

To Phyllis

Two are better off than one (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

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Preface

Legend has it that the phoenix, a fabulous bird, which periodically regenerated itself, lived in Arabia. When it reached the end of its life at five hundred years, it burned itself on a pyre of flames, and from its ashes a new phoenix arose. As a sacred symbol in the Egyptian religion, beginning with the ancient *bennu* bird, the phoenix represented the sun, which dies each night and rises again each morning. According to Herodotus's account in the fifth century BCE, the residents of Heliopolis told a story that the bird, whose plumage was a brilliant scarlet and gold ("phoenix" is the Greek word for crimson, a deep purplish red) and which resembled an eagle came all the way from Arabia, bringing the ashes of the parent bird in a ball of myrrh to deposit them there in the Egyptian Temple of the Sun. The Persian *huma*, also known as the "bird of paradise," was similar to the Egyptian phoenix. The phoenix appeared on the coinage of the late Roman Empire as a symbol of the Eternal City; it also appealed to emergent Christianity and heraldry. Interpreted in Western literature as an allegory of death and resurrection, references to the phoenix surface, among other sources, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Chaucer's *The Ploughman's Tale*; Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Henry VI*; Byron's *English and Scotch Reviewers*; Shaw's *Cashel Byron's Profession*; and D.H. Lawrence's collection of posthumous writings, *Phoenix*. More recently, it appeared notably in Eudora Welty's short story "A Worn Path"; Edith Nesbit's *The Phoenix and the Carpet*; Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*; and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.¹

The phoenix is present in Jewish sources as well. The book of *Job* includes the phrase "I shall multiply days as the *chol*" (29:18). A *midrash* on this biblical text speaks of a *chol* bird which lives for a thousand years, then dies a fiery red, and is later resurrected from its ashes. According to this *midrash*, Eve, upset after eating from the forbidden fruit in the

Garden of Eden and jealous of creatures still innocent, tempted all the other creatures of the garden to do the same. Only the *chol* (phoenix) resisted. As a reward, the phoenix was given eternal life, living in peace for a thousand years and then being reborn from an egg to continue to live in peace again, repeating the cycle eternally (*Bereishit Rabba* 19:5, with a similar version in *Midrash Shmuel* 12:2). Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, better known as Rashi, commenting on the verse in the book of *Job*, declared that death has no power over the phoenix, “because it did not taste the fruit from the tree of knowledge.” Rashi repeated this when the verse was cited in the Babylonian Talmud tractate *Sanhedrin* (108b) under the noun *avarshina* for *chol*. In another *midrash*, cited on that page in *Sanhedrin*, Noah found the *avarshina* sleeping in a hidden part of the ark. “Don’t you want food?” he asked. The bird replied: “I saw that you were busy, and I decided not to burden you.” Noah said: “May it be God’s will that you will not die.”²

Jacques Lipchitz, the first Cubist sculptor, placed a phoenix atop his last work of art. Toward the end of his life, he had been commissioned by the Hadassah Women’s Zionist Organization of America to prepare a sculpture for the Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem. At his death in 1974, what Lipchitz called “The Tree of Life” had not been finished. Four years later, the statue was completed by Lipchitz’s assistants, under the supervision of his widow. This towering artwork includes depictions of Noah, the sacrifice of Isaac with an angel restraining Abraham, the three Patriarchs, Moses and the burning bush, and a phoenix rising from the burning bush. Lipchitz’s phoenix is holding the Ten Commandments. In the renowned artist’s view, this sculpture represented the history of the Jewish people.³

Death and resurrection (*t’chiyat hameitim* in Hebrew), symbolized by the phoenix, is a core doctrine of traditional Jewish theology. Orthodox Jews believe that during the Messianic Age, the Holy Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, the Jewish people ingathered from the far corners of the earth, and the bodies of the dead brought back to life and reunited with their souls. The rabbinic sages, simplifying the concept of bodily resurrection, posed this analogy: A tree, once alive with blossoms and fruit, full of the sap of life, stands cold and still in the winter. With the coming of spring, God resurrects nature, green leaves appear, and colorful fruits burst from their seed. The most dramatic portrayal of this bodily revival is depicted in the “Valley of Dry Bones” prophecy in

chapter 37 of *Ezekiel*, where the “son of man” is told by the Lord God to say unto this “whole house of Israel”: “Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O My people; and I will bring you into the Land of Israel.”⁴

