

G'vanim

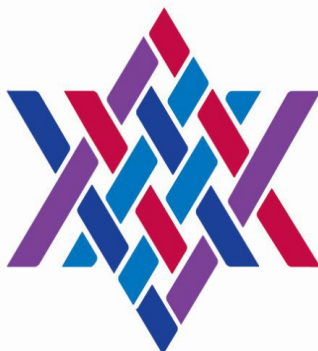
פִּיךָ יִדְבֵּר חֲכָמוֹת וּלְשׁוֹנְךָ יִרְחִישׁ רִנּוֹת

"MAY YOUR MOUTH SPEAK WISDOM
AND YOUR TONGUE COMPOSE SONG."

~BERAKHOT 17A

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Within the last couple of years, we have witnessed a number of dramatic and catastrophic events - riots, mass shootings, a worldwide pandemic, and much more. When we issued our call for papers back in 2019, we could not anticipate the magnitude of circumstances that would radically impact the United States and the world at large. Yet, alongside all of these widespread occurrences that impact the population as a whole, there is another challenge specific to the Jewish community that continually grows more pernicious: Antisemitism.

In fall of 2019, AJR dedicated its annual Retreat to exploring the dimensions of this threat, offering a several day program entitled *Antisemitism: History, Context, and a Charge to the Clergy*. Students, faculty, and alumni encountered the multifaceted nature of Antisemitism as it has appeared throughout Jewish history and as it manifests itself in the present day. This diversity mirrors the contributions to the present volume of *G'veanim*, which includes three unique articles that each engages with a different expression of Antisemitism (broadly conceived) during the 20th century.

In “From the Pit of Decay and Dust,” Timothy Riggio Quevillon explores the impact of violence against Jews during the British Mandate period in Palestine, particularly with respect to the Sanz Hasidic Kahana family in Safed. Riggio shows how conflicts between Jews and Arabs in the region, as well as involvement from the British, were powerful forces in shifting the political affiliation of members of the Kahana family from an anti-Zionist stance to a militant Zionist posture. This analysis provides

a window into the role of violence in propagating political extremism and polarization within families.

A more comparative approach underlies Miriam Eve Mora's article on Jewish and Black conceptions of masculinity. Examining American antisemitic and anti-Black depictions of men in the 1960s and 1970s, Mora explores the parallels between the almost diametrically opposed stereotypes employed to marginalize Jewish and Black men. She charts some of the interactions between these communities in their shared struggle to respond to negative stereotypes, offering us a thoughtful reflection on the delegitimizing conceptualization of minorities groups by those with power.

The final article in this volume turns to a more conventionally understood expression of Antisemitism, the Holocaust. However, Galit Gertsenzon contributes a perspective often overlooked when people think about Jewish responses to persecution. In her article, Gertsenzon considers musical compositions by three composers from 1936 to 1944 in order to delineate their respective musical aesthetics of resistance. She highlights not only the anger and calls for action in these works, but also the themes of hope, dignity, and redemption that make these pieces compelling responses to Antisemitism in their time and for today.

The three lengthy investigations in the present volume evince the diverse manifestations of Antisemitism in the modern era. Their in-depth expositions grant us a glimpse into the reverberations of many expressions of hatred that continue today but simultaneously reveal the importance of understanding the nuances of the past and the sparks of

hope that they encapsulate for the future.

Matthew S. Goldstone
August, 2021

From the Pit of Decay and Dust

The Emergence of Zionist Identity in a Sanzer Family in Early-20th Century Safed

Timothy Riggio Quevillon

In 1940, Mordechai Kahana sat at the Shabbat dinner table in Howard Beach, Brooklyn with his brother Charles and recounted stories “continuing Arab cruelty” and “Jewish heroism” to his eight-year-old nephew Meir.¹ Mordechai solely blamed the Arab population of Palestine for what he saw as a concerted effort to destroy the Jewish presence in the region. By the 1940s, still reeling from the loss of his wife, daughter, and mother-in-law in a 1938 attack on a taxicab along the Acre-Safed highway, Mordechai was transfixed by continuing interethnic violence and increasingly argued that the only way to counter Arab violence was through equally aggressive “counter-terror.” Though Mordechai was a native Palestinian, by the end of the 1930s, he permanently left the region, marking a drastic shift in Kahana politics, and the largest disruption in the family since they arrived in Palestine in the late-19th century.²

The Kahana family arrived in Palestine as part of a pre-Zionist Hasidic religious migration in the 1870s. As members of the Sanz Hasidic Dynasty, the family migrated to Safed not because of an attachment to Jewish nationalism or as an

1 Since “Kahana” is a Hebrew and Yiddish last name not derived from the Roman alphabet, there is no single transliteration, and individual family members often differed in the way they chose to spell their name in English. In this article, “Kahana” is used to discuss the family in general. “Kahane” refers to the spelling Charles, Meir, and their branch of the family used, and “Cahana” refers to Moshe and his branch of the family;

2 Robert I. Friedman, *The False Prophet: Rabbi Meir Kahane, From FBI Informant to Knesset Member* (Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1990), 23-24

escape from European antisemitism, but rather because of the city's importance to Jewish mysticism and Talmudic literature. While in Palestine, the family actively eschewed Zionist politics and instead placed ideological emphasis on Torah study and religious practice. As Jewish communities around them grew in size and Safed became a center of Zionist immigration, the Sanz Hasidic community became increasingly entrenched in a religious rejection of Zionism and older members of the Kahana family barred political activism in their family.

The interethnic violence of the British Mandate in Palestine quickly eroded the Kahanas' rejection of Zionism and within a generation the Kahanas would be a prominent family within the Zionist struggle for statehood. The deaths within the extended Kahana family in 1938 served as a flashpoint for the family and the city of Safed. Though it was a small part of a wider wave of violence between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, previous incidents lacked the direct impact on Safed's Hasidic community. The attack on the taxicab on the Acre-Safed highway not only killed eight Kahana family members, it ripped the family apart. It created political divisions, prompted migration to Europe and the United States, and thrust younger generations into the throes of anti-colonial struggles in the British Mandate.³

The struggles of the Kahana family under the British Mandate are representative of the struggles of Haredi Jews in early-20th century Palestine. Haredim, or ultra-Orthodox Jews characterized by a strict adherence to Jewish law and practice, were not immune from the interethnic violence, despite their wishes to abstain from

3 Moshe Cahana, *Saba Moshe: Memories*, interview by Michael Cahana, 2000; Libby Kahane, *Rabbi Meir Kahane: His Life and Thought, Volume One, 1932-1975* (Jerusalem: Institute for the Publication of the Writings of Rabbi Meir Kahane, 2008), 4-9.

it. This forced Jews to adopt ways to combat or avoid rising violence, which in the case of the Kahana family, resulted in the adoption of militant Zionism. Hasidism's contribution to the growth of Zionism in Palestine under the British mandate is often overlooked. Previous works primarily address Orthodox embrace of Zionism in static terms, best exemplified by Yosef Salmon's dichotomous view of Haredim and neo-Haredim. Haredim, he argues, rejected Zionism in every sense and eventually became its bitterest opponents. Neo-Haredim, however, fully embraced Zionism and eventually became Religious Zionism's strongest proponents. Salmon argues that this split came from a disagreement over who had the right to rebuild a Jewish state, as neo-Haredim believed Jews should build a state to prepare for the coming of a Messiah and Haredim believed only the Messiah could build a Jewish state.⁴ According to Salmon's interpretation, the split only diminished later, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, and the territorial gains in 1967 that spurred a sharp rise in Religious Zionism. Absent from these interpretations, however, are the Haredi Jews in Mandate Palestine who, caught in the middle of the political struggles in the region, had to navigate a life between political Zionism and Haredi political rejection, and ultimately decide between the two. Because of this dichotomous approach, scholars have placed Haredi Jews outside the analytical frame examining the development of Israel.

The struggles of the Kahana family in Palestine challenge Salmon's dichotomy and exemplify the ways in which Haredi Jews confronted Zionism throughout

4 Yosef Salmon, "Zionism and Anti-Zionism in Traditional Judaism in Eastern Europe," in Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira, eds. *Zionism and Religion*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1998, p. 26-27.

the twentieth century. The Kahanas demonstrate that the ideological line between Haredim and neo-Haredim was not firm and the distinctions between the two were seldom static. As an anti-Zionist Hasidic family, the Kahanas rejected all aspects of statecraft, despite a Jewish colony and state developing around them. Despite the family's rejectionist politics, the violent ethno-political conflict that accompanied the development of Palestine eventually thrust them into the center Zionist politics. As their entanglement within the conflict became too deep for family members to successfully navigate both Haredi rejectionism and everyday life in the British Mandate of Palestine, members of the Kahana family were eventually forced to choose between the two, with members deciding to either join the Zionist struggle or leave Palestine.

Examining the Kahana family in this way demonstrates how Haredi Jews in early-20th century Palestine were political actors. Instead of treating Haredim as passive figures in the development of Palestine and Israel, the experiences of the Kahana family suggest that Haredi Jews often directly affected the course of Jewish history in Palestine through their political choices. Even in their religious rejection of secular politics, the Kahana family actively engaged in Zionist politics of the early-20th century, as their rejection was in itself, a political stance. Focusing on the Kahana family therefore reconceptualizes how Haredi Jews engaged with Jewish statecraft in Palestine, placing them in the center of Zionist politics instead of on the periphery.

Origins in Nowy Sącz

Long before their arrival in Palestine in the late-19th century, the Kahanas emerged as a large Orthodox family

in Eastern Europe. The Kahana family joined the Hasidic movement when David Magid Hakohen, the chief rabbi of Radomyśl Wielki in southeast Poland and patriarch of the Kahana family studied under Jacob Isaac Horowitz, the Seer of Lublin, who was the most influential Hasidic leader in Poland at the dawn of the nineteenth century. This Hasidic tradition carried on with Magid Hakohen's son, Levy Itzhak who adopted the surname Kahana and became chief rabbi of Nowy Wiśnicz. Levy's eldest son, Baruch David, moved to Nowy Sącz and joined Chaim Halberstam's Hasidic dynasty. It was Baruch David Kahana's devotion to Halberstam that would eventually bring the Kahana family to Palestine.⁵

Nowy Sącz was founded as a town in 1292, and saw initial Jewish settlement beginning in the mid-17th century. Throughout its history, the Jews of Nowy Sącz experienced Cossack rioting, pogroms, and blood libels aimed at the Jewish community as Austrians, Hungarians, Poles, and Russians all vied for territorial control of Galicia. Despite these struggles, a Jewish community flourished in Nowy Sącz, eventually constituting nearly 50 percent of the city's population.⁶

Jewish life in Nowy Sącz centered around the Hasidic rabbi Chaim Halberstam, who arrived in Nowy Sącz in 1830 when he was taken on as a *moreh tzedek dayan*, an auxiliary rabbi whose job was to assist the

5 "Kahana Genealogy and Family History," Geni.com, November 20, 2018 [<https://www.geni.com/family-tree/index/6000000003683488088>] accessed February 24, 2020; The Kahana family tree was compiled by Nachman Kahane, Meir's brother, and is based primarily off of familial records rather than government documents. However, many details align with limited government documents, denoting the credibility of the genealogical findings.

6 Lehrer, Shlomo Zalman and Leizer Strassman. *The Vanished City of Tsanz*. Jerusalem: Targum Press, 1994.

town's Rav, or chief rabbi. By Halberstam's arrival in 1830, Nowy Saçz's Rav was in his 57th year as the town's rabbi. Within the year, Halberstam became the Rav, a position he held until his death in 1876. During Halberstam's tenure, Nowy Saçz became a vibrant center of Hasidism, attracting tens of thousands of followers.⁷

Hasidism was often antithetical to mainstream Jewish movements in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries. When the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, spread across Europe in the 19th century, Hasidic leaders perceived it as a dire threat to the future of Hasidism. As a Jewish offshoot of the larger Enlightenment, the Haskalah stressed rationalism, liberalism, and freedom of thought and enquiry. Proponents of the Haskalah sought communal, educational, and cultural reforms in both religious and secular institutions. This modernization of the Jewish community allowed Jews an opportunity to embrace a secular political identity for the first time and eventually gave rise to secular Jewish political movements such as Zionism.

Since political Zionism arose in Europe as a secular movement, Orthodox leaders voiced strong objection to the movement. Leaders feared that the secular nationalism of Zionism would replace the Jewish faith and the observance of religion. They also viewed Jews reconstituting Jewish rule in *Eretz Israel* (the Land of Israel) before the arrival of the Messiah as forbidden. While these early leaders often supported Jewish settlement in Palestine, they did so with no intention of conquering Palestine from the Ottoman Turks, and many leaders argued that only strictly observant Jews should migrate.

The Hasidim were particularly vociferous in their opposition to Zionism and often protested the

⁷ Ibid., 21-30.

Zionists. They even went as far as banning the Star of David, originally a religious symbol appearing only in synagogues, believing it to have become “defiled” by the Zionists. In 1889, Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveichik had proclaimed early Zionist initiatives as resembling a resurging Sabbateanism.⁸ His son Rabbi Hayyim Soloveichik further warned: “The people of Israel should take care not to join a venture that threatens their souls, to destroy religion, and is a stumbling block to the House of Israel.”⁹ When the Zionists in Brisk claimed that Zionism would stem the tide of Jewish assimilation, Soloveichik felt that what mattered most for Judaism was the quality, not the quantity.¹⁰

Throughout the Sanz Hasidic movement’s development in the early centuries, Chaim Halberstam and his followers in Nowy Sącz remained committed to political anti-Zionism. For Sanz Hasids, the secularism of Zionism represented a heresy and an affront to messianic prophecies. As devoted Sanzer Hasids, the Kahana family rejected the secularism of political Zionism for generations, instead placing a premium on religious devotion and study.¹¹ Despite these qualms with growing political Zionism, in the late-19th century, a number of Sanzer migrants left Europe for Palestine, seeking further religious revival in lands hold great biblical significance.

