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## Who is a Yid? Reading the journal *Der Yid* beyond the Hebraist – Yiddishist binary

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### ABSTRACT

The journal *Der Yid* was the first Yiddish periodical officially tied to a Zionist body. This article follows the shared genealogy of early Zionism and diasporic nationalism as expressed in *Der Yid*, and offers a revision to common notions on Yiddish cultural and political revival around the turn of the twentieth century. In contrast with a tendency to highlight a sharp divide between these movements, this article emphasizes the points of intimacy and convergence between the ostensibly opposing ideological and lingual choices of Hebraism-Zionism and Yiddishism-diasporism. More specifically, it analyses a controversy between Yiddishists and Hebraists, particularly Ahad Håam, generated by the very title of the journal during its first year of publication: Who is *Der Yid* – the Jew? Who is the ultimate imagined national readership and national collective of a Yiddish-language journal? By probing the populist, sentimentalist discourse that the journal produced, this article argues for a renewed evaluation of the presumably dichotomous constructions of Hebrew versus Yiddish, or Zionism versus diasporic nationalism.

### KEYWORDS

Zionism; diaspora; language politics; Jewish nationalism; affect; Ahad Håam

### An ugly prince

Sigmund Werner, editor of the Zionist German periodical *Die Welt*, wrote the following in an open letter of support of *Der Yid* (1899–1902), the first Yiddish periodical published by a Zionist body:

As we grow up, smart as we may become, we often humorously recall our childhood fairy-tales, and oftentimes it is precisely then that we suddenly grasp these tales' profound ideas [...]. I now recall a tale of a handsome prince or a beautiful princess, who due to some evil power – witchcraft of sorts – became a poor, despised and abject creature. They could be delivered from their curse only by means of true love, a love that is stronger than death [...]. Such a curse, it seems to me, is the curse of my people. Someone had cursed my people, and he has become such an abject creature, impoverished and despised, like the least beggar. He speaks such a tongue that disgusts everyone; in this language he laughs and cries, writes and expresses everything that his heart

feels and his mind thinks. Yet now, when true love towards the people had begun growing, his hideous tongue slowly grows prettier, rings a bit sweeter, and becomes more comprehensible. One day would come, when the ugly disguise will fall off the body, and the ghastly mantle will fall off the tongue, and the charming prince would grow ever more handsome, and his tongue will ring sweeter than before.<sup>1</sup>

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In his letter, Werner commended the new journal's choice to publish in Yiddish, especially in light of many intellectuals' disregard, or even pronounced hatred, towards the language. The only way to act in favour of the people, his fairy-tale seems to suggest, is by loving it despite, or perhaps because of, the people's abject poverty and its hideous and corrupt language – Yiddish, or “Jargon,” as it was then often called. In other words, publishing a Yiddish journal serves a double cause, functional and aesthetic: On the one hand, it allows for a communication with the people, and on the other, writing in Yiddish allows the writer to express love towards the people, and that love, in return, would turn the ugly handsome, that is, would turn a wretched people into a proud nation.

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Who is this people, “dos folk,” that is identified with Yiddish? How can we understand the love that Werner indicates had begun growing? What is the role of aesthetics and love in the national project which Werner and *Der Yid* were involved in, and how are they tied to the lingual choice of *Der Yid* to publish in Yiddish? These questions stand at the centre of my reading in the political and affective discourse that developed on the pages of *Der Yid*.

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While this study focuses on a Yiddish journal at the turn of the nineteenth century, it seeks to shed light on the broader context in which it appeared, especially on the Hebraist ideological and cultural undertaking which supported it and participated in it. Without an exploration of this Yiddishist cultural phenomenon, understanding the Hebraist revivalist project which surrounded it is bound to remain partial due to the intertwined history of Hebrew and Yiddish cultures at that moment. But before we delve into reading in the journal itself, it seems necessary to explore the discursive background of this cultural undertaking.

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### **Terms of the discussion: tackling the Zionist – diasporist binary**

As Dan Miron has demonstrated in his seminal work on Yiddish fiction of the nineteenth century, *A Traveler Disguised*, Yiddish as a language epitomized Jewish deplorability in the European imagination.<sup>2</sup> Against the nineteenth-century European philological notions regarding lingual purity as a marker of mental coherence and racial propriety, Yiddish's hybrid nature, incorporating Germanic, Slavic, and Semitic components, was viewed in racialized terms as a corrupt and contaminated half caste.<sup>3</sup> This view was early on and most famously expressed in Moses Mendelssohn's *Be'ur*, a German translation/interpretation of the Pentateuch in Hebrew transliteration, which established

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the aspiration to rid the Jews of Yiddish and have them acquire High German in its stead as a wholesale project of European acculturation and a civilizing mission. In his introduction to the *Be'ur*, Mendelssohn described the “taytsh,” the Yiddish translation of the Pentateuch as “a corrupt, distorted, garbled tongue; it disgusts the soul of the reader who can speak without blemish.”<sup>4</sup>

85 The feeling of disgust which Mendelssohn invokes highlights the fact that the so-called “Jewish question” was also a question about European norms and decorum, and that the Jews’ problem was also a problem of derogation and abjectness, of lack of respectability, of being “a pariah people.”<sup>5</sup>

90 In this context, creating Yiddish literature and poetry – establishing a Yiddish aesthetics – as a means to solve the Jews’ ugliness functions as a political project. Sigmund Werner, in fact, was not the first to identify the collective, political function of producing a Yiddish aesthetics. Already in 1873 the Hebrew and Yiddish writer Sholem Yankev Abramovitch published an allegorical novella,

95 *Di klyatche* [*The Mare*], where a beaten and miserable mare is revealed to be a cursed prince, a stand-in for the Jewish collective, who requires love and nourishment rather than civilizing missions to educate and reform it. And in his autobiographical notes, Abramovitch describes his turn to write in Yiddish in eroticized terms, celebrating his matrimones with the youthful Yiddish over the old, sage Hebrew. Another bilingual writer, Isaac Leib Peretz, also resented

100 the Hebraist dictate to abandon Yiddish and reform its speakers in an early Hebrew poem, “Manginot hazeman” (Melodies of the Time) written in 1887, in which Peretz paraphrased and rejected Mendelssohn’s ridicule of the “garbled tongue,” and instead expressed a sentimental love for the language and its speakers. He later heeded his own call in series of Yiddish works,

105 among them *Bilder fun a provints-rayze* (Impressions from a Journey through the Provinces), which explore the prospects of an intellectual’s “return,” as it were, to the simple people, the folk, and their language. And on the pages of *Der Yid* Peretz published some his early neo-hasidic and sentimentalist stories, which are of his most famous works.

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Yet in what terms should we understand this political project? Should such a turn to Yiddish be understood as a populist, socialist, or nationalist aspiration, or in yet other terms? Scholars who have examined the Yiddish cultural revival in the nineteenth and twentieth century often described it vague terms, alluding to diasporism, socialism, and revolutionary ideas.<sup>6</sup> In reading in *Der yid* I wish to offer an investigation into the ambiguous terminology and political concepts of the Yiddishist and Hebraist revivalist projects.

