

BITZARON

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BITZARON, P.O. Box 623, Cooper Station, N.Y. 10003. Tel (212) 293-5977

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Prof. *Chaim Tchrenowitz*, Founder and Editor (1939-1949)
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Peretz Smolenskin and Moses Hess

Eisig Barzilay

Columbia University

Moses Hesse's Rom Und Jerusalem, the first book by a German-Jewish author to embrace Jewish nationalism in the subsequent Zionist conception, appeared in the summer of 1862. About ten years later, Peretz Smolenskin, a major Hebrew novelist and essayist, published his book-length essay, "Am Olam" (*Ha-Shahar*, III, 1872) in which he propogated a spiritual Jewish nationalism. Eight years afterwards, the young David Frishman published an article in Abraham Dov Gottlober's, *Haboker Or* (1880-18881), In which he accused Smolenskin of plagiarizing Hesse's work. A polemic ensued with varying opinions; However, nobody attempted to analyze the two works.

Smolenskin, no doubt, was acquainted with **Rom Und Jerusalem**. He shares with Hess for instance the notion that it will be mainly the burden of Eastern-European Jewry to achieve the national goal, and a number of other views. On the other hand they differ in their views on Moses Mendelsson, the reform, the political European aspect of Jewish nationalism, and more. An objective reading of both works leaves no room for Frishman's accusation. There's no plagiarism here; nor can Smolenskin's "Am Olam" be considered a translation in any way.

Uri Z'vi Greenberg: Contra Exterritorialism

Shalom Lindenbaum

Bar Ilan University

In the aftermath of WWI, Uri Z'vi Greenberg joined the avant-gardist group of Yiddish poets: Moshe Broderzon, Peretz Markish and mailach Ravitch. U.Z.G. published at the beginning of the twenties, his poem, "Mefisto." at the same time he edited a journal, "Albatross," in which he set forth his iconoclastic ideas on literary and national themes. in contradistinction to his colleagues who were dedicated to Socialism and believed that it would solve the Jewish question. U.Z.G criticized the exterritorialism of the

yiddishists; the illusion that Jewish life built around yiddish language and culture was a viable alternative to Zionism. He also decried the patent or at least latent assimilationist tendencies inherent in Yiddishism.

Furthermore, U.Z.G argued that from an aesthetic point of view, authentic art and literature (i.e. Expressionism) are by definition predicated upon the existence of a specific national-territorial base. As early as 1923, U.Z.G warned of the Damoclean sword hanging over European Jewry. His warning only provoked bitter criticism. Among his erstwhile Yiddish colleagues, U.Z.G was accused of spreading dangerously reactionary ideas.

Though an ideological opponent of Yiddishism, U.Z.G perceived the Yiddish language and its literary and cultural cannon as vital for understanding the soul of the East European Jewish experience. Scholars of modern Jewish letters and criticism will discover affinities between U.Z.G's and Dov Sadan's respective views regarding the complementary links between the various canons of Jewish literature.

Responsa Literature During the Holocaust

Meir Ayali

Seminar Hakibbutzim

In addition to its patent halakhic function, responsa literature provides historical data. With respect to given tragic events in Jewish history such as the Crusaders, pogroms, etc., halakhic literature reflects the manner in which rabbinic authorities dealt with the specific religious problems prescribed by the given event.

Two differences separate Holocaust responsa literature, that has been written during and after the Holocaust was lost and/or destroyed. In addition, due to the unprecedented nature of the event, Holocaust responsa literature has an eerie quality sometimes bordering on the surreal. It also reflects the religious determination of the victims to abide by halakhik laws in the face of death.

The unprecedented nature of the event burdened the religious leaders to find legal solutions commensurate with traditional Jewish law without

obviating the precious flexibility demanded by the times and the humanistic application of halakhik law.

On Two Short Novels of Aharon Appelfeld

Aryeh Wineman

Troy, New-York

In both **Ke'ishon Ha'ayin** (1973) and **Be'et Uve'onah Ahat** (1985), novellas, which are also historical parables recreating the social background of the Holocaust, Appelfeld utilized biblical archetypes among his means to present and contrast two societies, the population of Jews bent upon assimilation into European life and the non-Jewish European population. In each case an analysis of the biblical archetype serves as a key in understanding the novella.

In **Ke'ishon Ha'ayin**, the Akedah motif is molded to convey that the Jew's will to assimilate, which left him rootless in the midst of a vibrant but merciless society, was a futile and self-defeating attempt to avoid his historical fate. The author's particular use of the Akedah reflects the concept, underlying primitive ritual, that the continuity of life and nature requires periodic sacrifice.

The biblical and post-biblical tradition of Jacob and Esau reverberate in an entire network of signs in Appelfeld's later novella, **Be'et Uve'onah Ahat**, which casts light upon the contrasts between the members of the family portrayed and their respective inclinations. The ultimate significance of the Jacob-Esau polarity in this novella, it is suggested, relates to the two faces of Europe, of the non-Jewish European society to which the assimilated Viennese Jew is drawn: beneath the shining veneer of European culture hides its deeper and truer character which is akin to Esau, the hunter-figure and totally brutal physical man.

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done by Orly Benun (212) 889-8834