**3. “Keep away from the prima donnas”: The athletic body and revolutionary essence**

About three weeks after Arne Borg won the gold at the Amsterdam Olympics (1928), the *Haaretz* newspaper published an editorial about the Swedish swimmer’s body.[[1]](#footnote-1) The author of the article sought not to praise or admire the exceptional achievements of one of the greatest swimmers of his generation, but, rather, to try and identify the unique biological attributes that enabled the success of the man he sardonically referred to as “the record breaker.”[[2]](#footnote-2) According to the local journalist, an X-ray had revealed that Borg’s triumphs were not the result of practice and perseverance, but were actually attributable to an air-filled space in his belly, “a kind of fish bladder,” that had formed in the aftermath of a surgery he had undergone in childhood. “And lo and behold,” declared the journalist, “the consequences of the surgery became, of all things, an advantage which, together with other physical virtues, played a decisive part in his remarkable athletic career: the abnormality served as the foundation and pillar of Arne Borg’s optimal performance.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Disregarding this questionable medical diagnosis, it is not in itself surprising to learn that a record-breaking athlete has exceptional physical attributes, since athletic competition (certainly at the international level) is not a phenomenon situated within the realm of the average. Nevertheless, the Hebrew author of the *Haaretz* article did not consider Borg’s exceptional body an object of admiration, instead, viewing it as “scientific” proof of the national purposelessness of athletic achievement “The results of this sort of research,” the writer decrees, “serve those who believe that all such famous jugglers and tricksters are anomalous and, therefore, according to them, we must educate the wide multitudes in the virtue of sports rather than direct our efforts toward cultivating a select abnormal few.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

A similar public discourse, voicing some of the same concerns raised by the Hebrew journalist, emerged in many countries and cultures during the interwar period. On the one hand, critics around the world expressed doubts about the ability of individualistic and elitist athletic competition to train and prepare the body of the nation for the challenges ahead.[[5]](#footnote-5) On the other hand, an ultimately more significant cultural process was concurrently taking place, wherein the athletic body was becoming established as a representative symbol of the nation. This process had not begun in the “short twentieth century.” As George Mosse demonstrated, as early as the nineteenth century, sports had already played a dominant role in fashioning the stereotype of modern masculinity.[[6]](#footnote-6) Nevertheless, following World War I and the globalization of athletic competition, the athletic body gradually stopped being perceived as representative of the desired norm, becoming, instead, an array of exceptional qualities that was representative of the nation-society as a whole.[[7]](#footnote-7) This competitive discourse was reflected in the transformation of athletes into heroes lauded by the public and etched into the national collective memory. Thus, despite their very different physical dimensions, sports figures, such as the German Max Schmeling, the American Babe Ruth, and the Finnish Paavo Nurmi, became objects of international admiration thanks to their athletic feats. These gender-defining processes were not limited to the West; in Eastern Europe, the USSR, Asia, and the Middle East, athletes became models of “correct” masculinity.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Hebrew culture at the time, on the other hand, perceived the athletic body as “abnormal.” This Zionist attitude not only set Hebrew athletes apart from their colleagues around the world, but also created a constant tension between them and the fundamental principles of Jewish existence in Palestine. The Zionist revolution, according to Boaz Neumann, sought to impart existential meaning to the Jewish body and turn it from a member-less body ostensibly lacking purpose or beauty, to a Hebrew body with all its parts firmly planted in the soil of Eretz Yisrael, a body belonging to history and place, a body that exists in the world.[[9]](#footnote-9) And yet, in the Hebrew discourse, the athletic body lacked the revolutionary essence that links the person with the nation. Shortly before his death, A. D. Gordon wrote to the head of the Maccabi organization: “I am aware that the basic premise of your association is ‘a healthy mind in a healthy body’ but I ask: where is the body, our national body?...If the body is missing, what good is this health?”[[10]](#footnote-10)

Following this line of reasoning, we can say that if the pioneer was a healthy, multi-membered body, the muscular athlete was to a great extent a cripple, a body consisting of one member only. That is, the competitive athletic body was not an entity worthy of public admiration, but rather a shallow cultural object. The front cover of a pamphlet produced by the Maccabi movement featured a rough illustration of a burly man under the slogan: “A healthy mind in a healthy body.” The depiction of the bare-chested muscle man was very minimal, relying mostly on abstract outlines. This was a figure of physical strength but devoid of essence and substance. Shortly after the pamphlet’s publication, the Tel Aviv-based cultural journalist Ouri Kessary wrote about its cover illustration: “The image does indeed attest to a body in full health… but what of the mind?”[[11]](#footnote-11) Writer Yitshak Dami’el was harsher in his criticism, arguing that athletic competition was conducive to atrophy. “Varied are the editions and the slogans,” he wrote, “but their foundation, their essence is one! Theirs is to obscure, to muddle, to taint! Theirs is the self-ejection from reason into a thicket of dark and ranging instincts…, theirs is the weariness with the narrow and crooked human-scale and the allure of escape, if only for an hour, there, there, down into the shadows, down into baseness.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Proponents of physical culture in Jewish Palestine likewise warned about the bodily and mental dangers of athletic competition. Unlike physical exercise, competitive sports did not make the athletes “into one unit, a solid, beautiful body.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Instead, they were perceived as savage, unrestrained objects. “We believe in the victory of ability,” wrote Benayahu in 1937, “not in the victory of the blind ecstasy that turns a man into a bull in a ring, inflamed by the scorching rod and the red cape.”[[14]](#footnote-14) In the revolutionary mind-set, the “sporting moment” devoted to victory was to be disciplined and controlled. “The aspiration to victory is cheap, chasing after ‘goals’ and whatnot,” proclaimed an article in *Haaretz*, “after all, it is not the purpose of sports and competition. Certainly, everyone should aspire to be the winner, but not outside the limits of courtesy and patience toward one’s opponent.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Or as the journalist for *HaBoker Sport* (“Sports this morning”) put it, one must commend the young boxer who “always chooses to lose graciously rather than win disgracefully.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

This attitude dictated, furthermore, that athletic competition was harmful not only to the competitors themselves but to the observing public as well. When the game is conducted with malicious savagery and the desire to win “no matter what,” wrote *Davar* journalist Shim’on Samet, “it is capable of awakening the most bestial instincts in the spectator and turning him into a vicious animal.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Rather than pursuing futile competition, physical culture adherents advocated nationalizing the “sporting moment and the sporting body.” “Sport is also a means of national education,” claimed *Davar*, “and it is unacceptable that foreign languages should be spoken at the [boxing] event. As for the public clamor that many of our experts see as an inseparable part of a successful boxing event, one or two respectful cheers could not do any harm, but wild jeering and shouting must be stopped immediately and compellingly.”[[18]](#footnote-18) And thus, for fear of the damaging effects of sports enthusiasm, Hebrew athletes undertook the task of educating the crowd to conduct themselves in a civilized and non-rowdy manner. Members of HaPo’el, for instance, formulated the “ten commandments” for “improving the sporting level in Eretz Yisrael by promoting proper behavior worthy of a civilized public.”[[19]](#footnote-19) The private boxing club in Tel Aviv, Benny Leonard, also supported the cause by distributing a flyer depicting a crowd of spectators composed of a dog, a pig, and a monkey all yelling out violent slogans while the legend above them instructed: “Do not shout!! The boxing ring is not an animal pen.”[[20]](#footnote-20) The “destructive” effect of the uncontrolled sporting experience on the physical body of the Hebrew man is also implied by the word “doping” (from the English word denoting a state of drug-induced mindlessness) used by the Hebrew press to describe the actions of cheering and encouraging players during competition.[[21]](#footnote-21)

However, the determination to rein in the emotions aroused by one’s presence in the “sporting space” left the Hebrew athlete with no lofty metaphors for excellence and success. “We, therefore, have the right to demand that at the HaPo’el gathering” maintained *Haaretz*, “we should see before us the multitudes who engage in sports and exercise in practice, **and not outstanding sportspeople** blessed with a gift for running and jumping. It is not the quality but the quantity that must serve as the measure of the actions of our [sporting] associations in Eretz Yisrael.”[[22]](#footnote-22) The Maccabi organization, ostensibly bourgeois, took a similar stance. As stated in the pamphlet of Maccabi Tel Aviv’s light athletics department, “sports do not aspire to create ‘stars,’ and it is not the ultimate goal of sports to foster record-holding individuals. Our sportspeople must always stay humble and not think of themselves as outstanding… and keep away from the ‘prima donnas.’”[[23]](#footnote-23)

The Hebrew athlete was thus asked to be one of the people.[[24]](#footnote-24) While it was said about Avraham Beit Halevy, one of the leading footballers in Palestine, for example, that he was “a European-level player,” whose game was like that of “the best amateur players with a high degree of athletic culture,” he was also “not just an excellent athlete on the playing field but a ‘decent fellow’ in day-to-day life. He knows how to draw people to him in a comradely and friendly manner.”[[25]](#footnote-25) The press coverage of Yaffa Cohen, one of the leading female Hebrew athletes, also redirected attention from her competitive performance and accomplishments to her everyday life. When a *HaBoker Sport* journalist visited her home, he proudly noted that her home life was the model of modesty and good hygiene. “This is the room of a true sportswoman,” he wrote, “cleanliness, light, and flowers… sparse furniture. The walls hung with pretty pictures.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Following this impression of her humble character, and a brief overview of her athletic achievements, the interview ends with the question: “And what about [your life] outside of sport?” This question positions Cohen’s body in the banality of the day-to-day. “My time is entirely taken up by domestic matters,” she replies, “the only free time I have for sports is in the evenings and on Saturdays.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

