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## Zionism and the Hebrew Bible: from religious holiness to national sanctity

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The Zionist consciousness of the Jewish past is powerfully connected with the Bible. Of the canonic Jewish texts, which include the Mishnah, Talmud, mystical literature, rabbinic literature, Jewish philosophy, poetry and *piyyut* (sacred poetry), the Bible stands out for its ability to connect the modern concept of nationalism with the ancient Jewish past. From its inception, Jewish national thought viewed the Bible as a deeply inspirational source for the education and formation of the 'New Jew'. Zionist thinkers viewed the Bible as a foundational document and guide for Jewish nationalism. The two main revolutions that Zionism initiated – adoption of the Hebrew language and return to the Land of Israel – reflect the position of the Bible within Zionism. In this article, I intend to explore how the Hebrew Bible, the ancient religious text, became a foundational text for Zionism as a modern national movement.

In the early modern period, many western countries drew parallels between their own countries and the national model described in the Bible. For example, the Dutch nationalist movement identified itself with the 'Children of Israel'.<sup>1</sup> Further, Simon Schama described many expressions of Dutch patriotism that drew on Bible stories.<sup>2</sup> He pointed out that during the seventeenth century, the Dutch allusion to the Hebrew Bible, which 'struck again and again, was meant to assure the Netherlands that they were the heroes of the new scripture: the latter-day Maccabees'.<sup>3</sup> Early modern England was another country that demonstrated a strong affinity with the biblical model. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, British leaders described their national identity as 'the new Israelite nation' and a true 'Chosen People' – 'a Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and Worthies'.<sup>4</sup>

These allusions reveal that nationalism in the early modern period was influenced by the Hebrew Bible. Scholars of nationalism such as Hans Kohn and Liah Greenfeld identified this period as the beginning of modern nationalism.<sup>5</sup> The influence of the Hebrew Bible on nationalism led researchers of this topic to address the question of the relationship between religion and nationalism. Modernist researchers such as Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson, and John Breuilly, highlighted the secular and political aspects of nationalism.<sup>6</sup> Most of the modernists, with the exception of Elie Kedourie in his later works, viewed nationalism as a secular phenomenon that replaced the religion of faith.<sup>7</sup> This position was challenged by ethno-symbolic scholars such as Anthony Smith, who argued that modernists 'relegate religion and the sacred to the pre-modern past, and [...] pronounce the sacred objects, cults, and rites of faith communities obsolete, if not irrelevant'.<sup>8</sup> As Smith pointed out:

It is not enough to see nationalism as a secular political ideology like liberalism and socialism. Certainly, at the level of official ideology, it is undoubtedly secular, a doctrine of purely human auto-emancipation. But nationalism also operates on other levels. Here it is best seen as a form of culture and type of belief-system whose object is the nation conceived as a sacred communion.<sup>9</sup>

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Adrian Hastings rejected the modernist claim more bluntly, arguing that nationalism is not a modern construct at all. For Hastings, England was the first nation-state in the Christian world, and has served as a model for other western nations since the medieval period. Moreover, for him 'religion is an integral element of many cultures, most ethnicities and some states. The [Hebrew] Bible provided, for the Christian world at least, the original model of the nation. Without it [...] and its Christian interpretation and implementation, it is arguable that nations and nationalism, as we know them, could never have existed.'<sup>10</sup> Aviel Roshwald and Steven Grosby both referred to the Hebrew Bible as the first expression of nationalism.<sup>11</sup> They saw the Hebrew Bible as a primordial starting point for nationalism in general and Zionism in particular. And David Goodblatt argued that the Hebrew Bible had a decisive role in constructing Jewish nationalism in ancient times.<sup>12</sup> Yet there is no simple way to describe how religion and nationalism interact in modern times.<sup>13</sup>

Several studies have addressed the question of the relationship of modern Israeli society to the Bible. Some scholars have tried to decipher the declining value of the Bible in contemporary Israeli society – prominent examples include Uriel Simon, Anita Shapira and Yair Zakovitz.<sup>14</sup> Other researchers have examined the relationship between the Bible and Israeli society from cultural, intellectual and political angles.<sup>15</sup>

The most comprehensive study on the position of the Bible in modern Jewish history is Yaakov Shavit and Mordechai Eran's *The Hebrew Bible Reborn*. According to the authors, 'the Biblical revolution, namely the profound change in the status of the Bible in Jewish society, appeared with the emergence of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) movement at the end of eighteenth century.'<sup>16</sup> In the book's final section, they discuss the biblical character of Zionist culture and its decline in contemporary Israeli secular society.<sup>17</sup>

Most previous studies have focused on Israeli society following the establishment of the State of Israel, or the broader context of modern Jewish society. By contrast, this article focuses on the role of the Bible in Jewish nationalism and early Zionist thought from the 1880s to 1948. I do not attempt to propose a general model for understanding the relationship between religion and nationalism. Instead, my goal for this article is to explore how the religious holiness of the biblical text took on national sanctity in the pre-state period. In addition, I will show how this ancient religious work became a foundational text for Zionism, within the context of modern nationalism.

## From early modern nationalism to enlightenment

After the Reformation in the sixteenth century, several nation-states developed in Western European countries.<sup>18</sup> In England, the Netherlands, and other European states, the Hebrew Bible served as a model for shaping these states and their national identities.<sup>19</sup> The influence of the Hebrew Bible was also evident among early European settlers in North America as well as during the American Revolution.<sup>20</sup> In the early modern age, the political thought of the leading European thinkers was deeply influenced by the national model presented in the Hebrew Bible. This approach was evident in the work of political philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, John Selden, and Baruch Spinoza.<sup>21</sup> Thomas Hobbes, for example, asserted that the only Kingdom of God that existed historically was the republic of the ancient Israelites.<sup>22</sup> The use of the biblical model enabled these thinkers to outline the model for a concrete historical state, instead of an eternal divine kingdom.<sup>23</sup> The ancient Hebrew republic was viewed as a historical case that could be applied to other nation-states.<sup>24</sup>

In parallel with the development of the early nation-state, intellectuals began to change their approach to the biblical text.<sup>25</sup> A highly important work in this context was *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (Theological-Political Treatise) (1670) by Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza (1632–1677). Part of a Jewish converso family in Amsterdam, Spinoza lay the foundation for a natural, humanistic reading of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>26</sup> Spinoza's work contributed to the critical study of the Bible as it developed in modern times. Yet more importantly, it was essentially a political argument against theocracy and in favor of a modern nation-state.<sup>27</sup>

For this reason, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Spinoza's enterprise captured the imagination of Jewish nationalists, such as Moses Hess (1812–1875), Nahum Sokolow (1859–1937), Ya'akov Klatzkin (1882–1948), and Joseph Klausner.<sup>28</sup> Moses Hess called himself 'a student of Spinoza,'<sup>29</sup> while in a dramatic gesture, Klausner symbolically 'cancelled' the ban on Spinoza in a conference dedicated to Spinoza's thought at the Hebrew University in 1927. As Israel's prime minister, Ben Gurion expressed his pride that Spinoza had 'predicted' the reestablishment of the Jewish state in modern times.<sup>30</sup> The Zionist historian Ben Zion Dinur even listed Spinoza as one of the 'forerunners of Zionism' who transformed the Jewish messianic concept 'from sacred to profane.'<sup>31</sup>

