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ISOLATION AND ALIENATION: FACTORS IN THE GROWTH OF ZIONISM IN THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES, 1917–1939¹

Diverse local influences during the interwar years set Zionism in the Prairies apart from Zionism in other regions of the North America and the rest of the world. Membership in Zionist organizations in the Prairies grew rapidly in proportion, far beyond other areas in North America. Foundations for a strong Zionist movement had been established before World War I, but with the 1920s and 1930s came an unprecedented expansion. Furthermore, the per capita rate of immigration to Palestine from the Prairies exceeded the continental rate by at least five times.² Explanations for the expansion of this ideological movement are drawn from the special nature and role played by Zionism in this region resulting from the unique physical and social environment. In more general terms, a rural population or a sparsely distributed population was the breeding ground for the nurturing of a distinct form of Zionism.

Part of this development can be attributed to the tenor of Zionism nationally. Michael Brown pointed to two distinct roles played by Zionism in Canada. The national organizations, the Federation of Canadian Zionist Societies and its heir, the Zionist Organization of Canada “acted as the representative organization of Canadian Jewry,” from 1899 until 1934 with the reconstituting of the Canadian Jewish Congress. The umbrella Zionist organizations dealt also with varied issues: education, antisemitism,

Jewish immigration, and others. Moreover, Zionism served as a cohesive force for Canadian Jewry.³

The special nature of Zionism in the Prairies has connections to the physical environment. The vast plains and the extreme continental climate together with factors of land use and human organization of space begot a sparse spatial distribution of Prairie Jews. They were located in small pockets in cities and towns (with the exception of a large concentration in Winnipeg), and in smaller concentrations in rural centers and also families on isolated farms. This spawned a sense of isolation. Often linguistic, cultural and religious differences between Jews and their neighbours aggravated the isolation and fostered a sense of alienation. This situation was further intensified through the proliferation of antisemitism in various occurrences, and degrees of severity.

Concurrent with the decline of religious observance among many Jews, particularly for the second and third generations, was the supplanting of certain factors of religious organization and community by Zionism. It took on three important roles in local Jewish society.

First, Zionism became an instrument through which Jewish society in the Prairies combatted its sense of isolation. Zionist groups and societies provided meeting points for Jews from every walk of life. Zionism, often defined as the desire to assist Jewish brethren in the upbuilding of Eretz Israel (Heb.: Land of Israel or Palestine), became a common denominator with which most Prairie Jews could identify. Thus, Zionism evolved into a new form of social-philanthropic society. Other forms of Jewish community organization did not suit most Prairie communities. The lack of a critical population mass and the sparse spatial distribution were not sufficient to foster a proliferation of landsmanschaft societies as in the large Jewish communities in North America. In addition, these societies had passed their peak with the growth of second and third generations who no longer identified with their parents' or grandparents' roots in the Old World.⁴

Second, Zionism became an instrument for the sustaining of Jewish education in the prairies, particularly in areas of smaller Jewish concentrations. The programs developed by Zionist youth groups included basic religious observances, cultural heritage, and nationalism. The informal nature of these educational programs and the basic level on which information was presented did not necessitate the establishment of distinct institutions nor the hiring of trained educators. This factor was of greater importance in the smaller Jewish communities. Some had synagogues or used private homes for religious services but only a few communities could afford the economic burdens of hiring a Jewish educator. In the larger communities, elements of Zionism were found within the mainstream Jewish educational institutions since Zionists were active in the development of the Talmud Torahs in Winnipeg, Regina, and Calgary. Secular Jewish education emphasized Yiddish language and culture as with the I. L. Peretz Schools in Winnipeg and Calgary. Labour Zionists in Winnipeg supported the Peretz School although in 1930 they attempted to develop a school that would cultivate Zionist ideals and teach Hebrew instead of Yiddish. Where Jewish educational institutions existed, informal Zionist education was of lesser importance. In most secular schools, the ideological leanings of the parents opposed Zionist education. In mainstream Talmud Torahs, elements of Zionism were found already in the curricula and hence there was less of a need to supplement formal Jewish education.⁵

Third, Zionism became an important dream and possibly a practical outlet for frustrations and difficulties in the Prairies. Its fulfillment through aliyah (immigration to Eretz Israel) was seen by some as the panacea to their problems. Others yearned and dreamt, sustained in their present situation by these aspirations. Eretz Israel was perceived as a place where Jews were not isolated. Instead, a sense of community existed there for Jews. Eretz Israel placed similar demands on its inhabitants as did the Prairies. Both were frontiers and the settlers would have to be pioneers. There was a disproportionately larger number of plans for settlement in Eretz Israel and a higher

percentage of actual immigrants from the Prairies than in other regions in North America.

This paper describes the unique nature of Zionism in the Prairies. Discussed are various factors that molded this form of Zionism — antisemitism, assimilation, isolation and alienation. The development of the ideological movement in this region is outlined. Various facets of local Zionism — social, philanthropic, educational, and migrational — are then analyzed.

FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRAIRIE ZIONISM: ANTISEMITISM

Western Canadian Jews were subject to various forms of antisemitism during the interwar years.⁶ The phenomenon did not originate during the period of study, nor did it expand drastically. Waves of antisemitism were felt locally and regionally, often connected to specific events or changes in the local social and economic climate. Variations found geographically were probably attributed to local norms, based on ethnic origin of the population, religious affiliation, size of the Jewish community, inter-personal experiences, etc. Antisemitism in the Prairies was aggravated by the spatial distribution of the Jewish population. Examples are provided of lone Jewish families or small isolated Jewish communities which sensed heightened animosity and prejudice due to racial and religious tensions.

Contemporary researcher Louis Rosenberg in describing conditions favouring antisemitism pointed to the presence of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, areas “in which antisemitism has long played a prominent part in religious, social and economic life.” The intense propaganda initiated by Nazi Germany from 1933 onward led to increased antisemitism by Canadians of German origin. The *Deutscher Bund* published a subsidized German weekly, with an English supplement, in Winnipeg containing antisemitic material. Rosenberg also pointed to the high concentration of Poles and Ukrainians in the Prairies as a source of antisemitic activity.⁷

Antisemitic occurrences included isolated incidents of name calling, taunting and physical abuse; traditional religious forms, such as reports of blood libels; institutional and legal discrimination; and organized charges and verbal maligning. The discussion details examples of different categories of antisemitism.

In a milder form, isolated incidents of name calling, taunting and physical abuse found expression in the Alberta settlement of Rumsey. A former resident recounted incidents of rock throwing at Jewish school children and calling them “dirty Jews.” However, the general tenor of the relationship between Jews and their neighbours in this rural environment was characterized as kind and helpful. A reduction in inter-religious tensions was credited to Jewish participation in local sports, namely baseball and hockey.⁸

On the other extreme, blood libels did not occur in the Prairies, but the local press reported such incidents in Eastern Europe. The Calgary Herald in 1914 reported: “A Christian boy, Anton Zumme, working a bakery machine making Matza bread had his hand thrust into the machine by Jewish boys and lost much blood, which was mixed with the bread.”⁹ The language and tone of the description expressed a belief that the incidents did occur and Jews were actually the culprits. In another example, Molly Lyons recounted her childhood memories detailing that, “we had a German housemaid named Lizzy Krautich, and when she put me to bed at night she told me that the [Free] Masons killed gentile children at Passover, and that all [Free] Masons were Jews.”¹⁰

Antisemitism found its expression in accusations that Jews traded diseased carcasses. J. Goldenberg in a letter to the editor of the Brandon Daily Sun reacted to an unnamed alderman’s charges. Goldenberg outlined that this was as unfounded as accusations of ritual murders, well poisonings, and espionage. He wrote, “Now we are asked to believe that it is the Jews that are responsible for filthy meat eaten by gentiles, whereas, as a matter of fact, it is the gentiles who must learn from the Jews how to prepare clean meat.”¹¹

A more prevalent and perhaps more difficult antisemitic expression excluded Jews from certain professions and offices. Researcher Irving Abella summarizing a 1937 Canadian Jewish Congress study, elaborated that,

few of the country's school teachers and none of its principals were Jewish. The banks, insurance companies and the large industrial and commercial interests, it charged, also excluded Jews from employment. Department stores did not hire Jews as salespeople; Jewish doctors could not get hospital appointments. Not only did universities and professional schools devise quotas against Jewish students, but they did not hire Jewish faculty. For most of this period there was not a single Jewish professor in the entire country. The report added that it was almost impossible for Jewish nurses, architects and engineers to find jobs in their fields.¹²

