

## The Place of Aliyah in Moroccan Jewry's Conception of Zionism

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THE MASS IMMIGRATION of Jews from Muslim countries to Israel in the twentieth century is an historical phenomenon yet to be satisfactorily explained. It is true that Jews wandered from country to country throughout history, and even entire Jewish communities were occasionally uprooted from their dwelling places. However, the uprooting of a Jewish community from the land in which it had lived for hundreds of years, and its transfer *en masse* to the Land of Israel, has occurred only in our time, and only from Muslim countries.

Supplementing earlier studies,<sup>1</sup> this paper focuses on the place of ideological elements in the mass aliyah movements, and investigates the relationship between political and economic factors and the development of an understanding of Zionism in which aliyah plays a central role, in the largest Jewish community in Muslim countries: Moroccan Jewry.

The traditional Jewish relationship to the Land of Israel and the messianic faith in the revival of Jewish independence and the redemption of the Jewish people from the oppression of exile, were still part of the spiritual baggage of the overwhelming majority of Moroccan Jewry in the first half of the twentieth century.

The first Zionist organizations were established in Morocco in the autumn of 1900, due to the influence of European Zionist activists. These groups did not address themselves to the meaning of political Zionism during their brief period of existence, and they contented themselves with following instructions received from the World Zionist Organization (WZO). The question of political Zionism's significance was raised only some years later, in letters from the Zionist associations in Morocco to the leadership of the WZO, after their members had learned of what was happening in the Zionist movement from the Hebrew newspapers which reached them from Europe. The founders of the Moroccan Zionist socie-

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, H.J. Cohen, *Factors in the Aliyah from Asia and Africa in the Twentieth Century* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1968.

ties in this period, who stemmed from the communities' elite, could not accept political Zionism as it was formulated by Dr. Theodor Herzl. In March 1903, the Ahavat Sion society of Safi wrote its first letter to the "father of Zionism" and President of the Zionist Organization, in which it posed penetrating questions about the essence of Zionism: "Was Zionism created only in order to distribute the *shekel*?" And how was it that purchase of the *shekel* and not "many and mighty deeds on behalf of the Jewish people" sufficed for a person to be called a Zionist and be counted among the bearers of the Jewish nation's banner?<sup>2</sup>

From the letters of the Safi Zionist society, it becomes clear the Moroccan Jews conceived of Zionism as a movement whose task was to save the Jewish people, and return them to their homeland. As they expressed it, "If, in the days following the present great national movement, the redemption of Israel should tarry, Heaven forbid, then the hope of the people in its own great future will melt and vanish, and our ancient nation will disappear, God forbid."<sup>3</sup>

For the leaders of organized Zionist activity in Morocco prior to 1923, Zionism was integrated with traditional religious thinking. They believed that the "Zionist society" was "created" in order to "gather the dispersed to go up to Zion and dwell each man under his grapevine and figtree. Our nation's glory will be reinstated as of old, and the banner of the Jews raised high."<sup>4</sup> The "Zionist society," i.e., the Zionist Organization, was fulfilling its God-sent mission and as such, was not to be questioned or criticized. This view led Moroccan Zionists to an unlimited faith in the WZO and its leadership, to the extent that they were completely uninterested in obtaining representation in the WZO's institutions.<sup>5</sup>

2 See letter from the Ahavat Sion Society of As-Safi to Dr. Herzl in Vienna, March 17, 1903, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (hereafter C.Z.A.), Z1/343.

3 See letter from the Ahavat Sion Society to Dr. Herzl in Basle, August 19, 1903, C.Z.A., Z1/349.

4 See letter from the Hevrat Sion Society of Fèz to the Hovevei Zion Association of London, n.d. (1909), C.Z.A., Z1/309; letter from Rabbi Pinhas Cohen of Marrakesh to the Vaad Leumi (National Council) of the Jews in Palestine in Jerusalem, August 14, 1922, C.Z.A., J1/209. Other Moroccan rabbis continued to hold this conception of Zionism in later years as well; see letter from Rabbi Yishaq Chakroun, of the rabbinical court of Larache, to Nahum Sokolow, WZO President, January 3, 1932, C.Z.A., Z4/3245.