The Jewish Enlightenment movement (Haskalah) began in Germany in the last third of the eighteenth century.<sup>32</sup> During the nineteenth century, the movement developed and spread to eastern and southern Europe. The Hebrew language and the Hebrew Bible were at the center of the Berlin Jewish educators and enlightened group (Maskilim) in the 1780s.<sup>33</sup> The Jewish Enlightenment movement viewed the Bible as a powerful tool for promoting values of human and secular knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

In 1782, Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805), a Maskil in Berlin, wrote a manifesto entitled *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (Words of Peace and Truth), in which he emphasized the importance of secular studies in modern Jewish education. Wessely outlined a new educational program that combined secular studies (*torat ha'adam*) with Torah studies (*torat Hashem*).<sup>35</sup> Rabbinic objection to his ideas led to a fierce polemic in 1782 between Orthodox rabbis and the Berlin Maskilim.<sup>36</sup>

As researchers of Zionist education have shown, Wessely's book represents an origin point for the reintroduction of the Bible into modern Jewish education.<sup>37</sup> While traditional society emphasized the Talmud, Wessely emphasized the importance of the Bible as the basis for a new program of Jewish education.<sup>38</sup> Wessely asserted that traditional education had neglected the study of the Bible: 'Know, Gentlemen, that we have a great failure in our hands, that we do not study the Bible at all.'<sup>39</sup>

We find a similar trend of using the Bible within the Haskalah movement in Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. For example, in *Te'udah be-Yisrael* (Testimony in Israel), Enlightenment scholar Yitzhak Baer Levinson (1788–1860) professed the need for Jewish scholars to study the Bible extensively and become proficient in it: 'The study of the holy tongue brings a great many benefits... However, the greatest is that it enables one to understand the twenty-four books written in it.'<sup>40</sup> Like him, Eastern European scholar Abraham Baer Gottlob (1811–1899) asserted that studying the Bible had to serve as a tool for Jewish education and progress. In his view, the purpose of studying the Bible was: 'To open blind eyes, and more than dealing with the Bible, they cast out superstitions and vain beliefs, for a light shines forth from the Holy Books, a brightness that drives away the darkness.'<sup>41</sup>

The crisis in the Enlightenment movement in the late nineteenth century gave way to the rise of alternative ideologies, such as Jewish nationalism and socialism.<sup>42</sup> Early Zionist thinkers, such as Peretz Smolenskin (1842–1885), sharply criticized the Enlightenment scholars and their universalist approach.<sup>43</sup> Yet the nationalist critique of the Haskalah did not lead to the abandonment of its basic ideas of secular knowledge, reason and a historical attitude to ancient Jewish texts including the Bible.<sup>44</sup>

## Early Zionist thinkers and the Bible

The centrality of the Hebrew Bible in the Zionist movement is evident from the formative period of the movement in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Early Zionist intellectuals and leaders highlighted the importance of the Bible as a historical national text, with most emphasizing the centrality of the Bible in forming the Zionist consciousness. In an important study, Allan Arkush emphasized the view of some prominent secular Zionist thinkers who embraced the study of biblical criticism at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>45</sup> The perspective presented here explores the influence of the early Zionist thought on the Hebrew culture and education as

it developed in the pre-state period in the land of Israel. As we will see, the concept of the ideal 'new Jew'<sup>46</sup> in Palestine was fundamentally connected to traditional Bible stories.

One example of an early Zionist thinker who made the connection between Zionism and the Bible was Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910). He wrote extensively on the Bible and early Jewish history, demonstrating his deep knowledge of the Bible and his interest in Bible research. After becoming a Zionist intellectual and one of the leaders of *Hibbat Zion* organization, Lilienblum adopted a relatively conservative position regarding the tension between religion and Jewish modern life. He saw the Bible as a national work that developed within numerous historical contexts of the Jewish people.<sup>47</sup> Lilienblum emphatically rejected the documentary hypothesis and the assumption that the Bible was written during the Babylonian Exile or the time of Ezra. He thought that the biblical text, even if written later than the period it described, expressed an ancient oral tradition that faithfully documented the life of the ancient Israelites.

Lilienblum negated the approach that questioned the uniformity of the national Jewish story in the Bible.<sup>48</sup> As a nationalist scholar, Lilienblum thought that students of the Bible must scrutinize the text carefully and use logic to explain the textual contradictions. But he also fiercely opposed negating the historical value of the biblical text, and the trend to 'deny the existence of the forefathers'.<sup>49</sup> His national approach is evident from the way he understood the biblical text as a realistic story of an ancient people. Lilienblum determined that during biblical times, religious faith and the act of recording history were one and the same. Therefore, the ancient historical memories have real historical value:

We should trust in historical faith and consider the Exodus [from Egypt] to be a historical act that actually took place in some way. This is the case for our other memories as well. The critics may post-date the time of writing for whichever memories they so desire, but we cannot deny that the national legends, which were passed down from one generation to another before writing spread among the people, have historical value.<sup>50</sup>

Due to his national view Lilienblum supported the value of the Bible as a record of the early history of the Jewish people. This approach became integrated into Zionist education in the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine.

Unlike Lilienblum, some early Zionist thinkers adopted a tone of contempt in their attitude toward religion and the cultural value of the Bible. For example, Max Nordau in *Conventional Lies of our Civilization* (1886), concluded that the Bible had no cultural, historical, or literary significance. For him the Bible could not be compared to the great works of Western culture such as those of 'Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare or Goethe'.<sup>51</sup> Still, Nordau's statements had no impact on Zionist culture in Palestine.

More important for our discussion is Yosef Haim Brenner's position on the Bible. Brenner, a leading Zionist writer of the Second Aliyah, cast doubt on the Bible's importance to Zionism. In an article published in *Hapo'el Hatza'ir* (November 1910), Brenner stated:

For myself, the Old Testament does not have the same value that all proclaim as the 'sacred writings', 'the Book of Books', 'the Eternal Book', and so on. I was long ago released from the hypnosis of the twenty-four books of the Bible.<sup>52</sup>

His article provoked furious reactions within the Yishuv in Palestine and among Zionist leaders in Europe. His use of phrases such as the 'Old Testament' (*Ha-brit ha-yeshana*) towards the Hebrew Bible, his criticism of the accepted term that prevailed in the Yishuv, 'the Book of Books', and other critical statements on the Bible inflamed the controversy. As a result of this article, at a meeting in Odessa on 5 January 1911, the Hovevei Zion steering committee decided to withdraw its financial support for *Hapo'el Hatza'ir*.<sup>53</sup> Despite Brenner's senior status in the Yishuv, his position on the importance of the Bible to Zionist education was in the minority.<sup>54</sup> As we will see, Hebrew education in the secular, cultural camp assigned great importance to study of the Bible as a national, historical text. In fact, most Zionist intellectuals and educators at the

time – secularists as well as traditionalists – granted the Bible an essential role in the national education and consciousness.

Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg, 1856–1927) expressed his opinion in a series of articles during a Yishuv debate on the question of how to teach the Bible in schools. Ahad Ha'am asserted that the Bible was made sacred by the Jewish people throughout Jewish history. Even if the stories of its protagonists were the products of imagination and not proven historical reality, their presence within the nation's imagination for thousands of years transformed them into 'historical truth'. For example, he writes:

Every object that has a recognizable effect on reality is real in the historical sense, even if it is only an imaginary figure. Therefore, even someone who does not believe in the reality of the divine cannot deny its reality as a historical power. A nationalist Jew, even if he is a complete atheist, cannot say I have no part in the God of Israel, that historical force that kept our people alive and influenced its character and the course of its life for thousands of years.<sup>55</sup>

In 'Moses', a seminal article published in 1914, Ahad Ha'am clarified the distinction between the real figure of Moses and his historical image. According to Ahad Ha'am, the questions of whether Moses was a real historical figure and whether the traditional account truly reflected his life and activities were not relevant. The importance of Moses lies in his historical-cultural image throughout Jewish history: the 'Moses of our own, whose image has been enshrined in hearts of the Jewish people for centuries, and who has never ceased to influence our national life from the earliest time to the present day.'<sup>56</sup>

Ahad Ha'am thus formed a national approach toward the Bible and its values and symbols. In his view, the Bible enabled modern Jews to identify with their national past even if they did not accept its religious significance. As Anthony Smith has shown, for modern nationalism, the national sanctity of ancient religious texts wielded as much power as traditional religious sanctity.<sup>57</sup> Hence Ahad Ha'am saw the need to preserve the literal biblical text as a national asset. Ahad Ha'am's approach had a major impact on the Yishuv in Palestine, especially on the general education stream.

The debate during the Second Aliyah (1904–1914) again suggested that biblical criticism be included in the Bible teaching curriculum in schools.<sup>58</sup> In practice, the extent to which it was introduced was relatively low. However, even educators who approved of it fiercely emphasized the national importance of the Bible as the 'Book of Books' in the Hebrew education, contrary to Brenner's position.<sup>59</sup> Early Zionist thinkers assumed that while the biblical text was not necessarily divine in origin, it did describe the true history of the ancient people of Israel. In the next section, we will examine how the Bible served as the foundational text for shaping the 'new Jews' of all Zionist educational streams in Palestine.

## Teaching the Hebrew Bible in Palestine 1905–1948

The Bible in its traditional form became the founding text of Zionist education in Palestine. The Bible enabled Zionism to overcome ideological differences between the secular, traditional, and religious groups in the Yishuv, creating a common ground based on a vital connection to the land, the Hebrew language, and national fraternity. These foundations formed the basis of the Zionist approach to the Bible in the late nineteenth century, and they became more pronounced in pre-state education in Palestine. I will demonstrate my argument by discussing prominent thinkers and educators who influenced Bible instruction in the different streams of Zionist education in the Yishuv.

The different streams placed varying emphases on Bible instruction, leading to polemics and conflicts. There were major differences between the secular mode of Bible study at the Herzliya Gymnasium, the Labor stream, the more traditional General stream, and the religious Mizrachi stream.<sup>60</sup> Still, all educational streams emphasized the importance of teaching the Bible as the 'Book of Books' that laid the foundation for educating the Zionist youth in Palestine.

In a prominent article, Ben Zion Mossinson (1878–1942) of the Gymnasium called for teaching the Bible using a new method that fit the national worldview:

In the Bible we find the remainder of the original national literature of the Jewish people, who lived in freedom in the Land of Israel during the First and Second Temple periods. Thus the 'Book of Books' reflects the free will of the Jewish people much more than in anything the people have created after that time. Herein lies the value of the Bible. This book is the only mirror that reflects our glorious past. For this poor and lowly people, wanderers without land or language, repressed and persecuted by their neighbors – it is the sole source of inspiration for a different life, a life of freedom and honor.<sup>61</sup>

Mossinson thought to create an anthology of Bible stories that would emphasize the role of the Prophets. The stories would 'give a clear picture of the life of the people,' and 'not the wonders and miracles.' Mossinson called for emphasizing the 'natural' stories in the Bible that 'exuded the scent of the homeland' instead of the religious laws.

Mossinson's secular approach was expressed in the curriculum of Gymnasia Herzliya, and it became the target of harsh criticism from religious circles as well as from many educators in the cultural Zionist camp in Palestine.<sup>62</sup> The Gymnasia curricula emphasized secular national aspects of the Bible, yet it placed the Bible at the foundation of nationalist education.<sup>63</sup> Mossinson was not afraid to mix biblical criticism with Bible teaching in schools, and this provoked controversy and outrage among many educators in the Yishuv.<sup>64</sup>

Mossinson's approach to teaching the Bible met with criticism from Ahad Ha'am and other educators such as Zalman Epstein (1860–1936), who strongly objected to the Gymnasium's secular attitude toward religion in general. For Epstein, as an intellectual from the cultural camp, the relationship between religion and nationalism in the Zionist education should develop in a moderate direction, not as a revolutionary path. Epstein concluded with a tone of sorrow: 'At the Hebrew Gymnasium in Jaffa, the studies of Jewish religion was completely removed from the curriculum.'<sup>65</sup>

Noah Pines (1871–1939) was a prominent poet, teacher, and educator during the Yishuv period. He also responded to Mossinson's article on teaching the Bible. Pines objected to Mossinson's attempt to distinguish between the historical aspects of the Bible on the one hand, and the religious and mythical aspects on the other.<sup>66</sup> Further, he asserted that teachers should not confuse their students with 'the tangle of inquiries of the biblical critics. Even scholars who have read and studied deeply must approach them with extra caution.'<sup>67</sup> Pines was close to the circles of the Hebrew writers and cultural Zionism, and he thought that the Bible should be taught in schools in its traditional format, without changes or adaptations. He objected to Mossinson's intention to create an educational Bible reader that emphasized national, historic, and secular aspects of the biblical text.

Haim Aryeh Zuta (1868–1939) was one of the most senior and influential teachers on biblical instruction and on Bible curricula during the Yishuv period. He thought that the Bible was the most important source for defining Zionist values. In his view, the Bible was the source of Zionism and Jewish values: 'There is no more valuable book for Jewish nationalist religious education than this eternal Book.'<sup>68</sup> According to Zuta, Bible education could help connect the 'new Jew' with the 'old Jew', tradition and progress, Jewish sources, and modern nationalism. In the curriculum that he formulated in 1929 (published by the Federation of Hebrew Teachers in Palestine), he wrote, 'For us, teaching the Bible, in all schools and for all parties, is a central focus from which the other nationalist subjects branch out: homeland, Jewish history from its inception, Hebrew language, *piyyut* [liturgical poetry], ethics, and tradition.'<sup>69</sup> For him, beyond serving as a primer for religious faith, the Bible was supremely relevant to the present: 'For us, sanctity is not only the main principle, but the stories of our lives, our history, the simple and pure customs of our forefathers, in our land where we are now settled. Each personality in the Bible is dear to us, not only because of its sanctity but also because it belongs to our long history, and it interests us because "the deeds of the forefathers are an example for their descendants."<sup>70</sup>

Zuta outlined a moderately traditional view that had a strong influence on the general education stream – the largest during the Yishuv period. In his book *Darkhei Ha-Limud Shel*



*Ha-Tanakh* (Methods of Bible teaching), he set three goals for Bible instruction: teaching Hebrew language and literature, instilling love of homeland, and strengthening Jewish values.<sup>71</sup> Zuta preferred to teach the Bible in a traditional spirit combined with national values, with the aim of shaping the Yishuv youth on the model of the 'New Jew'.<sup>72</sup>

In 1923, the education department of the Zionist executive in Palestine published its first formal curriculum. A close examination of this program reveals the extent of the Bible's importance in Zionist education and the highlights of Bible instruction. Teaching the Bible was granted the maximum number of teaching hours in schools (together with the Hebrew language) as compared to other subjects. The pedagogical content emphasized the historical and geographic contexts of Bible stories, the conquest of the Land of Israel and settlement, and the periods of the kings and prophets.<sup>73</sup> They also taught the Torah and Psalms, and traditional commentators such as Rashi.

