Late Nineteenth Century Zionism & Political Need for Subversion of the Messianic Idea

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the historical role of messianism in the formation of Zionism during the late Nineteenth century. By examining the messianic idea's application to various political and social movements, I explore the adaptations that were made to both religious and national doctrine. Ultimately subversion and secularization of the messianic idea became a necessary component in the formation of Zionist ideology. Thus, through the analytic lens of messianism, the fluidity of Jewish voices of authority is revealed.

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Introduction

David Ben-Gurion (b. 1886), Israel's first prime minister, reflecting on his understanding of messianic fulfillment, once stated, "[m]y concept of the messianic ideal and vision is not a metaphysical one but a socio-cultural-moral one… I believe in our moral and intellectual superiority, in our capacity to serve as a model for the redemption of the human race. This belief of mine is based on my knowledge of the Jewish people, and not on some mystical faith; the glory of the Divine Presence is within us, in our hearts, and not outside us."[1] For Ben-Gurion, nationalism and messianic redemption are intertwined. The creation of a Jewish state can open the door for a societal reordering that will reach far beyond Israel's borders. Ben-Gurion's Messiah is his empirical knowledge of the Jewish people and thus neither miraculous nor metaphysical. As such, he places the desire for national autonomy within the framework of one of the oldest ideas in Jewish thought, messianic redemption. Ben-Gurion is certain to appeal to tradition, albeit subverted, even as he ushers in a radical break from the past.

Ben-Gurion is far from alone in infusing modern Jewish nationalism with the messianic idea. Rather he joins a pantheon of thinkers who saw the political and/or the religious utility of Zionism and messianism's symbiosis. In hindsight, the two forces seem uniquely suited for each other. Evoking tradition often provides a necessary sense of continuity to radical new ideas. Jewish history provided an ideal opportunity for Zionists to make political use of this fact. As Ehud Luz suggests, "[t]here was something unique to Zionism: a concrete topos, which no other utopian movement had. Zion was

[1] Arthur Hertzberg and Aron Hirt-Manheimer, *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People* (HarperCollins, 1998) p. 17.

both a symbol and reality, the Heavenly City and an actual piece of real estate."[2] When presented deftly, both messianic and national hopes could find common ground in one movement.

Yet, this was hardly a given as Zionist ideology began to take shape during the second half of the nineteenth century. For many ultra-Orthodox, the two forces of messianic redemption and Zionism were antithetical to one another. Jewish settlements in the holy land were portrayed as flouting the rabbinic proscription against actively working to advance redemption through human means. Additionally secular Jews' failure to uphold the commandments while living in Palestine was seen as an egregious violation of the holy land. While ultra-Orthodox found fault with Zionism for prophetic and symbolic reasons, national territorialists, for whom the symbolism of the holy land did not hold supreme importance, often focused on other pieces of real estate in which to establish Jewish settlements. The practical concern of creating national autonomy trumped the religious significance of Palestine. Even Theodor Herzl (b.1860), the founder of political Zionism, did not immediately contend that a Jewish homeland necessarily needed to be located in the holy land. [3] How then did the two desires for Jewish national autonomy and messianic redemption come together? What forces coalesced to create the intellectual milieu in which Ben-Gurion could appeal to messianic fulfillment even as he divorced it from metaphysical faith? How did Zionists subvert the messianic idea, as it was traditionally constituted, reinterpreting its symbolism to comport with the political realities of their national project?

[2] Ehud Luz, *Utopia and Return: On the Structure of Utopian Thinking and its Relation to Jewish-Christian Tradition* (The Journal of Religion,Vol.73, No. 3) p.370.
[3] Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (Schocken Books, 1972) p. 74.

Central to these questions stands the essential fluidity of the messianic idea. Without a consistent doctrine of the Messiah, the messianic idea can be reshaped in order to fulfill political and social ends. There is never a definitive messianic idea. Therefore, at different times and by various groups, Zionism and messianism have been presented as being in symbiotic, dialectical and oppositional relationships. All three stand as theologically legitimate interpretations. Nonetheless, by the close of the Nineteenth century, certain permutations of the messianic idea had gained greater popular credence. Understanding messianism and Zionism as either symbiotic or dialectical forces allowed Jews to embrace broader intellectual and social trends while maintaining or even strengthening their Jewish identity. The modern concepts of nationalism, socialism and liberalism could be applied to the messianic process thus subverting the normative approach to messianism.

In this context, subversion is understood as an overthrowing, upsetting or destroying of established beliefs. Zionists achieved this end by reinventing the relationship between the holy land and redemption. They subverted the normative order of traditional messianism, replacing it with a new symbolic order. As such, Zionists did not commit a transgression, a sin for which they could or conceivably might want to atone for. [4] Rather, they presented a new formulation of how to bring about redemption. What was once sinful could now be understood as virtuous. In presenting novel interpretations of the messianic idea, Zionists destabilized established understandings and the prohibitions that followed from them. They challenged the traditional rabbinate's hegemony over biblical interpretation. Normative messianism posed an impediment to

[4] Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 55.

realizing the Zionists political goals. Therefore, subverting this tradition became a prerequisite for building a coalition that could be both religious and nationalistic.

The subversion of normative messianism took on multiple forms. Zionists and the thinkers which are retrospectively referred to as proto-Zionists introduced the messianic idea into various systems of rational thought. The fluidity of the messianic idea allowed for its integration into disparate camps. Led by a common desire to give historical lineage to their utopian project, Zionist thinkers, across the ideological spectrum, drew upon messianic symbolism. Robert Wistrich writes, "Zionism, understood in this sense as a secular Messianism, aimed above all to transform the collective position of the Jews as a people in the Gentile world. Whether it looked to enlightenment liberalism, integral nationalism or constructivist socialism to help accomplish this end (within a Jewish national framework) did not change the fact that Zionism sought a reconciliation of Jewry with the nations of the world, which was thought to be possible once Jews acquired their own nation-state."[5] The nationalist reordering of Jewish life consciously echoed traditional ideas of messianism, presenting a coherent narrative culminating in a glorious ending. Zionists tapped into these deep-seated notions of return and restoration in justifying their various visions of utopia.

The synthesis of messianism with Jewish nationalism reflected Zionist's need to invoke historical symbolism. It provided biblical lineage to a novel political project. Messianism, in a subverted form, held the ability to energize both devoutly religious and avowedly secular Zionists. These two groups found common ground in their desire to subvert the messianic idea in response to shifting political realities. How and when

[5] Robert Wistrich, "In the Footsteps of the Messiah" in *"Theodor Herzl: Visionary of the Jewish State,* p.325.

redemption would occur lacked any consensus. What nonetheless emerged was a shared belief among disparate thinkers that Zionism's realization would advance the redemptive process. This argument, offered in various forms by Rabbis and socialists alike, helped to create an environment in which those who hold an internalized conception of the messianic idea coexist with those who await a metaphysical Messiah.

Their common devotion to a Jewish state trumped any differing conceptions of the messianic idea. Ultimately, certain Zionist thinkers succeeded in offering new ways of understanding the messianic idea, laying claim to the holy land as both symbol and reality. Their shared desire to subvert normative messianism grew out of a common realization of shifting political and social conditions after emancipation. Traditional modes of Jewish life had been forever altered. Zionists recognized this reality and, in turn, saw the need to alter traditional modes of thinking as well. Viewing the modern world through the prism of traditional messianism would stand as an impediment to both political and religious progress. Thus, a national vision of the Messiah became a political necessity for religious and secular Zionists alike.

Chapter 1
The Historical Development of the Messianic Idea

As radical as Zionism's subversion of the traditional messianic idea might appear at first blush, there exists a long history of such subversions. Political and historical events have always driven the messianic idea's reinterpretation. Messianism has been presented through movements, speculations and ideologies. Underlying these various incarnations is certain fluidity; what stands as the established messianic idea today could very well be displaced as a new interpretation begins to gain popular credence. Nevertheless, certain traits, derived primarily from the Book of Isaiah, have come to define messianic redemption regardless of time or place. It is commonly understood that the Messiah will descend from King David; "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots. (Isaiah 11:1)" His arrival will herald the end of the Jewish people's dispersion, their ingathering in the land of Israel and the reestablishment of Jewish political autonomy; "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:12)" The Messiah will bring peace and prosperity to the land of Israel; "He will comfort her waste places: and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. (Isaiah 51:3)" The expectation that these fundamental changes will transform Jewish life provides the cornerstone of any truly messianic movement. According to Marc Saperstein, messianic movements do not need to view such goals as imminent but must view them as essential

to the redemptive process.[6] Within this framework of messianism, there exists a clear malleability. How messianic redemption is brought about and how it responds to human initiative all remain open to various interpretations.

The defining concept that underpins messianism is the presence of the Messiah, a human manifestation of divine power. It is through God's intervention that the exile of the Jews will end and their existence will come into keeping with biblical visions of redemption. However, religious historians often point to the contradictions in understanding messianism's perceived biblical lineage. The word *Mashiah*, Messiah in Hebrew, means "the anointed one." R. J. Zwi Werblowsky holds that the broad usage of this term which in its adjectival form could describe objects as well as a range of people such as High Priests and Kings. On searching for a biblical precedent to the messianic idea, he writes, "The Old Testament does not speak of an eschatological messiah and we look in vain for even traces of messianism in many books of the Bible, including the Pentateuch."[7] Similarly biblical passages often considered overtly messianic, in fact, make no reference to an actual Messiah, only to the ingathering of exiles and universal peace. They are redemptive without being eschatological. As Saperstein puts it, "[t]hey might be considered visions of a messianic age without a Messiah."[8] A personal Messiah, descended from the house of King David, is not necessary to such visions. Therefore, they only become messianic in retrospect. How then did messianism come to be seen as fundamental to Judaism?