5 Herzl did not succeed in convincing Safi's Zionists to send a representative to the Sixth Zionist Congress. The Zionists of Fèz and Mogador did not send delegates either, despite the fact that they sold enough *shekalim* to enable them to hold elections and do so. Only after World War II did Moroccan Zionists regard representation at the Zionist Congress as important.

The Zionists of Morocco, ignorant of the complexities of international politics and uncomprehending of the debates about the methods of the Zionist movement, awaited the immediate realization of the national vision and expected the active support of the WZO in solving their plight by arranging their aliyah and absorption in Eretz-Yisrael. They were ready to participate in financing the national enterprise in Palestine and the maintenance of the central Zionist Organization, but they expected that the WZO would solve their plight by arranging their immediate aliyah and suitable absorption. When it became clear to them that the WZO could not arrange their immediate emigration, the Zionist activists in Morocco relinquished their activity within the framework of the WZO.<sup>6</sup>

Zionist activity in Morocco after 1924 was shaped by Zionists who were not natives of the country, but rather East European Jewish youths who had received a French education and came to Morocco after previously engaging in Zionist activity in France or England. On their arrival in Morocco in the early 1920s, they began to set up a stable organizational framework for the local Zionist movement and to formulate its ideological platform.<sup>7</sup> While doing so, they had to take into account restrictions imposed by the circumstances in Morocco. The French Protectorate authorities' prohibition of all political organization in Morocco; the Sherifian authorities' opposition to the organized aliyah of Moroccan Jews to Eretz-Yisrael; the fact that the overwhelming majority of Moroccan Jewry were religiously observant.

The position of the French Protectorate authorities vis-à-vis Zionist activity became clear and consistent in the mid-1920s, and the Zionist activists who wished to establish a stable and vital Zionist organization in Morocco had to contend with many restrictions. However, it was impossible to maintain a Zionist movement based on an abstract ideology in a community that regarded aliyah as a means of solving its own problems, and as the main message of Zionism. To the political and social obstacles in Morocco itself, one must add the restrictions placed on immigration to Palestine in this period by the British Mandatory authorities, as well as

6 For example, letter from the Hibbat Sion Society of Fèz to the Hovevei Zion Association of London, n.d. (1909), C.Z.A., Z2/309; letter from Hibbat Sion of Fèz to the WZO office in Cologne, July 28, 1910, C.Z.A., Z2/511.

7 These were Solomon Kagan, a Russian-born and French-educated lawyer, who had engaged in Zionist activity in France before settling in Casablanca in the early 1920s, and Jonathan Thursz (1895-1976), Polish-born and Belgian-educated, who moved to England during World War I. Thursz began visiting Morocco as an agent of a British trading firm and settled in Casablanca at the end of 1923.

the unsuccessful absorption of immigrants from Muslim countries, including Morocco, in the early 1920s, both of which influenced the WZO to reduce organized aliyah from those countries to a minimum.<sup>8</sup>

Organized Zionist activity in Morocco and other Muslim countries was thus limited to financial support of the WZO and the National Home. This philanthropy was in effect a continuation of those Jewish communities' traditional monetary support for the Old Yishuv (Jewish community in Palestine) over the course of the centuries.<sup>9</sup> Zionist thinkers in Morocco from the mid-1920s on developed a conception which ignored or downplayed the national-political aspects of Zionism and emphasized its philanthropic-emancipatory elements. As a result of this, however, the Zionist Organization grew apart from the main Jewish community, which was of limited means and demanded immediate aliyah, and addressed itself instead to the intellectual, for the most part non-native elements. The latter elements were rooted in French culture and unwilling to engage in any activity not consonant with loyalty to France.<sup>10</sup>

