

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda

A Symposium in
Oxford

Edited by
Eisig Silberschlag

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PREFACE

The Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies held a symposium on Eliezer Ben-Yehuda in 1979. Four lectures were delivered to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the publication of his seminal article, "A Weighty Question" in *Ha-Shahar* in 1879: "Revival of Literature and Revival of Language" by Dr. David Patterson, the President of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies; "*Sheelah Nikhbadah* and the Revival of Hebrew" by Dr. George Mandel; "Language Revival: A Comparison of the Work of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and L'udovít Štúr" by Dr. Tudor Parfitt; "Critique of Enlightenment in the Works of Ahad Haam and Ben-Yehuda" by Eisig Silberschlag.

The present volume is essentially a collection of the above-mentioned lectures in revised and amplified form. In addition, and at my request, Dr. Patterson consented to prepare a new English version of "A Weighty Question" for the present volume. Dr. Mandel assisted me generously in checking the final versions of the manuscripts.

I wish to express my thanks to the Brit Ivrit Olamit, the David Lewis Charitable Foundation, Mr. Daniel Nussbaum and Mr. Ralph Yablon, whose support has made the publication of this volume possible; and to the contributors, who spared no effort to prepare papers suitable to the spirit of Oxford's noblesse académique oblige.

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*A Weighty Question*¹

by

ELIEZER BEN-YEHUDA

In the middle of the last century political science gave birth to a new child which was destined to change the form of many governments and the fate of various peoples, with the power of life and death at its command.

It was small and contemptible at birth, but soon its appearance changed, and it flourished and waxed beautifully. Once enthroned it began to pass judgement on peoples, kingdoms, kings and rulers with ferocity. It brought devastation upon the land, and it is still poised to change the entire face of Europe.

That child is: the concept of nationalism.

Who brought it forth? Who or what summoned it to life from the womb of the void to the light of day?

This is the question we shall have to answer if we wish to reach a proper understanding of the aforementioned idea. If we turn our attention to the events of the last century we will have to conclude that they all arose apparently from a chance happening.

We would, however, be quite wrong to infer that such an event was the original source of the concept. For every happening under the sun, both in men's private lives and in the lives of peoples and nations, we shall find on reflection immediate and underlying causes. Whereas the former can consist of happenings of little import, the latter may result from the entire life of the nation and its history in general, as the final link in a chain of events which have occurred throughout its existence.

What was the cause of our dreadful collapse and the destruction of our state?

The immediate cause was the Romans who vanquished us and drove us from our homeland: but the underlying cause was the pattern of our national life — always an agricultural life without slaves and without warriors skilled in war, a life of tranquillity, with every man under his vine and under his fig tree, at a time when ravening lions prowled about on every side, when other nations lived only by force of arms, solely intent upon the usurpation of their neighbours' lands. The concept of nationalism, too, has

an immediate and an underlying cause. The guiding spirit of the previous century, a spirit of liberty, a spirit of revolt by the oppressed against their oppressors, a spirit which brought about the French uprising in 1789 — this spirit also gave rise to the concept of nationalism which was fashioned in the void. Then it hovered in the air until along came a man who (all unwittingly) summoned this concept from the void into the realm of action, in the event to overturn all he had done and everything his great spirit had created. This man was Napoleon Bonaparte. “Great men have great passions”, declared the sages of the Talmud, and in Napoleon’s case the saying is particularly apt. His greatness was matched by a propensity for devastating evil and a passion to extend his hegemony and his iron dominion over all the lands and peoples of Europe. He betrayed the country which had chosen him as leader, and placed the crown of kingship on his own head. With fire and sword he threw countries into turmoil and made whole kingdoms quake, conquering Germany, Spain, Austria, Piedmont and Naples, before setting off for the land of Russia. Here, however, fortune turned her back on him, and he was defeated by the Russians who smote him hip and thigh. Even nature turned against him, and the bitter winter cold played havoc with his army, so that only a small part of it escaped. But even this disaster did not humble the pride of that man of blood, and he continued to wage war against the Germans. On this occasion, however, the coalition monarchs who had united against him got the better of Napoleon, and put an end to the rivers of blood which he had shed.

These events occasioned a surge of nationalism initially among the Germans, and the various German principedoms began to unite in its name against their common enemy. Indeed, even after Napoleon had been vanquished, the idea of nationalism survived. It was not long before it raised its head again, this time among the Greeks in 1821, after their subjection to Turkish rule for four hundred years. The Greeks demanded their national rights from their oppressors, and with the help of the French, the English and the Russians these rights were restored to them in 1829. Then came the turn of nationalism for many other peoples. In 1848 the Hungarians rose against Austria in its name, the Rumanians against the Turks, and Italy, too, revolted in 1849. So successful has this idea been that recently the Bulgars have also had their national rights restored.

The history of this idea demonstrates that it was originally conceived in order to break the yoke of tyrants from the necks of the oppressed. But like every living thing, this concept, too, gradually developed in the course of

time and took on a different form and a new meaning, namely, the justification and strengthening of the natural urge of every people and nation to defend its "nationalism", to guard the particular national spirit separating it from all other nations and to preserve its language and its traits from admixture and change.

By virtue of this broad concept the national idea aroused much enmity in the socialist and communist camps which argued that it was a narrow idea, inimical to the perfection of mankind, when all the various human families, all peoples and all tongues would mingle together, and there would be no difference between man and man, and peoples would not regard each other as strangers. "The idea of nationalism will cramp feeling and spirit", says Proudhon², while Fichte³ declares, "Mankind must unburden itself of this idea in order to achieve the freedom of universal love (cosmopolitanism)".

For all the good intentions of those scholars who claim to speak in the name of universal love, I, nevertheless, venture to suggest that their views are utterly mistaken, being based on airy nothings, imagination and wishful thinking. In fact, they have no foundation whatsoever. Is nationalism a mere bagatelle? Is it an invention conjured up for fun? Why then does one people differ from another in character, in temperament, in language and in traits? Are these not fundamental to its nature, factors as natural as the differences between various countries in landscape, climatic features, mountains and valleys, seas and rivers, cold and heat, dryness and damp? All these factors affect man and put their seal upon him. If that be so, do we then have the power to change it all according to our wish? Can we order nature to change? Can the whole earth be turned into one valley? Shall a northern country bring forth palm trees? As long as such wonders cannot be done, mankind which is firmly subject to nature's rule, mankind, too, will continue to be divided into peoples and nations differing in their temperaments, talents, inclinations, etc., etc.

But even supposing it could be done; even supposing that some unseen hand performed a miracle and changed the whole face of nature, would that bring mankind happiness? Would a single drab appearance instead of the glorious variety and multi-coloured splendour of its present state make it more perfect and complete? Harmonious change and contrast are inherent in the glory and splendour of all nature and, indeed, the glory of the human spirit! Like everything else in nature, man's spirit, too, is graced with the power to attract or repel: the former draws the individual members of the human race to each other by virtue of temperamental affinity, while the

latter repels and pushes them away from one another because of individual differences of spirit. Hence, these two forces are in constant conflict, each struggling with the other; and the measure of affinity or difference will determine which one prevails over the other. Those whose affinity of spirit outweighs their individual differences will gather together and become one people, *one nationality*. They labour in vain who seek to attribute to human nature a single disposition and a single pattern. Such a thing can never be! The hatred of peoples for one another, the terrible wars and pointless bloodshed might well vanish from the world completely, the nations might well extend the hand of friendship to each other and tread the path that leads towards the goal of mankind's perfection; yet, fortunately for all humanity, the various languages and traits of different peoples will not disappear from the face of the earth.

If, however, every people and every nation does, indeed, have the right to defend and protect its national identity lest its name vanish from under the heavens, then we Hebrews, too (as every clear-thinking mortal will concede) share this right. For why should our situation be worse than that of every other people? In what way are we inferior to them? But, alas! Not everything which commends itself to common sense also commends itself to philosophy; and in this instance, too, fate has decreed that philosophy should, in our case, contradict people's common sense. "The Hebrews have ceased to be a people", it instructs its adherents. "Hebrew nationality is dead, and only the Jewish religion and those who profess it remain on earth. Hence, assimilation with their *fellow citizens* — is the sole prospect for those who profess the Jewish religion".

Against this evil and pernicious doctrine Mr. Smolenskin⁴ has already entered the lists. His admirable books demonstrate in words that burn with love for his people what this doctrine has done to us in Germany, its birth-place, and what else it will do to us if we do not anticipate the evil. He has ignored the reproaches and all the abuse rained down on him by the disciples of Moses Mendelssohn⁵ who beset him all about. The scholar E. Schulmann⁶ followed his lead and published an excellent book *Mi-Mekor Yisrael* (From the Source of Israel) which supports his contention by showing the havoc wreaked by Mendelssohn's followers in turning their backs on Judaism and the Jewish people. So let us now consider this philosophy for ourselves and see whether it is correct. For although common sense cannot compete with philosophy, we too are quite capable of philosophising and splitting hairs to the philosophers' hearts' content; and we

can demonstrate that their statements are somewhat inferior to the Urim and Thummim.

What is nationalism and how is it to be defined? Is a common language an essential criterion of peoplehood? What about the ethnic groups in America, Belgium and Switzerland — do all their members have one language? Do all Germans speak one language? And what about the French? Are Bretons, Provençals and Alsations not Frenchmen because they do not speak French? Why, then, do some of us (such as Philippon⁷ in his journal) declare that we are not able to lead a national life because we do not all speak a single language? We Hebrews, indeed, have an advantage in that we possess a language in which we can even now write anything we care to, and which it is also in our power to speak if only we wish, and if many of us spurn Hebrew, if many of our people cannot even read Hebrew, who is to blame? What has deprived us of a knowledge of the language if not this philosophy itself? Or can only those, perhaps, who live under one regime or who dwell in one country be regarded as a nation? Then what about the Greeks in Turkey, and the Bulgars in eastern Rumelia, and the Hebrews who lived in Alexandria, Rome and Babylon? Did they stop being Greeks, Bulgars or Hebrews?

So what then defines nationalism?

Many writers have discussed this question, and the best of them have reached the following conclusion: The inner awareness which arises in the hearts of a certain number of people and fosters the desire to live together, however large or small their number, serves as a justification for them to live a national life of their own, and it is a duty to grant them that right. (József Eötvös⁸, the Hungarian writer, born 1813, wrote in favour of equal rights for the Hebrews in 1838); and John Stuart Mill⁹ writes as follows:

A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a Nationality, if they are united among themselves by common sympathies, which do not exist between them and any others — which make them co-operate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves, exclusively. This feeling of nationality may have been generated by various causes. Sometimes it is the effect of identity of race and descent. Community of language, and community of religion, greatly contribute to it. Geographical limits are one of its causes. But the strongest of all is identity of political antecedents; the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past.¹⁰

As for us Hebrews — though we are scattered to every corner of the earth — does all this not apply? Are we not united by one feeling, a pure and holy feeling, a lofty and exalted feeling that we are all responsible for one another? Do we not derive from one source, do we not profess one faith? Is not the history of our people precious to us all? Do we not bask in the reflected glory of our distinguished sons? Do we not suffer anguish when we read the history of our people in medieval times? Why then should we suppress the hope of returning to live a national life in our desolate country, which mourns the sons who have been exiled for two thousand years in distant lands? Why should we not do the same as other peoples great and small? Why should we not take action to protect our nationhood lest it perish and be utterly destroyed?

Indeed, this is not the first time our people has been in exile; nor is it the first time our people has heard the refrain, all hope for us is lost. Even when Israel was in Babylon, many of those who found their land of exile congenial cried out: "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, we are cut off" (Ezekiel 37:11). But the prophets of God, like the second Isaiah and Ezekiel, with sublime spirit and passionate love for land and people, proclaimed in a voice that kindled flames of fire: These bones shall yet live, Israel will yet return and blossom like a rose. They comforted the people, strengthened their hope, showed them their future and fostered within them a powerful urge to return and possess their land. Their fiery words induced king Cyrus of Persia to declare: Whoever the Lord his God be with him — let him go up!¹¹ Then great spirits such as Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi, Zerubbabel, Zadok the priest, Ezra and Nehemiah responded to their words, and laboured for the benefit of their people. "Is this the time for you to sit in your own well-roofed houses, while this house lies in ruins?"¹² they cried to the people, and their words were not spoken in vain. Nor did they sow their seeds on barren rock, for the love of the land burns in our people's hearts. No sooner did they blow upon it than it burst into flame!

We have prophets in our day, too — writers who tell the people of their sins. They, too, profess great love for their people. What, then, shall they prophesy and what shall be the burthen of their message? What shall our literature do and in what shall it delight? Our periodical literature has put on and discarded many forms since its inception to the present day; it has changed its fashion and altered its appearance ten times. There was a period when literature occupied only the heights of Parnassus, the mountain favoured by the gods, adorning itself in the festive garb of rhetoric and

poetry, and wafting its sweet fragrance into the nostrils of every reader. But it quickly realised that all of us mortals who sit at the foot of the mountain do not dare ascend the heights, and that little by little we were becoming remote from it. So our literature humbled itself and came down the mountain. Again it stretched out its magic wand, its raiment changed once more, and it appeared to its readers clad in the mantle of scholarship and science. But neither were these robes pleasing to the readers, so it cast them off, grasped a sword and proceeded to wage war on the Kabbalah and Hasidism, against its frivolous customs, its over-lengthy garments and sidelocks, etc., etc. Our literature passed through all these phases, without leaving behind any great impression on the life of our people. It is an idle boast that literature changed the face of Judaism, that by virtue of its strength and power the Jewish people ascended a number of rungs on the ladder of Enlightenment. Literature made no impact on the life of the people either in Russia or in the countries of the west.

But why? In what respect does our literature fall short of the literatures of other peoples which are so successful?

Unfortunately, we must confess that it all stems from the short-sightedness of our literature. Life has always gone ahead of literature and outstripped it. Indeed, only when life outdistanced it too much, did literature make the effort to set off in pursuit and catch it up. What has always been characteristic of our literature, and remains characteristic of it even in most recent times, is its short-sightedness and its inability to foresee what is happening! A few of our authors have, indeed, managed to look beyond the present to prognosticate what may ultimately happen to our people in the future. They have been distressed not only by the present dreadful situation but by the terrible danger threatening our people. It is they who have sallied forth to fight the distortions proffered in the name of Enlightenment, all of which are painful thorns in our people's side.

But their remarks have found scarcely an echo in our literature which continues along the same path as before.

If in all this I have exaggerated a little, I beg forgiveness from our writers and from our literature: but I believe that in general I am right.

Many articles devoted to the Jewish question are appearing in our literature at the present time. Some maintain that by clutching on to Russia and working its soil the Jewish people will find complete felicity; others express the view that all misfortunes and afflictions will cease with the founding of rabbinical seminaries (in Russia of all places); while others

loudly proclaim: break down the wall separating you from the Russians your brothers and your sickness will be cured completely! So many physicians and so many remedies, and such little benefit from them all! What dreadful running sores will fester in the national body with prescriptions such as these! Do you not see that even without the help of literature the wall has already been breached, and nothing now stands between our young people and their Russian brothers? Supposing ten thousand of our people become Russian peasants, and neither they nor their offspring ever return to our people's traditions, will that mean salvation for the people as a whole? Do you really not see that for all your wish to do the Jewish people good, you will crush its soul? That instead of healing it, you will rub salt into its wounds? That far from strengthening its unity, you will fragment it? Why is our gaze not directed towards the future? Why do we sit idly by instead of taking action which might become a real source of salvation for our people in its entirety?

All our efforts will be in vain as long as there is no national centre, a centre which will attract to it all the elements of the body politic. In vain will be all the effort of our writers to revive the language if the entire people remains scattered in different lands among nations speaking different tongues.

All our work will be in vain, for it will not succeed. In vain will we boast that there is no means of making us disappear from the face of the earth. In vain!

Till now, admittedly our people has retained its strength and vigour. All the vicissitudes to which it has been subject, the many calamities which have befallen it, the devastation by fire, flood and sword have not been powerful enough to wipe us off the face of the earth. What then gave our nation such gigantic strength? Surely its religion, which differs from the religions of all other peoples, and the hatred of the nations for it. Were it not for these two factors, Israel would long have ceased to be a people, just as many peoples have vanished, whose names remain only in history books. But now — neither the one nor the other can exert sufficient force to safeguard our nationhood which gapes like a city whose wall has been breached. If we wish, then, to prevent Israel's name from being blotted out completely, we must make something act as a centre for the entire people, a kind of heart from which the blood will flow into the arteries of the national body and give it life. And that something is — the settlement of the land of Israel.

This idea is not new, and it is not the purpose of this article to make any

sensational revelations. Even the sages of the Talmud saw that this was Israel's sole salvation, and that in days to come its wounds could be healed only by gradually taking possession of the land from which it had been driven. Hence they decreed: "Whoever lives outside the land of Israel may be regarded as one who has no God" (Ketubot 110b) and "Israelites who reside outside the land of Israel serve idols though in pure innocence" (Abodah Zarah 8a, and there are many similar statements scattered throughout the Talmud). By means of statements such as these, they hoped to restore the affections of the children to the mother who bore them. For our sages were well aware of the temperament of the people whom they were addressing, and they understood that only by overlaying the idea with a religious colouring could they breathe life into it — and only then would the idea gain acceptance among our people.

These statements would, indeed, have gradually succeeded in returning our people to its land, had it not been for the dreadful calamities suffered by that forsaken country during the thousands of years of our exile; had the land which formerly flowed with milk and honey not come to be regarded by the peoples of Europe as a country which devours its inhabitants; had not legend added to its many vanities the story that even the birds of the air do not dare to fly in the neighbourhood of the Jordan because of the pestilence of the atmosphere there. But all these dreams and vanities have vanished in the light of the information spread by all the recent travellers to the Holy Land who have seen for themselves that, after lying desolate for some two thousand years, the land is just as blessed now as in the past. It is a land where we need not live in poverty, a fertile land graced by nature with every splendour to attract the heart and eye, a land which lacks only diligent hands to work it — otherwise it would be the happiest of lands (consult the books of French travellers such as Guérin,¹³ Saulcy,¹⁴ etc., and the latest English and German travellers). The testimony of all these travellers is unanimous. And now the time has come for us Hebrews, too, to work for this great cause.

I have already stated that life has always moved ahead of literature and passed it by. In this respect, too, what I say is true, and I have not done literature an injustice.

A number of societies already exist whose aim is the settlement of the land of Israel. Indeed, the admirable society, Alliance Israélite Universelle¹⁵, has founded an agricultural school and settlement called Mikveh Yisrael in the vicinity of Jaffa. Sir Moses Montefiore¹⁶, whose

name commands respect and veneration from all our people — our own Sir Moses too, has made great efforts, and he is still actively engaged in spite of his great age. Yet all these activities have proved ineffective, and the results of all their efforts are of little worth, and have no power to heal our people's affliction or effect a cure.

But why? Have our great men not acted in good faith? Do they begrudge either the money or the effort required? Of course not. It is not their fault if a few individuals are unable to undertake so great a task which concerns the people as a whole. If the latter remain complacent and if they do not lend support to the efforts of the men who have taken it upon themselves to work on our behalf, a few individuals cannot succeed no matter how great their wealth. They need intermediaries between the people and themselves, intermediaries who will explain their aims and objects, arouse the people's enthusiasm and make them want to help.