Arnold J. Toynbee, in his analysis of the rise and fall of twenty-six civilizations in the course of human history, did not think so. As early as 1934, in book one of the eventual twelve-volume *A Study of History* (1934–1961), his discussion of Jewish culture began with this sentence: “There remains the case where victims of religious discrimination represent an extinct society which only survives as a fossil. . . . By far the most notable is one of the fossil remnants of the Syriac Society, the Jews.” A fossil, in scientific terms, retains its original shape and semblance without the breath of life; its very existence is an anachronism. Two years later, after meeting with Adolf Hitler, Toynbee told British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and the Foreign Office that he believed the German *Führer* was “sincere” in disclaiming any desire to conquer Europe. In the 1950s this erudite research professor of international history at the London School of Economics, a firm believer that history was shaped by spiritual forces, asserted that Jews and Judaism did not fit into any definition of nation, race, or religion. Jews were not a nation because they lived for centuries without a land and the Jewish people were scattered throughout the world. They were not a race because they accepted converts. Nor were they solely a religion, because Jews counted atheists among their numbers. According to Toynbee, the biblical Chosen People, following the spirit of their Hebrew God—provincial and exclusive—viewed its divine mission with arrogance, not as a burden of obligation to be carried with humility.⁵

The Jewish presence on earth for more than four thousand years notwithstanding, Toynbee was certain that the living Jewish historical drama had come to a halt with the rise of Christianity, when the Jewish people forfeited its political independence in the Land of Israel. With the Fifth and Twelfth Roman legions’ crushing of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 CE), Jewish futurism died down, a people now relegated to the dustbin of history. Rather than what Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the prime rabbinic voice of Modern Orthodoxy, would later call “a developing, destiny-conscious Jewish nation,” the British academic, whom many critics considered more of a Christian moralist than a historian, viewed the Jewish people as a mummified community that lived on in

memories and thought in retrospective terms. Given Toynbee's conviction about the absence of continuity and creativity within that people, joined to his preference for some mystical, universal religious civilization rather than what he deemed "obsolete" national sovereignty, it is not surprising that he opposed the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state.⁶

In Toynbee's view, delivered while addressing a Council on Foreign Relations select audience on April 20, 1948 in New York City, "a despotic government by a third party" in Palestine was "needed for an indefinite time to come," with the halting of Jewish immigration "at some definite time in the future." This air of pontification, coming but three weeks before the end of the British mandate for Palestine, rested upon Toynbee's belief that "the backgrounds of neither the Jews nor the Arabs contain the tradition of a national state." The Jews, "primarily a central or eastern European people," he described as "a penalized minority living in ghetto conditions," theirs "an autocratic tradition, and the political education they received was not therefore very good in gentile [*sic*] western terms." The Ottoman Empire's millet system, communities separated by religion while living side by side, had worked well for minorities in the Middle East, but the western institution of nationalism "poisoned the situation." The Balfour Declaration of 1917, when the British government pledged to facilitate "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," "injected still another minority" into the area; Palestine was "sold twice over to two different peoples." Toynbee agreed on that occasion with the Jewish international banker Frank Altschul of Lazard Frères, who believed that "passionate Zionism might begin to fade in the United States" if the resettlement worldwide of Holocaust survivors were carried out on humanitarian grounds. Asked for a final comment, Toynbee replied that this was "certainly the first step in the solution of the problem and a realistic one."⁷

