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Messianism and nationalism: Liberal optimism vs. orthodox anxiety

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Abstract. Confronting modernity, nineteenth century Jewish historians offered four different interpretations of the Jewish century that began in 1840: the liberal, the Orthodox, the nationalist, and the messianic. Exponents of the Wissenschaft school associated the year 5600 with the gospel of emancipation and the winds of cultural openness in western Europe; Orthodox historians viewed these change with suspicion and believed that the new century would usher in a period of twilight. *Nationalist* and the *messianic* interpreters saw the year 5600 as marking the start of the age of the redemption of Israel in its land: whether because the first buds of a Jewish national movement had appeared or because contemporary events were identified as heralds of the messianic redemption in the traditional sense. Unique was Rabbi Judah Alkalai, who sought to link traditional messianism with the liberal, optimistic interpretation of current events. He viewed progress, the Haskalah, and emancipation as positive signs of the messianic age and indicted traditionalists. Their rejectionist attitude toward modernity, he said, was delaying redemption. Today, narrowing differences between the traditionalist reaction to modernity and the religious nationalism have buried the memory of Alkalai's bold attempt.

I.

The concept of "the messiah" has always terrified traditional Jewish society. For most of its members, the idea was too radical. The possibility of the messiah's coming threatened the existing social order, endangered the authority of the Torah, and undermined tradition itself. That the "messiahs" who arose at various junctures in Jewish history never achieved an honorable niche in the Jewish collective memory should not surprise us. It took the modernizing currents that appeared only at the twilight of the traditional Jewish world, at about the time of the emergence of Zionism, to emphasize messianism's central role in Jewish history. Yet what was emphasized was messianism's radical nature, which was associated with challenges to sacred traditions, whether in fact or in theory.

In what follows, I shall attempt to show how Orthodoxy – in its formal self a new phenomenon in the nineteenth century – reacted to the use modernizers (including Jewish nationalists) made of the belief in messianic redemption. My main thesis is that the desire to "neutralize" messianism (and especially

messianic thinking's potential effects) spawned two interrelated responses, both of which still retain their force. The first was to view modernism and the changes it spawned as portents of redemption in the negative sense: "a generation that is wholly guilty," whose degeneration prefigures redemption. The second response adopted non-traditional usages, detached them from their modern context, and attempted to present them as legitimate offspring of the traditional world. The repercussions and the impact of the overt and covert dialogue between non-traditional interpretations of messianism and Orthodox interpretations, which can be traced back to the start of the Haskalah, continue to resound even today in contemporary Israeli political and cultural discourse.

II.

> A new age began for our nation in the year 5600, with both its material and spiritual events. Those who reckoned the end of days had been waiting for that year. That year had already been singled out – precisely as if in a prophecy – in the holy Zohar.[1]

Thus did Jacob Lipschitz (1838–1921), one of the most prominent Orthodox activists in the Russian Empire, the author of *Zikhron Ya'akov: The History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, and a consistent opponent of Haskalah and Zionism, begin his description of the seventh century of the sixth millennium following the creation of the world. On the basis of a passage in the Zohar, Lipschitz, associated the end of the fifty-sixth century in the year 5600 (*Ha-TaR*, 1839/1840) with hopes for redemption. According to Lipschitz:

> The apocalyptics calculated that this year was the "time set for the redemption" according to tradition. As with every other year concerning which there were allusions to the end of days and redemption (such as 5408 [1648]), which, because of the sins of a generation that did not merit redemption, became a time of untoward events, disasters, and evil decrees (from which Heaven protect us), so too they calculated that the year 5600 was a set time – and its many untoward events and disasters are well known.[2]

The Zohar also alludes to the era that began in 1840 as the age of modern scientific and technological discoveries. In Lipschitz' words:

> Starting in the year 5600, the vision of the holy Zohar – that at that date the gates of wisdom would be opened, ... – was realized. The construction of railroads and steamships proliferated from that

> epoch, along with the invention of matches, the telegraph, gaslights, and electricity, and later the telephone and phonograph, as well as many other inventions in every branch of technology and scientific disciplines. . . . In our country, too, which was then in a wild state, the government began to pave the first highway from Petersburg to Warsaw in the year 5600. Many associated this with a biblical verse: "Build up, build up the highway" etc. (Isa. 62:10). The construction of this road was a great marvel for many.[3]