This surely is the task of our literature and of our writers.

Why then is our literature silent and why do our writers stand aloof? Why does our literature seek to remedy the disease of one organ only when the whole body needs healing at the source?

There are many of our young people in Russia who would like to devote their lives to agriculture. Many have been waiting for the Alliance Israélite Universelle to buy land in Russia and apportion it for them to work and look after. But is the soil of Russia the only one that appeals to all the people? Is, indeed, the soil better there than in the land of Israel which can bestow its produce in abundance on those who work it? If so, why doesn't our literature encourage the people to devote money and energy to those societies which already exist, or found new societies for that purpose?

Let us create a society, a kind of branch of the great society Alliance Israélite Universelle, whose aim will be to purchase lands and everything that is necessary for agricultural life in the land of Israel; to parcel out the lands among the Jews already settled there, or to those from the diaspora who would like to go there, and give them the necessary money if their means are inadequate to make their own way. It is the task of literature to take up this question — how and what can be done to propagate this notion widely, to render a proper account every week or every month, to show the people what the society has done during that time, etc., etc.

If we can really accomplish that, we shall be able to survive, and the salvation of Israel will come soon.

The land of Israel will become the centre for the entire people, and even

those who live in the diaspora will know that "their people" dwells in its land, that its language and its literature are there. The language too will flourish, and literature will spawn writers in plenty, because there literature will be able to reward its devotees, and it will become an art in their hands, as is the case with other literatures. Only then will our literature renew its vigour, because writers will serve it not for love alone, but also for reward; and they will not be forced to write at unearthly hours as they do now — for our writers have to make a living, since at present they receive no reward for their labours.

Jewish scholarship, too, will thrive and blossom and bear fruit, like a healthy plant in its native soil, and it will bring benefit to all the people.

Herein lies our people's salvation and our nation's happiness!

Paris, 13 Adar.

Ben-Yehuda.¹⁷

Translated by David Patterson.

NOTES

¹ This article was first published in the Hebrew monthly *Ha-Shahar*, edited in Vienna by Peretz Smolenskin, after an earlier version had been unsuccessfully submitted to the weekly newspaper *Ha-Maggid*. It appeared in the issue of *Ha-Shahar* dated Nisan 5639, i.e., March-April 1879. The author, whose first work it was, was 21 years old at the time of publication.

Ben-Yehuda himself called his article *Sheelah Lohetet*, a translation of the French "question brûlante". Smolenskin changed "Lohetet" to "Nikhbadah". (See E. Ben-Yehuda, *Millon ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit . . . Ha-Mavo ha-Gadol*, Jerusalem, 1948, p.1, note 2). Elsewhere, the original title is given as *Sheelah Lohatah* (see *Kol Kitbe Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, I*, Jerusalem, 1941, p.3).

² Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809—1865).

³ Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762—1814).

⁴ Peretz ben Moshe Smolenskin (1840 or 1842—1885), Hebrew novelist and essayist, and editor of *Ha-Shahar* (in which *Sheelah Nikhbadah* appeared). Smolenskin had argued for many years that the Jews should be considered a nation, not just a religious group, although — unlike Ben-Yehuda — he believed, at that time, that their nationhood could and should be expressed wholly in cultural, not territorial or political, terms.

⁵ Moses Mendelssohn (1729—1786), philosopher, spiritual leader of German Jewry, advocate of *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) and of Jewish rights. Smolenskin blamed Mendelssohn's influence for the far-reaching assimilation and erosion of Jewish identity among West European Jews in the century after his death.

⁶ Eleazar Schulmann (1837—1904), Hebrew writer and scholar.

⁷ Ludwig Philippson (1811—1889), Reform rabbi in Germany, founder of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, which was one of the leading Jewish newspapers of its day and which Philippson edited until his death. Philippson was an opponent of Jewish nationalism. The article that Ben-Yehuda is referring to here, "Die Wiederherstellung des jüdischen Staates", appeared in the issue of 11 June 1878.

⁸ Baron József Eötvös (1813—1871), Hungarian writer and statesman, advocate of equal rights for Jews.

⁹ John Stuart Mill (1806—1873), English philosopher, economist and politician.

¹⁰ J. S. Mill, "Considerations on Representative Government". See *Essay on Politics and Society* (= *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Vol. XIX), ed. by J. M. Robson, Toronto and Buffalo, 1977, p. 546.

¹¹ Allusion to II. Chron. 36:23 and Ezra 1:3.

¹² Allusion to Haggai 1:4.

¹³ Victor-Honoré Guérin (1821—1891), author of a number of works about Palestine.

¹⁴ Louis Felicien de Saulcy (1807—1880), French orientalist and archaeologist. A third French traveller mentioned here by Ben-Yehuda (Limin?) has not been identified.

¹⁵ A French-Jewish organization founded in 1860 which worked on behalf of oppressed and impoverished Jews all over the world.

¹⁶ Sir Moses Montefiore (1784—1885), Anglo-Jewish philanthropist and one of the leading figures in Jewish public life in the nineteenth century. He visited Palestine seven times and tried to strengthen the economic foundations of the Jewish community there.

¹⁷ The author's real name was Eliezer Yitzhak Perelman, the son of Yehuda-Leib Perelman. He adopted the *nom-de-plume* Ben-Yehuda when he wrote *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, and later — after settling in Palestine — made it his official surname.

Revival of Literature and Revival of Language

by

DAVID PATTERSON

This paper is concerned with the revival of Hebrew literature and the revival of Hebrew language in the century following the French Revolution. It is an attempt to supply the backcloth against which the importance of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's first article may be illustrated in the papers following. One hundred years have passed since the article *Sheelah Nikhbadah* appeared in 1879 in Peretz Smolenskin's periodical *Ha-Shahar*. It was Ben-Yehuda's first venture into print, and it represents a heartfelt plea for a resurgence of Jewish nationalism and a return to Zion. But the parts of the article which are devoted to literature and language are, in fact, quite small. Although, in his later writings, the revival of spoken Hebrew became one of the central planks in his platform, in this first article the revival of literature and the revival of language play a somewhat minor role. Only a few passages have any real bearing in this regard, and these are worth quoting in full.

Towards the end of his article, Ben-Yehuda writes as follows about the growth of modern Hebrew literature:

What shall our literature do and in what shall it delight? Our periodical literature has put on and discarded many forms since its inception to the present day; it has changed its fashion and altered its appearance ten times. There was a period when literature occupied only the heights of Parnassus, the mountain favoured by the gods, adorning itself in the festive garb of rhetoric and poetry, and wafting its sweet fragrance into the nostrils of every reader. But it quickly realised that all of us mortals who sit at the foot of the mountain do not dare ascend the heights, and that little by little we were becoming remote from it. So our literature humbled itself and came down the mountain. Again it stretched out its magic wand, its raiment changed once more, and it appeared to its readers clad in the mantle of scholarship and science. But neither were these robes pleasing to the readers, so it cast them off, grasped a sword and proceeded to wage war on the Kabbalah and Hasidism, against its frivolous customs, its over-lengthy garments and sidelocks, etc., etc. Our literature passed through all these phases, without leaving behind any great impression on the life of our people. It is an idle boast that literature changed

the face of Judaism, that by virtue of its strength and power the Jewish people ascended a number of rungs on the ladder of Enlightenment. Literature made no impact on the life of the people either in Russia or in the countries of the west.

In Ben-Yehuda's view the real task of Hebrew literature should be the propagation throughout the Jewish people of the idea of a return to Zion — an enterprise beyond the powers of the few societies and philanthropists then concerned with the problem, in spite of their good intentions:

A number of societies already exist whose aim is the settlement of the land of Israel. Indeed, the admirable society, Alliance Israélite Universelle, has founded an agricultural school and settlement called Mikveh Yisrael in the vicinity of Jaffa. Sir Moses Montefiore, whose name commands respect and veneration from all our people — our own Sir Moses too, has made great efforts, and he is still actively engaged in spite of his great age. Yet all these activities have proved ineffective, and the results of all their efforts are of little worth, and have no power to heal our people's affliction or effect a cure.

But why? Have our great men not acted in good faith? Do they begrudge either the money or the effort required? Of course not. It is not their fault if a few individuals are unable to undertake so great a task which concerns the people as a whole. If the latter remain complacent and if they do not lend support to the efforts of the men who have taken it upon themselves to work on our behalf, a few individuals cannot succeed no matter how great their wealth. They need intermediaries between the people and themselves, intermediaries who will explain their aims and objects, arouse the people's enthusiasm and make them want to help.

This surely is the task of our literature and of our writers.

So much for Ben-Yehuda's opinion of Hebrew literature from the French Revolution until his own day! About the Hebrew language he adds an additional passage:

The land of Israel will become the centre for the entire people, and even those who live in the diaspora will know that "their people" dwells in its land, that its language and its literature are there. The language too will flourish, and literature will spawn writers in plenty, because there literature will be able to reward its devotees, and it will become an art in their hands, as is the case with other literatures. Only then will our literature renew its vigour, because writers will serve it not for love alone, but also for reward; and they will not be forced to write at unearthly hours as they do now — for our writers have to make a living, since at present they receive no reward for their labours.

Jewish scholarship, too, will thrive and blossom and bear fruit, like a

healthy plant in its native soil, and it will bring benefit to all the people.
Herein lies our people's salvation and our nation's happiness!

These passages contain almost all that Ben-Yehuda has to say in *Sheelah Nikhbadah* about literature and language — and it is clearly limited. There is one further sentence which is worth quoting because of its apparently prophetic quality:

We Hebrews, indeed, have an advantage in that we possess a language in which we can even now write anything we care to, and which it is also in our power to speak if only we wish . . .

The main thrust of his ideas about the revival of Hebrew as a living language, however, comes in his subsequent writings, some of them published not long after the appearance of his first article. The original concept of national revival was followed by the growth of the idea of a comparable and, indeed, inseparable revival of language and literature only as a second stage in his thinking, even though it soon became central to it.

It is, however, worth reviewing, if only in short compass, the early development of modern Hebrew literature and the concomitant development of language which Ben-Yehuda dismisses in somewhat cavalier fashion, to determine whether its impact was quite as negligible as might appear from his article. Although the roots of modern Hebrew literature may be traced back to the Renaissance, Ben-Yehuda seems to accept the commonly held view in his day that the modern period begins in the last decades of the eighteenth century in Germany, and that modern Hebrew literature is a consequence, if not a cause of the movement of Enlightenment known in Hebrew as *Haskalah*. The movement of Enlightenment reflects the attempts by sections of the Jewish people in western and central — and later eastern — Europe to come to terms with European culture in the “age of reason”.

It is common knowledge that the Jewish people — held back by the institution of the ghetto and the consequent separation of ghetto dwellers from the populace outside — were late comers to the modern world. Suffice it to recall that following the Napoleonic conquests the ghetto gates were broken down, and many Jews set off hot-foot towards the elusive goal of emancipation. The impact of the outside world upon the Jews as they emerged from the ghetto and tried to find their way into the glittering realm of western European civilisation is responsible, directly or indirectly, for

many of the subsequent movements in Jewish history. Thrown off balance, many Jews pinned their faith upon the movement of Enlightenment, a dominating force in the eighteenth century. At the time it seemed to many exponents of *Haskalah* that here was the dawn of a new era for the Jewish people too, where all would be sweetness and light, and that all the old hatreds and animosities between Jews and their Gentile neighbours had been some kind of ghastly mistake, merely a wrong way of looking at things. With a change in the angle of vision in the wake of the new Enlightenment the problems would dissolve and Jews would at last be able to integrate into western European culture. With one proviso, namely, that to achieve this desirable end, the Jews would have to change their image so as to merge more smoothly into the patterns of the outside world.

The attempt to bring about this change of image followed two distinct lines. The first entailed a religious reform, with a marked shift of stress from the practical aspects — the positive and negative injunctions — which were regarded as a barrier between Jewish and Gentile society, to the ethical aspects of Judaism. At the same time a deliberate attempt was made to diminish the nationalist elements in the Jewish religion, which seemed to hinder progress towards the goal of emancipation. The charge of dual loyalties was levelled against the Jews by the opponents of emancipation. How can Jews aspire to German citizenship — it was argued — when every day they pray for the restoration of Zion and for the return to their ancient homeland? To obviate any such charge, the Jewish national future was sacrificed in favour of the Jewish past. History took the place of nationalism, just as a concern with the ethics of religion replaced traditional observance.

From the early nineteenth century Reform Judaism regarded itself as a bridge between Jews and Gentiles, as an important signpost on the road to emancipation. The remarkable growth of the Reform Movement in Judaism is a fascinating topic in itself, but one which lies beyond the confines of this paper. More germane is the second method employed to bring about a change of image and present what was regarded as a more acceptable face to the outside world.

The proponents of such a change advocated a reform of the Jewish educational system. Instead of an education based on an intensive and, indeed, exclusive study of the traditional Jewish sources, new elements were grafted on to the syllabus, designed to enable the child to come to grips more successfully with the outside world. Hence, the introduction of secular

studies, side by side with more traditional learning, was reinforced by teaching at least the elements of the language of the country in which the child lived. A growing proportion of Jewish children in Germany acquired some familiarity with German, Jewish children in France started to learn French, those in Holland began to acquire Dutch — in addition to their native Yiddish. Meanwhile, however, the first language most children acquired for the purposes of reading and writing remained Hebrew, which was taught from a very tender age. The provision of textbooks in Hebrew over a range of secular subjects, both original or translated, to cater for the new kinds of syllabus, reinforced by an adult thirst for edifying and instructive works of literature reflecting the currents of Enlightenment provide the driving force behind the growth of modern Hebrew literature.

There was a second formative factor of importance. The new literature was deliberately composed in a particular kind of language. The adherents of Enlightenment rejected the rabbinical Hebrew modes of composition, which they regarded as unsatisfactory both stylistically and grammatically, and unsuitable for the expression of the cultural and aesthetic values which they wished to inculcate as part of their educational aims. Reviewing the strata of literary Hebrew in search of the one most likely to help unleash emotional and aesthetic springs of creativity which, it was believed, had suffered atrophy in the ghetto period, and hence bring out “the man in the Jew” and stimulate an interest in culture and ethics, the *maskilim* opted for the language of the Bible. Apart from the sharp contrast with rabbinical Hebrew, the language of the Bible was favoured partly because it reflected the halcyon period when the Jewish people lived in its own land, and partly because it was considered that biblical Hebrew represented the pure and pristine form of the language. It is noteworthy in this respect, that biblical Hebrew was treated as a single stratum of language, regardless of the fact that it spans not less than a millennium.

Modern Hebrew literature, therefore, in the century following the French Revolution, comprises an attempt to describe and embrace many facets of the contemporary European world in a neo-biblical Hebrew. In great measure it proved to be a contradiction in terms. The Hebrew Bible contains less than six thousand different words, and although for certain kinds of expression, namely, historical narrative, religious poetry, wisdom literature and prophecy in particular, biblical Hebrew is highly effective, even perhaps unrivalled, any attempt to formulate the concepts and phenomena of modern society in that idiom must soon encounter

formidable problems. In the absence of the necessary vocabulary, Hebrew writers were frequently compelled to foster conventions in their readers' minds that when they wrote particular words or phrases what they actually meant was something different. At the same time they resorted to complex, euphuistic and rhetorical modes of expression, known as *melizah*. It was a brave attempt, still worthy of respect, but its limitations were of such severity that the flowering of modern Hebrew literature in German-speaking Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century scarcely lasted thirty years. German quickly superseded Hebrew as the mode of literary expression, as an inferior instrument is abandoned in favour of a better. After a short exhilarating flight to the heights of Parnassus, the heady enthusiasm for Hebrew rhetoric rapidly declined. Had it been confined to central Europe, modern Hebrew literature would certainly have been short-lived.

Prior to tracing the shift of modern Hebrew literature to the more fertile soil of eastern Europe, one further aspect of modern Jewish history is worthy of consideration. As stated above, the exponents of Enlightenment were convinced that the solution to the Jewish problem was firmly rooted in the "age of reason", and that the best hope for emancipation lay in propagating the concepts of Enlightenment both among the Jewish people and the population at large. But whereas in the latter half of the eighteenth century the ideas of Enlightenment were, indeed, a real force within certain intellectual circles, the nineteenth century was increasingly dominated by two quite different influences, which have largely shaped the modern world.

The immense impact of the movements of nationalism on the one hand and materialist philosophies on the other on the course of nineteenth and twentieth century history requires little elaboration. But in pinning their hopes on the movement of Enlightenment the Jews hitched their fortunes to a waning star. It is as though they came charging into the nineteenth century on an eighteenth-century wagon. The curious feeling of unreality which characterises Jewish aspirations in the nineteenth century stems largely from this factor. It is a striking feature of much of the Hebrew literature of the period, certainly until almost the last quarter of the nineteenth century. A lack of contact with reality and a strong flavour of self-delusion permeate most Hebrew writing of that time. In hindsight, it is quite clear that Jewish longings for acceptance into German society by means of a change of image were never really reciprocated by the German population, and the true nature of the Jewish situation has been illustrated only too tragically in this

century. But the particular delusions which characterize modern Hebrew literature in Germany and Austria from the last decades of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries were carried over into the very different conditions of Jewish life in eastern Europe just when modern Hebrew literature was sinking into oblivion in Germany itself.

In eastern Europe, and particularly the so-called Pale of Settlement in Russia, Hebrew literature quickly struck deep roots. The Jewish population was numerous and closely-knit. Large numbers of Jews lived in small towns and villages, while many larger towns contained sizeable Jewish communities. Moreover, there was no centre of cultural imitation comparable to that in Germany. Whereas for the Jews in Germany the adoption of German at the expense of Hebrew had yielded obvious benefits, both cultural and economic, for Russian Jewry there was little point in abandoning Hebrew literature and learning for the inferior peasant culture of the surrounding environment. In consequence, Hebrew literature began to flourish, although it was still dominated by the ideals of the *Haskalah* movement in Germany, which were quite unsuited to the conditions of eastern Europe.

In a well-known passage in a novel by Peretz Smolenskin, the author asks, "What has *Haskalah* got to do with Rumania?"¹ The question is pertinent, because it embodies the artificial attempt to apply a set of ideas, which might have had some relevance in the cultural milieu of Berlin, to the completely different conditions of Jewish life in eastern Europe. Gradually, however, Hebrew literature came to grips with the more immediate and obvious reality, and the two vibrant forces of the nineteenth century, namely, nationalism and then materialism — the latter at first in the guise of social realism — play an increasingly noticeable role.