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We may begin by examining the question that informed the genealogy of Jewish nationalism from the late nineteenth century and until today – the Jewish question, known otherwise also as *die Judenfrage*. “Until the eighteenth century, religious belief and social organization were intertwined,” writes Israel Bartal.<sup>7</sup> A “Jew,” as a category of feudal taxonomy divided into different social corporates, constituted of a set of interconnected and inseparable

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defining factors. Being Jewish, in other words, meant belonging to a social corporate defined by particular economic characteristics and tax obligation, and shared culture, language, and religious practice. Yet with the (often only partial) disintegration of feudal regimes in central and eastern Europe, came the atomization of such identifying markers.

Both discursively and as a matter of *realpolitik*, *die Judenfrage* invoked questions regarding the Jews legal and cultural place, or if fact lack thereof, within the European empire or within the modern European nation-state. These concerns regarded a series of questions, one of which culminated in a long polemic in the Hebrew journal *Hashiloah* (which will be of prime interest for our discussion later).<sup>8</sup> In essence, the debate asked what reason could be provided for the continued separate existence of the Jews, as a people *sui generis*, a collective that keeps to itself, once such separation is no longer required by law. This question, of why maintain an exclusive Jewish identity while fighting for civil emancipation, parallels and co-dependes on another question: Who is a Jew? On the basis of what criteria may one define the Jewish collective? At once an abstract question and a reaction to the political crises facing Jews in eastern Europe, answering this second question determines the answer to the first, and thus becomes a crucial step in the articulation and genealogy of nationalist Jewish movements. Whether they espoused a solution of *realpolitik* and territorial sovereignty, liberalist ideas of integration and religious reform, early socialist convictions of social liberation, or a Romantic solution of creating ethnic, populist sentiments through cultural revival – all solutions to the so-called “Jewish question” required establishing an answer to the foundational question of “who is a Jew.” That very question, as we shall see, reverberated through the pages of *Der Yid*.

In recent decades, historians and literary critics engage in an intensified attempt to re-read the various responses to the Jewish question on their own terms, without the analytical inheritance imposed by previously dominant, mostly Zionist historiographical premises. My analysis of *Der Yid* joins this trend, while it also seeks to challenge some of its core tendencies. Rather than narrating Jewish history as linearly progressing towards territorial sovereignty in Palestine, scholars express an interest in other ideas present at that historical moment, even if those did not come to fruition later in the twentieth century. The 1990s and early 2000s thus saw a shift in the field of Jewish Studies, a shift which we might call the “diasporic turn” in writings on Jewish history and culture. Criticizing the Zionist outright negation of Jewish existence in exile (an attitude known as *shelilat hagalut*), scholars began consciously considering Jewish diasporic history positively.<sup>9</sup> One articulation of this shift in literary scholarship took on the shape of a renewed analyses of the complicated relationship between Hebrew and Yiddish cultures.<sup>10</sup> Some of the more recent writings often paradigmatically portray this relationship as dependent on the ostensibly

binary opposition, differentiating between autonomist, self-reliant and elitist  
 Hebraism and diasporic, populist, inclusive and tolerant Yiddishism, high-  
 lighting the compatibility of either of the two to its respective allotted ideol-  
 ogy – Zionism versus diasporic nationalism.<sup>11</sup> More generally, we might  
 165 even submit that the rising popular and scholarly interest in the Yiddish  
 language, culture, and literature, can in itself be attributed to the “diasporic  
 turn” in Jewish Studies, in which Yiddish came to stand as the ultimate  
 emblem of diaspora at large.

While this paper is indebted to these works, it also seeks to challenge some of  
 170 their premises. First and foremost, it asks whether by turning to diasporism and  
 to Yiddish as a diametrical opposite to Zionist ideology, one may not find oneself  
 reinforcing a teleology which constructs a binary of power and powerlessness,  
 suppresses as “lost” and “forgotten” the very same Yiddish culture it seeks to  
 recover, and attributes ultimate victory in the so-called “Language War” to  
 175 the Zionist territorialist project and to Hebraist exclusivity.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, by  
 exposing the intimacy, rather than differences, between Hebraism and Yiddish-  
 ism as nationalist discourses, as those expressed in the journal *Der Yid*, this  
 article claims that any dichotomous positioning of the two political methods  
 is bound to fail our understanding of them as historical phenomena. Alterna-  
 180 tively, it makes the case for the need of a renewed exploration of the foundational  
 notions and terminology of the debate.

Finally, and more specifically, this paper concentrates on one key figure of  
 Zionist and Hebraist discourses at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth cen-  
 turies – Ahad Hàam (Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg). Ahad Hàam is most often dis-  
 185 cussed in light of his objection to Herzelian, political Zionism, and his espousal  
 of an alternative, “spiritual” or cultural Zionism.<sup>13</sup> This view was recently right-  
 fully challenged by Dmitry Shumsky, who rejects the artificial binary of “political  
 Zionism” and “spiritual Zionism.” According to Shumsky, this binary led to a  
 depoliticized appreciation of Ahad Hàam’s writings despite the fact that Ahad  
 190 Hàam expressed clear political convictions, such as that Palestine is the national  
 home of two peoples and must be treated as such by the Zionist movement.<sup>14</sup> In  
 the context of Hebrew literature, Ahad Hàam is most frequently discussed in  
 light of his views on the Hebrew revival (*hatehiyah*) as demonstrated through  
 his polemic with a Vitalist movement of Hebrew writers, famously promoted  
 195 by Micah Joseph Berdichevsky.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, his expansive essayistic writing has  
 been analysed primarily against these and similar polemics. Along a similar  
 vein to Shumsky, this study argues that in order to comprehensively understand  
 Ahad Hàam’s Hebraist position, one must examine his debates with his Yiddish  
 interlocutors.

