FOREWORD

This study has two aims. On the one hand, it aims to uncover the sources, the "ideas" and the "ideals" of men like Gershom Schalom (Scholem), Ernst Simon and Robert Weltsch, emigrants from central Europe, who formed a circle or coterie in the Brith Shalom Society in Palestine from 1925 to 1933. On the other hand, the study aims to consider the relationship between the ideology—which they preached to the public—and reality. The importance of these tasks inheres in the fact that these personalities were considered by many—even by themselves—to represent the Spiritual trend of Zionism among the Jews living in the country. If we recall that this group included philosophers, educators, historians and economists, none of whom was a politician in the ordinary sense of the word, the importance of the goals of the study becomes quite clear.

Brith Shalom was founded in 1925. Its goals were: to study the Jewish-Arab conflict; "to find a proper juridical arrangement for relations between Jews and Arabs"; to serve as a vehicle for clarifying the immediate issues that were likely to feature in the long term, such as the issue of cooperation between Jews and Arabs in legislation, administration, taxation, and the like; to strive to find a Jewish-Arab understanding that would respond both to the moral requirements of its founders and to the demands of the Arabs. All this was to be done without harming the foundations of Zionism, as the members of the society understood it.[1] However, almost from the very day it was founded, differences of opinion came to light, both differences regarding principle and differences regarding tactics. As a result, the society changed from being an organization for research and deliberation to a political organization taking political positions and promoting its own initiatives. These included, in addition to the bi-national idea and support for the establishment of a parliament for Palestine according to the existing relation of forces, assent to limiting the

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[1] See also Ruppin, Arthur, *Be-binyan ha-arts ve-ha-am 1920–1942*, Tel Aviv, 1968, p. 225; *"Agudat 'Brith Shalom'—Taqanot"* AZM, A/187; Paul R. Mendes-Flohr (ed.), *A Land of Two Peoples, Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, New York, 1983, pp. 74–75. The statutes of 'Brith Shalom' was printed in Hebrew, English and Arabic and distributed immediately after its publication. It was published also in the first journal of Brith Shalom, *She'ifhoteinu*, which appeared in 1927.

immigration of Jews to Erets-Israel, in accordance with the principles of the 1922 White Paper.[2]

These positions, and especially the last one, which seemed to be too conciliatory, aroused public polemics accompanied by defamation of the society and its members, to the point at which doubt was being cast on their allegiance to the Zionist idea. In the wake of the Western Wall Events (1929), the members of the society were even accused of treason, of placing a stigma on the Zionist camp, and of attempting to undermine Zionism through exposing its flaws in public. Thus, through a continuing process, which began almost on the day it was founded, the organization found itself outside the national consensus.[3] As early as the first half of the nineteen-thirties, immediately after the Brith Shalom organ, *She'ifoteinu* [Our Aspirations], stopped appearing for various reasons,[4] the withdrawal from active involvement by several of its outstanding members, such as Arthur Ruppin and Rabbi Binyamin (Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann) forced the organization to cease its activities.[5] At the same time, as Hugo Bergmann relates, despite the disgust with politics felt by many of its members in the years leading up to the establishment of the Ihud Society in 1942, they knew no rest and examined various ways to influence political reality. Martin Buber defined their situation well

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[2] About this development and its sources see Kedar, Aharon, "Agudat 'Brith Shalom': ha-ma'avar me-Agudat Mehqar ve-iyyun le-aguda politit", *Devar ha-qongres ha-olami ha-6 le-medaei ha-yahdut*, Vol. 2 (1976), pp. 365–370. On Brith Shalom's political position from its inception up to its disappearance from the political stage in 1933 see Kedar, Aharon, "Le-toldoteia shel 'Brith Shalom' ba-bshanim 1925–1928", in Bauar, Y., Davis, M., Kolatt, Y., *Pirqei mehqar be-toldot ha-tsiyonut*, Jerusalem, 1976, pp. 224–285. See also Kedar, Aharon, "Le-hshqafoteia shel 'Brith Shalom'", in Ben-Zion, Y. & Kedar, A. (eds.), *Ideologya u-mediniyut tsiyonit*, Jerusalem, 97–47; Gorny, Yosef, *Zionism and the Arabs*, 1882–1948, Oxford, 1987, pp. 118–128. Dothan, Shmuel, *Ha-Mavq al Erets Israel*, Tel Aviv, 1983, pp. 56–63. About the affinity of Brith Shalom with the bi-national idea see Susan Lee Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea in Palestine during Mandatory Times*, Tel Aviv, 1970, pp. 47–51.