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[6] Marc Saperstein, *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History* (New York University Press, 1992) p. 3.

[7] R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Messianism in Jewish History" in *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*, p. 36.

[8] Saperstein, p. 3.

In understanding the rise of messianism as a religious concept, it is important to fully appreciate the lack of a consistent doctrine of the Messiah. Jacob Neusner holds that the Mishnah formulated a system of Judaism based not on messianic fulfillment but through sanctification.[9] Commandments are fulfilled not to advance the Messiah's coming. They are effective in themselves. Neusner writes, "the main thing is a simple fact, namely, that salvation comes through sanctification. The salvific figure, then, becomes an instrument of consecration and so fits into an ahistorical system quite different from one built around the Messiah."[10] Given the lack of a Messiah figure in the Mishnah, the possibilities for messianic speculation are left open. The Mishnah neither encourages nor condemns such thinking. According to the Mishnah, the Messiah is therefore hardly essential to Jewish piety or practice.

Without a clear doctrine, the messianic idea remains particularly open to development. It provides a natural repository for societal stresses. In charting messianism's development, it first found ideological strength in the national shortcomings of Israelite society. Messianism's early incarnation was "essentially a political ideal…and remained a this-world, temporal, national ideal."[11] Yet as the reigns of kings faltered, hopes were placed farther and farther into the future. In kind, such hopes became both increasingly utopian and supernatural. No longer was the vision of the future marked by restoration of the reigns of David and Solomon but by the emergence of an entirely new order which Werblowsky terms utopian messianism. Restorative

[9] Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck, *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism* (Blackwell Publishing, 2003) p. 255.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the First through the Seventeenth Century* (Peter Smith, 1978) p. 13.

messianism looked to the "restoration of the good old times in a relatively near, or at least historically accessible future…"[12] and utopian messianism sought "something that was completely and fundamentally new." [13] In Werblowsky's analysis, restorative messianism presented the end of Jewish exile and the renewal of political sovereignty as coming about within history whereas utopian messianism presented redemption as a force outside of history.

Despite this fundamental difference between restorative and utopian messianism, Werblowsky locates both visions of messianic fulfillment as revolutionary to the understanding of time. Events lead to a final end and, in turn, time ceases to be repetitive. This development of eschatology in messianic thought held a strong existential appeal. By tapping into the basic human desire to see meaning in life, messianism's eschaton gave profound significance to history. Moshe Idel writes, "As Frank Kermode [the Shakespeare scholar and literary critic] would say, the Messiah, as all people do, attempts to understand, 'and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords, with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and to poems.'...It [messianism] is essentially part of the ongoing human search for meaning, for purpose, for security, whose validity as explanations transcends the tides of history." [14] Previous understandings of history were marked only by endless repetition. Now, with messianism's engagement with history, there emerges a meaningful end and, thus, greater hope for the future. There is a common dynamism to both restorative and utopian messianism as history either works in concert with or in opposition to the expected end. Werblowsky writes that, "[b]ut whether

[12] Werblowsky, p. 37.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (Yale University Press, 1998) p. 9.

in history or outside it, fully developed messianism represents a decisive transformation of the notion of time…there is a directedness in the time process and a peculiar tension which is expected to find its discharge in the decisive consummating event."[15] Whereas in the Mishnah, redemption is ahistorical; in messianic understandings of redemption, history and eschatology play an ever-present role.

Gerhsom Scholem takes Werblowsky's line of thinking even further. For him, utopian and restorative messianism not only share a temporal notion but also exist dialectically with one another. They function as one process. Scholem writes, "Both tendencies [restorative and utopian] are deeply intertwined and yet at the same time of a contradictory nature; the Messianic idea crystallizes only out of the two of them together." [16] By engaging historical processes, the messianic idea creates a tension between this world and either the restored past or the utopian future. Thus, in both Scholem and Werblowsky's view the tension between the present and redemptive expectations stand as an inherent part of messianism. As Scholem sees it, this tension is doubled between this world and both the past and the future. These two contradictory messianic visions exist dialectically. There is no absolute division between a vision of redemption that occurs inside or outside of history. The two are locked in a dialectal interplay. Regardless of Scholem and Werblowsky's differences, their works find common ground in pointing to the profound tensions that arise when redemption is understood as being historical.

As messianism's utopian elements became more pronounced, its tensions were often seen as manifested in religious transgression accompanied by physical suffering.

[15] Werblowsky, p.37.
[16] Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (Schocken Books, 1995) p. 3.

These "birth pangs" were understood as presaging the messianic age. This idea gained societal influence as times of suffering were frequently viewed as part of the messianic process. Werblowsky writes that "this was not merely wishful thinking…but an application to concrete historical situations of one of the traditional dialectal patterns of messianic belief."[17] By engaging contemporary events, the messianic idea gave added meaning to its vision of redemption. This belief in history's trajectory, even if it ultimately culminates in an overcoming of history itself, is central to messianism. It places historical events, be they "birth pangs" or the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, within the framework of spiritual redemption. Scholem argues that destructive "birth pangs" play an important role in messianic redemption, signifying "the dissolution of old ties which lose their meaning in the new context of Messianic freedom."[18] Certainly it is possible to see a utopian redemption unfolding naturally without catastrophic "birth pangs." Yet, it is nonetheless important to note this developing strain of the messianic idea. Utopian messianism marked by catastrophe offered temporal and historical signs of redemption that found particular relevance during times of suffering. Thus, political and social stresses were often understood as harbingers of the coming messianic age.

Messianism's emphasis on catastrophe reached its height with apocalyptic visions of redemption. Beginning during the Second Century B.C. E., the classical period of Jewish apocalyptic literature promoted the belief that prophecy would be renewed during the messianic age. The word *apocalypse* means "revelation, unveiling" and "[t]he major purpose of apocalyptic writings is to reveal mysteries beyond the bounds of normal knowledge: the secrets of the heavens and the world order, the names and functions of the

[17] Werblowsky, p.39.
[18] Scholem, p. 19.

angels, the explanation of natural phenomena, and the secrets of creation, the end of days, and other eschatological matters, and even the nature of God himself."[19] In explaining these matters, apocalypticism presents a stark divide between the wickedness of "this world" and the righteousness of "the world to come." Marking this division is a catastrophic period of oppression, disaster and war. It is only with the destruction of "this world" that redemption will occur. The Book of Daniel is an early example of apocalyptic literature's intertwining of catastrophe and eschatology; "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same people: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. (Daniel 12:1)" Noticeably missing from this vision of the end is a Messiah; rather God works directly through the angel Michael.

By presenting the destruction of "this world" as a prerequisite for redemption, apocalypticism departs from both restorative and utopian messianism's reliance on events that occur within a continuous historical reality. "This world's" laws of nature no longer apply. Therefore, apocalyptic visions are free to invoke superhuman figures, such as the angel Michael or even a superhuman Messiah. Accompanying this rejection of a personal Messiah is the absence of a malleable historical trajectory. There is nothing individuals can do to alter redemption's course. Joseph Dan describes the vast apocalyptic literature which developed during the middle ages; "In these works the future is described as an inevitable end of the world as known and the beginning of a new one. In none of these works is there any explanation as to why anything is going to happen, or what a Jew

[19] David Flusser, "Apocalypse" in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Macmillan Reference USA, 2006) p. 257.

should do in order to help in the great task of bringing about the redemption."[20] Hence, apocalypticism lacks the ability to provide existential meaning or purpose in the same way traditional messianism can. It fails to offer hope that individuals can advance redemption through personal piety or repentance.

Whether or not apocalyptic elements are infused into the messianic idea is often determined by the political needs of a given movement. For instance, Maimonides (b.1135), the rabbi, philosopher and physician, interpreted the Messianic age as bringing an end to gentile rule over the Jews. His vision of redemption held little place for the supernatural or apocalyptic. For Maimonides, deliverance was, in large part, political. He, therefore, stressed the role of the individual and their active intellect in affecting the redemptive process. Louis Jacobs writes, "[a]mong the theological movements in the middle ages the ideas of apocalyptical eschatology clashed with the ideas of personal eschatology, the personal reward that a devout person will receive upon his death in the next world. Evidently, when emphasis was put upon personal redemption in the Garden of Eden the descriptions of national deliverance upon the coming of the Messiah tended to be somewhat blunted."[21] Maimonides came down clearly on the side of personal eschatology. In turn, he downplayed apocalypticism since doing so was advantageous to promoting the role of the individual's intellect and personal knowledge of God in advancing the redemptive process.

[20] Joseph Dan, "Messiah" in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Macmillan Reference USA, 2006) p. 113.

[21] Louis Jacobs, "Messianism" in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Macmillan Reference USA, 2006) p. 114.