Nevertheless, the beginning of the new age of technology, of which the author was well aware and which he associated in his book with the vast social and economic changes that took place in the Russian Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century, also marked the inception of the two great evils that would chart the course of the Jews in the modern age: the birth of Haskalah and the rise of modern anti-Semitism:

> The year 5600 was the start of a new age of harsh servitude for our people, both inwardly and outwardly. Many and incessant troubles beset the Jews, terrible decrees and persecutions, wreaked by our enemies without, along with the material and spiritual assault and decline instigated by our "beneficiaries" within, those who followed the path of the Berlin Haskalah. These two sources of damage depressed our people, both materially and spiritually.[4]

Lipschitz' historical analysis, which has had a major influence on the historical writings of Orthodox Talmud students of the Lithuanian school, thus associates the year 5600 with the heightening of the crisis of modernity. The scientific and technological progress alluded to in the holy Zohar were accompanied by scant material benefit. The new Jewish century that began in 1839/1840, which the author from Kovno in Lithuania knew from personal experience, was inferior to its predecessor, which Lipschitz describes in glowing terms:

> The previous century of Jewish life was so rich in knowledge, in great rabbinic scholars, and uncommon events; but most of our history books deprecate it. . . . That century excelled in great Torah scholars, each of whom was like a sun of righteousness that illuminated the earth and its inhabitants and had many disciples who were like shining stars in the heavens of Judaism. And like the sun, which gives light and life to the entire universe, these rabbis illuminated our people with the light of their Torah and animated them with knowledge of Torah and fear of Heaven. Thanks to them Israel lived the life of a righteous and believing nation.[5]

III.

This Orthodox description of the century between 1740 and 1840 is the antithesis of modern Jewish historical writing as it narrates the story of European Jewry. The proponents of the German *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, historians like Isaac Marcus Jost and Heinrich Graetz, depicted this time as the spiritual nadir of German Jewry. Lipschitz, we just saw, portrayed it as the zenith. It was the next century, the one that began in 1840, that was inferior and flawed. What *Wissenschaft* authors and Eastern European maskilim presented in a positive light, Lipschitz dismissed as worthless. Lipschitz actually invokes the common maskilic metaphor of light, which he turns on its head. For him, the light of the sun is the talmudic scholarship of the rabbis of Poland and Lithuania, not maskilic lore and science. Scrutiny of the writings of German *Wissenschaft* historians shows that Lipschitz was aware of them and thoroughly understood to what he was reacting. Isaac Marcus Jost, the father of modern Jewish historical writing, for one, completely inverted Lipschitz' categories of light and darkness. For Jost, the rabbinic scholarship of the eighteenth century embodied all the negative traits of Ashkenazi Judaism. This was the very scholarship that Lipschitz had placed at the center of his idealized portrait of the past.

Lipschitz also rejected out of hand the modern periodization that the German *Wissenschaft* School sought to inculcate in the Jewish collective memory. He did not accept the sweeping view that the history of the Jews and the history of the Gentile nations developed in parallel and followed the same calendar. Even less did he accept the European Enlightenment, emancipation, and social progress as criteria for evaluating Jewish history. Instead, Lipschitz chose to arrange his chronicle according to the Jewish calendar: for him, the "previous century" ran from 5500 to 5600 (1740 to 1840), and Jewish history moved in chronological circles distinct from those of non-Jews. Only when modernity was forced on the Jews did historians give in to the imposed union between Jewish and general history.

Jost, like all subsequent Jewish historians, dissociated himself from Jewish chronology, both calendrical and periodic, saying clearly that this divorce was an ideological desideratum and educationally meritorious:

> The year that in addition to civic freedom, also gives the Jews a divine service worthy of the name, recognized by the authorities, as well as religious studies, will be noted by the historians of the future as the start of a new age.[6]