8 Sabbateans were followers of Sabbatei Zevi, a 17th century rabbi who proclaimed himself to be the Messiah; Newton, Adam Z. *The Fence and the Neighbor: Emmanuel Levinas, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, and Israel Among the Nations*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001, 233

9 Ibid.

10 Salmon, Yosef. *Religion and Zionism – First Encounters*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002, 349

11 While ‘Sanz’ is the name of the Hasidic dynasty, ‘Sanzer’ is the adjective for things relating to the Sanz dynasty such as rabbis, institutions, and members of the community.

Among these would be the earliest members of the Kahana family to arrive in northern Palestine.

Migration to Safed

The Kahana family arrived in Palestine in 1873, following the establishment of a Sanzer community in Safed. Baruch David Kahana was the earliest member of the family to migrate to the region, arriving with his wife Rivka and their four-year-old son Nachman. Kahana was a leader in the new Sanz community in Safed, helping build the Sanz community's synagogue and dining hall shortly after arriving. He spent most of his life travelling back and forth between Nowy Sącz and Safed collecting money for *halukah* (charity) and helping Jews migrate to the Palestinian city. Kahana also wrote two books concerning the laws, customs, and holiness of *Eretz Israel*, *Hibat Ha'aretz* and *Birkat Ha'aretz*.¹² In *Hibat Ha'aretz*, Kahana expressed the importance of observant Jews returning to Eretz Israel. By returning, Kahana believed, Jews could end the European Diaspora and bring about the messianic redemption promised in the Hebrew Bible, putting an end to Jewish life outside of the Land of Israel.¹³ Though he called for widespread migration to Palestine, Kahana's motives were apolitical as he mentioned nothing of state-building or the existing Arab population.¹⁴

While there had been Jews migrating in and out of Safed over the city's 800-year history, the arrival of

12 *Hibat Ha'aretz* translates to *Love of the Land* and *Birkat Ha'aretz* translates to *Blessing of the Land*.

13 Though Kahana does not overtly emphasize a solely European migration, the Hasidic life and struggles he discusses are unique to European Jewry at the time.

14 Baruch David Kahana. *Chibat Ha'aretz*. Jerusalem: Goldenberg Brothers, 1897.

large numbers of European immigrants marked a change in relations between Arabs and Jews in northern Palestine. Previous immigrants to the city were either Sephardic, Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal in the 15th century who settled in the Middle East and North Africa, or Mizrahi, Jews who remained in the Middle East in the wake of ancient expulsions. The culture of early migrants varied little from that of their Arab neighbors and thus precipitated relatively little social change or potential for conflict. However, as Jewish immigrants from Europe arrived in Palestine and strengthened bonds between local communities and European institutions, local Arab populations became increasingly distasteful toward new immigrants. As a result, ethnic tensions arose in northern Palestine, even before the rise of competing nationalisms in the 20th century.¹⁵

Hoping to develop a Jewish imprint on the region, Baruch David's son Nachman attempted several businesses in northern Palestine. The first of these was a prayer shawl factory in Safed, which sought to build upon the long history of textiles in the city. This business, however, encountered several financial setbacks. The largest of these was Nachman's hiring of a traveler to purchase wool for Nachman from Damascus that resulted in the traveler fleeing with the entire investment, which forced Kahana to shut down the factory shortly thereafter. Following the factory closure, Kahana leased an orchard in Kfar Hittim, near Tiberias in the North. The orchard grew etrogim, a Levantine citrus, which Kahana then brought to the port at Jaffa to ship to Poland and Russia.¹⁶

15 Klein, Menachem. *Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Hebron*. London: Oxford University Press, 2014.

16 Kahane, Libby. *Rabbi Meir Kahane, His Life and Thought Volume One: 1932-1975*. Jerusalem: Institute for the Publication of

Following the purchase of land in Kfar Hittim by the Jewish National Fund, the area became a point of contention between Jews and Arabs who both claimed ownership of the citrus groves. This dispute put Kahana's business in a precarious position and resulted in frequent theft of fruit by Arab residents. Tensions came to a head in 1893 when one of the orchard's watchmen killed someone attempting to steal fruit. When the watchman discovered he had killed the head of a nearby Arab village, he panicked and dragged the body to where Kahana had fallen asleep in the grove. Kahana awoke to Arab villagers surrounding him, believing him to have killed their village head. They beat Kahana severely before handing him over to Turkish police for arrest, where he was beaten again. Kahana remained imprisoned until his family was finally able to compel the local Austrian Counsel to act on his behalf and convince Turkish authorities to release him.¹⁷

This incident was indicative of rising ethnic tensions in the region. As Jewish populations increased in the mid- to late-19th century, competition over land and labor markets increased as well. Newly arriving Jewish immigrants typically acquired land through purchase by Jewish philanthropists and foundations and they switched agricultural ventures from a plantation form that depended on hired Arab labor to a self-employment form which privileged collective and cooperative systems of labor. This replaced Arab land tenancy with Jewish land ownership, displacing Arab residents who had worked the land for generations prior. This established a separate Jewish economy in Palestine that laid the groundwork for an eventual separate state. Though Nachman Kahana was not a political Zionist, his purchase of the citrus grove in

the Writings of Rabbi Meir Kahane, 2008, 3.

¹⁷ Kahane, 3-4.

Kfar Hittim bolstered the Zionist project of colonization and state-building, putting him in conflict with local Arab populations.¹⁸

In 1884, Nachman Kahana married Pessia Faige, the daughter of Sanzer rabbi Moshe Yehuda Tzvi Yavetz-Miller. The two of them eventually had eight children, five of which were boys. The second oldest of the boys was Mordechai and the youngest was Yechezkel Shraga. Mordechai Kahana spent most of his life traveling Europe collecting *halukah* for the Sanz community in Safed. He was a pious and apolitical Sanzer rabbi who desired, above all else, a strong attachment to the Hasidic teachings of the Halberstams for himself and his family. He eventually married Tzipporah Barol and had six children.

Yechezkel Shraga, the youngest of Nachman Kahana's sons was born in Safed in 1905. He lived there until the First World War broke out in the mid-1910s. As the British army advanced on retreating Ottoman forces, Turkish soldiers destroyed much of northern Palestine, including several prominent Jewish institutions and Talmudic academies. This strife prompted Nachman Kahana to leave Palestine with his younger children, including Yechezkel Shraga who was 13 years of age, and migrate to Oświęcim, Poland, where they could continue religious studies at a Polish yeshiva.¹⁹ Following his studies, Yechezkel Shraga moved to the United States, where his older brothers Chaim and Levi Yitzchak moved years earlier. Upon arriving in New York in 1925, Kahana adopted the name Charles, changed the spelling of his last name to "Kahane," and became the rabbi of

18 Shafir, Gershon. *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

19 The town of Oświęcim became more famous in subsequent decades under its German name, Auschwitz.

Congregation Anshe Sholom in Brooklyn. While in the United States, Charles Kahane diverted from the rest of the Kahana family. He abandoned Hasidism and became a rabbi in what eventually became Modern Orthodoxy; he was active in American politics, leading protests against American inaction during the Holocaust; and he was a staunch and active Zionist.²⁰

By the end of World War I, the Kahana family was increasingly split between Palestine and the United States. Nachman and three of his children left Palestine as nationalist politics arose, choosing instead to remain in the Diaspora rather than navigate increasing nationalism in Palestine. The Kahana family members who remained in Palestine increasingly became embroiled in the nationalist politics of the region and found themselves thrust into the center of interwar ethnic conflict resulting from the state-building occurring around them.

Ethnic Tensions in Safed

The fortunes of Palestine changed drastically in 1917. At the height of the First World War, Ottoman control weakened substantially from an ongoing revolt by Arab nationalists throughout the Empire. Emboldened by British and French promises of postwar autonomy, Arab fighters fought Ottoman forces from within, eventually forcing Ottoman withdrawal from the war and eventual dissolution of the Empire after the armistice in 1918. This emerging nationalism in Palestine suffered a blow in 1917 when British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour drafted a statement which promised “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” and that Britain would “use their best endeavors to facilitate

20 Kahane, 4-8.

the achievement of this object.”²¹

This declaration marked the culmination of years lobbying the British government by Jewish organizations, which had increased during the war, and the Balfour Declaration became the philosophical mandate upon which Zionists rallied Jews around their cause. As a result, the Jewish population rose from 12 percent of Palestine in 1922 to over 31 percent in 1939.²² The League of Nations codified the Balfour declaration in 1922 by passing a mandate to “secure the establishment of the Jewish national home ... and the development of self-governing institutions, and also safeguard the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.”²³

Beginning in 1920, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Mohammad Ain al-Husayni used his position to become a leader in the Arab nationalist movement in Palestine. He influenced nationalistic passions and incited religious protests and violence against Jews in Palestine by claiming that Jews sought to rebuild a Jewish Temple on the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque. There were no less than 15 major incidents between 1920 and 1938 that resulted in over 800 deaths. The largest of these was in Jaffa in May 1921. The violence resulted in the death of 47 Jews, the injury of another 146, and the displacement of thousands of Jewish residents of Jaffa to neighboring Tel Aviv. Other

21 Balfour, Arthur J. “Letter to Lord Rothschild, 2 November 1917,” in Friedman, Isaiah, ed. *The Rise of Israel: Britain Enters into a Compact with Zionism, 1917*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1987, 257.

22 Kelemen, Paul. “The Labour Party and the Zionist Project” in *The British Left and Zionism: History of a Divorce*. Manchester, Eng.: Manchester University Press, 2012, 11-43.

23 “League of Nations Palestine Mandate” in Klieman, Aaron S. *The Rise of Israel: Giving Substance to the Jewish National Home, 1920 and Beyond*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1987, 27-28.

major riots occurred in Jerusalem in 1920 and 1929, and Hebron in 1929.²⁴

Throughout the bulk of the 1920s, violence between Jewish and Arab Palestinians primarily occurred in dense population centers in central Palestine where large Jewish and Arab populations existed alongside one another. This changed in the late-1920s and early 1930s, however, as Jewish populations in northern Palestine increased from 19,672 in 1922 to 40,928 in 1931, which would affect the city of Safed.²⁵ Arab Palestinians felt increasingly dispossessed and responded to this Jewish population increase with nationalist fervor. By the end of the 1920s, Jews accounted for 27 percent of Safed's population, the third-largest Jewish population in northern Palestine, behind Haifa and Tiberias. Local Arab officials proved unwilling to accept incoming Zionist Jews into Safed society and the disconnect between Jews and Arabs in the 1920s grew more pronounced. The growing divide accelerated as Revisionist Zionists arrived in the city in large numbers.²⁶

Tensions finally came to a head in 1929 with the *Meora'ot Tarpat*, a series of pogroms in August 1929 during which 133 Jews died and another 241 were injured. The violence initially stemmed from a dispute over access to

24 Cohen, Hillel. *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1929*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015.

25 J.B. Barron, Report and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922 Taken on 23rd of October 1922; London: British Government of Palestine, 1922; E. Mills, *Census of Palestine 1931, Population of Villages, Towns, and Administrative Areas* (Jerusalem: Goldberg Press, 1932).

26 Revisionism was a stream of Zionism founded by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky in the 1920s as a response to what he felt was excessive kowtowing to British imperial goals. It emphasized Jewish militarism, Jewish control over the whole of the Palestinian Mandate, and noncooperation with Arab Palestinians; Ibid., 191.

the Western Wall and spread across Palestine as both Arab and Jewish populations engaged in increasingly violent reprisals. In Hebron, Arab mobs converged on Jewish neighborhoods raping men, women, and children, Arab demonstrators torched the Hadassah hospital in Hebron, Jewish vandals desecrated the Nebi Akasha Mosque in Jerusalem, and at the local branch of the famed Slabodka Yeshiva, Arab rioters killed over seventy students with staves and axes.²⁷

Despite the higher death tolls in Jerusalem and Hebron, the violence in Safed proved to have a far greater impact on the Kahanas and their fellow Sanzer Jews. A week after the initial violence in Jerusalem, tensions in Safed remained high. Despite local leaders urging calm and restraint, tempers boiled over when British authorities mistook a murdered Sephardic Jew for an Arab, sending rumors of immanent Jewish reprisal into overdrive. In response, several Arab bands stormed into Safed's Jewish neighborhoods, and over the course of an hour, these bands went from house to house with knives and axes, killing and maiming, dousing the houses with combustibles and setting them on fire. Thirteen Jews died in Safed in the first hour, two were killed on the road into town, and another three burned alive in Ein Zeitim, a kibbutz two kilometers north of Safed.²⁸

When violence broke out, the children of the Kahana family all gathered in one house and the adults were in various parts of the city. After the violence began, adults in the family ran home and they all gathered and hid in the cellar while their house was attacked by a group of Arab Palestinians. Rachel Kahana, 16 years old at the time,

27 Ibid. 295-313; Auerbach, Jerold S. *Hebron Jews: Memory and Conflict in the Land of Israel*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

28 Cohen, 188-194.

recalled the general feeling of fear and despair present in the cellar and how many family members trembled with fear and alarm. The Arabs moved on after being chased away from the Kahana house. Following the flight of the perpetrators, the Kahana family emerged to find a scene of chaos. As Rachel Kahana described it, “We went up to the roof and there it was, wow, the city was in flames and Hebrew boys were running and shouting....each of us put a child on our shoulders and we are running, running in the crowd with our knees buckling, our hearts pounding, pounding like a hammer.” In her description, Kahana described police inaction during the violence. She noted that “The Arab policemen, amusement showing on their faces, urged it on...those Arab policemen, they are to blame for it all, for all the horrible destruction.”²⁹

Rachel carried her toddler cousin Budik across the city as the family searched for some form of refuge. Once the rioting began dying down, community leaders led affected Jews into the courtyard of a government building hoping to protect surviving Jews from further violence. Nearly 3,000 Jews crowded into a courtyard typically reserved for housing horses, straw, and garbage.³⁰

Despite the Kahana family's political anti-Zionism, the violence brought on by competing nationalist movements in 1929 was unavoidable. It enveloped both secular Zionists and religious objectors, drawing no distinction between the two. Orthodox Jews could not avoid the state-building occurring around them and were often reluctantly thrown into the center of the conflict. The Kahana family abstained from the Zionist activism that spurred violent disputes between Jewish and Arab Palestinians, yet they still found themselves directly

29 Kahana, Rachel. “1929 riots”, Beit Hameiri Museum and Archive, Safed, Israel

30 Cohen, 198-201.

affected by the violence and forced to seek refuge. As the interethnic conflict picked up in the 1930s, the Kahana family found themselves in the throes of violence, claiming the lives of several family members.