Parallel to the tensions between restorative and utopian messianism stand those between active and passive messianism. Though neither vision of redemption demands activism or passivity, their respective histories show certain proclivities. Restorative messianism tends towards activism while utopian messianism tends to advocate passivity. Aviezer Ravitzky writes, "[i]n a seemingly paradoxical way, it is precisely the moderate image of redemption that, seizing upon a suitable personality or circumstance, is most likely to provoke a tempest of messianic fervor. In contrast, it is the miraculous, supernatural, utopian vision of redemption that, in many cases, succeeds in blocking the way, preserving and defending the status quo."[22] This is, of course, not a steadfast rule and many exceptions do exist. Trends towards either active or passive messianism also fluctuate in relationship to Jewish political fortunes. Periods of messianic activism and zeal are often followed by a revived faith in passivity. The return of either passive or active messianism as the "dominant outlook"[23] stands as a response to recent historical developments.

One of the earliest events in engendering renewed passivity towards the messianic idea was the Bar-Kokhba rebellion (132-135 C.E). Led by Simon bar Kokhba, the Bar-Kokhba revolt succeeded in wresting control of Jerusalem from Roman rule. This military victory was seen as heralding redemption and its heroic leader became a messianic figure. Yet the gains of the Bar-Kokhba revolt were short lived. In 135 C.E., the Roman army crushed the newfound Jewish authority, killing or forcing into exile most of Jerusalem's Jewish population. Bar Kokhba quickly came to be seen as a false

[22] Ravitzky, p. 21.
[23] Jody Elizabeth Myers, *Seeking Zion: Modernity and Messianic Activism in the Writings Tsevi Hirsch Kalischer* (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003) p. 5.

Messiah. Until this point, messianism as a restorative, national ideal was frequently bolstered by the belief that redemption could be hastened via military and political actions. However, the Bar-Kokhba rebellion's failure ushered in a greater opposition to active rebellion termed "mounting the ramparts."

The belief that only divine intervention could end the exile of the Jews became increasingly accepted. New messianic visions that placed redemption outside of human history gained popularity. As such, the Messiah's arrival would not be advanced through temporal military actions or political movements. Jews should hasten the end through studying Torah and strictly observing the commandments. Whereas many prominent Rabbis before the Bar Kokhba rebellion saw redemption as imminent, in its aftermath they "sought to project the messianic hope to a more distant future, thereby discouraging, if possible, a recrudescence of such intense hopes in the immediacy of the Messiah's advent."[24] Passive messianism dovetailed well with a vision of redemption outside of history that served to place the messiah's coming well into the future. Jody Elizabeth Myers writes "[C]onsistent with the passive messianist's emphasis on God's omnipotence and human passivity is their insistence that the Exile will end supernaturally through God's sudden abrogation of historical laws; apocalypticism flows logically from the doctrine of human powerlessness."[25] Thus, many rabbinic authorities turned towards passive messianism in order to dampen popular zeal for bringing about redemption through Bar-Kokhba like activism.

In forming their Talmudic opposition to messianic activism, advocates of passive messianism looked to the three oaths from The Song of Songs 2:7, "I charge you, O ye

[24] Silver, p. 15.
[25] Myers, p. 5.

daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes of the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." God imposed exile from the land of Israel and it is only through divine decree that it will be brought to an end. Hence, the human role in advancing the messianic age is, at best, miniscule in comparison to God's omnipotence. If anything at all can be done to hasten the messiah's coming, it is only through living in accordance with Jewish law and even this is a debatable point among passive messianists. For many, redemption holds absolutely no relationship to human behavior. What, nonetheless, unites passive messianists is a clear opposition to directed attempts at bringing about redemption which they term "forcing the End." Military conquest of Palestine, mass immigration to the holy land and overemphasizing the end of exile in prayer, all constitute "forcing the End."

Active messianists took another approach to redemption, though not a "diametrically opposed"[26] one as the two ideologies "share similar assumptions."[27] For active messianists, God controls history yet he does so in accordance with natural laws and rational thought. There is greater room for human initiative within this framework. The messianic process is distinctly interactive. It demands that "[w]hen Jews perceive the finger of God in history, they are to take concrete actions to hasten the messianic age."[28] Active messianists hold the hope that pre-exilic life can be restored gradually. Just as passive messianists find their historical basis in the Bar Kokhba rebellion's failure, active messianists point to the successful and natural restoration of Jewish life after the Babylonian exile. Each ideology bolsters its own approach through historical examples.

[26] Myers, p. 5.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

Active messianists also hold God's role as central to the messianic process. They are neither impatient nor faithless. For them, God is a partner who responds positively to their rational actions. Myers writes, "[t]hey believe that God will assist and enhance their initiatives; thus, the Redemption will evolve in a gradual and natural manner over an extended period. The emphasis on human initiative precludes apocalypticism."[29] Given active messianist's greater emphasis on natural processes and redemption's evolution within history, it comes as no surprise that they tend to eschew apocalyptic visions and catastrophic "birth pangs." Such notions do not comport with the idea of natural progress. Myers theorizes that active messianism arises when the religious tension between passivity and exilic life become too great to bear. The contradiction between seeing the land of Israel as the Jew's natural home while also embracing their exile from it cannot always be sustained. Often such moments occur during times of political change in Palestine. Jews took these conditions as a sign from God, a divine invitation to advance the messianic age. Whereas passive messianism provides stability, it has frequently been supplanted by active messianism and the desire to see tangible progress towards redemption.

The clearest sign of redemption's imminent arrival is the emergence of the Messiah himself. Sabbatai Sevi (b.1626) and the movement he inspired provides a pivotal example of a sweeping messianic outburst in Jewish history. With his claim of being the Messiah, Sabbatai Sevi was able to generate a devoted following of Jews around the world. They excitedly awaited redemption, which he predicted would occur in 1666.

[29] Ibid.

When this vision failed to come to fruition, the date was artfully shifted forward.[30] In Gershom Scholem's examination of the Sabbatian movement, religious tensions play a central role in creating messianic fervor. Passivity and activism, transformation and restoration, utopia and catastrophe, all crystallize as dialectal relationships in Scholem's eyes. Without a clear doctrine of messianism, these tensions between popular messianic expectations and traditional rabbinic law had been free to simmer. Their discharge came about when Sabbatian movement brought the messianic age into the present, in turn, challenging rabbinic authority. Scholem writes, "[t]here seems to be an intrinsic connection between active messianism and the courage for religious innovation. Messianic movements would often produce individuals with sufficient charismatic authority to challenge the established authority of rabbinic Judaism."[31] Hence, active messianism holds the capacity to sharpen the tensions between the established religious order and popular hopes for the future. Yet with the failure of a messianic movement, such as the one Sabbatai Svi engendered, the dominant outlook tends to swing back to messianic passivity and a renewed respect for rabbinic Judaism.

Messianism has continually alternated between periods of passivity and activism. In the aftermath of the Sabbatian movement, the development of Hassidism can be seen as stabilized messianic activism within traditional Judaism by stressing inwardness, rather than apocolypicism.[32] However, messianic movements hardly ceased to exist. Werblowsky theorizes that active messianism found a new manifestation in European

[30] W. D. Davies, "Reflections on Sabbatai Svi" in *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalitites in Jewish History,* p.336.
[31] Gershom Scholem, "Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah" in *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History,* p. 297.

[32] Werblowsky, p.50.

Jewry's political activism for liberal reforms and civil emancipation. He describes such movements as having "certain messianic overtones or, at least, consciously making use of traditional messianic terminology."[33] Socialists also made symbolic use of the messianic idea. Like traditional messianists, socialists understood their actions as bringing about both a reordering of the world in which peace and prosperity would flourish. W.B. Rideout, as quoted by David Shuldiner, illustrates the possible substitutions of secular ideas that could be made to Judaism, "Thus, dialectal materialism, that inevitable and all-powerful process, took the place of God; the International declared the unity of the human race; and the Proletarian Revolution was the true Messiah that would restore an ideal kingdom on the earth and bring world peace."[34] Both socialism and messianism delineate paths to societal perfection. This common feature made socialist's use of the messianic idea a meaningful trope. Like traditional messianism, the secularized messianism of socialists offered new hope particularly in times of despair such as in the aftermath of World War I.[35]

Throughout its history, the messianic idea has clearly been reshaped in accordance with social and political needs. It has been presented as either restorative or utopian, demanding passivity or activism, a religious or a secular idea. In many ways, Zionism's subversion of the messianic idea echoes this history of continual reinterpretation. Various Zionists and proto-Zionists inhabited these disparate permutations of messianism. As such, it is impossible to speak of a single Zionist

[33] Ibid.
[34] David Philip Shuldiner, *Of Moses and Marx: Folk Ideology and Folk history in the Jewish Labor Movement* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999) p. 37.
[35] Richard Wolin, "Reflections on Jewish Secular Messianism" in *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era* (Oxford University Press, 1991) p. 193.

conception of the messianic idea. In advancing their political project, Zionists made appeals to messianism in its many forms. Often the common desire for a homeland trumped differing conceptions of the messianic idea. Nationalism demanded cooperation and concessions. Nevertheless, in reading the works of those thinkers who shaped Zionist ideology, very different and frequently opposing ideas of messianism emerge. The long history of the messianic idea evidences its fluid nature and provides precedents for such divergent interpretations. It is an idea that has endured, in part, because of its fluid nature. What united these various Zionist thinkers was a common nationalist desire to return to the holy land and bring about redemption. Subverting the normative approach to messianism, thus, became a necessity. What form redemption would take and how it would be brought about remained a matter of disagreement.