Jost was referring to the emancipation of Prussian Jewry in 1812. The Jewish German historian who wrote the *Annals of the Israelites* viewed emancipation and religious Reform, two utterly non-traditional processes, as the most

important movements in modern Jewish history. As he wrote in 1830, in the programmatic statement that introduced the periodical he edited, *Israelitische Annalen:* "Justice is about to be liberated from the arms of folly, thoughtlessness, prejudice, and tyrannical impudence." And all of this in light of "the appeasing voice of love for humanity that breaks through the mists of tradition and incomprehension, . . . precisely that love of human beings that seeks to seal off the fissures of the past and heal the old wounds."[7] Jost, indeed, was among the first to adopt the concept of "the modern age," an era in which human reason overcame the failings of earlier generations and began to exert an influence on politics, society, and culture.[8]

The acrimony between the new historiography of the *Wissenschaft* School, which was inspired by optimism about political equality, cultural progress, and scientific advancement, grew out of the pessimism and defensiveness of the Orthodox as they focused on events associated with 1840. The guardians of traditional society, exposed to the threats of the European Enlightenment, sought to entrench themselves by creating an image of a perfect, pre-modern past. And they drew on traditional language to express positions and opinions about the far-reaching and rapid changes which they saw taking place. The advocates of progress and partisans of the struggle to achieve equal Jewish rights often painted the pre-modern age in the blackest colors, and they condemned both the Jewish milieu and treatment of the Jews by the societies where they lived. They also adopted the maskilic lexicon, which was somewhat anachronistic when applied to the ideological, literary, and artistic currents of the 1830s and 1840s. Pro-emancipation historical writing often translated traditional expectations of redemption into messages of secular messianism or abstract religious belief, as was frequently done by people who lived in the decades immediately prior to 1840. Members of the *Wissenschaft* School, in particular, saw the realization of human progress, the spread of the rule of reason, and the achievement by Jews of equal civil rights as embodiments of messianic expectations. Traditionalist writers and radical Orthodox observers, of which Lipschitz was one of the harbingers, often interpreted what happened after 1840 as demonic, a continuous degeneration, and a struggle for survival. For the traditionalists, especially later Hasidic authors,[9] the events of their day sounded the alarum to retreat to defensive positions.

IV.

Lipschitz and Jost, representatives of two schools that created their own distinct versions of the past in keeping with their particular hopes or anxieties, nonetheless, shared a stolid, monolithic view of the pre-modern era, which

contemporary historical scholarship has long since challenged. As one scholar recently wrote about the eighteenth century, sixty years of which were also part of the Jewish (calendrical) century that began in 1740:

> [. . .] eighteenth-century Jewry was not marked by stability; nor did it stagnate while it awaited the advent of the Haskalah. The "tradition and crisis" model depicts a long period of continuity, until Moses Mendelssohn and his "disciples" appeared upon the scene and shattered the foundation of the leadership by force of rationalism and their association with the social frameworks of the German intellectual elite. But, in reality, this was a particularly dynamic century. For both Cristians and Jews, it was not only the "century of enlightenment." For the Ashkenazi Jews, it was a century of division, of the emergence of separate camps and the beginning of the internal struggle over hegemony. It was the century in which the uniformity and totality of the traditional world was smashed, from without and from within.[10]

An excellent example of the transformation of traditional messianism into a concept that was at once universal and political is the work of Heinrich Graetz, a great advocate of emancipation, whose stance is the reverse of that of Jacob Lipschitz. In 1865, Graetz wrote:

> The history of the world, if we examine it critically, manifests clear signs of a messianic kingdom of tranquility, of fraternity among human beings, and of pure knowledge of God. . . . We Jews may rightly be proud of the fact that it was Judaism that introduced the messianic aspiration of "they shall beat their swords into plowshares" to the world, one that we share with the noblest spirits among the gentiles in our own day.[11]

Others who viewed the period after 1840 messianically were the founders of the movement for religious Reform. They were responding to what they saw as the progress of the human spirit and the Jews' advancement toward integration among the nations. At the rabbinical conferences in Frankfurt and Breslav, Reform Rabbi David Einhorn described the Jews as a priestly nation with a messianic mission. Later, he called for re-making the Ninth of Av into a joyous festival. As he saw it, rather than a disaster, the destruction of the Temple, which this date commemorated, was an event of messianic importance, a cause for celebration. The Temple's destruction inaugurated the Jews' dispersal among the nations, and it allowed them to fulfill their vocation of disseminating the divine Torah to the entire world: "The day of sorrow and fasting has become a day of gladness," a time for renewed dedication to the building of the New Jerusalem that would embrace all humanity.[12]

V.