Arab Revolt of 1936

The 1930s proved to be a defining decade for the Kahana family, as it marked the point at which they could no longer idly weather the region's conflict. Violence between Jews and Arabs in Palestine continued throughout the 1930s, escalating even further in the second half of the decade as Arab Palestinians launched a nationalistic uprising in response to increasing Jewish immigration and land purchases. Between 1922 and 1931, the Jewish population of Palestine more than doubled, and by the late 1930s, an average of 20,000 Jews immigrated every year, fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe. These demographic changes increasingly displaced Arab workers and by 1935, not only did Arab-possessed land have to accommodate ten times the amount of farmers as Jewish owned land, leading to smaller plots for each person, but only five percent of the Arab workforce worked in Jewish industries.³¹ More immediately, Arab Palestinians reacted to the killing of nationalist leader Izz ad-Din al-Qassam at the hands of British military officials in 1935. What began as a general strike from April until October 1936 morphed into a violent revolt by end of the year as a peasant-led resistance movement arose to counter British responses to the general

31 Bernstein, Deborah. *Constructing Boundaries: Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002, 20-21; Yazbak, Mahmoud. "From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36, July 2000, 93-113.

strike. Over the next two years, Arab protestors clashed with the British Army and Palestine Police resulting in the death of over 2,000 Arabs in the clashes, another 108 hanged, and 961 killed in “gang and terrorist activities.”³²

Caught in the middle between Arab protestors and British authorities, Jewish leaders attempted to weather the violence as best they could, while still focusing on migration away from an increasingly hostile European continent. Given the concurrent violence in Germany and Palestinian leadership’s sympathy towards Nazism, many Jewish leaders viewed the 1936 Revolt as immoral, terroristic, and an offshoot of the Nazi campaign against European Jews.³³ Between 1936 and 1939, roughly 300 Jewish civilians died as a result of the fighting. While not as damaging to the Jewish population as *Meora’ot Tarpag*, the Arab Revolt of 1936 caused a radicalization and militarization of the Jewish populace. Across the region, Jewish involvement in paramilitary organizations such as *Haganah*, *Etzel*, and *Lehi* rose, and Jewish leaders started a metalworking industry to begin crafting armaments.³⁴

Perhaps the most notable event in Safed during the early months of the 1936 Revolt was the murder of the Unger family in August 1936. On the night of August 13, two Arabs entered the Unger family house and opened fire on the family, wounding several members, before detonating a bomb inside the house as they left. The attack killed Alter Ungar and his three children Abraham, Haws, and Shneidel.³⁵ British authorities arrested numerous

32 Levenberg, Haim. *Military Preparations of the Arab Community in Palestine: 1945–1948*. London: Routledge, 1993, 74-76.

33 Morris, Benny. *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1999*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001, 136.

34 Morris, 160.

35 “Arabs Kill 4 Jews in Safed Bombing; U.S. Citizens Ask Protection,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, August 16, 1936; “Justice

suspects in relation to the murder, however, none were convicted by the British Court of Criminal Assize.³⁶

The Jewish community in Safed reeled after the acquittals, feeling that the British government failed to protect the Jewish community. Jewish residents in Safed not only directed their anger at the High Commissioner and British government, they also expressed outrage at the Arab mayor of Safed. In the wake of the murders, the mayor wrote British authorities pleading for restraint while refraining from condemnation the murders. Jewish residents believed this letter condoned the murder of the Unger family and argued that the mayor actively refused to protect the city's Jewish residents, further fueling outrage and despair over the loss of the Unger family.³⁷

Over the next few years, Safed was a center for violence between Jews and Arabs as nationalist movements promoted increasingly hostile actions to garner publicity and support for their plight. Arab Palestinians bombed Jewish houses in and around Safed, injuring multiple people each time; during the regional boycott of Jewish businesses in the fall of 1936, a crowd gathered and stoned Arabs who continued to work with Jews; Revisionist activists detonated bombs in Arab-occupied public spaces, buses traveling the highway between Acre and Safed were routinely attacked by both Jewish and Arab militants; and Arab bands regularly fought the British military in

Palestinienne," *Israël*, November 13, 1936, Historical Jewish Press Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem

36 "2 Arabs Acquitted in Ungar Murder Case," *The Palestine Post*, November 10, 1936, Historical Jewish Press Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem

37 "Jewish Delegation Sees the High Commissioner," *The Palestine Post*, August 25, 1936, Historical Jewish Press Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem

towns surrounding Safed.³⁸ In the wake of these events, British authorities increased their control over the city, establishing curfews, military details, and making several arrests. Despite an increasing British presence, violence in Safed never dampened. The opposite, in many cases, occurred. The more the British cracked down on local populations, the more violent the revolts became.

The violence of the 1936 Revolt reached the Kahana family in 1938, as it claimed the lives of four members of the extended Kahana family, and two close family friends. Several members of the Kahana family had been in Tel Aviv in March 1938 for a family wedding. While much of the family returned to Safed directly from the wedding, Tzipporah Kahana, her daughter Rivka, brother-in-law Zvi Segal, and his son David, traveled north to Acre to pick up Kahana's mother Bashe Baharah and bring her to Safed to visit the family. As their taxi traveled the recently opened Acre-Safed road, they were stopped by a band of about 20 Arabs outside the village of Sajur, between Majd el Kurum and Rama. Once the taxi stopped, the Arabs opened fire on the vehicle killing everyone except the one-year-old Rivka Kahana. She survived the attack because she was shielded from bullets by Baharah's slumped body and when the shooters approached the car, she was thus hidden from view. The taxi driver, Behor Shachrour, and a fifth passenger traveling to Safed for her wedding, Allegra Mosseri, managed to escape the initial attack. Police found the two, days later, murdered about 150 meters from the scene of the original attack.³⁹ British authorities arrived on the scene of the murders a

38 Various Articles, *The Palestine Post*, Historical Jewish Press Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

39 "Funeral of Safad's Road Sacrifices," *The Palestine Post*, March 30, 1938, Historical Jewish Press Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

short time after the violence and engaged in a fire fight with the group of attackers, killing three. The remaining few eluded capture. In the days after the attack, British military authorities devoted resources, including aircraft, to searching for Shachrour and Mosseri hoping to find them alive. The local police headed up the search for the escaped attackers but yielded little to no results for their efforts.⁴⁰ For their part in the grisly murders in the Kahana family, no one was arrested nor faced any form of justice.

The funerals for the slain members of the Kahana family occurred a few days later and the entirety of Jewish Safed attended. Schools suspended classes, Jewish shops closed, there was a general cessation of work throughout the day, and the entire city sat Shiva in mourning.⁴¹ The funerals for the Kahana family attracted thousands of visitors from across Mandate Palestine's Northern District and saw eulogies from high-ranking officials in *Va'ad Leumi*, the Jewish National Council, and the Jewish Agency.⁴² The grief of funeral attendees was prevalent. One police officer, who was a police escort for the bodies arriving in Safed, was so distressed by the scene of grief that greeted him in the city that he lost control of his vehicle, seriously injuring himself and another police officer.

40 "Police Find Bodies of Driver and Girl," *The Palestine Post*, March 31, 1938, Historical Jewish Press Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

41 Shiva is a week-long period of mourning in Judaism that embraces a time when individuals discuss their loss and accept the comfort of others; *The Palestine Post*, March 30, 1938, Historical Jewish Press Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

42 These latter two groups served as the primary governing institutions for Jewish settlements under the British Mandate with *Va'ad Leumi* handling internal issues and acting as a legislature and the Jewish Agency focusing on external relations and assisting migration.

The deaths in the Kahana family sparked outrage from numerous Jews in Safed and many actively sought ways to exact revenge on the local Arab population. During the Kahana funeral procession in Safed, an Arab garbage collector continued his normal route, despite the cessation of work throughout the city. As the procession came upon his route, his presence and insistence on working provoked anger and a large group of mourning Jews attempted to attack him, seeking revenge for the murders. These efforts, however, were thwarted at the last minute by Moshe Cahana, who stepped between the mob and the Arab man, believing the group's anger was misplaced. When members of the procession saw that, despite his immense grief, Cahana was willing to defend this man, they went back to the funeral proceedings, saving the garbageman's life.⁴³

Following the deaths in the Kahana family, British authorities placed Safed under a strict curfew and closed roads into town. Included in this was the Acre-Safed Road where the Kahana murders occurred. This road, however, was the main passageway between Safed and large Jewish settlements on the coast. Shutting down the road proved detrimental to Jewish merchants in Safed who could not ship goods in and out of the city. This move inspired anger among Jewish residents of Safed, feeling that they were being unduly punished for the actions of Arab Palestinians.⁴⁴

Burgeoning Zionism

43 *Saba Moshe: Memories*. Interview by Michael Cahana, VHS, 2000.

44 "Troops Carry Out Highway Searches," *The Palestine Post*, April 26, 1938, Historical Jewish Press Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

Following the death of his wife, Mordechai Kahana left Palestine and moved in with his brother Charles in Brooklyn in 1939. By Mordechai's arrival, Charles Kahane was already a fervent Zionist. He was an active member in the Zionist Mizrachi Organization of America and served on their executive committee for many years. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Kahane raised funds for Revisionist Zionist organizations, even hosting Revisionist founder Ze'ev Jabotinsky and movement leader Hillel Kook when they visited New York in 1940. Kahane and Kook, who used the Alias Peter Bergson in the United States, worked together throughout the 1940s. By 1942, Kahane was a member of Kook's Committee for a Jewish Army and participated in the Rabbis' March a year later.⁴⁵

Mordechai Kahana, though he never joined the Zionist movement in any formal capacity, developed a strong attachment to Jewish independence, antipathy toward the British, and outright hostility against the Arab population. While living in Brooklyn, Mordechai routinely discussed the murder of his wife and the need for Jewish protection through independence with Charles, a stark contrast to the political antipathy he previously held.⁴⁶

The younger generations of Kahanas gravitated toward Zionism even more than Mordechai and Charles' generation. Many of Nachman Kahana's grandchildren joined the Zionist struggle through paramilitary organizations such as *Haganah* and *Etzel*, with others

45 "Jews Fight for the Right to Fight," *New York Times*, January 5, 1942, p. 13; and "When the Enemy's Gun..." *New York Times*, April 21, 1942, p. 17.

46 Friedman, Robert I. *The False Prophet: Rabbi Meir Kahane, From FBI Informant to Knesset Member*. Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1990, 23-24.

becoming involved through support organizations in the United States. The impact of this younger generation lasted decades beyond the struggle for independence with some of them becoming some of the most important figures in Zionism.

Mordechai Kahana's move was perhaps the most impactful event on the early life of Charles Kahane's son Meir. Kahana's grief and anger, however, colored much of his life in Brooklyn and his presence in the Kahane household impacted Meir's early life by imbuing him with strong anti-Arab ideas. Charles and Mordechai discussed the murders regularly during Shabbat dinners, and Charles regaled Meir with stories of Jewish heroism and Arab cruelty in Palestine each night. His cousin, Moshe Cahana, recalled years later that "Charles imbued Meir with a sense of Jewish pride in every aspect...He taught his son about the spiritual strength as well as their physical prowess with stories from the bible," a message that gained extra veracity when coupled with the biblical notion of "an eye for an eye."⁴⁷

Like his father, Meir Kahane served the Jewish fight in Palestine from Brooklyn during the 1940s, as a member of *Betar*, the Revisionist youth organization, Kahane participated in numerous protest around New York including storming the British Consulate in New York and taking over the British Admiralty Delegation office in New York in 1947 to protest the intercepting of the Exodus. In late September 1947, Kahane participated in the "Monster Protest Demonstration" against a visiting fleet of the British Royal Navy which resulted in a police crackdown. *Betar* materials linked this protest to not only the intercepting of the Exodus, but also the hanging of Shlomo ben-Josef and latter "patriots of Israel" by the

47 Friedman, 23-24.

British.⁴⁸ Meir Kahane continued both Orthodox and Zionist activism throughout his life, eventually becoming the face of religious ultra-nationalism in Israel before his death in 1991.

Meir Kahane's brother, Nachman, became an Orthodox rabbi. Born in 1937, Nachman remained too young to partake in the Jewish struggle for independence and statehood. Nachman, however, inherited his father's Religious Zionism and moved to Israel as an adult. Following the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, Nachman established Congregation Chazon Yechezkiel in East Jerusalem with the hope of reigniting Jewish life in newly acquired areas of Jerusalem. For Nachman, this endeavor served to legitimize Israeli claims to a unified Jerusalem and sovereignty over Jewish settlements in Palestine.⁴⁹

Though he had been a rabbinical student studying under famed rabbi Avraham Karelitz, Moshe Cahana struggled to return to a religious life following the death of his mother Tzipporah. Before long, Moshe Cahana dropped out of his Hasidic yeshiva and joined secular Jewish society. When he turned eighteen in 1940, Moshe Cahana joined a Revisionist political organization for the first time. Cahana spent a few years in this organization before joining the Revisionist paramilitary organization *Etzel* in 1942. Cahana served in *Etzel's* intelligence division *Delek* for several years, where he eventually worked his way up to the rank of *Samal*, serving as commander of the Jerusalem district in 1946 and Haifa-Galilee in 1947. As a district commander, he became a close confidant of Menahem Begin and was instrumental in the planning and

48 "By His Orders..." flyer, March 30, 1947, Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, Betar Collection, Box16 Folder 8.

49 Kahane, Nachman. "Become a Builder of Yerushalayim." https://nachmankahana.com/build_yerushalayim/

execution of the King David Hotel bombing in July 1946, for which Cahana became one of the most-wanted men in Palestine by British authorities.⁵⁰ Despite this history as a militant, Cahana completed his religious training after the 1948 War and became a prominent voice in Religious Zionism.