The purposelessness ascribed to the athletic body in Hebrew culture went hand in hand with a concrete social dilemma—the issue of professionalism in sports.[[28]](#footnote-28) The critique against athletic professionalism was not unique to Hebrew culture and began to emerge in the course of the nineteenth century, concurrently with the establishment of the rugby field as an important, gendered arena of the British bourgeoisie.[[29]](#footnote-29) Social historians tend to emphasize that the ethos of amateurism, forced on athletic competition by the British bourgeoisie, was at least partially meant to prevent the lower classes, who had to work for a living, from actively participating in sports. The same historians also claim that the espousal of a professional ethos by the heads of the football (soccer in the United States) leagues in Britain was one of the main reasons for the spread and popularization of the game. In other words, economic and individual interests were at the basis of the sport’s rapid dissemination and transformation from a marginal cultural phenomenon (in comparison to rugby and other ball sports) into a global industry.[[30]](#footnote-30) Indeed, it is hard to separate the history of consumer culture from the evolution of competitive sports. Nevertheless, once sports became globalized, the social and cultural repercussions of athletic professionalism became important subjects for discussion in many countries. In England it reflected, among other things, the geographic tensions between north and south, while in Germany, the wealthy arena of professional sports was often perceived as a sign of Americanization and was opposed by both sides of the political spectrum on the grounds of its purported damage to the national identity, on the one hand, and to the social classes, on the other.[[31]](#footnote-31) In this sense, the criticism leveled by Hebrew culture against athletic professionalism was not unique; however, unlike in most other countries, it was voiced despite the fact that the extent of the phenomenon itself was extremely negligible. Regardless of the modest extent of athletic professionalism in Palestine, its criticism was shared across class and political boundaries. The fact that it was given the Western nomenclature of “professionalism”—a kind of mark of Cain—signaled the foreignness of the phenomenon and the cultural threat it represented. As one member of Maccabi’s internal committee asserted: “We have witnessed a wave of football and professionalism while the cultural and national endeavor has been abandoned or greatly weakened.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

To Hebrew eyes, athletic professionalism was not just an economic-social problem but a phenomenon with devastating repercussions to the body of the Hebrew revival. As early as 1921, *Do’ar Hayom* warned of the harmful tendency “to make ‘sports’ an interest in its own right, a source of income and big profits, an institution of betting for large sums.”[[33]](#footnote-33) According to the journalist, athletic competitions are a moral blight because they do not ask “who is strong in body, healthy in spirit, quick in wit, but who might impart upon the public multitudes more competitive and pecuniary enthusiasm.”[[34]](#footnote-34) This perception, which was still present in the Hebrew press in the years leading up to World War II, had real bureaucratic influence.[[35]](#footnote-35) Thus, in 1926, when the Maccabi association defined its amateur status, it allowed payment for training and coaching work. As one of the heads of the Maccabi movement publicly declared, the organization saw it “as a very natural thing to share in the profits… a very common thing in the circles of amateur sports.”[[36]](#footnote-36) That is, the prohibition of professionalism and the reception of payment were applicable to the athletes alone – to the commercialization of their bodies.

This fear of athletic professionalism in the Hebrew Yishuv is also reflected in the dissolution of the neighborhood football teams in the late 1920s. With the rise of competitive sports, local footballs teams began forming in all corners of the Yishuv. These teams were not directly or officially associated with Maccabi, the only Zionist physical culture organization active at the time in Palestine.[[37]](#footnote-37) They were mainly organized by Hebrew youths and gave expression to popular, that is to say, non-institutionalized interest in competitive sports.[[38]](#footnote-38) In line with the early, “innocent” state of the sport itself, these teams were beginner amateur enterprises that were very far removed from the image of the contemporary professional European football club. Nevertheless, during the 1920s, these popular teams took an active part, along with the Maccabi clubs and the British and Arab teams, in a number of friendly games, small tournaments, and other competitions.[[39]](#footnote-39) Not much is known about these neighborhood teams, but their local development is reminiscent of the process European football clubs had undergone twenty years earlier. This kind of “cultural pluralism” was disparaged by the Zionists even before it had begun to create any kind of tradition.[[40]](#footnote-40)

“This great stirring among our sportspeople,” read a 1923 article in *Do’ar Hayom*, “especially among the youth, is very gladdening, yet, on the other hand, it saddens the heart to see some members start pulling players from team to team in forming, from time to time, a new team.”[[41]](#footnote-41)To the journalist’s mind, the proliferation of clubs and the emphasis on the individual went against the body’s revival. “The exertion of energy and work of each for himself is harmful to the movement as a whole,” the author of the article goes on to assert, “and let us not forget that this is not a matter of witch hunts for the benefit of one team or the other, but of the development of the Hebrew sports movement in general and the health of our youth in particular.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

A few years later, neighborhood teams began to disappear from the national sports landscape and the collective consciousness. Some of the teams broke up; others joined the mainstream physical culture organizations—Maccabi and HaPo’el. From the materialistic perspective, this process is likely to have been influenced by the shaky financial state of the physical culture associations which, eventually, had no choice but to recognize the necessity of selling tickets.[[43]](#footnote-43) In addition, we can assume that the financial crisis endured by the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine in the latter half of the 1920s hastened the merger of the small neighborhood enterprises with the “big” national organizations.[[44]](#footnote-44) The establishment of HaPo’el and the subsequent transformation of Maccabi into an organization identified with the “middle class” was also an important catalyzing factor. And yet, the official reason for the dissolution of the private teams was defined as fear of professionalization. In 1927, for example, the members of the Balfour Jerusalem football team wrote: “In recognition of our team’s need for great development, and in opposition to the professionalism that has been spreading through Maccabi of late, we hereby declare our departure from the Maccabi sports association and our entrance into the ranks of the HaPo’el physical culture union, and tie our position with that the organized labor movement of the General Organization of Workers.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

An even terser statement was issued a month earlier by the Allenby football team from Tel Aviv. Only three years after its foundation by students of the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium living adjacent to the school on Allenby Street, the heads of the team decided to give up their independence and merge with the HaPo’el organization. “In recognition of the need to combat professionalism in sports,” they wrote, “we hereby announce that we are severing all ties with Gibor. We are entering the ranks of HaPo’el and tying our position with that the organized labor movement of the General Organization of Workers.”[[46]](#footnote-46) The merger between HaPo’el and Allenby was the beginning of the popular and much beloved football club HaPo’el Tel Aviv. Nevertheless, its foundation was akin to a public announcement against sports entrepreneurship as a whole. “We call upon our comrades in the field of sports in Eretz Yisrael,” they wrote, “to fight against the disease of professionalism spreading today in several places in our land. And likewise, to prohibit the possibility of receiving a steady salary for playing, without it hinging on productive construction or social work, [for the benefit of] the nation and the land.”[[47]](#footnote-47) That is, the neighborhood football club decided to relinquish its independence for fear of the impact of professionalism on the revolutionary culture. As long as the Hebrew athlete was in the least influenced by professionalism, claimed the members of the Allenby club, he was mired in a “poisonous atmosphere,” and only once the venom has been drained could he return to contributing to “physical and spiritual health!”[[48]](#footnote-48)

A similar process took place in Hebrew boxing. The beginning of the modern sport of boxing is usually dated back to 1867 with the publication of the “Marquess of Queensberry Rules.” During the nineteenth century, boxing was mainly identified with Anglo-Saxon culture and, toward the end of the century, the United States emerged as the central location for the development of the sport.[[49]](#footnote-49) In the course of this period, the American boxer became transformed from a marginal figure associated with circuses and freak shows to that of a modern gladiator admired by the public.[[50]](#footnote-50) After the Great War, the sport spread to additional countries and the boxing ring became the stage for a “mainstream” cultural spectacle.[[51]](#footnote-51) According to Erik Jensen and other historians, the rise of boxing was not a random phenomenon, but rather a direct product of the destructive and traumatic impact that the first total war in the history of humanity had on modern masculinity.[[52]](#footnote-52) The soldiers returning from the battlefield were forced to deal with severe injuries, shell shock, and the deaths of their brothers in arms, along with a decline in their social and cultural status.[[53]](#footnote-53) As a counter to these devastating effects, the “rational” sport of boxing allowed men to reproduce violence within a framework of safety and control.[[54]](#footnote-54) And indeed, during the 1920s, military service and participation in the war were an integral part of the public image of several prominent boxers, such as Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney, and Georges Carpentier.[[55]](#footnote-55) Similarly, the dozens of champions who emerged from the “golden age” of Jewish boxing, which evolved concurrently, sought not only social mobility, but also to engage in a direct and indirect gender dialogue with the aim of shaping an image of the tough and violent Jewish male in contrast to the anti-Semitic stereotypes of old.[[56]](#footnote-56)