Lita-Rose Betcherman qualified this situation in the western Canadian context and pointed out that “western Jews met less discrimination than those in central Canada.” She explained that “the proportion of Jewish doctors and lawyers was twice as high in Winnipeg as in Toronto, and participation in the salaried professions was typically on par with the average for all origins, mainly because Jewish women teachers were hired by the public schools.”¹³

M.B. Steine's letter to lawyer and Zionist leader Jacob M. Goldberg of Saskatoon from October 1930 illuminates the atmosphere of fear and anxiety experienced by Prairie Jews in this context,

You stated that the Canadian Bar was considering the advisability of excluding all but those of British stock from practicing Law, and you further told us that colleges in the United States were excluding Jewish would-be students, demonstrating that no Jew was sure of his position on this Continent.¹⁴

Certain Zionist groups actively combated antisemitism. In 1936, a branch of Avukah was established at the University of Manitoba. Avukah had been founded, in 1925, to participate in the “study of Jewish life and literature from a creative national standpoint [...] and in practical service for Palestine.”¹⁵ Affiliated groups sprung up at universities throughout North America. The University of Manitoba branch was active. Due to its efforts, a fact-finding committee, which attempted to deal with discrimination against Jews in their admittance to the university, particularly the School of Medicine, was created.¹⁶ This act and others provided many Jewish residents with a sense of empowerment and heightened their resolve to remain and continue to do battle against antisemitism.

Chronologically, the decade preceding World War I saw a wave of antisemitism. This found expression in certain Saskatchewan newspapers, their headlines included “Tories First Slander then Flatter Hebrew Residents of North Qu’appelle,” “The Jewish Colony is Undesirable,” “Invasion Juive,” for example.¹⁷ This was a period of increased Jewish migration to the Prairies. Some non-Jews feared that this was the beginning of a large-scale Jewish migration. The 1930s saw renewed waves of antisemitism expressed through the growth of militant fascist and antisemitic groups. Among them were the Canadian Nationalist Party in Manitoba and the Ku Klux Klan in Saskatchewan. Molly Lyons of Tisdale, Saskatchewan, “saw ordinary decent citizens turn venomous and hateful and take on mob character.” This was the strongest expression of antisemitism that Molly had experienced, although not the first. The long series of antisemitic expressions was an important factor in the Lyons family’s emigration to Palestine.¹⁸

Occurrences of antisemitism extended to a variety of spatial expanses. On a local level, antisemitic experiences in Brookdale, Manitoba were the reason given by Sara Kliman for her and her husband’s migration in 1929 to another and more hospitable town.

And he decided to go to a place called Brookdale near [Neepawa]. He bought this store [...] but once we got into it we realized it wasn't the place to go [...]. Both of us realized it wasn't the right thing so we lost one thousand dollars in the store. It was a very antisemitic town [...]. Within a few months we were out of there. Then we heard of Holland [Manitoba] so we went to see the people there; we felt we would do well there [...]¹⁹

The difference between the experiences of the Klimans in these two communities was probably a result of the ethnic composition of the two host communities. This also exemplifies the heterogeneous nature of antisemitism in the prairies.

As seen in some of the above examples, one reaction to various forms of antisemitism was emigration to Eretz Israel. But this was far from the most prevalent reaction. An extreme one was that out of fear of antisemitism some Jews hid their true identity from their gentile neighbors. Abe Gutnick encountered one of these "secret Jews" near Lethbridge.²⁰ But in general, the Jewish population remained in place and did not hide its true identity. Most Jews bore the torment of antisemitism and fought for its eradication. Antisemitism in the prairies was mild compared to that of Europe which the immigrant generation remembered.

Membership in Zionist organizations was also affected by the perception and attitudes toward such an affiliation by non-Jewish neighbors. Zionism was viewed by some as a form of disloyalty to Canada. In the midst of the war, in 1915, the Brandon Daily Sun published a letter which insinuated that a mass meeting of Zionists which was to be held in the city was an expression of disloyalty on the part of Brandon Jewish citizens. The writer questioned, "Have the Jewish people fallen to the wiles of the despicable Hun, and are they working up a mischievous and traitorous propaganda in conjunction with the Chicago society? Such conduct demands sharp penalties."²¹

In general, however, membership in Zionist organizations was not perceived as act of disloyalty to Canada. Molly Lyons pointed out, “Canadian Jews are not plagued by the idea of dual loyalties as Americans.” She explained, “The gentiles accept this as natural and refer to Israel as the mother country of all Jews. Canadians have been educated to love England, the “Old Country,” as much as their own new land. They can understand that there is no conflict in broadening one’s love to include another good.”²²

ASSIMILATION

It should not be inferred from the discussion above that anti-semitism was widespread. Just as many, if not more examples of warm, friendly and harmonious relationships between Jews and their gentile neighbors have been found. This friendliness, however, on the other extreme of the spectrum initiated the fear of assimilation. It included the loss of Jewish identity, intermarriage, and conversion.

In a somewhat harmless incident, Sara Kliman of Holland, Manitoba recounted her daughter’s desire to play the Virgin Mary in the local Christmas play.²³ This was not a unique occurrence. Growing up a Jew in a community of non-Jews led to confusion in one’s Jewish identity. Fredelle Bruser Maynard in her memoirs *Raisins and Almonds* adeptly outlined the sense of isolation resulting from being the only Jewish child in the town of Birch Hills, Saskatchewan of the 1920s. The difficulty of being different from the rest of the population on account of her being Jewish was a strong recurring theme. She wanted to be like the other children.

Though my father spoke of Jewishness as a special distinction, as far as I could see it was an inheritance without a kingdom, a check on a bank that had failed. Being Jewish was mostly not doing things other people did — not eating pork, not going to Sunday school, not entering,

even playfully, into childhood romances, because the only boys around were goyishe boys. I remember, when I was five or six, falling in love with Edward Prince of Wales. Of the many arguments with which Mama might have dampened my ardor, she chose surely the most extraordinary. “You can’t marry him. He isn’t Jewish.” And of course, finally, definitely, most crushing of all, being Jewish meant not celebrating Christ’s birth.²⁴

Extended habitation in isolated communities could lead to further assimilation and possibly intermarriage. In Rumsey, Alberta as explained by one resident, “barriers had also begun to break down between the Jewish and Gentile farming communities, and assimilation and intermarriage were looming.”²⁵ Molly Lyons described the difficulties in finding a Jewish mate in the rural environment. She explained, “With the Jewish boys we were on safe ground and, what’s more, if it ever came to that we were marriageable prospects. Our relationships, however, were too close and too filial for any romantic feelings. We kissed and we danced and we whooped, all on a sisterly-brotherly semi-sweetheart basis. Our mates would have to all come from afar.”²⁶ Typical of low-density Jewish populations, the percentage of mixed marriages in this region exceeded the national average. For the years, 1926-1936, 5.07 percent of Canadian Jewish marriages were mixed and for the Prairies 8.00 percent (Manitoba, 5.63 percent; Saskatchewan, 14.74 percent; Alberta, 15.81 percent).²⁷ The fear of intermarriage was an important element in the decision of Jewish farmers to leave the farm and for Jewish merchants in small isolated towns to move away from them.²⁸

Conversion to Christianity was the most acute form of assimilation. In Winnipeg as in other cities, it was not uncommon for members of the Jewish community to be subject to missionary activities. Local resident, Dr. Sheppy Hershfield reminisced that out of curiosity he and other Jewish youths joined clubs at various missions unbeknown to their parents. But, “Another mission soon opened [...] ‘A Christian Mission to the Jews,’ but none of us came close to this building because

the mission was conducted by a meshumod [an apostate Jew], and we despised his efforts at proselytization.”²⁹ The missionary activity was not very successful in drawing Jews into the Christian fold. As of 1931, Jewish converts to Christianity numbered 156 in Manitoba (68 in Winnipeg), 71 in Saskatchewan (5 in Saskatoon and 3 in Regina) and 66 in Alberta (18 in Calgary and 15 in Edmonton).³⁰

Zionism, as a social and educational organization, probably served to retard the rate of assimilation by providing information about Jewish heritage and stronger identification with the Jewish community. Migration to centers with a larger concentration of Jews and their institutions, among them Palestine, was another solution.

ISOLATION AND ALIENATION

The spatial distribution of the Jews in the Prairie provinces was that of dispersion, spread over areas suitable for agricultural production in these vast plains. The Jewish population of the Prairies was more rural in nature than the Canadian Jewish average but exhibited a downward trend from the beginning of the twentieth century.