On January 18, 1955, Abba Eban, then Israel's ambassador to the United States, coined the phrase "The Toynbee Heresy" when addressing the Israel Institute at Yeshiva University. Toynbee's was the first broad, "vehement assault" by an historian on the entire Jewish historic process, he observed, commencing with the supersessionist theologian's belief that the birth of Christianity left the Jewish mission fulfilled and exhausted. Fanaticism was the one authentically Jewish

idea, in Toynbee's eyes, not what Eban termed the "three circles" of Hebrew morality—individual conscience, social justice, and universal peace. For Toynbee, the reborn State of Israel, specifically the youth of its *kibbutzim*, was the abode of "a Janus figure, half American farmer-technician half Nazi sicarius." He portrayed Jewish survival (in the vein of many antisemites) as the result of an excessive ritualism and of financial astuteness, instead of an affirmative spiritual dedication. The tenacity with which world Jewry worked for the Restoration in Eretz Israel by mundane political and military means, usurping what Toynbee charged was the Divine Will to restore Israel to Palestine in the messianic era, invited the British professor's greatest indignation for its rejection of "political quietism." Omitting any thought of "international equity" allowing for Jewish independence and a far broader Arab emancipation, and neglecting the Zionist theme in the idealistic literature of Great Britain and the United States, Toynbee refused to accept that, alongside nine sovereign Arab states, it would be an "authentic tragedy" if the people which had suffered the Nazi onslaught most were not established in national freedom after the Holocaust. The State of Israel stands firm, Eban concluded, and "the pride of exaltation has come into the tents of Jacob everywhere."⁸

Toynbee's celebrity status, leading to an invitation to lecture at McGill University, in turn sparked a famous debate on January 31, 1961, with Israel's then Ambassador to Canada, the thirty-nine-year old Yaacov Herzog. Challenging the illustrious guest before a packed Hillel House and a live radio broadcast across the country on Toynbee's declaration in volume eight of his *A Study of History* that Israel's treatment of Arabs in its 1948 War of Independence was morally equivalent to, and actually an even greater tragedy than, the Nazis' "Final Solution of the Jewish Question," and on his repeated assertion that Judaism was a fossil, Herzog proudly defended his people's vitality and creativity over the centuries, and pressed the prominent intellectual to explain how Israel's actions during a war of self-defense against five invading Arab armies and the ensuing unfortunate uprooting of Arab communities could be compared to the Nazis' systematic slaughter of one people in Europe during World War II. Many nations had committed atrocities throughout history, including the massacres of Jewish civilians, Herzog noted, so why single out Israel's Jewish citizens—no more and no less guilty than any other modern state of crimes, and crimes that were condemned by wider Israeli society?

While declaring that “Israel has become defossilized as you can defrost a car,” Toynbee continued to insist that, due to persecution and isolation, Jews had not played an influential role in much of history. Ultimately, after Toynbee acknowledged a continuous Jewish residence in the Land of Israel and “the continuous memory of the Jews for Palestine and for their return,” Herzog invited the seventy-one-year-old guest to Israel, to witness its “defossilization” firsthand, Jewry’s “passage through the Valley of Death down the ages” to where “we have come to life in our time.” The leading Canadian dailies commended Herzog as the victor, Toynbee’s wife overheard telling him afterwards, “I told you not to debate!”⁹

The “revival of the fossil remnant,” eminent Hebrew University philosopher Natan Rotenstreich wrote one year after that Montreal stand-off, had in fact pitted traditional Jewish memory and self-understanding against the modern “return of the Jews to history” as conscious actors in the shaping of their own political destiny. European Jewry’s quest for civil emancipation had witnessed over time a protracted struggle whose dialectic, in Rotenstreich’s view, inevitably led to Zionism and the restoration of Jewish political sovereignty in the Land of Israel. Counter to Toynbee’s “decreed petrification” of Zionism, a movement seen as the agent of a Syriac civilization and an “archaic” turning back to the past with the revival of the Hebrew language, Rotenstreich charged that this British historian ignored the special connection between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel. Writing in the spirit of an Arab nationalist, Toynbee’s calumnious indictment equated Zionism with Nazi ideology as “naked Neo-Paganism,” *Herrenvolk* racism, and a thirst for *Lebensraum*, “threatening the integrity and independence of the heart of the Arabic world.” Nor did he mention the international background to Zionism’s will and its triumph, most notably the UN decision on November 29, 1947, to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. Jewish nationalism, Rotenstreich pointed out, aimed at not only liberation from political subjection, but the creation of the social basis for national life.¹⁰