Mordechai and Charles Kahane's nephew, Fred Kahan, partook in numerous wartime Zionist efforts like his American cousins. An avid Zionist, he believed that the creation and maintenance of a national home was paramount in Jewish identity. His activism extended beyond statehood as well. As a longtime resident of Los Angeles, Kahan worked with the American Jewish Congress and eventually became the director of the Jewish National Fund of America and the Bnai Zion Foundation. Kahan spent his entire life working to build up Israel as a state, donating millions of dollars over the course of his life. So great was his contribution to post-statehood Zionism that he earned the Israel Freedom Medal in 1966 and had a forest named for him following his death in 1987.⁵¹

The latter half of the 20th century entrenched the Kahana family deep in Zionist activism. Moshe Cahana and Fred Kahan became Zionist figureheads in their respective cities, Nachman Kahana became a religious face for Israeli settlers, and Meir Kahane became one of the most controversially radical Zionists in Jewish history. This Zionism continued into further generations

50 "Palestine Police (Eretz Israel) WANTED poster, February 1947," PS 1220, Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, Tel Aviv, Israel.

51 "Fred Kahan; Ex-Director of Jewish National Fund," obit. *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1987; "Los Angeles Jewish Leader Bequeaths \$1,000,000 to J.N.F. Foundation," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, June 17, 1966; "Los Angeles Jews Honor Christian Minister for His Pro-Jewish Act," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, March 1, 1965.

as all four men's children took up the mantle of their fathers' Zionism and expanded upon it, in the case of Meir Kahane's son Binyamin and grandson Meir Ettinger to a violent level. The Hasidic apoliticism that dominated the ethos of their Sanzer forbears lay abandoned for the ethos that autonomy breeds security.

This new politicism marked a seismic shift in the way the Kahana family approached Zionism. Early generations of the family devoted all their time to religious study and rejected all forms of Zionism, believing it to be heretical. Their beliefs aligned with the dominant political stance of Hasidic Orthodoxy in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, which argued that migration to Palestine should be reserved only for religious pilgrims. Any migration beyond this, for Hasidism, constituted false messianism and was an affront to Judaism.

The rising nationalisms, and accompanying violence, in the 1920s and 1930s chipped away at the Kahanas' Hasidic anti-Zionism. Under the yoke of British imperialism, Arab and Jewish nationalisms boiled over into outright violence. During the *Meora'ot Tarpat* in 1929, the Kahana family had their home burned to the ground and during the Arab Revolt in 1938, Arab Palestinians killed a large contingent of the Kahana family, including Moshe Kahana's mother and grandmother. These events, and the perceived lack of British response to them, proved to be the tipping point for anti-Zionist Kahanas, who increasingly believed that the only recourse to this violence was an independent Jewish state. By the time Moshe and Meir Kahane's generation matured, the Kahana family was a monumentally important family in the evolution of Revisionist Zionism.

Through this transformation, the Kahana family exemplifies how, for many Orthodox Jews in pre-state Palestine, there was rarely a strict dichotomy between

religious anti-Zionism and the everyday struggles of state building. Haredi Jews did not exist outside the Zionist project, but instead, through their participation in nationalist ventures such as settlement and farming, were instrumental in the development of an Israeli state. As a result, Orthodox Jews often navigated both the religious and political worlds of pre-state Palestine as the world changed around them, embracing specific elements of each as they saw fit. For the Kahanas, anti-Zionism eroded as a form of religious nationalism grew and by the latter-half of the 20th century, the family successfully merged Orthodoxy and Zionism, becoming a dominating voice in Religious Zionism.

Revivifying Virility

Attempts to Remedy Black and Jewish Male Stereotypes During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s

Miriam Eve Mora

Discussing his role in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the student protest movement at Columbia University in 1968, Mark Rudd explained, "Identifying with the oppressed seemed to me ... a natural Jewish value, though one we never spoke of as being Jewish."¹ Rudd was referring to the disproportionate number of Jews involved in the protest, particularly in support of Black students. He and other Jewish student leaders closely followed the Black Panthers and Black Power movement, attempted to emulate and identify with them in action, and yet never discussed their own Jewishness. Why would another ethnic group, also with a history of oppression, not bring this point to the fore of their participation? To answer, Rudd explained, "by being radicals we thought we could escape our Jewishness." However, students of Jewish history know that Jews have long been associated with radical movements. What Rudd and other Jewish men in the movement were truly trying to escape was less their Jewishness than their perception of Jewish manhood. What they may not have realized, however, is that in emulating Black men, they were emulating another masculinity on the periphery of American society, as White America has historically barred access of both groups to the American masculine hegemon.

A persistent theme in antisemitic rhetoric is its attack on the masculinity of Jewish men, at times equating them with

1 Mark Rudd, "Why Were There So Many Jews in SDS?" Markrudd.com, accessed September 16, 2020, <https://www.markrudd.com/index-cd39.html?about-mark-rudd/why-were-there-so-many-jews-in-sds-or-the-ordeal-of-civility.html>

women, and at others, as aberrant sexualities incomparable to white Anglo-Saxon masculinity. Racist rhetoric also traditionally attacks the masculinity of Black men, though in different ways. This article examines the origins of the two related but separate gendered attacks, and surveys several of each group's responses. It then analyzes the intersection of the two in the social movements of 1960s and '70s, in which both groups were actively reclaiming their masculinity in an overlapping, though not joined, struggle. By examining the two during the same period, in a historical moment in which they worked together or paralleled one another in the public eye, we find an interesting moment of tension between Jewish and Black manhood, in which both simultaneously attempt to emulate one another in different ways, and create conflict in the process.

During the mass migration period (1880-1924), unprecedented numbers of European immigrants, including many Jews, came to the United States, and brought with them a perception of Jewish manhood which had solidified in Western Europe over the previous century. Growing tension between Jews and Europeans, particularly between Jewish and hegemonic masculinity, was largely a consequence of a solidifying ideal of manhood manifested by European nationalism. By the turn of the twentieth century, nationalist movements existed across Europe and had become inseparable from concepts of ideal manhood performed through behavior and virtue. The modern West (the United States included) defined bravery and manliness through honor, devotion to nation, and by individual physical prowess. Jews, often viewed as residents but not as national brethren, held a unique place in European and American society regarding these qualifiers for manhood. Non-Jews often suspected that Jews maintained dual national loyalties,

and subsequently rarely granted them full acceptance into nationalist movements and ideologies. As manliness became linked to the nation, rejection from the national ideal frequently manifested as rejection from masculinity.

For this reason, many countries and empires banned Jews from acts of service to the nation, acts which themselves came to signify manhood: military service, employment as government officials, dueling societies (particularly in Germany and Austria), land ownership, etc. Even in the United States, Jewish men, though allowed to serve in the armed forces, were limited in how high they could rise as career soldiers. The growing nativist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ensured that the officer core consisted primarily of established upper- or middle-class white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.² Other institutions of American manhood banned Jewish entry all together, including fraternities, athletic clubs, sporting organizations, country clubs, student groups, and the like.³ Those behind these exclusions often rationalized that Jews were prone to malingering, hated physical hardships, and shied away from physical confrontation of any kind (assumptions which further denied Jews masculine identities).⁴

2 Joseph W. Bendersky, *The Jewish Threat: Anti-Semitic Politics of the U.S. Army* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 2-6.

3 For more on Jewish responses to rejection from American institutions of masculinity, see chapter III of Miriam Eve Mora's "From Talking Softly to Carrying a Big Shtick: Jewish Masculinity in Twentieth-Century America" (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 2019).

4 The 1919 American Jewish Committee's Office of Jewish War Records report on Jewish participation was published as an ardent rebuttal of antisemitic claims of malingering and draft-dodging, which constituted an attack on the manliness and honor of American Jews. American Jewish Committee, *The War Record of American Jews: First Report of the Office of War Records* (New York City:

In addition, Jewish behaviors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often contradicted modern European and American concepts of ideal family structure and proper gendered practices. Unlike traditional European definitions of gender, in which men carry the economic burden of the family and women remain in the domestic sphere as caregivers and educators, the way Jews enacted gender valued study and prayer among men and thus often positioned women in breadwinning or financially contributing roles. Though Jewish male immigrants to the United States pursued religious learning less than their more traditional European counterparts, the Jewish difference remained. Jewish female immigrants often branched even further from the home in search of both income and education. Consequently, the image of Jewish gender roles as contrary to the hegemonic gender ideals became even greater, relegating Jewish men to the periphery of American manhood. The role of women in Jewish life proved more adaptable to Western culture, as middle-class gender norms supported elements of traditional Jewish women's behavior in the home while adapting to the so-called "cult of domesticity."⁵ Women took on more dominant roles as transmitters of Jewish religion and identity to the children, a role which previously fell under male responsibility in traditional Jewish culture.

The results of Jewish rejection from male institutions in the early twentieth century were manifold. In some cases, Jewish men accepted that they were, in fact, less

American Jewish Committee, 1919) 6.

5 This is true of Jewish women attempting to assimilate in both European and American culture, where the middle-class domestic role for women dominated. Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995) 25-32.

masculine than their Protestant neighbors, and committed themselves to remedying their degraded state. In these cases, they opened their own parallel institutions of manhood, like the City Athletic Club in New York City, which had the goal of building up its members in sports and athletics, but never formally discussed or publicized their Jewishness.⁶ There were others who believed that Jewish men were no less masculine than their neighbors, and so also created parallel institutions, these ones openly Jewish, as their goal was not to quietly remedy Jewish manhood, but to prove Jewish manhood to American society at large. In the case of the Jewish Athletic Club of Brooklyn (J.A.C.O.B.), for example, the fliers specifically appeal to Jewish boys who were “sick of being pushed around.”⁷

American perceptions of Jewish men had continued to follow the trajectory of what Daniel Boyarin called “gentle Jewish masculinity” throughout the World Wars, with a number of ups and downs, particularly surrounding World War II.⁸ Jewish participation in military endeavors during the wars bolstered their image of tough, vigorous manhood, particularly fighting in the Jewish Legion in World War I. It was, however, brought down again by the image of the wizened Holocaust survivor that emerged

6 For an analysis of the Jewish athletic organizations, their publicity, and their goals in New York and beyond, see chapter III of Miriam Eve Mora’s “From Talking Softly to Carrying a Big Shtick: Jewish Masculinity in Twentieth-Century America” (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 2019).

7 JACOB Flier, Jewish Defense Organization Records; I-490; Box 10; Folder 11; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY, and Boston, MA.

8 Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

at the close of WWII.⁹ A dramatic change came with the sudden and unexpected victory of the Israeli military during the Six Day War in 1967. The show of strength and aggression by an entirely Jewish army inspired American Jewish youth to claim a more aggressive form of masculinity, one which might allow them to distance themselves from the soft, gentle Jewish image they had grown up with. But the late '60s was a time in which many young Americans were embracing identities well outside of those of the American mainstream, and many young Jewish men emulated the emerging masculinity of the Black community, claiming both a more masculine and American masculinity themselves. The Black men they emulated, however, were themselves in a period of change and reclamation.

Just like antisemitism, anti-Black rhetoric has attacked the manhood of Black men consistently in different but equally damaging ways. As another acculturating community, making their way in American society, Black men also felt that to attain successful assimilation into mainstream white culture, they had to access some semblance of white masculinity.¹⁰ The barriers to that access were quite different from those obstructing Jews.

9 For examinations of Jewish masculinity during and around the World Wars, see chapter IV of Miriam Eve Mora's "From Talking Softly to Carrying a Big Shtick: Jewish Masculinity in Twentieth-Century America" (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 2019), as well as Maddy Carey, *Jewish Masculinity in the Holocaust: Between Destruction and Construction* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017).

10 This view takes it as fact that Black Americans have (and do) face the same struggles as a migrant or decolonizing community, in spite of their long history in the United States, as discussed at length in Brenda Gayle Plummer's *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956-1974* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Unlike Jewish men (who were told by American society that they were soft, effeminate, and incapable of reaching the mainstream, valor-based, hegemonic masculine ideal), Black men were told that they were strong, virile, and really quite capable of reaching this lofty goal, but that they were failing to do so because of their other weaknesses.

Quite the opposite of the attack on Jewish men, American media (both mainstream and in the racist fringe) have presented Black men as “brutes,” “savages,” rapists, and murderers. From the legal abolition of slavery through the Jim Crow period, white American media used this image of the brute, animal-like Black man as justification for unfair treatment and abuse, as well as to resolve white guilt about the realities of Black male vulnerability in American society. Long-held stereotypes about Black men (which presented them as hypermasculine, untamed, and unfeeling) formed in the wake of Black emancipation still hold sway today in the justification of violence against Black men. In his 2017 book on Black manhood, Tommy Curry argued that it is not only the blackness of Black men that makes them more vulnerable to violence in American society, but their maleness as well, specifically because of this perception of Black men as violent and bestial.¹¹ This constant threat of attack is in itself emasculating, forcing Black men to live in a state of fear and submission, particularly when dealing with white law enforcement.

The consistent presentation of Black men as physically superior, but mentally inferior, has damaged the Black community in several ways. It has obscured the realities

11 For more on the “brute” image to justify mistreatment of Black men as enslaved people, victims of sexual abuse, and as scapegoats for the sexual violence of American men on the whole, see Tommy J. Curry, *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017) 7, 86, 100, 139, 161.

of Black struggles in the United States by explaining the matriarchal structure of urban Black families, often lacking father figures, as a result of male promiscuity and aggression.¹² A 1971 article in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* explained that among lower-class Black couples,

Either the male is contributing to the economic maintenance of the female partner or attempting to exploit her for financial gain. As a [*sic*] ego-enhancing process, many lower-class black males prefer to see themselves as exploiters, women as the exploited. The man who does not make capital of his relationships with a woman is failing to prove his masculinity.¹³

In blaming Black men and their “ego-enhancing process” for the number of single-mother households, Americans were able (for many decades) to ignore the much stronger correlation of single-mother households to impoverished communities, regardless of race. However, even when lack of employment opportunities became the focus of sociologists studying the problem, they continued to fault Black men, for failing to become more successful providers.¹⁴

12 For studies which point to Black men as the cause of familial disintegration in the African American community see the highly influential (though well-outdated and disproven) 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* by Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

13 Robert Staples, “Towards a Sociology of the Black Family: A Theoretical and Methodological Assessment,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 33 (1971): 127.