However, in contrast to the global processes taking place in the sport, the Hebrew boxing ring was not perceived as a platform for shaping the desired image of healthy masculinity. “The boxer does not do his job as the ‘rewarding profession’ of a healthy sportsman,” read a 1932 article in a Hebrew sports journal, “instead he does dangerous tricks, his inhuman and uncivilized antics enflaming the crowd of onlookers and transforming them into vicious beasts.”[[57]](#footnote-57) Thus, as opposed to seeing it as a violent means of restoring Jewish masculinity, a *Haaretz* journalist affirmed: “Of course it is necessary to make sure that the new sport does not become a kind of ‘weakness,’ the likes of football. This sport possesses certain qualities that tug at the heart of youths and we may worry that they may become obsessed from an early age and suffer from an unbalanced development.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Fearing a disturbing spectacle, proponents of physical culture warned that “boxing requires, first of all, a healthy and developed body, and it is not enough to be skin and bones and have some agility, as some might have it.”[[59]](#footnote-59) An expression of this attitude can be seen in the praise heaped by members of HaPo’el upon their heavyweight boxer Loeb for not having “his favorite sport [replace] his pickaxe.”[[60]](#footnote-60) Loeb’s physical labor as a road worker not perceived as a hindrance to his athletic activity on the contrary, it was seen as contributing to his abilities in the ring by making his fists stronger and his body sturdier.[[61]](#footnote-61)

To Hebrew eyes, the sport of boxing had value not as a violent spectacle, but as a disciplined practice. “In athletic circles, there are those who see the sport of boxing in a negative light due to the bitter spirit of controversy around it and the manifestations of cruelty that sometimes accompany the competitions,” claimed Benayahu in 1929. “However,” he continued, “all admit that this sport, especially the preparatory and training exercises it requires, is unmatched in the harmonious advancement of the body and the development of certain positive psychological qualities.”[[62]](#footnote-62) And so, while training was meant to teach participants to “purposefully use all the motions of the body in any situation,” the aim of the competition was merely to “demonstrate in the eyes of the crowd the accomplishments of groups and individuals as the result of systematic training.”[[63]](#footnote-63)

The national-amateur approach was also instrumental in shaping the spirit of boxing competition in the Yishuv. “Even as we take our first steps, we must refrain from the tasteless propaganda, the cheap advertising and the crude poster,” maintained a *Davar* journalist in 1937. “The competition,” he continued, “must take place in broad daylight, without blinding spotlights or tiresome flashing on and off.”[[64]](#footnote-64) And yet, despite their hope for daylight, boxing fights often took place in old warehouses and without proper equipment budgets.[[65]](#footnote-65) For instance, in 1935, the film “Yoman Carmel” documented a random boxing match between the Maccabi and HaPo’el teams.[[66]](#footnote-66) The short film focuses on pale-skinned, nameless boxers trading blows in a ring in the center of a crowded hall. One of the contestants is bare-chested while the other is wearing a tank top meant to distinguish him from his rival. The judges are seated in the tiny space between the ring and the wall behind white wooden tables. Next to them, below the ropes, young children are gawking at the proceedings while, to their right, a man wearing a suit and tie stuffs his hands into his pockets and leans back on a big cupboard topped with a pile of mattresses. At the edge of the ring there are tables covered with tablecloths, with a few men standing around next to these. It seems like very few people showed up to watch the fight out of sheer interest. Through the small window one can see it is dark outside. At the far end of the hall, next to a long wooden ladder, a dark figure appears and watches the fights from above. A big flag of Zion hangs in the background, stretching across the entire wall. The wide piece of fabric catches the spectator’s eye, pulling it away from the events in the ring.

In the interwar period, boxing was one of the most popular sports in Jewish Palestine, but even a year after the outbreak of World War II, Hebrew culture still viewed boxing competitions as underground events with a hint of the avant-garde.[[67]](#footnote-67) “Imagine a special canton over which the police have no control, where everything is tolerated and permitted,” wrote a Tel Aviv resident in 1938, after watching a boxing match for the first time.[[68]](#footnote-68) And yet, despite the general foreignness and the amateurish, spectacle-free atmosphere of the sport, the Hebrew physical culture experts continued to strive for a sporting experience where “order rules all.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Only then, according to a Hebrew sports journalist, would boxing acquire purpose beyond personal and momentary triumph—“an aim and will common to both sides: to educate a generation of winners.”[[70]](#footnote-70)

An explicit illustration of the Hebrew culture’s ideological stance with regard to boxing can be seen in the story of the boxer Ami’el Avineri (Emil Rebelski). Avineri, son of the Hebrew educator Moshe Rebelski, was born in 1908 in the southern region of the Russian empire. In 1926, after spending three years in Berlin, he immigrated to Palestine.[[71]](#footnote-71) His first encounter with boxing took place in the German capital, and when he arrived in the Middle East, he set his sights on developing the sport in Tel Aviv, first within the framework of the Maccabi organization, then later, from 1929 onward, in his own private boxing club initially simply called “Box Club.” The following year, the club’s name was changed to “Benny Leonard” in honor of the greatest Jewish boxer of all time.[[72]](#footnote-72) In the early thirties, Avineri closed down his club and went to Berlin for three years during which time he tried his luck as a film actor. Having failed to make it in the business, he came back to Palestine and reopened the club. It would seem that the figure of Avineri in the 1920s reflected the tension that existed between wide-reaching international influences and the specific role Hebrew culture assigned to the athletic body. On the one hand, the choice of “Benny Leonard” as the name of the club attests to the influence and recognition of accomplishments in the field elsewhere.[[73]](#footnote-73) On the other hand, the club did not attempt to push the boundaries set by revolutionary language and, similar to the athletic endeavors of Maccabi and HaPo’al, this private boxing arena was amateurish and characterized by an unassuming, familial atmosphere, where the participants were “just a bunch of Hebrew boys from Tel Aviv and the neighboring towns.”[[74]](#footnote-74)

The description of Avineri in the 1931 issue *HaMaccabi* shows just how little national value was ascribed to the Hebrew boxer. The story, featured in a pamphlet distributed by the Maccabi organization, is not testimony, but a historical anecdote elucidating the essence (or lack thereof) of the athletic act. “On the Hebrew shore in Tel Aviv there appeared a young man, a youth almost, who attracted the attention of the passersby with his strange motions,” the description read. “The handsome-bodied youngster was swinging punches into the air.—‘Lunatic!’—the kids who surrounded him on all sides called him. —‘He has lost his mind’—the majority of women lounging in the sand called out mournfully. And the youth kept brandishing his fists in the air, as if hitting someone.”[[75]](#footnote-75) Besides attesting to the foreignness of the sport of boxing to the Tel Aviv public, the short text insists on Avineri’s castrated masculinity in the eyes of the women and children on the beach, who do not see in him the model of a father or a lover.

Nevertheless, alongside the scorn, the author’s choice to mention that Avineri was “handsome-bodied” is significant. It implies that Avineri’s lack of masculinity is not due to a lack of aesthetic appeal. As the historian Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska points out, the modern ideal of masculine beauty is directly and indirectly influenced by two Hellenistic archetypes: the muscular body of Hercules and the athletic body of Pluto.[[76]](#footnote-76) Accordingly, German wrestlers, who were perceived as icons of masculine beauty, were often photographed in the nude. The renowned German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld even compared the chiseled (and nude) body of Max Schmeling to that of a Greek god.[[77]](#footnote-77) In Hebrew culture, on the other hand, the athlete was not seen as a symbol of beauty, and that is precisely why the story in *HaMaccabi* emphasizes the fact that it is not the physical aesthetic of Avineri’s body that causes him to become the subject of ridicule and scorn, but his social performance, that is, the boxing itself.

The narrative “redemption” granted to Avineri later on in the text only comes about when his athletic body is given the dimension of purpose. Having witnessed him knock out a “strong fellow of considerable heft and height” who had provoked him, the author declares: “All cheered for Emil. They stopped laughing at him and his gesticulations no longer seemed so strange.”[[78]](#footnote-78) The account goes on to describe Avineri overcoming a British rival and even instructing “sixteen- and seventeen-year-old Hebrew youths, their skin tanned by the Israeli sun,” how to beat “the tall British soldiers hands down.”[[79]](#footnote-79) And yet, despite his narrative redemption, the Hebrew boxer’s actual athletic activity failed to earn him a place in Zionist collective memory. Even though the Hebrew press continued praising Avineri for his competitive prowess against British and Arab boxers throughout the thirties,[[80]](#footnote-80) he returned to the beaches of Tel Aviv and added a more practical occupation to that of the frivolous sport of boxing—that of a lifeguard.[[81]](#footnote-81) Legends about him claim that he saved the lives of thousands and even developed a lifesaving technique using a stand-up paddle board (the *hasakeh*), yet his exploits in the ring remain marginal and secondary. And thus, from the late 1930s and until his death in the 1980s, he was mainly known in Hebrew culture as “Emil the lifeguard.”[[82]](#footnote-82)