The two perspectives which viewed 1840 as either the start of a new epoch, the triumph of progress, and an age of rapprochement or, contrarily, as the beginning of a retreat for Jewish tradition and a time of anti-Semitic resurgence did not monopolize the field. Two other Jewish historical outlooks, based, respectively, on nationalism and messianism, made their debut at about this time. And just as the pro-emancipation and Orthodox schools, have remained alive in the twentieth-century, so, too, have these other two, especially in a Zionist context. There were others who attributed the year 1840 with messianic import. Lipschutz had reckoned on the basis of the Zohar. But this was also the year of the Damascus blood libel, which left an imprint on the Jewish mind that lasted more than two decades. The libel itself had been made at a critical moment. In 1840, nine years after Egypt had taken control of Syria and Palestine, a coalition of European powers helped the Turkish Ottoman's regain these territories. However, during Egyptian rule in the 1830s, the future of Palestine and the possibility of Jewish settlement had been "hot" topics in the modern Jewish press. In addition, 1840 witnessed a surge in Christian millenarianism, including pilgrimages by Christian apocalyptics to Jewish communities in the Diaspora and Palestine. A by-product was the birth of Christian programs for re-establishing Jewish settlement in the Jews' ancestral homeland (known as "the restoration of the Jews"). Finally, 1840 saw the beginning of an intensive effort by the government of Czar Nicholas I to "reform" the status of the Jews in the Russian empire, which culminated in the abolition of the *kahal*, in 1844, and the establishment of a state-sponsored educational network for Jews.

Yet about 1840, Jewish nationalism and messianism were no more than faint whispers drowned out by the dominant voices of the liberal and Orthodox camps. The later Zionist context of a secular nationalism drunk with the triumphs of the mid-twentieth century and a nationalist Orthodoxy seeking its precursors in the pre-Zionist past have often blurred the distinctive interpretations of the year 5600 as they were originally made. Ben Zion Dinur, that arch-Zionistic interpreter of the pre-Zionist past, viewed the fifty-sixth (Hebrew) century (from 1740 to 1840) as the first flowering of the great national awakening, whose beginning, not surprisingly, he placed in 1840. For Dinur, this was not a time of post-Sabbatean gloom. Nor were those who migrated to the Land of Israel minor figures drawn from the margins of Jewish society:

> The ideological elements we have noted are adequate, it seems to me, to support the assumption that the waves of immigration of which we have spoken [those between 1740 and 1840] were

> not late offshoots of the Sabbatean movement, but harbingers of a new chapter in the search for paths to redemption – a search that was conditioned by the historical experience and determined by the unique processes of life in the recent generations.[13]

In this description, in fact of the immigration to Palestine by Hasidim and the disciples of the Vilna Gaon, Dinur was reacting to the *Wissenschaft* School's exclusive focus on the processes of social and cultural renewal among German Jews. This school identified enthusiastically with social and legal integration. The Zionist historian rejected the optimism of those who looked for integration to succeed in Europe. National redemption, his "counter-history" emphasized, must be pursued in the ancestral homeland.

For Dinur as Zionist historian, the century that began in 1840 was the century of Zionism, one that began with "the first fundamental Zionist plans."[14] Dinur presents the small Jewish community living in Eretz Israel in 1840 as a vanguard with a nationalist mission, not at all a collection of elderly idlers who had come to spend their old age in the Land of the Patriarchs. As he put it:

> Only in the light of these ideological principles can we understand the composition of the waves of immigration between 1740 and 1840s, which, according to the testimony of contemporaries, included many of the most famous traditionalists: those moved by the holy spirit, great Torah scholars, expositors of halakhah and kabala, along with many of the flock of poor but pious Jews. . . . Only in the light [of what we said above] can we correctly appreciate the distinctive milieu and brilliance created by these waves of immigration to the holy cities, with their fraternities and associations, their yeshivas and halls of study. We display a paucity of imagination and distort historical truth if we try to describe this milieu merely as one borrowed from the Diaspora. It awaits its scholars and loyalists to place it in the proper light and restore its honor.[15]

Dinur viewed the period as though it were dialectically engaged with messianic energies, which had caused non-traditionalists to move toward nationalism after 1840. He was the first among those historians, including, notably, Yitzhak Ben Zvi, who used modern nationalist thought to interpret the past in Zionistic terms. Progress, the Haskalah, and emancipation were said to have united with latent nationalist energies embedded in traditional expectations of redemption.