14 For a full account of the debate among sociologists surrounding this theory and the Moynihan Report, see Lee Rainwater, *The*

White society restricted the access of Black Americans to institutions of all kinds, not just those which promoted masculine ideals, to a much greater degree than Jews ever experienced in the United States. Though clearly distinct, the two share some common elements, like the stripping of male identities to restrict their access to the hegemon. By limiting the rights of Black citizens, the American government disenfranchised them politically, socially, and commercially, forcing them into a perpetual state of financial hardship and dishonor. In the Jim Crow south, for example, Black men were limited in nearly every way, and lack of access to the masculine hegemon was just one of many effects of this mistreatment. Though one of many, this particular denial carried very real consequences for the Black community.

The 1960s was defined by rapid cultural change, redefinition of norms and identities, and new ideas in American culture. Issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and patriotism were proven to be multifaceted and complex. During this time, both Black and Jewish youth were involved in protest actions, particularly in civil rights and antiwar protests. The two groups found themselves interacting in several ways, some familiar, and some novel to the time and place of the American counterculture. Black Americans were at the center of the world's attention in US news, and two streams of performative manhood became dominant in the Black community.

Within the civil rights Movement, the dominant theme of male behavior was dignity through nonviolence. By refusing to engage in reactive violence, even in response to violence against them, members of civil rights protests

Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy: A Trans-action Social Science and Public Policy Report (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

recall feeling as though they had gained a respectable manhood in their measured response and dignified calm. Franklin McCain, a member of the Greensboro Four, explained that by protesting in this way, he had gained his manhood, but not only that, he felt as though “the manhood of a number of other black persons had been restored.”¹⁵ The Black Power movement, by contrast, bolstered an affirmative message, which contradicted the previously dominant narrative of Black male powerlessness. They viewed the nonviolence promoted by civil rights leadership as promoting ideas of Black powerlessness and effeminacy.¹⁶ The dominant image of this new Black man was personified by Malcolm X, who followers saw as taking a stand against the “determined effort of a certain part of the power structure to emasculate the [B]lack man.”¹⁷ At Malcolm X’s funeral, Ossie Davis explained in his eulogy, “Malcolm was our manhood, our living, Black manhood! This was his meaning to his people. And, in honoring him, we honor the best in ourselves.”¹⁸ Malcolm X’s cultivation of a respectable Black manhood was a conscious and recognized effort which continued after his

15 D’Weston Haywood, *Let Us Make Men: The Twentieth-Century Black Press and a Manly Vision for Racial Advancement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018) 170.

16 Simon Wendt, “‘They Finally Found Out that We Really Are Men’: Non-Violence and Black Manhood in the Civil Rights Era,” *Gender and History* 19, no. 2 (November 2007): 547.

17 According to Malcolm X (and the Nation of Islam), the transformation to redeemed Black men was achieved by expunging vices and committing to stable, monogamous relationships. James L. Hicks, “Black Manhood,” *New York Amsterdam News*: Mar 6, 1965. William Eric Perkins “Matriarchy, Malcolm X, and Masculinity: A Historical Essay,” *Counterpoints* 107 (2000): 25.

18 Ossie Davis, “Eulogy delivered by Ossie Davis at the funeral of Malcolm X,” February 27, 1965, <https://www.malcolmx.com/eulogy/>

death, as the Malcolm X Black Hand Society of the World presented the “Black Manhood” award to figures they saw as further promoting this image.¹⁹

Regardless of which method of performative manhood emerged as the longest lasting or most effective, what is of interest to the present study is the one which Jewish American men sought to emulate. Though Jews of a previous generation would most likely have related more readily with the first image of Black manhood and nonviolence, the Jewish youth of the ‘60s (especially in the aftermath of the Six Day War) readily identified with the Black Power movement, which promoted a more tough, virile masculinity. Among Jewish youth on both the political left and right, young men felt connected with the movement for Black power and pride, taking it as an example for political action and, in some cases, a framework for Jewish pride and ethnic revival.

Black and Jewish men maintained separate struggles for their own masculine identities during this time, but they did not exist entirely apart from one another. Black Americans, both men and women, were the leaders and driving force of the fight for civil rights, at the forefront of the ethnic pride movement, and the feminist movement as well. As non-violent protest increased all over the country, Jews became particularly prominent among the protesters and supporters of social movements around the United States. Even in non-Jewish specific groups, Jews were quite visible in leadership and among the ranks of civil rights protest. This is partially because of the religious tradition of *zedakah*, but arguably just as important is that Jews believed that a society which had progressed beyond discriminating against Black people would be a safer and

19 Recipients included Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sekou Toure of Guinea.

happier place for Jews as well.²⁰ To wit, Jews comprised two-thirds of the white Freedom Riders traveling to Mississippi; the majority of the steering committee of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in 1964; more than half of both the chapters of SDS at Columbia and the University of Michigan; at Kent State in Ohio, where only five percent of the student population was Jewish, Jews constituted nineteen percent of SDS membership (also three of the four students shot by the National Guard); there were Jews present in the early days of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); and two Jewish men from New York were famously killed while working with Black civil rights protestors in the Freedom Summer murders in Mississippi in 1964.²¹

At Columbia University, where multiple student movements erupted simultaneously, faculty discussing the Jewish students in non-Jewish specific white protest theorized that the protest was, in part, an attempt by Jewish students to revolt against their middle-class parents and prove their masculinity and place alongside Black nationalists.²² SDS, the Weathermen, and other primarily white student groups attempted to join forces with more militant protestors, like the Black Panthers on multiple occasions. In large part, they were rejected, not embraced as brothers in arms in a shared struggle.

20 Hasia R. Diner, *Jews in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 120-121.

21 Numerical data on SDS chapters from Paul Berman, *A Tale of Two Utopias: The Political Journey of the Generation of 1968* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996) 44-45.

22 Report by the American Jewish Committee's Information Service on the *Faculty Thoughts on the Jewish Role in the Student Disorders at Columbia University*, November 1968, Box 95, Folder 2, General correspondence, memos & working papers, 1968. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

A professor at Columbia used the case of Mark Rudd as an example of this rejection by Black nationalists, and the subsequent desire by Jewish students to assert their masculinity. He explained, of the SDS takeover of an administration building on campus, “the Black students in Hamilton Hall challenged Rudd... they challenged his masculinity in a way ... you know They said, ‘show us your way, take your own building,’ and he did.”²³ Rudd, though this faculty member could not have known it, became a founding member of the Weathermen, a terrorist organization that claimed repeatedly to be fighting for Black nationalists, though Black leaders rejected this claim. Similarly, the Jewish Defense League (also founded in 1968) often referred to themselves as Jewish Panthers, used a raised fist in their logo, promoted the “Jewish is Beautiful” slogan, and in spite of their repeated conflicts with the Black community, claimed alliances and shared struggle with Black nationalists.²⁴

One American rabbi, commenting on Jewish student participation in non-Jewish groups, noted that though Jewish students were previously barred from many (though not all) Gentile student groups, the student revolts of the sixties “destroyed these barriers” and therefore Jewish participation in exclusively Jewish student groups suffered a sharp decline.²⁵ The only benefit to this shift

23 Report by the American Jewish Committee’s Information Service on the *Faculty Thoughts on the Jewish Role in the Student Disorders at Columbia University*, November 1968, Box 95, Folder 2, General correspondence, memos & working papers, 1968. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

24 For more on the JDL and Black Power, see Miriam Eve Mora, “Husky Jewish Boys”: The Jewish Defense League and the Project of Jewish American Masculinity,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* (forthcoming).

25 Ezra Spicehandler, “National and Social Characteristics of Jewish Youth in the U.S.A.,” in *Youth Today: A Collection of Articles*

towards outside groups, in his estimation, was that when radical Jews were rejected from some groups, particularly the Black protest movement, they were forced to find a radicalism of their own, guiding those who did continue to embrace their Jewish connection to form more radical, socialist, Zionist organizations. Certainly, when leadership within the Black nationalist movement declared Zionism a form of racist colonialism and accused Israel of oppressing a Third World people, they alienated Jewish protestors who also considered themselves Zionists.”²⁶ However, some Black leaders, whether sympathetic to the Zionist cause or not, used Zionism as an example and precedent for reparations and the creation of a Black state. Malcom X, though drawn to the Palestinian cause, suggested that the Black community use the “strategy used by the American Jews” and explained that “Pan Africanism will do for people of African decent [*sic*] all over the world the same that Zionism has done for Jews all over the world.”²⁷

and Essays, edited by Yehuda Gottlieb (Tel-Aviv, Israel: The World Labour Zionist Movement, 1970) 129. Accessed through YIVO at the Center for Jewish History.

26 The Black Caucus at the 1967 National Conference for New Politics convention condemned the Six Day War as Zionist imperialism. SNCC published an article in their newsletter on “The Palestine Problem” which inarguably antagonized Israel, presenting Israel as the oppressor of colored brothers in arms. *SNCC Newsletter* 1, no. 4 (June/July 1967): 5 (accessed through the online repository at Duke University).

27 His view on Zionism, however, revealed little solidarity with what “Zionism has done for Jews all over the world,” and much antagonism towards what he believed was the white oppression of another people of color, Palestinian Arabs. He explained, “the Jews ... with the help of Christians in America and Europe, drove our Muslim brothers out of their homeland, there they had settled for centuries, and took over the land for themselves ... In America the Jews sap the very life-blood of the so-called Negroes to maintain the state of Israel. Michael R. Fischbach, *Black Power and Palestine*:

In spite of continued Jewish attempts to join forces with Black nationalists, the rift only widened as a result of the Israel-Palestine debate. In truth, their conflict was far closer to home and was based on the journey that Jews had worked so hard to complete in America: attaining whiteness. Whiteness in American culture is not only an aspirational goal, but is inexorably linked to masculinity.²⁸ Many scholars of whiteness and assimilation argue that to become Americans, Jews also became white (or vice versa).²⁹ What is fascinating about this interaction is that the Jewish students, bolstered by Jewish feats of strength in Israel, hoped to find a place among the masculine Black movements in America, which, in turn, rejected them for already having attained sufficient whiteness to exert their power over others. And in reality, these young Jewish men *were* joining as white men, not as Jews. They were participating in larger movements, not self-identifying as Jews, but as white activists. A commentator in a Jewish student paper expressed his frustration with this, explaining that the Jewish young man “joins [B]lack

Transnational Countries of Color (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), “Malcolm X, Global Black Solidarity, and Palestine,” ebook. “Malcolm X Makes it Home From Mecca,” *Amsterdam News*, May 23, 1964.

28 See Michael Kimmel’s various works on American manhood, particularly his 2015 work, *Angry White Men*.

29 Jewish whiteness is a topic which has received some scholarly attention in the twenty first century, beginning with the oft-criticized 1998 Karen Brodtkin book, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*. For more scholarly works dealing with Jews and whiteness, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.); and David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

nationalist groups, not as a Jew but as a white man. His whiteness, his precious whiteness, is too valuable to him for it to be relegated to a secondary position.” For this reason, he explained, “he does not understand that his relevance to the Black struggle is as a Jew and a fellow victim of endless white exploitation.”³⁰

In truth, however, Jewish and Black men, both fighting for their masculinity, were battling very different impediments. Attaining masculinity meant different things to each. Jewish men wanted to be *seen* as men, as strong, virile, fighters. Black men wanted the power, freedoms, and status that Jewish men had already achieved by virtue of their passing in white society. It is a product of their disparate struggles to acculturate in American society that Jewish men felt their manhood was diminished, while simultaneously being presented by the Black community as an example of success in attaining white manhood. James Baldwin explained,

The Negro is really condemning the Jew for having become an American white man-- for having become, in effect, a Christian ... The Jew does not realize that the credential he offers, the fact that he has been despised and slaughtered, does not increase the Negro's understanding. It increases the Negro's rage. For it is not here, and not now, that the Jew is being slaughtered, and he is never despised, here, as the Negro is, because he is an American.³¹

30 M. Jay Rosenberg, “To Uncle Tom & Other Such Jews,” 1969; Jewish Counter Culture Collection; I-504; box 5; folder 3; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

31 James Baldwin, “Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They’re Anti-White,” New York Times Digital Archive, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/>

As for the Jewish state, Baldwin explained that unlike the non-violent struggle for Black rights in America, “no one has ever seriously suggested that the Jew be nonviolent. There was no need for him to be nonviolent. On the contrary, the Jewish battle for Israel was saluted as the most tremendous heroism.” Baldwin, without realizing he was doing so, perhaps, gets to the core of the tension in many ways. Perhaps no one had ever suggested that Jews ought to be non-violent, but they had, for centuries, insisted that Jews were already non-violent by their nature.

Examining the interaction of these two groups of men during a time in which they were both actively fighting to change their image, their reality, and the world around them uncovers a number of notable features. First, it reveals a tension among American Jewish youth, between a nearly achieved goal of American manhood and a readily available alternative of virile Jewish manhood in the State of Israel. Their desire to share the struggle with the Black nationalist movement shows a yearning for American identity, but with the strength and gravitas of those fighting for their community. By choosing to mimic Black nationalists instead of Israeli sabras, they preferred a tough American masculinity over Jewish revival as the masculinity of choice.

Black activists, by contrast, in both the civil rights and Black nationalist movements, were not choosing a new masculine identity to embrace, as much as proving the masculinity that racist rhetoric claimed they were capable of, but chose not to cultivate. They were not choosing to change themselves, but to demonstrate the fallacy in the rhetoric used against them as men, showing that they were capable of organization, rationality, and dignified advocacy. The reactions of Black nationalists to Jewish

attempts at solidarity reveal a different perspective about Jewish assimilation, one which assumes success and therefore rejects them for their whiteness. This left Jewish men in an odd position, as they were simultaneously still rejected by hegemonic white manhood.