Emil’s story reflects not only the place of athletic competition in Hebrew ideology but also the tension between the Diaspora and Eretz Yisrael. In Central and Eastern Europe, sports became increasingly important for Jewish communities.[[83]](#footnote-83) In Germany, for example, where Jews were prohibited from enlisting in the military because of their allegedly malformed and atrophied legs, participating in football games became a symbolic act of fitting into the local culture as healthy and equal men.[[84]](#footnote-84) In Palestine, on the other hand, this kind of reform discourse was perceived as dangerous assimilation. “Our sport is but an imitation of the actions of others, and as such—it is no different than any other imitation in the world: it renders man into a monkey donning his owner’s clothes,” declared *Do’ar Hayom* in 1923.[[85]](#footnote-85)

The place of the athletic body of the Diaspora Jew in the Hebrew revolution became the subject of broad public discussion following the visit of the Hakoah Vienna football club to Palestine in 1924.[[86]](#footnote-86) Founded in 1909, the Austrian club was among the most prominent Jewish sports clubs in the first half of the twentieth century. Alongside a successful football team, the club also had wrestling, swimming, and light athletics teams that produced quite a few Olympic athletes. Similar to Jewish wrestling, the Jewish sports clubs in Central and Eastern Europe were a major identity arena where the Jewish desire to create the image of a secure and muscular Jew could find expression.[[87]](#footnote-87) Accordingly, their appearance in Palestine was depicted as an encounter with “the small and skinny ‘Hakoah’” who had dealt with antisemitism through their “courage, agility and technique.”[[88]](#footnote-88)

The Austrian team’s visit to Palestine was not just a matter of competition; it also raised a public debate over the role of sports in the Hebrew revolution. During their eight-day sojourn, the Jewish team travelled throughout Palestine and were festively welcomed wherever they went with speeches and ceremonies.[[89]](#footnote-89) The hospitality shown to the team, which mainly consisted of visiting holy places and historical attractions, reflected the common destiny shared by Hebrew culture and Diaspora Jewry.[[90]](#footnote-90) Members of Maccabi, for instance, took out an ad to welcome the visitors and express the hope that “Hakoah, who managed to raise Hebrew sports to such a high degree, will open with their visit a ‘new era’ in Hebrew sports here.”[[91]](#footnote-91) The message implied by this warm reception was that regardless of their international success, it was only in setting foot on the soil of Israel that the Austrian athletes were satisfying their “burning yearnings and longings,” and thus “the sons of Eretz Yisrael are required to welcome Hakoah with the brotherly love it deserves.”[[92]](#footnote-92) Moreover, proponents of this approach wished to bridge the team’s athletic activity in Europe with toil in Eretz Yisrael. They claimed that Hakoah’s endeavors were “pioneering work, like the work of the pioneers building up Eretz Yisrael, sacrificing their sweat and blood for the one single ideal they share with the members of Hakoah.”[[93]](#footnote-93)

It is likely that some of the Jewish footballers were indeed excited to visit the “land of their fathers” and to observe the developing Zionist enterprise. Yet a considerable proportion of the Jews in Palestine chose to focus on the foreignness of the Austrian sportsmen.[[94]](#footnote-94) Most of the criticism of their otherness revolved around their inability to speak Hebrew.[[95]](#footnote-95) As a *Haaretz* journalist put it, “it is certainly no sign of national unity when their representative greets the children of Tel Aviv in German.”[[96]](#footnote-96) Eli’ezer Riger also wondered why Hakoah was being presented “as a symbol of our national vigor,” a team that “could not greet the children of Tel Aviv in Hebrew and did not find it necessary to write Hebrew words on the flag in Cairo. These are the symbols of our national vigor in the eyes of the municipality, not the Hebrew Brigade, the defenders of Galilee, or the pioneers?”[[97]](#footnote-97) The Zionist newspaper even claimed that the manager of the Austrian team admitted that they were undeserving of the great praise they received “because we still do not know your language.”[[98]](#footnote-98) Thus, even those who wished to compliment and embrace the European guests had to admit that the Austrian Jews “still cling, it would seem, to the exterior and superficial order of things, without delving into their depths.”[[99]](#footnote-99)

In other words, despite their international success and their muscular physique, the members of Hakoah—and sports in general—found themselves excluded from the revolutionary discourse. There were, among the Austrian footballers, quite a few Zionists who asked of their Hebrew brethren: “Light our way, give us your Israeli Hebrew-ness and your wants—our wants will be fulfilled.”[[100]](#footnote-100) However, it seems that, ultimately, the Yishuv public looked past the minor details and exhorted the Austrians to go home and send “young men who will take up shovels and ploughs,” instead.[[101]](#footnote-101) As Moshe Smilanski phrased it, “our nation’s victory” must only be realized “the old and proven way: with the book and with the plough.”[[102]](#footnote-102) Similar sentiments were expressed in the speech delivered by the Mayor of Tel Aviv, Meir Dizengoff to the Hakoah team: “We stand here in full recognition and the utmost confidence that we are fulfilling a great historical role, all of us here who are working to build, to plough, and to plant, and that success will be granted to those who come with the lofty purpose of reviving our nation and raising its light… Only with the participation of the entire nation, who with strength and who with spirit, **who with money and who with labor**—will Eretz Yisrael be built.”[[103]](#footnote-103) A year later, Hakoah returned for a second visit to Palestine.[[104]](#footnote-104) This time, their sojourn elicited little public interest and the media discussion no longer focused on the “youngsters who know how to kick a ball.”[[105]](#footnote-105)

A decade later, tensions regarding the shaping of Hebrew athletic competition were reawakened with the return of Central European Jewish athletes to Palestine, this time not as guests, but as immigrants.[[106]](#footnote-106) The mass migration of Eastern and Central European Jews to Palestine after the rise of Nazism included a considerable number of people who had athletic knowledge, talent, and ability and who wished to continue being active in this field even after their move to the Levant.[[107]](#footnote-107) In June 1933, a *Do’ar Hayom* article proclaimed: “There is no doubt that the sportspeople from all the branches of sports, the experts, the coaches, the trainers, and the leaders…who are present aboard almost every ship arriving on our homeland’s shores will raise the level of physical culture in Eretz Yisrael.”[[108]](#footnote-108) As was the case in many other fields, the German immigrants integrated relatively quickly into the world of sport, and, within a few years, athletes from Central Europe already held senior positions in Hebrew sports. Yet, at the same time, many of these athletes were having a harder time fitting into Hebrew culture. “It is with sorrow that we must mention the unhappy fact that, over the years, many immigrant athletes have left us,” wrote Maccabi member Ernst Freudenthal. “Some have moved on to other sports federations,” he continued, “while others—and these are the majority—scattered to the four corners of the Earth, among them those who had been loyal and devoted members in the ranks of Maccabi abroad.”[[109]](#footnote-109) The former player of Hakoah Vienna, Egon Pollak, for example, was appointed coach of the Maccabi Tel Aviv team in the 1930s and even served as the coach of the Eretz Yisrael team for a short period. Nevertheless, Pollak, who had taken part in the Hakoah Vienna delegation to Palestine a decade earlier, never managed to find his place in Palestine, and ultimately immigrated to Australia in 1939.[[110]](#footnote-110) Even though Pollack returned to Israel in the 1950s and served in a number of positions as coach and commentator, culminating in an appointment as the first coach of the national team, he seems to have failed to leave his mark on Hebrew culture. In the 1970s, he returned to Germany and remained there until his death at the age of eighty-two. Pollak’s story was no exception. As a 1939 article in *HaBoker Sport* put it: “Any incoming immigrant, even if he was immeasurably outstanding in sports in the Diaspora, is considered a stranger here.”[[111]](#footnote-111)

The story of Nickolaus “Mickey” Hirschl is probably the starkest example of the failure of Central European athletes to integrate into Hebrew culture. Hirschl, a heavyweight wrestler and member of Hakoah Vienna, was one of the most prominent athletes to immigrate to Palestine in the interwar period.[[112]](#footnote-112) Approximately two years after his double-bronze-medal win at the Los Angeles Olympics, the twenty-six-year-old athlete immigrated to Palestine.[[113]](#footnote-113) A powerful man with an impressive physical presence who was even born into an observant Jewish family, Hirschl seemed a living example of the revolutionary ambition to create a healthy, strong, and neurosis-free Jewish body.[[114]](#footnote-114) With his arrival in Eretz Yisrael, Hirschl planned to continue competing in his favorite sport, as well as coach and foster a future generation of local wrestlers. In an interview he gave to a *Davar* journalist, he said: “The human material in Eretz Yisrael is excellent! I can already see in my mind’s eye the strong Eretz Yisraeli brigade I have assembled, and how it surprises the European countries with its power and makes a name for the revived land of the Hebrews.”[[115]](#footnote-115) Yet this was not to be. In spite of his determination, Hirschl never got to represent Eretz Yisrael in an official international competition and was soon erased from Hebrew culture and the collective memory of Israel.

