

“Not as Sheep Led to Slaughter”? On Trauma, Selective Memory, and the Making of Historical Consciousness

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ABSTRACT

A major post-Holocaust psychoethical dilemma seems to be the product of a collective repression of a long pre-World War II history that has almost disappeared from modern memory. In this forgotten past, the contested victim trope—“as sheep to slaughter”—that aroused much concern in the wake of the Holocaust had in fact been alive for centuries. Amazingly, its negation, the call for resistance “not as sheep led to slaughter,” has had an even longer history, going back to tenth-century Italy. By reconstructing major points of the trajectory of these opposites during the past thousand years, this article lays bare the workings of “selective memory” in the making of Jewish historical consciousness and ponders whether partial silencing or forgetting is indeed necessary for surviving trauma, both collective and individual.

Key words: memory, resistance, victims, trauma, Yosippon

Recent scholarship in the field of cultural studies seems to be weighed down by many divisions: between history and memory, archive and art, document and oral testimony, collective and personal remembrance, and memory and postmemory. Scarred by the traumas of unfathomable catastrophes, chief among them the Holocaust, memory scholars in particular favor the second term of each of these severed pairs, though few attempt to reconcile them.¹

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However, at least one crucial feature may be shared by historians and culture/memory scholars, even as they take variant views. As Marianne Hirsch notes, “*Postmemory* . . . reflects an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture. . . . I see it, rather, as a *structure* of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience.”² In contrast, Yehuda Bauer states, “One has to differentiate very clearly between terms that were used by the victims during the Holocaust itself, and the use of the same terms afterwards.”³ Whether claiming some transmission lines between past and present or emphasizing difference between the “during” and the “afterward” of the Holocaust, both Hirsch and Bauer focus on the relationship between a traumatic event and its “afterward” or “post-ness.”

The present article seeks to reverse this temporal vector. Though equally motivated by the traumatized condition of recent post-Holocaust generations, it seeks to establish a relationship between the major catastrophe of our times and a millennium-old cultural history that preceded it but that has somehow disappeared from modern memory.⁴ As we shall see, the long view of this past makes clear that the phrase “as sheep led to slaughter,” the contested Holocaust trope that aroused Bauer’s concern—and even its negation, “*not* as sheep led to slaughter”—were surprisingly alive and well for centuries; yet their fully embodied presence seems to have gone underground, dropping out of recent historical consciousness.

There is nothing new in the realization that recollection and forgetfulness are two powerful mechanisms that control the human mind, as observed most famously by both Sigmund Freud and Marcel Proust. Yet given the shattering psychic role that the phrases in question here have played since World War II, the discovery of their long prehistory forces us to look more closely into two questions: How and why could such an act of disappearance happen? And why should we care?

Before we can answer this query, however, the “missing” piece of the historical puzzle must be brought back from oblivion. The following is an initial effort toward this goal: an attempt to retrieve a long-forgotten (or perhaps repressed) past and to map the questions that this “loss” raises about selective recalling and forgetting, trauma, and the making of historical consciousness.

A Post-Holocaust Dilemma

The traumatic experiences of the sacrificial victim or martyr are among the foremost religious images to have survived the emergence

of modernity, nationalism, and secularism.⁵ Yet few studies have probed the afterlife of the sacrificial-victim and martyr tropes in secular national thought.⁶ The Hebraic tradition is an ideal test case for such an inquiry, as several biblical tropes of the sacrificial victim, potential or realized, are unfortunately alive and well in modern Jewish memory. Chief among these are the near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 and the “lamb/sheep led to the slaughter” of Isaiah 53:7.

My recent study, *Glory and Agony*,⁷ explores the multifaceted afterlife of Isaac and related sacrificial victim figures in the Hebraic national corpus of the first Zionist century. My present project extends this exploration to narratives of the Holocaust. Here, however, the focus is not on the discursive use of Isaac’s near-sacrifice, the Akedah, but rather on the provocative use of the image of Isaiah 53 during and after World War II. The motivation for this shift of focus is simple: whereas the Akedah did have a considerable presence in Holocaust and post-Holocaust thinking of the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox camps,⁸ it was less prominent in the secular Hebrew Zionist corpus.⁹ Israeli post-Holocaust discourse was heavily preoccupied with a modern variant of Isaiah’s sacrificial image, the one famously depicting God’s servant as “a *lamb* led to slaughter” (*ka-seh la-tevah yuval*). Isaiah’s trope has had an intricate afterlife in the Jewish–Christian feud over its meaning and interpretation.¹⁰ During World War II, however, it gave rise to an equally contested variation that emerged as a trope for death with honor: *al nelekh ke-tson la-tevah yuval* (let us *not* go as *sheep* led to slaughter.)

Indeed, the powerful presence of this phrase in modern memory often makes us forget that it does not enjoy the biblical pedigree we tend to attribute to it.¹¹ Neither the particular animal (sheep) nor the verbal negation attached to it hail from Isaiah’s description of the meek and mild servant of God. In fact, the wording of the World War II trope doubly subverts Isaiah’s intention, first by negating it (*not . . . as*) and second by substituting *sheep* for *lamb*—a crucial lexical difference, much more marked in Hebrew than in English, whose significance and provenance have not hitherto been properly investigated.

More important, in its contrary semantics, which moves from the acceptance of sacrificial victimhood (“as sheep to slaughter”) to resistance to it (“not as sheep to slaughter”), this Janus-faced double trope has had a traumatic impact in the second half of the past century, if not beyond. Given this recent history, to which I will return, it may be shocking to learn that this phrase is not a product of the twentieth century but is in fact the heir of at least a thousand-year-old tradition that we moderns have lost.

[141]

“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”

●
Yael S.
Feldman

I first realized that this might be the case a few years ago, when I discovered the phrase *lo nuval ke-tson la-tevah* (we shall not be led as sheep to slaughter) in a text composed and published in Jewish Palestine in 1911. This chance finding flew in the face of what both collective memory and the scholarly record have taught us, namely, that the time and place of this clarion call for armed resistance was the dawning of the year 1942 in the Vilna ghetto and that its author was none other than the young partisan Abba Kovner (1918–87).¹² The implications of Kovner’s challenge went far beyond its immediate effect on Jewish resistance, however. Ironically, after the war it was understood as implying a charge against the Jews, ostensibly blaming the victims for going to their deaths *ke-tson la-tevah*, as sheep to slaughter. As noted above, Yehuda Bauer was still struggling with this moral dilemma as late as 1998, concluding that no one but the victim community itself has the moral right to use this phrase.¹³

As expected, this issue tore at the ethical fabric of the fledgling Jewish state from its inception. In the 1950s, it set off the Kastner trial¹⁴ and a heated exchange between Abba Kovner and Nathan Alterman (1910–70), the Israeli poet and moral compass of the time, over the choice between two responses to Nazi aggression: the Judenrat and the resistance.¹⁵ By the 1960s, this dilemma mushroomed into an international intellectual drama of no less intensity, following the Eichmann trial and the Hannah Arendt controversy. With the publication of Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), the charges against the victims’ “Jewish submissiveness” and against the Judenrat’s cooperation with their oppressors gained international visibility and aroused considerable antagonism.¹⁶

Less visible at the time, but of special interest in retrospect, is a slim Hebrew booklet entitled *Ke-tson la-tevah?* (As Sheep to Slaughter?), which was published privately in 1962 by the journalist and educator K. Shabbetai, the pen name of Shabbetai Keshev (Klugman) (1898–1981). In this passionately argued “defense,” Shabbetai, himself a survivor of the Kovno ghetto, fiercely contests Arendt’s (and others’) charges of Jewish passivity and cowardice, labeling them myths. He eventually published four more expanded Hebrew editions of the work (1963–66), along with translations into Yiddish, German, and English.¹⁷ The immediate impact of Shabbetai’s challenge has not been explored to date. It is clear, however, that survivors’ memoirs published since the 1980s have joined his angry challenge, denying such charges.¹⁸

As a native Israeli, I remember well the internal sociocultural climate of accusations and counteraccusations that unsettled my early

years, the emotional impact of which is still with us today, half a century later. In Israel, it was partially reignited by the belated Hebrew translation of Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in 2000 and subsequent publication of her works.¹⁹ In the United States, the 2012 film *Hannah Arendt* did the same, unsurprisingly: despite the Hebraic provenance of the designation "as sheep to slaughter," the national identity it implies seems to stem from the cluster of European antisemitic stereotypes that had paved the way for the annihilation of the Jewish people in World War II. It has come to stand for Jewish victimization (emasculatation, passivity, obedience, and lack of courage), both collective and individual, and thus deepened and reinforced the prewar perception of the Jew as the dishonorable antithesis of all the "virile" qualities deemed necessary by modern nationalism (not to mention Freudianism).²⁰ Consequently, it left a deep mark not only on survivors but also on the postwar Israeli community at large.

But why should this modern psychoethical conflict center on this age-old, presumably biblical trope? I would like to suggest that when taken together with its negated formulation, generally assumed to have been authored by Kovner on New Year's Day 1942, this twofold phrase encapsulates the troubling slippage between victimization and resistance. The anxiety aroused by the awareness of this slippery slope—the fine line separating two ostensibly contradictory psychological and political states of being—may explain some unsavory psychopolitical traits of national behavior that Israelis have developed since this phrase came onto the stage in World War II.