Considering masculinity, and attempts at intentional change to perceived masculinity, in the history of both of these communities allows us new perspective on motivation for historical change. In the case of Black American men, their goals, perceptions of manhood, and purposeful displays of masculine qualities were on the surface. Black leadership discussed them publicly, amongst themselves, and in their evaluations of the movements. The Jewish students attempting to force a new masculine identity on themselves, by contrast, were on the fringes of Jewish society. However, it is in examining these fringes that we can better identify and understand the hegemon. The desire to shed the popular view of Jewish male timidity was well-established, and Jewish men in the United States had been attempting to change it for a century. Jewish protestors of the civil rights and counterculture movement merely showcased this desire in a brief, aggressive, and fascinating vignette of the Jewish American story.

Musical Expressions of Incarcerated Jewish Composers during the Holocaust

Galit Gertsenzon

Introduction

There are many ways to tell a story. There are stories told to us by our parents. There are stories printed in books. And there are stories told in music. The stories presented here give their audiences not so much of a *plot*, as an *atmosphere*. Hints of trauma, snippets of chaos, and movements of grief: songs borne of the Holocaust are more felt in the body than understood in the mind. Nevertheless, these compositions have occupied the attention and enthusiasm of music historians and scholars since their inception. They connect us, viscerally, to our past. They are puzzles that today we are privileged to piece together while we consider the lives of the composers and the circumstances in which they lived.

Soon after the Nazis rose to power in 1933, the first actions in their process of formal discrimination against Jews and other minorities began.¹ Led by the Nazi Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, the arts (in all of its expressions) aligned with a Nazi ideology of discrimination.² In the same year, The Reich Chamber of Culture (Reichskulturkammer) began an insidious campaign to control every aspect of German culture.³ They empowered and encouraged the performance

1 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Antisemitic Legislation, 1933-1939." *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, 2020. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitic-legislation-1933-1939>

2 "Reichskulturkammer & Reichsmusikkammer." *Music and the Holocaust*, 2020. <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/politics-and-propaganda/third-reich/reichskulturkammer/>

3 Heiber, Helmut. "Joseph Goebbels: German Propagandist." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 25 Oct. 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/biogra->

and distribution of music and other works of art that glorified Aryan idioms, while suppressing and banning art and music originating from people of different races and ethnicities. Modern styles, such as jazz and the avant-garde, which were gaining attention across the globe, were banned as “degenerate.” Myriad expressions in musical and visual arts were publicly labeled by the Reichskulturkammer as works of shame and obstruction. Similar acts of crude censorship and radical discrimination gradually gained momentum throughout Europe, serving as an effective weapon against countless Jewish musicians and composers. While many banned musicians fled Europe at this time, others remained without any promise of professional future.⁴ Many of those who stayed in Europe were later deported, incarcerated, and murdered, leaving only their music as testimony. This essay presents several works from select composers of this era, and considers elements of musical resistance from their early compositions, before the Holocaust, and then later, while incarcerated in ghettos and concentration camps.

Music in the Holocaust has long occupied the attention of scholars across disciplines, and continues today as a focus of inquiry and appreciation. In considering the general phenomenon of music-making, researchers posit that the act of composing or performing music is both cathartic for the artist, reflecting the circumstances of the musician, and convocative, fostering a sense of community.⁵ In the extreme circumstances of the

phy/Joseph-Goebbels

4 Haas, Michael. *Forbidden Music: The Jewish Composers Banned by the Nazis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

5 “Music in the Vilna Ghetto.” *Music, Memory, and Resistance during the Holocaust*. Facing History and Ourselves, 2020. 21 Feb. 2017. <https://www.facinghistory.org/music-memory-and-resis->

Holocaust, however, new functions of music emerge, both practical and ethereal. The music that comes out of the ghettos and concentration camps reflects a triumphant artistic spirit and firm resistant posture against ethnic hate and genocide. “Through fostering a sense of community,” scholar Guido Fackler writes, “music served...as a form of cultural resistance, as practical assistance in the struggle to survive.”⁶

In light of the Reich’s discriminatory acts against the arts, their persistent antisemitic action and legislation against the Jewish people in Europe at this time, and the communal, cultural, and survival dreams of incarcerated artists, I consider the works of three musicians: Mordechai Gebirtig, Gideon Klein and Pavel Haas – all of whom were imprisoned in ghettos and camps, and murdered by the Nazis. While their circumstances differ, their music shares elements of coping, resistance, and survival. A Yiddish song by Gebirtig, three art songs and a piano sonata by Klein, and a choral composition in Hebrew by Haas all vary in scope, literary style, and musical composition. Some are lively and hopeful, others prophetic, and yet each reflects the human experience of unspeakable tragic suffering. This essay seeks to illuminate these works by considering the unique circumstances which brought them to life and the stories of the men who composed them. In so doing, I explore these selections as an enduring record of sentient composers who found expression, against all odds, before murder. It is my hope that by listening to their musical messages, readers might find pause to reflect

tance-during-holocaust/music-vilna-ghetto

6 Fackler, Guido. “Music in Concentration Camps 1933–1945.” *Music & Politics*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0001.102>

upon both their torment and heroic, resistant response to outrageous hate and discrimination. Their compositions tell the story of a Jewish world destroyed, and never to be again.

***Es Brent* (1936)**

Mordechai Gebirtig (1877-1942) and Pogroms in Poland

The early works of poet and songwriter Mordechai Gebirtig most often reflect Jewish life in the Shtetl,⁷ his family relations, and friendships. In contrast to these, his 1936 song, *Es Brent* (It is Burning) expresses resistance to the Nazis years before the waging of the Second World War. Born and raised in Kraków, Poland, Gebirtig was a carpenter by trade. His life and work in Kraków was dedicated to the Jewish theater and to songwriting. After serving five years in the Austrian army during World War One (where Gebirtig continued to write and compose), his first book of poems, *Folkstimlekh* (In the Folk Mode) was published in 1920. Having captivated readers in Poland and throughout Europe,⁸ Gebirtig followed up with a second volume out of Vilna entitled, *Mayne Lieder* (My Songs), in 1936.⁹

Of the events in Gebirtig's extraordinary life, few proved more influential on his writing than the pogrom

7 Zollman, Joellyn. "What Were Shtetls?" *Modern Jewish History*. My Jewish Learning, 2020. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shtetl-in-jewish-history-and-memory/>

8 ORT: Obchestvo Remeslenogo Truda [Association for the Promotion of Skilled Trades].

"Mordechai Gebirtig." *Music and the Holocaust*. <http://holocaust-music.ort.org/places/ghettos/krakow/gebirtigmordechai/>

9 Pasternak, Velvel. *The Mordechai Gebirtig Songbook*. Tara Publications, 1998.

in Przytyk, a small town located in east-central Poland.¹⁰ The town of Przytyk was home to 1930 inhabitants, 1852 (96%) of whom were Jewish. Its residents were craftsmen, traders, and farmers who struggled for livelihood. Business in Przytyk principally involved bakeries, slaughterhouses, and shops of common trade and services. Together, town merchants would organize markets to attract buyers from nearby areas. In February 1936, Polish authorities suspended the market out of fear of antisemitic rioting. The pogrom began after several weeks of suspended trading, with a small dispute between Jewish and Polish merchants. Likely incited by antisemitic party politicians, Polish peasants rioted against Jews in Przytyk. In defense, Jewish townspeople organized an armed group to fight back. In his historical analysis of Polish Jewry and politics, Emanuel Melzer emphasizes the brave Jewish resistance in Przytyk in years preceding the Second World War.¹¹ And yet, despite their brave acts against the rioters, the incident nevertheless proved disturbing and frightening to the Jewish community in Europe, that it gained international attention in the press; the *New York Times* reporting “anti-Semitic excesses”¹² as “mob violence” and “mournful.”¹³

Among Gebirtig’s resistance songs, *Es Brent* is his

10 Polonsky, Antony. “Przytyk Pogrom.” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Translated by Rami Hann, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2010. https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Przytyk_Pogrom

11 Melzer, Emanuel. *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935-1939*. Hebrew Union College Press, 1997, p. 56.

12 Special Cable to the New York Times. “Poles Again Attack Jews: Six More Nationalists are arrested for Przytyk Rioting.” *New York Times*, 3 Jun. 1936, p. 14.

13 Wireless to the New York Times. “Polish Jews Depressed: Mourning Prevails over Conviction of Ten Jews in Rioting Case.” *New York Times*, 28 Jun. 1936, p. 8.

most remembered and recited. In it, Gebirtig expresses what can only be understood in hindsight as a prophecy of wrath, predicting the horrific form of antisemitism yet to come. Today, modern performances of this Yiddish original continue to populate streaming services and archival collections.¹⁴

ES BRENT

Es brent, briderlekh, es brent.
Undzer orem shtetl, nebekh, brent!
Beyze vintn irgazon,
Brekh, brenen un tseblozn,
Un ir shteyt un kukt,
Azoy zikh, mit farleygte hent.
Oy, ir shteyt un kukt
Azoy zikh, vi undzer shtetl brent.

Es brent, briderlekh, es brent.
Undzer orem shtetl, nebekh, brent!
Es hobn shovn di fayertsungen
Dos gantse shtetl ayngeshlungen.
Alts arum shovn brent.
Un ir shteyt un kukt
Azoy zikh, vi undzer shtetl brent.

Es brent, briderlekh, es brent!
Di hilf iz nor in aykh gevent.
Az dos shtetl iz aykh tayer.
Nemt di keylim, lesht dos fayer,
Lesht dos fayer mit eygn blut,
Shteyt nit brider
Ot azoy zikh mit farleygte hent.
Shtetyt nit brider
Lesht dos fayer, vayl undzer shtetl brent.

14 Peerce, Jan. "Es Brent." Provided by Universal Music Group, *YouTube*, Vanguard Records, 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jfkG5drFM>

IT IS BURNING

It is burning, brothers, it is burning.
Our poor little town, a pity, burns!
Furious winds blow,
Breaking, burning and scattering,
And you stand around
With folded arms.
O, you stand and look
While our town burns.

It is burning, brothers, it is burning
Our poor little town, a pity, burns~
The tongues of fire have already
Swallowed the entire town.
Everything surrounding it is burning,
And you stand around
While our town burns.

It is burning, brothers, it is burning!
You are the only source of help.
If you value your town,
Take up the tools to put out the fire,
Put out the fire with your own blood.
Don't just stand there, brothers,
with your arms folded.
Don't just stand there, brothers,
Put out the fire, because our town is burning.

Mordechai Gebirtig's "Es Brent." Translated by Mindle Crystel Gross.

In this song, Gebirtig watches the horror of the pogrom from a distance, foreshadowing what is to come. Depicting the horrors of hateful acts that precede the Holocaust, these illustrious prophecies become influential poetic and musical predictions of the Holocaust. The lyrics in *Es Brent* are uncharacteristic blunt expressions of anger,

frustration, and calls for action.¹⁵ Although many consider this song to be Mordechai Gebirtig's direct response to the pogrom on the Jews of Przytyk, it is an expressive outpouring of many violent acts against Jewish people at this time.¹⁶ In other songs, too, Gebirtig raises his poetic voice in a call for action and resistance. One such song is, *Chanale* (Hannah), which gives the urgent plea for action: "Brothers, we shall not be silent! / It's the blood of our sister! / We'll pay them back / with bombs and grenades / and the red flag in our midst."¹⁷ Themes of action, fidelity, and hope resound in Gebirtig's compositions. His song, *Minutn Fun Bitokhn* (Moments of Confidence), appeals to the power of faith and redemption: "Jews, be merry! / Their end is coming / and the war will be over. / Be merry and do not worry. / Have patience and confidence / and hold these close at hand. Our spirit is our weapon / and it will keep us together!"¹⁸ Describing Gebirtig's life and work, Professor Nathan Cohen¹⁹ writes:

Until 1940, Gebirtig lived in Kraków with his wife and family and continued to write songs that reflected the dark mood of the time, although his songs still contained a note of hope for a better future. In October

15 Gebirtig, Mordechai. "Es Brent." Translated by Mindle Crystel Gross. Performed by Dudu Fisher, Helicon Records, 2003. *Jewish World Life Online*. <http://www.hebrewsongs.com/?song=esbrent>

16 Gebirtig, Mordecai, and Gertrude Schneider. *Mordechai Gebirtig: His Poetic and Musical Legacy*. Praeger, 2000. Musical score.

17 Ibid., 11.

18 Pasternak, 114.

19 The Joseph and Norman Berman Department of Literature of the Jewish People. Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan 5290002, Israel. Nathan.Cohen@biu.ac.il

1940, his family was expelled, along with other Jews, to a village on the outskirts of the city, where Gebirtig, whose health was deteriorating, continued to write. One of the songs he wrote then was called *A Tog fun Nekome* (A Day for Revenge), a song of solace and encouragement about the future downfall of the persecutors. In April 1942, the Gebirtig family was transported to the ghetto, where Mordkhe still continued to write. On 4 June 1942, while being marched to the Kraków train station on the way to the Bełżec death camp, Gebirtig was murdered by random Nazi fire.²⁰

Mordechai Gebirtig was shot and killed during the liquidation of the Kraków Ghetto, leaving a treasure trove of brilliant Jewish musical expression in his wake.

Three Songs Opus 1 for Voice and Piano (1940)
Gideon Klein (1919-1945) and Uncertainty in Prague

Months before the deportation of Mordechai Gebirtig and his family to a small ghetto on the outskirts of Kraków, atrocities were spreading in other parts of Europe. Such was the case in Czechoslovakia, where German troops invaded on March 15, 1939 and immediately enforced the discriminatory Nuremberg Laws. Israeli historian and archivist, Livia Rothkirchen writes: “The

20 Cohen, Nathan. “Gebirtig, Mordkhe.” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Translated by Rami Hann, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2010. 16 May 2013. https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Gebirtig_Mordkhe.