Table 1:

PERCENTAGE OF THE RURAL JEWISH POPULATION FOR CANADA AND THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES, 1901–1931.

PLACE/YEAR	1901	1911	1921	1931
Canada	5.77	5.96	4.28	3.55
Manitoba	10.96	9.49	7.25	5.62
Saskatchewan	98.98	48.08	22.68	21.15
Alberta	--	37.21	17.24	8.22

Source: Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, p. 23.

Certain concentrations were found in and around the cities, with additional clusters, which were usually randomly created. Canadian government policy, in general, prevented any contiguous settlement by Jewish farmers. In 1914, a Calgary man elaborated upon the isolation experienced by the city's Jewish inhabitants and its meaning.

[...] the problem which confronts Western Canadian Jews, composed as we are of small communities and scattered over a vast country. Vancouver and Winnipeg are separated by some fifteen hundred miles, with Calgary and Edmonton midway between and separated from each other by one hundred and ninety miles. Around and between these cities are to be found Jewish communities varying from one to two hundred families and around and between these communities, the Jewish farmer and his family [...] What are our co-religionists doing and how are they faring? Responding to our gregarious instinct we are seeking the companionship of those bonds of race and religion. We are seeking an outlet for our sympathy for those who, like us, are wanderers on the face of the globe in the search of political and social equality and justice, and in return seek the sympathy of our kind in blood and creed.³¹

Isolation was sensed on the local level as well. Michael Usiskin of Edenbridge explained, "There could be no talk of organizing ourselves. We lived miles apart from one another, separated by thick bush. Months went by without contact."³² Barr and Lehr drew attention to the relationship between man and the Prairies.

The Western Interior is, as many prairie authors have observed, a stark land of haunting beauty, a land of contrasts and extremes in climate, vegetation, and topography; one which places a vertical man on a horizontal land and pits the puny skills of mankind against the immensity of the plain and the unpredictable vagaries of the unforgiving continental climate. Many perceptive writers of the prairie provinces have attributed the

attitudes and opinions held by the region's inhabitants to the environment in which they live. This may be facile determinism, but it is clear that the historical evolution of the Western Interior as a hinterland region has done little to dissipate the westerners' perception of themselves as a people beset by a harsh environment.³³

Distance was another facet of isolation, and included factors of actual distance, modes and speed of transportation and conditions for travel. Following World War I motor vehicles were an increasingly utilized mode of travel, supplementing the existing railroad system. This change is seen in the example of the Sidemans, the only Jewish family in Landsberg, Saskatchewan. Morris Sideman explains, "we had Jewish people in Esterhazy [...] they'd come and visit us, and we had no car, but we would, on a Sunday, we'd rent a car for a nickel a mile." The closest Jewish community was in Yorkton, but the Sidemans had no contact with it. Instead, the Sidemans journeyed to Winnipeg for the High Holidays.³⁴

Certain rural communities did not sense isolation, particularly those near or easily accessible to urban centers. Chronicler of Manitoba's Jews Arthur A. Chiel expanded on the interaction between Winnipeg and its Jewish agricultural hinterland:

The Jewish farmers in Manitoba who were the most successful for the longest period of time were those who settled near Winnipeg. Such farmers were able to give their children a Jewish education and to join their city friends during the major festivals and holidays. Two farm settlements near Winnipeg, Bird's Hill and West Kildonan, were large enough to build their own synagogues. Others, like St. Anna, Gimli, Lorette, Transcona, Rosenfeld, and Rosser, though smaller Jewish settlements, were close enough to Winnipeg to be spared the privations brought on by distance and isolation.³⁵

Isolation was more intensely sensed when certain needs were not satisfied due to the distance from larger Jewish centers. This was also connected both to antisemitism and assimilation. The Jewish

community at Rumsey, for example, decreased in number following World War I not only due to economic problems but because proper Jewish education could not be provided there for their children. Others withdrew from the colony when their offspring attained marriageable age and the prospects of finding Jewish spouses for them were limited. Urban centers provided a greater likelihood for finding a partner in marriage. In situations when children migrated, their parents often followed later, retiring near their children or to enter old age homes in the city. Thus, in these instances, there was a rural-urban migration due to the sense of isolation. This was not unique to this farming community; similar documentation has been found for other locales: Hirsch, Edenbridge, Wapella, Lipton, Sonnenfeld, Montefiore, and Alsask to name a few.³⁶

Alternatives, if only temporary, existed in the rural environment. Chiel related to Jewish country merchants in Manitoba. He explained:

As their children grew older, however, and the problems of Jewish education and marriage became of immediate concern to them, many sold their businesses, lucrative though they might have been. Some postponed their departure from the country by sending their children to the boarding school at Winnipeg's Jewish Orphanage. Others brought young men from Europe to help in the store and to teach the children of the household in after school hours. But sooner or later, almost all the Jewish merchants in rural Manitoba finally came to live in Winnipeg, the centre of Jewish cultural and religious life in the province.³⁷

Aggravating the situation during the 1930s was a drastic fall in wheat prices and a series of drier years. These factors and others led to economic calamity and an increase in rural to urban migration.³⁸

The sense of alienation together with the fear of assimilation are well illustrated in a letter to Tel Aviv Mayor Meir Dizengoff from L. Keel of Lethbridge, a Jewish community of approximately 100 Jews:

I am anxious to get away from 'Galuth' [Hebrew and Yiddish: Diaspora]. I have lived in this town for the past twenty years. My children are all born here. While they were little, we, the parents, consoled ourselves with the notion that we could afford to wait. But now our children are getting older, and you will readily understand that, we are most anxious for their future. In other words, we want them to remain in the Jewish fold. Here, where we now live, the surroundings and environment are anything but Jewish.³⁹

Here, the perceived solution to the problems of alienation and assimilation was a Zionist one — emigration to Palestine. For the majority of the Jewish population the solution was found locally. Zionism played an important role in combating antisemitism, assimilation, alienation and isolation. Its history, roles within the Jewish community and the question of Aliyah are elaborated upon in the following sections.

THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Although far from the major population centres of North America, Prairie cities and towns were vibrant centres of Zionist activity. Zionism satisfied the needs of this Jewish population for nationalism, identification, and social interaction. Canadian Jewish historian Gerald Tulchinsky related to the growth of Zionism in smaller Jewish communities from the larger Canadian perspective:

The small-town Jew — for the most part — did not enjoy the luxuries of landsmanshaften, political clubs, and various forms of cultural expression that were readily available in large Jewish centres. His major forms of Jewish association were decided for him: the local synagogue, the B'nai B'rith lodge, and, for women, Hadassah and the synagogue Ladies' Auxiliary. For the youth, after 1917, there was usually a branch of Young Judaea. There were, of course,

minor variations, but this was the essential organizational structure of small-town Jewish life by the early 1920s.⁴⁰

Prior to World War I, Western Canada had a disproportionately lively amount of Zionist activity. The first Prairie Zionist group, the Winnipeg Zionist Society, was established in 1899.⁴¹ Its membership was relatively large in comparison to other Canadian Jewish communities and the percent of members relative to the total Jewish population exceeded the two other large Jewish communities, Montreal and Toronto, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2:
MEMBERSHIP IN CANADIAN ZIONIST ORGANIZATIONS IN 1899 AND 1900.

LOCATION	MEMBERS IN 1899	MEMBERS IN 1900	JEWISH		
			POPULATION (1901)	PERCENT IN 1899	PERCENT IN 1900
Montreal	340	450	6,941	19.60	25.92
Winnipeg	80	100	1,156	27.68	34.60
Toronto	50	80	3,090	6.48	10.36
Canada	512	828	16,717	12.24	19.80

Source: Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, pp. 308-309; Goldman, "History of Zionism in Canada," pp. 291.