The French-language newspaper *L'Avenir Illustré* served as the platform for discussion and formulation of Zionist thought in Morocco in this period. It was founded in 1926 by Jonathan Thursz, with the support of a small group of Zionist activists from Casablanca, who became the leaders of the Moroccan Zionist organization through the mid-1940s. The discussions in *L'Avenir Illustré*, influenced as they were by the "French conception" of Zionism, reveal a new understanding of Zionism in Morocco: not as a national movement (according to the journal, the unofficial organ of Moroccan Zionism, "Zionism is not nationalism since Jewish nationalism ceased to exist with the destruction of the Second Temple and the end of the prophecy"),<sup>11</sup> but as a movement aiming to solve the problem of the persecuted and oppressed Jews of Eastern Europe and guarantee them a place where they could live in freedom. In this

8 This subject will be discussed at length in a future article. See Z. Yehuda, "The Aliyah from Iraq in the Early 1920s and Its Problems" (Hebrew), in: *From Babylon to Jerusalem*, Tel Aviv, 1980, pp. 3-16; H. J. Cohen, *Zionist Activity in Iraq* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1969, pp. 113-118.

9 In *Zionist Activity in Iraq*, p. 134, Cohen writes that the aim of the institutions of the Zionist movement "... was not to bring the Jews closer to Zionism and Eretz-Yisrael, nor Zionist education, nor aliyah to Eretz-Yisrael, but to get money from Iraq..."

10 This subject is discussed in my article, "Moroccan Jews and Organized Zionist Activity in the Years 1900-1948" (Hebrew), *Zion* (in print).

11 See *L'Avenir Illustré* (15 avril 1927), p. 2. The article was written by Thursz in response to an anonymous article published in *Echo du Maroc* attacking Zionism and pleading with Moroccan Jewry not to support it, because, as a nationalist movement, it would undermine their loyalty to Morocco. According to Thursz, the said article was written

conception, Eretz-Yisrael became not the goal of aliyah for all Jews, but a refuge for Jews in distress, and the National Home in Palestine became a model to inspire the development of Jewish communities enjoying freedom in the Diaspora, such as Moroccan Jewry under the protection of France. In this way, *L'Avenir Illustré* reached the conclusion that Moroccan Jewry would fulfill their Zionist duty not by aliyah and active participation in the upbuilding of the National Home, but by financial support of the WZO's projects in Palestine on behalf of their suffering brethren, and by working to develop the Moroccan Jewish community, inspired by the National Home and the spirit of French civilization.<sup>12</sup>

*L'Avenir Illustré* believed that Zionism did not offer a political solution to Moroccan Jewry,<sup>13</sup> nor did they need one, since for them, "Zion is Morocco."<sup>14</sup> The journal regarded the development of the local community in the spirit of French civilization, even if lacking national and political characteristics, as a necessary stage in the realization of Zionism, for only by carrying out reforms in communal life could Moroccan Jews come to believe in Zionism. Thus the Zionist group of Casablanca linked philanthropic-emancipatory activity with attempts to bring Moroccan Jewry closer to the Zionist idea. According to this group, the road to Zionism required "revival" and "renewal" of the community, in the spirit of the New Yishuv in Palestine, while Moroccan Jewry's relationship to the New Yishuv during the period of renewal would safeguard its Jewish values and preserve it from assimilation. The development of Moroccan Jewry would also serve, according to *L'Avenir Illustré*, to integrate local

by a Jew. The article in *Echo du Maroc* also elicited a response from advocate Fernand Corcos, who published it in *L'Avenir Illustré* (29 avril 1927), pp. 3-4. Corcos rejected the argument that Zionism required aliyah to Eretz-Yisrael. According to him, Zionism has no need of immigrants, and if a few Moroccan Jews did make aliyah, they did so for their own reasons. He also rejected the argument that Zionism aimed to renew Jewish sovereignty, and maintained that a special relationship with Palestine did not mean disloyalty to one's country of birth, since both Jews and non-Jews holding the highest public offices in France were supporters of Zionism.