Palestine’s 600,000 Jews played the vital role in this denouement. Viewing Zionism as the legitimate movement of national return by an indigenous people intimately connected to that land for over three millennia and revolting against the litany of victimhood which had plagued Jewish history for centuries past, they had transformed the country from a primitive and corrupt Ottoman backwater into what they

rightly called *hamedina baderekh* (“the state-in-the-making”). Its firm infrastructure already established in the 1930’s, the *yishuv* (Palestinian Jewish community) continued to flourish economically during World War II, with impetus particularly given to industrial progress.¹¹ Its ongoing achievement thereafter under the aegis of the Jewish Agency for Palestine deeply impressed international investigatory committees and ultimately the required majority at the UN General Assembly, which endorsed a Jewish commonwealth in November 1947.

David Ben-Gurion carried the budding nation on the shoulders of his imagination and the wings of his vision. This phoenix rising on the shores of the Mediterranean due especially to his unwavering will to make the Jewish state a reality, the militant chairman of the Jewish Agency executive pressed forward with the feeling of *ein breira* (“we have no alternative”), a sense which captured the hearts of the collective entity whose back was to the wall in a war for national survival. Converted by the Holocaust, world Jewry, spearheaded by essential help from the five million Jews of America, embraced the Zionist thesis that their anomalous position as a homeless people had made the Jews expendable in the years of the *Shoah*, and that they, like all other peoples, had the right to national self-determination. A wave of support from non-Jews for realizing the Zionist dream mounted in these same three short years, dramatically confirmed by the fact that of the thirty-three countries which voted at the General Assembly for Jewish independence, a full thirteen were Latin American or Caribbean.

Compelled to fight and to win a war of liberation, the Jews of Palestine, with the heavy loss in battle of a full one percent of their population, proved to the Western world and a doubting Anglo-American military establishment that they were indeed a nation, not only a religious, or at best an ethnic, community as Prime Minister Clement Attlee, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, and other mandarins, particularly in Britain, widely held at the time. Thus Ben-Gurion’s last word to Richard Crossman, when the young, new Labourite MP for Coventry East and a member on the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine left that embattled country: “Remember we are not the Jews of the Bronx or Whitechapel. We are the ones who refused to live there. And if you want to get us right, imagine yourself out here, fighting for your national existence, and calculate that we shall behave as you would behave if you were in our situation.”¹²

The chapters in this volume examine a few facets of the drama. I have briefly touched on them in the final part of my trilogy on the rise of the State of Israel between Hitler's coming to power in January 30, 1933, and Ben-Gurion's declaration of its independence on May 14, 1948, but remain convinced that they merit full exposition. Chapter 1 reviews the pivotal World Zionist Congress of December 1946, while Chapter 2 details the significant but overlooked input of Jacob Robinson in Israel's sovereign revival. One of American Jewry's crucial contributions in this saga, the raising of an incredible \$50 million in early 1948 to save a Jewish state, is the subject of Chapter 3. The efforts of Carl Eichelberger, a forgotten champion of the UN and of Israel's rebirth, are discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 investigates the efforts to create a truce and trusteeship for Palestine. Judah Leib Magnes's attempt in the last year of his life to create a federated state resting on Jewish-Arab community councils in Palestine (first published in *The American Jewish Archives* 71:11 [2019]), as well as the question of its relevance in today's Middle East, is analyzed in Chapter 6.