200 The major cultural project that Ahad Hàam led, the non-for-profit, Warsaw-  
 based Hebrew publisher and cultural body “Hevrat Ahi’asaf,” published books,  
 the periodical *Hashiloah* (1896–1926, the most prominent turn-of-the-century  
 Hebrew periodical), the Hebrew yearbook *Luah Ahi’asaf* (1893–1904, 1923),

and more. However, at the request of the board of the Zionist Organization to publish a Zionist organ in Yiddish, it also published *Der Yid*.<sup>16</sup>

### Between Hebraists and Yiddishists: *Der Yid*

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The journal *Der Yid* served as a main platform for debates on Jewish nationalism and Jewish national identity. Moreover, the nationalist discourse it developed tied itself intimately with the journal's choice to write and publish in Yiddish, the implications of which may clarify against the intellectual background in which this choice was made. When the board of the Zionist Organization asked "Hevrat Ahi'asaf" to publish a Yiddish organ, Ahad Håam was sceptical with regards to the effectiveness and aptitude of publishing in Yiddish. He finally agreed to the Zionist Organization's request on the condition that his disciple, the Hebrew writer, editor and cultural activist Yehoshua Hana Ravnitsky would be the journal's chief editor.<sup>17</sup> And yet, despite his organizational and personal relationship with *Der Yid*, Ahad Håam was dissatisfied with the Yiddish publication. He wrote as much to Ravnitsky directly, in a letter dated 16 February 1899, after receiving the journal's first issue: "What shall I say? I guess I do not have the palate for appreciating the beauty of Jargon [Yiddish, pejoratively]."<sup>18</sup> Like many of his contemporary European Jewish intellectuals, Ahad Håam too viewed Yiddish as a corrupt German dialect, unfit for intellectual and aesthetic endeavours, and believed that Yiddish speakers would be better off learning Hebrew or the local imperial language (Russian or German). Publishing in Yiddish, in his eyes, was a means to an end – to reach a wider audience, which would thereby hopefully abandon the language.

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Such common approach towards Yiddish, wrote Ravnitsky in his first editorial column, is what caused the intelligentsia to completely neglect writing in a language that the majority of the people knows and understands. And so it happened, Ravnitsky continued, that all those who pride themselves on being "folksfraynd," friends or benefactors of the people, wrote passionately *about* the people, but not *to* the people. Therefore, the people had satisfied its reading needs with corrupt and worthless literature. *Der Yid* came into the world in order to solve this problem, wrote Ravnitsky. Its goal is to speak to the people in its own language, to give it knowledge of its past, of its current condition and of its hopes for the future, in order to raise its national consciousness and to give it the energy required to rejuvenate, spiritually and materially. After all, Ravnitsky reminded his reader, it is clear that the Jewish people suffers not only from anti-Semitism, but also from self-hatred. Educated and enlightened Jews are ashamed of their language and culture. The younger generation is tied with threads so thin and frail that any weak wind could detach them. In order to fix this predicament, the Jewish people must invigorate itself, live a healthy and natural life, not mimic other nations, but raise "Jewish children, who hold a Jewish spirit, who experience Jewish feelings, and who carry true

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and loyal love towards the people, towards its precious and ancient treasures, as is natural among the children of every nation.”<sup>19</sup>

245 The purpose of publishing in Yiddish in Ravnitsky’s eyes, we conclude, was not merely to address the practical dependence of simple Jews on Yiddish. Rather, there was another purpose, an affective and national one: to raise love towards a people that suffers from external and internal hate. Perhaps, like in Werner’s fairy-tale, such love would end up making the despised people less despicable.

250 The fear that Ravnitsky mentioned of the younger generation losing its connection to the people brings us back to the complex of “Jewish questions:” Who is a Jew? Why maintain a separate Jewish identity? How to preserve a sense of Jewishness among the Jewish masses and the Jewish elite? All these questions were not directly answered in Ravnitsky’s manifesto, but we may find an initial hint with regards to the journal’s position already with the choice of its title: *Der Yid*, the Jew. Compare, for example, this title with the opening manifesto of Ahad Hàam’s Hebrew periodical *Hashiloah*, which describes the crisis of Jewish identity brought about by the emancipation, the Enlightenment, and the Haskalah movements, and the anxieties that surfaced as a result of this crisis:

260 The great question mark, which hovered over Judaism in the two previous generations and was then hidden away behind thick clouds, slowly reappears out of the fog, and the fear it brings with it diminishes our emotional drunkenness and forces us to stare at it with our eyes wide open and our minds clear: What is this national or historical selfhood of ours, for which we have been struggling with the entire universe in the past millennia? How to describe our present existence, in all our lands of dispersal? To what extent are our lives true and right, and where do they require mending? And above all – the question of the future: whether, how, and when, will we finally arrive at the longed-for shore despite the forceful streams that rip us apart, organ by organ, and wash them away, one by one, into the ocean?<sup>20</sup>

270 This question mark regarding the national “selfhood,” regarding the national dismembering and geographical dispersal, regarding the past and present identity that would justify a national Jewish particularism in the future, is what *Hashiloah* came to answer. The adjectives with which Ahad Hàam chose to describe the possible answers for this “great question mark” are worth noting: He suggested the question may be resolved through “Hebrew literature,” by the “Hebrew mind,” and by the “sages of Israel.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, Ahad Hàam presented a similar problem to that raised by Ravnitsky, nevertheless, the adjectives he attaches to the endangered collective differ: Ahad Hàam’s is a “Hebrew” and “Israelite” nation. Ravnitsky, on the other hand, chose to speak of a “yidishe folk” and a “yidisher gayst” – using an adjective in which two different denotations are inextricably merged – Jewish and Yiddish.

280 The difference between Ahad Hàam and Ravnitsky’s choices may seem arbitrary, considering that the more proper Russian adjective for Jewish is *evreiskii* which derives from “Hebrew,” as oppose to the Russian pejorative derived from

“Jew” – *zhid*. This might especially be so when considering the influence of Russian culture and language on Ahad Håam and the eastern European Jewish intelligentsia.

285 Nevertheless, reading a series of articles and open letters that were published in *Der Yid* over the course of the first months of its run, tells a different story. It suggests that the journal served as a platform on which a new nationalist perspective emerged, fundamentally different from that of Ahad Håam and “Hevrat Ahi’asaf” under his leadership. Furthermore, a reading in these articles reveals that this new nationalist perspective relies precisely on the choice of publishing in Yiddish, and on the convenience and ambiguity in the double meaning of the noun “Yid,” which interchangeably ties Jewishness and what we may call Yiddishness.<sup>22</sup>

### 295 **The polemic: who is a Yid?**

The seventh issue of *Der Yid* included a letter signed under the pseudonym ADM (also: “man” in Hebrew), which addressed the general spirit of the six previous issues. The author of the letter responded to the support and enthusiasm expressed by various writers, who mostly repeated Ravnitsky’s basic arguments regarding Yiddish: This was the language of the people, and those who wished to connect with the people must write in this language. Among such supporters were Moshe Leib Lilienblum, who wrote about the reading habits of simple Jews; Shmuel Rosenfeld, one of the main contributors to the journal, who focused on the choice of Yiddish and on criticism of the intelligentsia’s elitism; Sigmund Werner, editor of the Zionist German organ *Die Welt*, whose letter of support opened this article, and others. ADM’s letter was the first to challenge the national-political logic of *Der Yid*, and this ADM was no other than Ahad Håam.<sup>23</sup>