12 Similar opinions were expressed by Thursz and Corcos before this, too; see: *L'Avenir Illustré* (31 décembre 1926), p. 2; *ibid.* (14 janvier 1927), pp. 10-12; *ibid.* (11 mars 1927), p. 3.

13 In his article [*L'Avenir Illustré* (27 juillet 1928), p. 3], Thursz emphasized that his journal never presented Zionism as a political solution for Moroccan Jewry. On the contrary, it maintained that Morocco's Jews should be good Jews and good Frenchmen, as Thursz expressed it, "Devenir de meilleurs et vrais Juifs pour être de plus pur Français telle est notre formule!"

14 See Thursz's response to an article published in *Annales Marocaines*, in which *L'Avenir Illustré* was accused of conducting Zionist propaganda intended to transfer Moroccan Jewry and their property to Palestine [*L'Avenir Illustré* (30 septembre 1929), p. 13].

Jews in France's enterprise in Morocco and contribute to the advancement of the native Muslims as well.<sup>15</sup>

In the process of formulating this conception of Zionism, the Zionist group from Casablanca tried to include within one framework all aspects of the Moroccan reality in that period: improvement of the socio-economic situation of the Jewish community, service to the Zionist cause, aid to the French authorities and to the Muslim population of Morocco. Thus the molders of Zionist thought in Morocco in the years 1924-1935 could satisfy the Protectorate and Sherifian authorities, and maintain the kind of Zionist activity desired by the WZO, i.e., fund-raising campaigns. This activity did not, however, include harnessing the well-to-do Moroccan Jewish intelligentsia to the Zionist cause, nor silencing the European anti-Semitic circles in Morocco and the local Muslim Arabs. Their conception of Zionism forced the Moroccan Jewish intelligentsia to publish their own newspaper *L'Union Marocaine* in 1932. In it they emphasized precisely those national elements of Zionism ignored by the editor of *L'Avenir Illustré*, and warned about the "dangers" that the Zionist idea posed to Moroccan Jewry.<sup>16</sup>

With the publication of *L'Union Marocaine*, the debate about the nature of Zionism moved from a guarded discussion of the question in the pages of the organ of the Casablanca Zionists, to an open controversy between the Zionists and the Jewish intelligentsia they sought to win over. This controversy was sparked by the words of Charles Lambert, a member of the French parliament and former government minister, which were published in the fourth issue of *L'Union Marocaine*. Basing himself on speeches of Zionist leaders and publications of the WZO, Lambert claimed that it was impossible to establish a Jewish state in Palestine because of the Jews' numerical inferiority there. In conclusion, he recommended that Moroccan Jews, enjoying France's protection, forget about aliyah and integrate into Moroccan society, especially in light of the danger to Jewish existence posed by what was happening in Germany.

15 See Thursz's response to the accusations of *Courrier Colonial*, which argued that British propaganda agents in the Jewish communities in Morocco were working to win the Jews over to Zionism [*L'Avenir Illustré* (30 juin 1929), p. 2; *ibid.* (1 juillet 1927), p. 2; *ibid.* (11 mars 1927), p. 3].

16 The newspaper was founded by a group of French Jews and leading Moroccan Jews [see the editorial in the first issue of the paper: *L'Union Marocaine* (4 février 1932), p. 1] and was intended to deal with communal matters. Its director and editor was the secretary of the Casablanca Jewish community and former principal of the Alliance school there — Elie Nataf.

