symbols of Western antiquity, while effectively separating it from the Arab world.

The greatest and most important difference between “On Hebrew Pronunciation” and “Hebrew Pronunciation” is the basis for argumentation: while the former text rejected Arabic influence based on present and future reasons – the physical inability of Russian-born Jews to pronounce gutturals and the imminent competition between Hebrew and Arabic – the later text resorted to historical justifications for the differences between the races and the languages. Jabotinsky’s growing desire to distance Hebrew identity from the east and to associate it with the west, accounts for the growing incorporation of the historical dimension. As we have seen, “On Hebrew Pronunciation” was the first paper in which Jabotinsky argued that the Hebrew and the Arab are two distinct races. As we shall see in the final section of this chapter, an important influence on Jabotinsky in this matter was the young Adya Horon. Nonetheless, Jabotinsky’s theories were emblematic of a general stream in Zionism, and quite a similar presentation of the development of the Hebrew language was developed by archaeologist and traveler Nahum Slouschz eleven years earlier.

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, 116, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, 118, emphasis added. The linguistic claims in this booklet were strongly criticized by the prominent linguist David Yellin, see his review in *Lěšonénu: A Journal for the Study of the Hebrew Language and Cognate Subjects* 4, (Fall 1932), 306–312. Yellin ridiculed Jabotinsky’s attempt to find European equivalents for Hebrew letters and sounds, venturing as far as Pushkin’s Tatyana, while ignoring the immediate Arab parallels.

Like Jabotinsky, Slouschz (1871–1966) spent his early years in Odessa, where he played an active part in Hebraist circles and was a close friend of Bialik, Tchernichovsky, Klausner and others who would later become leading Zionists. After visiting Palestine for the first time in 1891, where he met Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Slouschz began travelling extensively in the Middle East, the Mediterranean and Europe<sup>1</sup>. Slouschz wrote extensively about his travels and the communities he encountered in books and leading Hebrew journals, and in 1902 completed his studies at the Sorbonne, where he wrote his thesis about the renaissance of Hebrew literature. In Paris Slouschz was acquainted with current French theories on the origins and identity of the Phoenicians and their influence on the Greeks, such as Victor Bérard's theory on the Phoenician origins of the Odyssey<sup>2</sup>. Slouschz appreciated the Hebraist aspect of these theories which, by emphasizing the linguistic proximity between Hebrew and Phoenician, asserted greater proximity – if not actual identity – between the two peoples, than was previously accepted among scholars<sup>3</sup>. Slouschz continued to develop these theories, but also incorporated them into his travel literature, uncovering the Hebrew roots of peoples and places throughout the Mediterranean and the Levant<sup>4</sup>.

In 1919, while in New York, Slouschz published a rather slim book called *be'iyey hayam*<sup>5</sup> (At the Sea's Islands), a mash of memoir, travelogue, and Mediterranean history. In the chapter dedicated to Malta, however, Slouschz divulged his own thoughts on the Hebrew language: "I sincerely believe it is pointless to tire the throat of the Hebrew child to express the letter 'ain from the bottom of the throat like an Arab in the desert"<sup>6</sup>. Slouschz also doubted the ancient Hebrews had gutturals, or that their accent was even similar to the Arab accent in the desert. Based on the time he had spent with Arabs in the desert, Slouschz developed an original geo-climatic-linguistic theory: "lonesome for long periods the Arab sits in the desert, riding on his donkey, his camel. And these animals are incredibly stubborn, and the Arab, their owner, very reticent: for hours he sits or follows them like a mute, without opening his mouth, lazy to move his lips, only the sound

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<sup>1</sup> Jörg Schulte, "Nahum Slouschz (1871–1966) and his Contribution to the Hebrew Renaissance," in *The Russian Jewish Diaspora and European Culture, 1917–1937*, eds. Jörg Schulte, Olga Tabachnikova and Peter Wagstaff (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 111.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Bérard, *Les Phéniciens et l'Odysée* (Armand Colin, 1902, 1903).

<sup>3</sup> Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 77.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., *Travels in North Africa* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1927); *haanusim beportugal* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1931), and *be'iyey hayam* which will be studied below. For his attempt to associate the Hebrews with the Phoenicians see, Nahum Slouschz, ed., *Thesaurus of Phoenician inscriptions* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1942); for his interest in Jewish seafaring see his *The Book of the Sea* (Tel Aviv: Palestine Maritime League, 1948), 8–9, 294.

<sup>5</sup> Nahum Slouschz, *be'iyey hayam* (New York: Kadima, 1919).

<sup>6</sup> Slouschz, 59.

of a single vowel is heard from the bottom of his throat: *khi, khi, khi* [...] he shouts and hits them angrily, and the animal walks lazily and stubbornly, and he is angry and shouting more and more from his throat until, the air pressure he develops in his throat creates the pronunciation of the gutturals [...] The camels and the donkeys are those who created the gutturals!”<sup>1</sup> The ancient Hebrews who lived in the desert, Slouschz summarized, might have used some gutturals, but the Hebrews who lived by the sea only had very few traces of these guttural sounds remaining in their language. Moreover, Slouschz, like Jabotinsky, proclaimed the Hebrews were Europeans and should consequently fashion the reviving Hebrew according to European languages and standards. While Jabotinsky discussed the affinity between Mediterranean races and languages, Slouschz sought linguistic guidance in Maltese, a sister “Semitic-Western” language and from English<sup>2</sup>. Slouschz’s theory, which he developed and imparted time and again, even within the Hebrew Language Committee<sup>3</sup>, is reminiscent of Jabotinsky’s thesis in several ways: both emphasize the influence of geography and climate over the development of races and languages; distinguish between “desert races” and “sea races”; view language as an essential attribute of the people’s essence; and finally, use these historical theories in order to advance contemporary cultural and linguistic values.

Although Jabotinsky’s and Slouschz’s ideas were emblematic of contemporary thinking on nationalism in several ways, the similarity between the texts is still striking. It is noteworthy that Jabotinsky and Slouschz were acquainted, met several times, and corresponded, although only two letters from their correspondence survive at the Jabotinsky institute. In a letter from 1917 Jabotinsky discussed several aspects concerning Zionism in the US and the Jewish Legion and concluded by mentioning his everlasting gratitude to Slouschz for his personal support<sup>4</sup>. In a 1925 letter to Jabotinsky, Slouschz calls Jabotinsky “my dearest friend” and regrets not having met him

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<sup>1</sup> Slouschz, 60.

<sup>2</sup> Slouschz continued to portray the image of the Mediterranean man in *The Book of the Sea* (Tel Aviv: Palestine Maritime League, 1948), 27–32.

<sup>3</sup> See, Or, *Creating a Style for a Generation*, 182. Slouschz was a member of the Hebrew Language Committee, often seen as the precursor to the Academy of the Hebrew Language, alongside important linguists such as Ben-Yehuda, Yellin, and Klausner. In the committee Slouschz also attempted to advance the adoption of words of Canaanite origin, that are “closer to Hebrew”, at the expense of those of Arab origin, see Or, 172. See also, *The Memoirs of the Hebrew Language Committee, vol V*, (Jerusalem: *vaad hatsirim*, 1921), 54–55:

<https://hebrew-academy.org.il/wp-content/uploads/BookletEPart11.pdf>

See also Slouschz’s inauguration speech to the Committee: “Canaanite-Hebrew Words,” in the same volume:

<https://hebrew-academy.org.il/wp-content/uploads/BookletEPart08.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to Slouschz, December 19, 1917.

while both were in Paris<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, some emerging young Revisionists such as Halpern and Aba Ahimeir were enthusiastic about Slouschz's theories and promoted them within the movement<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, and although Slouschz divulged his theories on the origins of the Hebrews in various journals and books, Jabotinsky never mentioned him in any of his writings. It is only possible to hypothesize why Jabotinsky never mentioned Slouschz's ideas and writings, which significantly prefigured those of Horon, whose theories Jabotinsky supported and divulged to the public. It is possible that Jabotinsky preferred to endorse the theories of a young theoretician, and a *Beitarist* at that, instead of supporting a scholar older than himself who, in spite of his right-wing inclinations, was still associated with labor Zionism. Be that as it may, Jabotinsky's theories on the origins of the Hebrews were part of a general trend that sought to envision a new Jewish identity that was Mediterranean, and consequently, Western.

The three texts we have studied by Jabotinsky attest to the evolution of his thoughts on the Hebrew race and language. In the process of this evolution, the conventional perception of the joint origin of the Jews and the Arabs was gradually broken and the Hebrews were seen more and more as a Mediterranean people, contrasted with the "eastern" Arabic desert races. Based on Jabotinsky's own statements in articles and letters, it was through Horon's theories that he adopted the Mediterranean view of the Hebrews. During the 1930s Jabotinsky continued to utilize Horon's ideas for political and cultural purposes, until they clashed with the political and religious interests of Revisionist Zionism.

### 5.3 Latinization

An additional aspect of Jabotinsky's Western orientation in language concerns his interest in the Latinization of the Hebrew alphabet. Several Zionists were interested in this venture during the first half of the twentieth century, including the thinker Nathan Birnbaum,<sup>3</sup> poet Ja'akov Cahan, writer Avigdor Hameiri, Itamar Ben-Avi, and Canaanites Yonatan Ratosh and Uzzi Ornan<sup>4</sup>. Ben-

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<sup>1</sup> Slouschz to Jabotinsky, October 21, 1925, JI, A1/3/13, 100–101.

<sup>2</sup> See the 1944 *Beitar* booklet, *hageza haivri* (the Hebrew race), JI, Beitar-1/31, which contains previously published articles by Jabotinsky, Ahimeir, and Slouschz. Ahimeir's article unconditionally aggrandizes Slouschz's research and his contribution to a new historical understanding of the Hebrews. Ironically Ahimeir, who likely knew Horon's *razsvet* articles, did not mention the younger scholar at all. See also Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 84. For Halpern on Slouschz see *The Revival of Hebrew Seafaring*, 15–16.

<sup>3</sup> Roman Vater, "Hebrew as a Political Instrument," *Journal of Semitic Studies* LXII, no. 2 (Autumn 2017): 503.

<sup>4</sup> For Chan and Hameiri see Jabotinsky to Ben-Avi, March 30, 1927. For a survey of Latinization attempts in the *Yishuv* see İlker Aytürk, "Attempts at Romanizing the Hebrew Script and their Failure," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43,

Avi, the son of Hebrew revivalist Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and a mischievous journalist in his own right, was especially enthusiastic about Latinization and published two Hebrew newspapers, *Deror* and *Ha Şavuĵa ha Palestini*, as well as his father’s biography, *Avi*, in Latin script. In a society that was made mostly of immigrants to whom Hebrew was an acquired language, Latinization was mostly seen as a means of alleviating the difficulties of adult learners of Hebrew. At the same time, however, contemporary language reforms, such as the alphabet reforms in Soviet Russia, but especially the Latinization of Turkish as part of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s 1928 reforms, motivated Hebraists to consider reforming altogether the challenging Hebrew alphabet.

According to Jabotinsky, his experience with writing Hebrew in Latin script began during his 1907–1908 stay in Vienna, when he was studying the problem of national minorities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire: “I made notes from every book and pamphlet; I wrote them down in Hebrew in order to train myself in our language, which I also did not know sufficiently well. By the way, I became accustomed to writing Hebrew in Latin letters, a style of writing that is easier for me than the Assyrian square script.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Jabotinsky continued using Latin script in personal correspondences (especially with his son, Eri) and for his own manuscripts, as well as for the Hebrew textbook he composed, *Taryag millim*<sup>2</sup>. During the 1920s–1930s Jabotinsky was particularly supportive of Ben-Avi’s efforts to promote Latinization. Following their first meeting in 1919, when they discovered their common interest, they discussed Latin orthography for Hebrew and made plans to purchase the appropriate type for setting a Latin press for Hebrew<sup>3</sup>. Although his political activity drew him away from the Latinization project, Jabotinsky continued to support Ben-Avi’s efforts, and congratulated him warmly on the publication of his father’s biography and the launch of *Ha Şavuĵa ha Palestini*<sup>4</sup>.

Jabotinsky supported Latinization as a means of simplifying the teaching of Hebrew and improving its pronunciation. Jabotinsky believed the Hebrew alphabet was hindering the dissemination of the language among learners: “the main problem is that we must teach not only

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no. 4 (2007): 625–645. Poet Yonatan Ratosh, Horon’s close friend and cofounder of the so-called Canaanite movement, advocated Latinization as late as the 1960s: Yonatan Ratosh, “*sorry – ken velatini – lo?*,” *lamerchav*, May 11, 1962, 6.

<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, *Story of My Life*, 94.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsk, *Taryag Millim: 613 (Hebrew) Words*, (Jerusalem: Eri Jabotinsky, 1950).

<sup>3</sup> Josef Nedava, “Projects for the Latinization of the Hebrew Script,” *Hebrew Studies* 26, no. 1 (1985): 139.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to Ben-Avi, March 30, 1927; “Jabotinsky in our Favor,” in *Hebrew*, 281–283. Jabotinsky also supported other attempts to simplify or improve Hebrew writings, such as Max Bodenheimer’s association for Hebrew phonetics, although in a letter to Bodenheimer he confessed he was more supportive of Latinization, see Jabotinsky to Bodenheimer, July 1, 1925.

children, but also adults, the student, and the Zionist activist. For it is well known, that if it weren't for this 'Syrian' script the number of these learners would grow threefold, if not tenfold. Moreover: even those that have already learned, somehow, to speak or at least to chat – even those do not like reading. Ask your friends who have learned speaking Hebrew at an old age – the doctor, the engineer, even – the lawyer who has to read for his profession Hebrew manuscripts: how many of them read a Hebrew newspaper? How many of them will read a Hebrew book?"<sup>1</sup> According to Jabotinsky, even though some readers are already accustomed to the letters, it is new learners, and not experts, that have to be considered. "To me," Jabotinsky confessed, "the Hebrew language is first and foremost speaking, and I consider its sound just as important as its content. [A greater problem than pronunciation is] the absurd script our forefathers left us, which harms the distribution of our language, meaning it has become one of the most harmful obstacles in our national revival."<sup>2</sup> In addition, Jabotinsky argued that Hebrew script harmed pronunciation, and that even educated people did not know how to use niqqud (Hebrew diacritical signs) due to its complexity, which further contributed to mispronunciation<sup>3</sup>. Consequently, the printing of niqqud in books was uneconomical and unrealizable: not only would the press be extremely expensive, only professionals and professors would be able to proofread it: "an absurdity"<sup>4</sup>.