310 Ahad Håam began his letter with a question: “Who is *Der Yid*?”<sup>24</sup> Who is this capitalized and definite Jew after whom the journal is named? Jews, after all, are many, wrote Ahad Håam. But who is *the* Jew whom the journal addresses in Yiddish? Who is the imagined audience whom the writers in *Der Yid* simply called “dos folk,” the people? When a journal chooses to publish in Hebrew, argued Ahad Håam, it is clear who its targeted audience is. The addressee of such a journal is the entire Jewish people and Judaism as a whole, since readers of the “holy tongue” live in all lands and are members of various classes and all walks of life, and those who cannot read the “holy tongue” – well, argued Ahad Håam, they must learn it, since it is their national tongue! This is not the case with Yiddish, according to the letter, since Yiddish does not belong to the Jews, neither is it their mother tongue. Therefore, Ahad Håam confessed, he had initially thought that the targeted audience of the journal is class-based, where “folk” denotes something like “the masses,” or “the simple people.” However, after reading several issues, he realized he had



been mistaken. That being the case, he concluded, the question still remains: who is “Der Yid”? Is the “folk” with which the journal identifies a socio-economic class or a national collective?<sup>25</sup>

325 Ahad Håam’s frustration with the Yiddish publication cannot be narrowed  
 down to his personal, aesthetic distaste for the language,<sup>26</sup> to which he attested  
 in his personal letter to Ravnitsky quoted above. His criticism rather probes the  
 political and national need to establish definitive categories for the Jewish  
 people. So long as the collective bound together by Yiddish signifies an inner-  
 Jewish class-based definition, such as “the simple people,” or “the masses,”  
 330 Ahad Håam is willing to accept the choice of publishing in Yiddish for it does  
 not challenge his demarcation of the national collective on the basis of its  
 affinities to Hebrew. But from the moment that the “folk” whom the writers  
 in *Der Yid* address no longer signifies a class, rather an ethnic group, Ahad  
 Håam becomes concerned that the Yiddish-speaking “folk” acts as an exclusive  
 335 ethno-cultural definition of the Jewish nation. While the imagined national col-  
 lective of the Hebrew press encompasses the entire Jewish world, globally, the  
 collective addressed by the Yiddish press is different. This collective is specifi-  
 cally eastern European, yet by ignoring its eastern European particularity, it pur-  
 ports to represent the Jewish people in its entirety.

340 Ahad Håam’s letter drew a number of responses, which appeared in the fol-  
 lowing issues, and whose heat and sometimes vehemence testify to the sensitivity  
 of the matter. Ravnitsky added his first response right below Ahad Håam’s letter  
 in an editorial comment. In it he answered Ahad Håam’s question with a ques-  
 tion of his own: Who is *not* “Der Yid”? A minority among Jews reads Hebrew,  
 345 and so it happens that the majority reads either Yiddish or foreign languages.  
 Indeed, a Jew has a national obligation to learn Hebrew, but does that mean  
 that those who cannot yet read Hebrew must suffice themselves with foreign  
 languages instead of a Jewish language? In fact, even educated Jews sometimes  
 enjoy a good read in Yiddish, Ravnitsky argued. Therefore, *Der Yid*’s readers  
 350 do belong to various classes, and are not all ignorant. Still, he wrote, the main  
 audience *Der Yid* is interested in is that of lower, uneducated classes. In any  
 event, Ravnitsky concluded with an appealing tone, the journal believes that  
 “words that come from the heart, from a true Jewish [or Yiddish] heart, with  
 regards to Jewish interests, with regards to education and so on, will doubtlessly  
 355 benefit the people and influence it positively.”<sup>27</sup>

360 Ahad Håam’s laborious work of critical distinction between class and ethno-  
 cultural categories, between the global Hebrew and the exclusively eastern Euro-  
 pean Yiddish (even with its offshoots in some major immigration destinations  
 since the late nineteenth century), remained unaccounted for in Ravnitsky’s edi-  
 torial comment. Aside from its equivocal and ambivalent configurations of class  
 and of languages as foreign or Jewish, the editorial comment is also rife with  
 amorphous and abstract markers of Jewishness: authentic Jewish feelings, a  
 true Jewish heart, etc. In other words, *Der Yid*’s editor rejected Ahad Håam’s

question out of hand, as well as Ahad Håam's call to pay attention to the discrepancies between the Jewish-Yiddish collective and the Jewish-Hebrew collective.

A month later, Ravnitsky published a full article in response, entitled "Who is a Yid,"<sup>28</sup> paraphrasing Ahad Håam's question. No one, claimed Ravnitsky, holds the right to decide who is a Jew and who is not. If we are to eject people from the collective on the basis of their political beliefs, he wrote, the people is bound to lose its various organs until it will remain without a body at all. No political party holds the monopoly over Judaism, he argued heatedly, since "all Jews are equal."<sup>29</sup> If so, Ravnitsky continues asking,

Who is a Jew? All Jews have a share in the name "Jew" ["Yid"], and in this regard there is no difference between different classes and different parties. Any Jew who has the "Jewish spark" ["dos pintele yid"], that is, who thinks of himself as Jewish, who declares himself to be Jewish; any Jew who is not ashamed with the title "Jew," who wishes to remain a Jew and wishes his children to remain Jewish – he is a Jew.<sup>30</sup>

For Ravnitsky, the existence of the Jewish spark, "dos pintele yid," is what defines belonging to the national collective. This utterly vague term gains some meaning in Ravnitsky's article in light of what he describes as the national sentiments of the individual, expressed through pride, lack of shame, and desire for national continuity. And indeed, he concluded his essay by underlining the critical importance of affect for the national project, saying that if one wishes to promote one's own ideology, one could do so through pleading to the other's mind, "and even more so, to the other's heart and soul." Ravnitsky's emphasis on the significance of the emotional labour, on pleading with one's "pintele yid," reveals the centrality of affective rhetoric in his writing.

In his expanded response, too, Ravnitsky avoided dealing with the contradiction that Ahad Håam highlighted with regards to the dual meaning in the noun "Yid." In his immediate reaction, Ravnitsky collapsed Ahad Håam's distinction between a class-based Yiddish readership and an ethnically-defined Yiddish national readership, when he fused the two in his use of the term "folk." In his later response, he again avoided the eastern European ethnocentrism implied by his choice for the journal's title, by diverting Ahad Håam's question of "who is 'Der Yid'" into the more general "who is a yid." Finally, he dismissed Ahad Håam's criticism by answering his own question, "who is a Jew." His answer downplays any prescriptive categories, such as ethnicity, religion, language, and so on, instead favouring an individual, voluntary choice, on the basis of self-identification and expression of a strong emotional connection to the Jewish collective. Defining the national boundaries according to emotional borders and voluntary identification neutralizes Ahad Håam's claim that *Der Yid* presents a too-narrow and separatist answer to the question "who is a Jew" – he who speaks Yiddish.