Only under the protection of a free France could Moroccan Jewry enjoy a secure refuge, Lambert thought.<sup>17</sup>

These ideas of the French Government representative, rejecting emigration to Palestine and favoring the continued existence of Moroccan Jewry in the Diaspora, were attributed by *L'Avenir Illustré* to the journal in which they appeared. *L'Union Marocaine* was regarded as the organ of the "assimilationists" who denied their Judaism, repressing any hint of feeling for Eretz-Yisrael to the extent that they deleted from the Passover Haggadah the verse: "Now we are here, next year we shall be in Eretz-Yisrael; this year we are slaves, next year — we shall be free men."<sup>18</sup>

By mentioning the verse from the Haggadah, however, *L'Avenir Illustré* now argued that Moroccan Jews who recited the Haggadah annually at the Passover Seder, regarded themselves as slaves in Morocco and wished to emigrate to Palestine in order to become free men. *L'Union Marocaine* retorted that Zionist propaganda, which saw aliyah as the goal of Zionism, hindered Moroccan Jewry's development and undermined their integration into Moroccan society, and that in the country in which the Jews enjoyed liberty and equality they could *not* recite the verse in question.<sup>19</sup> We see how the debate over the nature of Zionism moved from the context of a theoretical discussion between two central conceptions in the contemporary Jewish world (i.e., Zionism and integrationism) to a practical context: the question of the continued existence and development of a Jewish community living under the protection of the first Big Power to grant emancipation to the Jews. An internal debate among the Moroccan Jewish intelligentsia was transformed into a discussion about continued Jewish existence in French society in general, a debate in which Jewish figures from outside Morocco also participated.

Rabbi Maurice Eisenbeth, of Algiers, came out in support of the "assimilationists" who rejected aliyah and desired to integrate into the local society. He agreed with the arguments that Zionism could not provide a solution for all the Jews in the Diaspora, and proposed adopting the methods of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in working to develop the Diaspora communities in their countries of residence.<sup>20</sup> Eisenbeth rejected aliyah to Eretz-Yisrael on ideological and pragmatic grounds. Arguing that the WZO led by Herzl wanted to establish a secular Jewish state in Palestine, he mused: "What kind of state would it be, if in it were

17 See J. Bielinky, "La France republicaine au Maroc," *L'Union Marocaine* (7 mars 1932), p. 1.

18 See *L'Avenir Illustré* (15 avril 1932), p. 2.

19 See *L'Union Marocaine* (28 avril 1932), p. 1.

20 See *L'Avenir Illustré* (6 mai 1932), p. 3.

gathered Jews who ceased to observe their Judaism? Though their kingdom will be in Zion, they will have ceased to be sons of Zion." Despite his arguments against the Zionist solution and aliyah to Palestine, Eisenbeth disapproved of controversy over the Zionist idea between Jews in the Diaspora, and called for Jewish unity, which he saw as the basis for Jewish existence.

Eisenbeth wished to avoid controversy about the essence of Zionism since he did not regard a movement for aliyah, settlement and the establishment of a Jewish national-political entity in Palestine as a subject of practical debate, because of religious reasons and in order not to endanger Jewish existence in the Diaspora. However, in the heat of their debate about the essence of Zionism, Zionist activists in Morocco slipped into arguments about the nationalist character of Zionism, and thus they exposed themselves to severe criticism from non-Jews — the European settlers of French nationality and the Arab reformers.

The verse from the Haggadah quoted by Thursz caused Maurice Le Glay, a former French Government official living in Morocco who, while serving in the Protectorate Government in 1921, had already expressed his opposition to Zionism, to attack Thursz and *L'Avenir Illustré*: "How is it that Jews are slaves in Casablanca, in Morocco, in France? My dear sir, you mock us ... and the Republic ... and what else!" Le Glay believed that after Moroccan Jewry had been liberated by France, they should refrain from reciting the verse. France had sacrificed much, he claimed, in order that the Jews would feel free in Morocco.<sup>21</sup> Le Glay's words provided an excuse for *L'Union Marocaine* to attack *L'Avenir Illustré* and Thursz himself. *L'Union Marocaine* maintained that Thursz's program, which regarded a Jew living in the Diaspora as an "assimilationist" and traitor to his people, and emigration to Palestine as the realization of national ideas, endangered Moroccan Jewry and alienated its supporters. In addition, *L'Union Marocaine* argued that the program might apply to Eastern European countries plagued by chronic anti-Semitism, but not to North African countries influenced as they were by French ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity.<sup>22</sup>