Jabotinsky consequently based his support for Hebrew Latinization on practical arguments that were designed to contribute to the dissemination of the language and its correct pronunciation. His discrediting of the Hebrew alphabet, however, was unequivocal: not only was it an "absurd script our forefathers left us", "a script older than the deluge, and that's where it belongs", Jabotinsky also tried to create the impression the script was not authentically Hebrew but imported: once he calls it "Assyrian"<sup>5</sup>, another time "Syrian"<sup>6</sup>. Latinization, on the other hand, was presented as "*a reversal to the original Hebrew script*, since the Latin alphabet is derived from the Greek, which in turn originates from the ancient Canaanite alphabet"<sup>7</sup>. Beyond this tactical argument, however, Latinization symbolized progress, something of the future: "those in America, who have

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, "otyot," *doar hayom*, April 5, 1929, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, "stenografia," *Haaretz*, June 28, 1925, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, "otyot," 2.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, *Story of My Life*, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Jabotinsky, "otyot," 2.

<sup>7</sup> Roman Vater, "Hebrew as a Political Instrument," 503, emphasis in the original. Jabotinsky and Ben-Avi shared other linguistic ideas, such as the view that Hebrew suffered from an inflation of "shin" (the sound š), see Ben-Avi, "*lehakalat haivrit*," *doar hayom*, September 29, 1928, 6.

a sense to things with a future, say this thing [a Hebrew-Latin typewriter] has a future.”<sup>1</sup> Latinization was consequently a part of Jabotinsky’s attempt to Westernize Hebrew and Zionism. Indeed, Latinization was key to Atatürk’s Westernization and modernization of Turkey in the 1920s-1930s<sup>2</sup>. Besides Itamar Ben-Avi’s predilection to sensations and exaggerations, it is noteworthy that he credited himself with inspiring Atatürk to Latinize Turkish script<sup>3</sup>. To adherents of Latinization among the Hebraists, the cultural implications of the reform were not just a means for alleviating the learning of Hebrew, but also of nearing the Western world, and the Turkish example was noteworthy.

#### 5.4 The Hebrew merchant

As we have seen, Jabotinsky believed *eretz israel*’s geographical location was important for the future state’s economy, arguing it would serve as a central crossroads for international trade. But commerce also played important roles in other aspects of Jabotinsky’s national vision, especially with regards to national identity and political rivalry. Not least importantly, the positive depiction of historical and contemporary Jewish commerce – which clearly contradicted the ideology and vision of labor Zionism – was another means of “westernizing” the Jews and Zionism.

Jabotinsky often discussed the Jewish inclination towards trade. In the article “The Four Sons”, which was reprinted numerous times since its original 1911 publication, Jabotinsky referred to the question of antisemitism and Jewish trade<sup>4</sup>. According to Jabotinsky, the Jews were always hated for their economic initiative, for being the avant-garde in historical economic development, and in modern times, for working mostly in trade and commerce. Although the Jews often excused the last accusation by claiming this was the only profession open to them in Europe, Jabotinsky dismissed the argument: Jews did not become merchants only because of social and legal limitations, but also because of Jewish values<sup>5</sup>. Throughout history, external limitations and national initiative have driven the Jews to practice professions that were frowned upon by most

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, *otyot*, 2. As we shall see in the following section, Jabotinsky equated progress with Judaism.

<sup>2</sup> Aytürk, “Attempts at Romanizing the Hebrew Script and their Failure,” 635.

<sup>3</sup> Itamar Ben-Avi, *The Cheeky Hebrew Man* (Yedioth Ahronoth Books and Chemed Books, 2016), 186–194.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, “The Four Sons,” JI, F-1911/202/EN. The article was originally published in Russian in 1911, and subsequently appeared in ten more languages, a testament to the importance Jabotinsky and the Revisionists attributed to it. For a history of its publications see Graur, *Bibliography*, 128–129.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, “A Lecture on Jewish History,” JI, J-90, 22.

peoples – such as shepherding in ancient Egypt and trade<sup>1</sup>. By establishing a connection between the modern inclination of Jews towards trade and the ancient historical circumstances that drove them to this profession, Jabotinsky presented Jewish commerce as a primordial national attribute, and the Jewish merchant as a national archetype. But commerce was not just another insignificant, or parasitic profession. An important influence on Jabotinsky's views on Jewish trade was Werner Sombart's work on modern capitalism<sup>2</sup>, which challenged Max Weber's theory on Protestantism and capitalism<sup>3</sup>. According to Sombart, it was not the Protestant ethos, but Jewish trade that beget European capitalism. Tracing the history of Jews in Europe – their wanderings and settlements across the continent, the economic and legal sanctions European rulers imposed on them, and the commercial networks the Jews established – Sombart argued that Jewish commerce, and not Protestant industry, was responsible for the accumulation of wealth in Europe and America<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, according to Sombart it was Jewish commerce that advanced and modernized Europe.

Relying on Sombart, Jabotinsky explained that “economic progress moved from European country to country with the Jews and [...] it was the Jews who gave the world international commerce without which the greatest capitals would to this day have remained the dirty backwaters they once were, [...] it was the Jews who developed credit and banking, who fitted Columbus out on his voyage of discovery to America.”<sup>5</sup> It was Jewish commerce, consequently that was responsible for Europe's financial and material progress. But Jewish trade contributed more than just capital: “the idea of *progress* is a Hebrew idea, and we introduced this idea to the west and created the west. Not just the Jew as the creator of culture, but also the Jewish merchant and the Jewish moneylender – [they] have influenced European culture more than Spinoza, for

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “The Four Sons,” 2–4.

<sup>2</sup> Werner Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, 119–133.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, “The Four Sons,” 4. Jabotinsky's utilization of Sombart's ideas was extremely selective, and he omitted several key components of Sombart's theory which did not harmonize with his own views on the topic, most notably the role of Jewish religion in the development of commerce, and Sombart's theory on Jewish racial identity. Although Sombart associated the Jewish race with the Egyptians and Phoenicians, he labeled them a “desert race”. In addition, unlike Jabotinsky's focus on the race's formative stages, Sombart emphasized that “many Jewish characteristics developed to the fullest in the Diaspora.” See Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, 196–225, and especially 198 and 207.



example.”<sup>1</sup> Consequently, through the ideal of the Jewish merchant Jabotinsky joined three vital currents of his ideology: Zionism, the middle class, and western civilization.

Jewish trade, personified in the archetype of the Jewish merchant, served additional ideological purposes. In the fight against labor Zionism, it was a social and economic alternative to socialism’s worker and agriculturist, offering a new Zionist ideology that was unashamedly middle-class. This ideal represented not only Jabotinsky’s own economic and aesthetic vision, but also appealed to the middleclass, anti-socialist supporters of Revisionism who were reluctant to relinquish their socio-economic positions (or aspirations) for socialism<sup>2</sup>. As we have seen in the first chapter, following the break with labor Zionism Jabotinsky’s anti-proletarian and pro-middleclass rhetoric intensified. In addition to the fierce attacks against the Zionist Palestine Workers Union – and especially the 1932 article “Yes, Break It!”<sup>3</sup> – Jabotinsky protected middleclass interests and identity in articles such as “We, the Bourgeois”<sup>4</sup>, “Working *eretz israel*”<sup>5</sup>, and “In Defense of the Jewish Middleman”<sup>6</sup>. We have already seen how Jabotinsky lamented the preference for workers in the granting of *sertifikats* and the importance he attributed to international commerce in *eretz israel*’s future economy. To his supporters Jabotinsky envisioned the victory of commerce over socialism, in which the Mediterranean played a central role. In 1933 Jabotinsky depicted the political, economic, and social realities of *eretz israel* in the year 1953. It is interesting to read his economic vision for the future state, especially with relation to the competition with labor Zionism: “Agriculture and industry indeed develop significantly. But the development of commerce eclipses both. Commerce takes the first place. [...] *Eretz israel* is the first stop of international commerce, destined for this due to its excellent geographic location and the commercial genius of the Jewish people that has taken root in its land. Trade – the first cause of civilization – has created for *eretz israel* possibilities that formerly were considered utopian.”<sup>7</sup> The future state’s location on the Mediterranean was thus imperative to the realization of its full economic potential for commerce. As we have seen in Jabotinsky’s letter to Mussolini

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “A National Home – a Spiritual Center,” in *Ideological Writings: Eretz Yisrael, Vol 2*, ed. Arye Naor (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, 2018), 183. Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> Eran Kaplan, “Revisionist Zionism,” in *New Jewish Time II*, 90.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “*ken, lishbor!*,” *hazit ha’am*, December 2, 1932, 1–2.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, “*anachnu haburganim*,” *Zionist Revisionism: The Years of Consolidation*, ed. Joseph Nedava (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, 1985), 211–217.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, “*eretz Israel haovedet*,” *doar hayom*, December 4, 1932, 2; December 5, 1932, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Jabotinsky, “In Defense of the Jewish Middleman,” *The American Jewish World*, July 18, 1930, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Jabotinsky, “*eretz israel beod esrim shana*,” *hazit ha’am*, June 23, 1933, 2.

and in his 1925 article “French”, the importance of Mediterranean commerce was also seen as a reason to establish closer relations with great European powers.

The fight with labor Zionism, however, also concerned nation building and the identity of the “new Jew”. As we have seen, labor Zionism envisioned the “new Jew” as a healthy farmer or worker, linking national revival with individual, physical rejuvenation. Jabotinsky was also an advocate of *Muskeljudentum*, although Revisionism idolized the Jewish fighter and liberator, more than the agriculture and worker. In contrast to labor Zionism, however, Jabotinsky also venerated the Jewish merchant and middleman. “In Defense of the Jewish Middleman”, for example, defended both the middleclass merchant and the enduring Jewish inclination towards trade against the socialist ideal of the “new Jew”. The Jews, Jabotinsky claimed, should not be ashamed, but proud of being “the sons and grandsons of generations of tradesmen”<sup>1</sup>. Contrary to the materialist belief that commerce is non-productive, Jabotinsky developed the theory that production, and “material culture”, its byproduct, could not exist without trade: “without him [the middleman] no factory would be able to obtain the machine and raw materials which it needs to produce the first pair of shoes. And without traders there would in general be no possibility of existence for any factory, for any institution, which works for a world of merchants.”<sup>2</sup> The merchant, however, is not just an agent of material and cultural production, but, given his imperative role in transmitting formation and material, he is actually “*the true fighter for progress, the first among those who bear the banner of civilization.*”<sup>3</sup> What’s more, “If [...] the greatest of all merchants was a Jew and [...] we still play this role today, then we should not renounce this honor.” We have seen that similar arguments were made in “Four sons” and “The East”, but in the “Defense” Jabotinsky uses this argument to legitimize commerce and the Jewish tradesman in the eyes of the Jews themselves, and especially against the socialist ideal of the “new Jew”. It is important to note a fundamental difference between the socialist and Revisionist visions of the “new Jew”: while labor Zionism sought to revolutionize completely the Jewish people, not only through immigration to Palestine, but also by fashioning a brand-new national identity, Revisionist Zionism maintained the new

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “In Defense of the Jewish Middleman,” 2. This article is also noteworthy for its reference to Victor Bérard, who showed that the Odyssey, “the beginning and the foundation of epic world poetry, consists entirely of travel impressions and adventures of Phoenician seamen and pirates and is built upon that: Again merchants!” This reference testifies to the development of Jabotinsky’s theory on the ancient Jews: even though Jabotinsky relies on Bérard in his reference to the Phoenicians, the connection between them and the Hebrews is still not explicit: they are merely given as an example of the importance of trade in history.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, 2, emphasis added.

Jewish identity could maintain some of its former, pre-Zionist characteristics. If labor Zionism demanded the severing of all ties with Jewish diasporic existence, epitomized not least of all in Jewish commerce and middleclass, the Revisionist vision retained this socioeconomic trait, by presenting it as an enduring, *pre-exilic*, and most of all, positive part of Jewish identity. If labor Zionism called for a total revolution of Jewish national identity, Revisionism advocated a “conservative” revolution that would maintain some aspects of the long Jewish history in the diaspora.

Labor Zionism’s and Revisionism’s relation to the “new Jew” and the diaspora conflicted on another economic dimension. As Shumsky has noted, at least until his 1936 “evacuation plan” (the evacuation of masses of Polish Jews to Palestine in light of the worsening antisemitism in Europe), Jabotinsky did not reject the diaspora in itself, believing significant Jewish communities would continue living in the diaspora even after the establishment of the future state<sup>1</sup>. In spite of his critique of exilic Judaism, Jabotinsky did not wish to relinquish or dismiss Jewish achievements in the diaspora. On the contrary: Jabotinsky believed these diasporic communities would prosper after their legal status has been consolidated, and that they would maintain fruitful relations with the Jewish state. As his 1929 speech, “The Producer and the Merchant” reveals, commerce constituted an important aspect of these relations<sup>2</sup>. After emphasizing once again the precedence of trade to production, Zionism’s unjustified neglect of commerce and the need to finally remedy this mistake, Jabotinsky urged the audience of industrialists to turn to the external markets of the diaspora: “let us not forget that the right bases for the *Yishuv*’s produce are in the diaspora: for there, among the masses of our people who begin to look at *eretz israel* as the metropolitan, there we have an advantage none of our competitors have – feeling!”<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky then developed the theory that diasporic Judaism’s desire to support the *Yishuv* would turn it into an important market of the *Yishuv*’s production. In a similar vein to his letter to Mussolini, which mentioned the Jews of Odessa and New York as invaluable agents in world commerce, Jabotinsky presented the commercial relations between the *Yishuv* and diasporic Judaism as cornerstones of the Zionist economy and future.

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<sup>1</sup> Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-State*, 163–165.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “*hayatzran vehasocheh*,” II, A1-8/23, 20–21.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “*hayatzran vehasocheh*,” 20.

The image of the Hebrew merchant consequently answered a number of Jabotinsky's national-building ideals: first, through Sombart's work, Jabotinsky was able to justify the Jewish inclination towards trade and present it as a beneficial attribute of the Jewish people; secondly, it depicted international and especially Mediterranean trade, and not agriculture or production, as the future state's economic base, due to the state's geographic location and the Jews' skill and history in trade; and finally, it negated Jewish identity, which Jabotinsky associated with progress, with the backward "east".