Pinchas Schiffman (1873–1945), an influential Yishuv educator and literary scholar, represents the middle ground between religious and general education in the Yishuv period. As a teacher in the Mizrachi stream he achieved a harmonious integration between traditional, yeshiva-style education and the Enlightenment, nationalist style.<sup>74</sup> Schiffman published articles in *Ahad Ha'am's Ha-Shiloah* and books on education and pedagogy. He taught at Lida Yeshiva, founded by Rabbi Reines, and after immigrating to Palestine, he became a teacher at the religious *Tachkemoni* School and at *Talpiyot* Teachers' College. His activity within religious Zionist circles did not prevent him from participating in cultural Zionism and becoming a follower of *Ahad Ha'am* and Bialik.<sup>75</sup> His approach to Bible instruction demonstrated an impressive integration of the religious aspect and the Enlightenment, which he had internalized in Eastern Europe. In his article 'On the Question of Bible Teaching in Elementary School', he addressed the question of how the secular school can teach Bible. In his words: 'Can a secular teacher teach Bible to his students?'<sup>76</sup> In thorough identification with the Enlightenment manner of thinking, he asked, 'The question of the miracle stories arises: is it permissible to teach the children such stories? The teacher deliberates this question. He himself does not believe in miracles, and the student might harbor doubts and question the matter.'<sup>77</sup> Still, Schiffman stated, 'Although our beliefs today vary from the beliefs of our ancestors in many areas. Still, their creation was eternal. Consciously or not, it lives within us, and we must continue to weave our creative national-historic texture.'<sup>78</sup>

Thus, in his writings we find comprehensive treatment of Enlightenment ideas, but he emphasized that we must not ignore the religious aspect of the Bible, as this is the main subject of the text. Schiffman argued that teaching Torah laws was not 'religious propaganda', but rather a pedagogic and educational requirement: 'There are laws in the Torah – eternal ethical laws, general human laws, moral laws derived from our national character, and laws of society and life – that can serve as an example for human life in every age. [...] The vast majority of the laws in the Torah have inestimable value for the education of children, and for this reason, they should be taught.'<sup>79</sup> In Schiffman's view, Bible instruction had educational value from a national, cultural, and historic standpoint:

We must not blur or reject the religious character of the Bible, because this would be a forgery of the truth. To the creators of the Bible, religion was the foundation of life, their worldview. These works have operated in this way for many generations. They are a part of the Jewish people and a part of other nations. Thus it is absolute historical truth. We must accept the Bible as it came from its creators, and as it was accepted and has existed for two thousand years.<sup>80</sup>

From this we learn that Schiffman's position was close to *Ahad Ha'am's* and Bialik's approach, although as said, he was one of the most senior teachers in the national religious education of the Mizrachi stream.

Shelomo Dov Goitein (1900–1985), the educator, historian, and prolific scholar, was also one of the most prominent teachers during the Yishuv period. He expressed a positive attitude toward the religious component of Bible teaching. In the 1930s, Goitein taught at the Reali School in Haifa, which was identified with the Labor camp.<sup>81</sup> In his article 'The Theoretical Foundations of



Bible Teaching in Hebrew Schools' (1939), he addressed the question of how to teach the Bible in secular schools in the national era. He sharply criticized the nationalist approach toward Bible teaching and defended teaching the Bible's religious aspect in general schools. Goitein asserted that the Bible contained all necessary aspects for national education, but that educators should not ignore the religious aspects which formed the main body of the text.<sup>82</sup>

Also in this article, Goitein surveyed the change in Bible teaching that took place during the Yishuv period. This change led to an emphasis on teaching the Prophets and the Writings, and preference for the Bible over the Oral Law (Mishnah and Talmud). He pointed out that the Yishuv curriculum placed these new principles at the focal point of Bible teaching.<sup>83</sup> Goitein argued that during the Yishuv period, the Bible was accepted among all educational streams as a major subject in the curriculum because it contained strong national symbols; it represented national literature; it returned the people to their homeland; it was a primer for teaching the early history of the nation; and it was a universal work of literature. Translations of the Bible into diverse languages had placed it at the foundation of human culture, more than any other work.

For Goitein, there was no need or reason to avoid the religious component at the foundation of the biblical text. In his view, most of the Bible teachers in Palestine were not hostile toward religion. His message to educators was:

The teacher must know that Bible teaching which ignores or degrades the foundations of religion is distorting and destructive. We are not fulfilling our duty if we speak, as we constantly hear [...] about 'the sublime ethic of our prophets'. [...] The words of the prophets are an integral part of the sacred texts. The Five Books of Moses and the Psalms have played an even more important role within the Jewish people and the nations of the world.<sup>84</sup>

In other words, Goitein ruled out the overemphasis on the non-religious foundations of the Bible in national education. He repeatedly emphasized the importance of the religious aspect in inspiring the students to love the Bible. Like Ahad Ha'am, Goitein also thought that the Bible could be taught on its own, because it had enough historiographic detail to be taught in school.<sup>85</sup>

As we have seen, the most prominent educators in all streams of Zionist education in the Yishuv – Mossinson of the Herzliya Gymnasium, Zuta of the general stream, Schiffman of the Mizrahi stream, and Goitein of the Labor stream – viewed the Bible as a foundational text and a valuable source for educating Zionist youth. The political split between the various streams of education during the Yishuv period disturbed many of the Zionist educators. This led to the founding of the Keren Kayemet (Jewish National Fund) Teacher's Council, which aimed to serve as a common Zionist ground for all. This organization operated from 1925–1953, under the leadership of prominent figures in the Yishuv. The Keren Kayemet Teacher's Council viewed the Bible as a valuable tool for educating the youth.<sup>86</sup> As one teacher wrote, Bible teaching was intended 'to inspire the Hebrew-Zionist personality [...] to fight for justice and honesty and for the renewal of the nation. For us the Bible is the proven and trusted tool to educate the Zionist, our true citizen. The Bible is the purest reflection of Jewish life in the return to its land.'<sup>87</sup>

## From Yishuv to statehood: culture and politics

Ben Zion Dinaburg (Dinur, 1884–1973) was another prominent individual who had a profound impact on Zionist education in the period under discussion, particularly in the fields of history and Bible instruction. Dinur immigrated to Palestine from Russia in 1921. He was a teacher and director of the Jerusalem Teachers' Seminary, a leading historian at the Hebrew University, and founder of the 'Jerusalem School'. Eventually, Dinur became a Knesset member for Mapai and served as Israel's Minister of Education (1951–1955). As minister, he was responsible for the writing of the entire state school curriculum, and he also participated in the sub-committees for the history and Bible curricula.<sup>88</sup>