A month after Ravnitsky's article, another open letter appeared on the topic, under the title "A Letter from a Simple Worker," signed M. Meirzamen.<sup>31</sup> The

class-based tone of the title informs the entire letter, in which the writer protests what he sees as Ahad Håam's arrogant elitism, "as someone saying to a poor man that he cannot enjoy good meat, since he is still healthy enough to gnaw bones."<sup>32</sup> So long as readers are given worthless literature and corrupt novels, Meirzamen complained bitterly, all those intellectuals and functionaries are quiet and keep to themselves. But the very minute someone begins writing to the people, eye to eye, only then suddenly all those self-appointed leaders come out of the woodwork: "Write this way, don't write that way, say this and not that, the people is deaf, the people is blind, the people is still a child, you need to start with the ABC and tell it some fairy-tales."<sup>33</sup> Meirzamen continued by asking why the intelligentsia strives to lock knowledge behind high walls. Why do they believe that a person, even if he is a simple Jew, could not comprehend what is written in his own language? And why, more generally, does the critic ADM think that only the poor read Yiddish? Do rich people not also enjoy a nice piece of cornbread from time to time? Do educated people not read a piece in their mother tongue every once in a while? And finally, Meirzamen asks, where does ADM's hatred towards Yiddish come from? How can he love his poor brethren and at the same time hate their language?

However, as we recall, what concerned Ahad Håam most was not at all the contents of the Yiddish press, the desired level of Yiddish writing, nor his personal distaste towards Yiddish. What did bother him was the implication of all these elements merged together with the title *Der Yid* on the Jewish national collective. Meirzamen interpreted Ahad Håam's critique as repeating the critique of the Haskalah movement of Yiddish as a lesser language, revolting and incompetent. Therefore, coming to its defence, he attacked Ahad Håam for his alleged hatred towards the people, and demanded that he express his love for the people through a love of their tongue, Yiddish. In doing so Meirzamen reproduced the ambiguity and conceptual overlap that Ahad Håam criticized: Meirzamen's class critique against the elite is inextricably linked with a Jewish national identity. "Folk," in his letter, is at one and the same time both a class category and a national category.

The last article directly addressing Ahad Håam's letter appeared in the following issue. The popular Yiddish writer Morderkhai Spektor published a piece with the decisive title "*Der Yid* is a Yid."<sup>34</sup> Spektor began his article with a Talmudic tone: In itself, Ahad Håam's question is no question at all.

But since every question [*kashe*] must have a solution [*terets*], we may answer in the same way that the rabbi used to answer his kindergarten students when learning Torah with translation [*taytsh*]:

"- Rabbi, what is 'Moshe'?" – "Moshe' is Moshe" [*Moyshe iz taytsh Moyshe*].  
 "- Rabbi, who is 'Der Yid'?" – "Der Yid' is a Yid" [*Der Yid iz taytsh a yid*].

And what a Yid is – well, that every child knows.<sup>35</sup>

The rest of the article repeats the already familiar arguments regarding the benefit of and justification for writing in Yiddish. Therefore, the opening of Spektor's article, with his translation-based tautology, holds the greatest interest for our purposes.

445 Spektor used the epistemological structure of traditional Jewish education in order to answer Ahad Håam's question. The study in the "Kheyder," the eastern European Jewish elementary education for boys, focused on acquiring reading knowledge of biblical and rabbinic Hebrew. The learning process relied on frag-  
 450 mentary and literal translation of the Pentateuch to medieval Yiddish, a translation known as Taytsh (originally a variation on *Duetsch* > *daytsh* > *taytsh*, but later came to mean "translation" more generally). A paraphrase on such translation may be represented thus: "*Vayedaber 'Adonai* – and God said – '*el Moshe* – to Moshe – *le'emor* – so to speak." This, instead of a comprehensive translation, such as in the King James version: "And the Lord spoke unto  
 455 Moses, saying." The symmetrical structure of the fragmented translation requires a Yiddish substitute for every Hebrew component of the sentence at the expense of a comprehensible Yiddish syntax. In the event of proper nouns, however, the same word might appear twice, once as the biblical origin and then as part of the translated text, thus creating a tautological trans-  
 460 lation, as is the case in Spektor's example: *Moshe = Moshe*.

The resulting text of such translation is a lingual hybrid, in which either language depends on the other in an inextricable weave and which tears the sen-  
 465 tence apart and breaks its syntax. It thus enables only a fragmentary understand- ing of the biblical verse, all the while presenting an effect of an unquestionable truth:  $a = a$ ,  $b = b$ . And indeed, so does Spektor conclude: "*Der Yid* is a Yid. And what a Yid is – well, that every child knows." Nevertheless, immediately there-  
 after he qualifies his assessment:

470 Truth be told, there are Jews who aside from the fact that they call themselves Jews, are actually anything else but Jewish, – but these are not the Jews we're talking about here. We refer to those Jews who love the Jew with all their hearts, willing to sacrifice their lives for their people ["folk"], to help with all their might, to rejoice in their people's joys and suffer in its miseries, and nothing is too heavy or too precious in their striving to help their brothers, to cheer them up, or sweeten their bitter lives.

475 Spektor continues and asks how Ahad Håam can purport to act in favour of the people, while hating its language, "for without love, without the holy fire and passion towards the people and their language, the writer would never be able to benefit the people." He concludes:

480 No matter how hard they try to rip the beloved mother tongue from the heart of the Jew, they will never succeed. This is a lost cause. Whether a simple Jew or an educated one, whenever he tells a Jewish joke, or reminisces in simple Yiddish over his childhood, looking in his eye you could clearly see the sweet holy fire of love for the mother tongue. Oh how a Jewish heart fills with tears when one sings or listens to a Yiddish song!<sup>36</sup>

Here too, as in Ravnitsky and Meirzamen's responses, and as appeared in Sigmund Werner and Shmuel Rosenfeld's letters of support, the term "folk" ties together a category of class with national contours. Its description as "yidishe" further ignores the dual meaning of Jewish and Yiddish. The definite Jew's heart is a heart filled with tears when hearing a Yiddish song and is overcome with love towards Yiddish and towards its speakers; and the writer who seeks to express his love towards the people, the simple masses, the "folk," speaks to them in their mother tongue which is his mother tongue as well. Thus, the writer is at one and the same time a part of the "folk" ethnically, but distinct from it in terms of class.

What allows this thoroughly contradictory text to stand, and even, apparently, to provide the final ruling in the polemic generated by Ahad Håam, is the tautological epistemology that Spektor presented at its opening: "the Yid is a Yid." Indeed, no one could argue otherwise. But the tautology that informs and activates Spektor's argument is not limited to the symmetric and fragmented translation, but also, perhaps even more effectively, to the broader logic that dictates his definition of a Jew. A Jew, according to Spektor, is he who loves the Jew wholeheartedly. A true Jewish heart is a heart that cries when hearing a Yiddish song or laughs when hearing a Yiddish joke – it is a heart that *kvells*.

The rhetorical construct based on an affective logic is also fundamentally tautological. Influenced by European Romanticism,<sup>37</sup> nineteenth-century Jewish intellectuals too viewed emotions as natural and authentic, and not as a result of a particular ideological and discursive phenomenon.<sup>38</sup> The imagined authenticity of emotions does not allow for them to be challenged through analytical categories exterior to the affective logic. The declarations "a Jew is someone I love," or "a Jew is someone who loves a Jew" serve as amorphous definitions that cannot be anchored in any prescriptive category (religion, language, culture, biological relation, etc.), yet they form an appearance of a holistic and impenetrable truth, complying with the symmetrical aesthetic of equality/equation: a Jew = a Jew.