### 5.5 Horon: influence and break

In Jabotinsky's views on Jewish national identity and the Mediterranean an important place is reserved to the influence of his son's friend and mentor, Adya Horon. Horon was born Adolphe Gourevitch in 1907 in Kiev<sup>1</sup>. When Horon was seven, his mother died, and the remaining family moved to Switzerland. After World War I, the family moved to Turin where Horon graduated from high school in 1924. Horon's next stop was Paris, where a number of factors combined to shape his lifelong ideas and beliefs<sup>2</sup>. In the late 1920s Horon entered the Sorbonne as a student of Semitic philology and literature, from which he graduated by 1936. During his studies in Paris Horon, like Slouschz before him, was influenced by French historiographic trends which emphasized Canaanite cultural precedency to and influence over the Greek and the crucial importance of Phoenician civilization in the development of Mediterranean culture<sup>3</sup>. In addition to his academic and intellectual activity, in 1928 Horon began associating with Revisionist circles, assuming commanding positions in local and international *Beitar* branches. It was through his *Beitar* activities that Horon became close friends with Eri Jabotinsky. Three years his junior, Eri looked up to Horon, introducing him to his father in 1927-8<sup>4</sup>. Ze'ev Jabotinsky was impressed by Horon: as we have seen earlier, Jabotinsky supported the *rodei-gal* venture, both conceptually and financially. But Jabotinsky also came to adopt some of Horon's theories on the origins and identity of the Hebrews, especially those that harmonized with his own ideas on the subject.

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<sup>1</sup> Horon's biographical outline is based on Vater, "A Hebrew from Samaria, Not a Jew from Yavneh," 37–63, and Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 54–55.

<sup>2</sup> Horon's 1938 meeting with poet Yonatan Ratosh, his co-founder of the so-called *Canaanite* movement, will be left out of the biographical review.

<sup>3</sup> Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 75.

<sup>4</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 127.

Between 1931 and 1932 Horon, under the Arabic pen name *Alraid* (“the pioneer”), published a series of articles in *razsvet* on the origins and history of the Hebrew people<sup>1</sup>. The historical narrative Horon presented sought to rewrite some of the conventional views Jews have held about their history based on the Bible and its traditional readings. Against the accepted view that the Israelites were distinct from other Canaanite peoples, Horon postulated that the Hebrews were a great nation, to which belonged the Israelites (i.e., the Jews) and other tribes, such as the Edomites and Moabites. Horon also emphasized the “cooperation between the Israelite tribes and the Phoenician coastal towns”.<sup>2</sup> According to Horon, although the Bible depicted the Phoenician cities Tyre and Sidon and the Israelites as mere allies, in reality the groups shared the same history. Moreover, the similarity between the Phoenicians’ and Hebrews’ language and literature, proved they were actually part of the same nation. Thus, Horon incorporated Jewish history into Canaanite and Phoenician history.

Horon’s fascination with the idea of Hebrew paganism, as well as the imagination of an “alternative” history to the Bible in which the Israelites lived harmoniously among other Canaanite tribes, was shared by a number of influential Zionists. The prominent poet Shaul Tchernichovsky, considered only second to the national poet Bialik, often wrote about a pre-monotheistic *eretz israel*, associating himself with the Hellenistic Greeks and the pagan Canaanites and gaining the epithet “Hellenistic”<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, in the introduction to his 1930 translation of the *Odyssey*, Tchernichovsky related extensively Bérard’s theory on the Phoenician origins of the *Odyssey* in order to emphasize the epos’ Semitic origins<sup>4</sup>. The poet Zalman Shneour, whom Jabotinsky admired and struggled to translate into Russian, also employed pagan and Canaanite themes in his work, and is often considered, along with Tchernichovsky, an important precursor to the Horon’s close friend and associate, the poet Yonatan Ratosh<sup>5</sup>. Finally, like Slouschz and Bérard, Ben-Avi

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<sup>1</sup> For a list of the articles see Vater, “*A Hebrew from Samaria, Not a Jew from Yavneh*,” 316. For their analysis as “proto-Canaanite” and Horon’s influences see Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 55 and 74–75. See also James S. Diamond, *Homeland or Holy Land?* (Indiana University Press, 1986), 34–36.

<sup>2</sup> Shavit, “Hebrews and Phoenicians,” 165–166.

<sup>3</sup> See poems such as *mot hatamuz*, *lenochach pesel apolo*, *mchezyonot nevi-hasheker*. See also Boaz Arpaly, afterward to *Selected Poems*, by Shaul Tchernichovsky, ed. Boaz Arpaly (Jerusalem: Carmel: 2015), 394–395.

<sup>4</sup> Shaul Tchernichovsky, *Odyssey* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1930), XIII–XVI. See also Ido Bassok, *Of Beauty and Sublime Aware* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2018), 464–465. Tchernichovsky also made a name for himself as a poet of the sea through his numerous poems on the topic (*saba maflig leodesa*, *al hamaym*, *lenochach hayam*).

<sup>5</sup> For Jabotinsky and Shneour see Jabotinsky to Shneour, February 10 and 13 1928, March 21, 1928, and October 19, 1931. Nietzsche was an important influence on these poets’ turn to paganism, see David Ohana, *Nietzsche and Jewish Political Theology* (Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 221–275. On Jabotinsky’s relationship with Tchernichovsky and Shneour see Miron, *The Focalizing Crystal*, 58–59.

also found Hebrew origins in the names of nearly every place along the Mediterranean, and wrote a series of articles titled “*cnaan artsenu*” (Our land Canaan), which divulged an extravagant history of the Hebrew empire, not unlike the more scientific theory of Horon<sup>1</sup>. Horon, Jabotinsky, and Tchernichovsky also differentiated between the popular strata of pagan Hebrews, who lived among the Canaanite peoples, and the Jewish monotheistic elite, which repeatedly conflicted with its surroundings. In *Shimshon* Jabotinsky portrayed the Jewish prophets as eccentric recluses, alien to the common Israelites<sup>2</sup>. But while Slouschz, Tchernichovsky, Ben-Avi, Shneour, and Jabotinsky gradually reconciled with Jewish religion and identity, appreciating its constructive role in Jewish history, Horon’s views became increasingly antagonistic towards them.

Horon’s theories held several implications for Jewish identity, national history, and nation building. Indeed, their digression from mainstream Jewish narratives culminated in the formation of the anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish “Canaanite” movement. Even though Horon’s views in the early 1930s were still developing and did not yet reach their radical conclusions, they already possessed a strong objection to Jewish religion which was seen as a later addition, in contrast with the nation’s original, “authentic”, paganism.

Horon’s ideas made a strong impression on Jabotinsky, and he addressed them several times during the 1930s. As Shavit has pointed out, Jabotinsky rarely wrote on historical subjects and consequently, the fact that he addressed Horon’s theories in several papers is significant<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky’s first public reference to Horon’s theories came in the form of a feuilleton, “The Mythology of Canaan”, published in 1931<sup>4</sup>. In the feuilleton Jabotinsky imagines the pantheon of Canaanite gods, which bears resemblance both to the Greek pantheon, but also to the Canaanite gods Jabotinsky depicted in *Shimshon*<sup>5</sup>. The Canaanite gods, including Moloch, Dagon, and Chemosh, lead a self-indulgent, careless life, worshiped by Canaanite nations, such as the Moabites, Jebusites and Sidonites, although the gods don’t seem to care much either for the peoples’ offerings or for their own representations at the hands of their worshippers<sup>6</sup>. The gods’

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<sup>1</sup> The articles were later published in book form: Itamar Ben-Avi, *cnaan artsenu* (Zion, 1931). Ben-Avi was also dedicated to reviving Hebrew seafaring, believing the Hebrews were a seafaring people who ruled the Mediterranean, see: *hayama* (Tel Aviv: Zebulun, 1936).

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Jabotinsky, *Shimshon*, 48–50.

<sup>3</sup> Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 56–57. Except for the feuilleton, Jabotinsky explicitly referred to *Alraid* in three articles: “Israel and Carthage” (1932), “Civitavecchia” (1934), and “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First” (1938).

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, “*hamitologia shel cnaan*,” *bamakhane*, JI, TAF-1931/28/HEB.

<sup>5</sup> Cf., Ze’ev Jabotinsky, *Shimshon* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), 35–42.

<sup>6</sup> Jabotinsky, “*hamitologia shel cnaan*”.

idyllic life of garden parties and feasts is interrupted when a mysterious stranger appears during one of the banquets, identifying himself as the god of the people of Israel. None of the gods seem to know this nation, although they quickly suspect it is the people responsible for attacking their peoples and ransacking neighboring kingdoms. Nonetheless, the gods welcome the stranger to stay, calling him *yachid* (one, or single), on account of having an unpronounceable name. Unlike the other Canaanite gods, *yachid* spends his time meticulously ruling, punishing, and judging his people. At the end of the feuilleton the other gods tease him for taking his people so seriously, only to discover *yachid* does not even believe in their existence.

It is noteworthy that in spite of the feuilleton's focus on the Canaanite gods, Jabotinsky still does not argue the Israelis are a Canaanite or Phoenician people. Nonetheless, other aspects of the feuilleton deserve attention. The people of Israel, for example, are described as a fighting and invading people who win the respect of the other gods, in the best romantic tradition, precisely for their ruthlessness, until finally their behavior antagonizes the carefree gods. Jabotinsky, like other Zionist thinkers and presumably under Nietzsche's influence, repeatedly envisaged a romantic image of the ancient Israelites as fierce warriors and conquerors, contrasting them with the weak and timid stereotype of the exilic Jew<sup>1</sup>. The feuilleton, however, adds a new dimension to this comparison through the words of Moloch: "Your [*yachid*'s] people is also somewhat unpleasant. Why can't they sit in one place? Why do they barge into foreign countries?"<sup>2</sup> These accusations strongly echo modern antisemitic charges against the Jews for invading foreign countries and living in them as uninvited and parasitical strangers. The words of Moloch, however, refer to the Jews' *military*, and consequently heroic, restlessness and appetite for expansion. The use of a similar sounding accusation in two distinct contexts draws the pathetic exilic Jew of the present closer to the daring Israelite conqueror of the past. It is typical of Jabotinsky's national thought to draw parallels between the nation's historical and contemporary state. Finally, worthy of mention is Jabotinsky's detailed description of the Sidonites, (i.e. the Phoenicians): "The most important of the gods was Moloch the Sidonian, whose proceeds poured in from all around the world, even beyond the seas, because the Sidonites were sea merchants, great experts in pirating, which served as a basis for export and import." This description of the Sidonites / Phoenicians as sea merchants and conquerors who ruled the ancient world stood at the heart of Horon's historical

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<sup>1</sup> Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 27–28.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, '*hamitologia shel cnaan*'.

vision<sup>1</sup>. What Jabotinsky's account still lacked, however, was a clear association of the Hebrews and the Phoenicians as one and the same people, and the implications of this association.

Four months after the feuilleton Jabotinsky published "Israel and Carthage" – an article dedicated to Horon's theories<sup>2</sup>. The article introduces Horon for the first time through his penname *Alraid*: a young man sitting in Paris, immersed in old and new books on the history of the east. It is important to see which parts of Horon's theory Jabotinsky divulged to his readers, and in what manner. Horon, Jabotinsky informs the readers, developed a theory that the Sidonites were not just "related" to the ancient Israelites, but "were simply 'Hebrews', just as the 'Israelites' were Hebrews – not even two nations of the same race, but simply two territorial branches of the same people. The only essential difference between the two," Jabotinsky continues, "was the religious ritual," although the Israelites only developed monotheism much later than is usually believed, around 700 B.C.<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky recounts in detail other parts of Horon's theory: the tribes in Canaan were all Hebrews (except for the Hittites, of course), all spoke Hebrew, and were all part of the same nation; the Canaan peoples were united in political alliances, but would often divide into smaller, tribal formations; unlike the accepted Jewish narrative – which identifies the Israelites with the Hebrews, but classifies all other groups as Canaanites while ignoring the Phoenicians – the Israelites and the Phoenicians were in fact "siblings in the ethnical sense", and both were Hebrews; consequently, "the founders of Carthage and creators of world seamanship, the discoverers of the Strait of Gibraltar were not just our 'relatives', but [...] us, people of our own race [...] as close to us as the Mazurs are to the Poles, or as the English of York are to the English of London."<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky also stressed the role of the Israelites in the Phoenicians' expansion: the Phoenicians used other Hebrew tribes, including those that would become Jewish, in order to colonize the countries they discovered in the Mediterranean. Another important issue Jabotinsky discussed was the naval dimension of the theory: the long history of Jewish seamanship which stretches from the times of the Phoenicians, through the middle ages, when Sephardic Jews ruled the seas as traders and pirates, to the present moment when the Jews, like the English, Norwegian,

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<sup>1</sup> As well as Bérard's and Slouschz's.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, "*israel vecartago*," February 5, 1932, 1–2. The article was originally published in Yiddish in the Warsaw daily Haynt. See Graur, *Bibliography*, 374.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, "*israel vecartago*," 1.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, 2.



Dutch and Greek were still a “sea people”, considering the outmost majority of them (more than four million) live by the sea.

In addition to the themes Jabotinsky addressed, it is important to note the manner in which Jabotinsky recounted Horon’s theories. As mentioned earlier, the fact that Jabotinsky dedicated an entire article to recounting Horon’s ideas, testifies to the significance Jabotinsky attributed to them. Nonetheless, Jabotinsky was careful to distance himself from some aspects of the theory, and to express some doubt as to their verity. In the first part of the paper Jabotinsky suggested twice that Horon’s political and naval aspiration – the establishment of *rodei-gal*, which Jabotinsky endorsed – might have inspired his historical views more than professional historical research. Jabotinsky also emphasized that he himself was not an expert on the subject, and therefore could not evaluate the truthfulness of Horon’s theories. Finally, at the end of the paper, Jabotinsky stressed the uniqueness of the Jews in relation to the other Hebrew people, as the people who developed religious, philosophical, and cosmological monotheism (or, “monism”, a term that echoes the Revisionist principle). Jabotinsky’s reservations about Horon’s theories, however, might have been inspired more for political purposes than agreement on historical facts. Both “The Mythology of Canaan” and “Israel and Carthage” were published in Yiddish in the New York daily “Jewish Morning Journal” (*der morgen zshurnal*). The “Jewish Morning Journal” was a Jewish Orthodox newspaper, although its outlook was more liberal and intellectual during the time Jabotinsky was a contributor<sup>1</sup>. In addition, following the establishment of *hatzohar* in 1925, Jabotinsky’s relations with religious Zionism, headed by the Mizrachi movement, gradually improved, inducing Jabotinsky to adopt a warmer attitude towards Jewish religion in general, and religious Zionism in particular<sup>2</sup>. The complete association of the Jews and the Phoenicians could seem offensive to religious readers and potential supporters of Revisionism. The semi-skeptical presentation of Horon’s theories consequently served two purposes: on the one hand, it offered a wider historical vision of Hebrew history than was hitherto accepted: exceeding the borders of the Bible and *eretz israel*, the Hebrews were now part of a glorious Mediterranean history of pirating, sea trading, the illustrious Carthage and Hannibal. Using the Hebrew language as the foundation for this historical narrative, it also served to bolster the value of modern Hebrew among the masses of Yiddish

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<sup>1</sup> Hillel Halkin, “The Morning Journal,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik (Macmillan Reference USA, 2006), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, vol. 11, 306–7.