The 1911 Erets Yisrael *Yizkor*

In view of this postwar psychopolitical reality, my discovery of an early twentieth-century antecedent raises several acute questions: What if the pendulum between the two aspects of this figure of speech is *not* the product of the Holocaust but is rather of older vintage? Could recalling such historical precedence have helped heal the postwar *psychological* damage to Jewish identity and self-image faster? Would it have changed the prevalent perception of the singularity of the Holocaust? Would it have facilitated better integration of the Holocaust into modern Jewish historical consciousness?²¹ More generally, could a probe into this particular case of forgotten (or repressed) cultural past shed light on major questions plaguing recent memory studies? Could it help us understand, for example, the mechanisms through which collective traumas, past and present, shape defensive behaviors

[143]

"Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter"

●
Yael S.
Feldman

such as selective memory, denial, and uncontrolled repetition? Would it teach us how such defenses are ultimately overturned? Or would it perhaps, on the contrary, prove right the arguments of Renan and Freud,²² further developed by their contemporary interpreters,²³ that selective memory or partial silencing and forgetting are necessary tools for surviving trauma, both collective (national) and personal?

Guided by this set of conjectures, I began my investigation into the historical record. My point of departure was one textual detail: a call for resistance, almost identical to the one issued by Kovner, cited in the Hebrew book *Yizkor* (Remembrance), published in 1911 in Jewish Palestine. Recent scholarship has amply shown that this *memorbukh* (memorial book) for Second Aliyah Jewish laborers and guards who fell by Arab fire was an important source for shaping the myth of heroism and self-sacrifice in nascent Zionism.²⁴ Yet despite this in-depth research, the book harbors a surprise, thus far unnoticed by readers and scholars.

The eldest of the fallen mourned in this book, Ya'akov Plotkin, was eulogized by Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the future second president of Israel. Ben-Zvi begins his eulogy by describing his first encounter with Plotkin at a public meeting somewhere in southern Russia, shortly before their respective departures for the Land of Israel: "A man of some forty-plus years of age mounted the stage and vowed that we will all die as one on the killing field; we *shall not be led as sheep to slaughter*, nor shall we stand afar when the slayers attack our brethren."²⁵

Even if we suppose that Plotkin, a Jewish merchant who "loved Hebrew literature" but whose mastery of the local language was poor, according to Ben-Zvi, did not actually use that particular Hebrew expression, there is no doubt that Ben-Zvi's words testify at least to the presence of this turn of phrase in his own discourse at the time of the book's publication.

The subversive call for resistance, habitually identified with Kovner's Vilna and subsequent ghetto uprisings, was not created out of the crucible of the Holocaust. Rather, it apparently existed by the beginning of the century, if not earlier. And given Ben-Zvi's position as a leader of the Jewish self-defense organizations in the Ukraine, the rhetoric of these movements is a likely source for his use of the phrase. Indeed, the wind of revolt attributed by him to Plotkin suits the spirit, though not the wording, of the manifestos distributed by these organizations in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian, especially after the 1903 Kishinev pogrom. It also no doubt echoes Hebrew literature's most famous manifestation of this spirit, Hayim Nahman Bialik's epochal poem, "In the City of Slaughter" (*Be-ir ha-haregah*).²⁶

Did Abba Kovner, in his challenge, absorb a new figure of speech coined and disseminated by his predecessors three decades earlier? It is possible, considering the great popularity of *Yizkor*, which was read avidly, in the original and in translation, by members of the Hashomer (Guardsmen) and He-haluts (Pioneer) youth movements in eastern and central Europe, as evidenced, for example, in the memoirs of Gershom Scholem and Dov Sadan.²⁷

However, this is not the major point I wish to make. Rather, I wish to question the absence of any reference to this antecedent in the Israeli postwar public debates mentioned above. This absence grows especially disturbing in view of Ben-Zvi's career as a historian and as the president of Israel from 1954 to 1963, precisely the years that saw both the Kastner and the Eichmann trials and hence the ongoing, less than peaceful conversation about the appropriateness of using the expression *lo ke-tson la-tevah*. Should not Ben-Zvi's reticence about his own use of this expression some three decades earlier hone our questions about the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish memory and historical consciousness? Should we not ask why the call for resistance preserved in *Yizkor* was totally forgotten within a generation or two? Was it because the Holocaust trauma wiped out any memory of previous history? Was this memory judged irrelevant, dwarfed by the enormity of the present catastrophe?

These questions are not easy to answer, certainly not before more information is gathered about the historical record. The first step toward the latter is to look for a chain of transmission between Ben-Zvi and Kovner or, more accurately, between the discourse represented by *Yizkor*—that of the self-defense movements of Europe and the Second Aliyah in Jewish Palestine—and the discourse of Jewish youth movements before and during World War II. Soon enough, though, it becomes clear that the reconstruction of such cultural history is deeply entangled with issues of language, so much so that it is almost impossible in any language but Hebrew. To explain why and how, we must take a small detour to the textual origins of our (in)famous expression(s). But before we do so, let me note that this linguistic indulgence was licensed, unknowingly, by none other than the recent ostensible author of this very expression, Abba Kovner himself.

Kovner's 1982 Retrospective Confession

In October 1945, a few months after he had reached the shores of his long-dreamt-of homeland, Abba Kovner gave his first public talk at a

[145]

"Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter"

●
Yael S.
Feldman

gathering of the Palmah in Modi'in, the ancestral burial grounds of the Maccabees, according to tradition.²⁸ Although the talk was published at the time in the newspaper *Mishmar*,²⁹ it was not readily accessible to future generations until nearly four decades later, when it was reprinted, almost verbatim, in the first collection of Kovner's non-literary work, *Al ha-gesher ha-tzar* (On the Narrow Bridge, 1981).³⁰ In retrospect, this delay was unfortunate, as it contributed to a misperception among Israelis that Kovner himself blamed Jews for going to their deaths as sheep to slaughter, when in fact he was simply quoting others and even provided his own rebuttal to the charge. This misunderstanding continued to plague Kovner, the state of Israel, and perhaps the Jewish people at large as well. By the early 1980s, when the text was republished and finally made available to the public, Kovner was already well established as the originator not only of the audacious call for resistance but also of its implied obverse charge, "as sheep to slaughter"—with its humiliating overtones.

In retrospect, however, it seems that in that first report of his wartime experiences, still painfully fresh in his mind in 1945, Kovner had already unraveled a complex and nuanced contextualization that prepared the ground for precisely the public polemics that would occupy center stage in the following decades. Indeed, the familiar imagery associated with the charge of Jewish passivity and submissiveness comes up early in the speech. However, Kovner does not use it in his own name. Rather, he attributes it to "others," to the Soviet commissar, for example, who in welcoming him and his comrades to the partisans' camp in the Rudniki forest also inquired, apparently echoing a generally held perception, "Why did your people go like sheep?"³¹ Kovner's answer is twofold. This charge is negated, he suggests, precisely through his own peer group's personal conduct: armed resistance. At the same time, he insists that "All and everyone did go like this!"—not only unarmed civilians but also former Soviet soldiers, former Lithuanian collaborators who had lost their usefulness to the Germans, and even Polish high officers who were known to have proudly sung "Poland is not yet lost, we will not go like this."³²

As noted above, K. Shabbetai developed similar counterarguments two decades later, and they emerged again in some memoirs in the 1990s. Kovner himself, however, revisited the issue shortly after the 1981 republication of his talk, defending against charges leveled at him by offering an ancient, indeed time-honored linguistic pedigree for his (in)famous call for resistance.

In a speech at the Yad Vashem International Council on December 16, 1982, Kovner made the following declaration:

Some issues must be understood in context, in their time and place. I am not prepared to apologize, nor will I relinquish my authorial rights to the proclamation [*karoz*] I issued in Vilna on January 1, 1942. I do not wish to go into the details of that event—this is perhaps the first time that I give a personal statement in this matter, and let the historians and researchers do with this whatever they want. I wrote the proclamation in two languages. As a student of the Tarbut gymnasium I had good control of Hebrew.³³ Can any of you vouch that you are familiar with even one Hebrew lament [*kinah*] written over the past 1300 years that does not express the idea of “as sheep to slaughter” [*ke-tson la-tevah*]? I lived [*hayiti*] this idea, yet I was never offended by it. This expression is a retort against heaven—[saying that] You, Lord of the Universe, see your chosen people go as sheep to be slaughtered [*ke-tson le-tivhah*]. I do not know how this idiom was translated to other languages, but in Hebrew, [the phrase] “saintly [or holy] sheep” [*tsen kedoshim*] does not express insult; it is an expression of something of great depth. This is how those who believe deeply in something—in the eternity [or victory] of Israel [*netsah Yisrael*—go to the slaughter.³⁴

[147]

“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”

●
Yael S.
Feldman

Kovner’s belated confession about the (un)fortuitous expression he had supposedly coined 40 years earlier suggests several crucial insights into the knotty issue at hand. In essence, he acknowledges three contradictory or at least dichotomous truths: 1. Although he will not relinquish the authorial right to his call for resistance, he admits that it was derived from a 1300-year-old Hebraic tradition. 2. Although he wrote it in two languages, the style of his proclamation is wholly indebted to the Hebrew, rather than the Yiddish, legacy. 3. In this age-old Hebraic liturgical legacy, retorts against God by his persecuted and harassed people were commonplace, and it is this poetic genre that served as a model for Kovner’s own call for resistance.

To make these claims, Kovner shifts, as if unaware, between three different Hebrew phrases, all featuring the proverbial flock of sheep that stands metaphorically for the people of Israel: *ke-tson la-tevah*, *ke-tson le-tivhah*, and *tsen kedoshim*. In English, the first two are hardly distinguishable. The difference between their respective standard translations—“as sheep to [the] slaughter” and “as sheep to be slaughtered”—seems to be merely stylistic. Not so in Hebrew: historically and theologically there is a world of difference between them. Whereas the first has no verbatim scriptural precedence, the second, or rather its slightly different cousin, *ke-tson tivhah* (without the Hebrew preposition *le-*, “to/for”),³⁵ is a direct quote from Psalm 44:23, usually translated, “Yea, for your sake we are being killed all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered” (*ki ‘alekha horagmu kol ha-yom nehshavnu ke-tson tivhah*).