[3] For the Yishuv's reactions towards Brith Shalom's political stance see Kedar, Aharon, "Le-hshqafoteia shel 'Brith Shalom'", pp. 107–108.

[4] The reasons included the rise to power of the Nazis in Germany, and the persecution of Jews in Germany and other countries in central and eastern Europe. So in his lecture of 16 May 1973 E. Simon referred to the relationship between the rise to power of the Nazis in Germany and the disappearance of Brith Shalom. See in the Diaspora' Archive, Tel Aviv University.

[5] As the result of the reaction of some members of Brith Shalom to Kotel's events in 1929 Ruppin declined to serve as the chairman of Brith Shalom. However, he continued to be a member of Brith Shalom, so he took part in the society's meetings. For examples see Ruppin, Arthur, *Be-binyan ha-arts ve-Ha-am*, p. 205. See also protocol of the Brith Shalom meeting of 30 December 1931, CZA-A/187/47.

when, at one of their meetings in 1935, he described the members of the organization as "yeast seeking dough". That is, they sought a political field of action.[6]

The roots of this development lay in the fact that Brith Shalom embraced men from various circles and parties.[7] For this reason, one of its members rejected arguments—such as those made by Abraham Shvadron (Sharon)—which treated the "ideology" of Brith Shalom as one block.[8] According to him, "Brith Shalom held to one principle that it would not deviate from . . . It is a principle that most Zionists do not disagree with, that realizing Zionism is not possible without achieving a political agreement with the Arabs of the country".[9] Since these remarks were made in the context of other matters, especially in connection with the demand for a revision of Zionism, they did not present the "ideology of Brith Shalom" as being representative of a political line, and they should be seen as only expressing the opinion of the person who made them.

Some joined Brith Shalom out of faith in its values and goals, and some joined for tactical and pragmatic reasons alone. Some of its members saw their activity as merely having political and social meanings, while others saw it as representing a religious and moral mission.[10] Yet all of them, as Simon attested, thought that Zionism was obliged "to create . . . the normal grounds for maintaining the Election of Israel, not against its will, that is, not under the abnormal conditions of the Exile".[11] And indeed as most researchers have discerned, the Brith Shalom Society was more a movement of ideas

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[6] See Bergmann's Journal entry of 20 April, 1935 in Schmuel Hugo Bergman, *Tagebücher und Briefe*, Band 1, 1901–1943, Bonn, 1985, pp. 390–395.

[7] For example see Kedar, Aharon, "Le-hshqafotea shel 'Brith Shalom'" p. 100.

[8] M. Meir, "Ideology of Brith Shalom? To the paper of A. Shevadron", *She'ifoteinu*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (August 1931) pp. 209–214. Indeed even from the criticism of Shevadron himself it recognized that he found in Brith Shalom varities of political stances and not homogeneous politics. See Shevadron (Sharon) Avraham, *Le-biqoret yesodei ha-ideologya shel 'Brith Shalom' mi-tokh ha-shkafat ha-tsiyonut ha-integralit*, Jerusalem, 1931, p. 5. And that is right even when we speak about the Jewish-Arabic conflict.

[9] M. Meir, "Ideologya of Brith Shalom? To the paper of A. Shevadron", *She'ifoteinu*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (August 1931) p. 212. See also Shevadron, "Tguvot la-biqort (Response to Criticism), *She'ifoteinu*, Vol. 2, No. 8 (September 1932) pp. 375–383. He found in the critical and remedial tendency of Brith Shalom grounds for a unique political attitude.

[10] Scholem, Gershom, "Emuna tama (Tsion le-dr. Santor)", *Devarim be-go* (ed., A. Shapira), Tel Aviv, 1975, p. 499.