<sup>2</sup> Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “Between Nationalism and Religion,” in Barely and Ginossar, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 165.

readers. On the other hand, the reservations concerning the historical accuracy of the story, as well as the emphasis on the uniqueness of the Jews among the Hebrews, would placate the religious and conservative readers and potential allies. “Israel and Carthage” could thus be seen as the high tide of Jabotinsky’s support for Horon’s radical vision of Hebrew history.

Jabotinsky mentioned Horon and his theories again in the articles dedicated to *Civitavecchia* (1935) and *Sarah the First* (1938). In these papers Jabotinsky focused on the naval aspects of Horon’s theory, using the association of the Hebrews and the Phoenicians in order to establish: 1. The Hebrews’ naval past; 2. The Hebrews’ historical dominance over the Mediterranean (a Hebrew “*mare nostrum*”); 3. The continuity of Hebrew seamanship. In addition, Jabotinsky mentioned Horon’s estimate that “at least a quarter of the Hebrew people” dwells on the seashore, *rodei-gal* and *Beitar*, as proof of the nation’s enduring maritime legacy and in order to create motivation for taking up seamanship<sup>1</sup>. Although Jabotinsky also mentioned the linguistic proximity between the Hebrews and the Phoenicians, Carthage, Hannibal, and the “Jewish” contribution to the *Odyssey*, these were merely touched on as Hebrew seamanship’s roots, without discussing their deeper cultural and religious implications.

Jabotinsky’s break, or partial break, with Horon’s ideas came in 1935, when the New Zionist Organization held its founding conference in Vienna. A key topic in the conference was the organization’s relation to Jewish religion and to religious Zionist movements. While a considerable body of the Revisionist Organization was made out of liberals, self-proclaimed atheists, and budding Canaanites such as Horon – all harsh critics of religion in general and Judaism and religious Jews in particular – Jabotinsky strove to make an alliance with religious Zionism<sup>2</sup>. The anti-religious Revisionists attacked Jabotinsky for the upcoming pact, obliging Jabotinsky to justify himself and promote the alliance within party members. In articles published before the conference and in the conference’s opening speech, Jabotinsky defended himself against accusations that the alliance was a political and hypocritical move on the one hand, and that the alliance would religionize the movement and its members, on the other<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky claimed a self-reexamination, or soul searching, led him to reassess his and his generation’s relation to religion: “This is about a revolution in the world view of an entire generation. For a long time this generation

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “*Civitavecchia*,” 2; “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First,” 2.

<sup>2</sup> Don-Yehiya, “Between Nationalism and Religion,” 166–8.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “*hadat*,” *hayarden*, August 2, 1935, 2; “*kheshbon hanefesh*,” *hayarden*, August 30, 1935, 2; “*neum biftichat congress hats.ch. bevina*,” *hayarden*, September 10, 1935, 2, 6.

believed that ‘religion’ had the sanctity of a museum, that it must be treated with ‘patience’. But as we see today [...] faith is once again an army, an active army, and its service is a service of liberation, because it is fighting for a grand principle, that the spirit is superior to ‘class’ [and to] ‘race’[,] the spirit is superior to all [...] the secular and the Orthodox] seek new forms of cooperation in the creation of a new Jewish soul.”<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky thus sought to recognize “spirit” as an important factor in the nation’s rejuvenation, alongside “race” and “class”, which he put in quotation marks, questioning their centrality in secular Zionism<sup>2</sup>. It is important to note the phrase “creation of a new Jewish soul”. Up until the 1940s Zionist rhetoric predominantly utilized the term “Hebrew” and not “Jewish” for various reasons, but not least of all to distance the national rejuvenation from Jewish religion<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky also showed preference for the term “Hebrew” in key Revisionist concepts such as “Hebrew state” and the “Hebrew Sea”. Consequently, Jabotinsky’s use of “Jewish” in Hebrew was a clear and deliberate turn from the values associated most with secular Zionism’s ideals of a break with the “old” world of religious Judaism and the ghetto<sup>4</sup>. At the conference’s opening speech, Jabotinsky elaborated on the importance of religion: the N.Z.O. is first and foremost a Jewish organization, and only then Zionist; in the future state social problems will be solved according to the Jewish spirit – not socialism; modernism’s eradication of God from life resulted in man’s deterioration; finally, Revisionism cherishes the influence of religion, “the purest influence, that has the pathos of divinity”<sup>5</sup>.

One of Jabotinsky’s harshest critics on the new approach to religion was Horon. Following Jabotinsky’s speech Horon took the stage and attacked the movement’s alliance with religious Zionism as a step that was contradicting history, concluding, not for the first time, that he was not a Jew from *eretz israel* but a Hebrew from Canaan<sup>6</sup>. Following Horon’s speech, Jabotinsky sat down next to him and tried to convince him to vote for the alliance, but Horon refused<sup>7</sup>. This was the end of Jabotinsky’s and Horon’s political cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “*kheshbon hanefesh*,” 2.

<sup>2</sup> Questioning the notions of race and class was also intended as an attack against Nazism and communism.

<sup>3</sup> For a survey and analysis of this usage see Savit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 30–45.

<sup>4</sup> The choice of the word “Jewish” might also be the translator’s (the article was originally published in Yiddish). Nonetheless, the context and content of the article are imperative for the use of the word “Jewish” and not “Hebrew”.

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, “*neum biftichat congress hats.ch. bevina*,” 2.

<sup>6</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 132; Vater, “*A Hebrew from Samaria, Not a Jew from Yavneh*,” 44.

<sup>7</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 132. The vote was in fact on the inclusion of a paragraph in the N.Z.O. credo that the movement was committed to “implanting” [or “imbuing”] the future state with Torah values.

There have been two explanations for Jabotinsky's changing relation to religion. Politically committed Revisionists often depict the act as authentic, an expression of Jabotinsky's own rapprochement with religion and the understanding of its importance for the Jewish nation<sup>1</sup>. Academic scholars, however, tend to follow the interpretation raised originally by Eri Jabotinsky, and see the entente as a predominantly political move, designed to bolster the ranks of the nascent N.Z.O.<sup>2</sup>. According to Eri Jabotinsky, Jabotinsky implored Horon to vote for the alliance with religious Zionism, because he believed a unanimous vote among the Revisionists would "emphasize the tactical and noncommitting nature" of the alliance.<sup>3</sup>

An important testimony to Jabotinsky's views on religion and Horon's theories can be found in his letter to his son shortly after the conclusion of the conference. The conference went well, Jabotinsky recounted, and asked his son's opinion on the N.Z.O.'s new paragraph on religion. Jabotinsky was also interested in his son's opinion on Horon's objection:

I support [the paragraph] word for word. For me it is the result of more than five years of contemplation. It is unnecessary for me to explain to you I still believe in the freedom of belief etc., and I do not regard ritual as being holy. The issue goes deeper. 'Imbuing the teachings of the holy Torah in the life of the nation...' everyone will agree that the Torah contains truly holy principles, and something holy is worthwhile imbuing; on the other hand, and in particular, these holy principles are precepts of morality and ethics, which even an atheist as such will support. So why imbue it under the 'banderole' of religion? In my view, here is the crux of the issue. One can establish a system of ethics without divine connection: I have done this my entire life. I am now certain it is better to treat ethical

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Nedava, *Vladimir Jabotinsky*, 68–69; Isaac Rembah, "dat umasoret bechayav ubemishnato," *hauma* 9, (1964): 145–160. Eri Jabotinsky harshly criticized Rembah's article, claiming that "[i]t would be incorrect to say [Remba's] article is full of falsifications: it is one great falsification from beginning to end." E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 95. For a survey of previous interpretations of Jabotinsky's change of heart see Don-Yehiya, "Between Nationalism and Religion," 171–172.

<sup>2</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 132; Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite*, 58. For an extensive analysis of Jabotinsky's relation to Judaism see, Arye Naor, "'Epicureans also have a Share in Sinai': On Jabotinsky's Approach to Jewish Legacy," *Iyunim bitkumat Israel* 16, (2006), 156–160. See also, Shalom Ratzabi, "Jabotinsky and Religion," *Israel* 5, (2004): 1–30.

<sup>3</sup> E. Jabotinsky, *My Father*, 132.

fundamentals as connected with superhuman mystery; not only out of “courteousness” – for the Bible is indeed their original source, and why should we hide the fact; why are we allowed to declare Zionist principles in the name of ‘Herzl’ (although they can also be established without Herzl; and Herzl’s ideas are as full of nonsense as Solomon’s Proverbs); and why should we be ashamed to quote the Bible? It is nothing but a famous kind of snobbishness, shrinking from something associated with ‘jargon’ and plebian clothes etc. – but to me it goes beyond, not just a rebellion against ‘shrinking’ and the will to restore the bible and god almighty to decent society. I go even farther than this: the *religious* pathos, in itself, is what we need.<sup>1</sup>

Jabotinsky’s letter to his son reveals a number of important ideas on religion and political movements. First of all, it attests to the authenticity of Jabotinsky’s alliance with religious Zionism. The break with Horon was not only the result of realpolitik interests after all, but of ideological differences concerning their views on religion in general, and Jewish religious heritage in relation to the Zionist movement, in particular. Jabotinsky did not become more religious himself, but he realized the genuine and important role Judaism played in Zionism. Secondly, it illuminates the importance Jabotinsky attributed to myths and symbols as sources of practical, or perhaps “real-life” phenomenon: Herzl is not important for his actual ideas, but as a symbol encapsulating the Zionist vision. Similarly, the Bible, and more specifically the *pathos* of the Bible, serves as a useful tool for imbuing society with morality and “holy principles”. Thirdly, Jabotinsky’s reference to “snobbishness” and “jargon” illuminates his dichotomic view of the dilemma: the “snobbish” anti-religious intellectuals, who idolize Hebrew, on the one hand, and the Yiddish masses, to whom the Bible still appeals more than the exotic allure of the Phoenicians and Hannibal himself. Although Jabotinsky was devoted to the dissemination and advancement of Hebrew, he did not recoil from Yiddish – and Judaism – as a means of addressing the Jewish masses in the diaspora.

In a 1938 letter to Horon, Jabotinsky revealed their disagreement was not just about the role of religion in Revisionism, but also about historical facts in themselves. Jabotinsky reviewed Horon’s latest lectures, and in spite of his interest in them, held several reservations about their

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Eri Jabotinsky, September 14, 1935.

content<sup>1</sup>. Among these reservations some are interesting in research of Jabotinsky and his views on the Zionist movement, for example, his assumption that the Exodus from Egypt undoubtedly occurred, but that a number of Israelite tribes intentionally rejected it, “like [Zionist activist Nahum] Sokolow, who did not mention the [Jewish] Legion even once in his history of Zionism.”<sup>2</sup> Another, reveals Jabotinsky’s conviction that the Phoenician city Tyre probably held feudal relations with the David and Solomon’s Kingdom (emphasizing the extent and nature of relations Jabotinsky believed existed between the Jews and the Phoenicians). Finally, Jabotinsky’s fourth comment illuminates the deeper disagreement among the two. Jabotinsky advised Horon not to “humiliate Israel” in order to glorify the “Hebrews”: although the popular strata of the people was probably pagan, the nation still exhibited a strong tendency towards monism and monotheism. This observation illuminates the fact that in spite of Jabotinsky’s interest in the greater-Hebrew-empire vision, he still believed Jewish monotheism was a noteworthy tendency among the Israelites which should not be relinquished in favor of a Canaanite identity or vision. But in spite of his reservations about Horon’s theory and the ultimate decision to embrace Judaism instead of Canaanism, Jabotinsky appreciated several aspects of Horon’s association of the Hebrews and the Phoenician. Jabotinsky found the theory instrumental in emphasizing the Mediterranean origins of the Hebrews and their maritime activities. In addition, journalistic references to the Phoenicians and Hannibal, as long as they did not conflict too severely with Jewish identity (as Horon increasingly aspired they would), added more pathos and grandeur to the Jewish history and the Revisionist naval revival.

## 5.6 Summary

The Mediterranean Sea played an important role in Jabotinsky’s views on Jewish identity, and mainly in the attempt to emphasize the nation’s Western identity. In Jabotinsky’s view, which was consistent with contemporary thought on national identity, nations and races were influenced by their natural surroundings in the development of their character. Jabotinsky sought to contest the common view of the Jews as an oriental race, by describing the ancient Hebrews as a people that originated and developed on the seashores, and with a Mediterranean orientation. This description was crucial in Jabotinsky’s attempt to distance Jewish identity from the eastern, Arab

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Horon, December 23, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to Horon.

world, and to connect it with Europe and the West. In addition, Jabotinsky advocated the Latinization of the Hebrew script as a means of Westernizing the language and Zionism. Another dimension of the Westernization of the Jews was the positive portrayal of the Jewish merchant who, according to Werner Sombart's theory, was responsible for the advancement and modernization of Europe. Jabotinsky developed Sombart's theory further, claiming the whole idea of progress and revolution was a Jewish idea. Jewish commerce also harmonized with the dominant role Jabotinsky ascribed to Mediterranean trade in the future Jewish state. Finally, under Horon's influence Jabotinsky attempted to connect Hebrew history and identity with the Phoenicians. Presenting the Hebrews as Phoenicians enhanced the people's contribution to the West – by including the dissemination of the alphabet, seafaring knowledge, and providing the foundation for the Odyssey – but also, through the archetype of the naval Phoenician merchant, provided further legitimization for the ideal of Jewish commerce. Although Jabotinsky was ambivalent towards the anti-Jewish implications of Horon's theory, he did utilize its naval aspects in order to conjure the grand vision of the Hebrew Sea.

## 6. Mythologizing the conquest of the Hebrew Sea: article analysis

### 6.1 Myths, mythologizing, and politics

So far we have studied the ways in which Jabotinsky framed and utilized the Mediterranean sea in his ideology and political activity. The sea was presented as an integral part of the territory of *eretz israel*, in an attempt to compete with labor Zionism over the politics and ideology; a bridge to Europe and the western world; an essential part of the future Jewish state's economy; the cradle of the Jewish race and nation; and finally, the locus of an ancient Hebrew empire. In all of these aspects, Jabotinsky aggrandized and mythologized a rather unconventional historical narrative, in order to develop and advocate his national vision. The mythologization, however, was not limited to the idea of the Hebrew Sea. An important means of popularizing this ideal was its association with other Revisionist mythologies that were commonly used by the movement.