Chapter 2
Religious Zionism: Redemption through Human Progress

Arthur Hertzberg describes Zionism as "the heir of the messianic impulse and emotion of the Jewish tradition, but it is much more than that; it is the most radical attempt in Jewish history to break out of the parochial molds of Jewish life in order to become part of general history of man in the modern world."[36] Are Jewish tradition and modern nationalism reconcilable under the shared banner of Zionism? Can the differing symbolism each narrative ascribes to history coexist with the other? As political Zionism first emerged, the answer to these questions from the traditional Jewish leadership was a resounding no.

Dissenters, however, did exist. Rabbis Yehudah Alkalai (b.1798) and Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (b.1795), presented redemption as a gradual process in which human initiative could pave the way for messianic fulfillment. Their ideas provided a model from which religious Zionists, such as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (b. 1865), later drew upon in attributing messianic significance to secular Zionists' settlements in Palestine. Thus, Alkalai, Kalischer and Kook, all represent the impulse to square the messianic process with modern political and philosophical forces. Modern nationalism and messianism could exist not in opposition to one another but in symbiosis or dialectic. Despite this shared underpinning, the form of Alkalai and Kalischer's messianism versus that of Kook's differed greatly. The differing political realities, which they experienced, shaped

[36] Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Atheneum, 1981), p. 20.

their varying interpretations of redemption. In short, Kook's work stands as a theological reckoning with a political, albeit secularized, reality that Alkalai and Kalischer could only have imagined: rapidly growing Jewish immigration and settlement in the holy land. Zionism as a political movement and ideology had taken shape. Kook offered a theological interpretation, keeping the messianic process moving apace with political developments.

Rabbis Alkalai and Kalischer were both born into multiethnic milieus in which the concepts of national sovereignty and restoration were quickly redefining the political landscape. Alkalai was born in Sarajevo and served as a rabbi in Semlin, Serbia. There, he witnessed the impact of nationalism as the Greeks successfully gained their independence from the Ottoman Empire. A similar desire to create national identities and homelands was emerging throughout the Balkans. Like Alkalai, Kalischer also came of age in a multiethnic borderland, Posen. This area, which was until 1793 western Poland, was then struggling to re-establish its independence from Prussian rule. For Alkalai and Kalischer, emerging nationalist sentiments were a reality of the place and time in which they existed. Nevertheless, this new political reality was one in which the Jewish community was decidedly peripheral. How Jews would now be identified, politically, culturally and linguistically, was unclear.

Alkalai and Kalischer's birthplaces were not only borderlands for the non-Jewish world but between Jewish communities as well. For Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jewry, Alkalai's Sarajevo was a meeting place for the two communities. Similarly Kalischer's Posen demarked the line between the emancipated Jews of the German lands and the unemancipated Jews of what was until recently the Polish Commonwealth. National

differences between non-Jewish communities compounded by political and cultural differences between Jewish communities made identity an ever-present issue. Hence, the increasing impact of nationalism, in both Poland and the Balkans, heightened pressure on the Jewish communities to redefine themselves in kind. Shlomo Avineri describes the situation as such, "[t]he delicate and complex balance Jewish society and its surroundings would begin to disintegrate and even the traditionalists in the Jewish society begin to look for new solutions."[37]

In creating what would only later be viewed as proto-Zionism, Alkalai and Kalischer called for a Jewish return to the land of Israel. Central to this national project was an understanding of the messianic idea that also encompassed the modern notion of historical progress. In *Seeking Zion: A Natural Beginning of the Redemption* (1862), Kalischer writes, "The bliss and the miracles that were promised by His servants, the prophets, will certainly come to pass – everything will be fulfilled – but we will not run in terror and flight, for the redemption of Israel will come by slow degrees and the ray of deliverance will shine forth gradually."[38] Redemption is presented as advancing through human progress, rather than arriving as divine perfection. In making this assertion, Kalischer poses a challenge to messianic theories of catastrophic rupture. Gershom Scholem argues that, "Jewish Messianism is in its origins and by its nature – this cannot be sufficiently emphasized – a theory of catastrophe. This theory stresses the revolutionary, cataclysmic element in the transition from every historical present to the

[37] Shlomo Avineri. *The Making of Modern Zionism* (Basic Books, 1981) p. 49.
[38] Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, "Seeking Zion" in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Atheneum, 1981), p. 111.

Messianic future."[39] Though Scholem overstates the inherently catastrophic nature of messianism, he, nonetheless, does point to a strong messianic tradition to which Kalischer stands in stark contrast. His conception of rational progress towards redemption, devoid of terror and flight, is opposed to revolutionary redemption marked by catastrophe or rupture.

Intertwined with Kalischer's break from passive messianism is a shifting relationship between theology and politics. Frequently active messianism calls for an increased reliance on human activity in shaping the messianic future. It breaches the divide, erected by passive messianism, "between concrete historical reality and high hopes for the future."[40] The implications of this are profound. Active messianism's evolutionary theory of redemption allows for political participation and activism in advancing redemption. However, by the same token, it can also open the door for extreme forms of messianic fervor. According to Ravitzky, the moderate vision of gradual redemption is paradoxically more likely than the supernatural, utopian vision of redemption to bring about messianic fervor. [41] Thus, Kalischer's pragmatic impulse to recast messianism in accordance with the Enlightenment conception of history's progress can also be credited with giving rise to messianic zealotry. The repressed notion of catastrophic rupture can ironically return via what was intended as a theological attempt to establish stability between Jewish and non-Jewish society.

Kalischer's active messianism found practical application in his letter to Amschel Mayer Rothschild written in 1836. In it, he appealed to Rothschild, a wealthy Jewish

[39] Scholem, p.7.
[40] Ravitzky, p. 21.
[41] Ibid.

banker from Frankfurt, to purchase Palestine in order to hasten redemption. Yet before making this request, he presents a coherent narrative of redemption that allowed for various forms of messianism's coexistence. Kalischer creates a vision of redemption that begins with rational human actions but that ultimately give way to non-rational divine intervention. Myers writes, "Kalischer's two-stage theory thus included the disparate elements transmitted from the past- naturalistic and supernaturalist, sudden and gradual, anticipated and suppressed – without appearing too extreme." [42] The dialectical nature of Kalischer's argument suggests a present defined by moderation and unity. Revolution and rupture exist only in the very distant second stage. However, in keeping with the aforementioned paradox that Ravitsky points out, such a rational approach could possibly lead to an extreme messianic fervor. It has the potential to destablalize and divide just as it has the power to strengthen and unite Jewish society.

Rothschild stands as a key actor in Kalischer's two-stage theory of redemption. Kalischer's political hopes for Rothschild presage his messianic hopes. Kalischer gives the impression that redemption is far from imminent, many steps must be made and much work must first be done. Yet, Kalischer does see new possibilities in Rothschild's influence and, in turn, the sweeping devotion he is able command. For him, Rothschild's power and influence are part of a divine plan that will eventually fulfill prophecy. Universal worldly influence can begin the process of messianic redemption. In a poem describing Rothschild, Kalischer intertwines the symbolism of familial prestige with the prophecies of Isaiah. "Surely he is from the stock of Jesse, A sprout from Judah bearing fruit. The shield of his banner reddens; His breastplate is righteousness and a helmet of

[42] Myers, p. 67.

salvation lies upon his head."[43] As such, modern political power, symbolized by his shield and breastplate, and messianic potential, denoted by Davidic lineage, form a unique symbiosis.

The vision of redemption, which Kalischer hoped to sell Rothschild on, is not defined by historical ruptures in the foreseeable future. This theological understanding of evolutionary steps is bolstered by pragmatic concerns. It stands in Kalischer's best interest to present a land in which life is increasingly improving not one that experiences birth pangs of the Messiah. After all, he is courting an investor whom he assumes appreciates a stable and continually profitable business. Kalischer again sees an evolving symbiosis. By beginning the process of redemption, a lucrative tourism industry could likely emerge. Kalischer contends, "For without a doubt there will be many rich pious Jews from all over who will travel there for an honored burial in holy soil…And just as a flock increases under a person's guidance, without a doubt his wealth will quadruple- as will his righteousness without measure."[44] Economic and messianic progress are weaved into a single narrative that holds little place for traditional ideas of passivity or rupture.

Another novel idea, that serves to fuse pragmatic nationalism with active messianism, was the suggestion of Hebrew as a national language. Alkalai viewed the holy language as a necessary step in preparation for messianic fulfillment. For him, exile and the disparate tongues that it encouraged were not to be passively accepted. Jews' active ingathering should be marked by linguistic unity. Thus like any modern nationalist project, education would play an integral role. Alkalai writes, "If the prophet foretold that the sons and daughters of the era of the Redemption will prophesy in a common language

[43] Myers, p.60.
[44] Myers, p.72.

which they would know and be able to use, we must not despair. We must redouble our efforts to maintain Hebrew and to strengthen its position. It must be the basis of our educational work."[45] Alkalai places his messianic hopes in the ability of education policy to shape the present and, in turn, hasten redemption.