[11] See the lecture of E. Simon of 16 May 73, Diaspora's Archive, Tel Aviv University.

than a monolithic party. For example, Yosef Gorny pointed out two trends in Brith Shalom, based primarily on political criteria.[12] These trends took shape, in his view, in the period between its establishment (1925) and the Events of 1929. The latter constituted a kind of catalyst in the formation and final shaping of these trends.[13] However, while one trend did not diverge from the Zionist consensus, the second dared to deviate from it by casting doubt on the national need for a Jewish majority in Palestine and on the political rationale of the aspiration to become a majority.[14] Gorny places among the outstanding representatives of this trend Gershom Scholem, Hugo Bergmann, Robert Weltsch, Shmuel Sambursky, Aqiba Ernst Simon, and Hans Kohn.

In a study devoted to the history of Brith Shalom between 1925–1928, Aharon Kedar enumerated several groups that were active within its framework.[15] Nevertheless, in his view, there were two central groups that shaped its policy; one was the "Anshei ha Yishuv" [Men of the Jewish Community in Israel]. The common ground of its members was practical and political Zionism, accompanied by the act of personal fulfillment. This group included intellectuals and academics, mostly from eastern Europe, led by Arthur Ruppin. It was dominant in the first years of the society and was content to research and study the Arab Problem.[16] Besides Ruppin, members of this group included Hayim Margalit-Kalvarisky, Yehoshua Radler-Feldmann Ha-Talmi (Rabbi Binyamin), Ya`aqov Tahon, and Yits'haq Epshtein. Making up the second group, which was of lesser importance when the society was founded, were: Shmuel Hugo Bergmann, Hans Kohn, and Robert Weltsch (these three had been members of the Bar Kokhba Students Society in Prague), as well as Gershom Scholem, Aqiba Ernst Simon, Georg Landauer, and Shmuel Sambursky, natives of the Second Reich. In fact, this was the more radical group, and it was also the one that worked to change the character of the organization from being a research and study society to that of an organization with independent political goals.

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[12] See Gorny, Yosef, *Zionism and the Arabs*, p. 189.

[13] See ibid. pp. 191–200.

[14] See ibid.

[15] See Kedar, Aharon, "Le-toldoteia shel 'Brith Shalom' ba-shanim 1925–1928", pp. 224–285.

[16] About the position of A. Ruppin and the internal conflict in Brith Shalom on the political stance see ibid. pp. 271–279. See also Susan Lee Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea in Palestine During Mandatory Times*, pp. 47–51.

We can discern in this group a nucleus with a definite sociological and cultural profile. It is worth noting that one of the important characteristics of this nucleus was the fact that the group comprised a group of intellectuals from central Europe, most of whom were connected with the Hebrew University. Their link to the University, which was outside the domain of exclusive control by the Palestinian parties, helped to shape them as an opposition group and helped them to remain independent as far as their activities were concerned.[17] To this general characteristic can be added the fact that while the members of the first group were practical-political Zionists who believed in the act of fulfillment, the members of the second group from central Europe were influenced by the teachings of M. Buber. It can be said that their concept of the values of Judaism was different, and as emigrants from Czechoslovakia and Germany their mentality was also different.[18] Another significant trait defining them as a group, which emerges from Kedar's discussion, is that, unlike the members of the first group, most of whom had emigrated from eastern Europe—which made it easier for them to identify with most of the Jewish population in the country—the men of the second group, due to the mentality of emigrants from Czechoslovakia and Germany, found it difficult to understand the Jewish population. This attitude was mutual: most of the Jewish population in the country did not understand them and did not identify with them. However, notwithstanding all of these distinguishing features, we must not forget that for the radical group, some of whose members belonged to the Aliyah Shlishith, and for the "Anshey Ha-Yyshuv" group, the faith in the value of personal fulfillment was a common trait.[19]

Hagit Lavsky, like Kedar, sees the emigrants from central Europe in Brith Shalom as a nucleus possessing a distinguishing ideological contour. This profile ought to be seen, in her view, in the context of the specific developments of German Zionism in particular, and of central European Zionism in general. Although she agrees in principle with Kedar's remarks quoted above, she stresses that the challenge of the rise of the Revisionist Zionism in the early twenties is

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[17] See Kedar, Aharon, "Le-toldoteia shel 'Brith Shalom' ba-shanim 1925–1928", p. 238.

[18] Ibid. pp. 236–237.