Mythologization of contemporary national achievements was not solely a Revisionist venture. National movements habitually employed both ancient mythologies and newly mythologized events and people in their nation building, and Zionism was no exception<sup>1</sup>. The second *aliya*, for example, became an object of mythologization while it was still taking place<sup>2</sup>. By the 1920s Zionism had already established a number of effective idols (Ben-Yehuda, Brenner, Trumpeldor) and symbols (the revival of Hebrew, Hebrew labor and defense), which were presented as mythological ideals to new pioneers and younger generations. After the split with labor Zionism, Revisionism cultivated its own mythologies, such as the Jewish Legion, Tel Hai and Trumpeldor<sup>3</sup>. Admittedly, Jabotinsky was interested in recruiting mythologies for ideological purposes from an early stage of his political career, an interest which harmonized with his inclination towards pathos and romanticism. To Jabotinsky mythologies and pathos were a means of stimulating the masses, which he considered a fundamental form of political activity. As we have seen, Jabotinsky believed “feeling” and enthusiasm for Zionism, and not necessarily rational economic planning, would help establish a viable market for the *Yishuv*'s produce among the Jews of the diaspora<sup>4</sup>. Following Zeev Sternhell's extensive study on the origins of European fascism,

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<sup>1</sup> For a collection of studies on myths in Zionism and Israel see David Ohana and Robert S. Wistrich, eds. *Myth and Memory: Transfigurations of Israeli Consciousness* (Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution*, 87–88.

<sup>3</sup> Admittedly, many myths originated from labor Zionism, and the Revisionists often tried to appropriate them and present them as their own, as in the case of Tel Hai. The fight over the memory of Tel Hai sometimes led to violent clashes between left and right: Goldstein, “The Pilgrimage to Tel Hai,” 269–274.

<sup>4</sup> See the section on the merchant.



Svetlana Natkovich has illuminated the Sorelian roots of this approach, the belief that “the masses need myths in order to go forward. It is sentiments, images, and symbols that hurl the individuals into action, not reasonings.”<sup>1</sup> Natkovich has closely studied Jabotinsky’s use of mythologies, observing that already in his translation of Bialik into Russian from 1904, he “sought to create social myths [...] that would influence [the readers’] consciousness.”<sup>2</sup> According to Natkovich, in his translation Jabotinsky transformed complex imageries into a concrete plan for political action. Natkovich relies on Roland Barthes’ study of mythological discourse, demonstrating how Jabotinsky detached the signifier (Bialik’s original) from its context and meaning, and replaced it in a new discourse in which it possessed the desired ideological meaning (Jabotinsky’s “political action program”)<sup>3</sup>. But Jabotinsky employed other techniques as well. As we shall see in the following analysis, Jabotinsky transplanted established mythologies (such as the Jewish Legion) in a new context (the Civitavecchia Naval Academy and Sara the First’s voyage) as a way of mythologizing the new. In addition, he made use of multilayered Revisionist terminology which denoted several potent meanings to his Revisionist and *Beitar* readers.

This chapter will study two articles that were dedicated to the conquest of the Hebrew Sea. In “Civitavecchia” (1935), Jabotinsky described his visit to the naval academy in Italy. During his life, the article was published in Yiddish (*Der moment*, one of the most important Yiddish newspapers in Poland), Hebrew (*Hayarden*), and Russian (*hadegel*, the most popular newspaper among the Jewish community of Harbin, China, published by *Beitar*)<sup>4</sup>. The second article, “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First” (1938), celebrated the ship’s tour in the Mediterranean and its visit to Palestine. This article was published in English (The Jewish Herald, the South African Revisionist newspaper), Hebrew (*Hayarden*), Yiddish (*unzer welt*, a Revisionist newspaper in Poland), German (*Medina Iwrit*, a Revisionist periodical published in Czechoslovakia), and Russian (*hadegel*)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Zeev Sternhell, et al., *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton University Press, 1995), 28. See Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 161.

<sup>2</sup> Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 114.

<sup>3</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 110–115.

<sup>4</sup> Graur, *Bibliography*, 500. For information about the newspapers see the Historical Jewish Press website, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/titles> (about *der moment* and *hayarden*).

<sup>5</sup> Graur, 547–548.

## 6.2 The Mythology of Ze'ev Jabotinsky

Perhaps the most significant mythology Jabotinsky employed in the two articles (not to mention countless other occasions) was that of his own biography and persona. After the formation of the Jewish Legion, for which he won the epithet “the Jewish Garibaldi”,<sup>1</sup> and throughout the 1920s, Jabotinsky was increasingly idolized by the Zionist right. The Jewish Legion, alongside Jabotinsky’s imprisonment in Acres in 1920, following the attempt to organize a Jewish defense force against the Arab riots, became cornerstones of a growing mythology of Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky became aware, and somewhat alarmed by this mythologization already in 1927, writing to his wife: “There is something unpleasant – I have felt it for a long time and now I’m beginning to fear it [...] I am being turned into a myth [...]. Worst of all, this myth is turning into the legend of a ‘Duce’. A while ago Weisl wrote from *eretz israel* critically, why I disappoint friends by rejecting the title ‘Duce’.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the following year the young and enthusiastic Abba Ahimeir published an article in his regular column, “From the Diary of a Fascist”, welcoming the “Duce” Jabotinsky to Israel<sup>3</sup>.

Jabotinsky might have found the mythologization tasteless and resisted the title “Duce”, but he did not necessarily shrink from its utilization. In addition to the habitual mentions of the Jewish Legion in articles and speeches, Jabotinsky published his own memoirs on the subject in 1927, which was later serialized, on his insistence, in the Revisionist edited “*doar hayom*”<sup>4</sup>, and wrote the preface to the Hebrew translation of the legion’s commander, Colonel J.H. Patterson’s *With the Judaeans in the Palestine Campaign*<sup>5</sup>. In his writings Jabotinsky extolled the Jewish Legion not only for its role in winning the Balfour Declaration but also in comparison with, what he considered, the overestimated contribution of Zionist workers and agriculturists<sup>6</sup>. Jabotinsky’s idealization of the Jewish warrior as a conqueror of the Jewish homeland, consequently resulted in his own idealization as the founding father of the Jewish Legion<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Katz, “Jabotinsky, the Jewish Legion,” 546.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to Joanna Jabotinsky, February 27, 1927. See also, Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 157–158.

<sup>3</sup> Ahimeir, “*mipinkaso shel fashistan, bekesher im bo’o shel ha “duce” shelanu*,” *doar hayom*, October 10, 1928, 3. Ben-Avi was also inspired by Italian Fascism in his desire to establish a personality cult around Jabotinsky, see Ouzi Elyada, “Itamar Ben-Avi: From Mussolini to Zabutinsky (*sic*),” *Kesher* 45, (Autumn 2013): 41–48.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky to *doar hayom* editorial staff, December 31, 1928.

<sup>5</sup> John Patterson, *With the Judaeans in the Palestine Campaign*, (Yerushalaim, Tel Aviv: Mitspeh, 1929).

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Jabotinsky, “*eretz israel haovedet, chelek 2*,” *doar hayom*, December 5, 1932, 2.; *The Story of the Battalion* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1991), 162.

<sup>7</sup> The myth of the Jewish Legion should also be understood with relation to Jabotinsky’s general militant view, which was expressed, among other ways, in *Beitar*’s militarism, with its emphasis on military order and training, but also in

In “Civitavecchia” and “The ‘Periple’” Jabotinsky drew direct parallels between the Jewish Legion and the conquest of the Hebrew Sea. To begin with, Nicola Fusco, the Christian captain at the school, is compared to J.H. Patterson, the legendary Christian-Zionist general who commanded the Jewish Legion: “Fusco has Patterson’s patience...<sup>1</sup>; “the Jewish renaissance movement [...] sometimes fascinates a Gentile heart to the extent of actual sacrificial devotion [...]. The most immortal example of such a Gentile heart is, of course, and will remain, John Henry Patterson. I should not be surprised if Fusco was destined to enter the same order”<sup>2</sup>. Patterson and Fusco consequently fulfill the role of the benevolent Christian-Zionist, dedicated to training Jewish soldiers, sailors, and fishermen. Secondly, the students’ hardships reminded Jabotinsky of those the Jewish Legion soldiers encountered during the war: “how difficult is military life for an ordinary soldier, how strongly he misses his father’s home, how heavy is the burden of barracks discipline”<sup>3</sup>. Describing the interviews he held with the cadets Jabotinsky employs the tone of a fatherly commander, strict, but caring: “I speak to each of them alone, and they are not embarrassed before me [...] I hear they speak honestly, especially because this is not just an ideological conversation, but a conversation concerning their career or profession”. Finally, two seemingly incidental remarks deserve attention: in “Civitavecchia” Jabotinsky casually remarks that the 16<sup>th</sup> century school building reminded him of the Citadel of Acre in 1920; and in “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First”, after describing Horon’s theory, Jabotinsky remembered reading Bérard’s “two fat volumes [...] ages ago, under my tent in the Jordan valley campaign”<sup>4</sup>. Although these mentions seem nonconsequential, they are instrumental in situating the conquest of the Hebrew Sea in the context of Jabotinsky’s two most mythologized episodes and heroic militarism.

Other elements from Jabotinsky’s life that were also mythologized, either intentionally or inadvertently, include Odessa, the lost paradise, and the jovial student years in Italy and his Italophilia. These were mythologized not only through Jabotinsky’s political and journalistic work, but also through his literary texts, especially *The Five*, and his autobiography. Indeed, Jabotinsky’s awareness of his own mythologization, as his letter to his wife revealed, made him realize the symbolic meaning his autobiography would attain, and in a personal letter he ironically referred to

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Jabotinsky’s struggle against the disbanding of the Legion at the end of the war and his continuous attempts to establish Jewish military units under the British Mandate.

<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “Civitavecchia,” 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First,” 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “Civitavecchia,” 2.

<sup>4</sup> Jabotinsky, “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First,” 2.

it as his “mythology”<sup>1</sup>. Jabotinsky’s Odessan patriotism is exhibited in the novel *The Five* and the first chapters of the autobiography to the fullest<sup>2</sup>. *The Five*, which was originally serialized in *razsvet* in 1933 and published in Hebrew translation in 1936, tells the story of the Milgroms, a highly assimilated Jewish family in Odessa. Although the novel follows the ultimate dissolution of the Jewish dream of assimilation, Jabotinsky and subsequent critics have described it more often as a eulogy to a bygone city and era than a story with a Zionist “moral”<sup>3</sup>. According to Miron, “It is as though the author returned in ‘The Five’ to [Odessa’s] vivacious essence, which has already set into the dim iron and concrete edifice of Stalinist Soviet Union, in order to revel in nostalgia and depart from it forever.”<sup>4</sup> Nostalgic reveries over Odessa also figure in the first volume of Jabotinsky’s autobiography: “The third of the factors that left an imprint on my childhood is Odessa. I never saw a city as light-natured as she [...]. No city could match Odessa – I mean Odessa of that generation – with the spirit of holly buoyancy and the light intoxication floating in the air”<sup>5</sup>. It is important to note that to Jabotinsky, and indeed many other natives of the city, Odessa was a cosmopolite, Western place, that exceeded the borders of Russia, “a Mediterranean city, [...] built by Italians and Greeks”<sup>6</sup>. As Miron has observed, while Jabotinsky’s relation to Russian and Russian culture was always ambivalent, Odessa “represented in his thought the practical dynamics, the direct movement from thought to action that was lacking, in his opinion, in Russian existence.”<sup>7</sup> Consequently, it is not insignificant that Jabotinsky writes both in “Civitavecchia” and “The ‘Periple’” that Yefim Kirschner and his wife Sarah, the benefactors who financed the acquisition of Sarah the First, were natives of Jabotinsky’s Odessa and live, like him, in Paris. The matter-of-fact mention of this detail in 1935 wins a nostalgic development in 1938: “I am proud to say that [Kirschner] showed excellent taste in choosing my own native town for his birthplace and, then a boy, also used to bathe by jumping into the Black Sea straight from the boulders of the Odessa breakwater.”<sup>8</sup> Jabotinsky’s “Italophilia” and Italian experiences, which

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky to Zaltsman, March 19, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, *The Five* (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Dan Miron, “*eduto shel ha’ach hashishi*,” *Haaretz*, April 16, 2019,

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/prose/.premium-1.7131181>. See also Jabotinsky to Zaltsman, June 15, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Miron, “*eduto*.”

<sup>5</sup> Jabotinsky, *Story of My Life*, 39. Odessan poet Tchernichovsky also wrote nostalgically about the “dead” Odessa in a series of memoirs, *Odessa shemeta* (The Dead Odessa), see in *kitvei shaul tchernichovsky vol 7* (Tel Aviv: vaad hayovel lehotsaat kitvei Shaul Tchernichovsky, 1931), 157–225.

<sup>6</sup> Miron, *The Focalizing Crystal*, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Miron, 14–15.

<sup>8</sup> Jabotinsky, “The ‘Periple’,” 2.

figured, as we have seen before, in articles, translations, and the autobiography, were also referenced in the articles, for example: “In today’s Italy – just like the one of the past, when I spent my study years – the foreigner is welcome at the schools”<sup>1</sup>; and the Neapolitan Fusco saying “*e bravissimi*”<sup>2</sup>. These and other offhanded Italianisms, along with the mentions of Odessa, the Jewish Legion, and Acres, served to link the conquest of the Hebrew Sea with Jabotinsky’s own mythology.

### 6.3 Iron

A key word among the terms that echo Jabotinsky’s mythology is “iron”. The word appears in the article “Civitavecchia” on its own, enlarged, with relation to the hardships of *kibush hayam* (thee conquest of the sea) in the following manner: “And like other conquests, [*kibush hayam*]: it is not a “career” it is not the royal road [...] it is a path for strong people with broad shoulders, and healthy body and soul. ‘Iron’”. The term “iron” resonates at least three important texts by Jabotinsky which became fundamental in his discourse and mythology: The essay “The Iron Wall” (1923), the novel “*Shimshon*” (1926) and the article “Iron” (1934).