Here, indeed, is the historical source of what Kovner calls “a retort against heaven.” Following this statement, the psalmist rebukes God and calls upon him to wake up from his slumber because his people are being everlastingly killed in his name. There is only one problem with Kovner’s statement, however: this rare gesture is the exception rather than the rule. There is no long liturgical tradition that upholds this retort against the heavens. We have of course a large body of Hebrew *kinot* (laments) that *complain* about the grave exilic condition of the people; but according to the Hebrew Academy database, only five of them use the expression *ke-tson tivhah*, and in no case is the complaint followed by a retort against God.³⁶

Martyr Sheep versus Victim Sheep

The same figure of speech coined by the psalmist developed another meaning in the postbiblical period. In various texts, from the Talmud to the midrash to the medieval sages, it was adopted as the *positive* signifier par excellence of theodicy (*tsiduk ha-din*) and of Jewish martyrdom (*kiddush ha-shem*), otherwise known as “beautiful” or “noble” death.³⁷

In the twelfth century, this long tradition was eloquently summed up by Maimonides:

Anybody who says that he will not transgress and will allow himself to be killed, and is killed without transgressing, does sanctify God’s name. If this happened in the presence of ten or more Jews, then it is a public sanctification, like what Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and Rabbi Akibah and his colleagues did. All of these are martyrs of the [“Roman”] authorities [*harugei malkhut*] who attained the most sublime level, above which there is none, and about them it is written, “Yea, for your sake we are being killed all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered [*nehshavnu ke-tson tivhah*] (Psalm 44:23).”³⁸

Maimonides was preceded by the sage and biblical interpreter Abraham Ibn-Ezra, who in his exposition of Psalm 44:23 made a strong argument for martyrdom *as choice*. In his reading, Jews have taken on the status of sheep to be slaughtered of their own free will: “This faithfully attests that we are being killed for the honor of your name of our own will [*bi-retsonenu*], and we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered [*nehshavnu ke-tson tivhah*] of our own will [*bi-retsonenu*].”³⁹

Kovner is aware of this tradition; yet he is not aware that the sages singled out one particular trope, the psalmist’s, to mark it. Hence he

interprets the “bastardized” expression *tson kedoshim* (saintly, holy, hence martyred sheep),⁴⁰ as an epithet for those who go to the slaughter willingly because they believe deeply in netsah Yisrael. This leads him directly to the knotty question of willed martyrdom: “Time is too short to detail here my thoughts about kiddush ha-shem. In the ghetto I tried to tell my comrades that whatever was happening there was not kiddush ha-shem; that it is precisely fighting that is the true spiritual offshoot [*hashraah*] of kiddush ha-shem.”⁴¹

Kovner constructs here a rather *unorthodox* genealogy for his ideal of armed resistance. He ignores a long Jewish tradition that acknowledged any Jew murdered by gentiles—as passive as she or he might have been—as a sanctifier of the holy name and hence as a martyr (*kadosh*) who died for kiddush ha-shem.⁴² My main point, however, is that Kovner does not differentiate between two phrases: the psalmist’s variant phrase on the one hand (*ke-tson [le-]tīvah*) and the phrase at the base of his own call for resistance on the other (*ke-tson la-tevah*). He seems to assume that they are semantically equivalent and hence that both can stand for acts of Jewish martyrdom (kiddush ha-shem).

Kovner is not alone in this unhistorical assumption. English speakers in particular do not distinguish between the two phrases, for obvious reasons.⁴³ Yet the textual record tells a different story. As noted above, *ke-tson la-tevah yuval* is *not* a biblical phrase. It is based on Isaiah’s image, but it features *sheep*, a collective noun of a mature animal, in place of Isaiah’s single and presumably young *lamb*.⁴⁴ This substitution probably reflects a rejection of the Christian interpretation of Isaiah 53, wherein the lamb is read as a prefiguration of Jesus, the New Testament’s “lamb of God” (*agnus dei*). Although a full history of this variant usage is not yet available, it is clear that the phrase “as *sheep* led to slaughter” is a latecomer. It does not show up in the midrashic corpus before the thirteenth century,⁴⁵ and though the corpus of early *piyut* (liturgical poetry) contains two occurrences of the simile *ke-tson la-tevah*,⁴⁶ they do not use the whole phrase, which includes the verb “led” (*yuval*). Significantly, this verb features in the lamb imagery of Isaiah, and it is precisely this verb, conjugated in the passive voice, that would eventually become an essential marker of the popular Jewish image deploring Jewish victimization, namely, the condition of a people behaving like sheep forcefully led by others to their demise.

Thus the question becomes how far back can we trace the complete phrase, passive verb included, *ke-tson la-tevah yuval*? One fact is clear: this phrase seems to have reached wide circulation as of the thirteenth century, apparently after it was incorporated into the Ashkenazi prayer book, *Mahzor Vitry*. It appears in a familiar prayer recited by observant

[149]

“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”

●
Yael S.
Feldman

Jews twice a week as part of the *Tahanun* supplication, the “personal” part of the morning service: “Look down from heaven and see that we have become a mockery and a scorn among the nations, we are considered as sheep led to the slaughter [*ke-tson la-tevah yuval*]⁴⁷—to kill, to destroy, to smite, and to disgrace.” However, this short text does *not* carry the high valuation of acts of martyrdom attributed by Maimonides to the Psalms variant, *ke-tson tivhah*. Rather, it continues the liturgical genre of passive complaint or lament—a literary modus greatly needed at the time by Ashkenazi Jews still smarting from their traumatic experiences during the Crusades.⁴⁷

1882: Victim Sheep Rather than Martyr Sheep

To appreciate the full force of the parting of ways between the lament and martyr traditions represented by the Hebrew variants of “sheep to (be) slaughter(ed),” we must roll the wheel of history several centuries forward, to late February 1882. By this time, the *Tahanun* has been recited by Ashkenazi Jews twice weekly for almost seven centuries. With this fact in mind, we turn to a response to the recent pogroms in the Ukraine and southern Russia by a major religious leader, Rabbi Chaim Berlin of Moscow (1832–1913). These pogroms eventually triggered the emergence of *Hibat Tsiyon*, mass migration to distant shores, including the Land of Israel (the *Bilu* or First Aliyah), and Jewish self-defense organizations.

Conveniently, Berlin’s reaction to the atrocities of the time is recorded in the Hebrew biweekly *Havatsalet*, published then in Jerusalem with Eliezer Ben Yehuda at its helm:

Rabbi Chaim Berlin mounted the bimah and cried profusely. . . . I wonder if the people of Israel wept as much when the temple was still in its place. . . . Many fainted; voices reached the heavens. . . . We saw today [in our mind’s eye] visions of the exiles and destructions of the First and Second Temples; but God shall have mercy on us! “We are considered as sheep led to slaughter”—said Rabbi Haim Berlin—“not *ke-tson tivhah* but rather as *ke-tson la-tevah yuval*, because we are *led* from place to place ever since we became a people, and who knows if we will not be led again and again. . . . We are at the mercy of others and we do not own anything, hence we are being led from one place to another.”⁴⁸

There is more to this highly pitched report, but my interest is in the bold contrast that Berlin sketches between the two very close Hebrew figures of speech we are following here, *ke-tson tivhah* and *ke-tson la-tevah*

yuvah, “as sheep to be slaughtered” versus “as sheep led to slaughter.” The present atrocities, avows Berlin, allow for no martyrdom, no beautiful or noble death as represented by the psalmist’s hallowed image, *ke-tson tivhah*; the present offers only degradation, itself the result of the dependence on others and the lack of material anchor. Hence only the later, postbiblical phrase, the one marking the dishonorable state of passive victimhood deplored in prayer since medieval times, is relevant. Moreover, Berlin seems to reject the equanimity with which this prayer had been recited for centuries. The seeds of revolt against the state of affairs of being *led* (emphasized in the text) as sheep to slaughter seem to have been sown already here, just a few months before the publication of Leo Pinsker’s *Autoemancipation!* We can almost imagine how Berlin’s linguistic pilpul over *kotso shel po’al* (the difference a verb can make) would eventually lead to the call for death with honor recorded in *Yizkor* and from there to Kovner’s proclamation on the first night of 1942.

Imagination is not historical verification, however. To make the argument stand, more evidence is needed. The following data, gathered from eight Hebrew newspapers and journals published between the 1860s and the 1940s, draws a multifaceted picture of a culture that has been totally submerged, perhaps under the impact of World War II, leaving only its tip—Kovner’s rallying call—as a marker of a rich idiomatic terrain hitherto lost to Jewish historical consciousness.⁴⁹

Beware: “As Sheep to Slaughter” Everywhere!

If we picture the relation between the original psalmist’s *ke-tson tivhah*, “as sheep to be slaughtered,” and the later invented form, *ke-tson la-tevah yuvah*, “as sheep led to slaughter,” as a race for popularity, the younger upstart clearly won the day. Although there is some confusion and overlapping between the two (or three, if we consider also the Jeremiah variant, *ke-tson le-tivhah*),⁵⁰ most of the modern uses in newspapers and journals stick to minor variations of the image made popular by the prayer book, “as sheep led to slaughter.” Moreover, from the very beginning, in early dailies and weeklies (such as *Hamelits*, *Ha-magid*, *Ha-tsefirah*, *Ha-yom*, *Ha-levanon*, and *Havatsalet*), the context of the usage is often faithful to the original—namely, a stock metaphor for describing pogroms, persecutions, and the general passive helplessness of Jewish communities all over the world, from Persia to Paris and from North Africa to London.