Moroccan Arab nationalist figures joined the integrationist camp of Jews and French Christians in criticizing Zionism. Their attacks were launched in the pages of the reformist journal *L'Action du Peuple*, a short time after it was founded in August 1933. They prompted *L'Avenir Illustré* to respond only in March 1934, after *L'Action du Peuple* began to accuse

local Zionists of disloyalty to Morocco on account of their support for the Palestinian Jews in the latter's "war of exploitation and oppression" against Palestinian Arabs.<sup>23</sup>

The editor of the reformist paper, Mohammed El-Kholti, criticized *L'Avenir Illustré's* position that Moroccan Jewry must be developed in the spirit of the Jewish national enterprise in Palestine in order to prepare them for aliyah and absorption there when the time came. *L'Avenir Illustré*, wrote El-Kholti, was sabotaging the Moroccan cause and Arab-Jewish unity in the country by publishing such views. And Zionism, seeking to realize in Morocco what it did in Palestine, was, according to him, anti-national and anti-Moroccan. Thus *L'Action du Peuple* felt obliged, out of "concern" for the future of Moroccan Jewry and for the Moroccan cause in general, to expose the "propagandists of Zionism in Morocco" and condemn them.<sup>24</sup>

The controversy over the nature of Zionism which began as an internal debate within the circles of the Jewish intelligentsia in Morocco, and expanded into a wide-ranging discussion about the future of Moroccan Jewry in a country under the protection of France, forced the Zionist

23 See "Solidarite judeo-musulmane," *L'Avenir Illustré* (15 mars 1934), p. 2; J. Ohayon, "Le vrai patriotisme," *ibid.* (13 mars - 8 avril 1934), pp. 7-8. We have information about hostility to Zionism among Moroccan Arabs from 1929, in the wake of the 1929 riots in Palestine (see report of J.J. Cohen, 1930, C.Z.A., KKL 5/618, pp. 14, 17-21). In her report of June 1934, Sasia Erlich, Keren Hayesod emissary to Morocco, analyzed the history of Moroccan Arabs' hostile attitude to Zionism and found a direct link between the Jews' aliyah and relations with the Protectorate, and the degree of hostility shown by the local Arabs. See Erlich to Hantke, June 7, 1934, C.Z.A., KH4/B.38. About *L'Action du Peuple*, see R. Le Tourneau, *Evolution politique de l'Afrique du Nord musulmane 1920-1961*, Paris, 1962, p. 187.

24 See M. El-Kholti, "Les sionistes au Maroc sur le défensive," *L'Action du Peuple* (27 avril 1934), p. 1. Jacob R. Benazaraf, a member of the group of Zionists who backed and funded *L'Avenir Illustré*, regarded the Moroccan Arab nationalists' negative attitude to Zionism as a result of their belonging to a Pan-Islamic movement that supplied them with arguments hostile to Zionism and the Jewish national enterprise in Palestine. He suspected that, under cover of its anti-Zionist slogans, the Moroccan Arab nationalist movement would become anti-Jewish, despite the fact that it promised to grant equal civil rights to Moroccan Jewry upon achieving independence. Benazaraf therefore supported *L'Avenir Illustré's* careful and restrained line of response to the attacks in *L'Action du Peuple*, in order not to be drawn into taking a stand in the conflict between the Protectorate authorities and the Moroccan reformists (see passage from the 1935 report by Benazaraf to the Jewish Agency, C.Z.A., J1/4691; J.R. Benazaraf Archives, Memoranda and Reports File, Ben-Zvi Institute). The consolidation of the Arab nationalist movement in Morocco as a political force uniting wide sectors of the Moroccan Muslim population took place after the publication of the "Berber Dahir" of June 22, 1930; see Pesah Shinar's comprehensive study of this subject in *Muslim Nationalism in Western North Africa* (Hebrew), Ph.D. thesis, Jerusalem, 1957, pp. 172-173.