Dinur began to teach history and Bible soon after his arrival to Palestine.<sup>89</sup> As a Zionist historian and educator, Dinur often relied on the past to understand the present. He was

particularly fond of using the Bible as a valuable source of inspiration for his young students.<sup>90</sup> Decades later, writer Yizhar Smilanski (known by his pen name S. Yizhar, 1916–2006) described Dinur's powerful influence on him and his generation:

He explained the Bible with ingenuity and compared it to research on the lands of the Fertile Crescent. [...] He provoked our imaginations, roused us with all his might, and stirred us with his excitement. He did not permit us to remain indifferent. [...] But he never decreed what his students should think, what conclusions to reach or how to understand. [...] Was there any other teacher who so penetrated my bones? Yes, my bones, my soul, for the rest of my life [...]. If only you had known him.<sup>91</sup>

Dinur combined the religious world of his youth with Zionist ideology and the secular worldview of the Enlightenment. Like Bialik, with whom he had had a close relationship in Odessa after the First World War, Dinur also gave the religious element, and its emphasis on practical action, a central position in his national doctrine. While Bialik transferred the element of sanctity to the realm of nationalism, Dinur drew his concept of national obligation from the traditional Jewish ideal of learning Torah.<sup>92</sup> Dinur placed great importance on the in-depth study of the canonical Jewish texts – the Bible and the Talmud.<sup>93</sup> At the founding convention of the World Association for Hebrew Education in the Diaspora in 1947, Dinur asserted:

I emphasize Torah, not religion. Torah means study, milestones, lifelong training – while 'religion' means the fixed, static, the text, the commandment, accepted tradition. Bible means compelling awareness, principles for life, worldview, and human character. The Bible has built the Jewish people and formed human character. [...] Bible teaching in Israel is not just imparting knowledge, but receiving the Torah.<sup>94</sup>

In this view, Dinur followed Bialik, who viewed teaching the Bible as a fundamental principle of Jewish nationalism. This view of Bible teaching does not identify with the Orthodox approach. Rather, it emphasizes traditional values and their importance in forming the character of the 'New Jew'.

Arguably, the person who had the most impact on Zionist culture during the Yishuv period was Haim Nachman Bialik, and his commitment to integrating the values of Jewish tradition into Zionist culture is in evidence throughout his work.<sup>95</sup> In his speech 'The Hebrew Book' (Vienna, 1913), he emphasized the dimension of sanctity in the national *kinnus* project, the 'ingathering' of Hebrew books from Diaspora countries. As he said, this work was 'holy of holies', and demanded that national scholars adopt 'an attitude of sanctification'.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, in his speech at the opening ceremony of the Hebrew University (1925), he described the work of the Zionist youth in the Land of Israel as follows:

These young people know how to raise simple and crude labor – physical labor – to the level of highest sanctity, to the level of religion. This holy fire it behooves us to kindle also within the walls of the house which has just been opened upon Mount Scopus. Let those youths build the Earthly Jerusalem with [holy] fire and let them who work within these walls build the Heavenly Jerusalem with [holy] fire, and between them let them build our house of life – 'For Thou, O Lord, didst consume it with fire, with fire Thou wilt rebuild it'.<sup>97</sup>

Bialik's attitude toward the sacred aspect of Zionism clearly indicates, that religious and sacred dimensions did not disappear in the national era, but were given new meaning within the Zionist revival. This supports the argument of ethno-symbolic researchers of nationalism that in the age of nation states and secularism, religious sentiment still played an important role in national movements.<sup>98</sup>

The diverse approaches within Zionism and the controversy surrounding the understanding of the biblical text – as divine or human in origin – should not obscure the fact that the Bible served as a fundamental and unifying text within the Zionist movement. In the Jewish Yishuv in the Land of Israel, the stories of the Bible were given concrete national meaning. The common use of the biblical term *olim* ('those who go up') to refer to Jewish immigrants to Palestine is only one example. In creating new Hebrew literature and poetry, Zionist culture adopted and integrated the stories of the Exodus from Egypt and the desert generation, the conquest of the land, the settlement, the monarchy, the return to Zion (Shivat Zion), the building of the

walls of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah, and many other narratives of the ancient Israelites.<sup>99</sup> The traditional Jewish holidays were given a new national meaning, especially Passover, Shavuot, and Hanukkah.<sup>100</sup> Uriel Simon has called the Zionist use of the Bible 'national midrash', while Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya termed it 'civil religion'.<sup>101</sup> Either way, the fact that the Bible was used so frequently at the peak of the Zionist era shows its centrality in national consciousness during the British Mandate in Palestine and the first decades of the State of Israel.

National leader David Ben Gurion adopted national and universalist values from the Bible. But during the early years of the state, his main interest in the Bible was focused on concrete historical issues, such as conquering the land, settlement, the kingdoms of David and Solomon, and the return to Zion during the reigns of Cyrus and Darius. These became the main subjects of discussion in the Bible study group he hosted in the prime minister's residence.<sup>102</sup>

Despite Ben Gurion's secular approach, he did not challenge the historical truth of the Bible. On the contrary, he thought that the Bible was a faithful reflection of the story of ancient Israel.<sup>103</sup> This approach was also characteristic of Zionist biblical scholar Yehezkel Kaufman, who stated:

The Jewish faith is a national creation, and it is imprinted in a national form – this is a historic fact to which all admit. The Jewish faith was created in the garb of national culture. It was part of Jewish history, rooted in its national land, and attached to its historic fate. Its expressions and symbols are Israel-national.<sup>104</sup>

Kaufman interpreted the Book of Joshua as a realistic historical book that correctly describes the conquest of the land and the settlement.<sup>105</sup> As we have seen, during the Yishuv period in Palestine, the Hebrew Bible became the manual for the practical life of Zionist movement activists, as well as a vital source for national inspiration.

## Conclusion

Of the pre-modern cultural sources that shaped the themes of modern Jewish nationalism, the Hebrew Bible stands out as the most prominent work.<sup>106</sup> Zionism viewed the Bible as a foundational text because it contained two fundamental pillars that the movement lacked: language and place. Zionism also focused on Bible stories as a unifying historical element, glorifying the biblical period as the 'golden age' of Judaism. Further, the Zionists used the Bible as a guide to forming the image of the 'New Jew'.

To fully understand the influence of the Bible on the Zionist movement, we must situate it within the context of the nascent European national movements in the late nineteenth century. In doing so, as this article has shown, we would do well to avoid the oversimplification of a binary division into 'religious' and 'secular'. Instead, as shown, the Yishuv intelligentsia held a broad and nuanced range of opinions on the Bible.

In the modern nationalist era, the Zionist thinkers gave the ancient biblical text national sanctity, which stemmed from its traditional religious holiness. The fact that biblical interpretation provoked internal debates among the various streams of the Zionist movement, as described above, reveals the shared importance of the Bible for all shades of Zionism.<sup>107</sup> As Uriel Simon notes, the biblical text became a unifying cultural element that bridged the gaps between secular, religious, and traditional Jews. As we have seen, the pre-state Zionist education system was divided into streams. The Hebrew Bible, as teachers from all parties testified, was a factor that unified the Zionist consciousness. The Bible served not only as a foundational text for the Zionist movement, but also as a proof-text which justified the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. Hence, in the first two decades of the State of Israel, the Bible continued to play a central role in Israeli education and culture.

