**The Sabbatean syndrome, the messianic idea and Zionism**

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Abstract

My research, still in its early stages, proposes a basic methodological and historiographic perspective that transcends particularistic analysis. This perspective challenges the crisis orientation that has dominated Zionist historiography and examines the roots of Zionism that are integral to the Sephardic diaspora. The purpose, conscious or otherwise, of Zionist historiography that detaches the sixteenth from the nineteenth century is to ensure that the mighty process of return to the Jewish homeland is attributed exclusively to Zionism of the modern era. This ignores all the momentous accomplishments of the sixteenth century that heralded a new age in the settlement of Eretz Israel. Most Zionist historiographers attempt to ‘normalize’ history so that anything hinting at redemption is summarily excised. This is the meaning of the historiographic dispute taking place over the past few decades concerning messianism and the history of Jewish settlement of Eretz Israel in the modern era.

**Keywords**: Zionist historiography, Sephardic diaspora, messianism, Zionism, Sabbatean crisis, Hokhmat Israel, Gershom Scholem, Ben-Zion Dinur, Léon Askenazi (Manitou).

He was a lad of 11, a pale Jewish boy in a black frock coat, who was sitting in the study hall of the Yeshiva of Plonsk when he heard that the Messiah had come. They said that Herzl, a handsome, dignified man with blazing eyes, would lead the Jewish People to the land of their forefathers.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Praised be He who restores life to the dead! Yesterday was the day for which we had all been hoping! One thousand, eight hundred and eight years after the destruction of the Temple, the monarchy was restored to Israel—a miracle greater than the parting of the Red Sea! Ezekiel’s prophecy has been fulfilled! Skin and sinews have covered the dry bones and the Lord, the Great, Mighty and Formidable God, has breathed the breath of life into them! Praised be He who restores life to the dead![[2]](#footnote-2)

One summer evening in 1963, my father announced that the Messiah was coming tonight. To the question of how we will recognize him, he responded “He will wear an open shirt, short trousers and sandals.” I met the Messiah, the Jewish Agency emissary who took us out of the *mellah* in Casablanca, where I lived up to the age of 10, and brought us to Jerusalem, where we lived without a gas stove or refrigerator, struggling with integration pangs and a new language, but we rejoiced, for we were deemed worthy of living in Eretz Israel.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Introduction**

The Israeli educational system has instilled a definitive distinction between the terms ‘longing for Zion’ and ‘Zionism’, an example of the dichotomous terminology long pursued in academia. I began to realize that such distinctions are artificial while researching the Jews of Spain, the Sephardic diaspora[[4]](#footnote-4) and the Parisian *Hokhmat Israel* School[[5]](#footnote-5) and here seek to lay the foundations for challenging this paradigm. The issue is highly significant, shedding light on the modern study of Jewish history and the paths of Zionist historiography and its alternating denigration and exaltation of personalities and processes, especially regarding the messianic idea. The scientific aura enveloping this historiography undoubtedly conceals purely ideological biases.

**The Ottoman conquest of Eretz Israel as a point of departure**

Several historical research conferences held in 2017 marked various round-number anniversaries: 500 years since the Protestant Reformation,[[6]](#footnote-6) 120 years since the First Zionist Congress, 100 years since both the Balfour Declaration and the Bolshevik Revolution, 70 years since the UN Partition Plan for Palestine’s publication, and 50 years since the Six-Day War. This study addresses a sixth: 500 years since the conquest of Eretz Israel by the Ottoman Empire in 1517, an event that fostered a half-millennium of dissent and decline within Western Christianity as it faced challenges from Lutherans, Calvinists and Anglicans. It also led to a rise in the British Empire’s status, with its Protestant Hebraism, millenarianism, and avowedly close ties to Eretz Israel.[[7]](#footnote-7) This year marked the beginnings of the authentic messianic idea and, as a direct consequence, Zionism in its ideology and practice. These processes that began in the sixteenth century should be the starting point for Zionist historiography.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Originally, the messianic idea was simply a call for reinstating Jewish sovereignty over *Eretz Israel*, a paradigm Maimonides presents in *Laws of Kings and Their Wars*,[[9]](#footnote-9) whereby the King Messiah is a political figure who will strive to re-establish the rule of Israel. Maimonides scorns those who perceive the messianic idea as abstract and utopian, embracing miracles and wonders.[[10]](#footnote-10) This idea was key within Jewish history and the foundation of the aspiration for Jewish redemption as a vector for universal redemption, as expressed powerfully since the expulsion from Spain.

Many perceive the expulsion from Spain as the harshest blow the Jewish people suffered during the Middle Ages: The glorious Jewish community’s downfall assumed cosmic dimensions, as if the entire Jewish people, or even humanity, had been expelled from the face of the earth.[[11]](#footnote-11) Shortly thereafter, scholars in the Sephardic diaspora, and those of sixteenth-century Safed and other centres of Jewish learning in Eretz Israel attributed special significance to this tragedy, perceiving it as the pains of redemption, the tribulations Israel would face in the its future redemptive era. The expulsion edict was signed in 5252 (1492), a date echoed numerologically in the following Biblical verse: ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say: “He that scattered Israel doth gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock”’ (Jeremiah 31:10). Kabbalistic literature associates this verse with the onset of the rising dawn.[[12]](#footnote-12) These interpretations became well-established in Jewish communities, reinforcing the sense of the era’s redemptive dimensions.

In his *Migdol Yeshuot* trilogy,[[13]](#footnote-13) Don Isaac Abarbanel, the greatest leader among the Spanish exiles, nurtured hope among his fellow Jews and helped them cope with their plight. His views were shared by several prominent Kabbalah scholars, including Rabbis Isaac Louria Ashkenazy, Shlomo Alkabetz, Yosef Karo,[[14]](#footnote-14) and Manasseh Ben-Israel.[[15]](#footnote-15) Events within *Eretz Israel* during the sixteenth century were considered the renaissance and restoration of the Jewish nation within its own land and fostered attachment to it. This attested to and reinforced the belief that Jewish statehood was being restored. The authentic messianic idea was realized clearly in political and military bids to conquer Eretz Israel (David Hareuveni and Solomon Molcho),[[16]](#footnote-16) immigration to and settlementthroughout Eretz Israel (*aliyah* pl. *aliyot*; Don Joseph Nasi and Doña Gracia Nasi),[[17]](#footnote-17) fortification of its cities with perimeter walls, and the stirrings of Jewish political activism (Abraham Castro in Jerusalem and Don Joseph Nasi in Tiberias).[[18]](#footnote-18) Messianism was also reflected in political-economic measures (i.e. the Ancona Boycott led by Don Joseph and Doña Gracia Nasi), the development of the textile industry in Safed, silk production in Tiberias, and tourist activities in the Lower Galilee. Other expressions included the restoration of the Hebrew language in administration, education, religious literature and in political-legislative steps, such as restoring the Sanhedrin, renewing ordination, national codification of the *halakhah* in the *Shulhan Arukh* (Rabbis Jacob Berab[[19]](#footnote-19) and Joseph Karo[[20]](#footnote-20)). A Hebrew press was also established that disseminated works from Safed and elsewhere in *Eretz Israel* throughout the Jewish Diaspora, including the liturgical poetry of Rabbis Shlomo Alkabetz and Israel Najara.[[21]](#footnote-21) There was also increased significance attached to the Ten Lost Tribes and their inclusion in the vision of redemption and a future Sanhedrin.[[22]](#footnote-22) Finally, an Ingathering of the Exiles in microcosm emerged,[[23]](#footnote-23) owing to *aliyot* from Spain, the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, Italy and even Germany, and the liturgical seal on European states from the Low Countries to Poland, resulting from the diaspora’s attraction to *Eretz Israel’s* Jewish community.[[24]](#footnote-24) The messianic ideal underpinning these phenomena was thus not merely some abstract, theoretical, or metahistorical concept but a series of actual, practical,[[25]](#footnote-25) operative, and historical measures.[[26]](#footnote-26)

As indicated, the sixteenth century appears to be an appropriate point of departure for studying the history of Zionism[[27]](#footnote-27) because it was only natural that the Zionist enterprise in the nineteenth century, seeking to restore Jewish sovereignty in *Eretz Israel*, would adopt most of the features already discernible three hundred years earlier, especially the conquest of labour and revival of the Hebrew language. For example, Joseph Marco Baruch[[28]](#footnote-28) and Rabbi Dr Yehuda Bibas,[[29]](#footnote-29) perhaps the fathers of Sephardic Zionism, adopted the sixteenth-century vision of restoring Jewish sovereignty in *Eretz Israel* naturally and directly, believing it constituted the fulfilment of the authentic messianic ideal. They perceived Zionism as a modern phenomenon deeply linked with ancient aims.