These new trends in modern Hebrew literature both spring from the novels of Abraham Mapu, who attempted at first to propagate the concepts of *Haskalah* by projecting them into an idealised past. It is as though he wished to say: "Life should be better than the wretched conditions of Lithuania warrant. It is difficult to know quite what the future may yield, but supposing we conjure up a picture of what life may have been like in biblical times when the Jewish nation lived on its own soil, and when its occupations and relationships were of a more normal kind." Accordingly, he wrote two historical romances set in the ancient land of Israel in the period of Isaiah. The first, entitled *Ahavat Ziyon* (The Love of Zion) appeared in 1853 and has become a classic by any standards, with

some twenty editions in Hebrew, and translations in perhaps a dozen languages — although like so many classics it has long been relegated to the schoolroom, to be read, and then reluctantly, only by children. But in its day *The Love of Zion* was widely acclaimed, and its vivid portrayal of everyday life in the ancient homeland greatly stimulated the rise of Jewish national consciousness. A second romance, *Ashmat Shomron* (The Guilt of Samaria), dovetails chronologically with Mapu's first novel and again transfers the ideals of Enlightenment into the distant past. The fact that both novels were composed in biblical, or rather neo-biblical Hebrew, with form and content blending by and large harmoniously, strengthened their impact on the Hebrew-reading public.

A third novel, *Ayit Zavua* (The Hypocrite), composed in the interval between the two already mentioned, is set in Mapu's native Lithuania and is concerned with the contemporary scene. Within the framework of this long and rambling romance, Mapu again attempts to propagate the ideals of *Haskalah*, by portraying his young hero, by profession an agricultural expert, and the gifted and charming young heroine meeting young Russian aristocrats on terms of social and cultural equality while remaining loyal to their Jewish background. The concept is so artificial — the product of wishful thinking — and the situation so unreal that the characters fall flat on their faces. The neo-biblical Hebrew, which suited the historical romances so well, seems only to heighten the sense of incongruity which permeates *The Hypocrite*. Yet Mapu's novel of contemporary Jewish life also contains much social criticism, and the depiction of the darker sides of Lithuanian Jewish society in the middle of the nineteenth century introduced an element of social realism into modern Hebrew literature, which was destined to play an increasingly important role in Hebrew fiction throughout the remainder of the century and well beyond — such was the power of Mapu's influence.

Even within *The Hypocrite*, however, there is a series of letters written by Azriel, who journeys to the Holy Land and describes his adventures in epistolary form for the benefit of his friends in Lithuania. Two passages in particular are worthy of note, and both occur in a letter which purports to have been written in Jerusalem on the eve of Passover in the year 1853 — the year in which *The Love of Zion* was published. Azriel writes as follows:

On the fourteenth day of the first month, the season of joy and gladness for our fathers in ancient times, the season of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord,

who brought them forth from Egypt to settle upon this lovely land, the inheritance of their father Jacob — on this pleasant festival I sit upon Mount Zion, pencil in hand, to set down my inmost thoughts upon the page. And the mourning and desolate city of God looks down upon me from the north, through the veil of widowhood. Just as I had pictured her, so do I see her in all her holiness, as though mourning for her sacred desolation. My spirit aches to see her mounds forsaken, the forlornness of ancient times, and the desolation of each generation. Can this be Zion, so celebrated by the prophets who sprang from her? Enemies have destroyed her foundations, and fools have dispersed the words of her holy sons. But Mount Zion shall never crumble, nor shall the holy words be lost to Zion's sons. For these are the words of the living God, fixed in the heavens, lighting up the darkness like the stars. And even when heavy clouds conceal the stars, the spirit of wisdom shall shine forth, and pierce the blackness. The night shall vanish, and the light of God shine even as of old. Yea, a new light shall shine on Zion, which now lies desolate and mourning. The sons, which she bore in bewilderment, shall flock to her sacred ruins. They shall come streaming in from all the lands of the dispersion, for they are all her children, who bear her name upon their lips with every outpouring of prayer. They shall come to her and say that through all their sorrows and afflictions they have remembered her, and the love of Zion shall never be erased from their hearts. It is the love that springs from the delightful hope that hovers over her ruins, and whispers in our ears the consolation of Isaiah: "For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

Then a little later the letter continues:

This is the heavenly vision which my imagination conjured up concerning Mount Zion and her assemblies. All the delights of ancient times welled up and lived before my eyes. Hurrah! I thought — wake up, my soul, and awaken the love of the eternal people. Remember the days of old, that they may bring comfort at the present time. And you too, O sacred Hebrew tongue, don your holy garb and your spirit of noble grace, and sing to your lover, the youth of Israel, borne on the arms of God since the days of Egypt. Make your voice resound, that your words be heard to the very ends of the earth, wherever the sound shall reach. But sing your song only for him that loves you, for the people that has chosen you, for they are all your delight. Hurrah! my spirit marches proudly, walking the eternal paths of old. And with the power of imagination I hear a rustling from the grave, a cry from out the rock, the voice of the world's dead that sleep in the dust of the ground, rising rejuvenated from the ashes of death, and living before me in my sight. This is the great cry, which breaks forth from the Hebrew tongue to her people, resounding as in the days of her youth.²

Now these two passages are quite remarkable. They are virtually prophetic. The ability to envisage in the early sixties of the last century the great ingathering of the exiles on the one hand and the revival of the Hebrew language on the other was an extraordinary achievement. Mapu's impact not only on the Hebrew reading public but on at least one complete generation of Hebrew writers was considerable. The growth of nationalist feeling which he engendered may be traced, although in different forms, through the writings of Peretz Smolenskin, Moshe Leb Lilienblum and Eliezer Ben-Yehuda into the great period of literary revival known in Hebrew as *Tehiyah*, which burgeoned in the twenty-five years prior to the First World War. The direct line of national sentiment clearly reflects one of the dominant forces of nineteenth century Europe, with the result that modern Hebrew literature at last makes contact with reality, and in so doing fulfils the condition so fervently advocated by Ben-Yehuda in *Sheelah Nikhbadah*.

At the same time the main element of Mapu's novel of contemporary life, namely, the aspect of social realism, albeit within the framework of a romance, exerted an impact of no less consequence for Hebrew literature. Time and again *The Hypocrite* emphasizes the need to change the social conditions of Jewish life in eastern Europe. It attempts to inculcate a more positive attitude to manual work and advocates changes of occupation, particularly by the acquisition of professional skills. In particular, it argues the case for a "back to the land" campaign as a means of creating a healthier and more solid basis for Jewish life, which was characterised by an increasingly precarious economy and instability of occupation.

The social realism of Mapu's story became the model for a series of powerful novels by his successors. The problems and dilemmas of contemporary Jewish life were singled out for treatment in the works of Peretz Smolenskin and Reuben Asher Braudes, and then particularly in the stories of Mendele Mokher Seforim, the pseudonym adopted by Shalom Jacob Abramowitsch. The emphasis on social realism continues to dominate Hebrew fiction throughout the above-mentioned period of literary revival, reaching its climax in the searing stories and novels of Joseph Hayyim Brenner. From the late sixties of the nineteenth century Hebrew literature is increasingly concerned with the portrait of the Jewish plight, and the attempt to heighten Jewish self-awareness. By gradually undermining the illusions fostered by the "Berlin Haskalah" and concentrating on the stark reality of everyday existence, Hebrew literature finally comes to grips with

life, and falls in line with the powerful emphasis on materialism and social reform which play so central a role in nineteenth-century thought.

Hence Mapu's work prefigures a bifurcation in Hebrew literature, with both prongs making contact with the real forces of the prevailing mental climate, namely, nationalism and materialism, and in consequence exerting an increasingly powerful impact on the circle of Hebrew readers.

Moreover, no matter whether Hebrew fiction was concerned primarily with nationalism or social realism, the writers were faced with the basic problems, first of description, and second — and what was to prove even more difficult — of dialogue. They were compelled to fashion conversation within the confines of a neo-biblical Hebrew, and portray characters who would in real life have spoken Yiddish, conversing in biblical idiom. Somehow it worked, although the ingenuity, the labour, the sheer devotion to the task which the creation of such dialogue demanded were immense, and even today, however quaint, it must command respect. Its contribution to the concept of the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language was considerable. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda himself testifies to the influence that Mapu's novels exerted upon him, and he describes how, while walking in the countryside with a friend, they began to converse in Hebrew using as their model the conversations from *The Love of Zion*³.

Hence the role of Hebrew literature, through the inspiration it afforded Ben-Yehuda and others like him, to revive the spoken language in *Erez Yisrael* (the land of Israel), led in turn to a revival of Hebrew literature as it was gradually transferred from Europe to *Erez Yisrael* from the early years of the twentieth century — thereby fulfilling the prediction which Ben-Yehuda had made in his very first article that only by concentrating the Jewish nation in its homeland could Hebrew literature really flourish.

As Hebrew literature at last made contact with the dominant forces of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, namely, nationalism and social realism, it acquired an impressive power and maturity. By fostering an awareness of the real nature of the Jewish situation and the decisive forces of the modern world, it stimulated the growth of national consciousness, and played a vital role in the process of harnessing and concentrating Jewish creativity. Due to the increasing flexibility of Hebrew, both in its literary and spoken forms, and the immense devotion and loyalty of its adherents, a veritable renaissance of language has taken place which has few if any parallels in history. Within the space of a hundred years, a halting literature, and at best a sporadic and stringently limited vernacular have blossomed into a

fully fledged and all-embracing medium of expression in writing and in speech. It is a striking and indeed dramatic development, of which the true dynamics have scarcely begun to be explored in any depth. But the mutual impact of literature and language would appear to be decisive. The growth of modern Hebrew literature laid the groundwork for the revival of the spoken language, which was in turn destined to stimulate the creation of a literature of surprising range and quality.

Although the appearance of the article *Sheelah Nikhbadah* in 1879 reflects only an initial and tentative groping towards a definition of the role of the revival of Hebrew literature and Hebrew language in the Jewish national renaissance, the subsequent development of his ideas and the remarkable tenacity bordering on fanaticism with which he pursued his goals throughout his life bear witness to the centrality of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's achievement as a missionary and catalyst. On the centenary of the publication of his first article, it is only fitting that he should be remembered with admiration and respect.

NOTES

¹ *Ha-Yerushah* (1878—1884), St. Petersburg, 1898, pt. 2, p.55. Cf. D. Patterson, *The Hebrew Novel in Czarist Russia*, Edinburgh, 1964, chs. 5 and 6.

² See D. Patterson, *Abraham Mapu*, London, 1964, pp. 160 ff.

³ Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Ha-Halom ve-Shivro*, ed. R. Sivan, Jerusalem, 1978, p.72.

Sheelah Nikhbadah and the Revival of Hebrew

by

GEORGE MANDEL

It is now a hundred years since the publication of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* (A Weighty Question), an article of just over three thousand words that appeared in Smolenskin's journal *Ha-Shahar* in the issue dated Nisan 5639 (March-April, 1879)¹. The article was the first work of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda², at that time a young and unknown Russian Jew studying medicine in Paris. Like most famous works of the past it is much more widely spoken of than read, and it seems appropriate on this anniversary to take a look at the text itself, see what it says, and ask why *Sheelah Nikhbadah* is important enough for its centenary to be commemorated.

The article contains a number of ideas and suggestions. Ben-Yehuda argues that the Jews are a nation and not merely a religious group, and that they are as much entitled to act to protect their national identity as are the other nations that have fought for their freedom in the nineteenth century. This identity is threatened by the doctrine and practice of assimilation. Ben-Yehuda discusses the state of Hebrew literature and asserts that it is in danger of dying out, a danger that can be averted only by large-scale Jewish immigration to Palestine. If the Jews concentrate there in sufficiently large numbers, they will form a society in which writing Hebrew is the normal form of literary activity rather than the esoteric activity of a small minority, and the continued existence of Hebrew literature will no longer be threatened. Ben-Yehuda argues that the Jews who go to Palestine in response to his call will be able to support themselves by agriculture because the land, though now desolate, is so only through neglect, and is potentially fruitful. Finally, if you read the considerable literature on *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, you are likely to form the impression that it contains another suggestion, singled out by some writers for its importance and originality: here, we are told, the revival of Hebrew as an everyday spoken language was advocated for the first time. A year after Ben-Yehuda's death, Joseph Klausner wrote of *Sheelah Nikhbadah*:

This article marks the beginning of the new movement among the Jews, which later came to be called Love of Zion and Zionism. It contained all the elements of the new world-view: [including] the demand . . . that Hebrew be revived as a spoken language.³

Nearly fifty years later Professor Chomsky wrote that, whereas most of the contents of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* were not original, there was one novelty in it, namely, “the firm connection between nation, land and language — meaning, specifically, spoken language.”⁴ These are merely two examples out of many that could be cited.⁵

If Ben-Yehuda did propose the revival of Hebrew speech in *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, there can be no doubt of the article’s importance: not only did it contain the suggestion, but its publication constituted the beginning of the determined, continuous, and ultimately successful campaign to realise the idea in practice. In other words, *Sheelah Nikhbadah* was not one of those articles that put forward an original idea which is then forgotten for another twenty years. Its author actually devoted his life to the implementation of the idea. But is it really the case that *Sheelah Nikhbadah* contains such a proposal? Anyone who has been told that it is, and who then reads the article, may be surprised to discover that, out of more than three thousand words, just nine have to do with the speaking of Hebrew. The phrase in question reads, in translation:

. . . we possess a language in which we can even now write anything we care to, and which it is also in our power to speak if only we wish . . .⁶

Those nine words — *we-gam le-dabber bah yesh l’el yadenu im akh nahpoz* — constitute the only explicit mention of Hebrew speech in the article, and it is chiefly those words that have been taken as a call for the Jews to revive Hebrew speech or at any rate as a hint in that direction.

It is clear that this is not the *peshat*, the plain meaning of the text. If *Sheelah Nikhbadah* were set before a reader with no preconceptions about it — one who had never heard of the article or its author — and he were asked to prepare a summary of its contents, it is most unlikely that he would say that Ben-Yehuda was suggesting that Hebrew be revived as a spoken language (and it is hard to believe that the essay’s first readers a century ago can have understood it in that sense). But if not *peshat*, is there at least *remez*, a hint, of Ben-Yehuda’s great idea in this essay? We know that Ben-Yehuda devoted much of his life to the revival of Hebrew and it seems

natural to see, in the quotation above, evidence that the idea had already occurred to him. On the other hand it is at least possible that such a reading is unduly influenced by our knowledge of Ben-Yehuda's later activities and opinions, and that he had not even conceived the idea of the revival at the time of *Sheelah Nikhbadah*. Is there any way of deciding which of these two possibilities is correct, and of discovering what was in Ben-Yehuda's mind when he wrote those words?

Before trying to answer this question I must digress for a moment to say a word about the meaning of the phrase "revival of Hebrew" as it has been used since the time of Ben-Yehuda. Hebrew a hundred years ago was not a dead language in the sense that Hittite is a dead language. There was a flourishing Hebrew press (Ben-Yehuda's first articles, including *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, appeared in it) and many new Hebrew books were published each year. On the other hand Hebrew was spoken only rarely and in special circumstances, and its subject-matter was restricted. It was used chiefly for writing about religious, legal and communal matters, about history, philosophy, politics, current affairs and literature, and for composing fiction and poetry. It was not the language of the kitchen, the bedroom or the nursery, and only rarely the language of the market-place. Few women knew Hebrew and nobody learned it as his mother-tongue. In short, Hebrew was to the Jewish world roughly what Latin had been to Christian Europe in the middle ages.⁷ Today, by contrast, Hebrew is the spoken and written language of a whole national society in the State of Israel, used for all the normal purposes of life, a household language as well as a language of intellectual discussion, learned by every child from its parents before it knows any other tongue. At this moment there are about a million people in the world who know Hebrew and no other language, whereas a century ago there was not a single person who knew only Hebrew. It is this extension of Hebrew from the literary to the spoken sphere that is today commonly called the revival of Hebrew, and that is how I shall use the phrase in this paper.⁸

To return to *Sheelah Nikhbadah*: the phrase quoted from it earlier, which includes the nine words about speaking Hebrew, occurs in a passage in which Ben-Yehuda is replying to the argument that the Jews, not having a common language, cannot be considered a nation and would not be capable of leading a proper national life even if they were to return to Palestine. Ben-Yehuda's reply to this is that there are other groups, such as the Swiss and the Belgians, who are generally regarded as nations yet are linguistically

divided. The clear implication is that the Jews, too, could get by in Palestine without a common language. It would obviously be inconsistent if, only a sentence or two later, and without a word of explanation, Ben-Yehuda were to be found calling for Hebrew to be revived in order to satisfy the need for a common national language. Here we have some internal evidence that this idea had not occurred to him at that time.

We find more, and stronger, evidence for this view if we look outside the text of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* itself. The next two articles of Ben-Yehuda's on the national question⁹ contain no mention of speaking Hebrew, and only one, very brief, passing reference to the problem of a national language.¹⁰ In both of these articles Ben-Yehuda argues that settlement in the land of Israel is the *only* thing that can save the whole nation.¹¹

But the most convincing evidence of all comes from Ben-Yehuda's own testimony. In *Ha-Mavo ha-Gadol*, the introductory volume of his dictionary, there is an autobiographical passage in which he tells us that *Sheelah Nikhbadah* was an immature article written while he was too much under the influence of other political thinkers whose works he had been reading in Paris. He continues:

To the assertion that the Jews are not a nation at present, and cannot be one because they do not speak a common language, I gave the artificial reply that there are other nations, such as the Swiss and the Belgians, who do not speak one language. But the more my own political awareness grew, the more I sensed what language is to a nation, and I quickly arrived at . . . the simpler and more natural answer that . . . just as the Jews cannot truly be a living nation without a return to the land of their forefathers, so they cannot truly be a living nation without a return to the language of their forefathers, using it not just as a written language for religious and intellectual purposes, as Peretz ben Moshe [Smolenskin], the editor of *Ha-Shahar*, had been advocating, but — especially — as a spoken language used by the common people as well as their leaders, by women and children, young men and girls, for all the purposes of life, at all hours of the day and night, just as every other people does, each in its own language.¹²

We shall see later on that there is yet more evidence in Ben-Yehuda's writings — albeit not as explicit as the passage I have just quoted — to show that he himself did not think of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* as having anything to do with the revival of Hebrew.

Now if the argument is correct so far, there are two questions that come to mind. First, when *did* Ben-Yehuda suggest the revival of Hebrew as an

everyday spoken language? Second, what does the phrase from *Sheelah Nikhbadah* quoted earlier mean — and, especially, what do the nine words about being able to speak Hebrew “if only we wish” mean — if not that spoken Hebrew should be revived?

The obvious way to set about answering the first question is to search Ben-Yehuda’s early writings systematically.¹³ Unfortunately the answer this produces is not clear-cut, but it seems to be the best there is. An article by Ben-Yehuda entitled *Sheelat ha-Hinnukh* (The Question of Education) appeared in the Palestinian weekly *Havazzelet* for 6 Kislev 5640 (21st November, 1879).¹⁴ Why, asks Ben-Yehuda, are the Jews of Jerusalem unwilling to send their children to the modern schools that European Jewish philanthropic organisations have established, or proposed to establish, for them? The answer he gives is that such schools, where instruction is in French, German, or English, estrange the children from their parents and from their people. In Russia, when similar schools aimed at bringing modern education to the Jews were set up, the result was to create enmity between fathers and sons. The fathers, writes Ben-Yehuda, speak Yiddish and don’t know Russian; the children talk Russian and despise Yiddish. Is it any wonder that the old generation looks askance at such Haskalah, which steals their offspring from them and from their people? For the children of the enlightened Jews are as far from the Jewish people as East is from West.