In suggesting that Hebrew be adopted as the universal spoken language of the Jewish people, rather than just the rabbinate, Alkalai redefines its symbolic potential. The holy language will, of course, be spoken during the Messiah's arrival but until then it must also be a national, temporal language. Modern organizational bodies, based "on the mode of the fire insurance companies and of the railroad companies"[46] will conduct their business in Hebrew. As such, Hebrew is made to encompass modern rationalism as well as ancient messianic hope. Alkalai does not acknowledge the extremes that merging these two symbolic narratives could create. The possibility that either Hebrew could become secularized or that its everyday use could feed a messianic fervor that would destabilize Jewish society goes unexamined.

For Alkalai and Kalischer, settlement in the holy land existed only on a very small scale. Their ideas gained fame and were deemed precursors after the later political success of secular Zionists. As they saw it, active messianism could provide a stable theological and political present from which Jews could chart their own destiny. Modern

[45] Yehudah Alkalai "The Third Redemption"in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Atheneum, 1981), p. 106.

[46] Alkalai, p.107.

nationalism, economics and education all served to advance this evolution. The two narratives of rational progress through history and messianic redemption were presented as one cohesive whole. However, like any ideal when translated into reality, complications emerged. Alkalai and Kalischer's belief in humans' tendencies towards moderation can only be described as utopian. They envisioned neither secular Jewish settlers nor the immediacy of the messianic expectations that would greet them. If the cohesive narrative of modern nationalism and messianism's symbiosis can withstand the extremes, which they each produce, remained unanswered. As Scholem wondered, "Can Jewish history manage to re-enter concrete reality without being destroyed by the messianic claim which [that reentry is bound to] bring up from its depths?"[47]

Whereas Alkalai and Kalischer only lived to see the very beginnings of modern Jewish settlements in Palestine, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, who was born in 1865, experienced their growth firsthand. He offered a messianic interpretation of the flourishing Jewish community, seeing the progress of redemptive forces even in vehemently secular settlements. As such, he subverted not only the narrative of traditional messianism but the secular Zionist narrative as well. Kook upset the settler's own notion that their work was purely secular. Like Alkalai and Kalischer, Kook used rationalism and an evolutionary understanding of history to bolstering his religious claims. However unlike his predecessors, he saw messianic fulfillment as imminent. Kook's immediate goal was not to forge a lasting national identity and stability but to bring about redemption in the very near future.

[47] Ravitzky, p. 3.

Kook's religious fervor always stood as his defining character trait. Since his early days as a student in a Latvian yeshiva, Kook's zeal for imminent redemption was palpable. Hertzberg writes, "he loved to speak Hebrew, then usually a sign of at least incipient heresy, but there was no evident change in his rapturous piety." [48] His tendency towards rejecting traditional prohibitions out of an overwhelming sense of religious zeal was already well developed. Unmoved by the three oaths against "forcing the End," Kook was eager to reconcile his traditional piety with messianic activism. Modern nationalism offered a means to a divine end. For Kook, Zionism was a new opportunity to see messianic fulfillment. Seizing upon the historical moment, he accepted the position of Chief Rabbi of Jaffa in 1904 and later became the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine under the British Mandate.

Kook saw Jewish settlements in Palestine solely as a transformative force in bringing about Messianic redemption. He lacked Alkalai and Kalischer's genuine interest in the pragmatic benefits of settlements. Economic, political and national stability as shaped by human affairs were obviated by the divine nature of a Jewish state in the Holy Land. Kook describes his vision of a messianic utopia. "An ideal state, one that has the highest of all ideals engraved in its being…the most sublime happiness of the individual…this shall be our state, the state of Israel, *the pedestal of God's throne in this world*, for its only aim shall be that the Lord be acknowledged as one and His name one, which is truly the highest happiness." [49] How then can Kook reconcile this vision of a divine state with the political goals of the secular Zionists who surrounded him? In creating a cohesive narrative for understanding secular Zionism and traditional

[48] Hertzberg, p. 417.
[49] Ravitzky, p. 5.

Orthodoxy, Kook draws on the concept of evolution, thus, illustrating his intellectual debt to Alkalai and Kalischer.

For Kook, both individuals and communities advance through evolutionary stages. In *The Lights of Penitence* (1925), Kook emphasizes the dual roles religious transgression and penitence play in fulfilling commandments. Stages of sin are followed by stages of repentance that ultimately culminate in its highest form, penitence according to reason. Kook writes, "Penitence according to reason comes after penitence according to nature and religious faith have already taken place…This phase of penitence, in which the previous are included, abounds in endless delight. It transforms all the past sins into spiritual assets. From every error it derives noble lessons, and from every lowly fall it derives the inspiration for the climb to splendid heights."[50] In order to repent, sins must first be committed. Kook presents a schema in which periods of transgression are necessary in order to fulfill commandments and bring about redemption. These prerequisite stages are not negated in the final phase of penitence, but included in it. As such, they are indispensable to the redemptive process. Kook's understanding of penitence provides a theological justification for his support of secular Zionists. Their sins represent the stage that precedes penitence and, in turn, redemption.

Unlike Alkalai and Kalischer, the messianic evolution, that Kook believed he was witnessing, was marked by a sense of the Messiah's imminent arrival. Redemption evolves, but not gradually. Every development becomes a sign of redemption. There are no divisions between naturalism and supernaturalism, rationalism and mysticism. Thus,

[50] Abraham Isaac Kook and Ben Zion Bokser, *Abraham Isaac Kook: The Lights of Penitence, Lights of Holiness, The Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters and Poems* (Paulist Press, 1978) p.44.

Kook's theological subversions were purposefully lacking in safeguards against religious fervor and extremism. If anything, he aimed to foster such sentiments. Whereas Alkalai and Kalischer hoped in the first stage to create a Jewish identity akin to other nation's, Kook stresses Jewish "chosenness" over universality. The divine uniqueness of the Jewish people is what unites them despite any theological or political divisions that might appear. Kook argues, "We are one people, one as the oneness of the universe. This is the enormous spiritual potential of our innate character, and the various processes of our historical road, the road of light that passes between the mountains of darkness and perdition, are leading us to realize the hidden essence of our nature. All the mundane sine-qua-nons of national identity are transmuted by the all-inclusiveness of the sprit of Israel."[51] Historical forces, such as Zionism, are driven by a divine order. It is therefore incumbent on religious Jews to recognize that secular Zionists are a part of messianic evolution.

Intertwined with Kook's belief that secular Zionism advances the Messiah's arrival is also a denial of Zionism as a universalizing force. For him, Jewish settlements in the holy land are inherently divine. Zionism is, thus, unlike other nationalist projects of the Nineteenth century. On the impossibility of secular Zionism, Kook writes, "If a Jewish secular nationalism were really imaginable, then we would, indeed be in danger of falling so low as to be beyond redemption. But Jewish nationalism is a form of self-delusion: the spirit of Israel is so closely linked to the spirit of God that a Jewish nationalist, no matter how secularist his intention may be, must despite himself, affirm

[51] Abraham Isaac Kook, "Lights for Rebirth" in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Atheneum, 1981), p. 427.

the divine."[52] Despite their best efforts, secular Zionists cannot divorce the redemptive process from either Jewish history or the holy land itself. Kook sees the innate spirit and unity of the Jewish people as militating against such divisions. A secular Jewish identity based upon "land, language, history and customs" is impossible since, for Kook, all are inescapably "vessels of the spirit of the Lord."[53] Kook argues that Zionism will not allow Jews to enter into the general history of the modern world. Rather, returning to the holy land strengthens Jews' distinctiveness from other nations. Jewish nationalism, in any form, is always an affirmation of the divine. By presenting Zionists' secular identities as obscuring their deeper truth, Kook is able to affirm the efforts of Zionists while denying their concordant identities.

Similar to Kalischer's presentation of Rothschild as a central actor in advancing the messianic age, Kook pointed to Theodor Herzl. The difference, of course, was that Kook did not need to convince Herzl of anything. Rather his goal was far more complicated; Kook needed to place Herzl and secular Zionism within the traditional narrative of messianic fulfillment. He sought to unite Jews, not simply under nationalism for temporal purposes, but as a means to actively achieving redemption. Kook draws a parallel between Herzl and Messiah ben Joseph, whom according to apocalyptic literature, brings about national unity in the temporal sense, presaging the arrival of Messiah ben David and divine unity. In his eulogy to Herzl, Kook declares, "Now, in our time, like the footsteps of Messiah ben Joseph, comes the Zionist vision, which leans entirely toward the material side of things. Because its preparation is lacking, the forces

[52] Kook, "Lights for Rebirth", p. 430.
[53] Kook, "Lights for Rebirth", p. 430.

are not united…until the leader fell victim to the reign of evil and sorrow. This man, whom we may consider to have been the harbinger of Messiah ben Joseph, in terms of his role in achieving the great aim of national rebirth in the general, material sense."[54] Here Kook's understanding of Zionism holds a clear place for "birth pangs of the Messiah." Redemption is not a painless process. Hence, Kook's interpretation of redemption evokes both progress and catastrophe in a dialectical relationship.