In “The Iron Wall”, Jabotinsky’s paper on Zionist-Arab relations, Jabotinsky attacked dovish Zionists who sought to appease the Arabs with diplomatic ploys and false promises. According to Jabotinsky, the Arabs understood perfectly well what Zionist aspirations were and what Zionism entailed and could not be deceived into thinking that Zionism did not aspire, ultimately, for a Jewish state in Palestine. The solution to the conflict with the Arabs was not to pretend that Zionism only sought to acquire more immigration certificates, but to confront the Arabs with the unwavering truth that Zionism was undefeatable. Consequently, “[Zionism] can proceed and develop only [...] behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach.”<sup>3</sup> The “iron wall” thus came to signify a firm, militant opposition to the Arabs. This was perhaps the first article in which Jabotinsky used “iron” as a dominant metaphor for a firm and resolute stance, but it has also become one of his most well-known ideals.

Three years later, in the novel *Shimshon*, Jabotinsky made another use of “iron” which also became engraved in the minds of his readers and admirers. An important theme in the novel

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “Civitavecchia,” 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “The ‘Perfiple’,” 4

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, “The Iron Wall,” II, F-1923/204/E, 6.

concerns *Shimshon*'s preoccupation with gathering iron for the Israelites' future war against the Philistines. This dedication is poignantly expressed in *Shimshon*'s memorable, final message to the Israelites: "collect iron, instate a king and learn to laugh"<sup>1</sup>. Although Jabotinsky claimed readers should differentiate between his political and literary work, by the time *Shimshon* was published this separation became unrealistic<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, although Jabotinsky complained about the association of the two fields, he knowingly utilized it. In 1928, two years after *Shimshon* was serialized in *razsvet* and a year before it was first published in Hebrew translation, Jabotinsky wrote a letter to Menachem Arber, the founder of the *Beitar* branch in *eretz Israel*, in which he defined the key ethe of *Beitar* and its goals. The third paragraph Jabotinsky mentioned was: "iron. Like in the days of the judges, now also the Philistine has iron and machine, and we don't. Respect and learn the art of iron."<sup>3</sup> The "days of the judges" (Samson was a judge), the Philistines, and iron, were a clear and purposeful reference to the novel. Consequently, the novel can be read with relation to Jabotinsky's political activity, as it was certainly read by contemporaries<sup>4</sup>. According to Natkovich, in *Shimshon* Jabotinsky was studying the historical stage in which the Jewish people were consolidating and evolving from a medley of tribes, languages and traditions, into a homogenous and nationally conscious society<sup>5</sup>. *Shimshon*'s final message is consequently read as a manual for gaining national maturity: while the institution of a king express political organization, "iron" signifies the Israelites' opposition to the Philistines, and their preparation for a military conflict and fight for sovereignty<sup>6</sup>.

Through its association with conflict, however, "iron" in the novel possesses an additional meaning: the transition from the Israelites' precarious survival through trickery and deceit, which *Shimshon* scorns throughout the novel, to a full-fledged confrontation with their oppressors. *Shimshon*'s contempt for the Israelites' existence at the mercy of greater powers through submission and deception reflects Jabotinsky's own criticism of the exilic Jews. A similar sentiment is expressed in Jabotinsky's autobiography, when he described the impact of his first encounter with "proper" exilic Jews on a train to Bern, which passed through Podolia and Galicia:

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, *Shimshon*, 302.

<sup>2</sup> Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 185.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky to Menachem Arber, June 3, 1928. Also published as a public pronouncement among the Palestine *Beitarists*, see, *Jl*, A1-2/18/1.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Jabotinsky's letter to Miriam Cohen, August 2, 1928.

<sup>5</sup> Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 178-179.

<sup>6</sup> Scholars have debated the significance of "iron" in *Shimshon* but are generally agreed that it stands for military and political supremacy. For an economic interpretation see Natkovich, *Among Radiant Clouds*, 191.

Between Razdelnaya and Vienna I heard more Yiddish than I had ever heard before in my life. I didn't understand all of it, but the impression was powerful and painful. In that train I got my first contact with the ghetto; I saw with my own eyes its degeneracy and decay, heard that *slavish humor that was content with 'ridiculing' the powerful enemy instead of fighting him*. [...] I bent my head and asked myself silently: Is this our people?<sup>1</sup>

In the novel, *Shimshon* exhibits similar feelings towards his compatriots, repulsed by their lowliness, disorder, and cunning, shunning them in favor of the oppressors of his own people, the proud and powerful Philistines. To Jabotinsky / *Shimshon*, an occupied nation (either through exile or foreign rule) is degenerated and forced to submit or deceive in order to survive. The nation's independence and agency are expressed, among other things, in military prowess and the ability to challenge its oppressor openly, as an equal, a view epitomized in "iron". To recall, in his 1922 letter to Mussolini, Jabotinsky proclaimed himself Mussolini's enemy immediately after introducing himself, an attitude consistent with the descriptions of "egalitarian" conflict in *Shimshon* and the autobiographical episode. Moreover, while reasoning for a Zionist-Italian alliance, Jabotinsky emphasized that he was not offering Mussolini *bakshish*, i.e., he was not trying to bribe Mussolini to show kindness or generosity towards a lesser opponent, but to egotistically consider the idea Jabotinsky was presenting him: restoring Italian rule over the Mediterranean as a common interest, no favors asked. In the letter Jabotinsky seems to suggest Mussolini can either view Jabotinsky and Zionism as an ally or an opponent, but in either case they will be equal. This notion was likely taken from Nietzsche, a major influence on Jabotinsky as he himself repeatedly admitted, and as scholars have frequently observed<sup>2</sup>. The presentation of an open rivalry among equals, in contrast to an eluded conflict in which the weaker side cannot assert itself openly and must fend for itself through dishonesty and trickery, strongly echoes Nietzsche's ideas on the fight between the "knightly-aristocratic" and the "priests":

The knightly-aristocratic value judgements presupposed a powerful physicality, a flourishing, abundant, even overflowing health, together with that which serves to preserve

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, *Story of My Life*, 48. Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> E.g.: Jabotinsky, *Story of My Life*, 43, 54; Jacob Golomb, *Nietzsche and Zion* (Cornell University Press, 2004), 59–62; Yehuda Friedlander, "V.Z. Jabotinsky as a Multilateral Artist," in: *In the Eye of the Storm*, in Barely and Ginossar, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 296–297.

it: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, war games, and in general all that involves vigorous, free, joyful activity. [...] The priests are the *most evil enemies* – but why? Because they are the most impotent. It is because of their impotence that in them hatred grows to monstrous and uncanny proportions, to the most spiritual and poisonous kind of hatred. [...] While the noble man lives in trust and openness with himself [...] the man of *ressentiment* is neither upright nor naïve nor honest and straightforward with himself. His soul *squints*; his spirit loves hiding places, secret paths and back doors, everything covert. [...] A race of such men of *ressentiment* is bound to become eventually *cleverer* than any noble race; it will also honor cleverness to a far greater degree [...] while [for the noble men cleverness] is far less essential. [...] How much reverence has a noble man for his enemies! – and such reverence is a bridge to love. –For he desires his enemies for himself, as his mark of distinction; he can endure no other enemy than one in whom there is nothing to despise and *very much* to honor!<sup>1</sup>

This quotation from Nietzsche contains several notions that appear both in *Shimshon* and in Jabotinsky's conception of "iron": the ideal of a fight among equals, in which the opponent's nobility testifies to one's own nobility; the directness of the noble fight, in contrast with the "cleverness" and deceitfulness of the slavish fight of the priest/Jew; the physical and mental health of the "knightly-aristocratic" as opposed to the physical and spiritual degeneracy of the Jews. "Iron" in *Shimshon* can thus be seen as a Nietzschean ideal, an instrument that will help the Jews transcend their physical and national inferiority in order to face their enemies as reborn, rejuvenated, and equal adversaries. To Jabotinsky's readers the word "Iron", framed as it is in the article *Civitavecchia*, clearly echoed *Shimshon*'s legacy, incorporating the conquest of the Hebrew Sea in the realm of *Shimshon*'s myth, and the toil of seamanship with that of national revival.

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Vintage Books: 1989), 33–39.



The final relevant use of “iron” appeared eight years after *Shimshon*, in the 1934 article “Iron”<sup>1</sup>. The article described the hostilities and aggression Jabotinsky and his *Beitarists* were facing from labor Zionists, due to the accusation that Haim Arlosoroff was assassinated by Revisionists<sup>2</sup>. These assaults were unprecedented, Jabotinsky claimed, and violent attacks against *Beitarists* were becoming increasingly common. *Beitar*’s struggle was extremely taxing and hardly rewarding, and Jabotinsky would not blame anyone who chose to leave the movement for an easier fate. Indeed, only the strongest should remain in *Beitar*, only “youths of iron”, had a place in the movement. The tough expectations from *Beitarists* were part of the movement’s ethos and became part of the ideal *Beitarist* as Jabotinsky portrayed him<sup>3</sup>. The “iron” in this article denoted fortitude and determination, in spite of the difficulties and sorrows *Beitarists* must face. As Jabotinsky presented it, to be a *Beitarist* might be unrewarding in the present and near future, but it was a noble destiny. The “iron” in “Civitavecchia” is perhaps closest in meaning to this last article, as it appears in a similar context, describing the difficult hardships of sea life *Beitarists* should expect: the conquest of the Hebrew Sea is “not a career”, nor the “royal road”, but a heroic ideal, worthy of the selected few.

Jabotinsky’s recurrent and emphasized use of the term “iron” throughout the years charged it with various meanings, that exceeded the conventional metaphors of iron. In the article “Civitavecchia”, as part of the mythologization of the Hebrew Sea, Jabotinsky used the term in order to associate the Hebrew Sea with current Revisionist symbols and mythologies.

#### 6.4 A Revisionist Odyssey: Civitavecchia and Sarah the First

In addition to employing established Revisionist mythologies, Jabotinsky explicitly invoked new aspects of the Hebrew Sea mythology to his readers. We have already studied two of the new mythologies Jabotinsky conjured in “Civitavecchia”: the fall of Avraham Strausberg, the

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “*barzel*,” *hazit ha’am*, March 21, 1934, 1. There are several other important references to iron in Jabotinsky’s writings. An early reference to iron figured already in the 1926 *The Story of the Battalion*, 83–84, in Trumpeldor’s description of his own dedication to Zionism. Jabotinsky later used this description in *haneder*, discussed above: “In a day of service I am like a bar of copper, like a mass of iron in the hands of the blacksmith / whose name is Zion; Mould me as you please, – a sickle, a machine wheel or a sword and a dagger.” These descriptions, however, seem less relevant to the use of the word in “Civitavecchia”, given the article’s context and rhetoric. The title of this article can already be seen as a reference to the previous, established uses of “iron” surveyed above.

<sup>2</sup> Arlosoroff was a labor Zionist and official at the Jewish Agency, who established the *haavara* agreement with Nazi Germany which facilitated the immigration of Jewish Germans to the *Yishuv*.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Jabotinsky, *The Ideology of Beitar*, II, Beitar-14.

first Hebrew to be “sacrificed on the altar of the Hebrew Sea”; and the Zionist ideal of “the conquest of the Hebrew Sea”<sup>1</sup>. As we have seen, Jabotinsky openly designated Strausberg and the Hebrew Sea as new Zionist ideals, contributing to their mythologization (the fallen hero and the perilous national ideal) through a grave, aggrandizing rhetoric. Jabotinsky, however, also provided a romantic, mythologizing narrative, for the ship Sarah the First, and its Mediterranean journey.

In “Civitavecchia” Jabotinsky narrated Sarah the First’s “biography” as a mythical legend, a riches-to-rags and back-to-riches story: Sarah the First, the largest sailing ship in the Mediterranean, was an American ship, originally an admiral’s luxury ship that was called “Four Winds”. Later, however, the ship lost its status: it was bought by Italians who changed its name, but also its purpose, turning it into a freight ship, carrying cattle and goats. Now it was once again “on its way to the height of its greatness”: bought by the benevolent Kirschners, it was destined to regain its status by serving the *Beitar* students in their mission to conquer the Hebrew Sea. Jabotinsky consequently gave the ship its own romantic biography.

After mythologizing the ship, in “The ‘Periple’ of Sarah the First” Jabotinsky mythologized its greatest tour in the Mediterranean, or its “periple” as he called it, an adventurous journey not unlike that of “grand-dad Ulysses”<sup>2</sup>. The ship was sailed by forty cadets to Palestine, trained by Fusco, and under Halpern’s command; in Palestine, the petty British authorities and socialist Zionists tried to sabotage the visit – but to no avail: “the man in the street [...] worshipped” the sailors; finally, British intrigue forced the inexperienced sailors to return to sea in autumn, when the Mediterranean “resembled if not a cemetery at least a casualty ward – every night an S.O.S., and that from steamers, not from sailing ships only”; on its perilous journey back to Italy “Sarah stopped at Rhodos, where the most beautiful women of all Israel dwell; from there she went to Salonica, where the Sephardi community (some of them renowned as the ablest stevedores of the Balkan coast, a few even sailors themselves, but only in Greek vessels under Gentile captains) wept and sang with joy in greeting an all-Jewish boat. From there to Malta after terrible storms which tore their sails to rags and ribbons; from there to Tunis, where Arabs at night cut their ropes to set them adrift, but the Jews took them to their hearts and dined and feted them, and Consuls in gold-braided uniform exchanged formal visits with the Captain”<sup>3</sup>. In this narrative, Jabotinsky

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, “Civitavecchia,” 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, “The ‘Periple’,” 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, 3–4.

openly embraced a mythological rhetoric, comparing the journey not once to the Odyssey and romanticizing the characters and the events. These descriptions were not only consistent with the romantic rhetoric and ideals of Revisionism, but also echo Jabotinsky's praise for Homer's work in his 1903 feuilleton "The Ten Books; A Conversation". In the feuilleton, a group of friends discuss which ten books should be saved if all the books in the world were burned. Homer's work is the first book to be discussed, and the choice is justified based on his characters: "I love Homer for his characters. His people are magnificent, monumental. [...] When I read Homer, I always remember that man in our times only rarely knows how to pleasantly do two things: to eat and to laugh. [...] In Homer I see people, who did everything important, sonorous, and beautiful [...] People, in a word, magnificent and who function magnificently."<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky consequently used not only his own established mythologies, but actively attempted to create new Revisionist symbols and myths. Moreover, Jabotinsky associated the Odyssey with *hadar*, as a letter to Menachem Arber about *Beitar* ethe reveals: "teach them to [...] walk in glory, speak and laugh and eat with glory."<sup>2</sup> Homer and the Odyssey were consequently not just model mythologies in Jabotinsky's vision and discourse, but part of his aesthetic and cultural vision.