[19] According to Keder many strings tied some of them to the "Anshei ha-yishuv. He pointed out that H. Bergmann and G. Scholem resembled Anshei ha-yishuv in their attitude towards self-realization. Ibid.

what led to the establishment of Brith Shalom.[20] This long process began, in her opinion, with the experience of the First World War and continued in the encounter with the aggressive German nationalism that the War had aroused. The Zionists were forced, as it were, to differentiate between their moral humanistic nationalism and chauvinistic German nationalism. The "Arab Question" was conceived by a great many German Zionists, and especially by those who were inclined to the Left, as a touchstone for the possibility of combining Zionism and humanism in particular, and nationalism and humanism in general. Therefore, Lavsky believes, the activity of Brith Shalom is to be linked to the struggle of various trends and currents of German Zionism and the demand of the Revisionist camp to shift the center of gravity of the Zionist endeavor from internal activity to an external political offensive.[21] In her opinion, these developments may help explain the links between the members of Brith Shalom and personalities who were close to the Democratic Faction or to other circles within German Zionism that leaned toward Cultural Zionism and centered the focus of their activity on internal activity.[22]

Shmuel Dothan also lists various circles that were active within the Brith Shalom framework. He singles out, on a sociological and cultural basis, the group of founders that included men of action from the Zionist establishment, like Arthur Ruppin and two of his previous assistants in the Palestine Office on the eve of World War II, Y. Tahon and Rabbi Binyamin.[23] Next came a group of important scholars, most of whom had emmigrated from Germany or Prague to the Land of Israel in order to work at the Hebrew University.[24] Among the latter he lists Samuel Hugo Bergmann, Gershom Scholem, and Hans Kohn. Joining them, either as members of the society or just as friends, were Orientalists, personalities close to the Mandatory administration, and other personalities among the founders of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, such as Judah Leon Magnes, Chancellor of the University.[25] Since this division was neither stable nor

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[20] Lavesky, Hagit, "Tsionei Germanya Ve-Reshita shel 'Brith Shalom'", *Yahadut Zmannu* 4 (1968), pp. 99–121 and particularly pp. 100–106.

[21] Lavesky, Hagit, *Before Catastrophe, The Distinctive Path of German Zionism*, Jerusalem, 1996, pp. 167–170.

[22] See also Kedar, Aharon, "Le-hshqafoteia shel 'Brith Shalom'", p. 98.

[23] Dothan, Shmuel, *Ha-ma'avq al erets Israel*, p. 57.

[24] Ibid.

[25] The members of Brith Shalom were mostly Erets Israel's citizens, and its friends

sufficiently clear, Dothan prefers, as does Gorny, the political criterion. By this means, he distinguishes between "Maximalist Zionists" such as Rabbi Binyamin or Kalvarisky, and "Radical Minimalists".[26] And principally, he distinguishes between those who were content with the bi-national ideas as a perspective and those who wanted a bi-national political solution. It seems that even their contemporaries, those active in and close to the society, were aware of this distinction. For instance, Judah Magnes was aware of this reality, and he used it as his explanation for officially joining Brith Shalom. He was not ready to accept adoption of the aspiration for peace and the pacifist approach as merely a tactic. However, he felt very close to Bergmann, Scholem, and Hans Kohn, whom he saw as being close to, if not sharing, his Zionist conception.[27]

Therefore, Dothan's description included Kohn, Bergmann, Scholem, Sambursky, and Simon in the Radical Minimalist group which saw the bi-national idea as both the only solution worthy in itself and as the most suitable solution for the national reality in Palestine. Like Kedar, he too points to the teachings of Buber, to the doctrine of integration into the East and to the myth of the Decline of the West—which pervaded central Europe due to Oswald Spengler's book of that name—as one of the sources on which the members of the circle drew. And again like Kedar, he too believes that the origin of some of the men of the circle in the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire had a considerable impact on shaping their political Weltanschauung.[28]

Thus, the group of men from central Europe in Brith Shalom made up a coterie in which radical minimalist trends combined with distinguishing moral, cultural and sociological traits. This circle was active on the basis of tendencies linked to their central European

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were mostly residents of other countries like M. Buber. R. Weltsch who lived in Germany at this time and was at the same time a member of Brith Shalom was an exceptional case. See the list of the names of Brith Shalom's members and friends and their addresses in Kedar, Aharon, "Le-toldoteia shel 'Brith Shalom' ba-shanim 1925–1928", pp. 281–285.