My late parents of cherished memory, Rabbi Murry S. Penkower and Lillian Stavisky Penkower, first taught me about what Yaacov Herzog called "the timeless identity of the Jew" over the generations. My family—children, grandchildren, siblings, and their spouses—is always a boundless joy. Professor Michael Popkin, former Touro College colleague and esteemed friend, again deserves my great thanks for reviewing the text for clarity. This volume of essays is dedicated to my dear wife, Phyllis Mayer. The new light of my life, she is a gifted listener and an exceptional companion. Her charm, her sensitivity, and her warmth make each day a wonder.

Some final thoughts: Having recently celebrated its seventy-second anniversary, Israel's population of 9.9 million (74.1 percent Jews and 21 percent Arabs) can justly point to its Jewish and democratic character, together with a record of extraordinary achievement in technology, the arts, and other fields. Biblical sources about the Lord's giving the Land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants as an "everlasting holding" (*Genesis* 17:8), and the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos concerning the Jewish revival there and the ingathering of the exiles, rang true for Truman, a devout Baptist, and still do for many, Jews and non-Jews alike. At the same time, the Jewish nation-state's right to exist, although having received 3.3 million immigrants from more than

150 countries since its establishment and sharing its advances for benefit worldwide, is yet denied by Toynbee's antisemitic successors, many of whom are also engaged in Holocaust denial, demonizing Jews and Israel as Nazis, employing modern guises of the Medieval blood libel and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and engaged in efforts to make the practice of Judaism in Europe impossible.¹³

Still, after two thousand years, the one people whose continuous historic memory—recalling the past but also identified with faith for the future—comprehends all the cycles of civilization which Toynbee recorded is reunited with its original inheritance. Indeed, Israel's remarkable victory in the Six-Day War of June 5–10, 1967, against the combined armed forces of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, seemed to have changed even Toynbee. Coming twenty years after the famed historian had been featured on a *Time* magazine cover, he told Herzog that when he heard Israel's soldiers at the Western Wall on the British radio, "I began to grasp the nature of your bonds with this city of Jerusalem and this country." "How could you understand them?" asked Herzog, as the BBC broadcast in Hebrew the liberation of Judaism's holiest site and the soldiers did not speak English. "In such things, I have historical antennae," Toynbee replied. "I heard the voices and I understood."¹⁴ Flaws are present, as would be the case with any living organism, but the State of Israel, the Third Jewish Commonwealth testimony to the greatest single collective affirmation of Jewish life in two millennia, remains committed to justice, compassion, and human dignity. Galvanizing Jews to renewed purpose, its message is crystalline clear: as a phoenix ascending of ancient legend, destruction can be followed by redemption, and even the Holocaust, the most unfathomable agony of all generations, by hope, renewal and national rebirth.

Jerusalem
Tish'a B'Av, 5780

Endnotes

1. W. Bridgwater and S. Kurtz, eds., "Phoenix," *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1963), 1655; "Phoenix," *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1971), 2156; Mary F. McDonald, "Phoenix Redivivus," *The Phoenix* 14:4 (Winter 1960): 187–206; R. van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix According to Classical and Early Christian Sources*