In other words, Spektor crystallized the affective, political logic that had already begun appearing in the earlier months of *Der Yid's* publication, searching for the proper way to articulate a nationalist ideology on the basis of the eastern European Jewish vernacular. Ahad Håam had pointed to a contradiction at the very core of the Yiddish-based Jewish nationalism. In order to tackle this fundamental contradiction, or in order to divert attention away from it, contributors to *Der Yid* used the term "folk" as a hybrid coin, at once denoting ethno-cultural and class-based meaning, not allowing for a sterile separation of the two yet at the same time preserving a sense of ambiguity, thus enabling a flexible, non-committed usage of it. Simultaneously, *Der Yid* exhibited a rise in the rhetorical use of love as a critical component of national ideology. Love between individuals defines their belonging to the same nation. Moreover, showing love towards the people is bound to rehabilitate it from its curse of ugliness, and thus it



strengthens the national ties between those who are under threat of detachment from the nation (the educated, the assimilated, those ashamed of their heritage). Love, and affect more generally, act as a discursive apparatus to appease the anxiety of a too-narrow exclusion and exclusivity, since its positive structure hints at inclusivity. Finally, love, as a motif that follows the affective logic of Romanticism, refutes the fears and ideological contradictions between an exclusivist Yiddish-based collective and an all-encompassing, global definition of Jewish nationalism by presenting a decisive, irrefutable, circular, and tautological truth.

### **The warm Jewish heart: *Der Yid's* sentimental politics**

About four months later, and ten months from the publication of the first issue of *Der Yid*, Ravnitsky moved back to Odessa, ceased serving as the editor, and the Zionist activist Yosef Luria filled his position.<sup>39</sup> Issue number 21, the first to come out under Luria's hands, opened with a second manifesto regarding the journal's goals and aspirations.<sup>40</sup> While Ravnitsky's manifesto focused on the need to provide readers with knowledge on national matters and encourage the development of a national consciousness, Luria's text was rife with affective language, addressing national sentiments and the urgent need to further invigorate them in order to unify all classes of the people. The journal, so Luria wrote, was born out of love for the "folk" and its values, and therefore it views it as its duty to "loyally serve the Zionist hope, to awaken the national consciousness [folks-bavustzayn], to educate the people to live a healthy national life, to arouse love for our old country to which all our hopes and memories are bound."<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the journal's aspiration according to Luria is to publish simple texts for the "folk's" masses, so that these would easily enter the hearts of the readers. The end of the manifesto again ties the dual meaning of the term "folk": "We hope that *Der Yid*, which speaks to the 'folk' in its language, would become a true national/popular journal [folks-tsaying] that will spread new life and light all over."<sup>42</sup> The text thus moves between the broad and narrow definitions of the Jewish/Yiddish "folk," and disguises these swings through an affective language, mentioning love, hope, sorrow, longing, pride, grief, and joy.

As if to continue this line of reasoning, the next two issues included one of the very few Yiddish articles ever published by the Hebraist intellectual and literary critic Joseph Klausner, who would replace Ahad Håam as the editor of the Hebrew periodical *Hashiloah* a few years later. Klausner's lengthy article, under the title "The Jewish Sentiment,"<sup>43</sup> had one basic argument. The "Jewish sentiment," he claimed, which preserved Judaism throughout the generations and brought Jews to give up their lives for the exalted national cause, had disappeared in recent generations, both among the intelligentsia and among the lower classes who occupy themselves only with what brings them immediate profit. He ended his article by emphasizing the necessary rehabilitation of the

national sentiment for the continuation of the nation: “If us, Zionists, will not revive and invigorate the old Jewish sentiment, the ancient Jewish idealism, the warm and wide Jewish heart – one day we might well have a land for the people, but no people for that land ...”<sup>44</sup> Thus Klausner brings us back to the central debate held at the time between territorial nationalism and diasporic nationalism, and the priorities of the two.

### Hebrew and Yiddish, between conflicting nationalist models

*Der Yid* appeared in the early years of the Zionist movement and was inspired by the rise of Jewish nationalism in Europe. Throughout its run, various conceptual and practical conflicts between different streams of Jewish nationalism found their expression on its pages. On inner-Zionist polemics, which erupted annually in the journal around the Zionist congresses, *Der Yid* generally tended to favour Ahad Håam’s position due to its institutional affiliation with “Hevrat Ahi’asaf.”<sup>45</sup> However, much more critically than its inner-Zionist political tendencies, the journal’s lingual choice of Yiddish presented a fundamental challenge in its configuration of Jewish nationalism. On the one hand, choosing Yiddish as a particularly eastern European language went in hand with the nationalist model of other nationalist movements in its immediate geographical surroundings, such as the Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, etc., which similarly sought to rely on the “simple people” and its vernacular language as a presumably authentic basis for cultural rejuvenation and national revival.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the lack of overlap between the simple people, “dos yidishe folk,” and the imagined whole of the national collective – a discrepancy particular to the Jewish condition due to the Jews’ geographical, cultural, and lingual dispersion – confronted *Der Yid*’s editors and writers with a conceptually unresolvable contradiction.<sup>47</sup> Like the dual-faced Janus,<sup>48</sup> this contradiction sustained a tension, generating a vibrant nationalist discourse. Yet, in order to maintain its energetic promise, this tension ought not to be resolved; thus *Der Yid*’s editors and contributors had to avoid clearly defining the Yiddish language’s role in their version of the national project, and mask over conflictual moments by using a rhetoric of sentimentalism.

Although the discursive trend portrayed here had begun before Ahad Håam published his critique, his public letter served as a catalyst for the conflicted probe into the relationships between concepts such as “the simple people,” “the folk,” “the Jew,” “Jews,” “Yiddish,” “mother tongue,” and so on. The heterogeneous and ambiguous term “dos folk” was used in dealing with, or, in fact, in systematically avoiding, the complicated issue of defining the Jewish nation. The love towards this “folk,” which drew murky borders as a demarcation for the collective, appeased anxieties of ideological conflicts and provided affective resources for the national project. Such trends became more and more apparent with *Der Yid*’s continued publication.