German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia brought about an instant change in the life of the Jewish populace... the Gestapo marched in and immediately launched a wave of mass arrests..."²¹ Jewish people were forced to leave their jobs, subjected to devastating social and professional discriminations. Jewish musicians, for example, were banned from all public performances. Jewish students were expelled from their schools. It was this untimely aggression that led Gideon Klein - a young, talented pianist, composer, and music scholar at the height of his career – down a tragic line of professional derailment. In a very short time, he lost each of his accomplished roles one after the other.²²

Born in 1919, Klein's exceptional musical talent prompted his parents to enroll him in piano studies at the best Czechoslovakian schools. At the age of eleven, Klein moved several hours from his hometown in Přerov to Prague.²³ Accompanied by his older sister, Gideon began a new life in the city at a young age. Under the tutelage of a renowned professoriate, young Gideon studied piano, composition, and musicological research. He enrolled in university studies in Prague, and took classes at the Prague Conservatory. By 1939, with much of his time devoted to concert performance, his pianistic career took off.²⁴ At the same time, he completed twelve compositions for piano and strings and sketched numerous pieces, all of which would remain unfinished due to political circumstance.²⁵ Because

21 Rothkirchen, Livia. *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust*. University of Nebraska Press, 2005, p. 103.

22 Slavický, Milan. *Gideon Klein: A Fragment of Life and Work*. Helvetica-Tempora, 1996, p. 14.

23 Ibid., 13.

24 Ibid., 14.

25 Ibid., 15.

of the German invasion, and the resultant uncertainties it brought to the Czechoslovakian city, Klein accelerated his studies to complete his master class in a single year. In the spring of 1940, he was forced to leave the Conservatory. Forbidden to leave the country, Gideon then declined an invitation to study at the London Royal Academy. Klein's legacy is limited to those 1939 compositions and the others he produced while incarcerated in Terezín. These are the only testament of his great talent in composition and artistry.

In response to political and military circumstance, Klein began to espouse musical resistance as early as 1939. Cornered and discriminated, he consciously refused Nazi abominations by adopting the non-Jewish stage name, Karl Vránek. As Vránek, he secretly performed concerts at private residences. It was at this time that Klein began setting a melancholic song cycle for voice and piano. Although Klein composed these songs shortly after his expulsion from higher education and the subsequent ban of his work, music historians still do not know if these were written in direct response to the discriminatory Nuremberg Laws.²⁶ As all three songs (*Vodotrysk*, *Polovina Zivota*, and *Soumrak Shury Sesouvá Se*) feature thematic elements of solitude and despair, it is natural to assume that their compositions originate in the unclear and hopeless crisis with which Klein was coping.

Vodotrysk (The Fountain) was composed on May 25, 1940. Klein set his music to a poem by Johann Klaj (1616-1656), a priest who was reviving German literature. Its soothing springtime scenes may have given Klein much-needed solace. In an atonal style reminiscent of Klein's twentieth-century milieu (honoring the styles

26 Ibid., 15.

of Schoenberg and Berg), Gideon incorporated rapid melodies to resemble the flow of water fountains in the text. Shifting lively, vibrant sounds to the melancholic when Klaj's text changes, Klein challenges his singers with high notes. While Klein's youthful exploration of art-song does not fully grasp the demands made on the human voice, his choice of text is intriguing.²⁷ Klein brings to life a text which begins with a beautiful description of a fountain and its serene landscape and then gradually prepares the reader for a change of season: "The running springs murmur and whisper / From them this green expanse has run / They shiver, deplore and fear already / The snowy time."²⁸ The youthful, generative scene is met with a fear of an unknown snowy time which threatens to stop their springs of pleasure by bringing cold and ice.²⁹

While Klein composed *Polovina Zivota* (The Middle of Life) a few weeks before *Vodotrysk* (May 6, 1940), he decided to place it in the middle of the two outer pieces in the cycle. It is not the only composition in which Klein wrote movements within a certain chronology and later changed the order of things to retrofit across a cycle.

27 NAXOS of America. "3 Songs, Op. 1: No. 1, Vodotrysk." Spiritual Resistance: Music from Theresienstadt. Performed by Wolfgang Holzmair, baritone, and Russell Ryan, piano. *YouTube*, 11 Mar. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NnANklRm6U&feature=youtu.be>

28 For a complete reading of *Vodotrysk* (Czech, German & English) see: Gertsenzon, Galit. "Gideon Klein's Songs Op. 1 for High Voice and Piano." *Music and the Holocaust*, 15 Feb. 2020, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/klein-gideon/gideon-kleins-songs/>

29 Gertsenzon, Galit. "Gideon Klein's Songs Op. 1 for High Voice and Piano." *Music and the Holocaust*, 2020 Feb. 15. <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/klein-gideon/gideon-kleins-songs/>

For this piece, Klein turns to another important German author, the celebrated Friedrich Hölderlin. The text begins with a symbolic description of springtime: “With yellow pears / and full of wild roses / the land hangs over the lake.” Pears, swans, and roses are often used in poetry to depict idealized nature, love, purity, and virility. The text continues: “You fair swans / and drunk with kisses / you dunk your heads / into the sacred, neutral water.” Again, this beautiful nature scene transforms to a dark, brooding atmosphere, seething melancholy throughout the text by a speaker who mourns the solitude of winter. In the poem’s musical setting, Klein evokes slow-walking steps through whole-tone passages, reflective of the contemporary musical trends of his time.³⁰ These reverberations signal an inward voyage – an introversion toward an ambiguous destination. The final lines suggest sad self-reflection, confusion, and despair: “Woe is me! where, when / it is winter, will I get flowers / and where the sunshine / and the shade of the earth? / The walls stand / mute and cold / in the wind the weathervanes / rattle.”³¹ Once again, Klein sets his music to a text rich with light and shadow, stone and wind. For the second time in the cycle, intonations and allusions of solitude and hopelessness seem to signify Klein’s extraordinary personal circumstances.³²

30 Slavický., 22.

31 For a complete reading of *Polovina Zivota* (German, Czech & English) see: Gertsenzon, Galit. “Gideon Klein’s Songs Op. 1 for High Voice and Piano.” *Music and the Holocaust*, 15 Feb. 2020, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/klein-gideon/gideon-kleins-songs/>

32 NAXOS of America. “3 Songs, Op. 1: No. 2, Polivina života.” *Spiritual Resistance: Music from Theresienstadt*. Performed by Wolfgang Holzmair, baritone, and Russell Ryan, piano. *YouTube*, 11 Mar. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DoaRVGA6mU&-feature=youtu.be>

Klein completed the third and final song in this cycle, *Soumrak Shury Sesouvá Se* (Dusk has Fallen from on High) on June 30, 1940. While poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe presents the text in two distinct stanzas, Klein scripts three musical sections each with a different musical atmosphere and interesting piano solo passages to precede the vocal parts. The song begins with a quiet interlude, as the piano plays a main melody which the voice will later repeat. The singer commences with the sentence: “Dusk has fallen from on high / All that was near now is distant.” Albeit foreboding and minimalistic, this phrase combines sparse descriptions of landscape, time, and personal testimony. Supported by a simple chordal texture and meditative sonorities, the first phrase is followed up with piano changes. Soon, the mood shifts, and a solo section envelopes a tense atmosphere, accelerated tempo, and repeated notes and rhythms to prepare the singer for the next phrase, a sign of hope: “But there the evening star appears / Shining with its lovely light!” The piano follows this text in a rather meditative, reflective mood, as if trying to convey the shimmering star with a series of ascending notes and flickering sounds. A descendant melody follows, preparing for yet another shift: “All becomes an uncertain blur / The mists creep up the sky.” The piano’s melodic imitation is trailed again by accelerated, repeated tones which amplify the unease about to come: “Ever blacker depths of darkness / Are mirrored in the silent lake.” Again, the piano gives yet another solo section enhanced with a chromatic chordal passage and repeated notes which gradually become louder, then descend, almost lost, into broken chords. The effect is an active seeking for a resolved, reassuring chord. Within this musical grappling,

the piano plays throughout many registers, as if blindly looking for an answer in the dark. Eventually, a chord is settled from which another phrase turns to prepare the voice. It reaches a new sonority, but does not stop. The piano speaks on its own, changes course, and returns to an accelerated tempo and repeated notes. Here, the text, “Now in the eastern reaches I sense the moon’s light and glow / The branching hair of slender willows frolics on the nearby water” conveys a sense of wholeness. The piano responds to the voice in complete and broken chords. While the final phrase of the poem creates a sense of hope, there is a cold calmness to it: “Through the play of moving shadows / The moon’s magic light quivers down / And coolness steals through the eye / Soothingly into the heart.”³³ The song concludes with a piano solo section that aligns with the text to articulate parallel emotion - pulsing creeps through the chordal repetitions, as the heart beats, while slow melody in the bass gives way to a calm, dark ending. The bass melody gradually silences as the chords slowly repeat and die.³⁴

While in Prague, Gideon Klein became acquainted with Czech translations of German poetry, perhaps at the encouragement of family friend and prominent translator, Erik A. Saudek. Klein made many friendships, in fact, with members of Prague’s literary establishment, and he

33 For a complete reading of *Soumrak Shury Sesouvá Se* (Czech, German & English) see: Gertsenzon, Galit. “Gideon Klein’s Songs Op. 1 for High Voice and Piano.” Music and the Holocaust, 15 Feb. 2020, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/klein-gideon/gideon-kleins-songs/>

34 NAXOS of America. “3 Songs, Op. 1: No. 3, Soumrak.” Spiritual Resistance: Music from Theresienstadt. Performed by Wolfgang Holzmaier, baritone, and Russell Ryan, piano. *YouTube*, 11 Mar. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZdXK-M8Hu0&feature=youtu.be>

was thus inspired to read, and later set music to, various German texts. Klein's literary selections have prompted scholars to question his interest in German texts during such an uncertain time in his life. Klein's music reflects a melancholic idiom that is indeed unusual, and this has led many to consider his sentimental identification with the spring and summer months following his expulsion from formal training. Some posit that, by setting music to these German poems, Klein exercised his creative impulse toward musical resistance. It is fascinating to consider how empowering this might have been. On the topic of the Verdi *Requiem* in Terezín, musician Raphael Schächter, a contemporary of Klein's and his collaborator at the camp, is known to have aptly stated: "It was possible to sing to the Germans what it was impossible to say to them."³⁵ Perhaps this was Klein's calling, to smuggle the words and transmute their meaning so to create lyrical resistance in song.

Of the music that came out of the Terezín camp, scholar David Bloch noted that, "this was, in effect, a direct continuation of private cultural events in Prague which had already been instigated as a consequence of the Nazi-occupation and of the Nuremberg racial laws. Jewish artists were no longer allowed to appear in public and Jews were not permitted to go out after eight o'clock in the evening."³⁶ It is my strong belief, therefore, that given his personal circumstances in 1939-1940, Gideon Klein's songs are a musical reflection of the time preceding his

35 Beckerman, Michael and Naomi Tadmor. "Lullaby": The Story of a Niggun." *Music & Politics*, vol. 10, issue 1, 2016, p. 5. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

36 Bloch, David. "Hidden Meanings: Musical Symbols in Terezín." *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 32, issue 4, 2006, pp. 110-124.

deportation to the Terezín concentration camp – a place from which he would never return. With the engagement of powerful text, Klein expresses a variety of melancholic and nostalgic moods characteristic of the uncertainties in Prague and in his life. Roughly two years after composing his *Opus 1* song cycle, Klein was deported to Terezín. Here he dedicated the last years of his life to music education, music composition, and performance. In 1945, Klein was transferred to Auschwitz, then to the Fürstengrube concentration camp where he was killed just weeks before its liberation. He was twenty-five.

Music in Terezín (1942-44)

Less than an hour's drive north of Prague, the Terezín concentration camp and ghetto (also known as, "Theresienstadt") served several functions during the Second World War. It was established in 1941 by the Schutzstaffel (SS) in a fortress town. With its adjacent prison, Terezín functioned as both a concentration camp (receiving 144,000 deportees, bound for labor camps and the gas chambers of Auschwitz) and a retirement settlement for older Jews, many of whom were quite prominent. In its first year (1941-42), Jews from across Europe began arriving. Unlike other camps, Terezín inmates were held for long periods of time before deportation to other sites. As such, the camp community was able to establish its own administrative committee to help create and encourage a rich cultural life there, including concert performances, lectures, and education for youth and adults.³⁷

While many musical compositions and performances emerged from the Terezín camp in the course

37 Adler, H. G. *Theresienstadt 1941 - 1945: The Face of a Coerced Community*. Cambridge, 2017.

of only two years (1942-44), Gideon Klein's *Piano Sonata* (1943) is of particular interest for its energy and imagery. Composer Pavel Haas, too, created pieces in Terezín that reflect the struggles and hopes of imprisoned Jews at this time in this place. Arriving in Terezín sick, depressed, and grief-stricken, young Klein motivated and supported his older compatriot and fellow inmate, Haas. His 1942 male choral composition, *Al S'Fod* (Do not Lament) is another noteworthy piece, long admired for its unique testimony of exile through melodic fragments of both the Chorale of the Hussites and original Hebrew text. Although different in scope and stylistic language, both composers achieved (through mutual admiration and support) extraordinary musical expressions of identity, pride, and love for one's country while imprisoned in Terezín.

Gideon Klein's *Piano Sonata* (1943)

Shortly after his arrival, Gideon Klein became a productive figure among the musical intellectuals in Terezín. His charismatic personality, knowledge, and natural talent drew people to him, and his music kept them close. An acquaintance at the camp, pianist Truda Reisová-Solarová, described Klein in this way:

tall, slim, with black hair, vivid but controlled...of extremely impressive and well-groomed appearance. ...His outstanding intelligence, his great interest from many different branches of art, for literature, and especially for music, so impressed all who knew him that it seemed as if some strange magic emanated from his personality. All of us, without reserve,

admitted the superiority of Gideon Klein,
maybe just because he did not try to be
better than we were: he was.³⁸

Another inmate in Terezín, Michael Flash, was so inspired
by a particular performance that he wrote a poem entitled,
*Concert in the Old Scholl Garret (Played by Gideon
Klein)*:

And this man yesterday cut all the veins,
Opening all the organ's stops,
Paid all the bird to sing,
To sing
Even though the harsh fingers of the sexton
Sleep heavy upon us.
Bent in his manner of death, you are like
Beethoven
Your forehead was as heavy as the heavens
before it rains.³⁹

Klein's *Piano Sonata* is an enigma of sorts,
and when I teach music of the Holocaust to university
undergraduates, I play it for its historic backdrop and
dizzying array of melodious meaning. With eyes closed,
I ask students to listen for Klein's different movements
throughout the piece. With eyes open, we examine
imagery and rhythm as both an individual and collective
experience. Only after we've exhausted the *Sonata* on its
own terms do I introduce Klein and the context for his

38 Karas, Joza. *Music in Terezín 1941-1945*. Pendragon, 2009, p.
76.

39 Beckerman, Michael. "Composers: Gideon Klein." *The Orel
Foundation*, 2020. http://orelfoundation.org/composers/article/gideon_klein.

composition. This piece faithfully serves contemporary audiences, young and old, as an exemplar of the beauty that can be borne of tragedy – transcending the horrors of the Holocaust in pulses of rich, harmonic triumph.