Gershom Scholem and Ben-Zion Dinur thought differently, ignoring the sixteenth century entirely.[[30]](#footnote-30) In their view, the point of departure of the Zionist enterprise was the Sabbatean crisis and its repercussions, as embodied in the *aliyah* of Rabbi Judah the Pious (Hebrew: *Hasid*).[[31]](#footnote-31) The lively dispute between these two perspectives centred on whether the respective *aliyot* of the Hasidim and the Perushim (the Vilna Gaon’s non-Hasidic followers) were messianic and whether they foreshadowed the Zionist *aliyah*. Scholem avowed that Zionism is a complete realization rather than a rupture in Jewish history, an original expression of an ancient national awareness and the necessary product of Jewish history. Dinur, by contrast, did not accord the sixteenth century the scholarly attention it deserved. Scholem claimed that the aftermath of the Sabbatean crisis enabled a secularization of traditional Jewish society and its penetration by the modern *haskalah* and reform movements, followed by secular ideologies such as socialism, communism and Zionism that would not have been able to embed themselves in Jewish society without the breaching of the spiritual ghetto walls in the days of Sabbatai Zevi.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Zionist historiography sought to represent Zionism as a manifestation of revolt in the diaspora and a revolution with its foundations in crisis awareness. Consequently, while ‘love of Zion’ represents a traditional and passive world, ‘Zionism’ represents an active revolt against tradition. This pattern was unacceptable to the Sephardic diaspora but appeared to suit the *Ashkenazim*, who had experienced schisms and social divisions between tradition and crisis, as Katz notes.[[33]](#footnote-33) Zionist historiography is consistent in its emphasis on change, crisis and revolution rather than perseverance, continuity and evolution. Moreover, there is an attempt to differentiate between periods of mass messianic *aliyah* aimed at fulfilling and realizing redemption and Zionist *aliyah* intended to build a homeland and a nation, as Altshuler and Morgenstern both repeatedly state, although with distinctive nuances.

I argue that deep within the messianic idea, at least as perceived by the Sephardic diaspora, the symbiosis between redemption and construction is natural and organic, the differences between them artificial. I contend that a differentiation between ‘love of Zion’ and ‘Zionism’, the product of Zionist historiography, is a contrived one, as ‘love of Zion’ is nothing other than the culmination of yearnings for the renewal of that very same Israeli statehood. While the Sephardic diaspora has an organic awareness characterized by perseverance, continuity and evolution, the Ashkenazic diaspora adopted a crisis-based awareness that would ultimately shape the historiography of Zionism, depicting it as a movement characterized by division and riddled with dichotomous terminology, such as ‘love of Zion’ versus ‘Zionism’, ‘old Yishuv’ versus ‘new Yishuv’, the Holy Land versus Eretz Israel and so on.[[34]](#footnote-34)

**Continuity and disruption in the Jewish diasporas: the messianic idea and Zionism**

Throughout the period under examination, the substantive difference between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic diasporas is rooted in the primacy accorded to Bible and Kabbalah studies in the former and Talmud study in the latter. This was reflected in the daily study of *Hok l’Israel* among *Sephardim* and of the daily Talmud page by *Ashkenazim*. These practices are rooted in deep historical processes from Spain and Germany during the Middle Ages. The Bible and the Kabbalah demand an overtly spiritual and educational orientation to shaping an identity that strives and yearns for Israel’s and the entire human race’s redemption.[[35]](#footnote-35) Four branches extend from this historiographic approach differentiating the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries from one another in the Ashkenazic diaspora and leading directly to the normative messianic idea being severed from its natural reflection, Zionism: the Sabbatean crisis; the shaping of a Jewish identity; attitudes towards the Three Oaths; and attitudes towards the concept of the ‘Messiah son of Joseph’.[[36]](#footnote-37) Unlike the *Ashkenazim*, the Sephardic diaspora maintained continuity between the Messianic idea and Zionism throughout this period. Moshe David Gaon, citing Itzhak Bezalel, called it the ‘Zionism of the generations’.

**The Sabbatean crisis**

The Sabbatean crisis, culminating on 6 September 1666 (16 Elul 5426), corrupted the original, normative messianic idea by imbuing it with anarchism, chaotic impulses, megalomaniacal adventurism and apocalyptic dimensions. Sabbatai Zevi’s conversion to Islam shocked the Jewish world, leading most of his despairing followers to abandon their faith in him. Jews converted to Christianity or Islam as a result of Zevi’s own apostasy.[[37]](#footnote-38) Once the repercussions of this crisis abated, however, the respective diasporas began moving in opposite directions on the essence of the messianic idea; the crisis thus was a watershed in early and late modern Jewish history. Generally speaking,[[38]](#footnote-39) the Sephardic diaspora considered the normative messianic idea a key component of national identity and consequently advocated rehabilitating and explaining the messianic idea according to its authentic Biblical meaning. Sephardic Jews devoted themselves to messianism as a historical, political and national concept aspirations, primarily towards the victory of Jewish nationalism on the soil of Eretz Israel.[[39]](#footnote-40)

 The Ashkenazic diaspora concentrated instead on hiding their shame: community records were destroyed and mentioning Sabbatai Zevi’s name was forbidden. To prevent others from declaring themselves the messiah, the Eastern European Council of Four Lands set limits on Kabbalah studies. Only those expert in the Talmud and *halakhah* were permitted to study the Kabbalah to prevent to others from falling into error.[[40]](#footnote-41) In general, the messianic idea was postponed to the ‘end of days’ and ceased being a live concept because the community feared that further false messianism might emerge.[[41]](#footnote-42) This substantial anxiety gave rise to the ‘division model’ underlying the schisms in the Ashkenazi diaspora during the modern era: Secularism versus religiosity; *hasidim* versus *mitnagdim*; orthodoxy, neo-Orthodoxy and ultra-Orthodoxy versus enlightenment; Reform versus Conservative Judaism; tradition versus modernity. This dichotomous world also informed the antagonism between Zionism and anti-Zionism. The anti-Zionist outlook was thus conceived in Ashkenazic religious space. For Zionism to be realized in the Ashkenazic diaspora it therefore had to rebel against the religious norm. This was not the case, however, in the Sephardic diaspora.

Some perceive the students of the Baal Shem Tov, especially those of the Vilna Gaon[[42]](#footnote-43) as exceptions to the rule as, for a short time, they diverged from the norms of that diaspora and chose the activist path of ‘natural redemption’. Nevertheless, when their hopes were dashed, especially in 1840, they renewed their shunning of messianic activism and were destined to be channelled into clearly anti-Zionist directions.[[43]](#footnote-44) Consequently, one should perceive Kook and his school of thought as the exception to the rule as well: he had to fight intense resistance to restore the normative messianic idea to its ancient glory.[[44]](#footnote-45) In contrast, Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari was an outstanding exception in the Sephardic diaspora because of his opposition to Zionism.[[45]](#footnote-46) Rabbi Yissachar Teichtal (1885-1945), the chief rabbinic justice and head of the Yeshivah in Pishtian, rebelled against the anti-Zionist trends in European Orthodoxy, challenging the entire range of arguments against Zionism that had grown among the *hasidim* of Munkacs. However, he met a tragic end.[[46]](#footnote-47)

It thus emerges that the Sabbatean crisis in the Sephardic diaspora did not sever the continuity between the normative messianic idea of the sixteenth century and the affinity for Zion of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