Of course, Ben-Yehuda says, I am not advocating that we teach in Yiddish. It is a corrupt language and, besides, not all the Jews of Jerusalem know it. No; the answer is to use Hebrew as the language of instruction. Contrary to the belief of many people, Hebrew is not a dead language. Smolenskin, Frumkin, Gordon, Brandstaedter, Judah Leb Levin and others have shown that it is still alive, that

we can say anything we want to in it. *We can use it for all of life’s purposes, in the household and in public meetings.* [Emphasis added.]

This language unites Jews all over the world. It is our national language. If modern schools are set up using Hebrew as the medium of instruction, the Jews will be glad to bring their children to them, for they are not opposed to Haskalah in itself but only to the wrong sort of Haskalah. The products of such schools will remain faithful to their parents and their people, because the education they receive will be national, even though it is modern.

In this article Ben-Yehuda is ostensibly talking only about education, but

the revival of Hebrew is obviously implied. One of his complaints about the existing modern schools is that they bring about a permanent linguistic change in their pupils; presumably the schools he advocates would do the same, but in favour of Hebrew rather than some European language. That he hoped for such a change may be indicated by the phrase quoted above in italics, especially the words "in the household" (*ben bene beto*). It is instructive to compare this quotation with the earlier one from *Sheelah Nikhbadah*; there Ben-Yehuda said that the Jews could *write* anything they wanted to in Hebrew, here he says that they can *say* anything they want to. It seems likely that Ben-Yehuda hoped for the revival of spoken Hebrew when he wrote this article, though his readers may not have sensed the full implication of his ideas. In fact, education through the medium of Hebrew was later to be one of the chief weapons in the campaign for the Revival.¹⁵

Ben-Yehuda returned to this theme in later articles in *Havazzelet*, arguing that the children should get used to speaking Hebrew "always, even for personal and intimate matters"¹⁶ and calling on the wealthy philanthropists to "give us our land . . . return our language to us . . . found schools there to teach our offspring in Hebrew, and let us lead a Hebrew life!"¹⁷ Although I believe that Ben-Yehuda was, in effect, calling for the revival of Hebrew as a household language in these articles in *Havazzelet*, he does not say so in so many words and most of the time it appears that the use of Hebrew in schools is merely a means to an educational end (though this end itself is intended to serve a national purpose). We find a change of tone in a series of three articles entitled *Degel ha-Leumiyyut* that appeared in *Ha-Maggid* in September of 1880.¹⁸ Here the Hebrew language itself is one of the main subjects under discussion, especially in the first and third articles. Ben-Yehuda states, as he had stated in *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, that Hebrew (meaning chiefly Hebrew literature) is doomed in the diaspora. There is no longer any legal or social wall dividing us Jews from the Christians and no matter how hard we try to teach our children Hebrew, the new generation will grow up speaking the language of the majority and will forget Hebrew.¹⁹

Can our language and our literature last long if we don't put it into the mouths of our descendants, if we don't *revive* it, if we don't make it a *spoken* language? And how can we succeed in making it a spoken language unless we make it the language of instruction in the schools? Not in Europe! Not in any of the lands of our exile! In all these countries we are a small minority and all our efforts to teach our language to our children will fail. But in our land, the

land of Israel, in the schools that we shall found there, we must make it the language of education and learning. I first suggested this in *Havazzelet* (5640, issue 7). . . .²⁰ [Emphasis as in the original].

Here we find the aim of reviving Hebrew as a spoken language stated explicitly for the first time, with Hebrew schools cast in the role of a means to this end.

In the last sentence of the passage just quoted Ben-Yehuda refers to *Havazzelet*, that is, to the article called *Sheelat ha-Hinnukh* which has already been discussed. It is worth noting that, although his subject is the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, he does not mention *Sheelah Nikhbadah*. This is further evidence — albeit an *argumentum ex silentio* — that he did not regard that article as having anything to do with the revival. Ben-Yehuda does sometimes refer back to *Sheelah Nikhbadah*. One such occasion is in *Degel ha-Leumiyyut* itself where he says in passing that the purpose of his first essay had been “to awaken our people to [the idea of] settlement in the Land of Israel”.²¹ On another occasion he does so during a discussion of whether all Jews, or only some, should be considered as Jews in a national sense.²² Nowhere, so far as I know, does Ben-Yehuda refer back to *Sheelah Nikhbadah* in connection with the revival of Hebrew. This is important additional evidence because it comes from things that Ben-Yehuda wrote only a year or two after *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, while its composition would still have been fresh in his memory. The introduction to his dictionary, on the other hand, was not written until some decades later.

To find an answer to the second question — what *did* Ben-Yehuda mean by the nine words quoted earlier? — it is helpful to start by giving the passage in which they occur more fully:

Is a common language an essential criterion of peoplehood? What about the ethnic groups in America, Belgium and Switzerland — do all their members have one language? Do all Germans speak one language? And what about the French? Are Bretons, Provençals and Alsations not Frenchmen because they do not speak French? Why, then, do some of us (such as Philippon in his journal²³) declare that we are not able to lead a national life because we do not all speak a single language? We Hebrews, indeed, have an advantage [*We-halō od yeter seet lanu ha-Ivrim*] in that we possess a language in which we can even now write anything we care to, and which it is also in our power to speak if only we wish, and if many of us spurn Hebrew, if many of our people cannot even read Hebrew, who is to blame? What has deprived us of a knowledge of the language if not this philosophy [i.e., the universalist and assimilationist philosophy of the Western Jews] itself?

Over whom do the Jews "have an advantage"? Clearly, over such peoples as the Swiss and the Belgians, who live in multi-lingual states. The advantage lies in the fact that the Jews, unlike the Swiss, have a common second language which they can use to overcome the linguistic barriers between them. They already use Hebrew for that purpose in writing *and can do so in speech too if they want to*. That, it seems to me, is a more likely meaning of the problematic passage than the one that has usually been read into it in the past. The idea crossing Ben-Yehuda's mind is that Hebrew can serve as a link language in Palestine, just as English does in India today.

The implication of this idea is that the Jewish entity in Palestine will be both multi-lingual and diglossic.²⁴ A Jew will speak Russian, German, French or whatever, at home and to other inhabitants of his village or region (in this respect the situation would be roughly like that of the Swiss) but may use Hebrew when talking to other Jews whose household language differs from his own. Hebrew will also be the principal language of literature and the press. This may seem a strange idea to us, and Ben-Yehuda himself soon abandoned it, but it is not really surprising that he should have entertained it for a while. After all, diglossia had been the normal state of affairs among Jews for two thousand years, and Ben-Yehuda himself grew up in a milieu in which it was normal to speak Yiddish and read Hebrew.

There is another reason why the idea of a multi-lingual and diglossic Jewish society might naturally have presented itself to Ben-Yehuda's mind. Ben-Yehuda was a disciple, as well as a critic, of Peretz Smolenskin, and we know that he was an avid reader of Smolenskin's essays in *Ha-Shahar*.²⁵ Smolenskin had for years been arguing that the Jews, contrary to the opinion widely held in Western Europe, were still a nation and should strive to retain a Jewish national identity even while living in the diaspora in countries in which they had attained political emancipation and social equality. An essential part of his programme for the Jewish future had to do with the use of Hebrew. Smolenskin envisaged the Jews using the languages of their neighbours in everyday life, but continuing to use Hebrew as a written means of communication with other Jews all over the world. Books and newspapers intended specifically for a Jewish readership would be written in Hebrew, and Jewish children, although receiving generally the same education as their Gentile counterparts in each country, would receive an intensive Hebrew education during the school periods in which other children were having their religious instruction. The use of Hebrew would

prevent the Jewish world from becoming linguistically fragmented, and the knowledge of Jewish literature and history, and especially of the Hebrew scriptures, would provide a bond in a consciousness of a common past and a common literary heritage.²⁶

Smolenskin's programme, it will be observed, was multi-lingual and diglossic, exactly as was Ben-Yehuda's in *Sheelah Nikhbadah*. Ben-Yehuda is simply taking Smolenskin's programme *in toto* and transferring it to Palestine, adding one touch of his own, the idea — expressed in a passing remark, and apparently not an essential part of his plan — that Hebrew can be used as a spoken common language as well as a written one. (At the time he wrote *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, Ben-Yehuda did not yet know that Hebrew was already used in that way among the Jews of Jerusalem, especially between Ashkenazi and non-Ashkenazi Jews.²⁷) I have argued that Ben-Yehuda did not propose, or even hint at, the revival of Hebrew in *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, if we understand that phrase in the way it is usually understood. On the other hand the use of spoken Hebrew on a large scale as a linguistic bridge between different Jewish groups in Palestine would certainly have constituted a considerable enhancement of the language's role and status.

Ben-Yehuda seems, then, to have arrived at his final view — that Hebrew must be made an everyday spoken language—in two stages. Taking Smolenskin's programme as his starting-point, Ben-Yehuda argued that it could not be carried out, in modern conditions, in the diaspora, where the Jews were everywhere a minority, and it was therefore necessary for Jews to immigrate into Palestine until they became so numerous that the programme could be implemented successfully there. This, in effect, is what Ben-Yehuda is proposing in *Sheelah Nikhbadah*. In the months after he wrote his first article, however, Ben-Yehuda's reflections on the connection between language and nationality led him to believe that Smolenskin's vision of a diglossic Jewish future had no hope of success even in Palestine. Diglossia had died out among the Christian nations of Europe and, although he never employed such terminology, Ben-Yehuda's instincts must have told him that social forces of the kind that had killed diglossia among the non-Jews were at work among the Jews too, now that they no longer lived socially and intellectually cut off from their neighbours. Diglossia was doomed; therefore, if Hebrew were to survive at all, it had to become the everyday language, spoken and written, of the new society in Palestine. This was Ben-Yehuda's view by the time he wrote the three articles entitled *Degel*

ha-Leumiyyut that appeared in *Ha-Maggid* in September 1880, and it remained his view thereafter. What we find in *Sheelah Nikhbadah* is not so much a hint at the idea of the Revival, as a stepping-stone towards that idea.

It is interesting to look at the story of the composition of *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, and the events surrounding it, in *Ha-Halom we-Shivro*, Ben-Yehuda's memoirs of his early years.²⁸ This autobiography, first published in *Ha-Toren* in 1917-18, describes how he came to dream of the restoration of the Jewish nation to *Erez Yisrael* and how Tshashnikov, a Russian non-Jew whom he met in Paris, persuaded him to set forth his ideas in an article for the Hebrew press. That article was *Sheelah Nikhbadah*. It is clear from Ben-Yehuda's account that love of the Hebrew language, and the wish to prevent it from dying out, played an important part in the story, and this is also evident from the pages of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* itself. But there is no hint in this part of the autobiography that the idea of making Hebrew an everyday spoken language again played any part in the composition of the article or was contained in its pages.

Ben-Yehuda's essay was first sent, not to *Ha-Shahar*, but to the weekly *Ha-Maggid*. While waiting to hear from the editor Ben-Yehuda met a young Lithuanian Jew, Getzel Selikovitch, who had spent some months among the Jews of Morocco and Tunisia. Not knowing Arabic, Selikovitch had spoken to them in Hebrew. Ben-Yehuda records that he heard not only the Sephardi accent for the first time from Selikovitch, but also natural, simple, Hebrew conversation. After that, Ben-Yehuda and Selikovitch conversed regularly in Hebrew.

In the meantime, having received no reply from *Ha-Maggid*, Ben-Yehuda decided to send his article to *Ha-Shahar*. Apparently he altered it first, making it longer, as befitted an article intended for a monthly review rather than a weekly newspaper. I cannot help wondering whether the problematic nine words about speaking Hebrew were added at this time as the result of Ben-Yehuda's meetings with Selikovitch. This idea raises a number of questions and possibilities, but they are too speculative to pursue here.

Answers have now been given, or suggested, to the two questions posed earlier in this paper.

It may be worth adding that the pages of *Ha-Maggid* cast light on two other aspects of *Sheelah Nikhbadah*. The first is its date of composition. In one of his works on Ben-Yehuda, Joseph Klausner suggests that the article may have been written and sent to Smolenskin in the spring of 1878, a year earlier than is usually supposed, in which case Smolenskin waited more than

a year before publishing it.²⁹ That this was not the case is shown at the beginning of the second article of *Degel ha-Leumiyyut*, where Ben-Yehuda writes that it is now about a year and a half since the day on which he first tried to write anything for publication (*le-min ha-yom asher ahazti et soferim ba-rishonah*). The issue of *Ha-Maggid* in which the words appear is dated 9 September 1880, so *Sheelah Nikhbadah* must have been written in about March 1879, and not in 1878. The incorrectness of Klausner's hypothesis also appears from the fact that Philippon's article³⁰ was published in the issue of his newspaper dated 11 June, 1878.

Klausner made his suggestion because of an apparent puzzle concerning dates. Many years after the publication of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* Ben-Yehuda recalled that Smolenskin's postcard announcing that he would publish the article reached him (Ben-Yehuda) on Purim, about a week after he had sent the article to Smolenskin.³¹ According to Klausner the article as printed in *Ha-Shahar* is dated 13 Adar (i.e., the eve of Purim) without any year. Since it would not have been possible for Ben-Yehuda, in Paris, to have received an acceptance from Smolenskin, in Vienna, only a day after finishing the article, Klausner made his suggestion that Ben-Yehuda signed his article on 13 Adar 5638, not 5639. In fact, however, what is printed in *Ha-Shahar* at the end of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* is not yod-gimmel (i.e., 13) Adar, but vav-gimmel Adar. It has generally been assumed that this apparently meaningless configuration of letters is a misprint for yod-gimmel, but since it could be a misprint for something else, it is not at all certain that any problem of dates exists. (It is, perhaps, worth adding that 5639 was not a leap year.)

The second aspect of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* about which we learn from Ben-Yehuda's writings in *Ha-Maggid* concerns one of its sources. To be more precise, Ben-Yehuda tells us of an event to which he was reacting in part of his first article. In *Degel ha-Leumiyyut*, in the sentences immediately following the one just referred to, Ben-Yehuda writes that at that time (i.e., a year and a half previously) a person called Ashkenazi came to Paris to talk to Cremieux about buying land in Russia for Jewish settlement. Ben-Yehuda continues: "I made this event the basis of the article I wrote then — to awaken our people to the idea of settlement in the land of Israel." Don't all modern travellers agree, asks Ben-Yehuda, that *Erez Yisrael* is fruitful and lacks only working hands to make it the happiest of countries? Why do we turn our attention to other countries (i.e., Russia) when the land of our forefathers is desolate?

These words of Ben-Yehuda's in *Ha-Maggid* provide the explanatory background to parts of *Sheelah Nikhbadah*. There is a passing reference in that article to the view of some Hebrew writers that Jews ought to become farmers in Russia,³² and later there is a section in which Ben-Yehuda talks about the common belief that Palestine is plague-infested and almost uninhabitable and, in words that are at times almost the same as those in *Ha-Maggid*, he tells us that French, German and English travellers who have visited Palestine in modern times have shown that this is false, that the land is fruitful, that only toiling hands are needed to make it the happiest of countries, and so on.³³ Later still, Ben-Yehuda tells us that many Jews in Russia now want to devote themselves to work on the land and have been waiting for the Alliance Israélite Universelle to buy land there and distribute it to them. But, he asks, isn't the land in Palestine just as good as that in Russia? So why doesn't our literature urge the Jews to support the organisations that exist to encourage settlement in Palestine?³⁴

Obviously the move to turn Jews into farmers in Russia aroused the opposition of Ben-Yehuda and, although Ashkenazi (whoever he may have been³⁵) was far from being the only advocate of such a move, it seems to have been his visit to Paris that prompted Ben-Yehuda to start reading Palestinian travelogues in order to assemble evidence that Palestine, too, could provide Jewish farmers with a livelihood. We can therefore add Ashkenazi's name to those of Tshashnikov, Smolenskin and Phillipson, in a list of those people who either acted as midwives at the birth of the article whose centenary we are commemorating, or helped, even if unwittingly and by negative influence, to determine its contents.

But how important is that article? No doubt its publication was significant as marking the beginning of Ben-Yehuda's public career, and its main idea, if not wholly original, was important because of the time and circumstances in which *Sheelah Nikhbadah* appeared. But in two respects the article has been over-rated. The first, obviously, is that *Sheelah Nikhbadah* is not, as has commonly been supposed, the place where the revival of Hebrew as a household language was first suggested. Since some writers have regarded that suggestion as the most important feature of the article, its loss is a serious one. In the second place *Sheelah Nikhbadah* is not the place where one should look for a considered statement of Ben-Yehuda's political outlook. At the time he wrote it, Ben-Yehuda's ideas were still changing. We have seen how he revised his opinion about the language question shortly afterwards, and anyone who reads the articles Ben-Yehuda

wrote in the two years or so following *Sheelah Nikhbadah* will observe his ideas developing, clarifying themselves, and gradually crystallizing. (In at least one of these articles Ben-Yehuda explicitly acknowledges that he has changed his mind about something that he wrote in *Sheelah Nikhbadah*.²²) Ben-Yehuda referred to *Sheelah Nikhbadah* as an immature work (*periboser*), not only in the passage from *Ha-Mavo ha-Gadol* which I referred to earlier, but also in *Ha-halom we-Shivro*.³⁶ This is a judgement that should be accepted at face value.

Unfortunately some accounts of Ben-Yehuda's opinions base themselves almost entirely on *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, and are therefore quite misleading. An example is the entry on Ben-Yehuda in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*,³⁷ which gives the impression that his Zionism was of the kind commonly known as "spiritual", i.e., like that of Ahad Haam, and that one of the purposes of the ingathering he was proposing was to create a national centre that would save those Jews who remained in the diaspora from assimilation. Yet Joseph Klausner, who came to know Ben-Yehuda very well in Palestine, describes him as totally hostile to the idea of a "spiritual centre", and says that the mainspring of all his actions was *shelilat ha-galut*, negation of the diaspora.³⁸ I am not sure that the entry in the encyclopaedia is right in saying that *Sheelah Nikhbadah* suggests the idea of "a national spiritual centre", since even at that time Ben-Yehuda's views may have been significantly different from those later propounded by Ahad Haam. At any rate it is certain that, through ignoring Ben-Yehuda's subsequent writings, the entry gives a distorted picture of his views.

It may seem strange that a paper written to mark the centenary of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* should conclude that the article is an over-rated one, but of course nothing said here should be taken as denigrating Ben-Yehuda himself. It makes no difference to an assessment of his place in Jewish history whether he first proposed the revival of Hebrew in the spring of 1879 or at some other time during the following year and a half. On the contrary, it is just because Ben-Yehuda was such an important figure in the early history of Zionism that we ought to form as accurate a view as we can of his opinions and of their place in the spectrum of Zionist thought.

NOTES

¹ *Ha-Shahar*, IX, Vienna, 1878-79, pp. 359-66. The most recent reprint is in E. Ben-Yehuda, *Ha-Halom we-Shivro*, ed. R. Sivan, Jerusalem, 1978, pp. 37-48. The passages from *Sheelah Nikhbadah* quoted in the present paper are taken from the translation by David Patterson.