In 1905 a second Zionist group, Ahavas Zion was founded in Brandon. In 1906, Zionist activity expanded with a second group in Winnipeg and the Jewish Agricultural Zionist Society at Wapella. By 1907 there were societies in Brandon, Calgary, Edmonton, Lipton, Wapella and four in Winnipeg. Zionist activity expanded to Regina in 1913.⁴² The years before World War I also saw the establishment of Labour Zionism and religious Zionism in Winnipeg. Around 1906, a Poalei Zion (Labour Zionist) group was founded in Winnipeg. The party foundered over the years, but by 1914 it had been reestablished.⁴³ In 1912 the religious Zionist organization, Mizrachi inaugurated a

branch in Winnipeg, the Shlome-Ammunah Society. In 1914, Mizrahi leader Rabbi Meir Berlin (Bar Ilan) visited Winnipeg and delivered a series of inspiring addresses, enhancing the organization's work.⁴⁴

Dr. John Shayne, a Toronto member of the Federation of Canadian Zionist Societies Council, toured Western Canada during the months of February, March and April 1914, visiting about 20 Jewish centers. He conducted extensive propaganda work and raised considerable sums for the Jewish National Fund. That year, five additional societies in the west were granted charters: in Estevan, two in Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg. In 1916 charters were granted to societies in Yorkton, Kamsack and Prince Albert. In 1917, a charter was granted to the Montefiore Zionists of Mulback, Alberta. Thus by 1917, strong foundations for the Zionist movement had been laid down in the Prairies, with societies in at least thirteen communities.

The Balfour Declaration, publicized on November 2, 1917, served as a catalyst for intensified Zionist activity in the region. Winnipeg lawyer and Zionist, Abraham Mark Shinbane explained that this British promise for a Jewish homeland in Palestine "came as a real bombshell. From that point on, everybody became a Zionist."⁴⁵

The executive secretary of the Zionist Organization of Canada, Leon Goldman, reported on November 27, 1919 on his return from a tour of Western Canada, a decided lack of organization there, the total registered Zionist membership being only 1,491 excluding Winnipeg. Goldman's criticism seems a bit harsh with an estimated membership rate of 25-30%.⁴⁶

The general impression one gains from contemporary sources was that almost every Prairie Jew was a member of some Zionist group. Harry Buckwold of Saskatoon, for example, when asked during an oral history interview if he was a member of a Zionist organization replied, "Oh yes, we belong to all these organizations."⁴⁷ This found expression through the integration of Zionist symbols and articles in prairie homes like the Jewish

National Fund Blue Box and even portraits of the father of modern Zionism, Theodor Herzl.

Unlike its American counterpart, Zionism appealed to a greater cross-section of Jewish society. Anti-Zionists and non-Zionists were less numerous and less vocal. G.A. Stolar in his 1929 history of Canadian Zionism explained,

In Canada, it is patent to everybody, be he Jew or a non-Jew, that the one dominating, alive, all-powerful bond uniting Canadian Jewry is the Zionist Organization of Canada. It has no rival, nor as far as one can foresee is it likely to meet with any serious competitor in the hearts of Canadian Jews. While here and there we may find, as in every country, a lukewarm Zionist or two, no Canadian Jew will have the audacity to proclaim publicly anti-Zionist sentiments, as in the case in most other countries. Such a thing as fear of being associated with the Jewish national movement can hardly be said to exist in Canada.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, there was opposition to Zionism in the Prairies. Following the Russian Revolution of 1905, a more radical Jewish element migrated to Western Canada. They were, in the main, socialists and adherents of Dr. Chaim Zhitlovsky and the anarchist Rudolph Rocker. Their presence was particularly felt in Winnipeg. A correlation can be drawn between the country of origin of the Jewish prairie settlers and the likelihood of anti-Zionist leanings. Polish Jews were more likely to be Yiddishists and Bundists, while Russian and Lithuanian Jews had a higher tendency to be affiliated with Zionism. Opposition to Zionism was strongest in Winnipeg and Calgary. Anti-Zionist sentiments were also associated with the individual personalities who set the tone for the communities as with the president of Medicine Hat Jewish community.⁴⁹

The 1920s saw the continued expansion of Zionist organizations and the blossoming of different Zionist societies during this and the following decade particularly in Winnipeg,—Hadassah Organization of Canada and its affiliated Junior Hadassah, Canadian Young Judaea, Mizrahi, Pioneer Women and Avukah.⁵⁰

Women's Zionist organizations existed in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Brandon, and Regina before the end of World War I. In 1920, these groups joined the Hadassah Organization of Canada. The same year, a Hadassah group was created in Calgary. Chapters or affiliated women's groups sprouted up in Vegreville, Kamsack, Yorkton, Estevan and Lipton in 1922 and Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Canora, Moose Jaw and Portage La Prairie in 1923. Chapters of Hadassah existed in at least sixteen communities. Not all these chapters were active throughout the period of the study.⁵¹

Focusing upon one organization, Young Judaea had an important role as a social organization and a body for informal education. In 1921, Philip Joseph reported that Young Judaea membership in Winnipeg was 500 as compared to 1,000 in Montreal and 320 in Toronto. This was a relatively large number, Winnipeg's Jewish population totaled 14,837 in 1921; Montreal's was 45,807 and Toronto's 34,770.⁵² By 1931, the movement had disseminated throughout the region. Outstanding was the high rate of affiliation. In certain communities almost all the Jewish youth were members of Young Judaea.

Table 3:
YOUNG JUDAEA MEMBERSHIP IN SASKATCHEWAN
IN 1931.

SETTLEMENT	CLUBS	MEMBERS	POPULATION	ESTIMATE OF YOUTH	PERCENT
Edenbridge	1	41		--	--
Estevan	1	21	88	20	104.69
Kamsack	1	19	114	26	73.13
Melville	2	43	135	31	139.75
Regina	2	47	1,010	230	20.42
Prince Albert	1	20	114	26	76.98
Saskatoon	4	160	691	157	101.98
Yorkton	2	27	101	23	117.29
Saskatchewan	14	378	5,116	1,166	32.42

Source: *Young Judaea Yearbook, 1931*; Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, pp. 308-320.

Table 4:
YOUNG JUDAEA MEMBERSHIP IN MANITOBA
IN 1931.

SETTLEMENT	CLUBS	MEMBERS	POPULATION	ESTIMATE OF YOUTH	PERCENT
Brandon	1	12	222	52	22.92
Dauphin	1	10	66	16	64.27
Winnipeg	9	184	17,660	4,164	4.42
Manitoba	11	206	19,341	4,561	4.52

Table 5:
YOUNG JUDAEA MEMBERSHIP IN ALBERTA IN 1931.

SETTLEMENT	CLUBS	MEMBERS	POPULATION	ESTIMATE OF YOUTH	PERCENT
Calgary	3	75	1,622	359	20.88
Edmonton	3	92	1,057	234	39.31
Vegreville	2	35	82	18	192.84
Alberta	8	202	3,722	824	24.51

Table 6:
YOUNG JUDAEA MEMBERSHIP IN CANADA IN 1931.

	CLUBS	MEMBERS	POPULATION	ESTIMATE OF YOUTH	PERCENT
Prairie Provinces	33	786	28,179	5,635	13.95
Rest of Canada	113	1,661	128,547	25,709	6.46
Canada	146	2,447	156,726	31,345	7.81

But in Winnipeg, Young Judaea membership had declined drastically. Other Zionist organizations like Hashomer Hatzair had sprouted in the city and formal Jewish education played an important role supplanting the need for Young Judaea. This appears to further the argument that isolation and alienation spawned Zionist activity. In Winnipeg, these sensations were not as acute, thus Zionism had a lesser role in day to day life. The majority of youth in the smaller communities of Saskatoon, Dauphin, Edenbridge, Estevan, Kamsack, Melville, Prince Albert, Vegreville, and Yorkton were members of Young Judaea.

The majority of the Jews of the Prairies embraced Zionism during the interwar years. Its functions are described in the following sections.

ZIONISM AS PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY

Aron Horowitz took a critical look at Zionist activities in the Prairies. Born in Palestine, he settled with his parents in Winnipeg in 1926. His father served as Chief Rabbi of Winnipeg and Western Canada. Remaining for a short period in the city, Aron Horowitz returned in 1939 when he accepted an offer to serve as Western Executive Director of the Zionist Organization of Canada. He paraphrased a well-known definition of a Zionist applying it to Canadian and American Zionists: "A Canadian Zionist is a person who obtains a donation from a second person to send a non-Canadian or non-American Jew to Palestine."⁵³ His criticism was based on his world-view of Zionism, which integrated education as one of its basic tenets. Nonetheless, fund raising for Zionist causes served as an integral part of community life and the sense of community with Jews throughout the world aiding in the establishment of an old-new homeland.