However, the image is also used metaphorically in surprising contexts. The image became ingrained in Hebrew discourse, to the degree

[151]

“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”

●
Yael S.
Feldman

that it was inflated and came to stand for any situation involving *unequal* powers. If in 2005 the use of “we will not go as sheep to slaughter” by Israeli settlers on the eve of their forced withdrawal from the Gaza Strip sounded hyperbolic, if not sacrilegious, this pre-Holocaust corpus revealed that such escalation was nothing new.

In 1862, *Ha-magid* featured an editorial of sorts warning against new threats to the system of traditional Jewish education. The warning was dressed in militaristic language, a feature that would soon penetrate modern Hebrew fiction.⁵¹ In this language, the image of “as lost sheep” (*ke-tson ovdot*) describes the innocent Jewish teachers and students who must be protected, presumably by *Ha-magid*'s readers, against an army of Jewish fighters and destroyers intent on breaking down the walls and defenses of tradition.⁵²

The shift from “lost sheep” to “sheep sent to slaughter” did not take long, though it did not necessarily take place in a Jewish context. In 1866 this expression was applied to the Austrian armies, who faced the threat of their enemy's new lethal weapon (*keli krav*). The frightened Austrians went to battle “as sheep to slaughter,” all their bravery dissipated in the face of this terrifying weapon.⁵³

This application of Hebrew's paradigmatic image of victimization to *armed* gentile armies is rather ironic. It turns on its head, or deautomatizes, the expected association between this image and the proverbial Jewish *lack* of weapons, means of defense, fighting spirit, or all of the above. Yet this reversal is not unique; it would later show up in the Hebrew press of the 1940s as a rationalization for the might of Hitler's armies. Why are they so powerful? the newspaper *Davar* asked in June 1940; because they show no consideration for their foot soldiers, who are sent “as sheep to slaughter” by a mechanized Molokh.⁵⁴

Other examples of unusual applications include triumphal reversals of any balance of power. In 1890, *Ha-tsefirah*, the Warsaw weekly, published a report entitled “Our Brethren's Settlements in the Holy Land,” about the victory of a group of settlers from the newly established settlement of Petah Tikvah over Arab robbers. The Arabs were finally *led* to prison, concludes the report, “as sheep to slaughter.”⁵⁵ Two years later, the same journal reported that not all is shiny in *die goldene medineh* (the golden land). Under the title “Slave [or Hard] Labor [*avodat perekh*] in a Free Country,” we hear about a man who managed to escape the misery of eastern Europe only to fall victim to economic oppression in America. His underpaid, heavily proscribed, hard labor is described by the phrase *ke-tson la-tevah yuval*.⁵⁶

“Sheep to Slaughter” and Hanukkah?

It was in the short-lived Russian Hebrew daily *Ha-yom* (1886–88) that a crucial finding surfaced. Around Hanukkah of 1886–87, this St. Petersburg newspaper published an extended piece, a historical essay of sorts, titled “Antiochus and the Hasmoneans.” The focus of the piece is the historical phenomenon of peoples’ struggles for freedom. There are two kinds of freedom, the essayist suggests: whereas “the more educated nations fought for their freedom and their country,” he reasons, “the people of Israel fight for the faith of its heart, for thoughts and ideas.” The model for this kind of freedom-fighting is quite startling: “Socrates gave up his life for his ideas and became an emblem; likewise, the Jewish people as a whole were a Socratic people . . . and it was the Hasmonean family that served as a model for the whole people.” What comes next, however, is even more remarkable: “Indeed, the Hasmoneans refused to give their life to the enemy; they refused to let the enemy lead them as sheep to slaughter for their faith. They said rather, ‘We will die a hero’s death and make the Hellenes pay dearly for our souls.’”⁵⁷

This echoes the familiar Hanukkah narrative, with one exception: the presence of the phrase *lead them as sheep to slaughter*. Nowhere else is there any link between Hanukkah and the phrase *ke-tson la-tevah yuval*. This disconnect is reinforced by research carried out in recent years into the rise and fall of this postcanonical festival, according to which Hanukkah, historically a rather marginal holiday, was reevaluated and reshaped by Zionism. It was mobilized as a national, heroic, military celebration in both eastern and central Europe as early as 1883.⁵⁸ The Jews of the Yishuv continued this trend, making Hag ha-Hashmonaim, the Hasmonean festival, the centerpiece of its secularized, reinvented tradition.⁵⁹ It was only with the establishment of the state, sociologist Eliezer Don-Yehiya argues, that the Zionist Hasmonean/Maccabean festival lost its primacy to Yom Ha-’atsmaut—the celebration of Israel’s independence—and to contemporary myths of national heroism.⁶⁰

In none of these recent studies, however, even in *Sefer Ha-mo’adim*, the classic Zionist/Israeli compendium of the Jewish festivals (1946–54), is there mention of a link between the Hasmonean legacy and the phrase *ke-tson la-tevah yuval*.⁶¹

Yet the record of the early Hebrew press is insistent. In December 1903, Hanukkah was celebrated by *Ha-zeman*, another journal published in St. Petersburg. Just a few months earlier, *Ha-zeman* had been the first Hebrew journal to report the news about the Kishinev pogrom. It was also privileged to publish Bialik’s haunting epic elegy (kinah), in which the pogrom was lamented, though not without a

[153]

“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”

●
Yael S.
Feldman

harsh critique of its victims for their exilic powerlessness and passivity, judged as typical products of the Jewish diaspora. The critique was carried out via a parody of the language of Jewish martyrdom: saintly Jewish martyrs (*kedoshim*), sanctified for generations through the image *ke-tson tivhah*, were now mockingly called “calves to be slaughtered” (*eglei ha-tivhah*).⁶²

We should not be surprised then that in a dramatic story titled “In the Days of Mattathias,” published by *Ha-zeman* for Hanukkah of 1903, the recent Kishinev catastrophe reverberates in the words of the “aged yet youthful-looking” patriarch, again harshly critiquing past and present weakness through the familiar image:

Our brethren, said Mattathias. . . . We are as sheep to slaughter; the impure Hellenes defiled our temple and we did not try to defend ourselves against the cruel enemy. This is our sin. If we must die, it behooves us [*tov ve-yafeh lanu*] to fall in battle while defending ourselves, sword in hand, rather than stretching our neck, as a dumb ewe, to every sword hovering over our faces. Let us die with our enemies!⁶³

The Hasmonean recipe for heroic death in battle as imagined in the Hebrew press in both 1887 and 1903 raises two questions. First, where did these early Zionists get the idea to put a critique of passive victimhood, in language that would come into being for the first time only some 1400 years later (in the Ashkenazi prayer book) in the mouth of Mattathias the Hasmonean? Second, why did this link disappear sometime in the twentieth century, certainly by the 1940s, as recent collective memory and scholarly research bear witness?

Sefer Yosippon: The Medieval Father of Invention

Though the answer to the second question is still pending and requires further research, the answer to the first harbors a revelation. Here we must turn to tenth-century Italy, to an anonymously authored Hebrew history of the Second Temple period known as *Sefer Yosippon* (The Book of Yosippon).⁶⁴ The author of this imaginative rendition of Josephus Flavius’s *The Jewish War* freely and creatively used sources drawn from the Latin Bible and from Latin “translations” (really Christian adaptations) of Josephus.⁶⁵ The changes he introduced are both stylistic and ideological. Some of the innovations contributed to the creation of a dramatic narrative written in a lively Hebrew; others helped re-Judaize the Latin sources (especially Josephus) that had been Christianized in the fourth century. In a

sense, the author of *Sefer Yosippon* secularized his sources, turning them into a history marked by national pride rather than religious devotion.⁶⁶ Among other rewritings, we may count the author's ambivalent treatment of King Herod and his depiction of the Messiah⁶⁷ or his more heroic-military version of Masada, which openly differs from the treatment of the scene in Josephus's *Jewish War*.⁶⁸

In light of this orientation, the unexpected contribution of the author of *Sefer Yosippon* to the story of Hanukkah is not surprising. Contrary to his sources, he puts in the mouth of Mattathias the Hasmonean a call that is very similar to the one that was brought back to center stage in Vilna a millennium later: "Be strong and let us be strengthened and let us die fighting and not die as sheep led to slaughter" (*hizeku ve-nithazekah ve-namut ba-milhamah ve-lo namut ketson la-tevah yuval*).⁶⁹

David Flusser, the editor of the modern edition of *Sefer Yosippon*, notes modestly that "Mattathias' speech to his followers . . . is the author's own invention."⁷⁰ Given the location—Jerusalem—and time frame of his work on this edition (from "after the Second World War," when Yitzhak Baer trusted him with the *Yosippon* manuscripts,⁷¹ until 1978, when the first volume was finally published), Flusser's restraint might seem surprising. Was Flusser not aware of the twentieth-century reverberations of this innovation and of the public storm that raged over its recent applications? Or did he feel that as a disciplined historian his obligation was to the text's philological past rather than its contemporary ideological applications?

This quandary grows more troubling when we consider Flusser's further scholarly publications. In two later articles, he examined "the historical circumstances of the Hasmoneans' Temple Dedication" and challenged the assumption that their great exploits were "forgotten on purpose" (or repressed, Hebrew *hushkehu*) by the people of Israel (*'am Yisrael*) in the Middle Ages.⁷² Yet despite his meticulous textual and chronological analyses, Flusser seems to be oblivious to *Sefer Yosippon*'s most crucial innovation: the challenging subversion of the traditional victim imagery. Were the contemporary repercussions of this subversion too bewildering for him? Or did he prefer—in typical Zionist fashion—the secular (*avant la lettre*) military, geopolitical exploits of the son, Judah the Maccabee, to the father's more traditional religious fervor?⁷³

Regardless of the answers to these questions, *Sefer Yosippon* holds a triple primacy. First, it foregrounded a hybrid version of Isaiah and Psalms (replacing *lamb* with *sheep*, perhaps an anti-Christian polemic). Second, it rejected the victimized passivity of the sources.