² At that time he was still known by his family name of Perelman. *Sheelah Nikhbadah* appeared with the signature Ben-Yehuda (not E. Ben-Yehuda, as is sometimes stated), which later became its author's adopted surname.

³ J. Klausner, *Yozerim u-Bonim*, I, 2nd ed., Tel-Aviv, 1943, p. 225, or p. 10 of the same author's *Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Aggadot Hayyaw u-Mifal Hayyaw*, Jerusalem 5718 [1958], where the essay in question is reprinted. The essay is dated Kislev, 5684, i.e., November-December, 1923. Klausner expresses the same opinion in *Encyclopaedia Hebraica*, IX, Jerusalem, 5718 [1958], col. 128, but cf. his *Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Toledotav u-Mifal Hayyaw* (= *Sifriyyat Erez Yisrael*, VI), Tel-Aviv, 5699 [1939], pp. 21-3, where he treats the subject more cautiously.

⁴ Z. (William) Chomsky in *Hadoar*, New York, 13 July 1973, p. 535.

⁵ It is interesting, however, that no such statement appears in two much earlier articles on Ben-Yehuda, both published during his lifetime: N. Sokolow, *Sefer Zikkaron*, Warsaw, 1889, pp. 188-92; *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, II, New York, 1902, pp. 675-6. The latter article does not mention *Sheelah Nikhbadah* at all.

⁶ R. Sivan, *op.cit.*, p. 42; *Ha-Shahar*, IX, p. 362. There is no emphasis on any part of this passage in the original text in *Ha-Shahar*.

⁷ For fuller accounts see W. Chomsky, *Hebrew: The Eternal Language*, Philadelphia, 1957; C. Rabin, *A Short History of the Hebrew Language*, Jerusalem, n.d. [1973] (both these books have also appeared in Hebrew versions); J. Fellman, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue: Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and the Modern Hebrew Language*, The Hague, 1973, Chapter I.

⁸ In the nineteenth century the phrase "revival of Hebrew" was sometimes used to refer to the literary revival that had taken place as part of the *Haskalah* movement. Ben-Yehuda himself uses the phrase in that sense in *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, when he writes: "In vain will be all the effort of our writers to revive the language if the entire people remains scattered in different lands among nations speaking different tongues." (Sivan, *op.cit.*, p.45; *Ha-Shahar*, IX, p.364) and again in an article in *Ha-Maggid* (1 September 1880, p.297) where he writes of "Our maskilim, who laboured to revive the Hebrew language . . .".

⁹ "We-Od Musar lo Lakahnu", *Ha-Shahar*, IX, pp.526-32; "Kol ha-Am", *Havazzelet*, Jerusalem, 6 September 1879, pp. 315-7. (A contribution by Ben-Yehuda had appeared in an earlier issue of *Havazzelet* — 8 August 1879 — but it was concerned with French politics only and did not touch on Jewish matters.)

¹⁰ *Ha-Shahar*, IX, p.527, three lines from bottom.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.531; *Havazzelet*, 6 September, 1879, p.316.

¹² E. Ben-Yehuda, *Millon ha-Lashon Ha-Ivrit . . . Ha-Mavo ha-Gadol*, Jerusalem, 1948, p.2.

¹³ The standard bibliography of Ben-Yehuda's writings is in Y. Kenaani, *Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Homer Bibliografi Meforat . . .*, Jerusalem, 1929 (offprint from *Mizrah u-Maarav*, III).

¹⁴ *Havazzelet*, Jerusalem, Year 10, issue 7, pp. 49-52.

¹⁵ Fellman, *op.cit.*, pp. 48-55, 94-111, 117-8. It seems to have led to difficulties between parents and children just as did the schools criticised by Ben-Yehuda; *ibid.*, p.54.

¹⁶ *Havazzelet* X, p.91. This article was written in reply to Frumkin, the editor of *Havazzelet*, who had appended a 24-line note to *Sheelat ha-Hinnukh* dissociating himself from Ben-Yehuda's views and saying that the idea of using Hebrew as the language of instruction in the schools of Jerusalem was "ein frommer Wunsch" (a pious wish).

¹⁷ *Havazzelet* X, pp. 211-2.

¹⁸ "Degel ha-Leumiyyut", *Ha-Maggid*, Lyck, Year 24, pp. 297-9, 306-7, 316-7 (issues 35-7, dated 1, 9 and 16 September 1880).

¹⁹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 298.

²⁰ *Loc. cit.*, p. 316.

²¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 306. For a fuller discussion of the passage in which this sentence occurs see pp.35-6.

²² *Havazzelet*, X, p. 90, note 3.

²³ The reference is to Ludwig Philippson, "Die Wiederherstellung des juedischen Staates", *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, XLII, 1878, no. 24, pp. 371-3. The importance of this article by the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* as a source for *Sheelah Nikhbadah* was pointed out by G. Kressel, "Mashma'ut ha-Sheelah ha-Nikhbadah le-Eliezer Ben-Yehuda", in C. Berlin (ed.), *Studies . . . in honor of I. Edward Kiev*, New York, 1971, pp. 117-22 (Hebrew section). Mr. Kressel also gives interesting information about the background to Philippson's article. I should like, at this point, to express my indebtedness to the Kressel Collection at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, which contains much important material on Ben-Yehuda and *Sheelah Nikhbadah*, some of it not accessible easily (if at all) elsewhere in Britain.

²⁴ Diglossia is the term used in sociolinguistics to refer to the use of different languages for different purposes. The best-known example comes from medieval Europe, where the usual written language, Latin, was rarely spoken, and the commonly-spoken vernaculars were rarely written.

²⁵ See, e.g., R. Sivan, *op.cit.*, p. 64; S. L. Zitron, *Leksikon Ziyyni*, Warsaw, 5684 [1924], col. 75.

²⁶ See, e.g., *Ha-Shahar*, IV, pp. 7-8, 65-9, or the reprint in Smolenskin's *Maamarim*, I, Jerusalem, 1925, pp. 170-8.

²⁷ Fellman, *op. cit.*, p. 30; T. V. Parfitt, "The Use of Hebrew in Palestine 1800-1882", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 1972, pp. 237-52; *idem*, "Terumato shel ha-Yishuv ha-Yashan li-Tehiyat ha-Lashon", in a forthcoming issue of *Balshanut Shimushit* (in press); C. Rabin, "Mahuto shel ha-Dibbur ha-Ivri she-lifne ha-Tehiyah", *Leshonenu La-Am*, XXVI, nos. 8-9, 1975. The fact that Ben-Yehuda did not know of it seems clear from the autobiographical account in *Ha-Halom ve-Shivro*, according to which his meeting with A. M. Lunz, from whom he first learned about the use of spoken Hebrew in Jerusalem, apparently took place well after the composition of *Sheelah Nikhbadah* (Sivan, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-79). Moreover Philippson, in the article cited above (note 23), had referred to the divisions between the various Jewish communities in Jerusalem and used them as evidence for his view that lack of a common language would be an insuperable obstacle to any attempt to set up a Jewish state in Palestine. If Ben-Yehuda had known of the way Hebrew was, in fact, used in Jerusalem, he would surely have mentioned it in *Sheelah Nikhbadah* in order to refute Philippson's argument.

²⁸ Sivan, *op.cit.*, pp. 65-73.

²⁹ Klausner, *op.cit.* (1939), p.18.

³⁰ See note 23.

³¹ Sivan, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

³² *Ibid.*, p.44; *Ha-Shahar*, IX, p.364.

³³ Sivan, *op.cit.* p.46; *Ha-Shahar*, IX, p. 365.

³⁴ Sivan, *op.cit.* p.47; *Ha-Shahar*, IX, p. 366.

³⁵ Perhaps Mikhail Osipovich Ashkinasi (see *Jewish Encyclopedia*, II, pp. 203-4). On agricultural settlement by Jews in Eastern Europe in the 19th century, and its place in the ideology of the Haskalah movement, see: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 1972, index, "Agriculture"; *Jewish Encyclopedia*, I, 1901, pp. 252-256; Y. Bartal in *Cathedra*, IX, Jerusalem, Tishre 5739 [1978], pp. 54-58.

³⁶ Sivan, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

³⁷ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, IV, cols. 564-569.

³⁸ Klausner, *op.cit.* (1943), pp. 240-245, and reprint in *op.cit.* (1958) pp. 35-44.

Language Revival: A Comparison of the Work of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and L'udovít Štúr

by

TUDOR PARFITT AND MÁJA TURČANOVÁ

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and L'udovít Štúr belong to a distinguished group of men whose names have been identified with the so-called revival of a national language.¹ The names of Aasen in Norway, Korais in Greece, Dobrovsky in Bohemia, Aavik in Estonia and Ljudevit Gaj in Croatia come to mind. Ben-Yehuda is known as the Father of Modern Hebrew.² L'udovít Štúr is known as the creator of the Slovak literary language.³

At first glance the differences between the life and work of the two men seem to outweigh any similarity. They were not contemporaries. L'udovít Štúr died as a result of a shooting accident in 1856. Ben-Yehuda was born in 1858. Moreover, the languages with which they have been so closely identified have undergone very different processes. Hebrew has regained its spoken aspect after a period of some two millennia — a process which Marcel Cohen — in common with many others — has regarded as the only example of the revival of a dead language.⁴ Slovak, on the other hand, has become a written language effectively for the first time. There was, of course, a written Slav in the eighth and ninth centuries⁵ but this has no more in common with modern Slovak than with any other Slav language of the area.⁶

Perhaps the most obvious similarity is that both revivals are closely connected with a national movement. One peculiarity of modern nationalism in general is its tendency to elevate aspects of nationhood such as a common language or an attachment to a geographical area to the level of a supreme value. Katz has described this as “the transforming of ethnical facts into ultimate values”.⁷ It is clear that the ideas of Slav nationalism which motivated Štúr were akin to those that influenced Ben-Yehuda. After all it was another outbreak of Slav nationalism embodied in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 and the Bulgarian struggle for liberation that led Ben-Yehuda to formulate his dictum recorded in the preface to his great dictionary, “The revival of Israel upon the ancestral soil”.⁸ It is equally

clear that the perception the two men had of the role of language on the unification and regeneration of the people was strikingly similar. In 1847 Štúr proclaimed in the pages of *Orol Tatranský*⁹ that he would

defend the right of every nation to be united in that element which contains its soul — that is in its national and ancestral language. It is in this language that the nation is spoken to from the grave by its ancestral spirits.¹⁰

Three decades later, Ben-Yehuda wrote:

It is this language which unites all the children of Israel from the four corners of the globe . . . it is the language of our forefathers, the language of our prophets, the language of our sages — the precious national tongue of the entire nation.¹¹

For Ben-Yehuda and Štúr the revival of what they regarded as their national tongue was a supreme value. Both men dedicated their lives to realizing their goals. They both made very considerable sacrifices. Ben-Yehuda emigrated to Jerusalem where he suffered the poverty and filth of an oriental city and the frequent insults of its Jewish inhabitants. His dedication to the idea of language revival can be measured by the fact that he brought his son up in Hebrew (a language the child's mother barely spoke) and incarcerated him behind locked doors lest he happen to overhear conversation in any language other than Hebrew. Štúr risked his life on many occasions and made personal sacrifices. One such was his decision to give up his great love, one Marie Pospíšilová, declaring that he "had consecrated himself to the cause of his precious nation",¹² and that he could serve the revival better as a bachelor. He thereafter lived a life of abnegation and poverty.

These two dedicated language revivers appear to have had some considerable success. Hebrew has become the national language, for all purposes, of the State of Israel and Slovak has become the national language, for all purposes, of the Slovak part of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic.

In the Slovak and Hebrew pantheons of national leaders, the places of Štúr and Ben-Yehuda are secure. Štúr, as we have seen, is widely regarded as the creator of the Slovak literary language, as the man who united the Slovak people¹³ and as "the most illustrious name in Slovak history".¹⁴ Similarly, Ben-Yehuda has been acclaimed as "the reviver of the Hebrew

language” and as the “Father of Modern Hebrew.” Streets in Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv are named after Ben-Yehuda; in communist Slovakia, streets, squares, statues and commemorative plaques abound in memory of Štúr — and this despite the fact that Marx criticized Štúr in whose revolt against Hungary he saw a betrayal of the democratic revolution.¹⁵

It would seem then that the role of these two great individuals in the “revivals” of the languages was immense.

Before we proceed further we should define some of the central terms. As we have seen, Štúr has been given the credit for the creation of the Slovak literary language. This term is not used here in the sense of a language of literature or *belles-lettres* but rather in the sense of the German *Schriftsprache* or the Czech and Slovak *spisovný jazyk* and is parallel to the Russian usage.¹⁶ In the case of Slovak the late Professor Auty explained the term in the sense of a generally accepted form of the national language “opposed to local or specialized forms of it.”¹⁷

The term “revival” should also be considered. It is perhaps wrong to talk about language revival in the case either of Slovak or Hebrew. For a language to be revived it has first to be dead, which was not so in the case either of Hebrew or Slovak. Slovak had a healthy life as a spoken language among some three million speakers in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Hebrew had traditionally been the written language *par excellence* of the Jews of Europe and elsewhere and more recently had been used as the chief vehicle for the Jewish movement of enlightenment known as the *Haskalah*. At the very least it was the language of the synagogue in a society which was still closely attached to its religious traditions. Professor Rabin has made the claim that “in 1879 over 50% of all male Jews were able to understand the Bible and daily prayers . . . and some 25% of all male Jews to read a Hebrew book of average difficulty . . . allowing for a much higher proportion in Eastern Europe”.¹⁹ Even allowing for some exaggeration there can be no doubt that the Hebrew language was very far from dead in the nineteenth century. It would be more appropriate perhaps to talk about a revival of language function since in the case of both Hebrew and Slovak only a certain language function was moribund. The situation that pertained for most Slovaks and most central and East European Jews may be termed *diglossia*: the use of one language for spoken functions and another for written functions.

There is a certain paradox involved in the fact that Ben-Yehuda’s attempt to make Hebrew the spoken language of the Jewish community in Palestine

met with deeply entrenched resistance on the part of certain orthodox Jews who felt that to use Hebrew for secular matters was sacrilegious while Štúr's attempt to make a form of Slovak the written language of Slovakia met with similar opposition on the part of certain Slovaks. A passage from Ben Ziyyon Yadler's book illustrates the distaste felt by the orthodox towards the new uses to which Hebrew was being put.

In 1904 the Freethinkers were strong enough to start expanding the use of what they called Ivrit: and all the Freethinkers' schools taught in Ivrit. Blatant desecrators of the Sabbath started speaking Ivrit and on the Holy Sabbath they would sell various drinks, shouting out — half a *grush* a bottle! . . . And it was a source of great bitterness to the old rabbis of Jerusalem that all the desecrators of the Sabbath and consumers of ritually unclean food and meat should use Ivrit. The rabbis of Jerusalem expressed their opposition to the teaching of Hebrew at this time saying that were the desecrators of the Sabbath to speak Hebrew they would desecrate the Sabbath in Hebrew, they would entice young hearts to profane education in Hebrew . . . and for this reason we should not speak Hebrew, it is better to speak Yiddish and thus we shall not associate with the Sabbath desecrators.²⁰

One of Štúr's most vociferous opponents was a Slovak Lutheran who published an article in 1847 entitled "A Word to the Nation" in which he demanded of Slovaks how much longer they were prepared to endure "Štúr's rotten drivel"; whether they would allow the "lice disease" that was Štúr's Slovak to "crawl over their limbs", and concluded:

Štúr's shameless rabble brings into the Church a language which is used for speaking to cows, bulls, dogs and swine: which is used for only the lowliest of human functions — for cursing and profaning. A layer of filth has accumulated on this household language.²¹

The historical reasons for the diglossia of European Jewry are too well known to need repetition here. The reasons for Slovak diglossia are straightforward. The Czechs had lost their independence to the Austrian Hapsburgs after the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620. The Slavs of present-day Slovakia had lost theirs seven centuries earlier when their territory was invaded by the Magyars. The Slovaks then were under foreign rule for longer than any other nation in Europe. The national institutions requiring a national written language were never developed. There are no vernacular texts written in Slovakia from before the end of the 14th century. Those to appear later were essentially Czech texts written or copied by Slovak writers and clerks who occasionally introduced Slovak lexical items and simple mistakes whose origin was Slovak usage.²²

But, by and large, the Czech used in Slovakia from the end of the 14th century was identical to the national literary language of 14th-century Bohemia and this medium continued to be used for some centuries by educated Slovaks. Those Slovaks who accepted Lutheranism in the 16th century adopted the language of the Kralice Bible for all forms of vernacular writing whether religious or secular, and thus had some reason to respect the norm of literary Czech. But at least until the end of the 18th century, Czech was regarded by the Slovaks as the most natural form of their vernacular. But, for all that, its use was severely limited. For most administrative and even literary purposes, Hungarian, German and particularly Latin were used in Slovakia.²³

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there were indications of a growing sense of national consciousness among Slovaks which found expression in various efforts to create some sort of literary Slovak. Certain works published in the Jesuit University of Trnava in Western Slovakia demonstrate an attempt to modify literary Czech by the introduction of West Slovak dialectal elements. A yet greater divergence was created in publications that appeared in the 1750s which were largely translations from Hungarian into the local Eastern Slovak dialect of Zemplin for the benefit of the Slovak Calvinists of the area. Although these works were of little importance for the later development of a Slovak literary language, it can be fairly maintained that they were the first books to be published in a language that is undeniably Slovak.²⁴

A new phase of the language was introduced by Anton Bernolák (1762-1813) who also worked from Trnava. In his attempt to elevate the material and, as he saw it, moral position of his people, he established a new literary form which was a compromise between Jesuit Slovak and West Central dialects. His linguistic work was published in two important volumes — *Dissertatio Philologico-Critica de Literis Slavorum* (Bratislava, 1787) and *Grammatica Slavica* (Bratislava, 1790)²⁵. It is noteworthy that although his language, or Bernolačina, was largely based on Western Slovak, in at least some important phonological respects it exhibits characteristics of central Slovak usage.²⁶

Bernolák's linguistic work was the consequence of his belief that the Slovaks constitute a separate people. His new form of the vernacular was enthusiastically welcomed by Catholic writers and intellectuals. Among others, Jan Hollý, the poet, used this language as his literary medium. In 1792 a Slovak literary society was founded, dedicated to substituting this

Slovak dialect for literary Czech.²⁷ But the Protestants rejected Bernolák's movement and remained loyal to Czech. They were much involved in the revival of literary Czech in the first decades of the nineteenth century and two Slovak Protestants, Jan Kollar and P. Šafárik, played an important role in the Czech national and linguistic revival. To such men, Bernolák's language seemed provincial and even ludicrous.