A final comparison between *Der Yid*'s position and that of *Ahad Håam* will be instructive. Both faced a principal contradiction with regards to the relationship between the national project and the lingual-cultural project that they espoused. They drew inspiration from similar relationships that they observed elsewhere around them in other rising nationalist movements in Europe, which relied on imagining the lower classes or the agricultural society as rooted in the nation's soil and as allowing an access into the national authentic soul, to the source of the ethnos, from which one could draw force for the national cause. Hebraist nationalism, and the Hebrew literature mobilized to its benefit, faced the gap that lies between the Volkist-Romanticist and particularistic element of national revival movements, on the one hand, and on the other, the means through which they sought to advance their aspirations – the Classicist, global, and a-particular Hebrew.<sup>49</sup> Against Romantic nationalism which relied on the vernacular, on reinvigorating the local, popular culture, Hebraists chose a classical language which was of prime fascination for non-Jewish, mostly Protestant theologians,<sup>50</sup> and thus acquired a universalistic, rather than particularistic aura. Moreover, from a Jewish perspective, the community bound together through Hebrew is demarcated by a theological tie and commitment to liturgy, praxis, and law, lacking other markers of nationalized concept of ethnicity such as vernacular language, culture, or shared locality.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, *Der Yid*, as well as other projects and movements that tied their national ideology with the lingual choice of Yiddish, avoided this obstacle by using Yiddish as a Volkist-Romanticist means to achieve a Volkist-Romanticist end, emphasizing its role as the people's vernacular as a vessel of the *Volk*'s soul. However, they, in return, faced gaps and discrepancies of their own, between their narrow, ethno-cultural definition of the people based on Yiddish, and the larger community which they recognized as being Jewish as well – Western European, Mediterranean, North African, and Middle Eastern Jews. These discrepancies and contradictions mirror the foundational gap in European nationalism between a culture and ethnicity and political nationalism which included a demand for sovereignty over a territory. Yet, in the Jewish context the abyss between an ethnic unity and a national claim to sovereignty spanned too wide, spreading globally over numerous languages and cultures.

In 1908, on the occasion of *Hashiloah*'s one hundredth issue, *Ahad Håam* published a reflection on the achievements and hindrances of the Zionist movement. The article, under the title “The Question Mark,”<sup>52</sup> opened with a quote of the same paragraph from *Hashiloah*'s manifesto, “*Tèudat Hashiloah*” quoted above, in which he described “the great question mark, which hovered over Judaism in the two previous generations and was then hidden away behind thick clouds.” That disturbing, concealed question was, I argued above, how to define and demarcate the Jewish collective. After quoting his own text from “*Te'udat Hashiloah*” *Ahad Håam* continued, accounting for what had transpired since its publication. A new phenomenon had been growing, “to increase the

excitement and enthusiasm at the expense of knowledge and reason.” That phenomenon, says Ahad Håam, was born in the first Zionist Congress in Basel,

645 and the ‘great question mark’ was hidden away again behind an even thicker cloud, a cloud of imaginations and fantasies, and there was no room anymore for those holding the flag of reason, such as *Hashiloah*, among the growing camp of those drunken with emotions.

Ahad Håam then describes the hardships and turbulences of the journal throughout those years, and wonders how come it survived. “Did it manage to resolve the great national questions of our present lives, of our past and our future, and therefore its audience grew fonder of it?” No, it did not, Ahad Håam answers frankly, yet argues that it is the journal’s insistence on constantly returning to that big “question mark” that sustained it.

655 This way of *Hashiloah* indeed cannot stir love and support in readers’ hearts. People, after all, prefer dozens of pleasant fantasies over one bitter truth, and thus they will always be mad at those who actively disperse the clouds and fog protecting them. But all the while, they cannot evade the deep and instinctive feeling, that those “dispersers” of clouds bring blessing and their work is crucially needed ...<sup>53</sup>

Ahad Håam thus positions *Hashiloah* as carrying the “flag of knowledge and reason” against all those enthusiasts, “drunken with emotions,” who seek to “stir love and support in the hearts” and therefore prefer to leave the clouds hiding “the great question mark” intact.<sup>54</sup> In other words, he defines the cultural project of *Hashiloah* as opposing nationalist sentimentalism and politics of affect such as that promoted by *Der Yid*. An intriguing moment in this regard is when Ahad Håam discusses the periodical’s turbulences. He mentions there specifically the change of editors, one of whom was Joseph Klausner, who provided the most extreme articulation of *Der Yid*’s affective politics in his aforementioned article “The Jewish Sentiment.” A concluding, comparative perspective on Ahad Håam and Klausner may therefore give us an important insight into the ties intertwining diasporic and territorialist nationalisms.

670 True, Ahad Håam rejected the populist, Yiddishist tendency, which, by its very fascination with the “simple people,” focused its attention on nurturing national consciousness in the diasporic setting and not investing energy in a territorial solution. Yet, neither did he dedicate any attention in his article (whose aim was to assess the progress of the Zionist movement!) to territorial sovereignty and its role in the national project. Klausner, on the other hand, who in his article in *Der Yid* brought the populist-Romanticist discourse to an unprecedented height, ended his article in an anticipation of a territorial sovereignty, as if saying: all diasporic efforts are nothing but preparation for sovereignty in Palestine. In other words, considering Ahad Håam’s Hebraist interest and involvement in diasporic life and Klausner’s populist, Yiddish-based, territorialist Zionism forces us to reassess some currently common premises. The unexpected and multidirectional shifts on both ostensibly opposing sides – the Yiddishist

and the Hebraist, the diasporist and the Zionist/territorialist – collapse the paradigmatic distinction which often positions Yiddish, diasporic culture, and class consciousness against elitist, Zionist, and territorialist Hebraism.

685 Thoroughly and hermetically distinguishing between Zionist-territorialist nationalism and diasporic nationalism thus becomes impossible. Similarly, allotting each nationalist model to a designated cultural ideology and language choice also fails to make sense. Not only do the two ostensible opposites share origins, as it were, but throughout their articulation, from the turn of the nineteenth century onwards, one could detect constant movement and instability of the presumed polarities. Diaspora as an analytical category, I submit, presents a conceptual and political alternative to inherited paradigms and functions as a productive intervention. It does so, however, only so long as it avoids replicating binary constructions, such as those of Hebrew versus Yiddish, or Zionism versus diasporic nationalism, and only so long as it pays attention to the heterogeneity and the fragmentary instability of terminological assemblages such as: people, nation and nationalism; the Jewish sentiment and the Jewish mind; Yiddish, Jewishness, Judaism, Hebrew, and Hebraism; the indefinite Jew and the definite *Yid*.