[155]

"Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter"

●
Yael S.
Feldman

Third, it integrated this rejection into a fitting dramatic event, the Hasmonean uprising.

Sefer Yosippon's first novelty was apparently inherited by the Hebrew prayer book of Ashkenazi Jewry, which in the wake of its traumatic experience in the Crusades was undeniably in need of images of victims and sacrifices (*horbanot*).⁷⁴ Its second novelty, the rejection of this very image, was apparently discovered by the early Zionists. Finding this rejection in the mouth of an ancient Jewish fighter for religious freedom might have helped these Zionists legitimize a new language of resistance, a call to turn the old tablets over.⁷⁵

From Text to Active Resistance

As the twentieth century rolled on, the bond between the Hasmoneans and the subversive image of resistance came slowly undone.⁷⁶ Soon Hanukkah rhetoric was returned to its “origins,” losing its medieval ornamentation.⁷⁷ *Sefer Yosippon's* imaginative invention, however, turned into a rallying call for practical action, now attached to any figure or call for resistance—most obviously in the frame of East European self-defense movements and especially in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom. Contemporary scholars have explored the repercussions of this seminal event, in particular in Bialik’s poetic response, “In the City of Slaughter.” Considered by many to be the banner of the turn to Jewish self-defense in the early twentieth century, this poem has recently become the object of much scrutiny.⁷⁸ Some argue that Bialik’s abrupt shift from an admiration of Jewish martyrdom (*kiddush ha-shem*) to its total negation and ridicule (“calves to be slaughtered”) was inspired by a postpogrom change of heart toward the use of force by cultural Zionist Ahad Ha’am, as evidenced by the proclamation (*karoz*) of the Union of Hebrew Writers, which he composed.⁷⁹

However, it is not easy to find any use of the trope we are following here in this Hebrew proclamation, nor is it present in similar public statements in Yiddish or Russian. Though the latter relied on the Russian linguistic polarization between *zhertvi* and *geroi* (victims and heroes),⁸⁰ the Hebrew and Yiddish proclamations mostly evoked traditional images of victimization. Ahad Ha’am, for example, fell back on tropes associated with the bound Isaac (“stretching one’s neck for the slaughter”), labeling such behavior as shameful and dishonorable (*herpah*). His powerful conclusion alludes to yet another stock image of victimization, that of the biblical first murder, the unsuspecting Abel: “Our brethren’s *blood* in Kishinev is *crying out to us*,” he says, to

“rise up and behave like men,” namely, to “defend our property, honor, and life by ourselves, not through the help of others.”⁸¹ Nevertheless, the sheep-to-slaughter motif is nowhere to be seen, apparently not yet part of the public discourse in 1903.

In his private communication, however, a slightly different picture emerges. In a letter written in May of the same year, Ahad Ha'am uses harsher language, making explicit his rejection of the age-old, sacrosanct Hebraic marker of martyrdom, *ke-tson tivhah*: “First of all we should turn into human beings/men [*anashim*], shaking off internally our lowliness and servitude/slavishness [*avedutenu*], so we can stop being as sheep to be slaughtered.”⁸² Soon after, the same marker—and a similar sentiment against it—appeared in Y. H. Brenner’s novella “Mi-saviv la-nekudah” (Around the Point). His protagonist, agitated by rumors of a lethal pogrom, falls back on the old martyr idiom only to denounce it: “Were the Jews like sheep to be slaughtered [*ke-tson tivhah*]? Did they not defend themselves?”⁸³

By the end of the decade, however, it was the medieval expression of protest invented in *Sefer Yossi'pon* that took center stage. In 1910, for example, *Ha-zeman* celebrated the work of Yehiel Michal Halperin, one of the most colorful Zionist activists, dubbed by the journalist “a dreamer and fighter” (*holem ve-lohem*). After the Kishinev pogrom, says the reporter, Halperin “wept and mourned as a child . . . and tore our hearts to pieces by his wailing. Not for the victims had he shed tears, however, but rather for the fact that Jews died as sheep led to slaughter, without protest, without resistance.”⁸⁴

A similar anecdote describes how Rabbi Yitzhok Schwarzbard, aged father of Sholom Schwarzbard of Petliura fame,⁸⁵ joined the Jewish self-defense movement in 1905. To explain his act to his young son, he compares himself to “one of the Hasmoneans,” saying: “It is better to die a hero’s death on the killing field than die as sheep to slaughter.”⁸⁶ The resemblance to the language of Yaakov Plotkin’s bravura as recalled by Ben-Zvi in *Yizkor* is striking.

We are close here to the language of the post-Holocaust debates with which I opened this article. As we have seen, by 1911, the critique of the meek and mild sheep had turned into a flat rejection, a recipe for forthcoming action, without necessarily falling back on the heroes of the past. The same call for action is replicated in 1920 Jewish Palestine, in a response to the Arab riots in Jerusalem. This traumatic event was the first disappointment that dampened the pioneers’ excited anticipation of a national home under the British Mandate, following the 1917 Balfour Declaration. Here it was Ben-Zvi’s friend, Zalman Rubashov (later Shazar, the third president of Israel), who disagreed with the

[157]

“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”

●
Yael S.
Feldman

attempts of his colleagues, Ben-Zvi among them, to reason with the British and demand justice and rule of law. In an article brazenly titled “Will They Make Jerusalem into a Kishinev?”⁸⁷ he adamantly proclaimed: “The brothers of the Tel Hai heroes will not be led as sheep to slaughter. The Land of Israel will not become a gallows [*gardom*] for the people of Israel.”⁸⁸

The resolute refusal to be “like Kishinev” is indeed emblematic. In a few years, the rejected victim trope would be read back onto the rationale for the self-defense efforts triggered by the Kishinev pogrom. Marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of that traumatic event, Ahad Ha’am’s poignant 1903 call for armed resistance was republished in the Hebrew journal *Ha-tekufah*, prefaced by Simon Dubnow. The sheep imagery surfaced in Dubnow’s preface, this time perceived as a first step in an aggressive strategy of defense. Organized self-defense was necessary, said the elder historian, not only for defense, “so that our enemies would see that we are not as sheep to slaughter [*ein anahnu ke-tson latevah*],” but also for deterrence, so they would realize that “by trying to kill us they put their own lives in danger.”⁸⁹

The line from *Sefer Yosippon*’s Mattathias to Abba Kovner via the 1880s Hebrew press and the post-Kishinev self-defense discourse of Ahad Ha’am, Ben-Zvi, Rubashov, and Dubnow seems straight enough, despite their different ideological loyalties. All shared the realization that it was necessary to subvert the traditional trope of the prayer book, which for almost a millennium deplored the persecuted people’s victim status without urging them to overturn it. By the 1930s, this conviction seems to have been so commonplace that it could even be loaned out to non-Jewish heroes. Thus the Hebrew translator of Franz Werfel’s classic *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* felt free to put it in the mouth of one of the leaders of the Musa Dagh uprising, the Armenian pastor Aram Tomasian: “I know how I would die: Not as a sheep led to slaughter [*lo ke-keves la-tevah yuval*].”⁹⁰ This translation reflects the spirit of the original, which holds heroic death in battle in the highest esteem. Yet it does not reflect the original wording. Werfel’s German is clear of scriptural echoes; his hero simply refuses to die like “a defenseless sheep,” as a later Hebrew version will have it too.⁹¹

In the 1930s, however, nobody seemed to mind such lax translation norms. Hebraization of foreign concepts was rampant. Yet in this case, it no doubt reflected Hebrew readers’ strong identification with the lot of the Armenians. The popularity of Werfel’s novel grew by leaps and bounds, reaching iconic status among Zionist youth movements in both Palestine and Europe, and especially in the ghettos.⁹²

Should we be surprised then that for Mordechai Tenenbaum (1916–43), Kovner’s comrade in arms (and also rival of sorts) who led the Bialystok ghetto uprising, the name Musa Dagh became a shorthand for “death with honor,” replacing for a brief moment the home-spun “not as sheep to slaughter” as a call for armed resistance? “Nothing is left for us to do,” Tenenbaum reportedly declared in the final meeting of the Dror youth movement in February 1943, “except for organizing, at all costs, an action of collective resistance; the ghetto will be our own Musa Dagh, and so it will add an honorable chapter to Jewish Bialystok and to our movement.”⁹³

[159]

*“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”*

●
Yael S.
Feldman

Preliminary Conclusions

The odyssey of the Hebraic motif of death with(out) honor as traced here across centuries and continents is far from complete. A fitting interim conclusion for this unfinished story comes from the 1943 Yishuv press, then in the grip of horrifying news from Europe. It is again Zalman Rubashov who offers a rather unorthodox view of the issue at hand, thereby opening up a new venue for exploration. In his talk at a laborers’ meeting, Rubashov pleaded:

We have no right nor desire to see ourselves as proud people and see them [European Jews] as enslaved just because they and not we are led to slaughter. We know that we are hewn from the same source and that the Jewish resistance movement, from Tel Hai in the Galilee to the partisans in Smolensk, emerged from the same cradle, from the cradle of the Jewry of Russia, Poland, and Lithuania.⁹⁴