Some activities focused on assisting the Jewish population in Palestine or helping their Jewish brethren from Eastern Europe in settling in Palestine. World War I was a period of

suffering for Palestine's Jews. The Calgary Herald painted a bleak picture of their plight:

The Turkish authorities are virtually running amuck [sic] among the Jews in the Holy Land. The material damage inflicted upon the Jewish people is, however, as nothing when compared with the unspeakably infamous threat that has been levelled against them. In plain unvarnished language there is hanging over them the prospect of such a massacre as only Turks are capable of, and of which the civilized world will understand the measure when they are told by the Turks themselves that it is to be of the Armenian sort. This, in a word, means the extermination of the Jewish people in Palestine, the pioneers of Jewry, whose lives have been inspired by a noble hope, who have been infused with the splendid aspiration of building up a new Israel nation in Israel's ancient land.⁵⁴

Trepidation for the fate of the Jews in Palestine inspired many Jews to open their wallets and contribute to Zionist charities and other organizations that assisted Palestinian Jews. This also roused over one hundred Jews to enlist in the Jewish Legion. The role of Zionism in this context was for the benefit of Jews in Palestine and would bring about a solution to the "Jewish Question". This form of Zionism served to lessen the Jews' sense of alienation. It became an avenue through which Prairie Jews could experience a sense of unity with their Jewish brethren nationally and internationally. The visits of Zionist personalities did not always draw large sums. Sometimes, the cost of the visit was barely defrayed by the donations. This form of philanthropy gave donors a sense that they were part of something greater.

The meaning of these visits can be comprehended through Lizzie Brownstone's account of World Zionist Organization President Chaim Weizmann's 1921 visit to Winnipeg. Weizmann was promoting the Keren Hayesod (Palestine Restoration Fund) in North America. The charisma of

the speaker and the excitement of the mass meeting created fervor in the audience. Lizzie and Dave Brownstone were at this appeal for financial assistance for the settlement of Jews in Palestine. They donated \$1,000, their total life savings. Lizzie narrated her conversation “Dave, you know how they’re in such terrible condition up there [in Palestine]. Can we give the thousand dollars to them? We are young and we have a running business [...] We can make other money.”⁵⁵

Among the organizations connected to work in Palestine receiving funding or investment from Prairie Jews were: the Bezalel Art School in Jerusalem, Jewish National Fund, Keren Hayesod, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jewish Colonial Trust, United Palestine Appeal, The Workers’ Bank (Bank HaPoalim), Bank for Agriculture and Industry Bnei Brak Cooperative Society, Ltd., Hassneh Eretz Israel Development Corporation and Nachson, to name a few. Local organizations engaged in work in Palestine were: the Hadassah Organization of Canada which funded the Tuberculous Hospital, the Motza Convalescent Home, Youth Aliya, School for Domestic and Agricultural Science for Girls at Nahalal; Red Magen David; Pioneer Women’s Organization, supporting training farms, vocational schools, convalescent centres for women and children, kindergartens and nurseries.

The proliferation of these organizations also had a negative effect on philanthropic activities. Certain communities were continually visited by various fundraisers, which resulted in a sense of exploitation. Furthermore, the performance of some organizations or their representatives caused suspicion among the potential donors. Horowitz, provided an example of his fund raising visit on behalf of the United Palestine Appeal to a Jewish community, thirty families strong in the late 1930s which is best summarized by the title of the section in his memoirs, “How do we know you too are not a crook?”⁵⁶

Despite certain irregularities, the Prairies were a fertile environment for philanthropic activities on behalf of Zionism. It is difficult to estimate the total amount of money donated by

Jews to charities in Palestine. Likewise, it is difficult to reach an estimate for the proportion of the population that contributed. From one source it was apparent that Prairie communities had a strong disposition to contribute to Zionist charities. There were 32 inscriptions by Canadians in the second Jewish National Fund Golden Book, of which 26 were paid for by Jews from the Prairies.⁵⁷ Another piece of information provides additional insight — in 1927, 281 out of 350 Jewish homes in Calgary were supplied with Jewish National Fund collection boxes.⁵⁸ These “Pushkes” were part of a central family ritual that found its way into Zionist and non-Zionist homes throughout the Prairies. One important element was the heightened sense of attachment to other Jews and to Palestine, the National Home in the making. It would appear that the Canadian campaign by the Jewish National Fund in 1927 for the purchase of Emek Hefer also served to concretize the connection to Palestine, it was a tangible link between two frontier environments.⁵⁹ Prairie Jews were actively building Palestine, a place to which some considered migrating.

ZIONISM AS A SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Another role taken on by Zionist organizations was that of uniting the Jewish population. It drew Jews of all walks of life together. This was particularly important when the Jewish community in general was undergoing changes with regard to Jewish practice and belief. Horowitz expressed the evolution:

The general atmosphere of Yidishkeit [sic] was, however, markedly different when I arrived there in March 1939 from what it had been in 1926. There was already a growing generation of native Canadians who had shed many of the manners of life and customs of their East-European forebears [...] The synagogues were not as fully packed as they had been in 1926, and many of the young were giving expression in various forms to a revolt against old traditions.⁶⁰

Particularly in dispersed communities, spread out in rural settlements and small towns, a Zionist event — meeting, lecture, or fundraiser — served to bring people together. In smaller centers such as Yorkton and Kamsack efforts were made to draw Jews to their meetings from places within a radius of around 100 miles (160 kilometers). Jews living at even greater distances attended events in the larger cities.⁶¹ Beginning in the late 1920s, a Hadassah chapter brought women together from the small Alberta Jewish communities of Ponoka, Camrose, Wetaskiwin, Lacombe and Red Deer once a month, alternating meeting at different homes.⁶²

Prairie Jewish historian Harry Gutkin explained the meaning of certain events:

Balfour Day was marked for several years in Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, and other centres by a grand public parade. Prince Albert held a Mandate picnic in 1922 and Regina welcomed a visiting Chaim Weizmann with a public reception and still another parade. All in all, Zionist activities, both serious and light-hearted, were woven into the fabric of Jewish life.⁶³

Often such gatherings replaced religious holidays as the uniting event for the Jewish community. In certain instances, the Zionist and the religious events were combined. For example, in 1934, the Calgary branch of the Pioneer Women held a Chanukah Party.

In keeping with the festivities of the occasion, the evening was spent in singing and dancing while Rabbi S. Smolensky performed the ceremony of lighting the Chanukah candles, and explained the significance of the holiday. Mrs. M. Freidman greeted the guests in a brief talk and spoke of the important contribution being made by Calgary women, and by women united outside Palestine for the purpose of helping the women pioneers in the Holy Land.⁶⁴

An important part of the expansion of Zionist activity was the visiting lecturer. Various international, American and Palestinian

Zionist leaders visited the Prairies. Their efforts were mainly concentrated on fund raising but also served to inspire certain individuals to consider the possibility of immigrating to Palestine or actually to stimulate migration. Among the Zionist leaders to visit the region were: Bella Pevsner in 1911–1912; Nahum Sokolov, Joseph Barondess, Dr. Benzion Mossinsohn and Shmaryahu Levin, in 1916–1917; Menachem Sheinkin in 1917; Dr. Nahman Syrkin in 1918; Chaim Arlosoroff in 1928; Israel Merminsky (Merom) for the Histadrut in 1929; Yaakov Zerubavel of Poalei Zion Left in 1930; Leib Yaffe for the Keren Hayesod in 1933; Golda Meir in 1935 (inspiring the founding of the Pioneer Women's Organization in Calgary); Yehudit Simhonit of the Working Women's council of the Federation of Jewish Labour in Palestine in 1939.⁶⁵ These personalities created a genuine bond between Prairie Jews and their brethren in Palestine. This inspired affiliation with Zionist organizations but the social connection weighed heavily in strengthening the role of Zionist organizations.

ZIONISM AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

In Western Canadian cities, the percent of Jewish school children receiving some form of Jewish education was estimated in the late 1930s at ranging from 60 to 90 percent. This was quite high in comparison to other urban centers in North America (Montreal, 47 percent; Toronto, 40 percent; Philadelphia, 35 percent; New York, 23 percent). In the small cities of Western Canada, the percentage of children receiving private Hebrew lessons was negligible. This was the result of a strongly developed community spirit in Western Canadian cities that encouraged attendance in the communities' schools. Jewish schools existed in the cities of Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, and Edmonton. Schools were also founded in certain rural settlements with Jewish concentrations, but

most schools had closed down by the 1920s and 1930s with the decline of these communities.⁶⁶

Zionist youth movements served as instruments for the propagation of Jewish education, but their scope and nature varied between urban and rural centers. In the rural environment, with the decline of Jewish educational institutions, Zionist youth movements provided an informal educational framework for Judaism and Zionism. A strong positive correlation exists between percentage of membership in Zionist youth groups and the rural nature of the community and the limited number of Jewish educational institutions [Tables 3–6]. In the urban environment, Zionists founded certain schools and thus their curriculum had a Zionist orientation. Zionist youth movements in the cities either supplemented the formal education system or were encouraged by the schools themselves. Schools with other orientations saw no need for the services of Zionist youth groups and were at times antagonistic.