## 700 Notes

1. Werner, “Briv.” Translations from Yiddish and Hebrew are mine.
2. Miron, *A Traveler Disguised*. See particularly the chapter “A Language as Caliban,” 34–66.
3. On the German racial-philological discourse on Yiddish, see Grossman, *The Discourse on Yiddish*.
- 705 4. Mendelssohn, ‘*Or linetivah*, 20.
5. See Arendt, “The Jew as Pariah.” The abjectness and dirtiness of the Jews, particularly eastern European Jews, in the cultural imagination of the Enlightenment is documented in Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*. Travellers and “explorers” described the Jews as dirty, “swarming” Polish and Lithuanian cities (335, 340), a “nuisance” (351), wholly unenlightened (p. 29), and overall “a living satire of the Chosen Race” (114).
- 710 6. Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish Culture*; Fishman, *The Rise of Yiddish*; Trachtenberg, *The Revolutionary Roots*; Dan Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*.
7. Bartal, *Kozak uvedui*, 9.
8. Engel, “Why **be** Jewish?”
9. Notable examples are Boyarin and Boyarin, “Diaspora”; and Raz-Krakotzkin, “Exile within Sovereignty.” Critiques of this shift in the field, see in Endelman, “Legitimization of Diaspora”; Engel, “Crisis and Lachrymosity.”
- 715 10. Among other works examining Hebrew and Yiddish literatures in light of diasporist sensibilities, see: Kronfeld, *Margins of Modernism*; Seidman, *Marriage Made in Heaven*; Dekoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage*; Norich, “Hebraism and Yiddishism”; Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms*; Pinsker, *Literary Passports*; Brenner, *Lingering Bilingualism*; Frieden, *Travels in Translation*.
- 720 11. Such a distinction was made most clearly in Dan Miron’s work, where he argues that Hebrew writing

would usually, albeit not always, project itself within Zionist perspectives and regard itself as the future cultural matrix of an independent, Hebrew-speaking



community in Palestine [... and Yiddishism] would project itself within a perspective of Jewish cultural autonomy in the form of self-aware, self-educating, and to an extent, also politically self-controlling Yiddish speaking communities. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity*, 293–4

- 725 Anita Norich and Chana Kronfeld have challenged this view, Kronfeld calling for a joint historiography of the two, and Norich warning against an essentialist division between Hebrew and Yiddish, while also steering away from a simplistic unified view of the two which invokes a romantic image of Jewish national unity. Kronfeld, “The Joint Literary Historiography,” 22; Norich, “Hebraism and Yiddishism,” 335.
- 730 12. For an instructive study which moves beyond the binary of diasporism versus territorialism, see in Amir Banbaji’s work on Abramovitch, despite Banbaji’s focus on the Hebrew works of Abramovitch’s bilingual oeuvre. Banbaji, “Ben semel le’alegoryah.”
13. For a detailed account of Ahad Håam and his writings, see Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*.
14. Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-state*, 91–2.
15. Hever, “Struggle over the Canon.”
- 735 16. Zilbertsvayg, *Ahad Håam*, 7; Wisse, “Pintele Yid,” 35.
17. Zilbertsvayg, *Ahad Håam*, 8.
18. Ahad Håam, “Lemar Y. H. Ravnitsky.”
19. Ravnitzky, “Der Yid.”
20. Ahad Håam, “Tèdat Hashiloah,” 2–3.
21. *Ibid.*, 1, 2, 5.
- 740 22. I use term Yiddishness here in order to avoid yet another over-determined, ambiguous term – Yiddishkayt. Yiddishkayt invokes overlapping denotations of particularly eastern European Jewish sentimentality, identity, and familiarity, which again relies on the dual and inextricable definitions of Jewish and Yiddish, or Jewish as Yiddish, or vice versa.
23. Zilbertsvayg, *Ahad Håam*, 13.
24. Ahad Håam, “Ver iz der yid?”
- 745 25. Such terminological overlap in the notion of “the people” was characteristic, as Natalie Zemon Davis demonstrated, also to early modern France, where the people, “*le peuple*,” could refer either to the entire populace of the French kingdom, or to a narrower group, the “simple people,” the non-noble, the commoners, thus tying together notions of ethnicity and class. Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture*, 190.
- 750 26. In her article on *Der Yid*, Ruth Wisse indeed views Ahad Håam’s critique as repeating maskilic and reformist distaste for Yiddish, neglecting to pay close attention to his concerns regarding broader implications of using Yiddish for a nationalist discourse. Wisse, “Pintele Yid.”
27. *Ibid.*, 3.
28. Ravnitzky, “Ver iz a yid.”
29. *Ibid.*, 3.
- 755 30. *Ibid.*
31. Meirzamen, “Briv.”
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. Spektor, “*Der Yid* iz a yid.”
35. *Ibid.*, 4.
- 760 36. *Ibid.*
37. See Olga Litvak’s work on sentimentalism and Romanticism in the Jewish Haskalah movement, Litvak, *Haskalah*.
38. On the politics and economies of emotions, see Ahmed, “Affective Economies.”

39. On Yosef Luria's position towards Yiddish: Fishman, *Rise of Yiddish Culture*, 41–2.
40. Luria, “*Der Yid*.”
41. *Ibid.*, 1.
42. *Ibid.*, 2.
43. Klausner, “*Dos yidishe gefil*.”
- 765 44. *Ibid.*, 2nd instalment, 5.
45. Although the difference of opinions within the Zionist movement crystallize into a full-fledged conflict only a little later (with Ahad Håam and Max Nordau's polemic in *Hashiloah* and with the shaping of the “Democratic Fraction” in 1901–1902), the gist of the disagreement between Nordau and Herzl on the one hand and Ahad Håam on the other, were well known from the very early days of the Zionist movement. This was expressed, for example, in Ahad Håam's articles, in which he articulated his claims and answered his critics: “*Yalkut katan*” and “*Lishe'elat hayom*.” On Ahad Håam's political vision, see Shumsky, *The Nation State*, 90–123.
- 770 46. A monumental survey and analysis of these ethno-linguistic aspirations and their expression in nationalist discourse and ideology can be found in Kamusella, *The Politics of Language*.
- 775 47. For Ruth Wisse, who adopts an affirmative nationalist perspective in her analysis of this journal, these fundamental contradictions and incompatibility of Jewish nationalism with European notions of nationalism is what proves the presumed authenticity and “realness” of Jewish nationalism and particularism. She writes: “these apparently paradoxical qualities of *Der yid* are no more than expressions of Jewishness, which sustains a great many internal contradictions, and appears to be contradictory only when judged by worldviews outside itself.” Wisse, “*Pintele yid*,” 57.
- 780 48. Nairn, “*The Modern Janus*.”
49. On this gap between the Romanticist goal and Classicist means, see Feldman, *Modernism and Cultural Transfer*, 11.
50. See, for example, Ilany, *In Search of the Hebrew People*.
- 785 51. On this ethnolinguistic conceptualization of nationalism, see, for example, Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 100.
52. Ahad Håam, “*Siman hashe'ela*.”
53. *Ibid.*, p. 398; my italics.
54. While his description of the “emotionally drunk” may refer, as is the common view in Hebrew literary scholarship, to the proponents of Hebraist, nationalist-Romanticist Vitalism, such as Micha Yosef Berdichevsky in his polemic with Ahad Håam in *Hashiloah*, Ahad Håam's participation in the debate in *Der Yid* suggests that his critique here spanned broader than his disagreement with Berdichevsky regarding the role of *belles-lettres* in the national project, and included all Romanticist tendencies of the Zionist movement. See Hever, “*Struggle over the Canon*.”
- 790 795

### Disclosure statement

Q1 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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