- (Leiden, 1972); *D. H. Lawrence Review* 5:3 (Fall 1972). It has been suggested that the name Phoenicia means “land of purple,” since Tyrian purple (a dye derived from sea snails) may have been first used by the ancient Phoenicians of Tyre in today’s Lebanon as early as 1570 BCE. On a related note, Phoenix, Arizona, was named such because it was a frontier station settled upon the ruins of a Native American site. The first European inhabitants decided to name their city in concurrence with the idea, recalling the legendary phoenix, that from the ruins of one city another was created.
2. Dan Pagis, “The Birth of Immortality: The Motif of the Phoenix in the Midrash and the Aggadah,” in *The Hebrew Gymnasium in Jerusalem: Jubilee Book*, ed. Ch. Merchavia (Jerusalem, 1962), 74–90; M. R. Niehoff, “The Phoenix in Rabbinic Literature,” *Harvard Theological Review* 89:3 (July 1996): 245–265; Nosson Slifkin, *Sacred Monsters: Mysterious and Mythical Creatures of Scripture, Talmud and Midrash* (Jerusalem, 2007), chap. 9. The equating of the *chol* and the phoenix is controversial, however, since the word *chol* has been translated as phoenix, sand, and palm tree in different versions. Other variants of the term cited in *Sanhedrin* 108b include *orshina*, *avrashina*, and *urshina*.
 3. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)*, August 17, 1978. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, informed Lipchitz’s widow that the *midrashic* commentary describes the *chol* as the phoenix—“hence the phoenix is a Jewish symbol.” Dovid Zaklikowski, “How Jacques Lipchitz Found G-d: The Rabbi and the Sculptor,” https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/393257/jewish/How-Jacques-Lipchitz-Found-G-d.htm. Also see Zofja Ameisenowa and W. F. Mainland, “The Tree of Life in Jewish Iconography,” *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 2:4 (April 1939): 326–345.
 4. Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning* (New York, 1969). This spirit moved then Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin, when signing the Camp David Accords on September 17, 1978, with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on the White House lawn, to recall learning as a young boy *Psalm* 126, with its divine promise of Zion’s restoration, from his parents, who perished in the Holocaust along with the rest of his family from Brisk (Brest-Litovsk). Begin’s father went to his death voicing his faith in God and singing the Zionist anthem *HaTikva*. And another example: Each year, the Jews of Rome keep the stubs of the candles that they use on Tish’a B’Av (the ninth day of Av), the annual fast day in the Jewish calendar marking the destruction of the two Holy Temples in Jerusalem (586 BCE. and 70 CE), as well as remembering other tragedies such as the martyrdom of the Rhineland Jewish communities during the First Crusade (1096), the burning of the Talmud in Paris (1242), the

expulsion of Jews from England (1290) and Spain (1492), and the Holocaust, in order to use them a few months later to light the menorah on Hanukah. Hanukah is the eight-day celebration, beginning on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev in the Jewish calendar, marking the rededication of the Holy Temple during the second century BCE, when the Jews had successfully risen against their Syrian-Greek oppressors of the Seleucid dynasty under Antiochus IV during the Maccabean Revolt. Herein lies the secret of Jewish endurance and Jewish eternity.

5. Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1934), section 7, 135–139; William H. McNeill, *Arnold Toynbee: A Life* (Oxford, 1989), chap. 8; Francis Neilson, “Arnold Toynbee’s ‘Study of History,’” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 14, supplement (April 1955): 1–77. In later printings, a footnote to the 1934 volume was appended which read “Mr. Toynbee wrote this part of the book before the Nazi persecution of the Jews opened a new and terrible chapter of the story. . . .” The subject was extensively debated, with input from critics, in his vol. 12, *Reconsiderations* (Oxford, 1961). After debates with Conservative rabbi Jacob B. Agus in particular, Toynbee changed his mind somewhat to declare that Judaism was a body of belief that had constantly reacted to philosophical challenges presented by Christianity and had continued to grow.
6. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Abraham’s Journey* (New York, 2008), 5. Also see Franz Borkenau, “Toynbee’s Judgment of the Jews: Where the Historian Misread History,” *Commentary* 19 (May 1955): 421–427; Kenneth W. Thompson, “Toynbee’s Approach to History Reviewed,” *Ethics* 65:4 (July 1955): 287–303; Eliezer Berkovitz, *Judaism: Fossil or Ferment?* (New York, 1956); Maurice Samuel, *The Professor and the Fossil* (New York, 1956); Jacob L. Talmon, *The Nature of Jewish History—Its Universal Significance* (London, 1957); and Oskar K. Rabinowicz, *Arnold Toynbee on Judaism and Zionism: A Critique* (London, 1975). Also informative is the discussion between Toynbee and Solomon Zeitlin in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* 52:1 (July 1961): 1–34. For a recent critique of Toynbee’s thought, see Jonathan Sacks, “On Creative Minorities,” 2013 Erasmus Lecture, *First Things*, January 2014.
7. Discussion Group, April 20, 1948, Records of Groups, Box XV-B, Council on Foreign Relations Archives, New York City.
8. Abba Eban, “The Toynbee Heresy,” in *Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews*, ed. Ashley Montagu (Boston, 1956), reprinted in *Israel Studies* 11:1 (Spring 2006): 91–107.
9. Yaacov Herzog, *A People That Dwells Alone*, ed. M. Louvish (London, 1975), 21–47; Yair Rosenberg, “When an Israeli Ambassador Debated a British