## 6.5 The Hebrew Mediterranean

The final aspect of mythologization in the articles concerns Horon and the Hebrew Sea. In both articles Jabotinsky mentioned *Alraid* as an important source of inspiration for the Revisionist conquest the Hebrew Sea. In "Civitavecchia" Horon was described as the first one to have developed the theory about a "Jewish naval empire", to argue that even Carthage was an Israelite city, and that "the Jewish past and the Jewish future (*rodei-gal*) are linked to the Mediterranean Sea"<sup>3</sup>. Jabotinsky connected the *Beitar* dream of conquering the sea with *rodei-gal* and promised it would become a division of the new, reforming *Beitar*. In "The 'Periple'" Jabotinsky gave more attention to Horon and his historical vision. Based on the closeness of Hebrew and Phoenician, which Jabotinsky *himself* witnessed on his visit to Carthage, he highlights the most impressive and appealing implications of Horon's theories: the Phoenicians were actually Hebrews; Qeret-Hadshet, i.e., Carthage, was actually a Hebrew colony; the Mediterranean world was ruled by a

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, "*aseret hasfarim; sicha*," *ktavim*, vol 7, *al safrut veomanut* (Jerusalem: Eri Jabotinsky, 1948), 13–16.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky to Menachem Arber, November 2, 1928. "Glory" (*tiferet*) is clearly a precursor to *hadar*.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, "Civitavecchia," 2.

Hebrew empire, which can be called a Hebrew translation of *mare nostrum*; the Hebrew language was the empire's *lingua franca*; and finally Hannibal, "that superman, that magician to whom distance meant nothing, [...] who, from Spain, pulled strings in Macedonia and Asia Minor in addition to invading Italy [...] was also *noster*."<sup>1</sup> Unlike "Israel and Carthage" in which Jabotinsky discussed the cultural and religious details of Horon's theories and had to contend with the assertion that the Israelites were in fact Phoenicians, the brief review in "The 'Periple'" allowed Jabotinsky to emphasize only the aggrandizing aspects of the theory, while avoiding its challenging complications.

After recounting Horon's theories, Jabotinsky reminisces on his days in the Jewish Legion when he was reading Bérard's books, arguing that

the nucleus of the immortal Hellenic poem [the *Odyssey*] is actually a Phoenician 'peripli' – the log-book of a Sidonian trader recording, with a judicious admixture of attractive lies, the very true story of History's first navigation from the Trojan sea to Calypso's island, or, in the prose of modern geography, from the Aegean to the vicinity of the Straits of Gibraltar. Bérard detects Hebrew roots in nearly half the names of localities mentioned in those hexameters.

This paragraph, in spite of Jabotinsky's irony ("Holy Homer," he later concludes, "wouldn't it be fun, to annex the whole of Carthage plus half the Greek civilization; and think of it – if Hannibal had only won, and it was after all not so quite impossibly impossible, then, – etc."<sup>2</sup>), draws the ultimate megalomaniac vision of the Jews as a people who have contributed to every aspect of Western civilization, especially through their supposed naval empire, intermingling it with Jabotinsky's own myth of the Jewish Legion and, through illusions to episodes from the *Odyssey* ("Trojan sea" and "Calypso's island"), prepares the reader to the story of Sarah the First's *Odyssey* (recall that after Palestine the ship visited Rhodes, "where the most beautiful women of all Israel dwell"). Thus, Horon enabled Jabotinsky to legitimize the Revisionist conquest of the Hebrew Sea in a historical context, conjure an image of a Jewish Mediterranean Sea – not only

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<sup>1</sup> Jabotinsky, "The 'Periple'," 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky, 2.

historically, but also by depicting the Jewish communities the ship visited on its journey – and finally, present this conquest within the accepted mythologies of Revisionism.

## 6.6 Summary

Jabotinsky was strongly aware of the power of mythologies to recruit the masses for political activity, and to harness them in the service of his political ideology. This awareness was exemplified not only in his political activity, but also in his literary endeavors, in spite of his attempts to separate these two parts of his life, and perhaps most importantly, in his utilization of his own mythology for political and ideological purposes. The episodic successes of Revisionist naval activities – the establishment of the Civitavecchia school, and Sarah the First's great tour in the Mediterranean – presented Jabotinsky with opportunities to celebrate these ventures in the attempt to include them in the growing pantheon of Revisionist mythologies. Jabotinsky attempted to mythologize the “conquest of the Hebrew Sea” mainly through its association with established Revisionist mythologies and ethe, especially from Jabotinsky's own biography. In addition, Jabotinsky used Horon's theories in order to present a new historical vision that would legitimize Hebrew seafaring and the framing of the Mediterranean as the locus a historical, and perhaps future, Hebrew empire.

## 7. Conclusion

As we have seen, the idea and the myth of the Hebrew Sea played various roles in Jabotinsky's views and activities. This dissertation studied how Jabotinsky utilized this concept in different fields of his Zionist activities, as well as the ways in which this idea evolved across time and in light of external circumstances. By emphasizing the importance of the Mediterranean Sea to the future Jewish state and the supposed historical connection between the Hebrews and the sea, Jabotinsky was able to develop and support a number of ideas and ventures.

In the political rivalry with labor Zionism, Jabotinsky used the "conquest of the sea" as an alternative to the already established "conquest of the land", in which labor Revisionism was severely disadvantaged in comparison with labor Zionism. Jabotinsky portrayed the conquest of the sea as a legitimate form of participating in the national revival. Although the insistence that labor Zionism had neglected this area was only partly true – there were in fact proto-Revisionist naval ventures – the Revisionists did contribute to the field by framing it as a worthy Zionist cause in itself. Because their ability to act in Palestine was limited due to their rivalry with labor Zionism, the Revisionists could practice the "conquest of the sea" away from Palestine: most importantly in the Civitavecchia Naval Academy in Italy, but also in Latvia and Tunis. In order to portray the "conquest of the sea" as a worthy Zionist endeavor Jabotinsky utilized established Zionist rhetoric and ideals, such as the "cult of the fallen", which glorified the human "sacrifices" to Zionism, an idea epitomized in the death of Joseph Trumpeldor. The Revisionists saw in the 1938 visit of the *Beitar* ship Sarah the First to Palestine an important opportunity to advance the movement among Zionist youth, public figures, and philanthropes. Even while celebrating such achievements, however, the Revisionists emphasized the British and labor Zionists' attempts to sabotage the visit and to downplay its achievement. This "rhetoric of victimhood" was common in Revisionist discourse, especially with relation to the movement's difficulty to obtain *sertifikats*. If "sacrifice" was a general Zionist ideal, "victimhood" was specifically Revisionist, harmonizing with Jabotinsky's depiction of the ideal *Beitarist* as determined and loyal to the movement, in spite of the abuse suffered from labor Zionism. The "conquest of the sea" was also consistent with Revisionist militarism: Horon's *rodei-gal* and the unmaterialized plan to conquer Palestine from the south-east, the military discipline of seamanship, the deep involvement of the militant Jeremiah Halpern in the field, and Jabotinsky's comparison of the naval academy and its personnel to the Jewish Legion, were all part of the movement's militaristic ethos.

The sea also played a part in Jabotinsky's geopolitical views. To begin with, he was well aware of the significance of the Mediterranean power balance for Zionism. Jabotinsky believed Italy and France would be interested in the future of the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, and should consequently be enticed to support Zionism, a vision he first tried to realize during the First World War, when he turned to the European powers with the plan to form the Jewish Legion. Even after this plan failed and Britain received the mandate over Palestine, Jabotinsky estimated that Italy and France would play an important role in the future state's economy and sought to improve the diplomatic relations with them – either directly, or by advancing the knowledge of French or Italian in the *Yishuv*. Unlike labor Zionism, whose economical platform focused on agriculture and industry, Jabotinsky emphasized the commercial potential of *eretz israel's* geographical location, envisioning the future state would act as an important crossroad in world commerce.

Jabotinsky's interest in Italy exceeded his economic estimates. The disappointment with the British Mandate, which aggravated at the beginning of the 1930s, drove Jabotinsky to try various tactics that would either rekindle Britain's support of Zionism or replace it altogether. In numerous articles, international press conferences, and speeches, Jabotinsky raised the idea that Zionism must find an ally that would replace Britain, often hinting that Italy was the preferred option. The interest in Italy was not only the result of the Mediterranean power balance, but also originated in Jabotinsky's Italophilia, which began in his student years in Rome, and the general enthusiasm among younger Revisionists, such as Abba Ahimeir and Zvi Kolitz, with Italian Fascism. Although Jabotinsky objected to their crude attempts to mimic Fascism, arguing that it was a purely Italian phenomenon and therefore was not suitable for other nations, he frequently defended Fascist Italy from Zionist critique and comparisons to Nazism, even during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War. In addition to public pronouncements in the press, the Revisionists also tried to improve their relations with Italy through diplomatic measures: firstly, Jabotinsky intended the Civitavecchia Naval Academy to act as a diplomatic springboard even before it was established. Secondly, the Revisionists were hoping to use the escalating conflict both the Zionists and Fascist Italy had with Britain in order to advance a possible pact. Nonetheless, all of these efforts, which also included desperate attempts to schedule a meeting between Jabotinsky and Mussolini, ultimately failed, bringing an end to Jabotinsky's Italian Mandate fantasies.

In addition to training Hebrew seamen and improving relations with Italy, Jabotinsky also hoped the Civitavecchia Naval Academy would civilize the exilic Jewish youth. In spite of being

a popular leader of the Jewish masses in the diaspora – and especially in eastern Europe, Italy, and north Africa – Jabotinsky saw them as uncivilized and unrefined. The attempts to rectify this were strongly exhibited in the Revisionist ethos of *hadar*, which Jabotinsky sought to instill in *Beitarists*. Jabotinsky hoped the Italian environment would civilize the mostly eastern European cadets and instill western European manners in them. The naval academy was consequently intended to fulfill an important cultural role in producing Jabotinsky's ideal of national identity.

The Hebrew Mediterranean played more parts in Jabotinsky's vision of national identity. Consistent with contemporary views on nationalism, Jabotinsky was interested in Jewish history, especially at its formative stages, as a means of discovering the Jews' "original" or "authentic" identity, before diasporic existence had corrupted it. Jabotinsky's views on national identity and historical processes were influenced both by Herderian essentialism and Marxist materialism. Consequently, national revival implied rediscovering and returning to national identity, which was seen as inherently connected with the climate, territory, and material conditions in which the race, or nation, developed. Jabotinsky's interest in Jewish history was far from scientific or disinterested: in light of his cultural ideals, he found it imperative to associate Jewish history and identity with western Europe and distance it from the Middle East and the Arab world, contrary to prevalent views of national revivers and historians on the Jews' origins and history. The main way Jabotinsky tried to achieve this was by describing the ancient Jews as a Mediterranean people, for whom the sea, and not the desert, was the main locus of development and existence. Jabotinsky hoped the association of the Jews and the west would also have a reciprocal outcome through language: Jabotinsky hoped to improve the pronunciation of Hebrew in light of aesthetic European ideals, arguing Hebrew was a Mediterranean, and consequently European language, and not Arab or eastern. Although Jabotinsky initially based his argument on the association of Jews and Europe in modern times, in the 1930s Jabotinsky already argued the ancient Hebrews were also a western people by nature of their origins and existence in the Mediterranean area. In addition, Jabotinsky hoped Latinizing Hebrew script would contribute to the dissemination of the language and to the westernizing of its speakers.

Jabotinsky's original national history was developed, supported, and enriched by various sources. The first scholarly basis for westernizing the Jews was the work of Werner Sombart, who claimed Jewish commerce was the main force behind the progress and modernization of Europe. In addition to tying closely together the Jews and the West, Sombart's narrative harmonized with



Revisionist middleclass ideology, which went against labor Zionism's socialist program. If labor Zionism venerated the agriculturist and the worker as Zionist idols, who both reconquered the land and rejuvenated the nation, Revisionism protected middleclass values and sought to present the bourgeoisie as a legitimate part of the Zionist revolution. Consequently, the Revisionists emphasized both the Jewish people's historical and "authentic" tendency towards trade; the benefit Jewish commerce brought to the western world; and finally, the importance this field would play in the future state's economy. Jabotinsky used Sombart's work to support the first two ideas, while the third was based on Jabotinsky's theory that Palestine's position at the eastern end of the Mediterranean would be imperative for international trade. Consequently, Jewish trade, the Mediterranean, and Europe were presented as inseparable parts of Zionism.

A second influence on Jabotinsky's views on Jewish, or rather, Hebrew identity, was the young Adya Gur Horon. If Sombart's theory was mainly useful as a means of demonstrating the association of the Jews and the west during the modern era, Horon provided Jabotinsky with a theory that emphasized the ancient history of this association. A student of Semitic philology at the Sorbonne, Horon developed a theory which increasingly associated the Hebrews with the Phoenicians and Canaanites, while downplaying the centrality of the Israelites in the people's history. Among other reasons, two important naval aspects of Horon's theory appealed to Jabotinsky: firstly, the idea that the Hebrews and Phoenicians were more or less the same people further associated Hebrew history with historical contributions of the Phoenicians to the West, such as the dissemination of the alphabet, naval techniques, and according to French scholar Victor Bérard, also the foundations for the Odyssey. Secondly, the theory presented the ancient Hebrews as a nautical people who lived by the sea, colonizing important Mediterranean places such as Carthage and the Strait of Gibraltar. This description, in which the sea was paramount, once again corroborated the essential Western identity of the Hebrews. In addition, Jabotinsky was impressed by Horon's observation that the majority of the Jews continued to live along the Mediterranean even during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Jabotinsky endorsed Horon's ideas and naval endeavors, especially the foundation of the seafaring movement *rodei-gal*, both financially, as well as in his own journalistic writings. Nonetheless, Horon's radicalizing theories, which gradually came to oppose Jewish religion, conflicted with Jabotinsky's political interests and ideological beliefs. Jabotinsky's desire to collaborate with religious Zionism, as well as his conviction that the pathos

of Jewish religion was imperative for Zionism, caused a rift between him and Horon, whose theories ultimately came to oppose Zionism.

Based on previous studies which have emphasized the important role myths played in Jabotinsky's worldview and political activities, and especially the recent work by Svetlana Natkovich, the final part of this dissertation studied Jabotinsky's attempts to turn the Hebrew Sea into an effective myth in Revisionist discourse. By studying articles dedicated to the Hebrew Sea, we have illuminated some of the techniques and devices Jabotinsky used in order to produce new Revisionist myths. To begin with, Jabotinsky sought to "expand" Zionism, by creating new slogans and ideals which echoed already prevalent ones in Zionist discourse: the "conquest of the sea" was a variation on the "conquest of the land" and similar endeavors (labor, defense, etc.), while the cult of the fallen, which already existed with relation to pioneers "sacrificed" for the fulfilment of Zionism, was extended to fallen seamen, "sacrificed" for the conquest of the sea. We have seen how even before the idea of the "conquest of the sea" crystallized Jabotinsky attempted to reproduce Zionist slogans in new areas that have not been associated with labor Zionism, such as the short-lived initiative for the "redemption of water", which echoed the prevalent "redemption of the land".