Here, Dinur differs from the Orthodox-nationalist interpretation. This last of the four outlooks examined here emphasizes the continuity between traditional messianism and modern nationalism, seeking to identify what it be-

lieves are elements of modern secular nationalism in pre-Zionist religious texts. As early as the late nineteenth century, the early nineteenth century immigration to Eretz Israel of disciples of the Vilna Gaon was being attributed with a messianic and redemptive nature. The proponents of this outlook, members of several families of the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv (Rivlin and Salomon) with a journalistic bent were seeking an alternative version to counter the then dominant Yishuv narrative about the first waves of Zionist immigration. Distinct from Dinur and those like him, who found the germ of secular nationalist ideology in the religious world of the pre-Zionistic immigrants, the religious-nationalist interpretation has always argued that religious foundations underlie the secular nationalist ideology. Without recourse to Dinur's dialectic mediator, such interpretations served (and continue to serve) as the vector along which religious messianism is transmitted directly to the world of modern nationalism, which it penetrates and seeks to replace. Progress, the Haskalah, and emancipation were obstacles that traditional messianism had to overcome in order to survive till the present day.

VI.

Nevertheless, this was not the way early religious-nationalist thinkers perceived the relationship between messianic faith, progress, the Haskalah, and emancipation. Regrettably, Orthodox nationalism in Israel today has almost totally forgotten that important Orthodox herald of Zionism, Rabbi Judah Hai Alkalai (1798–1878), for whom the messianic interpretation of the year 5600 as the start of the era of Jewish redemption was critical. In part, this is because other historical figures have come to overshadow Alkalai.[16] A new look at Rabbi Alkalai, whose prolific writing between the 1830s and the 1870s keeps returning to the year 5600, may teach us something about why he and his writings have fallen into disuse, and, of course, about broader issues as well.

Alkalai was optimistic on the subject of progress: he viewed the emancipation of the Jews as a positive historical phenomenon, whose nature, however, was messianic. This was much as emancipation was viewed by pioneers of religious Reform in Germany. Emancipation and its impact on Jewish society in Western Europe provided Alkalai with a historical starting point for the process of Israel's redemption. In his kabalistic exegesis of midrashim and passages from the Zohar, Alkalai was enthusiastic about the political accomplishments of Western European Jewish leaders, turning a blind eye to their failures of religious observance. Alkalai believed the role of the messiah son of Joseph would be played by an "elected assembly of Israelites," a body whose purpose was to renew Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel. Re-

demption was, in fact, conditional on this assembly being founded. Alkalai had no qualms about stating time and again that in his mind, this elected assembly was identical with the *Alliance Israélite Universelle.* The distance of the *Alliance* from tradition and its reformist bent, neither of which he ever sanctioned, nor with which he identified, did not prevent Alkalai from attributing the *Alliance*, and similar persons and organizations, with messianic characteristics. He did so, because, uniquely, Alkalai saw the events of the modern era as stages in the messianic process.

Disapproval for Alkalai's writings among contemporary Orthodox readers in Israel may partially lie in the extraordinary explanation this Sephardi rabbi gave for the growth of Reform. He blamed the traditionalists, alleging that it was their lack of faith in the possibility of redemption in 5600 that not only held back the creation of the assembly, but also catalyzed Reform. Alkalai's analysis of the events of 1840 indeed requires scrutiny. In a small volume Alkalai published in his old age, in 1870, thirty years after the eventful year of 1840, he reminded his readers that soon after the Damascus blood libel, he had written in (his book) *Minhat Yehudah*, Judah's Offering:

> And somewhat unexpectedly I said that because the same prophecy speaks of the consolation of the land and the salvation of the blood and the redemption of Israel, just as we merited through your [i.e., Western philanthropists'] efforts to be saved from the blood libel, so shall we merit the consolation of the land and redemption of Israel.[17]