 I refer to Rabbis Abraham Azoulay,[[47]](#footnote-48) Saadia Chouraqui, Yaakov Culi, Shalom Sharabi, Hayim de la Rosa, Haïm Joseph David Azoulay, Raphael Immanuel ben Abraham Hai Ricchi, Haim Ben Attar,[[48]](#footnote-49) Yehouda Ayache and Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Israel Yaakov Moshe Ayash[[49]](#footnote-50) and Zionism and the Zionist idea in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:[[50]](#footnote-51) Rabbis[[51]](#footnote-52) Judah Bibas, Judah Alkalai,[[52]](#footnote-53) Shmuel Abbo,[[53]](#footnote-54) David Ben-Shimon,[[54]](#footnote-55) Mordekhai Attiya,[[55]](#footnote-56) Moshe Kalfon Hacohen,[[56]](#footnote-57) Chaim Hezekiah Medini,[[57]](#footnote-58) Chaim Shvilly,[[58]](#footnote-59) David Cohen Scali,[[59]](#footnote-60) Chaim Beliah,[[60]](#footnote-61) Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel,[[61]](#footnote-62) Yaakov Moshe Toledano,[[62]](#footnote-63) Abraham Taviv,[[63]](#footnote-64) Yosef Renassia,[[64]](#footnote-65) Abraham Almaliah,[[65]](#footnote-66) Amram Aburbeh, Ovadia Hedaya, Yitzhak Nissim, Eliyahu Pardes,[[66]](#footnote-67) Joseph Mashash, Levi Nahmani, Israel Abuhatzeira (the Baba Sali), Yitzhak Abuhatzeira (the Baba Haki),[[67]](#footnote-68) Yeshayahu Meshorer,[[68]](#footnote-69) Hayyim David Halevi,[[69]](#footnote-70) Haïm Houri, Meir Mazuz, Michaël Cherbite, Meir Zini[[70]](#footnote-71) and Yehouda Léon Askenazi (Manitou).[[71]](#footnote-72) In this context, we should also mention Professor Abraham Shalom Yehuda, whose life and research express a combination of Jewish Diasporas and a special Zionist approach accordingly.[[72]](#footnote-73) Moreover, the years considered to have ‘messianic potential’ (especially those that fell during the sixth millennium since Creation: 1240; 1540; 1648; 1740–1781; 1840)[[73]](#footnote-74) were viewed differentially by the *Ashkenazim*, who perceived them as a comprehensive objective, and the *Sephardim*, who considered them milestones in a gradual process of redemption. The former reacted to messianic crises with disappointment that even led to apostasy, while the latter viewed them enthusiastically.[[74]](#footnote-75) The ‘Sabbatean syndrome’ permeated academic research, obscuring the difference between the normative messianic idea and the chaotic and apocalyptic variety, indeed emasculating the former and empowering the latter.[[75]](#footnote-76) It thus succeeded in politicizing research, labelling researchers as ‘messianists’[[76]](#footnote-77) and compiling messianism-free historical theses to achieve the ‘normalization of history’.[[77]](#footnote-78)

Israeli academic research is characterized by dialectical and paradoxical trends: on the one hand, it renders the messianic idea mythical, allegorical, abstract and metaphysical;[[78]](#footnote-79) on the other, it normalizes and secularizes the Zionist idea, removing all of its redemption-oriented thorns. Thus, academic research seeks to obscure the dualism between normative and chaotic messianism, thereby normalizing the history of the Zionist enterprise and according it the character of a national liberation movement, one of many in the modern era.

This perspective was spearheaded by Scholem,[[79]](#footnote-80) whose entire messianic conception was crisis-oriented[[80]](#footnote-81) and whose works have been sharply criticized by many researchers and intellectuals. Ben-Dov’s pointed critique of Scholem’s concept of redemption, attraction to anarchistic mysticism,[[81]](#footnote-82) and abhorrence of political messianism[[82]](#footnote-83) in writings is particularly notable. Schweid is equally critical, refuting Scholem’s philosophy and view of the Kabbalah as historically pivotal.[[83]](#footnote-84) Scholem has been strongly supported by Kabbalah and historical scholars, who claim that his study was purely scientific,[[84]](#footnote-85) but the ‘Sabbatean syndrome’ was already evident in their Jewish and political identities.[[85]](#footnote-88) [[86]](#footnote-89)

Kurzweil was the first to take issue with Scholem.[[87]](#footnote-90) By the 1950s, he had already identified weak points in Scholem’s research in the objective hubris of researching Jewish studies that conceals a new historiography of Judaism, according to which secularization is immanent in traditional Judaism. Kurzweil argues that Scholem, through rehabilitation of the controversial Sabbatai Zevi, presents him as a legitimate leader and ascribes progressive views to him. On the other hand, Sabbatai Zevi’s most notable opponent, Rabbi Jacob Sasportas, is presented as ‘a Jewish Inquisitor’. It emerges that anyone who attacked the apologetics of the Berlin Hokhmat Israelschool of thought is tainted with a purely secular identity. One who seeks to accord supreme authority to the research of historical realities ‘is diverting attention from the authentic wellsprings of human spirituality, namely religion on the one hand and poetry and art on the other, drowning his soul in the depths of fine detail in worlds distant from that of his own spirit’.[[88]](#footnote-91)

**Shaping Jewish identity in the diasporas**

While Jewish identity in Christian countries was defensive, as Christianity claimed to embody the *verus Israel* and declared that the Messiah had already arrived, Jewish identity in Islamic countries had no complexes regarding national affiliation, with Islam more of a threat to Jews’ status and less to their identity. Consequently, while the Jews of the Christian world perceived Judaism as a religion[[89]](#footnote-92) and/or an ancient religious community,[[90]](#footnote-93) those in Islamic countries saw themselves as a nation.[[91]](#footnote-94) As such, authentic messianic longing in Islamic countries remained intact. Moreover, the secular appearance of Zionism did not deter Jews in the Sephardic diaspora,[[92]](#footnote-95) as emphasis was placed on the renewal of a national entity in *Eretz Israel*. Consequently, ‘The “kosher” Messianism was Zionism, because the nation as a whole decided to return to Zion’, as Rabbi Askenazi (Manitou) declared:

The Zionist enterprise succeeded, unlike all other Messianic initiatives throughout history, because this is the authentic Messianism of which the Torah and Prophets speak—rehabilitation of the nation upon its land, in the political dimension and not the religious-mystical one. Herzl did not perceive himself as the Messiah, yet he was, just as those who lived in the time of Moses did not know that he would save them…When the nation declares that this is the time, it is true. When a mystic declares that he is the Messiah and avows that this is the time, it is false. Two millennia of exile were ordained to eliminate the ‘false Messiah images’ and enable return to the authentic constellation of the Messianic idea.[[93]](#footnote-96)

The basis for conflict that emerges even more powerfully in Judaism experienced as a religious community provides an additional basis for explaining the social polarization of the Ashkenazic diaspora, including the anti-Zionist element within it.

**The three oaths**

The Talmud indicates that Israel swore three oaths[[94]](#footnote-97) unto God, promising not to undertake mass immigration to Eretz Israel (‘scaling the wall’ or ‘as a wall’) and thereby postpone the inevitable. These oaths were never considered part of the *halakhah* by any major rabbinic authority: Rabbi Isaac Alfasi, Maimonides, Rabbenu Asher, Rabbi Jacob ben Asher and Rabbi Joseph Karo did not accord them legal status. They are also absent from the *Rishonim* commentaries on Tractate Ketubot (Nahmanides, Rabbi Yom Tov Asevilli, Rabbi Menahem Meiri) and Rashi’s commentary on the Song of Songs.

 Rabbi Zeira, to whom the Three Oaths are attributed, retracted them when he came to *Eretz Israel*, as Rabbi Mordechai Attiya explains.[[95]](#footnote-98) Attiya states that the theory propounded by Rabbi Yohanan and the sages of *Eretz Israel* maintains that *aliyah* ‘as a wall’ is mandatory. Yohanan explains that there is an oath obligating the Jewish people to rise ‘as a wall’ and come to *Eretz Israel* as one: ‘Rabbi Yohanan said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, tells us: “I will not come to Celestial Jerusalem until I come to Earthly Jerusalem”.’[[96]](#footnote-99) Yohanan’s disciple Rabbi Elazar consequently stated: ‘The Holy One, Blessed be He, told Israel: “If you uphold the oath, all will be well and if not, I will abandon your flesh like the gazelles and deer of the field.”’[[97]](#footnote-100) Altshuler argues that renowned *halakhah* scholar Rabbi Joseph Karo demonstrated by his *aliyah* that he did not recognize the validity of the Three Oaths.[[98]](#footnote-101) In the Sephardic diaspora, the Three Oaths do not constitute an impediment at all, in any period. On the contrary, the only valid oath is, as indicated, *aliyah* ‘as a wall’. By contrast, the Three Oaths continued to deter the leaders of ultra-Orthodox communities in Europe from *aliyah*. Rabbi Meir Simhah Hacohen of Dvinsk, author of *Meshekh Hokhmah*, observed after the 1920 San Remo Conference: ‘Fear of the oaths disappeared and by the grace of the monarchs, the commandment calling for settlement of *Eretz Israel*, that is equivalent to fulfilment of all commandments in the Torah, was restored to its place’. Regrettably, his remained a lone cry in the wilderness.[[99]](#footnote-102)

**The term ‘Messiah son of Joseph’**

The national reawakening of Israel is a gradual, dialectical process in two tiers, one built on the other,[[100]](#footnote-103) each essential in historical terms. Indeed, the Messiah son of Joseph (MSJ) precedes the Messiah son of David (MSD), not because one era is inferior to the other, but due to the development and substance of rebirth: The era of the MSJ is one in which geographic, political, military, economic and institutional reawakening takes place, whereas the MSD heralds a spiritual era in which Hebrew identity becomes complete, applied to all the Jewish people and embodying a universal imprint.