With the founding of the first Zionist society in Winnipeg, a platform of educational propaganda was adopted to promote Zionism. Winnipeg's Young Zionists Athletic Club, a group organized in 1903, had among its aims the cultivation of the love of Zion in young Jews. This could be attained through education with regular lectures organized.⁶⁷ The platforms of many Zionist groups included education. For example, in 1927 the Tel-Chai chapter of Junior Hadassah was organized in Regina. Its goal was fundraising for childcare in Palestine. A second goal was education, which focused upon acquainting its membership with life in Palestine.⁶⁸ The ideology of Young Judaea included education as an important part of its activities. At weekly meetings activities included lectures and discussions on Jewish history, current events and topics related to Zionism. The Saskatoon Young Judaea educational program for 1931 included addresses on various topics: "The Life of [Joseph] Trumpeldor"; "Lord [Arthur James] Balfour"; "The Hebrew University [of Jerusalem]"; "Tel Aviv"; and "Ten Years of Zionism in Palestine."⁶⁹ Other club activities were "readings

from Jewish literature, the singing of national and traditional melodies, the celebration of Jewish festivals, dramatic presentations and debates, as well as athletic events.” The movement, as Gerald Tulchinsky explained, “had the kind of broad appeal with which most Jewish youth could identify, and which gave their parents little concern that Zionist enthusiasm would be encouraged to develop beyond a certain point.”⁷⁰ This point was aliyah, which Young Judaea did not officially encourage.

More aliyah oriented youth groups, Hashomer Hatzair and Habonim, which were active in the prairies from the 1930s onward, had ideologies that placed greater emphasis on education. The Hashomer Hatzair movement and the Hechalutz organization in North America viewed hachshara chevratit (social and ideological training) as an integral part of the individual’s development, as part of the larger community, and as part of the preparatory process toward migration.⁷¹

Informal Zionist educational activities had declined in scope by the late 1930s. At that time, Horowitz called for the incorporation of Zionism in the curriculum of Jewish schools. He viewed Zionism and Jewish education as organically related. One of the first tasks of Zionism was to ensure the education of Jewish youth and to support formal Jewish education.⁷²

ZIONISM AND ALIYAH FROM THE PRAIRIES

The fulfillment of Zionism through aliyah drew limited numbers. For the majority of Prairie Jews, there was a realistic understanding that they would not immigrate to Palestine. The focus of their lives was earning a livelihood and providing for the needs of dependants. Despite the difficulties of life in general and of being a Jew in the Prairies in particular, they believed that the Prairies were their home.

The message relayed by most of the Zionist leadership was that there was no particular need to immigrate to Palestine. Bella Pevsner, a Russian Zionist who later resided in America,

visited the Prairies in the winter of 1911-1912. She represented the Bezalel Art School. Her lectures outlined the work of the school and the importance of supporting and facilitating the settlement of Russian Jews in Palestine. Her Calgary lecture emphasized that Zionists “must educate their self respect and promote and disseminate the Jewish national idea.” She attempted to correct the misconception that “Zionists wanted all Jews to go back to Palestine.”⁷³

The fifteenth Canadian Zionist Federation convention took place in Winnipeg on July 1-3, 1917 with guests of honour Dr. Benzion Mossinson, Dr. Nahum Syrkin, and Menahem Sheinkin. F.M. Sures of Winnipeg and Sheinkin moved a resolution to organize land purchasing groups and train pioneers to go to Palestine. At the banquet in honor of Sheinkin, Sures urged for the organization of an aliyah committee to encourage and inform those who would settle in Eretz Israel after the war.⁷⁴

Toward actual migration, a number of societies or groups were organized: the Winnipeg Achouza society, 1912; Halkar, 1918; Gan HaSharon Group, 1928. Other groups included the possibility of immigration within their constitutions. The American Zion Commonwealth, a land purchasing and development organization, founded in New York in 1914, sold land in Eretz Israel. Some Prairie Jews purchased land through this organization. The Jewish Legion, in which approximately 100 Prairie Jews enlisted, offered the possibility of demobilization in Palestine. Youth groups, among them Young Judaea and Hashomer Hatzair, fostered the idea of immigration to Palestine. In other instances, individuals or small groups acted without a large organizational framework.⁷⁵

The reasons for immigration to Palestine are varied. In the Prairies, it was an example of “free migration” with an ideological undertone, Zionism, directing it toward Eretz Israel. Reasons pulling Prairie Jews toward Palestine included: religious fulfillment, economic opportunity, realization of one’s Jewishness, return to the soil, pioneering (*halutzit*) and

personal satisfaction. Push factors consisted of antisemitism, assimilation, isolation and alienation.

Numerically, there were at least 100 Jews who left the Prairies for Palestine. It was a per capita rate of approximately 5.0 as compared to Canada 1.0 or the United States 1.05. Over 100 families were identified which showed some action demonstrating serious intentions: membership in a settlement society, purchasing land in Palestine, applying for visas or actually living there.

CONCLUSION

Isolation and alienation were factors in the adaptation of Zionism to the needs of the Jewish population of the Prairies. A connection has been drawn to the unique geographic conditions. In other words, organization of society was transformed through organization of space. As shown by researchers Katz and Lehr, the spatial distribution of early Jewish farmers in the Prairies affected the organization of religious and social services. The lack of a critical population mass led to the decline and dispersal of the population due to the inability to sustain Jewish life.⁷⁶ Zionism, particularly after World War I, took on a dynamic position in an attempt to address the problems of Jewishness and nationalism in the Prairies.

Prevention of assimilation was another issue with which Zionism in the prairies contended. Gerald Tulchinsky related to the role of the mainstream Zionist youth organization, Young Judaea on a national level. His comments are even more suitable for the prairies.

But there was another goal in Young Judaea, that of saving virtually an entire generation from assimilation. Jewish youth, according to this view, was adrift in North America because traditional East European mechanisms of guidance and control — parents, schools, and

synagogues — were no longer able to instill traditional values and culture in the younger generation.⁷⁷

Young Judaea did serve this special role in the survival of Jewish culture in the prairies. Its informal nature was appropriate for the spatial distribution of Jews in the region.

This study has detailed the growth of Zionism in the Prairies in the period between the two world wars and its various roles. The term “Palestinianism,” coined by Yonathan Shapiro in his discussion of American Zionist leadership, can be applied to Zionism in the Prairies. Shapiro explained that this was a form of compromise among the ideologies of different Zionist groups together with the non-Zionists. The focus of activity was not a “Political Zionism” that demanded action toward gaining international support for a Jewish state in the territory of Palestine. Instead, Palestinianism focused on practical activities for the settlement and development of Palestine. For many Zionist groups including those in the Prairies, this meant imbuing their membership with knowledge and love for the Land of Israel. Financial support of the national endeavor was another important element. Finally, within these surroundings, there was the added element of the social bond created among those who spent time together, educating themselves and striving to collect funds to match the needs of Palestine’s growing Jewish population.⁷⁸

Palestinianism crossed sectarian and ideological lines by creating a simple common denominator with which a large sector of the Jewish population could identify, and that did not conflict with their sense of loyalty to the society in which they would continue to reside. It was not uncommon to find exaggerated claims that “Everyone was a Zionist.” Though not all Prairie Jews were Zionists, Zionism nonetheless played an important role in the development of Jewish society in this region.

ENDNOTES

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²The per capita rate of Jewish immigration to Palestine from various countries for the years 1919–1934 was: Greece 49.30, Lithuania 37.30, Poland 26.30, Germany 25.40, Turkey 23.90, Iraq 16.35, Latvia 16.20, Rumania 10.15, Russia 10.10, Austria 8.00, Czechoslovakia 4.45, England 2.10, Holland 2.05, France 1.70, Hungary 1.70, the United States 1.05, Canada 1.00, Morocco 0.80, Argentina 0.75. These calculations are based on figures in David Gurevich, “Fifteen Years of Aliyah,” in: *Aliyah 2*, Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Jerusalem 1935, Tables 1 and 10, pp. I, XV (Hebrew).

³Michael Brown, “The Americanization of Canadian Zionism, 1917–1982,” Geoffrey Wigoder (ed.) *Contemporary Jewry—Studies in Honor of Moshe Davis*, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 1984, 57.

⁴Henry L. Feingold, *A Time for Searching, Entering the Mainstream, 1920–1945*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1992, 58–59.