The general awakening that moved the Jewish world to come to the aid of the persecuted Oriental Jews in Damascus, Alkalai believed, also spurred Jewish philanthropists in Western Europe like the Rothschilds and Sir Moses Montefiore to assist the new settlement enterprise in Eretz Israel. But, rather than welcoming this aid, the rabbis and community leaders of Jerusalem rejected it, especially the educational and social help being offered from Germany. This rejectionism peaked in the early 1840s, and in their dismay, German Jewish philanthropists who had intended to work on behalf of settlement in Eretz Israel turned instead to religious Reform. Refusing to collaborate with the European philanthropists was thus delaying redemption:

> Because of our sins, from that day on our brothers despaired of the redemption and the new spirit turned into spirit of confusion and delusion, and they were distracted to something else – from reforming the world to reforming the Torah. Thus, in 1844, Lucifer fell from heaven and the rabbis convened in Braunschweig and created the Reform movement, where they proclaimed that our ancestors have inherited only lies, that there is no messiah for Israel,

> and that the redemption means that we become like all the nations, and they said that the Torah is not from heaven, and Bible criticism, that despised maidservant, had the presumption to criticize the Torah and creed and precepts and prayers and cast aspersions on the sacraments of heaven – and all of this was the fruit of despair with the redemption, which had been delayed by those righteous man [the rabbis of Jerusalem] in their negligence.[18]

Events were unfolding just as Alkalai feared. The messianic spirit was being diverted from the hope for redemption in the Land of Israel to the hope for redemption in the Diaspora. It was, indeed, just this hope that was embodied in Rabbi David Einhorn's idea of turning the fast of the Ninth of Av into a joyous festival. Both Einhorn and Alkalai believed that the messianic age had already begun. However, they disagreed about where the political and social privileges so recently conferred upon the Jews of Europe were leading. The Sephardi rabbi from Semlin saw the birth of Reform as a deviation from the messianic path. Yet even in his old age, Alkalai did not throw up his hands. Despite the spread of Reform among Jewish communities in western and central Europe, he continued to see the new century (which had begun in 5600) as the age of redemption. Human progress, emancipation, and the political power that non-traditional Jews had acquired in the countries of northwestern Europe were clearly messianic portents, even though the century had begun with the postponement of redemption through the imprudent actions of the Jerusalem "purists."

Alkalai emerges as one who is fully aware of religious change in Germany. He even engaged in a hostile polemic with the liberal Jewish camp's optimistic interpretation of the new century's meaning, and he took part in the public debate about the Graetz' work in the mid-1860s, disputing Graetz' on the subject of messianism.[19] Alkalai did not react to the liberal camp by "circling the wagons." This was the usual Orthodox response adopted decades later by people like Jacob Lipschitz. Alkalai's critique of "purism" cited just above was written in the same year that Lipschitz was writing harsh anti-maskilic and anti-Reform propaganda as part of the debate surrounding M.L. Lilienblum's articles on the possibility of reforming halakhah. Moreover, Alkalai was optimistic not only with respect to the liberal interpretation of the beginning of the new century, he also reacted positively to non-Jewish positions about redemption, anticipating that rulers and governments would encourage the Jews to return to their land. He supported emancipation and the improvement in the Jews' social status in the countries where they lived, which he considered positive aspects of the modern age that should be exploited to further the redemptive process.

VII.

Is it Alkalai'a extravagant optimism that has led to his having fallen from grace? Is it that after what happened in the year 5700 (1939/40), with the beginning of the Holocaust in Europe, Alkalai's hopes for the year 5600 appear to be just one more Jewish illusion, encouraging us to view his thinking as naive and detached from reality, just as were the hopes of the pioneers of religious Reform and the dreams of the Jewish modernists who believed that Israel would be redeemed with the support of the nations? Has Alkalai's memory become clouded, because a pessimistic view of the modern age has taken hold of religious-nationalist thought?[20] And, finally, has the memory of the Orthodox nationalism of the rabbi from Semlin fallen victim to the rapprochement between religious-nationalist historical thinking and the Orthodox postulate that "Esau hates Jacob?"