In countries under Christian influence, the Jews became accustomed to speaking of one messianic personality only.[[101]](#footnote-104) Actually, the Jewish people await many messiahs, of which the most prominent are the MSJ, to be followed by the MSD. These principles are stipulated in the Midrash, Talmud and, of course, in Kabbalistic wisdom, but their roots are discernible in the account of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis. For Jews living in Europe, subject to Christianity’s religious influence, messianism has become part of the occult. This is due to Ashkenazic Jewish sages’ prohibition of study of the topic, to prevent confusion between the Christian and Jewish interpretations of messianism. As a corollary, the topic of messianism became a kind of legend or dream, until Theodor Herzl rose and declared: ‘If you will it, it is no dream’.

By contrast, messianism for Jews in Islamic countries was an integral part of the conventional curriculum. In my youth, *yeshiva* students were taught the topic from Midrashic and Talmudic sources. Every schoolchild knew simply that the Jewish people anticipate the arrival of the MSJ, inaugurating the messianic era that culminates in the arrival of the MSD and the resurrection of the dead. Whenever Sephardic Jews in Islamic countries studied Judaism in Arabic, messianism was an integral part of conventional studies. But when they began studying in the languages of the Ashkenazic world, messianism began to be classified as an occult topic in Sephardic circles as well. The primary reason for this shift was the danger of confusing Jewish conceptions with those of Christian tradition, leading scholars to prohibit public discussion of such matters. As in many spheres of Torah study, concealment led to oblivion. Consequently, when the incidents hinted at in Jewish source literature began occurring, the Jewish people, except for Kabbalistic circles among them, had no way of identifying their significance, particularly their connection to Zionism. Rabbi A. I. Kook was the first since Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz to explain what the issue was.[[102]](#footnote-106) In his eulogy for Dr. Theodor Herzl, visionary of the State of Israel, Kook hinted that Herzl’s endeavours were part of the MSJ conception.[[103]](#footnote-107)

Rabbi Askenazi perceived the MSJ as a component in the restoration of Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, basing his conclusion on Rabbi Chaim Shvilly’s Talmudic commentary:

The Talmud explains that there will be mourning for MSJ, ostensibly because he will be killed. Nevertheless, in the Kabbalistic Sephardic prayer book *Tefilat Hahodesh*, published in Livorno, the blessing [*amida*] ‘who buildeth Jerusalem’ includes a directive instructing worshippers to pray that MSJ not be killed. Even though the Kabbalists accept the Talmudic statement, they believe that the consequences may be avoided through prayer…According to the Midrash, MSJ is destined to be killed by the Roman Army Chief, the wicked Armilus.[[104]](#footnote-108)

Armilus is the Midrashic version of the Latin name Romulus, the founder of Rome. The Midrash thus foresees that, in MSJ’s time, a war may break out between Rome and Israel, during which MSJ will be killed by the Roman military leader. Shvilly, a Jerusalem Kabbalist of Georgian origin whom I knew personally, explains in his book *Calculations of Redemption*[[105]](#footnote-109) that, in our own generation, during World War II, the Jewish community in *Eretz Israel* faced possible destruction by German and Italian forces, led by a field marshal named Rommel. He hinted at the possibility that the MSJ’s death may have been ordained for that time and that we were only saved from tragedy thanks to 2,000 years of prayers, according to the Kabbalistic interpretation. Eulogizing Herzl in the summer of 1904, Kook introduced a ‘major innovation’ for the Ashkenazic Diaspora, an ‘innovation’[[106]](#footnote-110) that was part of the standard prayer ritual for Jews in the Sephardic Diaspora for many years. Kook, in emphasizing the existence of MSJ, hints at the activities of Herzl.[[107]](#footnote-111)

In this respect, Kook examined the exception to the rule, seeking to resist the mainstream with an outlook long supported by the Sephardic diaspora but had eroded among the *Ashkenazim*. Rabbis Judah Loew ben Bezalel (1520–1609) and Isaiah Horowitz (1558–1630), both active in the Ashkenazic diaspora during the sixteenth century, were the last supporters of the normative messianic idea to express their views in print until the nineteenth century.[[108]](#footnote-112) Kook would subsequently draw on their philosophy for his own. Rabbi Loew’s outlook was also supported enthusiastically by Rabbis Dr. Jacob Gordin and Isaac Hutner, who would impart his philosophy to their students in France and the United States respectively.[[109]](#footnote-113)

**The roots of Zionism: The normative messianic idea or modern European nationalism?** My research, still in its early stages, proposes a basic methodological and historiographic perspective[[110]](#footnote-114) that transcends particularistic analysis. This perspective challenges the crisis orientation that has dominated Zionist historiography and examines the roots of Zionism that are integral to the Sephardic diaspora. The purpose, conscious or otherwise, of Zionist historiography that detaches the sixteenth from the nineteenth century is to ensure that the mighty process of return to the Jewish homeland is attributed exclusively to Zionism of the modern era. This ignores all the momentous accomplishments of the sixteenth century that heralded a new age in the settlement of Eretz Israel. Most Zionist historiographers attempt to assign all due credit for national activism to the Zionist Movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and to ‘normalize’ history so that anything hinting at redemption is summarily excised.[[111]](#footnote-115) This is the meaning of the historiographic dispute taking place over the past few decades concerning messianism and the history of Jewish settlement of Eretz Israel in the modern era.[[112]](#footnote-116)

Nineteenth-century Zionism is only one segment of the process discussed above, only a reflection of the normative messianic idea that has monopolized the entire process of return. The unprecedented success of Zionism diverts attention from the process as a whole, the sum total of all its stages and layers.[[113]](#footnote-117) Historical research ignores far earlier stages that possess all the components of the Zionist enterprise: Formative spiritual foundation, settlement and conquest of Eretz Israel and legislation of a national character. The old Sephardic Yishuv was a platform for eastern European Zionism. Its people were involved in the Yishuv, people of action and vison who drew on the Jewish tradition. The classic Zionist narrative to which we have become accustomed has a direct affiliation to the growth and legitimation of the leadership prevailing in the Yishuv as of the late nineteenth century, a kind of three-way memory/Zion/control relationship. There is an obvious link between research of historical memories and the shaping of Jewish elites.

I emphasize that the treasures of Jewish wisdom have always constituted the source on which Zionism drew.[[114]](#footnote-118) Consequently, it would not be correct to limit oneself to the tripartite paradigm that ostensibly shaped Zionism exclusively: emancipation-secularization/antisemitism/modern nationalism. This paradigm is correct regarding the diaspora in Christian countries but less so for those in Islamic lands in the late nineteenth century. It represents the immediate factors that shaped the national ethos of Zionism in the Christian countries of eastern, central and western Europe.[[115]](#footnote-119) But the deepest roots of the birth of Zionism will always be cultural. Zionism’s drawing on the messianic idea embodies a universal aspiration for the land that is its objective. Moreover, the Zionism that was impelled by pogroms and crises, that reflected aspirations for shelter and response to existential distress, drew on cultural roots as well.[[116]](#footnote-120) The substantive difference between these approaches reflects the quality and motives of Zionism in the respective diasporas.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that Jewish nationalism preceded European nationalism in all respects, having faced and challenged the mighty empires of the ancient East. Jewish nationalism thus derives substantially from the Biblical era,[[117]](#footnote-121) in which the Jews were ‘the true proto-nation’, as Adrian Hastings declared.[[118]](#footnote-122)

Subsequently, Scholem’s dialectic and somewhat paradoxical outlook perceived Zionism and Hasidism as reflections of Sabbateanism, drawing on the wealth of Jewish wisdom without necessarily referring to European nationalism. Scholem considered exile-based mysticism[[119]](#footnote-123) to be the national power of Judaism and Zionism, a factor that accords it a political hue.