⁵Abraham Arnold, “New Jerusalem on the Prairies: Welcoming the Jews,” Benjamin G. Smillie (ed.), *Visions of The New Jerusalem, Religious Settlement on the Prairies*, Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983, pp. 100–101; Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, *Jewish Life and Times*, VI (June 1993), 38–41. Harry Gutkin, *Journey into Our Heritage: The Story of the Jewish People in the Canadian West*, Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd., Toronto 1980, 156–160, 163–166. Jewish schools were found in the rural settlements of Camper, the Hirsch Colony, Lipton, West Kildonan, Bender Hamlet, and Weyburn.

⁶Irving Abella, “Anti-Semitism in Canada in the Interwar Years,” Moses Rischin (ed.), *The Jews in North America*, Wayne State University

Press, Detroit 1987, 235–46. Abella referred only once to the Prairie provinces; most references were to Montreal and Toronto.

⁷Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews, A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada*, Bureau of Social and Economic Research, Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal 1939, 300–01. Rosenberg was the chairman of the Bureau of Social and Economic Research, Western Division Canadian Jewish Congress and Western Manager of the Jewish Colonization Association of Canada in 1939. A lack of anti-semitism in the dominantly German community of Langenburg was described in an interview with Morris Sideman of Langenburg, Saskatchewan, by D. Hande, 12 March 1976, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina and Saskatoon, (henceforth: SAB), 18.

⁸This is based on excerpts of Alias Sanders, “History of Rumsey,” quoted in Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta, *Shorashim – Roots, A Summary of the History of the Jewish Community in Calgary and Southern Alberta, 1888–1945*, Calgary 1991. For other examples see: Michael Usiskin, *Uncle Mike's Edenbridge, Memoirs of a Jewish Farmer* (translated from Yiddish by Marcia Usiskin Basman), Peguis Publishers Ltd., Winnipeg 1983, 82–83, 97–98.

⁹*Calgary Herald* (24 March 1914) quoted in *Shorashim*, 71; Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 301.

¹⁰Molly Lyons Bar-David, *My Promised Land*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York 1953, 5. For information on Jewish freemasons in Canada see: Arthur Daniel Hart (ed.), *The Jew in Canada, A Complete Record of Canadian Jewry from the Days of the French Regime to the Present Time*, Jewish Publications Limited, Toronto and Montreal 1932, 438–41.

¹¹*Brandon Daily Sun* (18 July 1916), 4.

¹²Abella, “Anti-Semitism in Canada,” 237; See: Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 303–05.

¹³Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf, Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties*, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, Toronto 1978, 61–62.

¹⁴M.B. Steine, Montreal, to Jacob M. Goldberg, Saskatoon, 24 October 1930, SAB, MG 26.2 file 1, part 1.

¹⁵*New Palestine* (10 July 1925), 45.

¹⁶Gutkin, *Journey into Our Heritage*, 174.

¹⁷The first two headlines were in (*Regina*) *Morning Leader* (10 August 1908), 3, the third was in *Patriot de L'ouest* (17 October 1912), 6.

¹⁸Lyons, *My Promised Land*, 3–31; Tisdale had a Jewish population of 10 in 1931. See: Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 312; See also: Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf*, 61–84.

¹⁹Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, *Jewish Life and Times*, VI (June 1993), 35. Additional incidents of antisemitism are documented, see: pp. 83–87. Holland and Brookdale were not listed in Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*.

²⁰*Jewish Life and Times*, 35.

²¹“Letter to the Editor,” *Brandon Daily Sun* (21 October 1915), 4. A strong response was issued by Victor Cohen for the Congress Committee of the Brandon Hebrew Citizens denying all allegations and emphasizing their loyalty to Great Britain. Letter to the Editor, *Brandon Daily Sun* (23 October 1915), 4; Victor Cohen was leader of the local Zionist organization.

²²Lyons, *My Promised Land*, 297.

²³*Jewish Life and Times*, 32–33.

²⁴Fredelle Bruser Maynard, *Raisins and Almonds*, PaperJacks, Don Mills, Ontario 1973, 30.

²⁵*Shorashim*, 58.

²⁶Lyons, *My Promised Land*, 18, 21.

²⁷Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 100–7, 348. The total number of marriages involving Jews was 16,237 of which 823 were mixed; much lower figures were quoted in Harry Allam, Chief Field Supervisor of the Calgary Office of the Soldier Settlement Board, “General Report of the Jewish Colonies,” to Director of the Soldier Settlement Board, Ottawa, March 24, 1937 in Maureen Fox, “Jewish Agricultural Colonies in Saskatchewan with Special Reference to the Colonies of Sonnenfeld and Edenbridge”, M.A. thesis, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, June 1979, appendix, n.p.. Allam wrote: “I was told that there was very little intermarrying between Jews and Gentiles. It is estimated that about 1% of Jewish boys marry Gentile girls, and about 2% of Jewish girls marry Gentile boys.”

²⁸Fox, “Jewish Agricultural Colonies in Saskatchewan,” 212.

²⁹Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, *Jewish Life and Times*, VI (June 1993), 67–68.

³⁰Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 112–116, 351.

³¹*Canadian Western Jewish Times* (April 1914), 3, Glenbow-Alberta Institute Archives, Calgary (henceforth: GAIA), David Spindel Miscellaneous Papers, M4744. The Jewish population of Calgary in 1911 was 604. Haim Avni, "Canada, Argentina and the Jews until World War II: The Impact of Immigration and Industrialization Policies on the Formation of Two Diasporas," *Occasional Paper*, 18, The Halbert Centre for Canadian Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 1996, 7.

³²Usiskin, *Uncle Mike's Edenbridge*, 142.

³³Brenton M. Barr and John C. Lehr, "The Western Interior: The Transformation of a Hinterland Region," L.D. McCann (ed.), *Heartland and Hinterland, A Geography of Canada*, Prentice-Hall Canada, Scarborough 1987, 294.

³⁴Interview with Morris Sideman of Langenburg, Saskatchewan, by D. Hande, 12 March 1976, SAB, 18.

³⁵Arthur A. Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba, A Social History*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1961, 56.

³⁶*Shorashim*, 57–58; Fox, "Jewish Agricultural Colonies in Saskatchewan," 145, 174, 181, 190, 208, 212; Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 312 lists 13 Jews in Rumsey in 1921 and 10 in 1931. These figures relate to the town of Rumsey and not the surrounding rural area. Rosenberg's sections on "Jews in Agriculture" and "Jewish Farm Statistics" 217–43 does not detail the population of individual settlements.

³⁷Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, 58–59. For details about the Jewish Orphanage, see: pp. 136–38 and Hart, *The Jew in Canada*, 227–31.

³⁸Barr and Lehr, "The Western Interior," 310–12; Fox, "Jewish Agricultural Colonies in Saskatchewan," 156, 160.

³⁹L. Keel, Lethbridge, Alberta, to the Mayor of Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv, 21 July 1925, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipal Historical Archives, RG 3, file 150.

⁴⁰Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root, The Origins of the Jewish Community*, Brandeis University Press, Hanover and London 1993, 160.

⁴¹Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, 154–57.

⁴²Leon Goldman, "History of Zionism in Canada," in Hart, *The Jew in Canada*, 293–99.

⁴³Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, 158–59; *Jewish Life and Times*, 76. Samuel Raburin described the founding of Poalei Zion in Winnipeg. He had

been a member of this organization in Eastern Europe, and played an important role in transplanting Poalei Zion to the prairies.

⁴⁴Chiel, *The Jews of Manitoba*, 159.

⁴⁵*Jewish Life and Times*, 77.

⁴⁶Goldman, "History of Zionism in Canada," 305. The Jewish population of the Prairie provinces and British Columbia, less Greater Winnipeg for 1921 totaled 12,150. 12.27% of this figure paid their Shekel membership fee. This if multiplied by a factor of two or two and a half, accounting for dependents, would place the affiliation rate at 25-30%. No information has been found detailing average family size for 1921, but figures for 1931 place the average Jewish Prairie family size at 4.42. Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 346.

⁴⁷Interview with Harry Buckwold, Saskatoon, conducted by A.M. Nicholson, 12, 14, 17–20 January 1966, SAB.

⁴⁸G.A. Stolar, "The Growth of Canadian Zionism," Meyer W. Weisgal (ed.), *Theodor Herzl, A Memorial*, s.n., New York 1929, 228.

⁴⁹Aron Horowitz, *Striking Roots, Reflections on Five Decades of Jewish Life*, Mosaic Press, Oakville, Ontario, 1979, 60–61, 65. *Jewish Life and Times*, 74–77.