Rubashov’s words may disrupt the conventional perception of the so-called Yishuv attitude to European Jewry during World War II and its aftermath.⁹⁵ They attempted to stamp out, in real time, the dividing line between “here” (Jewish Palestine) and “there” (the Jewish Diaspora), between “us” and “them”—that sense of chosenness (*ha-atah behartanu*) of the Yishuv that three decades earlier had rankled the Yishuv’s literary arbiter and moral compass, Y. H. Brenner.⁹⁶ They also anticipated Bauer’s admonition, four decades later, against a similar attitude to the survivors of the Holocaust through application of the phrase “as sheep to slaughter.” Above all, Rubashov’s words reminded his audience, as they should remind us today, that in human psychology, the line between helpless acceptance of victim status and resistance to it may be very thin indeed. In Jewish historical consciousness, the alternation between these two conditions has been influenced by



major historical catastrophes. Yet periods of resistance have often been cut short and easily forgotten. It is up to us and to future generations to make sure that we remember this forgotten past, so that we neither are doomed to repeat it nor blame the messengers who retrieve its lost lessons.⁹⁷

Notes

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- 1 E.g., Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Post-memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).
- 2 Marianne Hirsch, "Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 105.
- 3 Yehuda Bauer, interview by Amos Goldberg, *Yad Vashem Shoah Resource Center*, January 18, 1998, p. 31, accessed June 15, 2011, http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203856.pdf.
- 4 For this past-to-present orientation, see Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge, Engl., 2011), and Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge, Engl., 2012).
- 5 I use the term *secularism* with caution, fully cognizant of its problematic nature, as recent studies have made amply clear; see Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York, 1970); Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago, 1985 [1st ed., Berlin, 1922]); Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994); Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford, 2003); Vincent P. Pecora, *Secularization and Cultural Criticism* (Chicago, 2006); Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, eds., *Secularisms* (Durham, N.C., 2008).
- 6 See Eyal J. Naveh, *Crown of Thorns: Political Martyrdom in America* (New York, 1990); Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge, Engl., 1999); Ivan Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism, and Social Thought in France* (Chicago, 2002).
- 7 Yael S. Feldman, *Glory and Agony: Isaac's Sacrifice and National Narrative* (Stanford, 2010).

- 8 Simha Elberg, *Akeidas Treblinka* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1946); Eliezer Berkovits, *With God in Hell: Judaism in the Ghettos and Death Camps* (New York, 1979), 125; Elie Wiesel, *Night, Dawn, the Accident: Three Tales* (New York, 1972), 75. According to Elberg, the Akedah “moved with Israel from land to land until it ended up in the death camp”; see Simha Elberg, “The Akedah of Treblinka,” in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, ed. Steven T. Katz, Shlomo Biderman, and Gershon Greenberg (Oxford, 2007), 192–98. See also Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, “Holy Fire,” in Katz, Biderman, and Greenberg, *Wrestling with God*, 30–40; Gershon Greenberg, “Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Thought about the Holocaust since World War II: The Radicalized Aspect,” in Katz, Biderman, and Greenberg, *Wrestling with God*, 11–25; idem, “Sacred Death for Orthodox Jewish Thought during the Holocaust,” in *Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art, and Literature*, ed. Marcel Poorthuis, Joshua Schwartz, and Joseph Turner (Leiden, 2009), 289–315.
- 9 This is not to say that the Akedah was absent from Israeli Holocaust literature; see, for example, Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, 133–36.
- 10 Samuel Rolles Driver and Adolf Neubauer, eds., *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah* (New York, 1969); David Seeley, *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul’s Concept of Salvation* (Sheffield, 1990), 39–57; E. R. Ekblad, *Isaiah’s Servant Poems according to the Septuagint* (Leuven, 1999); Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, eds., *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2004).
- 11 The Israeli linguist and author Rubik Rosenthal, for instance, commenting in 2005 on the use of the phrase by Israeli settlers struggling against their government-imposed pull-out from the Gaza Strip, presents it as a part of the “Israeli Shoah lexicon”; it was coined, he avows, by Abba Kovner, on the basis of Isaiah 53 and Jeremiah 12; see Rubik Rosenthal, “Ha-zirah ha-leshonit,” *Ma’ariv*, May 6, 2005. I return below to the significant variations among the biblical sources.
- 12 On Kovner’s proclamation and the various challenges to his exclusive authorship of it, see Dina Porat, *Me-’ever la-gashmi: Parashat hayav shel Abba Kovner* (Tel Aviv, 2000), 80–102; English translation, *The Fall of a Sparrow: The Life and Times of Abba Kovner*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Yuval (Stanford, 2009).
- 13 Bauer’s unease with the expression at this late date was not unusual. A case in point is the English translation of Oz Almog’s study of the creation of the Sabra (*The Sabra*, trans. Haim Watzman [Los Angeles, Calif., 2000]). Though the original Hebrew version of the book openly discussed the phrase *ke-tson la-tevah* in the section on the Sabra’s “anti-diaspora education” (Oz Almog, *Ha-tsabar: Dyokan* [Tel Aviv, 1997], 138–40), attributing authorship of the phrase to Abba Kovner without dispute (418), the phrase is completely missing from the English version. However, in her 1998 novel *Lamah lo bat lifnei ha-milhamah* (Tel

[161]

“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”



Yael S.
Feldman

- Aviv, 1998), 57, Lizzi Doron falls back on the 1950s cliché contrasting the unpolished, prickly, native “elite” Sabra with the urban, European sensibilities of Helena, a Holocaust survivor, who in protest introduces herself to the native protagonist as Helena Tson La-tevah.
- 14 The belated ripple effect of the trial and eventual murder of Rudolf Israel Kastner (1906–57) is attested by recent publications, from Motti Lerner’s play *Kastner* (Tel Aviv, 1988) to Yechiam Weitz’s study *Ha-ish she-nirtsah pa’amayim: Hayav, mishpato u-moto shel d’r Yisrael Kastner* (Jerusalem, 1995).
- 15 This exchange, too, was revisited in the 1980s; see Abba Kovner, ‘*Al ha-gesher ha-tsar: Masot be-‘al peh*, ed. Shalom Luria (Tel Aviv, 1981), 111; Nathan Alterman, ‘*Al shetei ha-derakhim: Dapim min-ha-pinkas*, ed. Dan La’or (Jerusalem, 1989); Dina Porat, “Lo hayu shetei derakhim,” review of ‘*Al shetei ha-derakhim: Dapim min ha-pinkas* by Nathan Alterman, *Ha-tsiyonut* 15 (1990): 223–35; idem, *Me-‘ever la-gashmi*, 232–33.
- 16 Gershom Scholem’s 1964 letter to Arendt, blaming her for lacking in what is known in Jewish tradition as *ahavat Yisrael* (love of [the people of] Israel), resulted in a bitter exchange that famously put an end to their long-standing friendship; see Gershom Scholem, “A Letter to Hannah Arendt,” in *Devarim be-go: Pirkei morashah u-tehiyah*, 2 vols., ed. Avraham Shapira (Tel Aviv, 1975), 1: 91–95. Compare Hayim Gouri, *Mul ta ha-zekhukhit: Mishpat Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv, 1963); English translation, *Facing the Glass Booth: The Jerusalem Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, trans. Michael Swirsky (Detroit, 2003); Jacob Robinson, *And the Crooked Shall be Made Straight* (London, 1965); Gideon Hausner, *Justice in Jerusalem* (New York, 1966). For renewed interest more recently, see note 19, below.
- 17 K. Shabbetai, *Ke-tson la-tevah?* (Haifa, 1962); Yiddish translation, *Vi shof tsu der shkhite?* (Tel Aviv, 1962); German translation, *Wie Schafe zur Schlachtbank?*, trans. Emanuel Bin Gurion (Beit Dagan, 1965); English translation, *As Sheep to the Slaughter: The Myth of Cowardice* (London, 1962). Shabbetai elaborated on this subject in *Yehudim ve-lo-yehudim ba-Shoah* (Beit Dagan, 1970).
- 18 See, for example, Eliezer Lidovsky, *Lo ke-tson la-tevah* (Tel Aviv, 1982); Judah Segal Landau, *Lo ka-tson la-tevah* (Tel Aviv, 1994); Shalom Breyer, *Ha-mered be-Kostopol: Lo hiskamnu la-lekhet ke-tson la-tevah* (Tel Aviv, 1996); Zvi Smoliakov, ed., *Lo ke-tson la-tevah* (Tel Aviv, 2004). Alex Feitelson, *Basufah waa-mavak* (n.p., 1994), also raises the question, only to deny the charge and put the blame, paradoxically in the spirit of Arendt, on the leaders: “Did the Jews of Kovno go as sheep to slaughter? Absolutely not! Their leaders had knowingly led them as sheep to slaughter” (12).
- 19 Even before the Hebrew publication of Arendt’s *Eichmann bi-Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv, 2000), two master’s theses addressed different aspects of the Arendt controversy; see Edna Levinger, “Eichmann bi-Yerushalayim: Din ve-heshbon ‘al ha-banaliyut shel ha-roa’; Hannah Arendt veba-intelektualim ha-yehudim shel Nyu York (1963–1966)” (M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1996), and Haim Rosenson, “Ha-mahloket bi-shenot ha-shishim