Whereas Alkalai and Kalischer had no political need to see messianic fulfillment evolving with birth pangs, Kook did. He faced a political reality and an emerging secular identity that would have been deeply unsettling to most traditional rabbis of his time. Conceptualizing it within Jewish tradition stood as a challenge. In order to affirm his belief in progress and his messianic fervor, Kook needed to offer a way of understanding secular settlers in the Holy Land. Evoking birth pangs of the Messiah and Messiah ben Joseph helped to explain to religious Jews the role secular Zionists played in hastening redemption. Like Herzl, they achieve national rebirth, but only in the material sense. For Alkalai and Kalischer, material success on the national level and messianic redemption worked in symbiosis, but for Kook such an equation would not work. It did not reflect the political reality that he saw. Rather he presented the relationship between a Jewish state's empirical reality and messianic fulfillment as dialectical. Ravitsky defines Kook's shift in thinking as "a movement from the one concept of progress to the other, from the 'innocent' view that rules out destructive backtracking to the dialectical view that sees revolution as an integral part of the constructive march of events."[55] This theological change did not occur in a vacuum. It occurred with Kook's emigration to Palestine and

[54] Ravitzky, p. 99.
[55] Ravitzky, p. 105.

his observation of Zionist settlers. For him, the element of traditional messianism which warned of destruction was more apropos to Zionism's current reality than a purely utopian vision of progress.

Kook's theological interpretation of Zionism was certainly driven in part by fears of marginalization. Alkalai and Kalischer responded to a similar threat. They understood that Jews' position in society was quickly changing due to Eastern Europe's incipient national movements. How modern nationalist forces would affect Jewish life was uncertain. In response, they hoped to harness political forces in creating a Jewish identity. Kook saw the flip side of this fear of marginalization from modern nationalism. Jews had so imbibed the universalizing idea of nationalism that it now seemed possible, at least in Palestine, that religious Jews could become peripheral to secular Zionists and the power of their political will. In creating a divinely endowed identity, Kook calls upon the Orthodox to keep their faith strong in preparation for the secularists' coming change in consciousness. Kook writes, "What they [religious Jews] must do is to work all the harder at the task of uncovering the light and holiness implicit in our national spirit, the divine elements which are its core. The secularists will thus be constrained, to realize that they are immersed and rooted in the life of God and bathed in the radiant sanctity that comes from above."[56] Not only does Kook provide a place for Zionists in the redemptive order, but he also provides a place for religious Jews in the project of Jewish nationalism. Religious Jews living amongst non-believers, whose consciousness lags behind their divine labors, can now adopt the identity of religious educator.

[56] Kook, "Lights for Rebirth", p. 430.

Yet Kook's educational program is certainly not like the one Alkalai proposed for reviving Hebrew as an everyday language. Kook is suggesting a short-lived project that will yield messianic results marked by a quick transformation from above. He is deeply wary of the idea of a stable Jewish state and the sinfulness inherent to any political order. Kook writes, "It is not fitting for Jacob [that is, the people of Israel] to engage in political life at a time when statehood requires bloody ruthlessness and demands a talent for evil." [57] Whereas Alkalai and Kalischer were comfortable embracing notions of a Jewish state's longevity, Kook is not. He is keenly aware of the moral compromises which sustaining statehood inevitably entails. Politics, as the art of the possible, will only defile Jewish nationalism. Kook calls for religious Jews to remain outside of the political mainstream, thereby, continuing to bear witness free from the demand for pragmatic compromise. Entering into political life with the goal of creating a lasting and truly stable Jewish state will not advance the Messiah's arrival. For Kook, redemption is the only true goal of Jewish statehood. It is not to create a nation like any other but one that is wholly unique as it is endowed with the divine.

Alkalai, Kalischer and Kook's challenge to tradition lay in their desire to see that modern politics and messianic redemption can be synthesized. The two narratives of historical progress can together create a powerful unity. To accomplish this, however, the normative approach to the messianic idea must be actively subverted. A vision of redemption that reacts to the reality of post-emancipation life must be created. This common recognition buttressed the thinking of Alkalai, Kalischer and Kook. What separated them was the form, either symbiotic or dialectic, that the relationship between

[57] Avineri, p. 197.

messianism and modern nationalism. The differences in their historical experiences undoubtedly shaped this theological difference. Alkalai and Kalischer lived in a time before Zionism's existence. Kook did not. Ultimately, what Alkalai, Kalischer and Kook illustrate is a profound ability to subvert the traditional messianic idea, bringing it into keeping with the forces of modern nationalism.

Chapter 3
Socialist Proto-Zionism and Herzlian Zionism:

Universal Redemption Through National Restoration

During the 1860s, Alkalai and Kalischer were not alone in proposing a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. A few months after Kalischer's *Seeking Zion* (1862) appeared, Moses Hess (b.1812) published *Rome and Jerusalem* in which he, too, suggested that settlements in the holy land would solve the problems posed by emancipation to Jewish identity. Like Alkalai and Kalischer, Hess subverted normative approaches to messianism. He presented history as progressing through stages and ultimately culminating in a final vision of redemption. However, unlike Alkalai and Kalischer, Hess's critique of life after emancipation was largely shaped by his belief in socialism as a moral necessity. He contended that a shared consciousness of this need would inevitably lead to socialism's realization.[58] Hess's vision of redemption did not represent the fulfillment of traditional religious duties, but rather the moral imperative for socialism.

In Hess's formulation of the messianic idea, Jews would play a pivotal role in advancing the universal liberation of all oppressed peoples. Human history and Jewish history were inextricably linked. For instance, Hess saw the world's future in Judaism's pre-exilic life which he argued was itself proto-socialist. By supporting his social utopianism with the hope of restoring Jewish tradition, Hess was able to synthesize socialism and Jewish nationalism into his own vision of redemption. This subversion of

[58] Laqueur, p.47.

traditional messianism provided a powerful template as Zionists sought a symbolic order to align with their political goals. Theodor Herzl (b.1860) famously wrote of Hess's work, "Everything we tried is already there in his book."[59] Though Herzl was certainly exhibiting a degree of false modesty, Hess's belief that redemption could be realized by noble political principles is clearly echoed in Herzl's writing. Both Hess and Herzl represent an important strain in the subversion of normative messianism. For them, redemption is brought about only through the restoration of certain political and national values in the holy land. The realization of this social utopia, be it socialist or liberal, stands as their respective conceptions of messianic fulfillment.

Hess was born to an Orthodox Jewish family in the Rhineland, an area that was under French rule from 1795 to 1814. It was during this period that Hess's parents were emancipated. Yet this period of sweeping freedom was short lived. With Napoleon's defeat in 1815 and the annexation of the Rhineland to Prussia came attempts to restrict Jewish life. Many Jewish families responded by converting to Christianity. The Hesses did not. Instead, as Isaiah Berlin writes, "[f]or reasons both of genuine piety and of pride, they became even more fiercely attached to their ancient religion."[60] Hess was given a strict Jewish education. His devotion to traditional Judaism faltered as he found himself drawn to Left Hegelian thought while studying philosophy at the University of Bonn. Hess immersed himself in the intellectual milieu of German radicalism, befriending Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels. In his early writings, he posited that Jews' assimilation into

[59] Laqueur, p. 53.
[60] Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 214.

the socialist movement would solve the Jewish question.[61] Hess saw socialism as the universal panacea. It would bring the Jews, along with the rest of humanity, to a higher stage of rationality and freedom. There would then no longer be the need for religious and national differences. Hence, the Jews would naturally disappear.

Hess's turn towards Jewish nationalism was instigated by a series of events. The Damascus Blood Libel (1840) caused Hess to see the influence of anti-Jewish sentiment. On a more personal level, he sent a letter of admiration to Nikolas Becker, a German nationalist poet, only to be rebuffed by an anti-Semitic note. Together these two events led Hess to begin to question if the general solution of socialism would, in fact, solve the problems faced specifically by Jews.[62] The absence of Jewish national consciousness as well as issues of personal identity were pushed to the forefront of Hess's mind.

In Italy's movement towards unification and independence, Hess discovered his inspiration for conceptualizing of Jewish nationalism. *Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Problem* (1862) presents the flaws of assimilation and the validity of Jewish nationality in the form of letters to a fictional woman. Hess vehemently argued against previous understandings of the Jewish problem which conceived of it as the integration of a religious minority into liberal society. Shlomo Avineri holds that "[t]he uniqueness and novelty of Hess lies not only in the fact that the Zionist solution put forward in this work directs the Jewish people to the Land of Israel but that Hess's conceptual system views the Jews in terms of nineteenth-century national liberation movements."[63] For Hess, Jewish identity was not merely religious as he saw the German Reform movement

[61] Avineri, p. 38.
[62] Berlin, p. 226.
[63] Avineri, p. 42.

understanding it.[64] It was historical and national as well. The idea of messianism defines Jewish historical continuity. Thus, as Hess understood it, this unique history, will play a central role in bringing about the national revival of the Jews and ultimately universal redemption.