Hirschl’s failure to integrate is especially glaring in light of the classical nature of the sport of wrestling. Unlike popular football or violent and consumerist boxing, wrestling was a sport of pure male power and strength, stripped of many of the commercial aspects of modern sports. It was practiced by amateurs, and training did not require any expensive equipment or a large amount of space. Its Western origins were rooted in ancient Greece, but examples of wrestling traditions could be found in many indigenous cultures in the Americas, the Caucasus region, Oceania, and East Asia.[[116]](#footnote-116) Indeed, the masculine and pluralistic aspects of wrestling led many “Eastern” countries to convert the local tradition into a modern Western competitive sport. As early as the 1920s and 1930s, a large number of non-Western countries were able to compete in the Olympic wrestling competitions, with countries such as Japan, Turkey, and Egypt coming away with medals. One of the leading non-Western wrestlers at the time was Ibrahim Moustafa of Egypt. Following his gold-medal performance at the Amsterdam Olympics (1928) in the middleweight category, Moustafa became a symbol of Egyptian masculinity in his homeland and his bare-chested image was a perennial presence in the local press.[[117]](#footnote-117) Yet, in Egypt too, admiration for the “modern” wrestler was mixed in with doubts about whether the new brand of athletic competition was a social and educational tool in the nation’s struggle against the West and other problems.[[118]](#footnote-118)

In the Hebrew culture, on the other hand, Hirschl did not enjoy even the benefit of such doubt. It is true that traditional Jewish culture is lacking a clear heritage of wrestling or physical strength, but this background only partially explains why Zionist culture failed to embrace a man of Hirschl’s stature (and size) or include him in its national memory.[[119]](#footnote-119) Hirschl hoped to fit into Hebrew culture as an athlete, but instead of creating a new tradition of Zionist wrestling, he found himself preserving a different, family tradition. The son of a Jewish butcher, he found himself working in a slaughterhouse in Tel Aviv.[[120]](#footnote-120)

This notwithstanding, he did get off to a promising start. When Hirschl started training in the HaPo’el Tel Aviv wresting team and coaching them, the *Davar* newspaper described him as “a model of dedication, devotion, and humility.”[[121]](#footnote-121) Two years later, in 1936, Hirschl and his team competed successfully against the A.F.K Arab club. He even took part in HaPo’el’s delegation to the “Popular Olympics” in Barcelona that same year, but the event was cancelled due to the outbreak of the Spanish civil war and, like all the other athletes who had traveled to the Catalan capital, Hirschl never got to put his prowess on display.[[122]](#footnote-122) A short time after that, Hirschl vanished from the Hebrew sports landscape.[[123]](#footnote-123) He seemed to have given up on the sport he loved. “I am so tired, I have no desire to train,” he told a journalist during a chance encounter on a football pitch in 1938.[[124]](#footnote-124)

In 1939, he attempted to resume training.[[125]](#footnote-125) He joined Hakoah Tel Aviv and announced: “I feel capable of returning to a top performance level. But I must not work at the slaughterhouse as hard as I have been working until now. If I am allowed to cut back I believe I can play an honorable role in the 1940 Olympics.”[[126]](#footnote-126) According to him, he had even made a specific demand to obtain funding for a trip to the neighboring Egypt in order to train with this country’s excellent wrestlers. His demand went unanswered. In early 1940, Hirschl suffered a back injury on the job and never returned to the Hebrew wrestling mat.[[127]](#footnote-127) Shortly after, he joined the British army and fought in the Second World War, following which he got married, moved to Australia and opened a local beef processing business.[[128]](#footnote-128) About forty years later, he summed up his athletic career in a few words that seem to reflect the hardships endured by Central European Jewish athletes who had traded the deep-seated anti-Semitism of their homelands for national disregard in Palestine: “I did not compete for financial reward…but for self-respect.”[[129]](#footnote-129)

Like Hirschl, many athletes of the Fifth Aliyah experienced difficulties due to the amateur nature of Hebrew sports, which included material hardships and the lack of proper financial support. In the summer of 1936, for instance, the HaPo’al football club announced they would be giving up the services of the team’s coach and former Hakoah Vienna player Alexander “Nemesh” Neufeld because it could not “afford to spend the large sum of money that H. Nemesh’s presence entails.”[[130]](#footnote-130) The lack of funding had even greater adverse effects of members of Maccabi, unlike HaPo’el, many of them were newly-arrived immigrants who had been affiliates or members of the movement in their countries of birth. Roughly one month before Nemesh’s departure, Ernst Freudenthal, who had immigrated to Palestine in 1933 himself, made a suggestion on how to right the situation: “We must understand that this brand of immigrants require a foundation to engage in athletic pursuits, which is why we must create the conditions to allow their basic sustenance by making work arrangements for them, in order to give them the possibility to devote themselves to athletic work.”[[131]](#footnote-131)

Freudenthal’s suggestion, in fact, contains a proposal to change the essence of Hebrew athletic competition. Like Alexandrowitz and the “new sports journalists,” Central European immigrants also saw sports as an integral part of national activity. “Because Hebrew sports also require pioneering… sports pioneers to pave new ways and prime the soil for a new, robust generation,” wrote Walter Frankl, a notable Central European athlete in Palestine.[[132]](#footnote-132) Moreover, the lack of conflict between competition and personal/national identity in the eyes of these recent immigrants also led to the formation and establishment of sports teams and clubs representing the athletes’ countries of origin. “Atid,” the Central European immigrants’ club founded by Frankl and Freudenthal, was the biggest and most prominent among these, however, it was joined by the Lithuanian community’s “Atzil,” the Egyptian community’s “Hitkadmut,” and the Greek and Turkish communities’ “Degel Tzion” in the Florentin neighborhood in Tel Aviv.[[133]](#footnote-133)

However, like the proliferation of neighborhood teams in the previous decade, this process of the multicultural transformation of the map of Hebrew sports provoked a massive backlash on the part of the physical culture establishment. Maccabi member Aharon Rosenfeld wrote about this athletic schism: “It is a phenomenon that parades under the guise of an affinity for sports, but it is the fruit of moral degradation and organizational weakness that proves definitively that not all is well in our world of sports…We must gather our forces by using them to the utmost and avoiding any kind of separatism.”[[134]](#footnote-134) To counter the desire for pluralism, which in Europe had served mainly as an expression of identity, Maccabi and HaPo’al accused it of damaging national solidarity in seeing sport as an object with its own inherent meaning:

And if there are some sportsmen who would like to instill the idea of sport for the sake of sport and physical education disconnected from any national responsibility—the time has come to sound the alarm about this danger that threatens to empty the movement of the little soul it has left… There is no future for the various “Atids” [“futures”], there is no nobility in the Lithuanian immigrants’ “Atzil” [“noble”] and there is no strength in “Hakoah” [“strength”]. The “Hitkadmut” [“progress”] team, comprising Jews of Egyptian origin and active mainly in the field of basketball, too, has no progress, for it would be strange for every branch of sports to be an organization in and of itself. “Benny Leonard” has made no external appearances for years and we know nothing about their existence. Inter-group rivalries will not breed athletic accomplishments, for they are destined, with time, to collapse from lack of spiritual ferment and sustainability.[[135]](#footnote-135)

This criticism soon gave way to emphasizing the foreign nature of the new athletes. In a humorous article published in the Purim issue of *Davar* the writer “wished” the Atid team to secure “at least one section manager who is not a doctor,” and “Hakoah Tel Aviv—a dozen fans made in Israel.”[[136]](#footnote-136) Consequently, the “foreignness” of the German immigrants led to outright conflicts. Maccabi North Tel Aviv, for instance, chose to sever their cooperation with Atid under the pretext that their own activity was mostly national in essence, whereas “the Atid children are educated and spend time in a German rather than Hebrew environment.”[[137]](#footnote-137)

Some of these “ethnic” teams continued their activity well into the second half of the twentieth century; yet, in the 1930s, Central European Jewish athletes constantly faced with the charge that their profession lacked national meaning. Therefore, sportspersons who did manage to integrate Zionist society had to see themselves as something other than just athletes.[[138]](#footnote-138) Like Emil the lifeguard, and ophthalmologist and co-founder of the Maccabi Health Fund, Ernst Freudenthal, Walter Frankl, too, worked as a teacher of agriculture at the Hebrew Gymnasium in Jerusalem and was even one of the Hebrew developers of hydroponics—the art of cultivating plants without soil.[[139]](#footnote-139)

About half a year before the outbreak of World War II, *HaBoker Sport* summed up the cold shoulder given to the Jewish athletes who had immigrated to Palestine from Central Europe in the following words: “It is not at all hard to exclude the new man, the new immigrant who is mostly shattered in body and spirit due to the tortures he had undergone in the Diaspora. And on top of that, they also have their cares over their livelihoods and the relatives they had left behind back there, in the European inferno. And thus, the active sportsman gets ‘out of shape.’” As the examples of Hirschl, Pollak, or Neufeld show, Hebrew culture did not open its arms to an athlete wishing to pursue their craft. The sad result of such treatment was predictable: “national European champions, even European championship winners and Olympic medalists pushed aside by people who had never won even the tiniest competition in a country standing on the bottom rung of the sports world.”[[140]](#footnote-140)