However, there has been a certain welcome shift recently from the dominant tones of crisis historiography to the more subdued voice of organic historiography, especially regarding Zionism in the Sephardic Diaspora. Alon Gal describes it as ‘a movement of national continuity that is rooted in Jewish civilization and the tradition of Jewish political culture’ on the one hand and ‘Zionism of tradition, continuity and rebirth with great Zionist potential’ on the other.[[120]](#footnote-124) Furthermore, Dr Itzhak Bezalel wrote an article in whose title he quoted Dr Nahum Sokolov’s address to the Sephardic community in Eretz Israel: ‘We have become Zionists but you were born Zionists’.[[121]](#footnote-125)

Jacob Katz’s[[122]](#footnote-126) most recent book traces the communities of Israel that settled in Christian countries from the dawn of the Middle Ages until the modern era. His methodology, applied in the present article as well, is worthy of attention by those studying the history of the various Jewish diasporas. Like Katz, who observed and focused on the manifestations of tension between Jews and Christian nations and the Jewish aspiration to preserve and maintain a collective identity, I have reviewed the manifestations of the messianic idea over a period of 500 years in the different diasporas. Katz considered the two phenomena he studied to be the historic roots of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, while I have sought here to discern what shaped the attitudes of the respective diasporas towards Israel’s rebirth.[[123]](#footnote-127)

1. M. .I.(in Hebrew; 1977), . [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Miriam Peretz, Israel Prize recipient, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This expression encompasses the Sephardic diaspora in both Christian and Islamic countries as well as the eastern community population (*Mizrahim*). A methodological distinction should be made between different spaces in the Sephardic diaspora: the Middle East, the Balkans and North Africa. Various Zionist currents took shape in them: see ‘Introduction’ (in Hebrew) in A. Gal (ed), *Regions of Zionism.* vol. II: *The Balkans, the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia* (Jerusalem and Beersheba: Zalman Shazar Center and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2010); E. Benbassa, ‘Zionism and Local Politics in Oriental Jewish Communities’ (in Hebrew), *Peamim*, 73 (1998), pp. 36–40; E. Benbassa, *Un grand Rabbin sépharade en Politique, 1892–1923*, (Paris: Presses du CNRS, 1990); M. Abitbol, ‘Zionist Activity in North Africa up to the End of the Second World War’ (in Hebrew), *Peamim*, 2 (1979), pp. 65–91. I am aware that general statements can cloud particular one and I draw our attention to the exceptions in the methodological sections. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Y. Charvit, ‘Between Berlin and Jerusalem: *Hokhmat Israel* in France During the Twentieth Century, as Viewed by Rabbi. Y. L. Askenazi’ (in Hebrew), *Jewish Studies* 51 (2016), pp. 131–55. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ‘The Reformation: Special Edition Devoted Entirely to the Reformation, Following Research Conferences Held in 2017’ (in Hebrew), *Zmanim Historical Quarterly*, 140 (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. B.W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York, NY: New York University Press,1956); A. Morgenstern, *Messianism and Settlement* *of* *Eretz Israel* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi, 1987), pp. 197–203; M. Verete, *The Return of the Israel Concept in British Protestant Thought 1790–1840* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center and the Historical Society of Israel, 1968), pp. 145–79. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Opposing trends were evident as well: see H. Pedaya, *Going Beyond the Trauma: Mysticism, History and Ritual* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2011); S.Wiesenthal, *Sails of Hope: The Secret Mission of Christopher Columbus* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1973). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Yad Hahazaka*, *The Book of Judges, Laws of Kings and Their Wars* 11:1 (in Hebrew): ‘The King Messiah is destined to rise and restore the Kingdom of the House of David to the glory of its first reign, and to build the Temple and gather the dispersed of Israel’; See D. Schwartz, *The Messianic Idea in the Philosophy of the Middle Ages* (in Hebrew; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2005); D. Berger ‘Some Ironic Consequences of Maimonides’ Rationalist Approach to the Messianic age’, in Y. Levy and S. Carmy (eds), *The Legacy of Maimonides: Religion, Reason, and Community* (New York, NY: Yashar Books, 2006), pp. 79–88. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Yad Hahazaka*, 11:3: ; See also I. Knohl, *The Messiah Dispute: For Whom are the Jews Waiting?* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2019), pp. 170–82. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. G. Nahon, *La Terre Sainte au Temps des Kabbalistes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997), pp. 169–72. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The numerical value of the Hebrew word מְזָרֵה is 252 signifying the ‘midnight’ of the sixth millennium (since the leading number is normally omitted from year dates). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. B. Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman and Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 195–260; C. Cohen-Solal, *Don Isaac Abarbanel:* *Great Jewish Thinkers and Creators* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. M. Altshuler, *The Life of Rabbi Joseph Karo* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2017), pp. 357–85. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See M. Dorman, *Manasseh Ben-Israel* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad (Hillel Ben-Chaim Library, 1989), pp. 65–72. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. M. Benmelech, *Shlomo Molcho: The Life and Death of the Messiah Don of Joseph* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi, 2016), pp. 91–120, 187–228, 267–306; Altshuler, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 59–80, 268–91. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Netanyahu, *Isaac Abravanel,* pp. 212–70; Y. Harozen, *Doña Gracia and the Jewish State in Tiberias of the Galilee* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zur-Ot, 1980); S. Sheba, *Eretz Israel: An Autobiography* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2001), pp. 262–71; M. Orfali, ‘Doña Gracia Mendes and the Ragusan Republic: the Successful Use of Economic Institutions in 16th Century Commerce’, in E. Horowitz and M. Orfali (eds), *The* *Mediterranean and the Jews.* vol. II*:* *Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), pp. 175–203; Yosef H. Yerushalmi, ‘Introduction’, in S. Usque, *Consolations aux Tribulations* *d’Israël* *1553,* (Paris: Editions Chandeigne, 2014), pp. 23–45; A. David, *A Historian in Turmoil: The Personality and Character of the Historian Joseph Ha-Kohen, Author of* Vale of Tears*, as Reflected in a Collection of his Personal Letters* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Beit David, 2005); J. Ha-Kohen, *Vale of Tears* (Genoa: n.p., 1575). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Nahon, *Terre Sainte*, pp. 79–93. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. J. Katz, ‘The Dispute between Jacob Berab and Levi ben Habib over Renewing Ordination’, in J. Dan (ed), *Binah: Studies in Jewish History* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 1989), pp. 119–41. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. “Joseph Karo’s image of the Messianic world was inspired by three Messianic tales that were interwoven during the Middle Ages: The *Zohar*’s symbolic-mythic story […]; the *Kuzari*’ssemi-historical account […]; finally, there is Maimonides’s quasi-realistic narrative […].”Altshuler, *Joseph Karo*. p. x, 268–91. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. S. Elkayam, *The Kabbalah, Love and Messianism of Rabbi Israel Najara* (in Hebrew), Ph.D diss., Ramat Gan, Bar-Ilan University, 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See Dorman, *Manasseh Ben-Israel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See M. Rozen, ‘The Image of the Jewish Community’ (in Hebrew), in A. Cohen (ed), *History of Eretz Israel*: *Mameluke and Ottoman Rule* *(1260–1804)* (Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi, 1981), pp. 201–17; J. Hacker, *The Attraction and Immigration of Spanish Jews to Eretz Israel*, vol. xxxvi. (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi, 1985), pp. 3–34; G. Nahon, ‘*Saudade*: Portuguese Testimony to Jewish Nostalgia in Jerusalem and the Galilee in the Sixteenth Century’, *Hispania Judaica*, 8 (2011), pp. 125–47; A. Cohen and B. Lewis, *Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine in the Sixteenth Century*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,1978); A. Cohen, ‘New Evidence on Demographic Change’, in *Studies on Ottoman Palestine*, Ch. XIII, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); D. Abraham, *To Come to the Land: Immigration and Settlement in Sixteenth Century Eretz–Israel* (Tuscaloosa, AL and London: University of Alabama Press, Judaic Studies Series, 1999), pp. 15–23, 120–37; G. Veinstein (ed) C. H. Fleisher, ‘The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân’, in G. Veinstein (ed) *Soliman le Magnifique et son Temps* – *Actes du Colloque de Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 7–10 mars 1990*. (Paris: Documentation Française, 1992), pp. 159–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Nahon, *Terre Sainte.* pp. 137–52, 155–67. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. In order not to be too rigid in my determinations, I must point out that there was never a unanimous opinion as to the political meanings of Messianism among sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Sephardim. Not all Messianic visions were the same. Historians like Eliyahu Capsali, Joseph ben Isaac Sambari and Joseph haKohen pinned their Messianic hopes on the Ottoman Empire. Solomon Molcho, David Reubeni, or from a different point, Menasseh Ben Israel, tended to lean to more Christian Empires. Sephardim, then, could look at the same political currents, and the same Messianic signs, and interpret them differently based on the empire in which they resided. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jews also showed support for local leaders (like the Jews of Tiberias’s support of Zahir al‘Umar), while having Messianic hopes. However, the common denominator is the historical foundation of the Messianic idea. See: M. Jacobs, ‘An Ex-Sabbatean’s Remorse? Sambari’s Polemics Against Islam’, *The Jewish Quaterly Review* 97 (2003), pp. 347–78; M. Green-Mercado*, Visions of Deliverance: Moriscos and the Politics of Prophecy in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Z. Shazar, ‘Your Watchers, Safed’ (in Hebrew), in *Morning Stars* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1950), pp. 185–294. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. M. Breuer (2003) corroborates my observations: ‘In the history of the yeshivot and perhaps in other aspects of Jewish history as well, the sixteenth century is depicted as the dawn of the New Era. […] Yeshivot also thrived in *Eretz Israel*, particularly in Jerusalem and Safed, as a result of the Yeshiva Movement established by exiles from Spain who found refuge throughout the Ottoman Empire. Each group of immigrants to Eretz Israelestablished yeshivot and *batei midrash*, especially after the Ottoman conquest (about 1517). The ideal of pure and sacred Torah study in the Holy Land was a powerful motivation for immigration and settlement’, *Tents of Torah: The Yeshiva, its Structure and History* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center), pp. 38–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. J. Weinshall, *Marco Baruch: Prophet of the War of Independence* (in Hebrew; Haifa: Shikmona, 1981); D. Dratwa, ‘Aux Origines du Sionisme en Belgique: Le Petit Macchabi de Joseph Marcou-Baruch’, *Revue des Etudes Juives* 143, 1–2 (1984), pp.135–44. ‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬ [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Y. Weiler-Israel, ‘Religion, Nationalism and New Tidings: Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Arye Léon Bivas, Harbinger of Zionism’ (in Hebrew), in A. Yedidiya (ed), *Time to be Gracious* (Jerusalem, Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi, 2015), pp. 50–75. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cf. Shazar, ‘Your Watchers, Safed’, pp. 185–294. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. J. Barnai, *Historiography and Nationalism: Trends in the Study of Eretz Israel and its Jewish Settlement, 634–1881* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), pp. 185–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. M. Altshuler, ‘Against All Odds: The Dispute Between Ben-Zion Dinur and Gershom Scholem Concerning Messianism at the Inception of Hasidism’ (in Hebrew), in Y. Dan (ed), *Gershom Scholem Memorial Volume on the 25th Anniversary of his Death* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Studies on Jewish Thought vol. xx, 2007), pp. 1–30; E. Schieber, *Le Retour à Sion De l’Idéalisme au Pragmatisme, de Juda Ha-Hassid au Gaon de Vilna et ses Disciples*, (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York, NY: Schocken, 1971). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. SeeJ. Kaniel, ‘The Terms “Old Yishuv” and “New Yishuv” as Perceived by Contemporaries (1882–1914) and by Historiography’ (in Hebrew), *Cathedra:* *Journal of the History and Settlement of Eretz Israel* 141 (1977), pp.3–19; Y. Conforti, *Past Tense: Zionist Historiography and Shaping the National Memory* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Y. Charvit, ‘Hebraism and Beyond: An Intellectual Portrait of Rabbi Y. L. Askénazi (Manitou)’ (in Hebrew), *Idra*, pp.152–60. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. I focus on four factors that explain why Ashkenazi rabbis objected to the Zionist movement although there were other reasons, that had to do with the adoption of western ideologies like socialism and nationalism, disrespecting religious norms, change in gender attitudes and so on. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. See R. Elior, *Israel Baal Shem Tov and his Contemporaries: Sabbateans, Hasidim and Mitnagdim* (vols. A–B). (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2014) on the growth of the messianic idea during the Cossack Riots of 1648, that gave rise to the image of an avenging Messiah to combat the Gentiles who persecuted the Jewish people, an idea attributed to the Zohar. This theme also characterizes the rhetoric of Sabbatai Zevi in the mid–seventeenth century; see also R Elior’s ‘Introduction’ to R. Schatz–Uffenheimer, *The Messianic Idea Since the Expulsion from Spain* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005); See Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets*, (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. I do not intend to ignore the difficulties and distress that resulted from that crisis in several communities – the