By the 1830s the situation had become quite absurd. Two main forms of the vernacular had become current: Bernolák's — a form of Slovak tending towards Czech — and a form of Czech tending towards Slovak.²⁸ In addition there was the language of the East Slovak Calvinists. In opposition to all these trends were the Hungarian nationalists who endeavoured to suppress Slovak wherever they could. They realized, however, that nothing served their purpose better than the fragmentation of the revival. Slovaks now faced a choice. They could either adopt Czech, as they had before the eighteenth century, or they would have to find an acceptable form of written Slovak. Štúr realized that the adoption of Czech would drive a wedge between Slovak Protestants and Slovak Catholics. At the same time he feared that the introduction of a Slovak literary language would divide Czechs and Slovaks. He considered the latter course to be the lesser of the two evils.²⁹

Štúr had studied at the University of Halle (many other young Slovaks had been there at the same time³⁰) and had come into contact with Hegelian doctrines. Štúr's panslavism was set in a robustly Hegelian mould: he believed that the Slavs had a mission in the world and that the Slovaks would play a role as a young nation in the great family of Slav nations. Undoubtedly Štúr and the other young Slovak intellectuals were beginning to be affected by the same wave of national awareness that was engulfing the Czechs and other emerging nations and which was to culminate in the events of 1848 — the year historians have called the Spring of Nations.

The spur to the Slovak national movement was the great wave of magyarizing measures that were introduced in the 1830s and 1840s. European antisemitism acted in a similar way upon the Jewish national movement in the 1870s and 1880s. Magyarization culminated in a decree introduced in 1843 which declared that henceforth Hungarian would be the exclusive language of legislation, government, official business and education.³¹ At precisely the moment when Hungary, under the inspiring radical leadership of Kossuth, was attempting to wrest its national independence from Austria, it was furiously suppressing Croats, Serbs,

Rumanians and Slovaks who were struggling for their own national independence.³² Kossuth (himself a Slovak) proclaimed a view popularly held in Hungary: "Verily, verily I say unto you, a Slovak nation has never existed even in a dream".³³ Every conceivable measure was taken against the use of Slovak. Schools were closed, newspapers banned and children severely beaten for speaking Slovak in school.³⁴ Štúr believed that in the struggle against Magyarization the full resources of the Slovak nation would be needed. This mobilization could only be achieved by giving the Slovak people a literary language that mirrored their spoken language.

The development of the language that came to be known as Štúr's language can be traced back to 1843 when together with a circle of friends and students he worked out the principles of the new language. The first work to appear in the new language was the second volume of the periodical *Nitra* in June 1844 (the first volume had appeared in Czech) and the theoretical basis for the language was provided by Štúr's two works *The Slovak Dialect and the Need to Write in that Dialect* and *Grammar of the Slovak Language*, both of which appeared in Bratislava in 1846.

The decision to base the new language on the Central Slovak dialects appears to have been inspired largely by the brand of romantic nationalism current at the time and which saw in the Tatras the original home of the Slav people, and in the dialects of Central Slovakia the closest extant dialect to the original language of the Slavs.³⁵ With some passion Štúr remarked "The purest and most beautiful Slovak is spoken in the fastness of the Tatra mountains, under the hundred winged peaks, ancient fortresses and the first Slav settlements."³⁶ It should also be noted that Štúr himself and many of his collaborators were from Central Slovakia and that the choice of Central Slovakia made sound political sense insofar as the central dialect was identified neither with the Catholics of the West nor with the Calvinists of the East.

It is now recognized that although Štúr based his language on the central area he did not choose any particular dialect form (*e.g.*, his native dialect of Uhrovec) but rather took elements from various of the central dialects and welded them into a whole. He also introduced a certain admixture of Western Slovak.

Of great importance is the discussion mentioned by Auty in 1961 "of the presumed existence of a kind of *koiné* based on central dialects which had already established itself among Slovak intellectuals before Štúr began his work".³⁷ Evidence for this is adduced from the fact that in certain

eighteenth and nineteenth century Slovak texts, central dialect elements are superimposed on East and West dialects. In this respect Auty quotes Štúr who, in defence of his choice of central Slovak, wrote in 1846 "And this same speech influences other Slovaks who speak in a different way, so that the Slovaks of Prespurk, Nitra, Trenčín as it were unconsciously learn it and intermingle its forms with some of their own forms which diverge from it".³⁸ As Auty put it, "This is a very categorical and important statement coming from a scholar of Štúr's ability. While one may be slightly hesitant in saying that the codification of central Slovak was 'historically inevitable' there can be no doubt that circumstances were favourable to its establishment."³⁹

It should be noted in passing that there are certain inconsistencies especially apparent in the omission of a few phonetic features which were widespread in central dialects — notably *ä* and *ʃ*. They were subsequently restored. Similarly Štúr followed Bernolák in his modification of the Czech orthographical system notably by excluding the letter *y* which in most Slovak and Czech dialects is indistinguishable from *i* and in consequence of this introduced diacritics for all palatalized consonants. The *y* was reintroduced later in an attempt to bring Slovak closer to Czech orthographical norms and has bedevilled the dictation papers of Slovak children ever since.

If Štúr's scholarly works established the norm of the new language, his newspaper popularized it. There was both a great demand and a great need for a newspaper. In 1843 Štúr wrote "The time has come, the national and political conscience has awoken, we must now fill the national need and give the nation a newspaper".⁴⁰ At this time the nearest thing to a vernacular newspaper was the Czech press published in Prague. By Štúr's time the language of the Prague press was incomprehensible to many Slovaks.⁴¹ Nevertheless, despite the fact that other Hungarian minorities such as the Serbs, Croats and Germans all had newspapers, the authorities were slow in granting the necessary permission. The official position remained that as all Slovak intellectuals could read German, Hungarian or Latin, no purpose would be served by a Slovak paper. Nonetheless in August 1845 the first issue of the Slovak National Journal appeared in Štúr's Slovak. It received a tumultuous welcome in Slovakia and news of its publication spread throughout the Slav world. It was accompanied by a literary supplement, *The Eagle of the Tatras*.

By the 1850s the new language had won general acceptance. A not unimportant factor in its success was the appearance in 1846 of a romantic

epic by Andrej Sladkovič entitled *Marína*. An Austrian decree of 1849 ordering the use of Czech for official purposes in Slovakia had little effect. In 1851 a meeting of Catholic and Protestant writers and scholars in Bratislava agreed formally to accept Štúr's language with minor modifications and in this essential form Slovak has remained until now.⁴²

We have seen that although Štúr is so closely identified with the Slovak revival, he was not the originator of the idea of literary Slovak. Even Bernolák's Slovak followed a number of earlier attempts. Moreover his choice of medium seems to follow a trend that was already in motion.

Now to turn to Ben-Yehuda — the Father of Modern Hebrew. In the only recent monograph to be devoted to Ben-Yehuda, Fellman has stated:

Ben-Yehuda must be given the sole credit and distinction for being the first to state the idea and necessity of starting the revival and for being the first to show the feasibility of implementing it . . .⁴³

In fact, Ben-Yehuda was not the first to state the idea. The mere formulation of the idea in any case required little originality in the context of Jewish nationalism. But, in any event, Yehuda Alkalai (1798-1878), a Serbian rabbi (who must have been much influenced by the Slav nationalism and linguistic revival of his time) published a work entitled *Minhat Yehuda* in 1845 where he observed:

I wish to attest to the pain I have always felt at the error of our ancestors, that they allowed our Holy Tongue to be so forgotten. Because of this our people was divided into seventy peoples; our one language was replaced by the seventy languages of the lands of exile.

If the Almighty should indeed show us His miraculous favour and gather us into our land, we would not be able to speak to each other and such a divided community could not succeed . . . This sort of thing is not accomplished by a miracle, and it is almost impossible to imagine a true revival of our Hebrew tongue by natural means. But we must have faith that it will come . . . We must redouble our efforts to maintain Hebrew and to strengthen its position. It must be the basis of our educational work.⁴⁴

But even before Alkalai's time, the idea of reviving Hebrew was part and parcel of the early *Haskalah* movement. The revival of Hebrew was viewed as a necessary part of the revival of the nation. By the end of the eighteenth century the idea of a synthesis of Mishnaic Hebrew and classical Hebrew had been mooted,⁴⁵ certain neologisms created and the term

“modern Hebrew” (*leshon ha-kodesh ha-hadashah*)⁴⁶ introduced. In 1771 Mordechai Schnaber wrote:

Everyone speaks and creates in the language of his people so as to broaden it; and why should we be deprived of the inheritance of our forefathers by forsaking our holy tongue?⁴⁷

The spoken aspect of Hebrew had been stressed by Satanow in *Divre Rivot* where the teacher advised the prince of the necessity of learning to speak Hebrew as well as read and write it.⁴⁸ Moreover the practicality of speaking Hebrew had first been suggested to Ben-Yehuda by Abraham Luncz while he was being treated in a Paris hospital. Luncz, a scholar of some note,⁴⁹ was a Jerusalemite who spoke Hebrew fluently as did most Palestinian Jews who over the years had developed Hebrew as a *lingua franca*. The uses of spoken Hebrew in Palestine before Ben-Yehuda have been described elsewhere by one of the present writers.⁵⁰ Two quotations will have to suffice. In 1889 Ben-Yehuda wrote in his weekly newspaper *Ha-Zevi*:

Over a period of hundreds of years the Jews have created for themselves a simple style of speaking about everyday matters — forms of address, everything necessary for speech the Jews of Jerusalem have already created, and this living style we have tried to bring into our language.⁵¹

A second quotation is taken from a letter written by an official of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, stationed in Safed:

But here in Palestine where traditionally and as it were, atavistically, Hebrew is spoken absolutely as a living language by the Jews, simple merchants, rabbis, porters and domestic servants — here in Palestine the Zionists with their propaganda are preaching to the converted . . .⁵²

The influence of the spoken Hebrew of the old *yishuv* can be summarized as follows:

(1) The Hebrew of the old *yishuv* developed a wealth of idioms and forms that were taken over for the most part by Ben-Yehuda and his followers.

(2) When Ben-Yehuda arrived in Palestine the pronunciation of Hebrew was a *fait accompli* and the adoption of the Palestinian pronunciation never seems to have been seriously challenged.

(3) Two of the more critical areas in the Revival were the practice of teaching Hebrew in Hebrew and the establishment of Hebrew-speaking

kindergartens. Nissim Behar⁵³ (1848-1931), a native of Jerusalem, was the first to introduce the teaching of Hebrew in Hebrew — and the Hebrew-speaking kindergartens were to a large extent dependent upon the availability of Hebrew-speaking assistants who were recruited from the old *yishuv*.⁵⁴

(4) The practice of speaking Hebrew as a *lingua franca* had established an important precedent. Hebrew could, demonstrably, be spoken. The oddity of Ben-Yehuda and his followers speaking it was, therefore, much reduced.

(5) Until the time of the British Mandate practically all political Zionists in Palestine were from central and eastern Europe and almost all spoke Yiddish. The old *yishuv*, with its lack of homogeneity, provided a necessity for speaking Hebrew. As Ruppin put it in 1907:

Beside the revival in national consciousness, the growing use of Hebrew was aided by the fact that Hebrew served as the sole means by which Ashkenazi immigrants could communicate with their Palestine-born brethren.⁵⁵

It is very difficult to say how decisive Ben-Yehuda's role was in the revival of Hebrew. Perhaps his most important contribution was the fact that his was the first Hebrew-speaking household: this was important mainly because it set an example to others. But its immediate effect in Jerusalem was very slight. In 1902, for instance, only ten Jerusalem families actually spoke Hebrew in their homes. And it is still far from clear to what extent the settlers of the first *aliyah* were influenced by Ben-Yehuda. His paper *Ha-Zevi* played a very important role in disseminating his ideas but diminished in importance towards the end of the first *aliyah* and was soon overtaken in importance by the journal of the second *aliyah*, *Ha-Poel Ha-Zair*. Neither the societies *Tehiyat ha-Lashon* or *Safah Berurah* nor the *Vaad ha-Lashon* played an important role in the early years of the revival. Ben-Yehuda's dictionary, although a monumental undertaking, had no substantial effect on the revival except, perhaps, psychologically. People expected a proper language to have a dictionary and were comforted to know that one was in the making. It is to be remembered that the first volume of the dictionary only appeared in 1909.

It seems then that there are certain similarities between the work of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and L'udovít Štúr:

(1) Neither of them can claim responsibility for originating the idea of their respective revivals.

(2) In both cases they seem to have carried on a process which for a variety of reasons had already come into being. Štúr codified a *koiné* of central Slovak usage which had already developed and been tacitly accepted. Ben-Yehuda encouraged an extension of the function of spoken Hebrew which had already been developed for pragmatic reasons by the *yishuv* and continued an overall development or "revival" of Hebrew which can be traced back to the eighteenth century. In an important article written in 1958⁵⁶ Professor Auty concluded "it would of course be foolish to suggest that without Štúr's action there would have been no separate Slovak language". Later in the same article he wrote:

It would seem therefore that the new language was not simply the personal creation of a patriotic and gifted philologist. Štúr gave force and direction to tendencies that were already in existence.

In an article published in 1972⁵⁷ it was concluded that Ben-Yehuda

was undoubtedly a great lexicographer and his dynamic personality and fanatical insistence upon Hebrew as the only language for the new society which his colleagues were bent on building, clearly lent impetus to a trend that was already in motion.

It appears that in the same way as the heroes of the remote past served as symbols for the romantic nationalism of the nineteenth century so do more recent figures like Štúr and Ben-Yehuda serve as folk heroes in present-day society. Perhaps linguistic phenomena such as language revival can be better appreciated as the work of one man than as complicated albeit natural linguistic processes.

Auty continued "the ultimate solutions were indeed the work of individuals: but they owed their character to factors that lay outside the will of individuals — in the history and needs of the communities which the new language have to serve".⁵⁸ It is clear that the same conclusions hold good in the case of Hebrew.

As Štúr is the elder of the two *dramatis personae* we should leave the last words to him:

It is not a few heads that create or think up a language but rather it is the nation itself which creates its language: it is the duty of its educated sons to speak to it in its own language.⁵⁹

NOTES

¹ For the use of the term "Revival" in the Slovak and Slav case see R. Auty, "The Linguistic Revival among the Slavs of the Austrian Empire 1780-1850: The Role of Individuals in the Codification and Acceptance of New Literary Languages" in *Modern Language Review*, *LIII*, 1958, pp. 392-404.

² For a selection of views on Ben-Yehuda see T. V. Parfitt, "The Use of Hebrew in Palestine 1800-1882" in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, *XVII*, no. 2, 1972, note 1.

³ F. Ruttkay, *L'udovít Štúr*, Bratislava, 1971, p. 3; *Slovenština*, ed. J. Horecký, Š. Peciar, V. Vážný, Prague, 1964, frontispiece.

⁴ M. Cohen, "Langues et Nations" in *Mélanges Marcel Cohen*, The Hague, 1970, p. 25.

⁵ *I.e.*, Unitary Slav or Old Church Slavonic.

⁶ Štúr and his contemporaries believed that Slovak was, of all the Slav languages, the closest to the Unitary Slav of the Great Moravian Empire. This is no longer the view of scholars. A certain difficulty is created by the ambiguity of the term "Slovak" which, until the 18th century, meant either Slav or Slovak. See *Slovenština*, *op.cit.*, p. 163; A. Pražák, *Dejiny Spisovné Slovenštiny Po Dobu Štúrova*, Prague, 1922, p.8, p. 11, p. 12; R. Auty, "The Evolution of Literary Slovak" in the *Transactions of the Philological Society*, Cambridge, 1953, p. 147.

⁷ J. Katz, "The Jewish National Movement: A Sociological Analysis" in *Jewish Society Through the Ages*, ed. H. H. Ben-Sasson and S. Ettinger, London, 1971, p. 267.

⁸ *Millon ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit*, ed. E. Ben-Yehuda, *Ha-Mavo ha-Gadol*, I, Jerusalem, 1940.

⁹ *Orol Tatranský*: the literary supplement of the first Slovak newspaper (see below, p. 47).

¹⁰ A. Pražák, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

¹¹ *Kol Kitbe Eliezer Ben-Yehuda*, I, Jerusalem, 1941, p. 47.

¹² *Listy L'udovíta Štúra*, I, ed. J. Ambruš, Bratislava, 1954.

¹³ See F. Ruttkay, *op.cit.*, p. 3; J. M. Kirschbaum, *Slovak Language and Literature*, Winnipeg, 1975, p. 185; *Slovenština*, frontispiece, etc.

¹⁴ E. Denis, *La Question d'Autriche — les Slovaques*, Paris, 1917, p. 164.

¹⁵ See E. Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, Cambridge, 1973, p. 10.

¹⁶ See R. Auty, "The Linguistic Revival among the Slavs", p. 392; and R. Auty, "Dialect, *koiné* and Tradition in the Formation of Literary Slovak" in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, *XXXIX*, 1961, p. 339.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ E. Pauliny, *Dejiny Spisovnej slovenčiny*, I, Bratislava, 1966, p. 117.

¹⁹ C. Rabin, "Language Revival. Colloquialism or Purism", in *The Jewish Frontier*, 1958, pp. 11-15.

²⁰ Ben Ziyon Yadler, *Be-Tuv Yerushalayim*, Benei-Berak, 1967, p. 74.

²¹ A. Pražák, *op.cit.*, p. 448.

²² R. Auty, "The Evolution of Literary Slovak", p. 146.

²³ *Slovenština*, *op.cit.*, pp. 165-166.

²⁴ *Slovenština*, *op.cit.*, pp. 169ff; R. W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks*, London, 1943, pp. 258-9; J. M. Kirschbaum, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

²⁵ *Slovenština*, *op.cit.*, pp. 169-170; R. Auty, "Dialect, *koiné* and Tradition", p. 340, and "The Evolution of Literary Slovak", p. 149; J. M. Kirschbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 105; E. Pauliny, *Dejiny Spisovnej slovenčiny*, Bratislava, 1948, pp. 61-62.

²⁶ *E.g.*, *d'et'i* for *dzeci*.

²⁷ R. W. Seton-Watson, *op.cit.*, p. 259; J. M. Kirschbaum, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

²⁸ R. Auty, "The Evolution of Literary Slovak", p. 152.

²⁹ *L'udovít Štúr*, ed. V. Matula, Bratislava, 1956, p. 200, quoting a letter from Štúr to Palacký in 1836.

³⁰ Černerak, Jan Kalinčiak, Gustav Grossman; see F. Ruttkay, *L'udovít Štúr*, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

³¹ R. W. Seton-Watson, *op.cit.*, pp. 259-60.

³² *Idem* p. 263.

³³ *Idem*, p. 260.

³⁴ A. Pražák, *op. cit.*, p. 466.