Nevertheless, the influence of Central European immigration on Hebrew sports culture was not limited to the import of athletes, coaches, and fans. It brought with it a different understanding of the relationship between sports, consumerism, and individuality.[[141]](#footnote-141) As one immigrant athlete declared, “for sport to exist and to thrive, it requires money, money, and more money.”[[142]](#footnote-142) This attitude was exemplified by German athletes who had no qualms about using their image to advertise a Tel Aviv cigarette store and to earn money as models and spokespersons.[[143]](#footnote-143) The link between sports and commerce involved the import of a different, more individualistic aesthetic of the athlete and their activity. [[144]](#footnote-144) This kind of aesthetic was widespread in Europe at the time, and not only in fascist cultures. It appealed particularly to Jewish athletes because, unlike drawings or caricatures, photographs had a hard time depicting racist Jewish stereotypes.[[145]](#footnote-145) In the late thirties, examples of this type of visual representation appeared in the short-lived *HaSport* magazine established by the German immigrant Kurt Benyamin (see Chapter Two), and the photography of the German-born photographer Liselotte Grschebina.[[146]](#footnote-146) The latter’s photographs depict Hebrew athletes, both men and women, dressed in white on the background of Eretz Yisrael skies. The athletic body is positioned above the camera, gazing into the distance, back straight and, like the athletes of the ancient Greece, throwing a discus or a javelin. In Grschebina’s eyes, the Hebrew athlete is not a useless body but, like in the lens of Leni Riefenstahl, a mythical, bronze-skinned figure existing outside of time and space.[[147]](#footnote-147)

The consumerist and aesthetic aspects of this new approach were combined in the form of the *Mishmar VeSport* (“Guard and Sports”) sticker book. The booklet was issued in 1939 by the Dubek tobacco company under the ownership of the German immigrant Martin Gehl. The role of the financial considerations that might have motivated the company to publish this booklet is unclear, but what is certain is that, its commercial value aside, the product donned an aesthetic that explicitly glorified the athletic body and individual Hebrew athletes.[[148]](#footnote-148) While the commercialization of the body remained an unbreakable taboo in Hebrew culture, the mostly anonymous athletes were photographed in motion—in the midst of athletic activity. Their running, swimming, boxing bodies were essentially highlighted as vital bodies, part of “the creation of a new Jewish archetype, a healthy, beautiful, self-confident person… [who] in knowing his own strength overcomes the reality of life and joins, as an individual and out of discipline, the entirety of the emergent nation.”[[149]](#footnote-149)

And yet, even in the late thirties, the athlete remained a secondary figure within the context of the revolution and its challenges. As its name suggests *Mishmar VeSport* was not exclusively devoted to athletes; it opened and closed with images depicting pioneers conquering the barren land.[[150]](#footnote-150) A similar, albeit even more regressive position, is allotted to sports in the first Hebrew movie—“Zot hi ha’aretz” (“This is the Land”) released in 1935.[[151]](#footnote-151) The film, made by two Eastern European immigrants, Baruch Agadati and Avigdor HaMe’iri, devotes only about three minutes to depicting athletic activity as part of urban revival in Eretz Yisrael. The montage focuses mainly on group exercise rather than on athletic competition and, unlike the pioneer, the athlete does not speak but serves only as a body against the background of energetic music. Moreover, like *Mishmar VeSport*, the hour-long film begins and ends with descriptions of the exalted labor of pioneers working the land. In other words, even in the years leading up to the World War II, the Hebrew athlete was rarely, if ever, a standalone figure.

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In 1935, the organ of the HaPo’el movement printed a small comic caricature featuring David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett along with the other heads of the Histadrut as football players under the optimistic title: “In the not so distant future…”. While Germany saw the publication of a series of caricatures and satirical jokes about athletes overestimating their cultural importance as being above that of Goethe and Bismarck, for Zionist sports fans in Palestine, it was the heads of the Labor movement who had an important enough of a public identity to be objects of exaggeration and emphasis—the essential tools of caricature.[[152]](#footnote-152) The figure of the Hebrew athlete, on the other hand, was a faceless and identity-less detail in the background of the drawing. Below the drawing, a short legend made the place of the athlete in Hebrew revolutionary language exceedingly clear: “No need for HaPo’els youth,” it read, “we’re young ourselves.”[[153]](#footnote-153)

Hebrew culture sanctified the physical experience of revival, which ostensibly saved the Jewish nation from the physical and spiritual ills that afflicted it in the Diaspora. In this context, athletic competition, while producing a muscular body endowed with physical strength, was limited in terms of its ability to contribute to the nation-building enterprise. In Hebrew eyes, sports may have been suitable in the Diaspora, but in Eretz Yisrael, it was separate from the revolutionary qualities shaping the new Jewish body and mind. Therefore, in the words of Gordon, its place was limited to “an addition to work, a complement to work, or a preparation for work.”[[154]](#footnote-154)

This conception that denied the athlete an exalted essence made it difficult to position the Hebrew athletic body as a desired national model. As stated in an article published in the Maccabi movement’s organ, “if we assume that the master [champion] has to have exceptional qualities from birth… surely accomplishing a record based on this foundation cannot be a source of individual pride. This is all the more true for the nation to which the record-holder belongs.”[[155]](#footnote-155) This kind of argument was not unique to Hebrew culture, but was directly influenced by the sports discourse taking place in various places around the world. However, in Palestine, the sports discourse was given an additional, revolutionary dimension which did not allow the existence of athletic accomplishment in and of itself. In this vein, the same article declared that “sports champions are for the nation nothing but luxuries such as horse racing and cock-fighting, and a ‘world champion’ cannot serve as a source of pride for the people any more than a winning horse or cockerel. Less, perhaps.”[[156]](#footnote-156)

The competitive athletic body’s lack of national essence also affected the treatment of Jewish athletes who had immigrated to Palestine and wished to continue their athletic pursuits. “Any other place they would be treated with respect and only here they are met with shouts of contempt,” regretfully wrote the manager of a Haifa-based football team regarding the welcome received by his Hungarian players.[[157]](#footnote-157) The difficulties in absorbing immigrant athletes partially stemmed from the amateur financial model adopted by Hebrew sports culture. However, as an immigrant athlete from Germany phrased it, “the ‘unusual’ attitude to the demands of sport,” was also motivated by a deeper factor – “the lack of sports knowledge prevalent to this day in large sectors of the Yishuv.”[[158]](#footnote-158) Therefore, it is no coincidence that, even as late as 1939, Hebrew culture was having trouble finding, fostering, and producing a Hebrew athlete “qualified to participate in the Olympic Games.”[[159]](#footnote-159)

Nevertheless, by the end of the thirties, the first buds signaling the broadening of the national discourse began to appear. For instance, a short time before he left Palestine, Mickey Hirschl was described as being “strong as a bear.”[[160]](#footnote-160) This image of the athlete, while still animalistic, positively singled out the body of the Jewish wrestler from the common folk. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the consequences of this change took root, and Hebrew sportspeople born in Palestine in the interwar period, such as Yehoshua Glazer and Nahum Stelmach, were, for the first time, inducted into Israeli collective memory.[[161]](#footnote-161) And yet, even to this day, the “dyed-in-the-wool” fans of Israeli sports, hardened by decades of international disappointment, still suffer the aftermath of the anti-accomplishment crusade of revolutionary discourse.