Turkish speaking Jews had to deal with the rise of the *Donme*, who refused to abandon Zevi, and the Jewish communities in places like Egypt and Yemen had to deal with crises that originated from exiled and murdered pro-Sabbatean leaders. The movement, then, influenced a whole generation of Jewish communities and it might

# have not generated an ongoing crisis, but it was a harsh, difficult historical moment. See Cengiz Sişman, *The Burden of Silence: Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) and Marc David Baer, *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks*, (California: Stanford University Press, 2010).

 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. When news of the Zionist Movement reached the lands of the East, the idea was given unhesitating support by the somewhat limited groups of Jews who had established previous contact with European personalities representing the *Haskalah* and National Revival but were unaware of the new Zionist ideology conceived by Herzl and his associates. These circles and all Sephardic Jews related to political Zionism as a traditional Jewish movement aimed at fulfillment of the vision of the ancient Prophets. See J. Tobi, ‘The Roots of Eastern Jewry’s Reaction to the Zionist Movement’, in S. Almog et al., *Changes in Jewish History in the Modern Era* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center,1988), pp. 169–192); see also H. Cherki’s draft Ph.D dissertation submitted to the Senate of Bar-Ilan University in 2022 and entitled *National Awareness Among Sephardic Scholars at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (in Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. I. Heilperin, *Annals of the Council of Four Lands: Selected Regulations, Writings and Records* (vol. 2) (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. S. B. Hamburger, *False Messiahs and their Opponents* (in Hebrew; Bnei Brak: Ashkenazi Heritage Center, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. A. Yedidiya, ‘Between Internal and External Rectification and between Symbolic–Theurgic and Real Messianism: Students of the Vilna Gaon and R. Zvi Hirsch Kalischer’ (in Hebrew), *Cathedra*: *Journal of the History and Settlement of Eretz Israel*, 167 (2018), pp. 27–58. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Morgenstern, *Messianism*. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Y. Dadon, *It is a Beginning: The Attitude of Sephardic and Ashkenazic Sages to Zionism and the Establishment of the State* (vols. I and II) (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Y. Dadon, 2006, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. B. Braun, ‘Sages of the East and Religious Zealotry: Topics for Reassessment’ (in Hebrew), *Akdamot* 10 (2001), pp. 289–324. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Y. S. Teichtal, *A Joyous Mother of Children* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Machon Pri Ha’aretz, 1983); R. Schatz-Uffenheimer, ‘Confession at the Crematoria and Postscript: A Haredi Rabbi Confesses his Wrongdoings’ (in Hebrew), *Kivunim* 23 (2004), pp. 49–62; Schatz–Uffenheimer, *Messianic Idea*. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. A. Ben–Yishai, ‘Exile and Redemption in the Kabbalistic Thought of Rabbi Abraham Azoulay’, Master’s diss., Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beersheba, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. A. Morgenstern, *Natural Redemption* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Maor, 1997); A. Morgenstern, *Mysticism and Messianism* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Maor, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Y. Charvit, ‘The Rishon LeZion Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Ayash: A Reassessment of his Term in Jerusalem during the First Two Decades of the Nineteenth Century’ (in Hebrew), *Cathedra*: *Journal of the History and Settlement of Eretz Israel*, 141 (2011), pp. 53–74. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Remarks by Eretz Israel emissary to North Africa Ephraim Ben-Haim towards the end of the Second World War are thus more understandable. In September 1943, Ephraim Ben-Haim emphasized that Zionism was not intended only for victims of persecution but also those whose Zionism is messianic, such as the Jews of North Africa: see Y. Charvit, *History of the Jews of Algeria during the French Period* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence University of the Air Series, 2010), pp. 121–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Other such notables include the Sephardic Jews Moses Montefiore and Isaac-Jacob Adolphe Crémieux, who developed an attachment to Zion during the same period and atmosphere. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. J. Katz, *Messianism and Nationalism in the Philosophy of R. Yehuda Alkalai* (Jerusalem: Zionist Library, 1979), pp. 308–56; A. Malach, ‘Rethinking the Harbingers of Zionism as a Result of Contemporary Nationalism Studies’ (in Hebrew), in Yedidiya, *Time to Be Gracious*, pp. 17–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Y. Charvit, ‘France in Galilee during the Nineteenth Century, as Reflected in the Consular Correspondence of the Abou Family’ (in Hebrew), *Cathedra*: *Journal of the History and Settlement of Eretz Israel* 108 (2003), pp. 75–104. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. R. Kark, ‘A Pioneer Moroccan Neighborhood in New Jerusalem: Mahane Israel and Rabbi David Ben Shimon (*Zuf Devash*) (in Hebrew), in S. Shetreet (ed), *Pioneers in Tears* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1991), pp. 66–83. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. G. Greenberg, ‘Mordekhai Yehoshua Atiyah’s Kabbalistic Response to the Holocaust’, In G. C. Bacon, A. Baumgarten, J. Barnai, H. Waxman and I. Yuval (eds), *Iggud: Selected Essays in Jewish Studies*, vol. II (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2009), pp. 137–56. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Z. Zohar, ‘Religious Confirmation of Zionism as a Secular National Movement: A Chapter in the Philosophy of Rabbi Kalfon Moshe Hacohen’ (in Hebrew), *Israel* 2 (2002), pp.107–25; R. Mamo, *A Psalm of Moses: Chapters in the Zionist Philosophy of Rabbi Kalfon Moshe Hacohen* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: n.p., 2009); Y. Naim, *Rabbi Kalfon Moshe Hacohen: Between Conservatism and Modernity* (in Hebrew), Ph.D diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2009; S. Ratzabi, ‘Religious Philosophers on the Secular State’, in P. Ginossar and A. Bareli (eds), *Examining the Rebirth of Israel: A Compendium of Problems Facing Zionism, the Yishuv and the State of Israel*, vol. XI (in Hebrew) (Sde Boqer: Ben-Gurion Heritage Center, 2001), pp. 1–26. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Y. Elmakias, *The Zionist Movement and Hebron: From Vision to Reality, 1882–1948* (in Hebrew), Ph.D diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2015, pp. 47–51, 69–60; see also Y. Elmakias, ‘*Our Faces Towards Hebron!’ Hebron and the Zionist Movement: From Vision to Reality, 1882–1948* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Carmel, 2019), pp. 72–6, 110–1. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. See below. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. D. Cohen Scali, *Keren leDavid*, *Yalkut David*, *Parashat Vayishlah* (in Hebrew), sec. C, p. 8b (1994); D. Cohen Scali, *Lekha* *David*, *Parashat Vayehi* (in Hebrew), (1926), p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Y. Charvit, ‘La France, l’Élite Rabbinique d’Algérie et la Terre Sainte au XIXème Siècle: Tradition et Modernité, (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), pp. 157–63. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. S. Ratzabi, ‘Zionism, Judaism and Eretz Israel in the Philosophy of the Rishon LeZion Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel’ (in Hebrew), *Peamim*, 73 (1998), pp. 60–83; S. Ratzabi, ‘The Rishon LeZion Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel, Halakha and Zionism’, *Zionism*, 21(1998), pp. 77–97; Z. Zohar, *The Luminous Face of the East: Studies in the Legal and Religious Thought of Sephardic Rabbis of the Middle East* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2001), pp. 237–84. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. I. Bezalel, ‘*You Were Born Zionists’: Sephardim in Eretz Israel, Zionism and the Rebirth of the Hebrew Language during the Ottoman Era* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2018), pp. 206–9. Bezalel states: ‘Rabbi Toledano’s critique of Haredi ideology clearly characterized its anti–Zionist foundations: reconciliation to exile; prohibition of natural human activity oriented towards redemption; opposition to Jewish nationalism and isolation from secular Jews. R. Toledano was a partner in religious Zionism and propounded an even more radical view, defining secular national activity as a brilliant, noble and sacred endeavour, a position similar to that of R. A. I. Kook, for whose primacy we should express our gratitude’ (p. 207). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. J. Tobi, *‘I Shall Ascend the Date Tree’: A Century of Immigration and Settlement* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Mekorot, 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Y. Charvit, ‘Rabbi Joseph Renassia: Portrait of a Spiritual Leader in French Algeria, 1879–1962’, in M. Orpali and E. Hazan (eds), *Renewal and Tradition, Creativity, Leadership and Cultural Processes in North African Jewry* (in Hebrew; Ramat Gan and Jerusalem: Bar-Ilan University,2005), pp. 89–98. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. H. Z. Hirschberg (ed), *Remember Abraham: Anthology in Memory of R. Abraham Almaliah on the Fifth Anniversary of his Departure* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Jerusalem Council of North African Jewry, 1972). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Z. Zohar, ‘The State of Israel in the Eyes of Senior Sephardic/Eastern Sages’ (in Hebrew), in M. Bar-On and Z. Zameret (eds), *On Both Sides of the Bridge: State and Religion in the Early Years of Israel* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2002), pp. 320–49. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. See Dadon, *It Is a Beginning* for other relevant figures*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. M. Gavra, *Rabbi Yeshayahu Meshorer: His Life and Works* (in Hebrew; Bnei Brak: Yemenite Sages Research Institute, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Z. Zohar and A. Sagi (eds), *Living Judaism: Essays on the* Halakhic *Thought of Rabbi Hayyim David Halevi* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Y. Charvit, *From the Island Land to Eretz Israel: Algerian Jewry and the State of Israel 1948­­–1998* (in Hebrew; Kiryat Arba: Gei Yinasei Institute, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Y. Charvit, ‘Identity and History: The Cultural Heritage of Rabbi Yehouda Léon Askenazi (Manitou)’ (in Hebrew), *Peamim Quarterly for Research of Eastern Jewish Communities* 91 (2002), pp.105–22; Y. Charvit, Hokhmat Israel in France in the twentieth century: Between Berlin and Jerusalem (in Hebrew), *Mada’ei Hayahadut* 51 (2016), pp. 131–56. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877–1951) was a scion of Joseph ben Shoshan and Zionist activist of many talents: see M. D. Gaon, *Eastern Jews in Eretz Israel*, vol. II, (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Azriel Printers, 1938), pp. 276–80. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. H. Pedaya, ‘The Sixth Millennium: Millenarism and Messianism in the Zohar’ (in Hebrew), *Daat* 72 (2012), pp. 51–98. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. A. Morgenstern, ‘Diaspora Jewry and Longing for Zion, 1248–1840’ (in Hebrew), *Tekhelet* 12 (2002), pp. 51–100. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Rachel Elior elucidates this trend well in a YouTube lecture in Hebrew entitled ‘Sabbateans, Hasidim and Mitnagdim in Eighteenth-Century Jewish Community Leadership’. She characterizes the messianic trend as entirely non-normative and inherently crisis-oriented: ‘messianism flourishes and prospers when realities are absurd and impossible to cope with…messianism concerns speculation about other worlds, hidden utopias’. Scholem’s approach to Karo is highly symptomatic of this same tendency: ‘The internal mixture of Halakha, Kabbala in R. Joseph Karo’s thinking clarifies why Gershom Scholem, greatest of the Kabbala scholars, hardly refers to him in his writings. For Scholem, the Kabbala is underground knowledge that threatens Halakha and upsets the well-ordered world of Rabbinic Judaism. Consequently, the charismatic Kabbalist concerned with Divine Grace clashes frequently with the authority of Halakhic sages’: Altshuler *Joseph Karo*. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. D. Ariel-Yodel, M. Lebovitz, Y. Mazar and M. Inbar (eds), *The Battle of Gog and Magog: Messianism and the Apocalypse in Judaism Past and Present* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth (Safire Hemmed), 2001); M. Feige, *Two Maps for the [West] Bank: Gush Emunim, Peace Now and Shaping Israeli Space* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002); G. Aran, *Kookism: The Roots of Gush Emunim, Settler Culture, Theology, Zionism and Contemporary Messianism* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Carmel, 2013), pp. 332–82; M. Uriel, *From the Park Hotel to the Jewish Underground: The Place of Kiryat Arba-Hebron Settlers in Shaping the Ideological Path of Settlement in Judea and Samaria, 1967–1984* (in Hebrew), Ph.D diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. I. Bartal, *Exile in Israel: Pre–Zionistic Settlement of Eretz Israel—Essays and Research* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zionist Library, 1995), pp. 236–64; I. Etkes, ‘A Portrait of Messianic Zionism’, in I. Etkes, D. Assaf and Y. Kaplan (eds), *Milestones: Essays in Jewish History Dedicated to Zvi (Kuti) Yekutiel* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2016), pp. 363–78; Y. Harel, ‘Traditional Zionism? Clarifying the Nature of Zionist Activity among Asian and African (Jewish) Communities’ (in Hebrew), in I. Etkes et al. (eds) *Milestones*,pp. 321–36; I. Etkes, ‘The Vilna Gaon and his Disciples as Early Zionists: The Making of a Myth’ (in Hebrew), *Zion* 90 (1) (2015), pp. 69–114; For a recent and more comprehensive examination of the same subject, see I. Etkes, *The Messianic Zionism of the Vilna Gaon: The Invention of a Tradition* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. B. Araki-Klorman, *Messianism and Messiahs: Yemenite Jewry in the Nineteenth Century* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad (Hillel Ben-Chaim Library), 1995); H. Saadon, ‘Longing for Zion and Immigration to Israel’ (in Hebrew), in H. Saadon (ed), *Yemen: Eastern Jewish Communities in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2002), pp. 115–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. See Z. Gris, ‘The Messiah’s Scribe: Aaron Zev Eshkoli’ (in Hebrew), *Peamim* 100 (2004), pp. 147–57; Y. Liebes, ‘The Truth About the Kabbalah of R. Moshe Cordovero as Reflected in Lurian Literature’ (in Hebrew), *Peamim* 148 (2017), pp. 27–40; Nahon, *Terre Sainte*, pp. 129–30. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. M. Jonatan, ‘Messianic Movements: Unknown Lectures by Gershom Scholem, 1947’ (in Hebrew), *Dehak: Journal of Hebrew Literature* 10 (2018), pp. 395–459. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. See Avi Elkayam and Zahi Weiss on this: ‘Sabbatai Zvi’, YouTube, 28 July 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. B. Felah, *(Jacob’s) Ladder: Thoughts on the Monarchy of Israel* *(Periodical): Between Poetics and Politics* (in Hebrew)*,* Ph.D diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2010, pp. 256–64. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. E. Schweid, *Mysticism and Judaism According to Gershom Scholem: Analysis and Critique* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, 1983), Appendix B. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. A. Raz-Krakotzkin, ‘Legislation, Messianism and Censorship: Printing the *Shulhan Arukh* as the Advent of Modernity’, in E. Baumgarten, R. Weinstein and A. Raz-Krakotzkin (eds), *Tov Elem (Bonfils): Memory, Community and Gender in Jewish Societies in the Middle Ages and at the Advent of the Modern Era* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Mandel Institute, 2011), pp. 306–55; Cf. Altshuler, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 354–55. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. See I. Knohl, *In the Footsteps of the Messiah* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2000); E. Shai, *Messianism of Incest: A New and Uncensored History of Jewish Messianic Mysticism’s Sexual Foundation* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth (Hemed Books), 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
86. M. Idel, ‘Aharon (Adolf) Jellinek and the Kabbalah’ (in Hebrew), *Peamim*, 100 (2004), pp. 15–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
87. B. Kurzweil, ‘Fundamental Problems of our New Literature’ (in Hebrew), in B. Kurzweil (ed), *Our New Literature: Continuation or Revolution?* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1959). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
88. See A. Malach, ‘The Heart of Historical Truth: Kurzweil versus Gershom Scholem’ (in Hebrew), *Makor Rishon*, 26 December 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
89. L. Batnitzky, *How Judaism became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
90. A. Malach, ‘Research on Nationalism and the Jewish–Israeli Case’ (in Hebrew), *Iyunim* 26 (2016), pp. 15–152. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