From *Rome and Jerusalem*'s First Letter, Hess presents the holy land as a unifying force, not only for Jews but all of humanity. He describes the Land of Israel as "the birthplace of the belief in the divine unity of life, as well as the hope in the future brotherhood of men."[65] Hess goes on to argue that, "Judaism has no other dogma but the teaching of the Unity."[66] By placing divine unity and brotherhood as the central tenet of historical Judaism, Hess challenges existing notions of Jewish egoism and bourgeois morality. Historical and redemptive unity is antithetical to any class divisions or hierarchy. Hess's interpretation of Judaism as having a single dogma of unity is a political necessity to his argument. In weaving together the redemption of the Jews with that of all humanity, he conceives of Jewish nationalism and messianism in opposition to his own previously held views on nationalism. Robert Wistrich writes "Hess's recognition of the primal power of Jewish nationalism and his assertion of the creative vitality of religious messianism implied a complete reversal of the Marxian tradition."[67] Hess subverts this dominant strain of anti-Jewish thinking by presenting Judaism's innate egalitarianism and the possibility of its universal restoration.

[64] Robert Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews: The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982) p. 41.
[65] Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem:The Last Nationalist Question* (University of Nebraska Press, First published 1862) p.43
[66] Hess, p. 48.
[67] Wistrich, p. 42.

Hess extends this idea of unity to the sphere of historical progress. He places Jewish national regeneration as intrinsically linked with humanity's universal advancement. Both processes occur together. Hess contends, "When I labor for the regeneration of my own nation, I do not thereby renounce my humanistic aspiration. The national movement of the present day is only another step on the road of progress which began with the French Revolution."[68] The Enlightenment concept of progress and the establishment of Jewish nationalism exist as one process. Hence, nationalism will ultimately give rise to internationalism. As Berlin puts it, "[t]he first condition of true internationalism is that there should be nationalities."[69] It is impossible to skip this stage. Creating Jewish nationalism will thus have a universal impact according to Hess. Once again, Jews can act "as the leaven of the social world."[70]

Hess understands the time in which he is living as "the eve of the Sabbath of History"[71] Redemption is now imminent. He sees signs of this, not in birth pangs, but in the ever-increasing unity between classes. He presents this unity through merging both redemptive and socialist conceptions of history's end. Hess writes, "Though the time 'when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb' has not yet arrived, the ruling majority and the oppressed minority have both alike lost their wolfish appetite and sheepish patience."[72] The world is gradually moving through the final stages of progress which began with the French Revolution and will culminate in redemption. This natural process exists inside, not outside, of the flow of history. It can and should be hastened through human

[68] Hess, p.55
[69] Berlin, p.239.
[70] Hess, p.49.
[71] Hess, p.48.
[72] Hess, p.162.

initiative. Hess makes this most clear in his appeal for France's assistance in founding a Jewish commonwealth in the holy land. For Hess, political and national activism is the prerequisite for universal redemption.

Yet before Hess can address the specifics of such activism, he must first define what constitutes Jewish identity. He pithily writes "[t]he pious Jew is above all a Jewish patriot."[73] It is impossible to separate one's commitment to religious values and the desire for a national restoration. On Hess's formulation of Jewish identity, Ken Koltun-Fromm argues, "Underlying this image of Jewish identity is a self constituted by a religious history and a political community. A self without religious or political ideals simply would not count as a self at all in Hess's schema. For a self to be recognized as such, it must be embedded in the traditions that affirm religious and political values."[74] As such, the German Reform movement lacks a true Jewish identity due to its denial of Jewish nationalism. Judaism's national claim to the holy land is an intractable part of its history and essence. Hess goes on to juxtapose the Reformers, "who never learned anything,"[75] with the Orthodox, "who never forgot anything."[76] The Orthodox, though not as flawed as the Reformers, are unable to assert their religious and national identities in a modern formulation. They are dogmatically tied to the past and fail to recognize history's progression. As such, Hess calls for both Reform and Orthodox Jews to temper their respective extremism in order to assert their patriotism.

[73] Hess, p.62.
[74] Ken Koltun-Fromm, *Moses Hess and Modern Jewish Identity* (Indiana University Press, 2001) p.38.
[75] Hess, p.161.
[76] Hess, p.161.

Intertwined with Hess's understanding of Judaism's national claim is the emergence of new social relationships. Hess posits that a Jewish commonwealth will allow for the development of a more egalitarian society. He argues, "A common, native soil is a primary condition, if there is to be introduced among the Jews better and more progressive relations between Capital and Labor."[77] Material conditions will bring about greater unity, thus, hastening redemption. Hess supports this belief with an appeal to Judaism's pre-exilic history, in turn, giving a restorative element to his socialist theory. He conveniently suggests that the sacrificial cult held a proto-socialist function. Hess writes, "It [the sacrificial cult] had also another purpose, namely, to strengthen the unity of the people, by compelling them to bring their sacrifices to one place, the Temple at Jerusalem. It had likewise a charitable aim in view when it prescribed that every voluntary offering must be immediately consumed, for thus it often happened that the poor were invited to the sacrificial feast."[78] In pointing to this biblical precedent, Hess synthesizes utopian socialism with restorative messianism. He gives biblical origins to his hope of establishing modern socialism in the land of Israel.

Gershom Scholem's theory that messianism relies on the dialectic between utopian with restorative elements can certainly be applied to Hess's messianism. Scholem argues that in manifestations of messianism "even the restorative force has a utopian factor, and in utopianism restorative factors are at work. The restorative tendency per se, even when it understands itself as such…is nourished to no small degree by a utopian impulse which now appears as projection on the past instead of projection on the

[77] Hess, p.165.
[78] Hess, p.255.

future."[79] In Hess's formulation the radical innovations of the French Revolution are nourished by the restoration of Jewish life before exile. Alone neither the utopian nor the restorative element are effective mobilization tools. Hess is keenly aware of this reality. He contends, "The masses are never moved to progress by mere abstract conceptions; the springs of action lie far deeper than even the socialist revolutionaries think."[80] Hess recognizes that it is necessary to refer back to a glorified past in order to advance human progress. On this dialectic, Ehud Luz notes "There is a need for deeper, more vital underpinnings, such as those latent in tradition, myth and religion…It is only tradition, be it orthodox or heterodox, that can invest the utopian vision with an aura of sanctity and arouse in its adherents a burning desire for realization."[81] Hess fully understands the power of this dialectic. In a sense, his aforementioned criticism of the Orthodox and Reform movements illustrates this dialectic which each group fails to inhabit. For progress to occur, there must be both a level of breaking from the past and restoring it.

Hess sees the agents of humanity's progress as the French and the Jews. Each holds unique qualities which only together can create the relationship necessary for universal advancement. Hess argues, "It seems that in all things they [Frenchmen and Jews] were created for one another. They resemble one another in their humane and national aspirations, and differ only in such qualities as can only be complemented by another nation, but which are never united in one and the same people."[82] Like messianism's restorative and utopian elements, the French and the Jews gain their catalytic power when their disparate traits are united. Hess's understanding of French and

[79] Scholem, p. 4.
[80] Hess, p.165.
[81] Luz, p.359.
[82] Hess, p.168.

Jewish unity developed out of France's post-emancipation milieu. Wistrich describes the situation as such, "Jewish emancipation in France was a reality and the degree of social integration much greater than in Germany or Austria. There was no contradiction here between Jewish particularism and a belief in the ultimate unity of mankind."[83] France's success in allowing for the existence of dual currents of historical development, the particular and the universal, set the groundwork for Hess's theory. German racial chauvinism illustrated the need for a new conception of Jewish identity while French humanitarianism convinced Hess of the possibility of its realization.

Hess places Jewish national identity at both the core of the universal movement through history as well as the particular movement for founding a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. Connecting these two trajectories is Hess's notion of messianic fulfillment as the creation of a socialist society. By drawing on the dialectical relationship between messianism's utopian and restorative claims, he is able to create a political ideology of unity based in Jewish identity. In doing so, he subverts the normative conception of a metaphysical Messiah, proposing that political and moral values can form the basis for redemption. Ultimately Hess created a radical new vision of national identity by drawing on both socialist understandings of history's progression intertwined with Jewish understands of redemptive fulfillment.

Like Hess, Theodor Herzl saw both Jewish nationalism and advancements brought about by the French Revolution functioning together as agents of change. He argued that the establishment of a Jewish state and a modern national identity was the only way Jews could end the anti-Semitism of post-emancipation Europe. Liberalism and

[83] Wistrich, p.39.

technology would bring peace and prosperity to a Jewish state. As Herzl envisioned it, the ingathering of exiles and reordering of Jewish life would come not through a Messiah, but through the political initiative of Zionists. Herzl's subversion of normative messianism was profound. He proposed that central elements of redemption, such as the renewal of Jewish political sovereignty and the ingathering of exiles in the holy land, would soon become a reality. However, Herzl attributes no significance to religious devotion in advancing this purely national and political process. Unlike Hess, Herzl does not make explicit appeals to messianism, even in a subverted form.

Yet Zionism inevitably evokes messianic symbolism. The significance of the holy land is too great to be avoided. Herzl understood this and used it to advance Zionism's political project. Gershom Gorenberg writes of these contradictions, "Zionism was messianism, but it was also something transformed. Its relation to the traditional vision of the future was uncertain, shimmering, constantly shifting."[84] In a sense, Herzl hoped to give a sense of certainty and stability to the Zionist project. He points to Zionism's synergy with liberalism and technological progress to serve this function. Like traditional messianists, Herzl presents Jewish life as inexorably advancing through a well-constructed path which culminates in a glorious utopia. Thus, he subverts normative messianism by offering a sense of hope and certainty similar to that which was traditionally derived from messianism. Herzl makes political use of messianism's symbolic form while eschewing its content.