Klein takes the very classical, traditional, and methodical sonata form and, in atonal language (similar to that of composer Arnold Schönberg, a bellwether of the expressionist movement), turns it on its head. His *Sonata* is a relatively short piece, with three movements coming together to a whole – the result is a mix of elements, tossed together and competing, coming together again and melting. It is not a peaceful or calm composition. Instead, it carries energy and strength from its background, balanced with Klein's superb choices in melody, harmony, and rhythmic pattern. A sense of drive and energy occupies much of the piece - an agitated atmosphere ranging from energetic dissonance to irresolvable tension to unrestrained climax – before the final movement ends in a fit of total chaos and hammering brutality on the piano's lowest key (A). Yet, in its entirety, Klein demonstrates an excellent sense of form, intention, and order. His rhythmic motifs tell only *some* of his story, by providing not so much of a *plot* as a *palette*. The “what” and “when” is instead a well-organized, colorful panoply of wide-ranging emotion. Klein worked on this *Sonata* in 1943, from June to October. By that time, he'd endured nearly two years of incarceration at Terezín, witnessing starvation and disease, inmate transports out to the East, and a steady influx from all regions beyond. These experiences inform the piece, a composition considered today to be one of his greatest.⁴⁰ Recognized by Klein's first biographer, Milan Slavický, as, “the most striking result of Klein's

40 Along with *Fantasie a Fuga* in 1943.

composition activity during the Terezín period, and in fact, the best of all his works....”

A careful listening to the first movement reveals that perhaps the rhythmic moments, as well as its lyrical passages, tell a story that might otherwise lay beneath the surface. In the classroom, sections with strong rhythmic chords and harsh-moving ostinatos, in particular, challenge the listener and raise certain questions. What is Klein attempting to express in these moments? What feelings emerge from certain sounds? How do they manifest in the body? Impressions of violence, chaos, and triumph are often articulated by students. Images, such as trains signals and gunshots, flood their imaginations.⁴¹ Acknowledging and honoring the *Sonata*’s origin, students come to appreciate their own unique listening experience and interpretative authority. When I play the second movement for students, a sense of solace spreads across the classroom; and yet, what begins with a sense of calm (in contrast to the first movement) quickly transforms into a chaotic swirl ending in a dark, ominous pessimism.⁴² Klein’s third movement often elicits a range of reaction and interpretive response. Some students see it as a sarcastic dance of skeletons, others sense a triumphant (albeit dissonant and violent) sound that ends very assertively, thus demonstrating the spirit of the strong person behind it. When listening to the dark passages throughout the *Sonata*, the troubles under which Klein composed this particular piece are apparent.

41 Gertsenzon, Galit. “Gideon Klein Piano Sonata, Second Movement: Adagio.” *YouTube*, 24 Feb. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vjsiv6eA288>. Listen at: 2’35” (measure 59); 3’14” (measure 77); and 4’15” (measure 99).

42 Gertsenzon, Galit. “Gideon Klein Piano Sonata, Second Movement: Adagio.” *YouTube*, 24 Feb. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vjsiv6eA288>

Perhaps its composition was an attempt to communicate his incarcerated state of mind. Nonetheless, it is quite different from the songs Klein composed in 1940.⁴³

Michael Beckerman, a leading scholar in Czech music, offers several important characteristics of works composed in Terezín. Each bear dark, depressing elements, create “musical allusion” by incorporating elements of other composers, are encoded with secret communication, and reflect images of death.⁴⁴ In all of his works, Klein utilizes many such elements, but when listening to each of the *Sonata* movements, dark moments are prescient; depressing elements can be heard; and musical allusions to something outside of sound all conspire to attest that this piece grew out of indescribable trauma and despair. The piece is thus at once heroic and cathartic; as biographer Slavický notes, “This strain naturally affected even somebody who normally was a shining example of how to overcome the burdens of life in the camp.”⁴⁵

In the *Opus 1* songs discussed earlier, Klein utilizes texts to assist in expressing an array of feelings and emotions. In the *Piano Sonata*, however, Klein relies on the instrument’s ability to produce sound and thus convey meaning. The piano gives listeners a variety of raw images and feelings that go beyond the communicative function of words. Only in the imagination can the sounds in each of these movements present themselves, as different dynamics in variety, texture, and form occur in the music. Bringing all of these movements together is an expressive series of sound, affecting both intimate and

43 Gertsenzon, Galit. “Gideon Klein Piano Sonata Third Movement: Allegro Vivace.” *YouTube*, 21 Jan. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQsZwNuxhkl>

44 Beckerman & Tadmor, 20.

45 Slavický, 44.

aggressive, even violent, moments. As Klein's 1940 songs allude solitude and melancholy, his Terezín compositions embrace steadfast resistance. Here, place and sound converge, as in Klein's subsequent piece, *Madrigal*. Completed in December 1943, *Madrigal* is derivative of Friedrich Hölderlin's poem, *The World's Agreeable Things....*⁴⁶ Klein set this choral piece to Hölderlin's text shortly after completing the *Piano Sonata*. Once again, Klein turns to the German poet's melancholic writing, as a man who faced his own struggles and also passed away at a young age.⁴⁷ Klein's choice to set music to the following phrases once again reflect his mood and circumstance in Terezín:

The world's agreeable things were mine to
enjoy,
The hours of youth, how long they
have been gone!
Remote is April, May, remote, July;
I am nothing now, and listless I live on.⁴⁸

Scholars regard Klein's musical compositions in Terezín to be his most accomplished and developed work.⁴⁹ While incarcerated, Klein composed a collection of work that demonstrates his mastery of composition while also telling the story of Terezín in rich and varied

46 Hölderlin, Friedrich, Michael Hamburger, and Jeremy D. Adler. *Selected Poems and Fragments*. University of Michigan Press, 1967, p. 587.

47 Constantine, David. *Hölderlin*. Oxford University Press, 1988.

48 Believe SAS. "Madrigal after Friederich Hölderlin - Consort Vocale Diapente." KZ Muzik, vol. 14 [Encyclopedia of Music Composed in Concentration Camps], *YouTube*, 5 Nov. 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXgd174cTNU>

49 Slavický, 28.

sound. He led concerts and motivated others to create and perform. Ill-fated for a tragic end, his musical work and partnerships in Terezín are his legacy. One such celebrated relationship is his friendship with an elder, prominent musician, Pavel Haas. A renowned Czech composer in a deep state of mental discord and depression, Klein is credited as having handed Haas pieces of staff paper with which to write. Klein's abiding encouragement led Haas to create some of his most beautiful compositions, most notably, his first and only work in Hebrew, *Al S'Fod*.

Pavel Haas' *Al S'Fod*(1942)

Pavel Haas (1899-1944) was a prominent Czech composer in his own right, a protégé of the renowned Leoš Janáček. In 1941, Pavel was deported to Terezín. Haas was in his early forties at the time, sick and heartbroken after divorcing his wife in an effort to save her from the camps,⁵⁰ and separated from his beloved daughter. It was the young and motivated Gideon Klein who was able to lift Haas from his misery and depression.⁵¹ Eliska Kleinova, Gideon's sister and a Terezín survivor, lived to commemorate Klein's music and bear witness to the relationship between these two composers. Klein's insistent plea to Haas - that he take paper and start composing - is paramount in Eliska's memory.

Born on June 21, 1899 in the Moravian capital of Brno, Pavel was the eldest child in a relatively wealthy Jewish family of Czech and Russian origin.⁵² In Terezín, Haas composed many songs and other music for strings.

50 Karas, 79.

51 Ibid., 76.

52 Sadie, Stanley and John Tyrell, editors. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 2nd ed., Macmillan, 2001, p. 629.

He was especially attracted to Moravian folk songs, and he loved the chorales of St. Wenceslaus and the Hussite, *Ye Warriors of the Lord*.⁵³ He developed certain affinities for hopeful, faithful lines such as, “Let us not perish / us and our descendants / Saint Wenceslaus!”⁵⁴ In various Terezín compositions, Haas incorporates melodies from both the early chorales in Prague and those in the camp. While incarcerated, Haas composed a Hebrew choral piece for male voices entitled, *Al S’Fod* (Do not Lament). Completed on November 30, 1942, it assimilates a text dating from the 1920’s, in the Land of Israel during the time of the third Aliya. The massive immigration (from 1918 to 1923) of European Jews to Israel necessitated the building of roads and infrastructure to prepare empty ground for the settlement of Zionist Jews. Poet, author, and translator David Shimon (1886-1956) wrote the Hebrew text during this drive of Israeli pioneers; his uplifting verse is pure inspiration for those forerunners who worked hard to build a country from nothing: “Do not lament אֵל סָפֹד / do not cry בְּכֹת / אֵל בְּכֹת / at such a time בְּעֵת כְּזֹאת.”⁵⁵

The song was first set to music by Israeli composer Joseph Milt. According to Joža Karas, Haas was familiar with this setting.⁵⁶ Haas based this all-male chorus on the Czech folk Hussite Chorale melody, *Ye Who Are Warriors of God*. This is a famous chorale, sung in Czechoslovakia for hundreds of years, encouraging listeners to help those

53 Ibid., 79.

54 Ibid., 79.

55 Haas, Pavel: *A Song for a Male Choir on the Hebrew Words of Al S’fod*, 1942. Jewish Museum in Prague, 2020. https://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/1891/lang/en_US

56 Karas, 115.

in need, have faith in God, and fear not those who harm the body. In *Al S'Fod*, Haas combines similar male-choral voices, harmonic textures, and melodic fragments from both the Hussite Chorale and Milt's Hebrew text in order to blend pioneering Zionist ideas with his own Jewish roots and sense of national identity, pride, and love for his homeland. Indeed, Haas' Czechoslovakian roots, made manifest in the Hussite Chorale, were included in many other of his pieces as well. It is interesting to note that Haas had the opening page of this score engraved with musical notes that he, or perhaps someone on his behalf, arranged to form the Hebrew words: "מזכרת ליום השנה" ("a souvenir for the first and last anniversary in the Terezín exile").⁵⁷

Haas dedicated this composition to Mr. Otto Zucker, an engineer and former head of the Jewish community in Brno, and Deputy Chairman of the Terezín Council of Elders in the camp.

57 Jacobson, Joshua. "Music in the Holocaust." *Choral Journal*. December 1995, p. 17. https://acda-publications.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/choral_journals/December_1995_Jacobson_J.pdf

Do not Lament,	אַל סָפֹד,
Do not cry	אַל בְּכוֹת
At such a time.	בְּעֵת כְּזֹאת.
Do not bow your head down!	אַל הוֹרֵד רֹאשׁ!
Work! Work!	עֲבֹד! עֲבֹד!
Ploughman, Plough!	הַחוֹרֵשׁ, חֲרֹשׁ!
Sower, Sow!	הַזֹּרֵעַ, זֵרַע!
In an evil moment,	בְּרִגְעַ רָע
Labor twice	כַּפְלִים עֲמַל,
Create double!	כַּפְלִים יִצֹר,
Plant and Tread,	וַיִּטֵּעַ וַיַּעֲדֹר,
Extract and fence,	וַיִּסְקַל וַיַּגְדֹּר,
Level and pave,	וַיַּפְלֵס וַיְסַלֵּל,
Freedom rail	מִסְלַת הַדְּרֹוֹר
For the day of light	לְיוֹם הָאוֹר.
Plant and Tread,	וַיִּטֵּעַ וַיַּעֲדֹר,
Extract and fence,	וַיִּסְקַל וַיַּגְדֹּר,
Level and pave,	וַיַּפְלֵס וַיְסַלֵּל,
Freedom rail	מִסְלַת הַדְּרֹוֹר
For the day of light	לְיוֹם הָאוֹר!
In the path of humility	בְּנִתִיב הָעֲנֻוֹת
Moves redemption,	הוֹלֵכָה הַפְּדוּת,
And Cries the Blood	וְזוֹעֶק הַדָּם
To the soul of the people	לְנִשְׁמַת הָעָם:
Look and act!	הִתְנַעֵר וּפְעֹל!
Be redeemed and Redeem	הִגָּאֵל וּגְאֹל!

Pavel Haas' "A Song for a Male Choir on the Hebrew Words of Al S'fod," 1942.

Conclusion

While from September 1939 to September 1945, the world was engaged in its second war, the foundations for mass annihilation of Jews in Europe were laid decades earlier. The musical pieces explored here represent only a small seed in a vast garden of music produced by many different kinds of composers during this time. Each of these composers express their struggles in their own unique musical language and style - from Gebirtig's Shtetl Yiddish and simple melodies, to Klein's sophisticated handling of musical themes, to Haas' affinities for his country and its folk. In these original compositions, which are so telling of the time, all three composers choose to adopt the words and melodies of others as their own; thus echoing the sentiments of their forefathers while chronicling a twentieth-century experience of unspeakable hate and torment. Through these transcendent musical gems, we come to understand each man's feelings, hopes, frustrations, and identities (religious, national, and musical) at a time in which they were forbidden to even speak. Their music reminds us that even in the darkest of times, one can find ways to express one's voice. More than merely notes on a page, these compositions tell each man's story in sound – sounds that collectively float above a temporary, physical experience of incarceration into the boundless reaches of memory and imagination.