- ³⁵ R. Auty, "The Revival of Literary Slovak", p. 153.
- ³⁶ E. Paulíný, *op.cit.*, I, p. 103; see R. Auty, "The Evolution of Literary Slovak", p. 153.
- ³⁷ R. Auty, "Dialect, *koiné*, and Tradition in the Formation of Literary Slovak", p. 343.
- ³⁸ *Idem*, p. 344.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ F. Ruttkay, *op.cit.*, p. 50.
- ⁴¹ *L'udovít Štúr*, ed. V. Matula, p. 203.
- ⁴² Modification was the work of Hodža and Hattala. Czech orthography replaced Štúr's phonetic system and the phonemes *ä* and *l'* were introduced.
- ⁴³ J. Fellman, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue*, The Hague, 1973, p. 10.
- ⁴⁴ *Kitbe Ha-Rav Yehuda Alkalai, I*, ed. Y Rafael, Jerusalem, 1974, p. 247. English version from A. Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, New York, 1969, p. 106.
- ⁴⁵ M. Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah: Studies in Hebrew Literature of the Enlightenment in Germany*, Leiden, 1979, p. 85.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 87; I. Satanow, *Divre Rivot, II*, Berlin, 1793, pp. 106-116.
- ⁴⁹ See, e.g. *Netivot Ziyon vi-Yrushalayim*, ed. G. Kressel, Jerusalem, 1970, pp. 9ff.
- ⁵⁰ See note 2.
- ⁵¹ Quoted by J. Fellman, *op. cit.*, p. 60: *Ha-Zevi*, 1889-90, issue 26, pp. 101-2.
- ⁵² Archives, A.I.U., Israel, 11c11, Safed, M. Franco, 1899; see also T. V. Parfitt, *op. cit.*
- ⁵³ See E. Cohen-Reiss, *Mi-Zikhronot Ish Yerushalayim*, 2nd ed., Jerusalem, 1967, p. 86; A. Goldberg, *Pioneers and Builders*, London, 1943, pp. 188-193; Archives, A.I.U., i, M, xxvi, E, 82 & 83; C. Rabin, *Ikkare Toledot ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit*, p. 53; J. Fellman, *op.cit.*, *passim*.
- ⁵⁴ C. Rabin, "Ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit be-Hitpathutah" in *Orot, X*, February 1971, p. 73; J. Fellman, *op. cit.* (note 1 of the protocols of *Safah Berurah*).
- ⁵⁵ A. Ruppín, *Pirke Hayyay*, 11, 28.
- ⁵⁶ R. Auty, "The Linguistic Revival among the Slavs", p. 402.
- ⁵⁷ T. V. Parfitt, *op.cit.*, p. 251.
- ⁵⁸ R. Auty, "The Linguistic Revival among the Slavs", p. 404.
- ⁵⁹ *L'udovít Štúr*, ed V. Matula, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

Critique of Enlightenment in the Works of Ahad Haam and Ben-Yehuda

by

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A had Haam and Ben-Yehuda are transitory figures: they appear at the tail-end of enlightenment and they assist at the birth of nationalism. As liquidators of enlightenment they forge new goals for the lives and letters of their people. As midwives of nationalism, as incisive critics of the lingual poverty in the literature of enlightenment and as reformers of Written Hebrew they have carved out for themselves eminent positions in Hebrew literature. A guest in the halls of literature, a guest who enters at times for a specific purpose and leaves immediately when he has done his duty, Ahad Haam had a greater impact on the course of Hebrew literary history than all contemporary hosts with the exception of Bialik. And even Bialik regarded himself as a disciple of Ahad Haam — “paladin of truth and champion of the spirit” — who, in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, was the dominant force in Hebrew literature. To make language subservient to thought, form to content, to use his medieval terminology, that was the novelty of his achievement. For, at the end of the period of enlightenment, language had dominated thought, florid phrases supplanted ideas.

Ahad Haam succeeded, in his *horror vacui*, in imposing his *virtus pleni* on Hebrew literature: his spiritual nationalism and his Hebrew idiom. More than that: he changed the directions and goals of literature. Enlightenment had been encapsulated in a pithy Gordonian phrase: “Be Jew in your home, be man outside your home.” In Ahad Haam’s incisive criticism of that phrase, the Jew, the embodiment of the ethical and social spirit of Judaism, was ridiculed or neglected, the human aspect of the Jew was stressed. But that “humanity” meant superficial acquisition of secular knowledge and emancipation, superficial assimilation in matters of dress and language, mores and tastes. What Ahad Haam demanded was nothing less than a radical change: “Be a man in your home because humanity includes nationality; be a Jew outside your home because Jewishness is a function of the Jew’s humanity.”¹

Both Ahad Haam and Ben-Yehuda shared vicissitudes of fate and traits of character. They were born a few years apart in the same decade, in the fifties of the nineteenth century: Ahad Haam in 1856, Ben-Yehuda in 1858. And they died in the same decade, in the twenties of the twentieth century: Ahad Haam in 1927, Ben-Yehuda in 1922. Both were born in Russian regions: Ahad Haam in an emotional hasidic enclave, "in one of the darkest corners of the hasidic regions of Russia,"² Ben-Yehuda in the proximity of Vilna, a stronghold of rational, Habad Hasidism and downright anti-Hasidism. As for common characteristics: both wrote almost exclusively in Hebrew, both were impatient with Yiddish as a language, let alone as a national language or a substitute for Hebrew: Ahad Haam fought Yiddish though he pretended neither to hate nor to love it; Ben-Yehuda regarded it as a divisive jargon that has to be uprooted.³

Both developed periodicals which were turning-points in Hebrew literature at the end of the nineteenth century: *Ha-Shiloah* was Ahad Haam's gift to periodical literature, *Ha-Zevi* and its successive journals — Ben-Yehuda's. Both idolized Hebrew with fanatic devotion, deadly seriousness and lack of humour which dominated their personalities. But at the crossroads of the waning years of the nineteenth century they parted: Ahad Haam took a road that led to a new theory and practice of nationalism, Ben-Yehuda took the road of spoken revival of Hebrew. We may peck at Ben-Yehuda's achievement as the father of spoken Hebrew. We may uncover more and more predecessors and ancestral figures who spoke Hebrew before him. But the undeniable fact stares at our faces: he and he alone revived the language as a common bond of Jewry and as the national language of the future State of Israel. What would have occurred in lingual matters in former Palestine, had he not fatefully intervened, is anybody's guess.

But our concern is with critiques of written Hebrew — in journalism, in the periodical press, in literary output — by Ahad Haam and Ben-Yehuda. Such a critique was overdue: a glimpse at the language more than a hundred years ago immediately reveals the inadequacy of expression for the humblest and highest pursuits in life. The biblical idiom reigned supreme; the cult of biblical figures of speech was carried to ridiculous lengths; the authority of the biblical idiom as a holy or divine language was an unquestioned assumption. What the language expressed was a subsidiary consideration; how close it hued to the biblical idiom — that was of primary importance. Language for language's sake — that was the result of

language worship. Even Franz Delitzsch was convinced that Hebrew suffered loss of vitality when it abandoned biblical structures of syntax and biblical imagery. Hence his regard for David Franco Mendes (1713-1792) or rather Hisquiau David Franco Hofshi Mendes who also sported an alias Diego Franco Osorio — as the greatest Hebrew poet of the eighteenth century.⁴ The wrong assumption about the biblical idiom as the only great Hebrew idiom led to wrong deductions. Masters of that idiom came to be regarded as literary luminaries regardless of what they had to convey in that idiom. In the works of the “enlightened” authors the Hebrew idiom became a mosaic of ready-made biblical phrases, half-verses and quarter-verses. Poetry, and even “enlightened” prose, moved in poetic cadence which impoverished Hebrew letters and emptied them of significant content.

There were, even in the literature of the enlightened, departures from the biblical idiom and sallies into post-biblical resources of Hebrew. Attention has been called to them recently by Isaiah Carmiel. In his article *Mi-Millon Ha-Haskalah*⁵ he has given instances of non-biblical idioms in the literature of enlightenment. Some occur in as early a document as *Nahal ha-Besor*,⁶ the programmatic proclamation of the appearance of the first influential Hebrew periodical *Ha-Meassef* in 1783. Scholarly works — especially works with philosophical content — relied heavily on the medieval idiom of the Tibbons. But even literary works used post-biblical resources at times. Such use was exceptional. The lingual map of the period of enlightenment was a biblical map.

Any sample of enlightened literature, chosen at random, shows immediately the emptiness of the “enlightened” language. And it is against this emptiness of content that Ahad Haam launched his savage attack. Out of the entire range of Hebrew literature in the nineteenth century he singled out the *Guide of the Perplexed of our Time* by Nachman Krochmal (1785-1840) as a work that merits study and attention. He also favoured the massive work of Eisik Hirsch Weiss (1815-1905) on the development of oral law. All other works written in the era of enlightenment were regarded by him as inferior works produced by inferior minds. And with bitter incisiveness and infinite contempt he remarked that Hebrew literature would have been more worthy of attention and study if the enlightened writers had written less about enlightenment and had devoted themselves to the ideas and philosophies of enlightenment.

What were the reasons, then, for Ahad Haam’s contempt of modern

Hebrew literature? Had he written in English, he would have said perhaps that the enlightened put the cart before the horse, language before thought. Had they written serious books, they would have coined the necessary neologisms for new ideational needs and developed the Hebrew language naturally. Artificial developers contaminated the Hebrew language with neologisms which were unacceptable because they were either inadequate or imprecise. Ahad Haam's conclusion: poverty of knowledge and thought was responsible for the poverty of language in the literature of enlightenment.⁷ The didactic stance was a national characteristic, according to Ahad Haam, not a personal idiosyncrasy. It follows that Jewish thirst for erudition must be preserved at all costs in his opinion: "If, then, you desire to revive the language, you must strive to revive its literature".⁸ In the two main articles which deal with the Hebrew language and its literature — "The Language and Its Literature" and "The Language and Its Grammar"⁹ — he argued against biblicism in language and against aestheticism in literature. It was his contention that beauty rather than thought has become the central preoccupation of Hebrew writers.

But this assumption stunts literary growth in the estimation of Ahad Haam. The greatness of Hebrew literature in the Middle Ages was a result of preference of thought to beauty. And the first leaders of enlightenment — Mendelssohn, Solomon Maimon, Naphtali Hartwig (Herz) Wessely — continued the tradition of the Middle Ages: they filled their books and articles with "the new European ideas" written in the old style. But that attention to thought rather than to language characterized the beginnings of enlightenment. In its later stages the movement began "to beautify the language at the cost of thought."¹⁰ Such language could not aspire to produce a "national literature". It could attract readers but not admirers. Books that graced that literature from Mapu onward did not win the hearts and minds of Jewry for they were regarded as dessert rather than the main course, the "meat and fish", as the talmudic phrase would have it,¹¹ or *melizah bichlech* in Ahad Haam's contemptuous phrase. They were read for pleasure, for temporary delight, but not for enrichment of thought. Enrichment of language is the consequence of enrichment of thought, not the product of "special artisans" (*ummanim meyuhadim*).¹² And Ahad Haam argued almost epigrammatically that attention must be paid, first and foremost, not to "the poverty of language" but to "the poverty of knowledge". *The Guide of the Perplexed* by Maimonides, *The Book of the Wars of the Lord* by Levi ben Gershom (1288-1344), *Enlightenment to the*

Eyes by Azariah dei Rossi (c.1511-c.1578) — these have perpetuated themselves as books worthy of serious attention. Such they are without a doubt. But, in criticism of this critique it must be said that a people, fed by such theological and historical fare, would be starved emotionally and even intellectually. For readers, visualized by Ahad Haam, were miniature Ahad Haams, with Ahad Haam's tastes and preferences.

Not only Ahad Haam's choice of books worthy of attention can be questioned. His facile categorization which assumes the existence of such entities as beauty can be assailed or demolished. Yet, the general drift of his ideas is crystal-clear: it is anti-poetical and it shows a strong bias against *belles-lettres* in all forms. Only philosophical and scientific works hold his interest. In all his letters he rarely refers to landscapes. Like Socrates, he learned nothing from trees. With disarming candour Ahad Haam tells us in his *Reminiscences*:

Though I have spent the best part of my youth in a village, I did not acquire any love of nature . . . I was busy with books . . . I paid no attention to the beauties of nature.¹³

Insensitivity to poetry was another of Ahad Haam's failings — a major failing since so much in Hebrew literature from biblical times to our own era is poetry: "mere poetry, the outpourings of the soul on the beauty of nature and the joys of love, etcetera — all these can be found in other literatures".¹⁴ Exclusion of themes which are central to modern literatures: that seems to be Ahad Haam's negative programme for modern Hebrew literature. A permanent dependence on the non-Hebrew literatures for these themes: that seems to be another part of his programme for modern Hebrew literature. These pleas were luckily unheeded by writers in the post-Ahad Haamic era of Hebrew literature. But the style of his essays, stripped from the cheap cosmeticism of "enlightened" literature, was very much in vogue. It was clear and sober and to the point — an aggregate of qualities which were closer to the styles of English scientists, sociologists and essayists like Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill than Kant or Hegel. Yet English influences on Ahad Haam's language must not be exaggerated. What can be shown with certainty is this: the style for which he was praised was indeed new in Hebrew letters. It cut its moorings, as it were, from the turgid style of enlightenment once and for all. But it was no longer Semitic in syntax or

rhythm: it was European, it had an almost occidental rhythm. That is why Ahad Haam did not lose in translation into non-Semitic languages.

The literature of enlightenment promised regeneration but it did not fulfil the promise — either through education or literature. It neither offered a messianic hyperbole of rebirth nor did it achieve the gift of equality before the law. Though the most important nineteenth century historian of the Jewish people, Heinrich Graetz, regarded Jewish history — as he stated in the preface to the fifth volume of his monumental *Geschichte der Juden* — as a *Leidens- und Gelehrten-geschichte*, it was demonstrated in the massive *Social and Religious History of the Jews* by the magisterial historian of Jewry in this century, Salo W. Baron, that the “lachrymose view of Jewish history” is untenable. Legally, medieval Jewry did not enjoy the privileges of clergy and nobility but it was in a more favoured position than the vast masses of villeins, peasants, who comprised ninety per cent of the population at times.¹⁵ Emancipation was not liberation; it was renunciation of privileges like communal autonomy in exchange for duties of citizenship and privileges of equality.¹⁶ A messianic regeneration was postulated by Ahad Haam as regeneration from within, from the heart of Judaism. The name, borne by that regeneration, was love for Zion, an aspiration of the heart for national unity, national rebirth on a human base.

The tremendous paradox in Ahad Haam’s article *Torah she-ba-Lev* has not been fully appreciated or elucidated. Ahad Haam, who was regarded as a rationalist and who has written an article on Maimonides entitled “Rule of Reason”, reveals himself as a defender of emotional Judaism — here and in other essays. The very first essay of Ahad Haam, “This is not the Way”, ends with a plea for the re-education of the heart. And even in “The Rule of Reason” he attributes to Maimonides an emotionalism, a national feeling which conquers his logical approach to Judaism.¹⁷ This, then, is an important component of Ahad Haam’s critique of enlightenment: the need to substitute for its desiccating impact a deep emotionalism which is to permeate a new nationalism rooted in the great ethical and spiritual ideas of Judaism and implanted in the civilizations of the West.

Ben-Yehuda shared with Ahad Haam a penchant for the Europeanization of Hebrew.¹⁸ Both were West-oriented in spite of their Slav origins: Ahad Haam’s anglophilia — a temperamental though not uncritical preference for the genius of Great Britain — was matched by Ben-Yehuda’s francophilia¹⁹ — a temperamental preference for the graceful effervescence of France. Ahad Haam was not only nurtured on the intellectual fare of the

English; he even advised in the two incisive articles "Truth From the Land of Israel" the establishment of a Jewish society or corporation, preferably in England, which would come to the rescue of the young *yishuv* and establish it on solid financial, demographic and scientific principles.

Both Ahad Haam and Ben-Yehuda hastened the process of Europeanization of the Hebrew language. What Ahad Haam did for the philosophical essay, Ben-Yehuda did for the journalistic article. And, since journalism is an art of the ephemeral, he could and would go to greater lengths in de-orientalization of Hebrew and de-sacralization of Judaism than Ahad Haam. The idea of a spiritual centre and, consequently, religion as the source of spirituality — these were the twin *bêtes noires* of Ben-Yehuda. And the twin separating factors between them — in spite of their common aspirations. Interestingly, in "A Weighty Question", Ben-Yehuda visualized the *yishuv* in the land of Israel as "a centre for our entire people." And he compared it to "the heart in the body" and hoped that out of that heart "the blood will flow into the arteries of the whole nation and give it life."²⁰ Yet that was not to be a spiritual centre but a normal centre for a normalized people. The seminal sentence in "A Weighty Question" is: "Why should we not do the same as other peoples . . . [and] take action to protect our nationhood lest it perish and be utterly destroyed?"²¹

The crucial words in the sentence are: as other nations. They do away — with a stroke of the pen — with the idea of chosenness and they postulate a normalization of Jewry — an idea which was to be a battle cry and a rallying slogan of Zionism from its formative stages. But Ben-Yehuda carried the idea of normalization with greater boldness and originality than incipient and developing Zionism. Normalization meant to him land, language and literature as modern as any Western literature.

There were other undeniably profound differences between Ahad Haam and Ben-Yehuda. Where the author of his chef d'oeuvre *At the Crossroads* was conservative, Ben-Yehuda was revolutionary; where Ahad Haam was deliberate, Ben-Yehuda was hurried — even when he walked, according to an eye-witness. Where Ben-Yehuda wallowed in wholesale neologisms — more than a thousand were produced by his fertile and febrile mind — Ahad Haam kept to the lingual resources of the past.²² Where Ahad Haam contemplated the long-range effect of his ideas, Ben-Yehuda valued the immediate use of his innovations. But both moved into a lingual realm which was a complete departure from the styles of enlightenment — one in an evolutionary, the other in a revolutionary, rhythm. And both were critics

of enlightenment. What Jacob Rabinowitz said about Ahad Haam and Smolenskin is equally true of Ahad Haam and Ben-Yehuda. Ahad Haam was the negativist: this is not the way; Ben-Yehuda sought a positive stance: this is the way.²³ Both were emotional rationalists: Ahad Haam in spite of his hasidic background, Ben-Yehuda because of his Lithuanian provenance from Lushki in the vicinity of Vilna, the "Jerusalem of Lithuania", and his contacts with Habad Hasidism. And both conceived an innovative idea: an encyclopedic work would bolster the Hebrew language and its literature. For Ahad Haam the desideratum was a "treasury of Judaism" (*Ozar ha-Yahadut*), arranged in summary articles on all Judaic disciplines in alphabetical order,²⁴ and written by experts on Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish literature, Jewish leaders in life and literature. Ahad Haam regarded such an intellectual project as a continuation of the great summary works of Judah the Prince, Maimonides and Karo. Ben-Yehuda also attached immense importance to an encyclopedic work and called it by the same name: a "treasury" (Thesaurus) of the Hebrew language. The content of Judaism in a massive work — Ahad Haam's dream — was not realized; the form of Judaism — the Hebrew language in a massive work — Ben-Yehuda's dream — was completed after his death. The practical dreamer won; the theoretical dreamer lost. But the victory of the one and the defeat of the other have given the Hebrew language and its literature a new thrust which was the result of reassessment of enlightenment.

Canon Danby, the translator of the Mishnah into English, had remarked that Ben-Yehuda was one of the few men who realized his ideal during his lifetime.²⁵ This was true as far as the revival of spoken Hebrew was concerned. In forty years — between the eighties of the nineteenth and the twenties of the twentieth century — Ben-Yehuda succeeded, against tremendous odds which involved prison and excommunication, ridicule and contempt of the best and the worst, in imposing Hebrew as a spoken language in Israel. And that was one of his three ideals: "land, national language, national enlightenment."²⁶ That the critic of enlightenment used the word *haskalah leumit* in positive connotation shows how much he was permeated with the spirit of enlightenment in spite of his opposition to its allegedly negative values of assimilation as a precondition of emancipation.