Born in Budapest in 1860, Herzl was raised in a culturally assimilated family that maintained some level of Jewish religious tradition. As a young man studying in Vienna,

[84] Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount* (Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 87.

he experienced occasional anti-Semitism but, at the time, it was not a life altering experience. [85] Anti-Semitism and the reality of Jewish life after emancipation came to occupy Herzl's attention while working as a correspondent for *Neue Freie Presse* in Paris. During the 1890s, Herzl witnessed the Dreyfus affair and the surge of popular anti-Semitism that came in its wake. He began to consider possible solutions to the Jewish question.

In 1896, Herzl published *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question* in which he argued that it was the historical mission of the Jews to found their own state in the holy land. From the onset, Herzl makes clear that the creation of a Jewish state will inevitably occur. He writes, "[t]he Jewish State is essential to the world; it will therefore be created."[86] Herzl offers a secularized version of active messianism. Like with traditional understandings of the Messiah's arrival, there is no set timetable for Jewish statehood. What is set, however, is that statehood will eventually be achieved. It may not occur imminently, but nonetheless remains inevitable and essential to the world's historical progress. Like Hess, Herzl sees the impact of a Jewish state reaching far beyond the Jewish world. Its creation will be a consummating event that will forever reorder social relations.

In Herzl's subversion of normative messianism, rationalism and political will supplant the role of religious devotion in advancing fulfillment. He argues, "If the present generation is too dull to understand it [the need for a Jewish state] rightly, a future, finer and a better generation will arise to understand it. The Jews who wish for a State shall

[85] Laqueur, p.87.
[86] Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (Dover, 1988.) p. 72.

have it, and they will deserve to have it."[87] Herzl offers a vision of self-redemption. Individual Jews can work to hasten the fulfillment of Zionism's desired end. Through rational observation, Jews will see the need for nationalism and acting upon which they will found a Jewish state. There is no role for religious devotion in advancing this process. Herzl presents Zionism as a purely "modern solution" to the current reality of anti-Semitism.

For Herzl, religious faith and national renewal exist in entirely separate spheres. They do not overlap as religious Zionists presented them. In his blueprint for a Jewish state, Herzl takes a liberal approach to religion in the holy land. It is a matter of personal choice and not a collective concern. With a sense of tolerant detachment, he writes, "[w]e shall let every man find salvation 'over there' in his own particular way."[88] Herzl is careful to distance himself from the possible accusation that Zionism is a messianic movement and he a false Messiah. Though he does offer a vision of an ideal society in the holy land, Herzl does not propose to be nor does he see the need for a metaphysical leader. On this key difference, Yaacov Shavit writes, "The methods to be employed [by Zionists] were far removed from those of Sabbatianism, which had relied on providential intervention and the overturn of the natural order."[89] There is no messianic figure in Herzl's plan for a Jewish state. He is adamant that the catalyst for change will come from rational understandings of nationalism and the force of history.

In his novel *Old-New Land (Altneuland)*, (1902) Herzl develops the idea of redemption without a Messiah. He subverts the traditional conception of messianism by

[87] Herzl, p.72.
[88] Herzl, p.133.
[89] Yaacov Shavit, "Realism and Messianism in Zionism and the Yishuv" in *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era*, p. 108.

suggesting that national self-realization offers the true path to redemption. Thinly veiling his own opinions in the form of fiction, Herzl imagines a future in which Jews redirect their messianic hopes towards national restoration, "It was only at the end of the nineteenth century, when the other civilized nations had already attainted to self-consciousness and given evidence thereof, that our people- the pariah- realized that its salvation lay within itself, that nothing was to be expected from fantastic miracle workers. They realized then that the way of deliverance must be paved not by a single individual, but by a conscious and alert folk-personality." [90] He goes on to suggest that the Orthodox will see nothing blasphemous in this conception of an internalized Messiah. Herzl optimistically believes that religious energies will easily be redirected into a nationalist project. He proposes that Jews must adopt an identity like that of other nations, abandoning both exile and the hope for a metaphysical Messiah. This would mark a major break from tradition. Nevertheless, Herzl is unwilling to acknowledge it as such. To do so would only hurt his cause.

Instead Herzl chooses to present Zionism as the fulfillment of Jewish tradition. Recognition of an internalized messianism through national consciousness becomes a necessary step on the road to fulfillment. Redemption in the holy land, thus, becomes wholly symbolic. Herzl obscures the radicalism of Zionism's recasting of redemption by evoking messianic symbolism. He writes "For all these centers together form a single, great, long-sought object, which our people has always longed to attain, for which it has kept itself alive, for which our people has always longed to attain, for which it has been

[90] Theodor Herzl, *Old-New Land* (Bloch Publishing Company and Herzl Press, 1960) p.106.

kept alive by external pressure – a free home!"[91] Though in *Old-New Land*, Herzl argues that Jews lack a national consciousness, here he argues just the opposite. Zionism marks continuity with traditional ideas of redemption. It is the culmination of a long held hope for national return. What is different from the past is the mode through which national sovereignty is achieved. It will come about through modern nationalism, rather than traditional religious devotion. Herzl's conception of fulfillment simultaneously evokes both messianism's continuity and modern nationalism's radicalism. Together these two forces create a powerful dialectic, in turn, constructing a vision of redemption that attempts to appeal to secular and religious impulses.

Hess and Herzl bolster their respective political ideologies by setting them within the framework of Jewish history and the messianic idea. They make political use of messianic symbolism in advancing their desire for a Jewish homeland, appealing to a deep-seated narrative with an innate emotional appeal. However, simultaneously they subvert the central tenets of normative messianism. Redemption is brought about through nationalism alloyed with modern political systems, not a metaphysical messiah. They subvert traditional messianism to comport with this new road to redemption, playing upon the pre-existing messianism of both socialism and liberalism. Together Hess and Herzl usher in an era of more expansive and malleable understandings of messianism within Jewish identity. They allow for Jewish nationalism in its modern iteration to be understood as upholding the Jewish people's natural destiny not only to return to the holy land but also to bring about a grand reordering of society. This stands as a political imperative as it ultimately allows for Zionists to expand their coalition by placing their

[91] Herzl, *The Jewish State*, p.133.

own national project as central to the process of universal redemption. Hess and Herzl's subverted form of messianism appeals far beyond traditional messianism's adherents, bringing socialists and liberals into the fold. Messianism provides the symbolic order from which they too can understand their desire for societal perfection.

Conclusion

What emerges from these two distinct threads of Zionist thought is a shared belief that the late nineteenth century marked the dawn of the messianic era. The end of emancipation and the rise of European nationalism had irreversibly altered historical and social conditions. With these profound changes to traditional Jewish life came new opportunities for reinvention and, in turn, the desire to subvert normative modes of Jewish thought. The possibility of advancing the messianic age became increasingly palpable. To this end, Zionists, like Alkalai, Kalischer and Kook, who saw Zionism as a means to fulfilling traditional religious duties and Zionists, like Hess and Herzl, for whom it was a means to realizing noble political ideals, relied upon the messianic idea to bolster their claim to a Jewish homeland in the holy land. Both groups subverted traditional understandings of messianism in order to align their newly minted political objectives with the long held desire for messianic fulfillment.

Underlying this subversion of normative messianism was a common impulse towards adaptability and a unique openness to drawing upon heterodox modes of thought. Alkalai, Kalischer and Kook incorporated ideas of modern nationalism and progress in advancing their traditional desire for the Messiah's arrival. Conversely, Hess and Herzl marshaled traditional messianic symbolism in arguing for the creation of distinctly modern political systems. For both groups of Zionist thinkers, the messianic idea provided an important element to their political activism. It was the familiar narrative that bound the Jewish people to their desire to return to the holy land. Additionally, it provided the symbolic order, a sense of a meaningful end and hope for the future, that is

as present in socialist or liberal thought as it is in traditional Jewish thought. Messianism held an innate emotional appeal across the late nineteenth century's ideological spectrum. This fact made its integration a political necessity for any Jewish political movement hoping to gain widespread support.

All of the aforementioned Zionists recognized the unifying power of the messianic idea. It held the promise of mobilizing Jews of various levels of devotion and of various political allegiances. This stood as a political imperative since the end of emancipation had fractured the Jewish world. Jewish experience was increasingly diverse and sources of authority had become more disparate. Therefore, the need for a common unifying force became integral to Zionism's successes. In a subverted form, the messianic idea could create a powerful symbiosis or dialectic between modern nationalism and traditional devotion. Despite their divergent backgrounds and visions of the messianic future, the late nineteenth century Zionists all recognized the political utility of the messianic idea. Consequently they also recognized the need to subvert it in accordance with the reality of modern nationalism. In this historical instance, Herzl's aphorism that "The longing creates the Messiah"[92] might be revising to state that the need creates the Messiah. In creating a mass political movement out of a diverse group with divergent long term interests, ultimately late nineteenth century Zionists created common political ground through their shared subversion of the messianic idea.

[92] Herzl, *Old-New Land*, p.105.

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