21 See *L'Avenir Illustré* (29 septembre 1932), pp. 6-7; *Vigie Marocaine* (20 septembre 1932).

22 See *L'Union Marocaine* (29 septembre 1932), p. 1.

leaders in Morocco to reemphasize aliyah and set aside the philanthropic conception of Zionism, despite the difficulties and limitations confronting their organization in that period. This transformation is rooted in the political and socioeconomic developments Moroccan Jewry underwent in the 1930s.

The Nazi threat, political developments in France, the strengthening of the Moroccan Arab nationalist movement and the dissemination of propaganda by Palestinian Arabs in Morocco, weakened Moroccan Jews' feeling of security. Concurrently, Jewish existence in Morocco became more problematic due to the economic crisis that hit the country and to apparent changes in the WZO's policy regarding aliyah from Morocco.<sup>25</sup>

At the very same time the Zionist Organization in Morocco underwent decisive changes: its framework widened to include educated youth from the middle and lower classes in the Jewish community, and it underwent a series of organizational reforms from which it emerged strengthened and more consolidated.<sup>26</sup> The rise of the native Jews' power within the local Zionist Organization helped to augment the influence of the traditional religious conception and weaken the philanthropic approach of Zionism.

These changes caused the conception of the Zionist movement as a particularist movement aiming to solve the problems of only part of the Jewish people, to give way to a conception of Zionism as a global movement aiming to redeem the entire Jewish nation. Thus Zionism became, in the thought of Moroccan Jewry, a means of solving the problem of Jewish existence not only in Europe but in all countries of the Diaspora; Palestine was no longer considered a refuge for persecuted coreligionists from lands which never knew the light of freedom, but was rather seen as the homeland of the Jewish people everywhere. In this new view of Zionism, the economic and moral advancement of the local Jewish community ceased to be an end in itself and became instead one stage in the process that would culminate in the aliyah of Moroccan Jewry and their integration in the national effort. According to this approach, Zionism's legitimacy stems not from its contribution to the Jews' integration into France's enterprise in Morocco and to the local Muslims' advancement,

25 See letter from Aliyah Department to the Jewish National Fund (J.N.F.) committee in Meknes, January 2, 1935, C.Z.A., S6/2612; and letter from the Meknes J.N.F. committee to the Aliyah Department, February 13, 1935, C.Z.A., S6/2612.

26 This subject was discussed at length in my dissertation *Organized Zionism in Morocco 1900-1948* (Hebrew), unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, June 1981, pp. 136-154.

nor from the fact that it had achieved international recognition; its legitimacy is based on the Jewish people's historical right to its homeland in which it could maintain unrestricted aliyah and settlement and establish Jewish political independence.

This was first given shape by Moses J. Azancot, scion of a local rabbinical family, intellectual, graduate of the Alliance schools, and the main Zionist activist in Tangiers from the early 1920s on. Already in 1926, Azancot had regarded fund-raising as the central Zionist activity, and determined the scope of Moroccan Jewry's participation in the Zionist movement according to the amount of its contributions to those funds.<sup>27</sup> In a 1934 article responding to the controversy between *L'Avenir Illustré* and *L'Action du Peuple*, he rejected the ideas of Thursz and his journal (who regarded Palestine as a haven for persecuted Jews, and support for the New Yishuv as aid to unfortunate brethren). Azancot stated that Thursz's position ignored the religious-messianic aspect of Zionism, without which, according to him, there was no basis for the existence of the Zionist movement. Moreover, in his view, the Balfour Declaration was important not because it granted the Jews the right to establish a National Home (in Palestine) — the Jews could have been given a bigger, more fertile and uninhabited territory elsewhere in which to establish a Jewish state — but because it expressed international recognition of the right of the Jewish people to Eretz-Yisrael, a right anchored in the Bible accepted by the three monotheistic faiths as a Divine document. Azancot believed that the Jews were returning to Jerusalem in order to create new moral values that would benefit humanity, and to establish a political system of justice and fraternity, for which humanity longed.<sup>28</sup>