1. In the course of his athletic career, Borg won four Olympic medals, eight European Championships medals, and held a number of world records. The most prestigious of these was being the first man to have swum 1,500 meters in under twenty minutes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. M. Yavneh, “In the World of Sports,” *Haaretz,* August 29, 1928, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Joanna Bourke*, Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the great War* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1996), 176. Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. George Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 41–47. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Add article P&p; Hau*, Performance Anxiety*, 49–83. On modernity and productivity see: [Anson Rabinbach](about:blank), *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1992), esp. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Simon Creak, *Embodied Nation: Sport, Masculinity and the Making of Modern Laos* (University of Hawaii Press, 2015), 22-51, Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham, NA: Duke University Press, 2011), 125–156; Andrew D. Morris*, Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* [(](about:blank)Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 141–180; Stefan Huebner, *Pan-Asian Sports and the Emergence of Modern Asia, 1913-1974* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016), 55–102; Sivan Balslev, *Iranian Masculinities Gender and Sexuality in Late Qajar and Early Pahlavi Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2019), 245–280. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Neumann, *Passion of the Pioneers*, 146–184. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Godron, “Letter,” 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ouri Kessari, “From my perspective,” *Do’ar Ha-yom*, January 22, 1933, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Yitshak Shweiger [Dami’el], “The competitions,” *HaPo’el HaTsa’ir*, December 14, 1934, 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. “Jerusalem daily,” *HaZvi*, March 15, 1912, 3. For more examples see: “Osishkin between the ‘Macabees’,” *HaZvi*, December 26, 1912, 3; “General news,” *Hashkafa*, March 28, 1908, 2; R. A. “Jaffa,” *HaHerut Yerushala’im*, April 24, 1914, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Benayahu, “We remembered the doping…,” 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. A. Rubinstein, “The football season has begun,” *Haaretz*, September 10, 1931, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. A. El. “Sportsperson of the week: Shalom Dassia,” *HaBoker Sport*, March 4, 1939, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Samet, “Sport or savagery?”, 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. “The future of boxing in our land,” *Davar*, December 12, 1937, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. “To the sporting public,” *Ozenu*, February 1935, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Unmarked flyer 1929, Archive, AR25. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Benayahu, “We remembered the doping…,” 9; Niv, “Happy to be a sportsman!”, *Davar*, June 24, 1937, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. M. Yavneh, “In our corner,” *Haaretz*, September 19, 1928, 3 [my emphasis]. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. A.R. “Prima donnas,” *BaMaslul*, December 1932, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. A. El. “Sportsperson of the week: Ariyeh Aterman,” *HaBoker Sport*, February 4, 1939, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. A. El. “Sportsperson of the week: Avraham Beit Halevy,” *HaBoker Sport*, Aril 1, 1939, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. A. El. “Visiting with Yaffa Cohen,” *HaBoker Sport*, January 28, 1939, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. “‘Professionalism’ in sports,” *Do’ar Hayom*, December 12, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Collins, *Sport in Capitalist Society*, 27–37. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Adrian Harvey, *The Beginnings of a Commercial Sporting Culture in Britain 1793–1850* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); Neil Wigglesworth*, The Evolution of English Sport* (London: Frank Cass, 1996); Neil Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain 1750–1914* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Wray Vamplew, *Pay Up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain 1875–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Tony Collins, *A Social History of British Public Union* (New York: Routledge, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Hughes, *Max Schmeling*, 20. On Italy: Victoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. “’Sport’ in the lives of the nations,” *Do’ar Hayom*, July 5, 1921, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Southern Africa “Wasteland,” *HaBoker Sport*, April 29, 1939, 4; “Notable active sportspeople: in their private professions,” *HaBoker Sport*, March 18, 1939, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. “At the center of the Maccabi association in Eretz Israel,” *Do’ar Hayom*, December 10, 1926, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. See for example: The Ila Committee, “Committee of the ‘Maccabi’ association for physical exercise,” June 16, 1919, Maccabi Archive, 1-0094. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. “The Ila football team,” Maccabi Archive, 1-0090; “New sports team in Haifa,” *Do’ar Hayom*, June 24, 1926, 4; “The big exercise convention,” *Do’ar Hayom*, September 24, 1923, 2. This development was not limited to football. See, for example, “HaKvutza HaLevana” (“The White Team”) Jerusalem athletics club established in 1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Committee of the Maccabi association Tel Aviv, “Opening games of the 1922­–23 football season,” *HaMaccabi*, December, 1922 12–13. See also Kaufman, “The beginnings of Hebrew football in Eretz Yisrael,” 25–26. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The two famous teams of the city of Manchester, for example, were created for very different reasons. Manchester City was established in 1880 as an attempt by the church to combat urban violence through institutionalized male activity, while the neighboring club, Manchester United, was established in 1878 by local railway company workers. The two clubs were bought, admittedly, at the beginning of the twentieth century by business entrepreneurs, but the fierce rivalry between them arose only in the aftermath of World War I, following an increase in ticket prices, which meant the average fan could no longer attend the games of both teams. Similarly, the Prussian football club Borussia Dortmund was founded due to a dispute between residents and the local priest, and the Bayern Munich club was formed in 1900, due to disagreements with the Bavarian Gymnastics Club. Even the renowned Barcelona sports club, now a symbol of Catalan identity, was originally founded due to the private desire of Swiss businessman Hans-Max “Joan” Gamper, to set up football teams in the city. All this is to say that sports teams were formed as a result of a variety of historical circumstances, ones that differ greatly from the contemporary essence and heritage of each club, which emerged over the decades following their establishment. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. A.R. “Sport in our country,” *Doar Hayom*, June 29, 1923, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid. For more criticism of professionalism see: Shim’on Samet, “In sports: manners,” *Davar*, February 28, 1929, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Avner Shalosh, “Fiscal balance for the year 1925–1926,” *HaMaccabi,* November, 1926, 12; “Yearly convention of the Maccabi association,”*Do’ar Hayom,* November 25, 1922, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Sports commerce in Palestine was rather limited. In a game between the Gibor and Hashmonai teams, for instance, every ticket purchaser was given a pack of cigarettes. “In sports,” *Do’ar Hayom*, June 15, 1927, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Nenach Shmuel, “Declaration,” *Davar*, May 10, 1927, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. “Declaration,” *Davar*, April 3, 1927, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. For more on the early days of boxing in the United States see: Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Jeffrey T. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 48–72; Matthew Taylor, “Round the London Ring: Boxing, Class and Community in Interwar London,” *The London Journal* 34, no.2 (2009): 139–162. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Hughes, Max Schmeling, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. For more on boxing in the 1920s see: Gumbrecht, *In 1926,* 42–46. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring,* 49–50; Maxence Pascal Philippe Leconte, “Reexamining Violence and Trauma in the French Boxing Literature of the Interwar Period: Henri Decoin Quinze Rounds (1930) and Alfred Menguy Gueules Aplaties (1933),” *The International Journal of The History of Sport* 36, no.1–2 (2019): 207–224. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Bourke*, Dismembering the Male*, 11–13; Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Erik Jensen, “Crowd Control: Boxing Spectatorship and Social Order in Weimar Germany,” in *Histories of Leisure*, ed. Rudy Koshar (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 79–101. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Hughes, *Max Schmeling*, 29; Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 58–90. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Mike Silver, *Stars in the Ring: Jewish Champions in the Golden Age of Boxing* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 90–266; Allen Bodner, *When Boxing Was a Jewish Sport* (New York: SUNY Press, 2011); David Dee “‘The Hefty Hebrew’: Boxing and British-Jewish Identity, 1890–1960,” *Sport in History* 32, no, 3(2012): 361–381. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Sh. S., “The boxing controversy,” *HaSport Weekly*, March 25, 1932, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Benayahu, “In the world of sports,” *Haaretz,* March 19, 1929, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. G. Loeb, “In the ring,” *Azenu*, January 17, 1935, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Benayahu, “In the world of sports,” *Haaretz,* February 19, 1929, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. “The future of boxing in our land,” *Davar*, December 12, 1937, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. “In the divisions,” *Azenu*, January 3, 1935, 5; “In the ring,” *Azeny*, January 10, 1935, 3; “Boxing making advances in Tel Aviv,” *HaBoker Sport*, October 19, 1936, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. “Yoman Carmel,” Winter 35, State Archive, 046-1. <https://youtu.be/REsipFYiGS4> [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. For evidence of the relative popularity of the sport, see: A. El., “The boxing association is called to action,” *Haboker Sport*, March 3, 1939, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. See for example the description of man witnessing a boxing match for the first time in *Davar*: H., “I went to see the boxing,” *Davar*, May 15, 1938, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. “The future of boxing in our land,” 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. David Tidhar, “Amiel (Emil) Avineri (Rebelski),” *The Encyclopedia of Yishuv Pioneers and Founders*, *Vol. 5* (Hebrew) (Herzliya: Sifriyat Rishonim, 1959), 2259. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Yinon, “The Tel Aviv boxing federation turns five,” *Davar*, December 1, 1934, 2: Benayahu, “In the world of sports,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. The Jewish-American boxer received almost zero coverage in the Hebrew press: Benayahu, “A matter of one point,” Davar, June 23, 1930, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. M. B. “One year since the establishment of the Benny Leonard club,” *Haaretz,* July 10, 1930, 3; “Benny Leonard club rules,” May 4, 1930, Archive, 1.10-159-22; Benny Leonard, June 26, 1933, Maccabi Archive, 1-0090; “In the ring,” *Azenu*, January 10, 1935, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Lippe Levitan, “Master of boxing in Eretz Yisrael,” *HaMaccabi* 1 (January 1931): 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body,* 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 87–89. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Levitan, “Master of boxing,” 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. “Boxing competition in Tel Aviv,” *Do’ar Hayom*, December 28, 1934, 3; “In anticipation of the big boxing match,” Do’ar Hayom, December 14, 1934, 4; M. B. “One year since the establishment of the Benny Leonard club,” Haaretz, July 10, 1930, 3; Niv., “In the Israeli boxing system,” *Haaretz*, December 7, 1934, 10; M. B. “In the port of boxing,” *Haaretz*, May 14, 1930, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. A. A. “Edward G. Robinson made honorary president of the Benny Leonard club,” *Davar*, February 24, 1950, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Helman, "Zionism, Politics, Hedonism,” 106–107. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, And Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Mark H. Gelber, *Melancholy Pride: Nation, Race, And Gender in The German Literature of Cultural Zionism* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Nathan Marcus, “Zionist Football and Jewish Identity in Weimar Germany,” *Judaica* (2005): 147–166. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. “The eagle,” *Do’ar Hayom*, February 4, 1923, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. For more on Austrian and German Jewry see: Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New-Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Sharon Gillerman, *Germans into Jews Remaking the Jewish Social Body in the Weimar Republic* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. See for example the memoir: Yitzhak Rabinowitz, *From Moscow to Jerusalem* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Re’uven Press, 1957), 53. See also, “Almog from ‘Muscle Judaism,’” 137–140; Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, 106–154. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. “Upon the arrival of HaKoah in Eretz Yisrael,” *Haaretz*, January 7, 1924, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. “Plan,” Tel Aviv Municipal Archive (TAMA hereafter), 2-56-540; “In Jaffa and in Tel Aviv,” *Haaretz*, January 7, 1924, 2; “Hakoah’s trip to Israel,” *Do’ar Hayom*, January 3, 1924, 3; “Hakoah in competition,” *Haaretz*, February 13, 1924, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. “Hakoah received in Petah Tikva,”*Do’ar Hayom*, January 9, 1924, 1; “Visit of Hakoah and their escorts,” *Haaretz*, January 11, 1924, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. “The Maccabi federation from Tel Aviv,” *Haaretz*, January 7, 1924, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. “Upon the arrival of HaKoah in Eretz Yisrael,” Haaretz, January 7, 1924, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Ibid.; The Youth Federation of Tiberia, “Letter to the editor,” *Haaretz*, January 22, 1924, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. “Reception for Hakoah,” *Haaretz*, January 10, 1924, 3; Sh. Viloni Chovav, “Visit of Hakoah,” *Do’ar Hayom*, January 16, 1924, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Leadership of the Language Defenders’ Brigade, “On the visit of Hakoah,” *Haaretz*, February 13, 1924, 4; “In the ‘Menora’ cage,” *Haaretz*, February 14,1924, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. M. G. “On the docket,” Haaretz, January 10, 1924, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Riger, “The Municipality and Hakoah,” 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Yakar, “On the visit of Hakoah in Haifa,” *Haaretz*, January 17, 1924, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. M. G. “On the docket,” *Haaretz*, January 10, 1924, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. “Hakoah received in Petah Tikva,”*Do’ar Hayom*, January 9, 1924, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Yakar, “On the visit of Hakoah in Haifa,” Haaretz, January 17, 1924, 4. The statement was made by the Haifa-based agronomist and educator Pinchas Hacohen. See also, “Hakoah received in Petah Tikva,” *Do’ar Hayom*, January 9, 1924, 1; and the satirical poem: anonymous, “Hakoah,” *Haaretz*, January 18, 1924, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Smilanski, “Foreign labor,” 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. “Greeting speech of Meir Dizengoff at Tel Aviv City Hall,” *Haaretz*, January 7, 1924, 2 [my emphasis]. See also “Greeting speech given by Tel Aviv Mayor Meir Dizengoff,” January 7, 1924, TAMA, 2-56-540. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. “On the arrival of Hakoah,” *Haaretz*, January 2, 1925, 2; “Hakoah’s day,” *Haaretz*, January 14, 1925, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Zvi Levi, “The visits of Hakoah in our Land,” *Do’ar Hayom*, January 8, 1925, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Moshe Zimmerman and Yotam Chotem, eds., *Between homelands: German Jews in their places of residence* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2006). For more on German Jewry see: Shlomit Volkov, *In the enchanted circle: Jews, anti-Semites and other Germans* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2002). In the athletic context see also, Udi Carmi, *Sports in immigration* (Hebrew)(Tel Aviv: Resling, 2013), 49–66. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Ofer Ashkenazi, “German-Jewish Athletes and the Formation of Zionist (Trans-) National Culture," *Jewish Social Studies* 17 (2012): 124–155. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Z. Sh. “Sportsmen aplenty from the Diaspora,” *Do’ar Hayom*, June 16, 1933, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Dr. E. Freudenthal, “On the work methods of the Immigration Committee,” *HaMaccabi*, July 3, 1936, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. “Letter to Egon Pollak,” September 2, 1939, Maccabi Archive, 1-0043. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. “What is it we lack? People who know to make room…,” *HaBoker Sport*, April 1, 1939, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. One might even claim that Hirschl still holds the title of the most accomplished active sportsperson to ever immigrate to the Yishuv or the State of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. William D. Bowman, “Hakoah Vienna and the International Nature of Interwar Austrian Sports,” *Central European History* 44 (2011): 646–667. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Prior to his immigration, Hirschl gained only a few mentioned in the Hebrew press. See, for instance, “In sports,” *Davar*, May 24, 1932, 3, where it was claimed that Hirschl was the victim of anti-Semitism. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Yinon, “Hirschl—master of wrestling,” *Davar*, December 25, 1934, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Joseph S. Alter, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Frost, *Seeing Stars*, 19–68. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Jacob, *Working Out* *Egypt*, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Ibid., 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Men* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Yinon, “Hirschl—master of wrestling,” Davar, December 25, 1934, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Ibid.; “In sports,” *Davar*, 27 February, 1936, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Ra’anan Rein, “Barcelona 1936: The popular Olympics that never happened,” *Zmanim* 137 (2018): 110; “Heavy athletics,” *Davar*, March 2, 1936, 9; “In sports,” *Davar* March 12, 1936, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. As late as 1939, residents of the Yishuv could not tell the difference between boxing and wrestling: “Who is Mickey Hirschl,” *Davar*, April 9, 1939, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Hillel, “The sport of wrestling in Eretz Yisrael,” *Sport Haaretz*, February 21, 1938, 2. It appears that Hirschl’s physical abilities came in handy on the Yishuv’s football fields. In 1938, for example, he leapt from the stands to save a referee from the clutches of an angry crowd. See, Lippeh Levitan, “Were it not for a referee from HaPo’el…” *HaYarden*, January 21, 1938, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Fritz Lewinsohn, “Olympia-Training Miki Hirschls,” Mitteilungsblatt, 2 April 1939, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Friba, “Mickey Hirschl resumes training,” *HaBoker Sport*, March 25, 1939, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. “Work accident,” *Davar*, April 8, 1940, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Milt Sherman, “Wrestling Greats – Nicholas ‘Micky’ Hirschl Return to Los Angeles,” *Wrestling USA Magazine*, 1 October 1985. Accessed 26 June 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. “Nemesh to leave Eretz Yisrael,” *HaBoker Sport*, August 29, 1936, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Dr. E. Freudenthal, “On the work methods of the Immigration Committee,” HaMaccabi, July 3, 1936, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Walter Frankl, “Two years since the founding of Atid,” *HaBoker Sport*, October 19, 1936, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. “Sports federations in Tel Aviv,” *Davar*, September 8, 1938, 5. Local teams were also founded by the Yemenite and Spanish community, such as the Bnei Yehuda football club. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Dr. A. Rosenfeld, “On the bad luck of splitting,” *Haaretz*, January 2, 1937, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Mezik*,* “A sports Purim basket,” *Davar*, March 20, 1938, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. “Bitter conflict between Maccabi Tel Aviv and Atid,” *HaBoker Sport*, November 7, 1936, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. In this context, see Liat Kozma’s article regarding the immigration of German sexologists to the Yishuv in the 1930s: Liat Kozma, “The exact same sex: sexual counseling in the Hebrew Yishuv in the 1930s,” *Theory and Criticism* 37 (Hebrew)(Fall 2010): 96–124. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Walter Frankl, *The soil-less garden* (Hebrew)(Tel Aviv: Hadar, 1958). For more about Frankl’s ambition to work in agriculture in Palestine see: “An important visitor in Eretz Yisrael,” *HaSport Weekly*, March 25, 1932, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. “What is it we lack? People who know to make room…,”HaBoker Sport, April 1, 1939, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 3–14. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. P. Be’er, “Jews in the sport of football in Hungary,” *HaBoker Sport*, September 9, 1939, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. “Advertisement,” *HaSport*, April 20, 1938, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. For more about the sports aesthetics in totalitarian and liberal cultures see: Nadine Rossol, “Performing the Nation: Sports, Spectacles, and Aesthetics in Germany, 1926–1936,” *Central European History* 43, no. 4 (2010): 616–638; Tim Harte. *Faster, Higher, Stronger, Comrades! Sports, Art, and Ideology in Late Russian and Early Soviet Culture* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2020); Joan Tumblety, “Rethinking the Fascist Aesthetic: Mass Gymnastics, Political Spectacle and the Stadium in 1930s France,” *European History Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2013): 707–730; Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, “Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 4 (October 2006): 595–610. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Matthias Marschik, “Depicting Hakoah: Images of a Zionist Sports Club in Interwar Vienna,” *Historical Social Research* 43, no.2 (2018): 129–147. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, <https://www.imj.org.il/he/collections/342021>, retrieved June 21, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Michael Mackenzie, “From Athens to Berlin: The 1936 Olympics and Leni Riefenstahl’s Olympia”, *Critical Inquiry* 29, no.2 (2003): 302-336; Daniel Wildmann, “Desired Bodies: Leni Riefenstahl’s Olympia, Aryan Masculinity and the Classical Body,” in: Helen Roche and Kyriakos Demetriou, eds. *Brill’s Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 60–81. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. B. “Mishmar VeSport,” *Davar*, December 31, 1939, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Ibid., 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Ibid., 6–20, 49–64. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. את הסרט ומאמר של חזקי שהם ארכיון שפילברג [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. “In the not so distant future…,” *Azenu*, July 1935, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Gordon, “Letter,” 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Y. Lindhardt, “Olympic controversy,” *HaMaccabi*, September 22, 1936, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Dr. Haim Weisburg, “Regarding the visit of Maccabi-HaGibor to America,” *Do’ar Hayom,* May 12, 1927, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. *Mishmar VeSport*, 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. “Where is the Hebrew athlete qualified to participate in the Olympic Games,” *HaBoker Sport*, January 28, 1939, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Friba, “Mickey Hirschl,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Yahiel Limor, Ilan Tamir, and Orly Shifman, “The success that killed the newspaper, the newspaper that affected sports news: a requiem for the formation and foundation of sports journalism in Israel,” *Kesher* 45 (2013): 95–103. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)