Despite its importance in explaining the historical context of modern nationalism, the modernist approach either ignores the contribution of cultural elements, or at most, views them as instrumental political manipulation, or 'the invention of tradition'. As we have shown, identifying the centrality of cultural elements such as the Bible enables a broader, more nuanced view of the shaping of modern Jewish national consciousness.

## Disclosure statement

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## Notes

1. See *Neder-Nederlantsche Gedenck-Clanck* (1626), cited in Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p.98.
2. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, pp.51-125.
3. *Ibid.*, p.100.
4. John Milton, *Areopagitica*, pp.68-70 (cited from p.69) (Google Books, 1644). Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.46-47, 268 note 3; the concept of the Israelites as the chosen people in the Hebrew Bible had a profound effect also on French and American nationalism. See Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.8-44, esp. p.17, and pp.167-252.
5. Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1944). Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp.75-76.
6. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Eric J. Hobsbawm, and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 [1990]); John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982). See also Paul Lawrence, 'Nationalism and Historical Writing', in John Breuilly (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook for the History of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.713-30.
7. In Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1971), pp.1-152, Kedourie developed a more nuanced position on the place of religion in modern nationalism, more than his first book, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1960).
8. Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, p.21.
9. *Ibid.*, p.18.
10. Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.4.
11. Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism*. Steven Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality, Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002). See also Azar Gat, *Nations: The Long History and deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.89-91.
12. David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.28-48. See also his helpful discussion justifying the use of the term 'national identity' in antiquity, pp.1-27.
13. J. Christopher Soper and Joel S. Fetzer, *Religion and Nationalism in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp.1-31.
14. Uriel Simon, *The Place of the Bible in Israeli Society: From National Midrash to Existential Peshat* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1999); Uriel Simon, *Seek Peace and Pursue it* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronoth, 2002), esp. pp.21-44; Anita Shapira, *The Bible and Israeli Identity* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006). Shapira has also contributed to this topic in her articles 'The Bible and Israeli Identity', *AJS Review* 28, 1 (2004), pp.11-41; 'Ben Gurion and the Bible: A Creation of Historical Narrative?' in Anita Shapira, *New Jews, Old Jews* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1997), pp.217-47. See also Yair Zakovitch, 'The End of the Century of the Bible', in Israel Bartel (ed.), *A Century of Israeli Culture* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2002), pp.110-21.
15. Yael Zerubavel, 'Back to the Bible: Hiking in the Land as a Mnemonic Practice in Contemporary Israeli Tourist Discourse', in Meir Chazan and Uri Cohen (eds), *Culture, Memory, and History: Essays in Honor of Anita Shapira*, vol. 2 [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 2012), pp.497-522; Shalom Ratzabi, 'The Bible as History and Myth: The Place of the Bible in the Zionist Thought of David Ben Gurion and Martin Buber', in Chazan and Cohen (eds), *Culture, Memory, and History*, vol. 2, pp.471-96; Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'The Political Uses of the Hebrew Bible in Current Israeli Discourse: Transcending Right and Left', *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 25 (2011), pp.11-35.
16. Yaakov Shavit and Mordechai Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn: From Holy Scripture to the Book of Books: A History of Biblical Culture and Battles over the Bible in Modern Judaism* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2007), pp.18-22.
17. Another recent attempt to understand the place of the Bible in nationalism in a broad framework is Ofri Ilany and Avner Ben-Amos (eds), *Bible and Nationalism in the Modern Era* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2021), pp.9-26.
18. Diana Muir Appelbaum, 'Biblical Nationalism and the Sixteen-Century States', *National Identities* 15, 4 (2013), pp.317-32; Anthony D. Smith, 'The Biblical Origins of Nationalism', *Historically Speaking* 7, 4 (March-April 2006),

- p.22, characterized early nationalism as such: 'Two factors are crucial to the rise of this early modern nationalism. The first is political, the breakup of the medieval realm of Christendom [...] and the emergence of territorial kingdoms, first in England, France and Scotland, and later in Spain, Denmark, and Sweden.'
19. Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge MA and London, 2010), pp.1-22. Nelson pointed out that seventeenth-century European political thought was focused on the Hebrew Bible as a model for the early modern states – in his words, 'the Biblical century'. See also Steven Grosby, 'Hebraism: The Third Culture' in Jonathan A. Jacobs (ed.), *Judaic Sources and Western Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.73-96.
  20. See, for example, Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism*, pp.175-80; Daniel T. Rodgers, *As a City on the Hill: The Story of America's Most Famous Lay Sermon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), pp.44-57, 264-79; Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).
  21. Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*, pp.88-137. Meirav Jones, 'Introduction', Schochet, Oz-Salzberger and Jones (eds) *Political Hebraism*, vii-xix. Guido Bartolucci, 'The Hebrew Republic in Sixteenth-Century Political Debate: The Struggle for Jurisdiction', in Wyger Velema and Arthur Weststeijn (eds), *Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination* (Leiden and Boston: Brill), pp.214-33.
  22. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996 [1651]), p.271.
  23. Meirav Jones and Yossi Shain, 'Modern Sovereignty and the Non-Christian, or Westphalia's Jewish State', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 43, 5 (2017), pp.918-38.
  24. Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*, pp.92-94.
  25. In modern times, many viewed the Bible as a human work that should be understood in historical context, instead of a sacred text. See James L. Kugel, *The Bible as it Was* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007).
  26. Alan T. Levenson, *The Making of the Modern Jewish Bible: How Scholars in Germany, Israel, and America Transformed an Ancient Text* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), pp.13-16; Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p.44; Steven Nadler, *Spinoza – A Life*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1988), pp.264-65. It is interesting to compare Spinoza's book and Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). Both address the connection between the nation-state and the Hebrew Bible, and both have become foundational works of Western modern thought.
  27. Nadler, *Spinoza – A Life*, p.332: In Nadler's characterization: 'The *Theological- Political Treatise* is one of the most eloquent arguments for a secular, democratic state in the history of political thought.'
  28. Moses Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem: Die letzte Nationalitätenfrage* (Leipzig: Kaufman, 1862); Nahum Sokolow, *Baruch Spinoza and his Time* [in Hebrew] (Paris: Voltaire, 1929); Yaacov Klatzkin, *Baruch Spinoza: His Life, Books, Method* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1954), pp.13-40. Joseph Klausner declared that Spinoza should be symbolically reaccepted as a legitimate member of the Jewish people. See Levenson, *The Making of the Modern Jewish Bible*, pp.4-5, 9-25, 103-32. Ella Belfer, 'Benedict de Spinoza and the Secularization of Judaism' in Aviezer Ravitzky (ed.), *Religion and State in Twentieth Century Jewish Thought* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Israeli Democratic Institute, 2005), pp.115- 38; Ze'ev Halevy, *Spinoza's Interpretation of Judaism* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1972), pp.7-43.
  29. See Moses Hess, *The Holy History of Mankind*, Shlomo Avineri (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.1, 32-40, 136-39.
  30. Daniel B. Schwartz, *The First Modern Jew: Spinoza and the History of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p.149. See also pp.113-53, esp. 147-53.
  31. Dinur argued that 'Spinoza's views on the possibility of realizing redemption and the realization of this possibility should be viewed as the first exemplification of modern Zionist principles.' Ben Zion Dinaburg, *Sefer Ha-Tsiyonut: Mevasrei ha-Tsiyonut* Vol. 1 [Book of Zionism: The Forerunners of Zionism] (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1938), p.90. See David N. Myers, *Reinventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.146-48.
  32. Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp.68-84.
  33. Shmuel Feiner, *Moses Mendelssohn: Sage of Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp.180-86. Berlin Enlightenment scholars established educational institutions, founded Hebrew journals such as *Hame'asef* (1784), and published textbooks.
  34. Levenson, *The Making of the Modern Jewish Bible*, 29-44. Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: Or on Religious Power and Judaism* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1983[1783]), pp.35-45. See Feiner, *Moses Mendelssohn*, pp.165-67. See also Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp.1-9, 13-31.
  35. Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (Warsaw, 1886), p.3.
  36. For a comprehensive description of Wessely and the polemic incited by his manifest, see Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp.87-104. This conflict affected Mendelssohn who wrote his book *Jerusalem* in response to both Christian and Jewish religious zealotry.