This position was given full expression in a speech delivered by Samuel D. Lévy at the Third National Convention of Moroccan Zionists in Casablanca in February 1938.<sup>29</sup> Zionism, according to Lévy, was the raison d'être of Judaism and the Jewish people. Jewish existence in the Diaspora — consisting of religious ritual, Jewish tradition and heritage — is not complete. Those aspects had the power to preserve the heritage of the past but not to develop and improve it in the future. Only in Eretz-Yisrael, the Jewish homeland, could the Jewish people fully and freely

27 See M.J. Azancot, "Le Judaïsme marocain et le sionisme," *Bulletin de la Fédération Sioniste de France* (section du Maroc), Casablanca, 1926, p. 3.

28 See section from *L'Action du Peuple* (no date) including the article by M.J. Azancot, "Sionisme et Islamisme," which was published, with minor changes, in *L'Avenir Illustré* (30 avril 1934), pp. 6-7, C.Z.A., KH4/B.35.

29 See "La 3e Conférence Regionale des collaborateurs du 'K.K.K.', du 'K.H.' et du 'Chekel,' Le discours d'inauguration de M. S.D. Lévy," *L'Avenir Illustré* (15 février 1938), pp. 4-6.

develop their national genius and contribute to the values of morality and to the progress of humanity. Thus, he claimed, Zionism serves all of mankind.<sup>30</sup>

The formulation of this global conception of Zionism ended the process of development of the Zionist idea in Morocco that began in the early twentieth century in an attempt to understand political Zionism. The idea of redemption as understood by the rabbis and notables from Safi and Fèz in the first decades of the century, was refined by the nationalist and universalist thought of native Jewish French-educated intellectuals into a conception which linked the development of the Jewish people and the fulfillment of its mission to humanity with its return to its land. The change which occurred in the understanding of Zionism among Moroccan Zionists is reflected in the timing and context of Lévy's words; the end of the 1930s, in a programmatic speech by the president of the Zionist Organization in Morocco before delegates to the Moroccan Zionists' national conference. It seems to us that this change was the fruit not of ideological struggle but of the traditional relationship of Moroccan Jews to Eretz-Yisrael, reinforced by the political, economic and social changes which affected Moroccan Jewry in the first forty years of this century.

30 Ibid. The idea that the Jewish people, as the Chosen People, can develop its potential only in Eretz-Yisrael, the cradle of its glory, is found in the writings of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi [see *The Kuzari* (Hebrew), A. Zefroni edition, pp. 74-75]. The formulation of this idea in the spirit of nineteenth century thought was made by Moses Hess [see M. Hess, *Zionist and Jewish Writings* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1954, pp. 201-208].

## The Concept of Time in the Partition Controversy of 1937

Anita Shapira

What has happened — has happened, and no power in the world can alter even the minutest detail of what has already taken place, and there are therefore no empirical means of proving that things could have happened differently from the way they turned out in practice. But can anyone claim that future events are predetermined and will take only one form and no other? <sup>1</sup>

In every retrospective survey there is a tendency to view the past while influenced by knowledge of the "future" of that past. The historian, with this knowledge of the "future," must therefore tread warily. The greater the importance of the historical subject under discussion, the greater the tendency to view the protagonists of one period as failing to understand the period immediately following. This tendency has been especially marked regarding the controversy in 1937 on the British plan to partition Palestine. In an interview with Golda Meir, shortly before her death, she told the author:

As you know, it was the British who withdrew from the Partition Plan. Had we been the ones to turn it down, had we been responsible for the British withdrawal I would never have been able to free myself, for as long as I lived, from a feeling of responsibility for the death of millions in the Holocaust.

This perception illustrates the emotional intensity which the partition controversy of 1937 carries in retrospect. The destruction of European Jewry, still unforeseen as this debate was taking place, has since cast a dark shadow over the events of the decade which preceded it.

1 David Ben-Gurion, in *On Our Policymaking* (Hebrew), Tel Aviv, 1938, p. 212.

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