Whatever the case, we must not forget that around the year 5600, the hope for imminent redemption was an inseparable part of the quest for Jewish survival in a changing world and that this quest led some thinkers and apocalyptics to see the seventh century of the sixth millennium as a messianic epoch during which exile would come to an end. And it would come to an end regardless of whether this meant in the traditional messianic sense or in a radical secular one. Admittedly, the hope for redemption at the start of the fifty-seventh century has been channeled into partisan-political interpretation of one sort or another. Yet this kind of interpretation, with its appropriation and "reconsecration" of the secular nationalist discourse of the nineteenth century and its detachment of Western values from messianic creeds, has no part in a critical historical discussion. The current political status of the debate should not obscure the fact that in the decades before 1840 and the years immediately after, the debate hinged on realities, albeit it was one in which questions of religious belief, political outlook, and social reality very easily intertwined.

Notes

1. Jacob Lipschitz, *Zikhron Ya'akov* (Kovno-Slobodka, 1924), 1, 84.
2. Lipschitz, 1, 84–85. On Lipschitz's views see: Israel Bartal, "Zikhron Ya'akov' le-R. ya'akov lipschitz: historiografia ortodoksit?" *Milet* 2 (1984), 409–414; Bartal, " 'True Knowledge and Wisdom': On Orthodox Historiography," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 10 (1994), 178–192; Joseph Salmon, Dat ve-tsiyonut: imutim rishonim (Jerusalem, 1990).
3. Lipschitz, 86.
4. Lipschitz, 86.
5. Lipschitz, 86.

6. Reuven Michael, *I.M. Jost, avi ha-historiografia ha-yehudit ha-modernit* (Jerusalem, 1973), 73. See also Ismar Schorsch, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness in Modern Judaism," *Leo Baeck Year Book* 27 (1983), 413–437.
7. Michael, *Jost*, 153.
8. On the invention of the 'modern era' in Jewish historiography see: Shmuel Feiner, "Hamtsa'at 'ha-'et ha-hadasha': perek ba-retorika u-va-toda'ah ha-'atsmit shel ha-haskalah," *Dapim Le-mehkar Ha-sifrut* 11 (1998), 9–28.
9. Israel Bartal, "Shimon ha-epikorus: perek be-toldot ha-historyografia ha-ortodoksit," in Israel Bartal, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Chava Turniansky, eds., *Ke-minhag ashkenaz ve-polin, sefer yovel le-khone shmeruk* (Jerusalem, 1993), 243–268.
10. Shmuel Feiner, The Jewish Enlightenment (Philadelphia, 2004), 8.
11. Heinrich Graetz, "Stages in the Development of Belief in the Messiah," in Shmuel Ettinger, ed., *Essays, Memoirs Letters* (Jerusalem, 1969), 123–124.
12. Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity, a History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988), 247.
13. Ben Zion Dinur, "*Ha-yesodot ha-ide'ologiyim shel ha-'aliyot bi-shenot Ta"K-Ta"R*," *Be-mifneh ha-dorot* (Jerusalem, 1955), 68–69.
14. Dinur, *Ha-yesodot*, 69. For different views on the 'Old Yishuv' see: Ben Zion Gat, *Ha-yishuv ha-yehudi be-erets yisrael bi-shnot H-Ta"r-H-Ta"rMA* (Jerusalem, 1963), 193–283; Israel Bartal, *Exile in the Land* (Jerusalem, 1995), 15–19 (Hebrew).
15. Dinur, *Ha-yesodot*, 78.
16. On the removal of Alkalai from the pantheon of Religious Zionism see, for example Dov Schwarz, *Chalange and crisis in R. Kook's circle* (Tel Aviv, 2001), 313 (Hebrew). Alkalai's collected writings are now available in a deluxe edition in the series "Fundamental Writings of Religious Zionism" published by *Mossad Harav Kook*.
17. Judah Alkalai, *Ketavim* (Jerusalem, 1944), 2, 554. On Alkalai's views on the Damascus blood libel see: Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder," Politics and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge, 1997), 408–409.
18. Alkalai, 2:555. See also 516, where Alkalai claims that the Braunschweig Reform convention could have become the "elected assembly"!
19. Alakalai, 2, 435.
20. See, for example, a negative interpretation of Jewish emancipation in the writings of the national-religious thinker Yesha'ayahu Wollfsberg in Dov Schwarz, *Religious Zionism between logic and Messianism* (Tel Aviv, 1999), 128 (Hebrew).