37. Yairah Amit, 'Bible Teaching in the General Education: A Study of the Curriculum', in Amos Hoffman and Yitzhak Shanel (eds), *Values and Goals in the Israeli Curriculum* [in Hebrew] (Even Yehudah: Beit Berl College, 2002), pp.239-64; Tali Tadmor Shimony, *National Education and Formation of State of Israel* [in Hebrew] (Kiryat Sde Boker: Ben Gurion University Press, 2010), pp.164-85; Jacobus Schoneveld, *The Bible in Israeli Education: A Study of Approaches to the Hebrew Bible in Israeli Educational Education* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1976), pp.7-11; Tal Kogman, *The 'Maskilim' in the Sciences: Jewish Scientific Education in the German-Speaking Sphere in Modern Times* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2013), pp.11-48, 87-137.
38. Tali Tadmor Shimony, 'Teaching the Bible as a Common Culture', *Jewish History*, vol. 21 (2007), pp.159-78, esp. pp.160-61.
39. Wessely, *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet*, letter 2, pp.58-59. Wessely praised the Sephardic communities, particularly in Amsterdam, for emphasizing the study of the Bible, as opposed to the Jews of Ashkenaz (ibid., pp.42, 60, 64-65). Wessely himself wrote a pioneering Hebrew book on the Bible, *Shirei Tiferet* [Songs of Glory] [1789-1802], in which he described the life of Moses.
40. Isaac Baer Levinson (Ribal), *Te'udah be-Yisrael* [A testimony in Israel] (Vilna, 1828), cited in Shavit and Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn*, p.17.
41. Abraham Baer Gottlober, *Zikhronot u-masa'ot* [Memories and journeys], p.206, cited in Shavit and Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn*, pp.37, 56-57.
42. Shmuel Feiner, 'Smolenskin's Confrontation with the Haskalah Movement and the Roots of Jewish National Historiography', [in Hebrew] *Zionism*, vol. 16 (1991), pp.19-31.
43. Yitzhak Conforti, *Shaping a Nation: The Cultural Origins of Zionism 1882-1948* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2019), pp.32-56; Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment in the Nineteenth Century* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2010), pp.298-335.
44. Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment in the Nineteenth Century*, pp.76-94.
45. Allan Arkush, 'Biblical Criticism and Cultural Zionism Prior to the First World War', *Jewish History* 21 (2007), pp.121-58. In this important article, Arkush distinguishes clearly between Ahad Ha'am and his successor Joseph Klausner and other Zionist thinkers who have adopted biblical criticism. On the relations between modern Jewish scholars and biblical criticism, see also Shavit and Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn*, pp.85-155; Ran Hachohen, 'The Response of Jewish Intellectuals in Germany to Biblical Criticism in the Nineteenth Century', [in Hebrew] PhD dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2002, pp.108-26.
46. For the concept of the 'New Jew' see Yitzhak Conforti, "'The New Jew' in the Zionist Movement: Ideology and Historiography', *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, 25 (2011), pp.89-121.
47. Moshe Leib Lilienblum, '*Le toldot hitpatchut ha-deot ve-ha-minhagim be-Yisrael bi-yemei kedem*' [The evolution of ideas and customs in ancient Israel] *Pardes* III (1897), pp.46-60.
48. See Moshe Leib Lilienblum, '*Reshit toldot Yisrael*' [Early Israelite history], *Ha-Shiloah*, vol. I (1897), pp.166-77, 364-71.
49. Ibid., p.167.
50. Ibid.
51. Max Nordau, *The Conventional Lies of our Civilization* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1895 [1886]), p.61.
52. Nurit Guvrin, *The Brenner Affair: The Fight for Free Speech (1910-1913)* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1985), Appendix 1, p.136 (Hapo'el Hatz'a'ir, 22 Heshvan 1910).
53. Guvrin, *The Brenner Affair*, pp.145-48. This meeting was attended by Bialik, Rawnitzky, Klausner, Ussishkin and others. See Anita Shapira, *Brenner – A Life* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2008), pp.192-207. Brenner wrote his article in response to reports in Jewish publications on the phenomenon of conversion and intermarriage among Russian Jewry, See Samuel Schneider, *The Traditional Jewish World in the Writing of Joseph Hayim Brenner* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Reshafim, 1994), pp.55-73.
54. Shavit and Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn*, p.43.
55. Ahad Ha'am, *Kol kitvei Ahad Ha'am* [Collected writings of Ahad Ha'am] (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965), p.408 (first published in *Ha-Shiloah*, 1911).
56. *Kol kitvei Ahad Ha'am*, p.342.
57. Smith, *Chosen People*, pp.42-43.
58. On early Zionism and biblical criticism, see Arkush, 'Biblical Criticism and Cultural Zionism Prior to the First World War', pp.128-35.
59. Tadmor Shimony, *National Education and Formation of State of Israel*, pp.164-65. As biblical scholar Yairah Amit showed, during the Yishuv period and in the first two decades of the State of Israel, biblical criticism was not included in Bible curricula in schools. Yairah Amit, 'Biblical Criticism in the Teaching of the Hebrew Bible', [in Hebrew] *Studies in Jewish Education*, vol. 9 (2003), pp.101-14; Yairah Amit, 'The Study of Hebrew Bible in Israel – between Love and Knowledge', *Jewish History* Vol. 21 (2007), pp.199-208.
60. The Zionist educational streams were formed after the First World War. See Yitzhak Conforti, *Past Tense: Zionist Historiography and the Shaping of the National Memory* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2006), pp.216-22; Rachel Elboim Dror, *Hebrew Education in Eretz Israel*, I-II [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1986-1990), vol. I, pp.281-82, vol. II, pp.15-93.