91. Y. Charvit, ‘Christianity and Islam in the Philosophy of Rabbi Yehouda Léon Askenazi (Manitou): Chronicles and Eschatology’ (in Hebrew), in D. Schwartz and A. Gross (eds), *On Repentance and Redemption*: *A Festschrift for Binyamin Gross* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2008), pp. 257–78. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
92. See Z. Zohar, ‘Religious Confirmation of Zionism as a Secular National Movement: A Chapter in the Philosophy of Rabbi Kalfon Moshe Hacohen’ (in Hebrew), *Israel* 2 (2002), p. 108, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
93. ‘Toumanitou’ website, http://www.toumanitou.org/toumanitou/la\_sonotheque/parasha/chemot\_serie\_1994/cours\_1, accessed 4 June 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
94. *bKetub*. 110b, 111a. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
95. M. Attiya, *The Secret of the Oath* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Hatehiya,1965). [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
96. *bTa’an.* 5a. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
97. For a more thorough exposition, see Attiya, *Secret*, pp. 15–20; A. Livni, *Return to Zion: A Banner unto the Nations* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: El Artzi Publishers, 1995), p. 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
98. Altshuler, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 169–73. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
99. A. Pachnik, ‘The Late Gaon Rabbi Meir Simha: Love of the Land and Fear of the Oaths (in Hebrew)’, *Barkai* 1 (1983), pp. 37–41. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
100. The original Hebrew version of the Biblical phrase ‘…and made you go upright’ [Leviticus 26:13] is ‘*vaolekh etkhem komemiyut*’, hinting at these two tiers (*komot*). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
101. See Charvit, *Hebraism and Beyond*, pp. 237–68. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
102. A. I. Kook, *The Vision of Redemption* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Association for the Publication of Rabbi A. I. Kook’s Works, 1974), p. 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
103. Y. L. Askenazi, *Mourning for the Messiah?* (in Hebrew; Efrat: Manitou Institute, 2006), pp. 35–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
104. *bSukkah*. 52a. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
105. C. Shvilly, *Calculations of Redemption* (fourth edition; in Hebrew; Jerusalem: n.p.,1968), p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
106. The Hasidic courts of Satmar and Lubavitch maintain that Halakha recognizes only MSD: see M. M. Kasher, *The Great Era* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Torah Shlema Institute, 1969). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
107. A. I. Kook, ‘Mourning in Jerusalem’ (in Hebrew), *Maamarei Hareiayah*, Part I (Jerusalem: Golda Katz Foundation, 1984). pp. 94–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
108. B. Gross, ‘Le Sionisme de Maharal’, in B. Gross (ed), *Le Messianisme Juif dans la Pensée du Maharal de Prague* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), pp. vi–xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
109. J. Gordin, *Écrits: Le Renouveau de la Pensée Juive en France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
110. J. Barnai, *Historiography and Nationalism: Trends in the Research and Jewish Settlement of Eretz Israel, 634*–*1881* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem—Magnes Press and the Dinur Center for Research in Jewish History, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
111. Y. Ben-Zion, and A. Kedar, (eds), *Ideology and Zionist Policy* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1978). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
112. See Morgenstern, ‘Diaspora Jewry’, p. 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
113. Trigano, like Scholem, perceives the Sabbatean crisis as the beginning of the process that led to Zionism but, unlike Scholem, considers Zionism a reflection of ‘the Great Return’ that began with the Sabbatean crisis, an approach I adopt but extend backwards to the sixteenth century. See: N.Stillman, ‘My Heart’s in the East: Sephardi Zionism’, in N. Stillman (ed), *Sephardi* *Religious Responses to Modernity* (Abingdon and New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), pp. 49–64; S. Trigano, *Le récit de la disparue* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1977), pp. 361–73; S. Trigano, *La Nouvelle Question Juive* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1979), pp. 225–311; S. Trigano, *La Demeure Oubliée* (Paris: Lieu Commun, 1984), pp. 255–79. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
114. ‘The foundations of Zionism are in the Torah of Israel. All the spiritual movements led to Eretz Israel in one way or another. All Zionist processes originate in previous ones. One should examine the points of transition and trace the processes of development. In Islamic countries, they underwent crisis at a later date.’ (Interview in Hebrew with Prof. Eliezer Schweid, Jerusalem, 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
115. J. Talmon, *Herzl’s ‘Jewish State’ Seventy Years Later, in an Era of Violence* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1977), pp. 143–83. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
116. Y. Conforti, *Shaping the Nation: The Cultural Sources of Zionism* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2006); G. I. Weiss, *Theodor Herzl, a New Reading* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2014); A. Malach, ‘Herzl’s Theology: A New Reading of *Altneuland*’ (in Hebrew), *Cathedra*: *Journal of the History and Settlement of Eretz Israel*, 171(2014), pp. 49–74. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
117. See A. Malach, *The Legitimate Basis for a Jewish Nation-State in the Postmodern Era* (in Hebrew), Ph.D diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
118. A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*: *Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 186; A. Malach, ‘Research on Nationalism: The Jewish-Israeli Case’ (in Hebrew), *Iyunim* 26 (2016), pp. 135–73; J. Talmon, ‘Jewish History: Its Universal Significance and Uniqueness’ (in Hebrew), in J. Talmon (ed), *Unity and Uniqueness: Essays on Historical Thought* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1965), pp. 209–45; H. Ben-Israel, *On Behalf of the Nation: Essays and Articles on Nationalism and Zionism* (Beersheba: Ben-Gurion Institute for Israel Studies, Ben-Gurion University, 2004); H. Ben-Israel, ‘Review of A. D. Smith (2000), *The Nation in History,* (in Hebrew)’, *Historia: Journal of the Historical Society of Israel*, 12 (2003), pp. 93–104. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
119. Interview in Hebrew with Boaz Hoss, Jerusalem, 2020; see also B. Hoss, *The Existential Question of Jewish Mysticism: The Genealogy of Jewish Mysticism and the Theology of Kabbalah Study* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
120. See ‘Introduction’ (in Hebrew) in A. Gal (ed), *Regions of Zionism.* vol. II*: The Balkans, the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia* (Jerusalem and Beersheba: Zalman Shazar Center and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
121. Bezalel, ‘*You Were Born Zionists’.* [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
122. J. Katz, *A Time to Study and a Time to Observe* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center,1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
123. My article leaves certain questions open for future discussion: if Zionism was a form of nationalism that suited Sephardi messianic expectations, why did it not emerge in the Middle East, or in the Sephardi world, as other movements, like the Christian peoples in the Balkans, did through most of the nineteenth century, and as did those of the Arab peoples from at least 1908, who also spoke in a national idiom and raised national demands? How did the *Sephardim* feel about other options, like the Constitutional Revolution in the Ottoman Empire and Ottomanism? What about the *Sephardim* who objected to Zionism or to the socialism of the Second Aliya? What happened to this rabbinical leadership when they encounter Ashkenazic Zionism’s disrespect for their communities? Ashkenazi Zionism emissaries often suggested that their movement was Messianic in order to convince Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews to come to Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine: See B. Eraqi-Klorman, ‘Expressions of Messianism in the Immigration from Yemen to Eretz Israel (1881–1914) (in Hebrew), *Peamim*, 10 (1981), pp. 21–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)