[26] Dothan, Shmuel, *Ha-ma'avq al erets Israel*, p. 57.

[27] See Arthur A. Goren (ed.) *Dissenter in Zion, From the Writings of Judah L. Magnes*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1982, pp. 272–273; See also the lecture of E. Simon of 16 May 1973, Diaspora Archive, Tel Aviv University.

[28] Dothan, Shmuel, *Ha-ma'avq al erets Israel*, pp. 58–61; Kedar, Aharon, "Le-hshqafoteia shel 'Brith Shalom'", p. 102.

origin on the one hand, and the unique Zionist and Jewish worldview of its members on the other. The range of sources—that the researchers have pointed to—from which the group drew its ideas was extremely wide. We find in this range Jewish traditional sources next to modern ones such as Ahad Ha-am, A.D. Gordon and Moses Hess, in addition to non-Jewish sources, especially the social and national theories that prevailed in central Europe at the *fin-de-siècle*, such as utopian socialism and national ideologies cast in moulds borrowed from the organic-developmental theories. Combining with the distinguishing traits of the group is also the fact mentioned above that most members of the group immigrated to Palestine at the beginning of the 1920s, and for that reason they saw themselves as flesh of the flesh of the Aliya Shlishit (third).[29] Even those among them who immigrated later (such as Akiba Ernest Simon, who arrived in Israel in 1928, during the Fourth Aliyah) were similar to them in the motivation for their aliya and in their mentality.[30] For example, the principle of self-fulfillment was common to them and to the members of the Third Aliya, as well as to the members of the Second Aliya, which was also represented in Brith Shalom.

Although various researchers have insisted on the uniqueness of the ideology fashioned by this radical coterie, they have contented themselves solely with intuitive allusions as to its sources. For example, they do not really deal with the issue of the links of the members of the coterie to the thinkers of *Volk* nationalism, which they became acquainted with at an age when a young man shapes his worldview. Further, the concrete meaning of their exposure to the fin-de-siècle atmosphere has not often been the focus of research. Likewise, the scope and boundaries of their nexus to Ahad Ha-am or Martin Buber or Gustav Landauer, whose influence on the second generation of Zionists in central Europe was notorious, has not been studied very often. It is striking that the researchers have been

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[29] See S.H. Bergmann, "Neum be-mesibat ha-preida sh-ne'erkha al-yedei ovdei beit ha-sfarim, le-regel ozvi et beit ha-sfarim", *Ba-mishol* (ed. N. Rotenstreich). Tel-Aviv, 1967, p. 89 and further. See also G. Scholem, *Mi-berlin li-yerushlaim, zikhrunot ne'urim*, Tel Aviv, 1982, pp. 212–215; review with S. Samburski, *Iton77*, no. 140–141 (January-February 1990), p. 31.

[30] See A. Shapira, "Ha-morash ke-maqor li-thi'ya: le-zehuto ha-ruhanit sel Gershom Shalom", in Gershom Scholem (ed. A. Shapira), *Od davar*, Tel Aviv, 1989, p. 13. S.H. Bergmann, "Ne'um bemesibat ha-preida sh-ne'erkha al-yedei ovdei beit ha-sfarim, le-regel ozvi et beyt ha-sfarim", pp. 89–90. See also Shapira, Anita, "Uri Zvi Greenberg: apoqalipsa akhshav", *Zion*, Vol. 56, No. 174–192.

even less inclined to examine the ingredients of their national conception or to describe it as an orderly Zionist doctrine, even though they felt its presence.

This study seeks to fill the void in research described above. It does not intend to discuss the political activity or the organizational procedures or the social structure of the Ihud and Brith Shalom societies. These are subjects that have been dealt with many times before. The goal of the study is, on the one hand, to discover the "ideas" and the "ideals" of the men from central Europe who formed Brith Shalom, as members of the second and third generations of German Zionists—men who may be identified with Spiritual Zionism—and on the other hand, to elaborate on their attempt to implant these ideas and ideals in Palestinian reality. And this effort too is carried out solely from the narrow perspective of several men who consistently wrestled with the set of problems involved in realizing utopian ideas and ideals on the hard ground of reality.