- be-Yisrael uva-'olam ha-yehudi-intelektuali shel Nyu York, be-'ikvot sifrah shel Hannah Arendt 'Eichmann bi-Yerushalayim'" (M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1999). Moreover, Arendt's book title and her take on the trial reverberate in recent studies, both here and in Israel: Steven Aschheim, ed., *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem* (Berkeley, 2001); idem, *Hannah Arendt bi-Yerushalayim*, trans. Yaakov Gottschalk and Analu Verbin (Jerusalem, 2007); Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002); Idith Zertal and Moshe Zukerman, eds., *Hannah Arendt: Hatsi meah shel pulmus* (Tel Aviv, 2004); Michal ben Naftali, *Ha-bikur shel Hannah Arendt* (Jerusalem, 2006). The title of Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's biography, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven, 2004), takes its cue from the Scholem-Arendt rift that followed the trial. See also Idith Zertal, "Bein 'ahavat ha-'olam' le-'ahavat Yisrael': Ha-kol ha-haser be-pulmus Arendt," in *Ha-Shoah ba-historiyah ha-yehudit*, ed. Dan Michman (Jerusalem, 2005), 357–98. The scholarly debate over the Alterman-Kovner exchange was revisited recently as well: Raya Cohen, "Ha-omnam derekh ahavah? 'Od al ha-hitnagedut ha-mezuy-enet ba-getaot," in *Ha-Shoah – Historiyah ve-zikaron: Kovetz maamarim shai le-Israel Gutman*, ed. Shmuel Almog et al. (Jerusalem, 2001), 25–45.
- 20 See George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison, Wisc., 1985); Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York, 1991); idem, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, 1993); David Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (Berkeley, 1997); Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley, 1997); Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, 30–38.
- 21 See Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* (Seattle, 1982); Saul Friedlander, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington, Ind., 1993); Amos Funkenstein, *Jewish Perceptions of History* (Los Angeles, Calif., 1993); Gavriel David Rosenfeld, "A Flawed Prophecy? *Zakhor*, the Memory Boom, and the Holocaust," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97, no. 4 (2007): 508–20; David Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* (Stanford, 2009).
- 22 Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London, 1990), 8–22; Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through" (1914), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey et al., 24 vols. (London, 1953–74) 12: 145–56; "Mourning & Melancholia" (1917), in Strachey et al., *Standard Edition*, 14: 243–58.
- 23 See Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 291–32; idem, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994); Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony* (London, 1991); Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (Baltimore, Md., 1995); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, Md., 2001).
- 24 Yonatan Frankel, "Sefer 'ha-Yizkor' mi-shenat 1911: He'arah al mitosim leumiyim bi-tekfut ha-'aliyah ha-sheniyah," *Yahadut zamanenu* 4 (1988): 67–96; Emmanuel Sivan, *Dor tashah: Mitos, dyokan, zikaron* (Tel

[163]

"Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter"



Yael S.
Feldman

- Aviv, 1991); Anita Shapira, *Herev ha-yonah: Ha-tsiyonut v'eha-koah* (Tel Aviv, 1992), 109–15; Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, 70–80.
- 25 Alexander Zuskind Rabinovich, ed., *Yizkor: Matsevet zikaron le-halelei ha-po'alim ha-ivriyim be-Erets Yisrael* (Jaffa, 1911), 13, emphasis added. For the first publication about this finding, see Yael Feldman and Steven Bowman, “Lo namut ke-tson la-tevah yuval,” *Haaretz Literary Supplement*, Dec. 7, 2007, p. 4.
- 26 Hayim Nahman Bialik, “Be-‘ir ha-haregah” (1903), in *Kol kitvei* (Tel Aviv, 1961), 97–108.
- 27 Gershom Scholem, *Mi-Berlin li-Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv, 1982), 96. For more on this point, see Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, 83. Compare Dov Sadan, *Avnei gevul: ‘Al ishim u-derakhim* (Tel Aviv, 1964), 17.
- 28 The historical irony of this coincidence will become clear below.
- 29 Abba Kovner, “Ha-nes ba-hidalon,” *Mishmar*, Dec. 7, 14, and 21, 1945.
- 30 Kovner, *‘Al ha-gesher ha-tsar*, 38–49. Space limitations do not allow for the full attention this essay deserves.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 41–42.
- 33 There are conflicting opinions about the original language of the famous Vilna proclamation. In the Eichmann trial, however, Kovner himself—holding in hand the Yiddish document, the only material evidence of this proclamation to survive the war—stated: “This is the first revolt proclamation, and not only in Vilna. . . . It is written in Yiddish, though *I remember writing the original in Hebrew and then translating it myself to Yiddish*”; Kovner, *‘Al ha-gesher ha-tsar*, 95; emphasis added.
- 34 Abba Kovner, “Ha-mashma‘ut ha-historit shel ha-hitnagedut ha-yehudit,” in *Mishelo ve-‘alav: Abba Kovner—Shiv'im shanah le-huladeto*, ed. Ruzka Korczak-Merla and Yehudah Tuvin (Giv‘at Havivah, 1988), 50–51.
- 35 The source of *tsion le-tivhah* is Jeremiah 12:3; though at times used interchangeably in postbiblical texts, there is a world of difference between Jeremiah’s usage and context and the psalmist’s.
- 36 I thank Shulamit Elitzur for her help in retrieving this data.
- 37 See b. *Gittin* 57b: “On one occasion four hundred boys and girls were carried off for immoral purposes. . . . [and they leaped into the sea]; of them it is said, ‘Yea, for thy sake we are being killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered’ [*nehshavnu ke-tson tivhah*]; Rav Judah, however, said that this refers to the woman and her seven sons” (Soncino edition). Cf. *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1.22: “‘This is why maidens [*alamot*] loved you’: This is the martyred generation [*doro shel shemad*], as it is said, ‘Yea, for Thy sake we are being killed all day long, we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered’ [*nehshavnu ke-tson tivhah*].” Parallel statements occur in *Sifre Deuteronomy* 32; *Mekhilta Shirata* 2; and *Lamentations Rabbah* 1.95.
- 38 Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: Hilkhot yesodei ha-Torah* (1180), 5.5, <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/i/0.htm>.
- 39 *Mikraot gedolot*, Psalms, 27.

- 40 This phrase is in fact a misreading of the biblical *ke-tson kodashim* (Ezekiel 36:38), in which the prophet compares Israel positively to sheep selected for sacrifice at the temple (rather than forcefully butchered by the enemy).
- 41 Kovner, “Ha-mashma‘ut ha-historit,” 50–51. In this respect his position did not change after his first 1945 talk; see Kovner, “Ha-nes ba-hid-alon,” 41.
- 42 According to Yitzhak Baer, it was the tenth-century *Sefer Yosippon* (to which we will return below) that was the first Hebrew text to sanctify human corpses as holy sacrifices. As such, Baer suggested, *Sefer Yosippon* anticipated the ideas about martyrdom expressed in the Hebrew *Crusade Chronicles*. See Yitzhak Baer, “Sefer Yosippon ha-‘ivri,” in *Mehkarim u-masot be-toledot am Israel*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1986), 2: 117. David Flusser, ed., *Sefer Yosippon*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1978–80), adds to “this strong influence on the medieval chronicles” (2: 116) the rampant use of the adjective *kadosh/kedoshim* (holy), which he attributes to the influence of tenth-century Christian culture (2: 108–9). Compare Shmuel Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds* (Cambridge, Engl., 2006), 117–20; Simha Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom* (Brussels, 2008).
- 43 Yisrael Rutman claims that Kovner “was not the first to use the expression ‘led like sheep to the slaughter’” and goes on to refer to precisely those classic sources cited above wherein the expression *ke-tson tivhah* was used to indicate martyrdom rather than resistance. Yisrael Rutman, “Like Sheep to the Slaughter,” August 10, 2002, <http://www.aish.com/ho/i/48954636.html>.
- 44 In biblical Hebrew, the word *seh* implies a single but not necessarily a young animal; the term acquired the latter connotation in postbiblical times, probably under the influence of Christian interpretations of Isaiah 53.
- 45 I thank Avigdor Shin’an for his help in retrieving this data.
- 46 Based on the Academy of the Hebrew Language database, <http://hebrew-treasures.huji.ac.il/>, which was searched for me by Shulamit Elitzur.
- 47 Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley, 1986); idem, *God, Humanity, and History: The Hebrew First Crusade Chronicles* (Los Angeles, Calif., 2000); Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs*; Goldin, *Ways*.
- 48 “Rousia,” *Havatsalet*, Feb. 24, 1882, p. 4.
- 49 This search could not have been carried out without the digitized Jewish Historical Press and the services of the National Library’s help desk. I am indebted to Anita Shapira for pointing me in this direction and for other helpful suggestions.
- 50 I even found redundancies such as *yuvlu ke-tson tivhah la-tevah*; *Havatsalet*, Sept. 13, 1888.
- 51 On militaristic language in Hebrew literature at the turn of the twentieth century, see, for instance, Feierberg’s novella “Le-an?” (1899), in

[165]

“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”