- Historian on Israel's Legitimacy—and Won," *Tablet*, January 31, 2014. The equation of the Jewish State's treatment of Arabs in 1948 with the Nazi annihilation of European Jewry was first made in Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. 8 (London, 1954), 291n.304.
10. Nathan Rotenstreich, "The Revival of the Fossil Remnant: Or Toynbee and Jewish Nationalism," *Jewish Social Studies* 24:3 (July 1962): 131–143. Rotenstreich's last point had been articulated much earlier by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In Book Four of *Emile* (1762), his treatise on the nature of education and on the nature of humankind, the great French philosophe of the Enlightenment wrote thus: "I shall never believe that I have seriously heard the arguments of the Jews until they have a free State, schools and universities, where they can speak and dispute without risk. Only then will we be able to know what they have to say." Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu cited Rousseau's observation when speaking at the Knesset special session in honor of the President of the French Republic, François Hollande, on November 18, 2013.
 11. Monty Noam Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (Urbana, 1983); idem, *Palestine to Israel: Mandate to State, 1945–1948*, vol. 1, *Rebellion Launched, 1945–1946*, and vol. 2, *Into the International Arena, 1947–1948* (New York, 2019); Rafael Medoff, "'Hatikvah' in the Holocaust," *CT Jewish Ledger*, April 3, 2013.
 12. Richard Crossman, *A Nation Reborn* (New York, 1960), 135n. On May 14, 1948, the day that Ben-Gurion declared Israel's independence, the British Dominions' Fortnightly Summary began: "The general feeling is that the British mandate on Palestine is ending on a note of exasperation, disappointment, and failure." Extract, May 14, 1948, RG 25, series A-12, vol. 2093, file AR35/1, pt. 6, Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Ottawa. One day later, Great Britain's Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations informed Canada's foreign minister of the Attlee Cabinet's position that at the end of the mandate, and pending emergence of one or more states in Palestine to which international recognition could be accorded, Palestine would be a sort of *res nullius*. Noel-Baker to Pearson, May 15, 1948, MG 26, J4, vol. 397, PAC. The Latin term, from Roman law, signifies a thing which has no owner whether because never appropriated (as a wild animal), or because abandoned by its owner but acquirable by appropriation. His Majesty's Government delayed in granting *de facto* recognition of Israel until May 13, 1949, four months after the last of the Jews who had been detained in Cyprus camps for their attempting "illegal" immigration to Palestine reached the Land of Israel. London granted the Jewish State *de jure* recognition on April 28, 1950.

13. "Vital Statistics: Latest Population Statistics for Israel," (2020), <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/latest-population-statistics-for-israel>; Penkower, *Palestine to Israel: Mandate to State*, vol. 2, 725; Manfred Gerstenfeld, "Holocaust Inversion: The Portraying of Israel and Jews as Nazis," *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* 55 (April 2, 2007). Worthy of note is the German film *Phoenix* (2014), directed by Christian Petzold. It tells the story of a woman who, having survived Auschwitz with a reconstructed, disfigured face, returns to Berlin to seek out her gentile husband, a piano player who may or may not have betrayed her to the Nazis. While she naïvely wishes to return to a life or identity as it was before the war, her clear-eyed female friend looks to a future State of Israel as the hope for a haven for the Jewish people. Without recognizing his wife, the husband enlists her to play his wife in a bizarre hall-of-shattered-mirrors story that is as richly metaphorical as it is engrossing.
14. Herzog, *A People that Dwells Alone*, 53. It is telling that even Ben-Gurion, the supreme realist, had remarked in an interview with Edward R. Murrow on CBS-TV three weeks before his country's military victory in the 1956 Sinai Campaign against Egypt, "In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles." Ben-Gurion-Murrow interview, "Person to Person," CBS-TV, October 5, 1956.