61. Ben Zion Mossinson, 'Ha-tanach be-veit ha-sefer' [The Bible in school], *Ha-chinuch*, vol. 1 (1910), pp.23-32, 110-19 (cited from pp.24-25). See also in Shapira, *The Bible and Israeli Identity*, pp.5-7, 37-56.
62. *Programa le'khol sh'not ha-limud: ha-Gimnasia ha-ivrit be-Yaffo* [Curriculum for all years of study: The Hebrew Gymnasium in Jaffa] (Jerusalem, 1907), pp.38-44.
63. Schoneveld, *The Bible in Israeli Education*, pp.24-38.
64. Baruch Ben-Yehuda, *The Story of Gimnasia 'Herzlia'* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Gimnasia Herzlia, 1970), pp.95-114. Amit, 'Biblical Criticism in the Teaching of the Hebrew Bible', pp.104-05.
65. Zalman Epstein, 'The Hebrew Gymnasium in Jaffa', in Shapira (ed.), *The Bible and Israeli Identity*, p.62, and the entire article, pp.57-67 (originally published in *Ha-Shiloah* 25, 1911-1912).
66. Noah Pines, 'The Question of Bible Teaching' [in Hebrew], *Ha-Chinuch* vol. 1 (1910), p.379.
67. Ibid.
68. Haim Aryeh Zuta, 'Ha-melamed ve ha-moreh' [The Traditional educator and the Teacher], *Ha-Shiloah* vol 21 (1914), p.107.
69. Haim Aryeh Zuta, *Nisayon shel tochnit meforetet le-limudei ha-tanach be-beit ha-sefer ha-amami* [Attempt of a detailed program for Bible study in the elementary school] (Jerusalem: *Histadrut ha-morim ha-ivriyim be-Eretz Yisrael*, 1929), pp.6-7.
70. Ibid., p.7.
71. Haim Aryeh Zuta, *Methods of Bible Teaching* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: R. Mass, 1935-1937); Shoshana Sitton, 'Education in the Spirit of the Homeland': *The Curriculum of the Teachers' Council for Keren Kayemet (1925-1953)* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1998), p.85. On Zuta, see also David Shahar, 'The Bible and the Relationship to the Biblical Past in the Study of Jewish History, in Hebrew Education in the Land of Israel in its Inception (1882-1914)' [in Hebrew], *Ma'of u-Ma'asseh* vol 9 (2004), pp.39-58; Schoneveld, *The Bible in Israeli Education*, pp.41-45.
72. Zuta, *Methods of Bible Teaching*, p.36.
73. *Tochnit batei ha-sefer ha-amamiyim ha-ironiyim* [Municipal Elementary Schools Program] (Jerusalem: *Ha-histadrut ha-tsiyonit ha-olamit*, 1923), p.2.
74. Shabbtai Don Yehiyeh, 'Precious Man', [in Hebrew] *Ha-Tsofeh* (11 May 1945).
75. In this context, I add that Schiffman sent his son to study at the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium.
76. Pinchas Schiffman, 'On the Question of Bible Teaching in Elementary School', in Pinchas Schiffman, *Culture and Education: Selected Writings* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Shtibel, 1934), pp.58-79. [First published in *Ha-Chinuch* vol. 8, (1925)]
77. Ibid., p.68.
78. Ibid., p.79.
79. Ibid., pp.65-66, 58 (footnote).
80. Ibid., p.78.
81. On Goitein as a Bible teacher, see Schoneveld, *The Bible in Israeli Education*, pp.50-57.
82. Shlomo Dov Goitein, 'Al ha-yesodot ha-iyuni'im shel hora'at ha-tanakh be-veit ha-sefer ha-ivri' [The theoretical foundations of Bible teaching in Hebrew schools], in Y. H. Roth (ed.), *Al ha-hinukh ha-tikhoni ha-ivri be-eretzyisrael* [Hebrew high schools in the Land of Israel] (Jerusalem: R. Mass, 1939), pp.41-83.
83. Ibid., p.43.
84. Ibid., p.66.
85. Ibid., p.81.
86. Sitton, 'Education in the Spirit of the Homeland', pp.86-90.
87. A. Orinowsky, 'What is Zionist Education?' [in Hebrew], *Shorashim* Vol. 1 (1936), pp.12-13. Zvi Zohar expresses a similar attitude in *Eretz Israel in Our Education* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Keren Kayemet, 1940), pp.123-25.
88. Conforti, *Past Tense*, pp.237-38.
89. Arielle Rein (ed.), *Ben Zion Dinur: Posthumous and Other Writings* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Dinur Center, 2009), p.157.
90. Aside from his work as an historian and a Bible teacher, he was an active Bible scholar and published several studies on the Bible. See Ben Zion Dinur, *Historical Writings*, vol. 3 [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1977).
91. Yizhar Smilanski, 'Moreh ba'atsamot' [Teacher in my bones] *Davar* (20 Oct. 1984), in [https://onegshabbat.blogspot.com/2011/06/blog-post\\_29.html](https://onegshabbat.blogspot.com/2011/06/blog-post_29.html).
92. Ben Zion Dinur, *In Times of War and Revolution: Memories and Writings* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1960), pp.442-77; Conforti, *Shaping a Nation*, pp.91-124.
93. Arielle Rein, 'The Historian as a Nation-BUILDER: Ben Zion Dinur's Evolution and Enterprise (1884-1948)' [in Hebrew], PhD dissertation, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2001, pp.52-53, 111-12.
94. Ben Zion Dinaburg, 'Hakhsharat morim le-batei ha-sefer ha-ivri'im ba-golah ve-darkheihah', [Methods of training teachers for the Hebrew schools in the diaspora], in *Ha-chinukh ha-ivri bi-tfutzot ha-golah* [Hebrew education in the Diaspora] (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1948), pp.61-62.



95. On Bialik's influence on the Zionist scholars, see Yitzhak Conforti, 'Integrating National Consciousness into the Study of Jewish History', in Anne O. Albert, Noah Gerber, Michael Meyer (eds), *Frontiers of Jewish Scholarship: Expanding German Origins, Transcending European Borders* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), pp.149-55.
96. Haim Nachman Bialik, *The Hebrew Book – An Essay* (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1951), p.15.
97. Haim Nachman Bialik, *Bialik on the Hebrew University* (Jerusalem: Palestine Friends of the Hebrew University, 1935), p.11.
98. See Smith, *Chosen People*, p.21. Soper and Fetzer, *Religion and Nationalism in Global Perspective*, pp.1-31.
99. David C. Jacobson, *Does David Still Play Before You? Israeli Poetry and the Bible* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), pp.17-38.
100. Yitzhak Conforti, 'Zionist Awareness of the Jewish Past: Inventing Tradition or Renewing the Ethnic Past?', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* vol. 12, 1 (2012), pp.155-71.
101. Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp.30-40. Simon, *The Place of the Bible in Israeli Society*.
102. Anita Shapira, 'Ben-Gurion and the Bible: The Creation of a Historical Narrative?' in Bartal (ed.), *A Century of Israeli Culture*, pp.120-46, esp. p.135.
103. Shavit and Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn*, pp.455-56.
104. Yehezkel Kaufman, *Mi-kivshonah shel ha-yetzirah ha-mikra'it* [The crucible of the Biblical text] (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1966), p.34. The religious Zionist commentators saw the Bible as a divine creation, but still they assumed that Judaism was a national religion.
105. Yehezkel Kaufman, *Book of Joshua* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1959), pp.1-87 esp., p.21; Yehezkel Kaufman, *The Biblical Account of the Conquest of Palestine* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1953).
106. Conforti, *Shaping a Nation*, pp.57-124.
107. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism*, pp.19-20.