Yael S.
Feldman

- Kovets sipurim u-ketavim*, ed. Hillel Bavli et al. (New York, 1937): 28–94, discussed in Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, 45–51.
- 52 “Hegyonei ha-magid,” *Ha-magid*, Nov. 13, 1862.
- 53 *Ha-magid*, July 18, 1866.
- 54 “‘Olam u-meorotav,” *Davar*, June 2, 1940. Ironically, this appreciation of Nazi soldiers as victims of their own system preceded contemporary attempts to critique National Socialism for its violent coercion of its own soldiers, using them as sacrificial victims on the altar of its ideology. See especially the website of the Library for Social Science and the work of its director, Richard A. Koenigsberg, libraryofsocialscience.com/publishers/koenigsberg.html.
- 55 *Ha-tsefirah*, Feb. 11, 1890.
- 56 *Ha-tsefirah*, Jan. 17, 1892.
- 57 M. P., “Antiyokhus veba-Hashmonaim,” *Ha-yom*, Jan. 4, 1887.
- 58 “As early as 1883, we find the Galician and Russian-Jewish students’ association Kadima with Nathan Birnbaum and Smolenskin at its head, organizing Chanukah celebrations in Vienna”; Francois Guesnet, “Chanukah and Its Function in the Invention of a Jewish-Heroic Tradition in Early Zionism, 1880–1900,” in *Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and Beyond*, ed. Michael Berkowitz (Leiden, 2004), 230.
- 59 Eric Hobsbaum and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, Engl., 1983); Shmuel Dotan, “Me-hag ha-hanukkah le-hag ha-Hashmonaim: Tsemihato shel ‘hag leumi’ tsioni,” in *Mehkarei hag: Ketav ‘et le-tarbut yehudit* (Beit Berl, 1998–2001), 60; Yaacov Shavit and Shoshana Sitton, *Staging and Stagers in Modern Jewish Palestine: The Creation of Festive Lore in a New Culture, 1882–1948* (Detroit, Mich., 2004).
- 60 Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “Hanukkah and the Myth of the Maccabees in Zionist Ideology and in Israeli Society,” *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (1992): 5–24; for an updated Hebrew version, see Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “Hag masorti u-mitos leumi: Hanukkah u-mitos ha-Makabim ba-tsiyonut, ha-Yishuv u-medinat Yisrael,” in *Bein masoret le-hidush*, ed. Eliezer Don-Yehiya (Ramat Gan, 2005), 581–610.
- 61 Yizhak Leib Baruch and Yomtov Levinsky, eds., *Sefer ha-mo’adim* (Tel Aviv, 1946–54). My thanks to Eliezer Don-Yehiya for directing me to this source, and for a fruitful conversation about the rise and fall of the Zionist Hanukkah in Jewish Palestine/Israel. Compare Orit Bashkin, “Hanukkah ba-siah ha-tsiyoni le-fi sefer ha-mo’adim,” *Zemanim* 61 (1998): 38–50.
- 62 Hayim Nahman Bialik, “Masa Nemirov,” later named “Be-‘ir ha-haregah.”
- 63 I. H. Tavyov, “Bi-yemei Matityahu,” *Ha-zeman*, Dec. 18, 1903, pp. 8–10 (emphasis added). In Hebrew, the final call for noble death transparently alludes to Samson’s final utterance, *tamot nafshi ‘im pelishtim* (“let me die with the Philistines”; Judges 16:30). This Hanukkah story, authored by the Hebrew educator and writer I. H. Tavyov (1858–1920), apparently reflected the contemporary split between defenders of

- old-time “religion” and their challengers, the endorsers of the budding new “Hebrew spirit.” Tavayov’s didactic “conclusion” is typical: “Thus the elders went to strengthen the faith [*dat*] with fences and boundaries while Mattathias and his friends went on to rescue Israel and the Hebrew spirit from final devastation” (10).
- 64 Flusser, *Sefer Yosippon*.
- 65 Steven Bowman, *The Book of Yosippon: An Edited and Annotated Translation* (Tel Aviv/Cambridge, Mass., forthcoming). I am indebted to Steven Bowman for introducing me to *Sefer Yosippon* and his editor, David Flusser, and for his quick recall of *Yosippon*’s audacious invention.
- 66 Steven Bowman, “Yosippon and Jewish Nationalism,” *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 61 (1995): 23–51.
- 67 Bowman, “Aqedah and Mashi’ah in Sepher Yosippon,” *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 2 (2008): 21–43.
- 68 Yael S. Feldman, “‘The Final Battle’ or ‘A Burnt Offering’? Lamdan’s *Masada* Revisited,” *AJS Perspectives*, Spring 2009, pp. 30–32.
- 69 Flusser, *Sefer Yosippon*, 1: 76; Bowman, *Book of Yosippon*. For subsequent occurrences of the new phrase, see Flusser, *Sefer Yosippon*, 1: 139 (twice), 413. Compare Eli Yassif, *Sefer ha-zikhronot—Hu divrei ha-yamim le-Yerahmiel: Mahadurah bikortit* (Tel Aviv, 2001), 292. The presence of this location in this late eleventh- or early twelfth-century chronicle, preserved in a unique fourteenth-century manuscript, is early evidence for the distribution of *Sefer Yosippon*.
- 70 Flusser, *Sefer Yosippon*, 1: 76.
- 71 Flusser, introduction to *Sefer Yosippon*, 1: n.p.
- 72 David Flusser, *Yahadut bayit sheni, hakhameiha ve-sifrutah*, ed. Serge Rozer (Jerusalem, 2002), 99–126, 127–45.
- 73 Indeed, his explorations are fully focused on Judah the Maccabee, to the total exclusion of Mattathias.
- 74 See the discussion of the double meaning of *korban* in Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, 34–36, 59–65.
- 75 To the Hebrew press references documented here we should add Micha Yosef Berdyczewski’s glowing portrayal of the “heroes of old” that he had ostensibly discovered as a child in *Sefer Yosippon*, as recounted in his early story “Be-derekh rehokah” (1898). Additional brief mentions abound in the works of major Hebrew authors (e.g., Y. H. Brenner, U. N. Gnessin, and S. Y. Agnon) and Zionist leaders (e.g., David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Berl Katznelson, and Pinhas Govrin).
- 76 Further research is needed to construct the transmission history between *Sefer Yosippon* and late nineteenth-century Zionism.
- 77 I have so far found only one modern memory trace of *Sefer Yosippon*’s innovation: in Avigdor Tcherikover, *Ha-Yehudim veva-Yevanim ba-tekufah ha-helenistit* (2nd ed., Tel Aviv, 1963 [1930]), 160, the Hasidim are said to “have avoided using arms on the Sabbath and thus let themselves be annihilated as sheep to be slaughtered [*ke-tson le-tivhah*].” My thanks to Eliezer Don-Yehiya for bringing this source to my attention.

[167]

“Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter”



Yael S.
Feldman

- 78 This shift was most pronounced in scholarly gatherings and subsequent publications marking the centennial of the event in 2003. For the most recent contribution to this literature that includes references to relevant prior scholarship, see Michael Gluzman, *Ha-guf ha-tsiyoni: Leumiyut, migdar ve-tsiyonut ba-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-modernit* (Tel Aviv, 2007), 67–95.
- 79 Ibid, 76–79.
- 80 See my discussion of Simon Dubnow’s usage of this distinction in Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, 81–82.
- 81 Ahad Ha’am, “Megilat setarim le-Ahad Ha’am,” in *Kol kitvei Ahad Ha’am*, 3 vols. (Tel Aviv, 1965), 3: 502. My thanks to Anita Shapira for directing me to this document.
- 82 Ibid, 250. My thanks to my doctoral student Danielle Drori for calling my attention to this reference.
- 83 Y. H. Brenner, “Mi-saviv la-nekudah” (1904), in *Ketavim*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv, 1978), 1: 529.
- 84 *Ha-zeman*, Aug. 28, 1910, p. 2.
- 85 Sholom Schwarzbard (1886–1938), an anarchist and Yiddish writer (under the pen name Baal-Khaloymes [the Dreamer]), is known for the 1926 assassination of Ukrainian national leader Symon Petliura, who was held responsible for the 1919 slaughter of Ukrainian Jews. Schwarzbard was eventually acquitted. For more on this case, see David Engel, *The Assassination of Symon Petliura and the Trial of Scholem Schwarzbard, 1926–1927: A Selection of Documents* (forthcoming, 2014).
- 86 “Ba-tefutsot: Le-toldotav shel Shalom Schwarsbord,” *Davar*, June 17, 1926, p. 2.
- 87 Zalman Rubashov, “Hake-Kishinev ya’asu et Yerushalayim?,” *Kuntres ahedut ha-avodah* 33 (Apr. 4, 1920): 6–8, based on Genesis 34:31: *hakezonah ya’aseh et ahoteinu* (should our sister be treated like a whore?).
- 88 Rubashov, “Hake-Kishinev,” 7. *Gardom* is an allusion to Bialik’s pogrom poem, “Al ha-shehitah”: *ve-khol ha-arets li gardom* (the whole world is my gallows).
- 89 Ahad Ha’am, “Megilat setarim,” 501.
- 90 Franz Werfel, *Arba’im ha-yamim shel Musa Dag*, trans. Joseph Lichtenbaum (Tel Aviv, 1934), 226. Compare the English translation by Geofrey Dunlop, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (New York, 1934), 205. My thanks to Dan Michman for suggesting this novel.
- 91 Franz Werfel, *Arba’im ha-yamim shel Musa Dag*, trans. Zvi Arad (Tel Aviv, 1979), 160.
- 92 See Raya Cohen, “Historiyah ke-mashal: Frants Verfel vеха-goral ha-armeni bi-tekufat ha-Shoah,” in *Sifrut ve-historiyah*, ed. Raya Cohen and Yosef Mali (Jerusalem, 1999), 171–89. Unfortunately, this otherwise insightful essay erroneously assumes that there were no differences between the two Hebrew translations, nor does it address the question of which translations—Hebrew? Yiddish?—were circulating in the ghettos during the war.

- 93 Mordechai Tenenbaum-Tamarof, *Dapim min ha-delekeh: Pirkei yoman, miktavim u-reshimot* (Tel Aviv, 1947), 79.
- 94 Zalman Rubashov, "Me-erets ha-hatsalah el gei ha-haregah," *Davar*, June 15, 1943, p. 2. Rubashov's stance echoes his essay "Magen ve-tikvah," also published in 1943, in which he defended the perceived passivity of medieval Jewish martyrdom (*kiddush hashem*) against the rising demands of the time for active self-defense. See Zalman Shazar, *Kokhvei boker* (Tel Aviv, 1950), 234–53, and my in-depth analysis in Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, 98–105. I would love to ask Rubashov-Shazar, along with Ben-Zvi and Flusser, why he kept silent in the face of the ongoing accusations against Kovner and his colleagues in the stormy 1950s and 1960s, which in part coincided with his presidency in 1963–73.
- 95 Dina Porat, *The Blue and the Yellow Stars of David: The Zionist Leadership and the Holocaust, 1939–1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York, 2000).
- 96 Brenner, "Bein mayim le-mayim" (1910), in *Ketavim*, 2: 1193; Yonatan Frankel, "Sefer 'ha-Yizkor.'" Cf. Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, 70–75.
- 97 George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, 5 vols. (New York, 1905–6), vol. 1.

[169]

"Not as Sheep
Led to Slaughter"



Yael S.
Feldman