There were individuals who spoke Hebrew before Ben-Yehuda, who used it on special occasions. But spoken Hebrew as a language of the entire community of Israel in the Land of Israel — that was the exclusive achievement of Ben-Yehuda. Without detracting from his achievement it

must be added that as a written language Hebrew was continually used after it had ceased to be a spoken language in the third century of the common era. It led an existence of a half-language in association with other languages and dialects of Jews — a phenomenon known to sociolinguistics as diglossia.

Did Ben-Yehuda — as Danby thought — realize his ideal during his lifetime? Less than a third of the great dictionary, the *Thesaurus totius Hebraicitatis* — five of the sixteen volumes — was published in the first two decades of the twentieth century. And that dictionary was a mere corollary and an extension of his life-goal. For with it he intended to forge the steely tool of both spoken and written Hebrew, and extend its boundaries beyond the wildest dreams of Hebraists and non-Hebraists. Biblical Hebrew, venerated by the enlightenment as the language of a nation in its own land, was part of romanticized nationalism. Total Hebrew, in Ben-Yehuda's sense of the word, was realistic nationalism. The total expression of needs and aspirations of modern man required total Hebrew — instead of the seven to eight thousand biblical idioms, myriads upon myriads of words culled from a variety of sources and created specifically for new purposes. That ideal of Ben-Yehuda was formed at the time when he published his article "A Weighty Question."²⁷ Nothing was new in this article. Revival of Palestine as a Jewish home was advocated by many predecessors of Ben-Yehuda: Kalischer and Alkalai within the religious sector, Hess and Smolenskin within the secular sector. There were also a few claimants to the fatherhood of the idea of a spiritual centre in the Land of Israel: Simon Bernfeld and Dr. Herman Schapira besides Smolenskin, Ben-Yehuda and Ahad Haam.

But Ben-Yehuda was unique in his insistence on a new realism: on secularism instead of spirituality in all areas of Jewish life. He did not advocate theoretical antithesis of the sword against the word, of physical prowess against over-intellectualization, of delight in landscape against confinement in the House of Study *à la* Berdyczewski; he pleaded for a practical solution of the problems of Jewish continuity: revival of spoken and written Hebrew, conquest of former Palestine by immigration and labour. He who pioneered — in theory and practice — teaching Hebrew as a living language, was also ready to shut the schools for a period of three years in order to use the money for the immigration of one thousand families into the land annually. He who was addicted to the Land of Israel was also ready to embrace "Uganda" as a national home because it offered

— as it seemed to him — a practical solution to the insoluble problem of a national home. And he joined the Ugandists in 1903 when, at the Sixth Zionist Congress, two hundred and ninety-five delegates voted for — one hundred and seventy-five against — acceptance of the offer of Great Britain to the Zionist Organization to set aside land for settlement by Jews as a temporary measure of relief. (The territory offered, incidentally, was not in Uganda; the so-called “Uganda Plan” was a misnomer.) Though the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905 rejected “Uganda” even as a temporary area of settlement, the two years between the congresses created a deep rift in the budding movement of Jewish nationalism and Jewish nationalists. The Land of Israel for Israel in the future, a land outside the Land of Israel in the immediate present: that was the choice of Zionists at that time and the cause of a deep chasm between them and the territorialists — *arzanim* in Ben-Avi’s neologism.

Ben-Yehuda provoked a fight with his son — “the first Hebrew child since Hebrew ceased to be a spoken language”, and previously, though briefly, an ardent Ugandist.²⁸ And he generously provided space for his son in *Hashkafah*²⁹ where Ben-Yehuda had written that

Our people will find no rest among the nations. They have no hope or salvation except in not being dedicated strangers among others but citizens in their own state — be that state for the time being wherever it be, be it whatever it be.

And in the same article Ben-Yehuda contended:

I believe with perfect faith that a Jewish soul still lives in our people — a Hebrew soul, which has sufficient strength to create a Land of Israel on any soil in all climes.³⁰

So much for Ben-Yehuda’s attitude to a Jewish State. The main problem was the people; the land was an ancillary problem. As for spoken Hebrew: it was an extension from the possession and practice of the few to the possession and practice of the many. What was new in Ben-Yehuda’s article “A Weighty Question” was the drive to implement the twin ideal of land and language with a single-minded devotion and fanaticism which

characterized the revolutionaries of France in the eighteenth and the revolutionaries of Russia in the twentieth century. The idea of the revival of the land came to him when he was still a student in Dünaburg and when the Russians allegedly fought — among other things — for the freedom of Bulgaria against the Turks. The idea of the revival of the language, adumbrated in “A Weighty Question”, came to him as a logical conclusion of the revival of the land: Jews cannot be a nation unless they speak the language of their ancestors and use it as a daily tool of communication. Patriot-linguists who were not uncommon in the nineteenth century fired the zeal of Ben-Yehuda. But his idea of spoken Hebrew was also a result of reading Mapu’s *The Love of Zion* and *The Guilt of Samaria*. He wanted to speak Hebrew as freely as Amnon and Tamar in the first novel by Mapu. By 1902, after twenty years of effort, only ten families in Jerusalem used Hebrew as the language of communication in their homes. Only one Sephardic school, two Ashkenazic *hadarim* and a few Sephardic *yeshivot* used Hebrew as a language of instruction. But Ben-Yehuda was undaunted. And he won by dint of faith and perseverance.

Hand in hand with the work on the dictionary went Ben-Yehuda’s journalistic and translating activity. Already in the first issue of *Ha-Zevi*, on October 24, 1884, he began forging the new style for political news as he forged, in later issues, a style for scientific and humanistic news. That style, based on sources, departed from them considerably. His ideal was the brief instead of the long sentence, the simple instead of the complicated paragraph, unadorned instead of ornate language. In his important article “Vitality of Style”³¹ he asserts with enviable pride and assurance:

We have tried to bring a new style to our literature, the style of simple talk (*sifah*), the style of two simple men of flesh and blood (*shene basar wa-dam peshutim*) who talk with each other about simple matters, about matters of this world (*olam ha-zeh*).

Ben-Yehuda was aware of the fact that certain articles needed an elevated style. But he was also aware of the florid style of his contemporaries: most of them wrote in “the style of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.” Simplicity rather than sublimity was to be the hallmark of the new style. Ben-Yehuda expressed it explicitly, Ahad Haam said it implicitly: A new style of Hebrew must be forged.

It is a significant fact which has escaped notice so far that both Ben-Yehuda’s “Vitality of Style” and Ahad Haam’s first appearance in Hebrew

literature with his essay "This is not the Way" occurred in 1889. That date can now be regarded as the convenient terminal of the style of enlightenment and the incipient date of a desacralized, despiritualized, deorientalized style in Hebrew literature. Or to put it in positive terms: 1889 was the turning point from Semitic to Europeanized Hebrew — first in the ephemeral and philosophical essay, then in *belles lettres* where Europeanization of Hebrew was not as complete as in other genres of literature.

Ben-Yehuda — and his successors in Hebrew letters — acknowledged the Bible as the basis of modern Hebrew: a debt he paid to enlightenment. But he also advocated the use of post-biblical Hebrew. His lingual ideal was to forge a language based on total Hebrew and create neologisms when sources failed to supply the words for new concepts, new technical terms and new scientific coinages.³² But Ahad Haam was sceptical and ironical; neologisms irritated him. At the very end of the nineteenth century he claims to have found a "few factories for language-making and chief among them that of Ben-Yehuda."³³ Brenner, too, wrote an article in 1914, "The Committee of the Hebrew Language Manufactures Words."³⁴ And Bernfeld simply stated, as late as 1912 in an article in *Ha-Zefirah*, that Hebrew as a spoken language in the ordinary sense of the word is altogether an impossibility (*nimna gamur*).

Even before 1889 spoken and written Hebrew were subjected to the stresses which accompany conscious and unconscious metamorphoses in lingual developments. Innovators fought conservatives in the chief organs of Hebrew journalism. While the Viennese *Ha-Shahar* under Smolenskin's editorship represented lingual conservatism, *Ha-Zevi*³⁵ under Ben-Yehuda's editorship strove to break away from the biblical idiom and to evolve spoken and written Hebrew from post-biblical sources: the Midrashim and the Talmudim, including the Mishnah and the Tosefta. This new approach to the Hebrew language made its hesitant appearance in Ben-Yehuda's translation of Jules Verne's *Le Tour du Monde en Quatre-vingts Jours* (Around the World in Eighty Days). The book — an early sample of what goes by the name of science-fiction — appeared in 1873 in the original and enjoyed immediate popularity, though the French author's conception — or rather misconception — of the protagonist of the story borders on unintended travesty. For Mr. Phileas Fogg, the cold, predictable, eccentric English aristocrat, a regular habitué of the Reform Club, whose sole pastimes were reading papers and playing whist, bears only a remote semblance to a true son of Albion. An English editor of the original, Arthur

Reed Ropes, a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, is quite right in asserting in his introduction that "there never was an Englishman quite like Phileas Fogg." But the sensational adventure endeared Mr. Fogg to readers all over the world.

Ben-Yehuda's translation avoids the pitfalls of a translator by discarding the difficult passages. Consequently his version is much briefer than the original. A comparison of the opening and closing paragraphs — in French and in Hebrew — reveals Ben-Yehuda's method. It aims at smooth but not faithful rendition, it avoids subtleties and it insists on simplicities; it makes use of post-biblical resources of language and it resembles spoken rather than written Hebrew.

Ben-Yehuda also planned a series of monographs on the spoken Hebrew of the Sages — 68 in number — from Simon the Just to R. Yehoshua ben Hananiah.³⁶ That series, had it appeared, would have also enriched written Hebrew. Unfortunately, his journalistic work and considerable translating work had precedence and priority in Ben-Yehuda's scheme of literary revival. Ben-Yehuda's break with the literary language of the enlightenment — in spite of his deep affection for the Bible — was unequivocal and uncompromising. His contribution to a new written Hebrew is as undeniable as his fatherhood of spoken Hebrew. In the former realm he had a formidable competitor — Ahad Haam; in the latter realm he stands alone.

NOTES

¹ *Kol Kitbe Ahad Haam*, Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, 1949, p. 50.

² *Ibid.*, p. 466.

³ Ahad Haam's word for Yiddish is almost exclusively "Jargon". On his attitude to Yiddish see especially the essays "Riv Leshonot" and "Tehiyyat ha-Ruah" in *Kol Kitbe Ahad Haam*, pp. 403-406 and pp. 173-186 respectively. See also Ahad Haam's letters to Dubnow and Ravnitzki in *Iggerot Ahad Haam IV*, Jerusalem-Berlin 1923/4, p. 124, p. 131. Ben-Yehuda also uses "Jargon" for Yiddish and condemns it — together with Ladino — as an instrument of separation between Jew and Jew. See G. Kressel, *Lexikon ha-Sifrut ha-Ivrit ba-Dorot ha-Aharohim I*, Merhavayah, 1965, pp. 276-277.

⁴ Franz Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie vom Abschluss der heiligen Schriften alten Bundes bis auf die neueste Zeit*, Leipzig, 1836, pp. 111-113.

⁵ *Leshonenu*, XXXI, July, 1967, pp. 311-317.

⁶ For the phrase *Nahal ha-Besor* — The Brook Besor — see I Samuel 30: 9; 21. It is the name of a brook in the vicinity of Gaza. Since the root *bsr* means "announce", the phrase was immediately understood as meaning "announcement". Thorough familiarity with the biblical text was taken for granted by writer and reader.

⁷ *Kol Kitbe Ahad Haam*, p. 95.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-97 and pp. 98-103.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95. The talmudic phrase for meat and fish: *Bisra we-Kavre* in *Shabbat* 140b.

¹² *Kol Kitbe Ahad Haam*, pp. 96-97.

¹³ For the translation of the passage see Leon Simon, *Ahad Haam*, Philadelphia, 1960, p. 16.

¹⁴ *Kol Kitbe Ahad Haam*, p. 128.

¹⁵ Salo W. Baron, "Newer Approaches to Emancipation", *Diogenes*, Spring, 1960, ed. Roger Caillois and Richard McKeon, p. 67.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁷ *Kol Kitbe Ahad Haam*, p. 368. See also Eisig Silberschlag, *From Renaissance to Renaissance I*, New York, 1973, pp. 161-163.

¹⁸ Ahad Haam was fully aware that "the spirit of the East is foreign to us. Not in vain have we lived for two thousand years among peoples of the West." See *Kol Kitbe Ahad Haam*, p. 474. That he was more attracted to England than any other European country is clear from a few of his utterances. See Aryeh (Leon) Simon and Joseph Eliyyahu Heller, *Ahad Haam ha-Ish, Poalo we-Torato*, Jerusalem, 1955, p. 18. Ahad Haam's thirteen years in London — from 1908 to 1921 — had a somewhat sobering effect on his attitudes to British culture. In his autobiography Ahad Haam expresses admiration for Locke and Hume. See *Kol Kitbe Ahad Haam*, p. 495.

¹⁹ An example of Ben-Yehuda's francophilia is his translation of Jules Verne's *Le Tour de Monde en Quatre-vingts Jours* (Around the World in Eighty Days). It appeared in the fourth and fifth years of *Ha-Zevi* (1887-1888) and was also published in book form in Jerusalem, undated (1902?). A comparative study of the original and the translation would undoubtedly produce important results in determining a decisive stage in the development of Ben-Yehuda's style. Incidentally, in spite of his francophilia, he respected and envied the German capacity to combine words. In his estimation it is simply impossible to coin in Hebrew a word — which is six words — like *Grossglocknergletscherbesteigungcommissionsmitglied*. It resembles "a long caravan of camels". See also Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Ha-Halom we-Shivro*, ed. R. Sivan, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 196. Hebrew is characterized by a paucity of word combinations as he pointed out in *Ha-Zevi* in 1897 with such examples as *afilu* (= *af illu*), *ezehu* (= *eze hu*), *mashehu* (= *mah shehu*).

²⁰ *Ha-Halom we-Shivro*, p. 45. Ben-Yehuda's simile of the heart sounds like an echo of Halevi's famous comparison of Israel's importance to mankind as that of the heart to the body. See *Kosari 2*, 36-44.

²¹ *Ha-Halom we-Shivro*, p. 43.

²² In one of his letters Ahad Haam used Ben-Yehuda's neologism *rakkevet* for "train" and apologized for his "Jerusalemite Hebrew" (*Ivrit Yerushalmit*). Throughout his life he showed a cool, cautionary attitude to Ben-Yehuda and tended to regard him as somewhat irresponsible — *kal daat* — in his judgements. But, when Ben-Yehuda died, Ahad Haam sent a telegram to Hemdah Ben-Yehuda which was more than a formal message of condolence. (See *Ha-Arez*, December 18, 1922.) The telegram, *in toto*, reads as follows: "No words can express my deep sorrow at the misfortune that has happened so suddenly. I regret very much that my poor health has not permitted me to travel to Jerusalem to accord Ben-Yehuda the last honour. The great work to which Ben-Yehuda consecrated his life with unparalleled devotion will be his honourable monument among his people forever. May this be a comfort to you. My wife and I share your great sorrow with all our hearts."

²³ Jacob Rabinowitz, "Peretz Smolenskin" in *Sefer Smolenskin*, ed. Solomon Breiman, Jerusalem, 1952, p. 52.

²⁴ In view of the massive opposition to an encyclopedic work with articles arranged in alphabetical order, Ahad Haam was content to publish *The Treasury of Judaism* in a series of volumes which would deal with important themes of Judaic content. See *Kol Kitbe Ahad Haam*, pp. 104-114.

²⁵ Herbert Danby, "Ben Yehuda — Ha-Mazpun ha-Hai" in *Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Kovez le-Zikhro*, ed. Joseph Klausner, Jerusalem, 1942, pp. 3-8. The article was translated from the author's manuscript in English.

²⁶ See Ben-Yehuda's dedicatory words — written in Paris in 1880 — to his son's biography by Hemdah Ben-Yehuda, *Nose ha-Degel — Hayye Itamar Ben-Avi*, Jerusalem-Talpiyyot, 17 years after the Balfour Declaration (*i.e.*, 1934).

²⁷ Original publication: *Ha-Shahar IX*, 1879. In *Kol Kitbe Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, I*,

Jerusalem, 1941, pp. 3-13, the title is given as "Sheelah Lohatah". According to I. Ben-Avi, that was the title Ben-Yehuda gave his article (*ibid.*, p. 3, n. 1), but the editor of *Ha-Shahar*, Peretz Smolenskin, changed it to "Sheelah Nihbadah". The article, written in the month of Adar 5639 (1879), was published in Nisan of the same year. In the collected writings of Ben-Yehuda the original title was restored to the article. See *Leket Teudot le-Toledot Waad ha-Lashon we-ha-Akademiyah la-Lashon ha-Ivrit Taw Resh Nun-Taw Shin Lamed u-le-Hiddush ha-Dibbur ha-Ivri*, Jerusalem, 1970, p. 14.

²⁸ Itamar Ben-Avi, *Im Shahar Azmautenu*, Tel Aviv, 1961, p. 178. The son's defiance, based on total dedication to the land of his birth, was also an attempt to rebel against the overwhelming authority of the father.

²⁹ *Hashkafah, III*, 1903. The numerous articles of Ben-Yehuda in *Hashkafah*, under the title *Ha-Medinah ha-Yehudit*, appeared in a pamphlet under the same name in Warsaw in 1905.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³¹ In Hebrew, "Hiyyut ha-Signon", in *Ha-Zevi*, Year 5, 1889, issue 26, pp. 101-102.

³² On total Hebrew see the illuminating pages in Jack Fellman's book, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue*, The Hague-Paris, 1973, pp. 55-70, and the very useful bibliography at the end of the book, pp. 140-151.

³³ *Leket Teudot*, p. 36.

³⁴ *Kol Kitbe H. J. Brenner, II*, Tel Aviv, 1961, p. 118. Brenner's ironical word for manufacturing is *mefabrek*.

³⁵ The journalistic work of Ben-Yehuda — as editor and contributor — included, beside *Ha-Zevi* and publications for children, the following newspapers: *Mevasseret Ziyon*, *Ha-Or*, *Ha-Ikkar ha-Yehudi*, *Hashkafah*. See G. Kressel, *Toledot ha-Ittonut ha-Ivrit be-Erez Yisrael*, Jerusalem, 1964, pp. 67-100. The first five issues of *Havazzelet*, which began its publication in 1863 and which may be regarded as a predecessor of *Ha-Zevi*, have been discovered by Zvi Ilan in the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts of the British Library — originally the British Museum. Numbers 4 and 5 of *Havazzelet* have also been found by Zvi Ilan in the Mocatta Library of University College London (see *Cathedra VII*, April, 1978, pp. 7-47. I am grateful to Mr. Richard Christopher Judd, the Librarian of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, for bringing *Cathedra* to my attention.)

³⁶ The monograph *Rabbi Akiba ben Yosef* appeared in Jerusalem in 1945 (twenty-eight years after the Balfour Declaration, in the bizarre reckoning of Ben-Yehuda). The title page, in Latin and Hebrew, is undoubtedly meant to give the book scientific weight. The map of Israel and the ancient Hebrew script on the page serve to underline the symbolic connection of the past with the present.