⁵⁰Branches of some of these organizations existed before the establishment of the national organizations in Canada. Some were affiliated with American national organizations. Canadian national organizations and the year of their founding were: Hadassah Organization of Canada (1917) Mizrahi Organization of Canada (1939) Canadian Young Judaea (1917). American national organizations and the year of their founding were: Hashomer Hatzair Organization (1923), Labor Zionist Organization of America—Poalei Zion (1905), Pioneer Women's Organization (1925). Sophie A. Udin (ed.) *The Palestine Yearbook, 5707*, 2, Zionist Organization of America, New York 1946, 545–72.

⁵¹Hart, *The Jew in Canada*, 277–87.

⁵²Goldman, "History of Zionism in Canada," 308; Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 34. Approximately 16.9 percent of Winnipeg's Jewish youth were members of Young Judaea. Figures were 10.9 percent and 4.6 percent for Montreal and Toronto respectively.

⁵³Horowitz, *Striking Roots*, 51.

⁵⁴"Jewish Mass Meeting Takes Place Tonight," *Calgary Daily* (12 June 1917), 9.

⁵⁵*Jewish Life and Times*, 77–8.

⁵⁶Horowitz, *Striking Roots*, 54–5. A. Schnitka, Calgary, to Meir Dizengoff, Tel Aviv, 10 December 1925, Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipal Archives, RG 3, file 150. Schnitka inquired into the credentials of Rabbi Margolis who was collecting money for the Tochkimeni Building Fund. “Kindly advise me as whether he was officially authorized to do so with the consent of the Zionist Organization, and whether he is working on a percentage or salary and whether it was decided to send him to Canada.”

⁵⁷*Eretz Israel, Jubilee Volume of the Jewish National Fund*. New York: Jewish National Fund for America, 1932, pp. 172–198. The spatial distribution of contributors in the Prairies was: Brandon 9, Winnipeg 8, Saskatoon 5, Edmonton 2, Calgary 1 and Bosthern, Saskatchewan 1.

⁵⁸*Jewish Post* (December 2, 1927) 12.

⁵⁹Joseph B. Glass, “American and Canadian Jews in Eretz Israel: Immigration, Settlement and Initiatives for the Development of the Landscape during the beginning of British Rule (1917–1932),” Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 1995, 209–14 (Hebrew).

⁶⁰Horowitz, *Striking Roots*, 50. For a discussion of the decline in religious practice in Manitoba, see: Chiel, *The Jew in Manitoba*, 88.

⁶¹Horowitz, *Striking Roots*, 97–8.

⁶²Interview with Myra Paperny, Calgary, 12 September 1993. The Jewish population of these towns in 1931 was Ponoka, 10; Camrose, 7; Lacombe, 5; Red Deer, 2; and Wetaskiwin, 2. Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 312–17. All these settlements, with the exception of Camrose, are on the Calgary-Edmonton road. The distance between the southernmost settlement, Red Deer, and Calgary was over 120 kilometers, and the distance between Wetaskiwin, the northernmost, and Edmonton was over 70 kilometers. The distance between the two furthest of these five settlements, Camrose and Red Deer, was approximately 120 kilometers.

⁶³Gutkin, *Journey into Our Heritage*, 154. See also photographs of various events 153–55; Horowitz, *Striking Roots*, 96–8.

⁶⁴“Women’s Palestine Organization Gives Gay Chanukah Party,” *Calgary Herald* (5 December 1934), 17. There is a certain irony in a women’s group which had a socialist and anti-religious orientation conducting religious services. However, this group, like many Pioneer Women’s groups in small Jewish communities was made up of bourgeois women who

chose a charity which was attractive to them, but retained their traditional religious leanings. *The Plough Woman*, which was translated into English and published in the United States in 1932, was an expression of the keen interest in the pioneering women in Palestine. Rachel Katznelson Shazar (Rubashow), *The Plough Woman, Memoirs of the Pioneer Woman of Palestine*, (translated by Maurice Samuel) Herzl Press 1975.

⁶⁵*Morning Albertan* (18 October 1918); *Calgary Herald* (25 July 1917), 7; (2 May 1939), 13; *Calgary Daily Herald* (20 March 1929); *Shorashim*, 6; Esther Waterman, Secretary, Federation of Young Judaea of Canada, Montreal, to Abraham Shumiatcher, Calgary Young Judaea, Calgary, 9 June 1933; Abraham Shumiatcher, Calgary, to William Engle, Tel Aviv, 12 April 1934, GAIA, M1107, file 91.

⁶⁶Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 274–76; For information about Jewish schools see: Horowitz, *Striking Roots*, 55–68; Hart, *The Jew in Canada*, 175–81; Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, 95–107.

⁶⁷Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, 155.

⁶⁸*Shorashim*, 41.

⁶⁹Federation of Young Judaea of Canada, *Year Book of Young Judaea, 1931*, Montreal, n.d., 46, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg (henceforth: PAM, MG 2, J6).

⁷⁰Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 199.

⁷¹Bulletin No. 2, Hashomer Hatzair Organization of North America, New York, November 1931, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (henceforth: CZA), KKL5/4931; “Resolutions Adopted by the Convention of American Hehalutz,” 31 December 1931, *Pioneers from America, 75 Years of Hechalutz, 1905–1980*, Bogrei Hechalutz America, Tel Aviv 1981, 40–41.

⁷²Horowitz, *Striking Roots*, 63–73, 373–79.

⁷³Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, 157; “Zionist Lecturer Addresses Calgary Hebrews, Seeking Aid,” *Morning Albertan* (1 January 1912), 4; Nurit Shilo-Cohen (ed.), *Bezalel, 1906–1929*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem 1983, 317.

⁷⁴Goldman, “History of Zionism in Canada,” 302; *Canadian Israelite Press* (6 July 1917), 1; Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, 160.

⁷⁵Glass, “American and Canadian Jews in Eretz Israel,” 218–24. Joseph B. Glass, “The Settlement of Prairie Jews in Palestine, 1917–1939,”

International Journal for Canadian Studies 16 (Fall 1997): 215–44; Yossi Katz, “The Plans and Efforts of the Jews of Winnipeg to Purchase Land and to Establish an Agricultural Settlement in Palestine before World War One,” *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, 5:1 (Spring 1981), 1–16; Lyons, *My Promised Land*, 39–49; List of American Zion Commonwealth purchasers, CZA L65/436.

⁷⁶Yossi Katz and John C. Lehr, “Jewish and Mormon Agricultural Settlement in Western Canada: A Comparative Analysis,” *Canadian Geographer*, 35:2 (1991), 128–142; Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 169.

⁷⁷Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, p. 202.

⁷⁸Yonathan Shapiro, *Leadership of the American Zionist Organization 1897–1930*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1971,

⁷⁹Only adult males voted in the election, thus this figure has been multiplied by a factor of four in order to reflect the Zionist affiliation of the whole population.

⁸⁰According to Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, 154, the Winnipeg Zionist Society had 75 members.

⁸¹Young Judaea members ranged in age from 8–18. The estimate of youth is based on provincial figures in Rosenberg, 46. Included are age groups 10–14 and 15–19. The provincial figures have been used for estimating all settlements listed in the provincial tables.

**Translated from the Yiddish and Edited by
Mervin Butovsky and Ode Garfinkle**

**IN DEFENCE OF YIDDISHKEIT: THE JOURNALS
OF YAACOV ZIPPER, A SELECTION: 1950-1972**

In memory of Max Motti Garfinkle

In late June 1950, after a hiatus of twenty-five years,¹ Yaacov Zipper, noted Montreal Yiddish writer and principal of the Jewish Peretz Schools for over forty years, resumed the practice of keeping a journal. From that date, with the exception of a three-year lapse in the mid-50s, he continued to write down his private thoughts for more than three decades, until 1982, some six-months before his death. The language of his notes was Yiddish, penned in a neat, minute, cursive handwriting, entered in small lined student notebooks measuring 7"x8" and consisting of 28 pages each. Some 31 of such notebooks and five larger ones measuring 8"x11" were found among his papers. In total, the journals consist of approximately 1214 pages of Yiddish manuscript. The project of translating and editing these journals was undertaken some years ago. We have now completed a first draft and are engaged in revising the 839 page typescript in preparation for eventual publication.

The existence of the journals only came to light following Zipper's death. He had never mentioned them to his family during his lifetime, nor did his will make any reference to them. This would suggest that the journals were intended as a private account of his inner life, a narrative, which for reasons we can