If the attempt to create new Zionist ideals was meant to appeal to Zionist enthusiasts in general, Jabotinsky's second mythologizing technique was designed to arouse mostly Revisionists. In this technique he used concepts and vocabulary that reverberated established Revisionist myths in the context of the "conquest of the sea". These included Jabotinsky's idealized biography, as well as terms which gained idiosyncratic meanings in his writings and in Revisionist discourse. Although Jabotinsky criticized and resisted his admirers' mythologization of his personality and biography and the attempts to initiate a "cult of the leader" following the Fascist model, he often made use of it. The two biographical affairs Jabotinsky evoked most often were the Jewish Legion, which he co-founded and in which he served during World War I, and his arrest at the Citadel of Acre by the British following his attempt to organize a Jewish defense against Arab rioters. By referring to these events through direct comparison or in passing, Jabotinsky drew parallels between the "conquest of the sea" and his greatest Zionist achievements. These evocations also associated the naval endeavors with militarism, a dominant Revisionist ethos. Jabotinsky also used more personal details from his biography, such as his Odessan background and his student years in Italy, frequently mentioning them in his journalistic writings, memoirs and literary works. In

addition to his mythologized biography, Jabotinsky also used terms that have assumed a distinct Revisionist meaning. Jabotinsky frequently referred to Revisionist principles such as *hadar* and *had-ness*, but “iron” also became a key word and gained several meanings through Jabotinsky’s use of it in several marked instances, such as the articles “The Iron Wall” and “Iron”, and in his novel *Shimshon*. Jabotinsky consequently developed a distinct discourse with his readers and followers which he used in order to promote new myths.

In addition to the use of specific terms and vocabulary Jabotinsky mythologized the Hebrew Sea through romanticized descriptions of Revisionist naval endeavors and references to Horon’s aggrandizing history of the Hebrews. The overtly romantic descriptions of the Civitavecchia Naval Academy and Sarah the First’s voyage across the Mediterranean were not just celebrations of great Revisionist achievements, but were also designed to add new myths to Revisionist folklore which connected with older ones, such as the Jewish Legion. The description of Sarah the First’s journey, with clear allusions to the Odyssey, mythologized the ship, the voyage, and the Revisionist conquest of the sea. The references to Horon’s theories, on the other hand, expanded the horizons of Jewish history, while supplying a new historical basis for Jewish maritime activity. Although historical pathos was not uncommon in Zionist discourse, it usually concerned the nation’s return to its land after two thousand years of diaspora, and secular allusions to the Bible. By referring to historical Hebrew seafaring and the Phoenicians Jabotinsky exceeded this typical routine and introduced a new chapter and a new identity into this discourse. Nonetheless, the historical references preserved the pathos of the Zionist revolution, albeit by replacing the grandeur of King David with that of Hannibal and the Kingdom of Israel with the Phoenician empire. Jabotinsky consequently reproduced the narrative of the people’s revival of a great history, but replaced the objects of history and its revival.

Far from being a fixed principle to be pursued, Jabotinsky used the Hebrew Sea where it served the agenda, highlighting the aspects he found useful. It was consequently a flexible ideal that could be adapted to different fields from the practical establishment of a naval school to the theoretical deliberation on the roots of the Jewish people. The ideal harmonized with a number of Revisionist ethe, such as *hadar*, the rejection of Marxism and the embracing of a middleclass, merchant identity, adventurism, and militarism. Studying the uses and developments of the Hebrew Sea illuminates Jabotinsky’s consistent views and ideals, but also how changing political

circumstances and the need to develop a distinct ideology for the Revisionist movement affected his public views, desires, and decisions.

The mythologization of the Hebrew Sea during the 1930s reflects Jabotinsky's general inclination towards the grand and the mythological, and the ways in which he used this aesthetic as a political tool. Research of the Hebrew Sea can consequently be seen as a case study of Jabotinsky's myth making as a form of political activity. From this perspective, the Hebrew Sea also illuminates more general trends among mass movements of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It reveals, for example, how myths were made and used by charismatic leaders of such movements. It also shows how national movements' understanding of the territory of the motherland connected to major issues of national identity, cultural affinity, and political and economic program.

Ultimately, however, the myth of the Hebrew Sea died with Jabotinsky. Seafaring did not become an integral part of Revisionism, and except for a few cases, such as Jeremiah Halpern's 1960 book on Hebrew seafaring, Revisionists and their successors chose to commemorate other myths, such as Jabotinsky's arrest in Acres and the persecution of Revisionists by labor Zionists. The Israeli right-wing today, while still designating Jabotinsky the founder of the Zionist right, has wildly distorted Jabotinsky's views and ideas, but the Hebrew Sea has been all but forgotten. Despite Halpern's desperate attempts to claim Revisionist precedence to reviving Hebrew seafaring, the sea is no longer an object of inter-Zionist political feuds. Geopolitically, while the U.S.A. has become Israel's dominant ally – both politically and culturally (as Babkov might have hoped) – Israelis rarely see in Italy more than a popular tourist destination with good food and pleasant beaches. The vision of Mediterranean identity, although the focus of interest of many thinkers and even social movements, has changed significantly from Jabotinsky's conception of it: no longer a means of associating Israelis or Jewish identity with Europe and the West, in contemporary discourse it is mainly seen as a way of assimilating in the culture and society of the Levant, the Middle East, and north Africa. Moreover, a dominant faction of the Israeli right wing has become increasingly antagonistic towards so-called European culture and identity, sanctioning and deriding the "Eurocentrism" of early Zionism. Attempts to emphasize Jabotinsky's eurocentrism are answered by testimonies to his affection towards Sephardic (i.e., non-European) Jews. Although Jabotinsky did indeed support Sephardic communities in the Balkans and north Africa, who reciprocated his advances not least of all because of labor Zionism's disregard for them, Jabotinsky was essentially and unashamedly a Eurocentric ideologue, who saw in Zionism

a venture that would benefit Europe and the Jews. If anything, Jabotinsky believed the “east” would benefit from Zionism by becoming increasingly Western and European. Finally, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, his mythologies and mythologizations, are becoming the interest of a growing body of scholars and commentators, due to in the increasing interest in the roots of the Zionist right.

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## Index

- Agnon, Shmuel Yosef, 19, 26  
Ahimeir, Abba, 60, 64, 70, 84, 106, 119, 128, 130  
Alterman, Natan, 19  
Amit, Gish, 19–20, 129  
Arber, Menachem, 110, 115  
Arlosoroff, Haim, 15, 29, 113  
Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal, 85, 87  
Babel, Isaac, 39, 129  
Babkov, Arye, 69–70, 124  
Barthes, Roland, 105, 129  
Begin, Menachem, 27  
*Beitar*, 9, 14, 17, 18, 33, 36, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 64, 67, 70, 72, 74, 76, 84, 92, 98, 105, 106, 113, 114, 115, 118  
Ben-Avi, Itamar, 8, 84–87, 93, 94, 106, 128, 130  
Ben-Gurion, David, 27, 29, 131  
Ben-Yehuda, Eliezer, 26, 78, 82, 104  
Bérard, Victor, 8, 82, 90, 93, 96, 107, 116, 121  
Bialik, Haim Nahman, 14, 26, 28, 36, 39, 82, 93, 105, 108, 127, 132  
Bilski Ben-Hur, Raphaella, 21, 22, 129  
Bissolati, Leonida, 49  
Bodenheimer, Max, 85  
Borochov, Dov Ber, 26, 48  
Brenner, Yosef Haim, 104  
Buber, Martin, 77  
Buckle, Henry Thomas, 22  
Cahan, Ya'akov, 84  
Carpi, Daniel, 31, 40, 60, 67, 68, 130  
Carpi, Leone, 8, 50, 56, 57, 60, 62  
Carthage, 44, 94, 96, 97, 98, 115, 116, 121  
Civitavecchia, 8, 15, 20, 24, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 50, 56, 58, 59, 61, 67, 68, 70, 94, 98, 105, 107, 108, 109, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119, 123, 126  
Cohen-Hattab, Kobbi, 20–21, 130  
Croce, Benedetto, 28, 71  
D'Annunzio, Gabriele, 52, 54, 58, 126  
Dante Alighieri, 62  
Darwin, Charles, 17  
de Haas, Jacob, 63, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70  
Donati, Angelo, 57  
Dreyfus, Alfred, 13  
Dubnov, Arie, 16, 17, 29–30, 130  
Einstein, Albert, 80  
Elias, Norbert, 58–59, 130  
Eri, Jabotinsky, 23  
Fusco, Nicola, 8, 60, 107, 109, 114  
Garibaldi, Giuseppe, 14, 57, 106  
Gellner, Ernest, 9, 131  
Giovagnoli, Raffaello, 62  
Gordon, A.D., 12, 34  
Graur, Mina, 31, 72, 78, 87, 96, 105, 126  
Gruweis-Kovalsky, Ofira, 27, 131  
Gruzenberg, Oscar, 64, 65  
*hadar*, 14, 42, 43, 58, 59, 76, 120, 123  
*had-ness*, 14, 42, 123  
Halpern, Jeremiah, 8, 18, 19, 20, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 60, 84, 114, 118, 124, 128, 131  
Halpern, Michael, 18  
Hameiri, Avigdor, 84  
Hannibal, 53, 98, 101, 102, 116, 123  
Harshav, Benjamin, 26, 34, 104, 131  
Haskel, Michael, 37  
Heifetz, Jascha, 39  
Herder, Johann Gottfried, 22, 71, 74, 75, 120  
Hervé, Gustave, 49  
Herzl, Theodor, 13, 29, 101  
Hever, Hannan, 18–20, 39, 40, 41, 131  
Hobsbawm, Eric, 9, 131  
Horon, Adya Gur, 8, 19, 23, 24, 41, 44, 53–54, 55, 71, 81, 84, 85, 92–102, 107, 115, 116, 117, 118, 121, 122, 123, 134  
Hroch, Miroslav, 9, 131  
Ibn-Gabirol, Shomo, 80  
Iron Wall, 33, 79, 109, 123  
Jabotinsky, Eri, 24, 27, 31, 44, 49, 68, 85, 92, 100, 101, 126  
Jabotinsky, Joanna, 106  
Jacobi, Shlomo, 67  
Jewish Legion, 10, 14, 28, 37, 38, 42, 48, 49, 50, 62, 83, 104, 106, 107, 109, 116, 118, 119, 122, 123, 132

Kaplan, Eran, 12, 24–25, 35, 67, 132  
 Katzanelson, Berl, 43  
 Kirschner, Yefim and Sarah, 108  
 Klausner, Joseph, 75, 82  
 Kolitz, Zvi, 43, 70, 119, 128  
 Kulischer, Alexander, 65  
 labor Zionism, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 26,  
 27, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 45, 46, 62,  
 68, 84, 87, 89, 90, 104, 118, 119, 121, 122  
 Labriola, Arturo, 71  
 Markovizky, Jacob, 56, 60, 61, 132  
 Marx, Karl, 21, 22, 71, 120  
 Mazzini, Giuseppe, 22, 48, 58  
 Miron, Dan, 36, 37, 108, 132  
 Mosca, Gaetano, 49  
 Mussolini, Benito, 10, 48, 50, 51–54, 56, 57,  
 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 89,  
 91, 111, 119  
 Naor, Arye, 21, 22, 31, 57, 74, 75, 76, 89,  
 126, 132  
 Naor, Aryeh, 31  
 Natkovich, Svetlana, 16, 17, 28–29, 33, 71,  
 72, 105, 106, 110, 122, 132  
 Netanyahu, Benjamin, 16  
 Netanyahu, Benzion, 16  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 17, 93, 95, 111, 112,  
 128, 131, 133  
 Nordau, Max, 12, 35, 78  
 Odyssey, 8, 82, 90, 93, 98, 103, 113, 115,  
 116, 121, 123, 129  
 Ornan, Uzzi, 43, 84, 133  
 Patterson, John Henry, 106, 107, 128  
 Peel Commission, 15  
 Phoenicians, 23, 41, 82, 90, 93, 95, 96, 97,  
 98, 101, 102, 103, 115, 121, 123, 133  
 Pinto, Vincenzo, 61, 67, 68, 69, 133  
 Pluschnitzki, Simcha, 36  
 Presner, Todd, 35, 41, 133  
 Ratosh, Yonatan, 23, 84, 85, 92, 93, 133  
 Ratzabi, Shalom, 21, 72, 133  
*rodei-gal*, 41, 44, 45, 92, 97, 98, 115, 118,  
 121  
 Rutenberg, Pinhas, 26, 49  
 Sarah the First, 8, 20, 33, 42, 45, 46, 55, 60,  
 94, 98, 105, 107, 108, 113, 114, 116, 117,  
 118, 123  
 Sciaky, Yitzhak, 8, 49, 50, 55, 56, 57, 60, 62,  
 68, 69  
 Segev, Tom, 27, 133  
 Shavit, Yaacov, 17, 22, 23–24, 27, 67, 82, 84,  
 92, 93, 94, 95, 100, 133, 134  
 Shneour, Zalman, 93, 94  
 Shumsky, Dmitri, 17, 29–30, 91, 134  
 Slouschz, Nahum, 8, 18, 82–84, 92, 94, 96,  
 128, 133  
 Smith, Anthony, 9, 25–26, 134  
 Sokolow, Nahum, 102  
 Sombart, Werner, 88, 92, 103, 120, 121, 128  
 Sorel, Georges, 28, 71, 105  
 Spencer, Herbert, 17  
 Sternhell, Zeev, 74, 104, 105, 134  
 Strausberg, Avraham, 8, 19, 43, 114  
 Tchernichovsky, Shaul, 8, 82, 93, 94, 108,  
 128, 129  
 Tel Hai, 26, 27, 42, 43, 104, 131, 133, 134  
 Theodoli, Alberto, 61, 62  
 Theodor Herzl [ship], 42  
 Trumpeldor, Joseph, 26–27, 42, 43, 44, 49,  
 104, 113, 118, 129, 133  
 Usishkin, Menachem, 26  
 Vishniak, Grigori, 45  
 Weber, Max, 88, 129  
 Wedgwood, Josiah, 30  
 Weizmann, Chaim, 13, 14, 30, 33, 40, 51, 52,  
 68, 130  
 Yellin, David, 78, 81, 129  
 Zion Mule Corps, 49  
 Zouplna, Jan, 22, 134