**Ben-Gurion University of the Negev**

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**The Department of Jewish History**

**On Journalism and Zionism:**

**David Gordon—**

**Editor of *HaMagid* newspaper**

**and a Pioneer of the Zionist Idea**

This thesis forms part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) in the Humanities and Social Sciences

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Abstract

In 1856, in the East Prussian town of Lyck near the border with the Russian Empire, the first Hebrew weekly newspaper *HaMagid* (*The Declarer*; 1856–1903) was born. *HaMagid’s* publisher and editor, Eliezer Lipman Zilbermann (1819–1882), is considered the first modern Hebrew journalist, and the paper’s publication heralded a new era in the history of the Hebrew and Jewish press. Another key figure associated with *HaMagid*, David Gordon (1831–1886), was also involved in the newspaper’s conception before it appeared in print. At *HaMagid,* Gordon would become the first foreign correspondent of the Hebrew press, and edited the paper alongside Zilbermann from 1858 until 1880. In 1880, he purchased the paper from Zilbermann, serving as its publisher and editor until his death in 1886. As part of his role, Gordon coordinated foreign news reports, wrote political commentary, and published and translated articles on topics including science, medicine, and history.

A parallel area of Gordon’s work is the subject of this thesis. In 1863, he published an article entitled “*In Returning and Rest You Shall be Saved*,” a piece that pioneered nationalist and Zionist opinion journalism in the Hebrew press. During the 1860s and 1870s, a time known in Zionist historiography as the proto- Zionism period, Gordon took an active interest in initiatives regarding *aliyah* (immigration to the land of Israel) and settlement in Eretz Yisrael, and provided a platform for numerous Zionist thinkers in *HaMagid*.

This thesis examines Gordon’s life and work in the period 1880–1886. The pogroms in Russia of 1881–1882 (known in Hebrew as “the Negev Storms, or the storms in the south), and the subsequent founding of *Hovevei Zion* (Lovers of Zion) associations across Eastern Europe were pivotal points in the history of the Jewish people. During this period, Gordon devoted himself to promoting ideas of Jewish nationalism, *aliyah*, and settlement in the land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*). He transformed *HaMagid* into a mouthpiece for the Jewish national movement and made it his personal mission to establish and unite branches of *Hovevei Zion*, with the aim of creating a powerful umbrella organization that could change the fate of the Jewish people.

By virtue of his personality and position, Gordon, who had long been well-known to readers of the Hebrew press, was regarded by the founders of the Zionist associations as someone who could mediate and foster collaboration between the Jewish communities of Eastern and Western Europe on this issue of Jewish nationalism. Gordon played a central role in the run-up to and events of the 1884 Katowice Conference of *Hovevei Zion* groups from throughout Europe, which represented the apogee of his work. He continued to labor tirelessly to promote the Jewish national movement until his death in 1886.

This thesis sheds light onto Gordon’s unique contribution as a pivotal figure during the Proto-Zionism period, the founding stages of the *Hovevei Zion* movement, and the early days of Practical Zionism. While Gordon promoted and published his ideas from the editor’s desk at *HaMagid*, he also worked far beyond the newspaper’s pages to advance these causes. This thesis illuminates the close ties between the development of the Hebrew press in the second half of the nineteenth century and the growth of modern Jewish nationalism and Zionism.

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