1. A Congress of Destiny

The twenty-second World Zionist Congress, convening in Basle's Mustermesse convention hall, opened on December 9, 1946. Switzerland's largest exhibit center had witnessed the historic birth of political Zionism in 1897, when founder Theodor Herzl inaugurated the movement's official proceedings as a symbolic parliament in that same building. Seven years had elapsed since the last Congress, during which time an estimated six million Jews, more than one-third of world Jewry, had been systematically killed across the soil of Europe by Nazi Germany and collaborator nations in World War II.

The dais and the Zionist flag were draped in black. With 5,000 Jewish communities having been obliterated in what would be called the Holocaust, no longer were there substantial delegations from Germany, Hungary, Holland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, or Belgium. Most notable of all was the absence of a delegation from Poland, the great center of Zionism during the period between the two World Wars.

The most tragic period in Jewish history had convinced many Jews to embrace the Zionist banner. No one could have foreseen that one nation would posit as the keystone of its worldview a murderous hatred of all Jews, nor that Christianity and the civilized world would abdicate their moral responsibility to aid a blameless people. Yet the basic tenet of Zionism had been rooted in the reality that the Jews' homelessness relegated this wandering community to the status of universal outsider, regular victim to exile and persecution because of the lack of national status. Jewish powerlessness had to undergo a radical transformation if Auschwitz-Birkenau were not to be repeated. In light of the *Shoah*'s ultimate confirmation of Zionist thought, it is not surprising that the proportion of Jews enrolled as subscribing Zionists had risen from

6.2 percent in 1939 to 19.6 percent in 1946, while world Zionist enrollment had more than doubled in absolute terms to well over two million.¹

The United States had now replaced Poland as the chief Zionist hub, claiming almost half the world membership. The Americans' dynamic leader, fifty-three-year-old Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver of Cleveland's Reform Temple and president of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), championed a strong stand against the British mandatory power. The Palestinians, constituting the other major contingent at the Congress, found an equally forceful voice in sixty-year-old David Ben-Gurion, the doughty chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine Executive. Among the 385 delegates, these two groups would dominate the gathering.

The 68 American delegates, composed mostly of members from the ZOA and the women's Hadassah organization, were overwhelmingly committed to the General Zionist movement. (That movement came to the Congress with 123 delegates, the largest group, or 31.9 percent of the total.) Formally established a few months before the Congress, the World Confederation of General Zionists, not committed to a specific party, had divided earlier over accepting a British invitation to attend yet another round-table conference on Palestine and over a partition of that embattled country. Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), favored both. Selig Brodetsky, Nahum Goldmann, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, Aliya Hadasha (the Palestinian association of Jewish immigrants from Germany and Central Europe), Barnett Janner, Louis E. Levinthal, Louis Lipsky, Stephen Wise, some Hadassah delegates led by Rose Halprin, and especially the British Zionist Federation all supported Weizmann's moderate stand. The more militant, anti-British element, led by Silver and his chief lieutenant and ZOA vice-president, Emanuel Neumann, along with World Confederation president Israel Goldstein, carried the day. Taken together, the US delegation offered a liberal-centrist viewpoint that commanded considerable weight.²

Party consciousness, by contrast, reflected the hotly contested political landscape of the *yishuv* (Palestinian Jewish community). Ben-Gurion's Mapai organization represented Socialist labor, weakened by the secession in 1944 of the more leftist Ahdut HaAvoda under Yitshak Tabenkin. HaShomer HaTsa'ir, generally pro-Weizmann but closer at the time to Soviet-inspired ideology, favored a binational Palestine. Mizrahi's program championed a state based on Orthodox Judaism.

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