

THE IMAGE OF ERETZ ISRAEL

Zionism and the Representation of Diasporic Identity

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ABSTRACT

This paper probes the influence of visual imagery in the emerging Zionist movement of the late nineteenth century and its unprecedented, large-scale fundraising campaigns. Recognizing the critical relationship between the Jewish population residing within Eretz Israel and the Diaspora abroad, key Zionist institutions and its members focused their efforts on the American Jewish community. Turning to the production of propagandistic artifacts featuring a distinct visual vocabulary, these organizations establish the image as integral to the eventual formation of Israel as both an independent state as well as the foundation for an international Jewish nation and Diasporic community.

Introduction

“The poor of the land of Israel come first.” This adage, originating in the text of the Hebrew Bible (Deuteronomy 15:7), is an established religious precept in the Jewish community dating as far back as Early Modern Europe. Evolving from this ubiquitous sentiment, *Halukkah*, defined as the transfer of funds from the Diaspora to Jews living in Eretz Israel, became a significant source of monetary support for the earliest settlers in Palestine, beginning in the 17th century. In addition to more traditional fundraising approaches, such as the production of pamphlets and religious appeals, the Jewish population of Palestine also engaged in the creation of visually enhanced materials for the purpose of direct fundraising sale and propaganda. Book, flyers, *Tzedakah* (charity) boxes and Challah covers were produced featuring images of Israel’s past and present.¹ A visual vocabulary was invented in which trees, bricks and other commonplace items took on new and symbolically charged meanings intended to prime the Diasporic Jew’s emotional connection to her historical homeland. These images, reminders of the sacrifices of those living in Israel and protecting the Holy Land, were integral in the collection of contributions from the Diaspora.

Following the First Zionist Congress of Basel in 1897, much of the Jewish Diaspora was united under a common goal, the creation of a political state founded by and dedicated to ethnic and religious Jews. This large-scale initiative required unprecedented support and ingenuity from people and organizations both within Palestine and the larger Jewish community abroad. Countless scholars have addressed the role of these Zionist institutions in the eventual formation of the state of Israel. However, scholar Dalia Manor is the only one to specifically consider the significance of art production, discussing the employment of specific Biblical iconography and themes in the work of early Zionist artists in Palestine. Her discussion primarily focuses on the formulation of a specifically Jewish art and history within *Eretz Israel*, translated from Hebrew as “the Land of Israel” and a term that is commonly used to refer to the region that, according to the Hebrew Bible, was promised by God to the descendants of Abraham and, ultimately, the home of the Jewish people. In this paper, I expound upon her argument, considering the influence of certain imagery beyond the confines of the land of Zion

¹ Dov Genachowski, "Pictures of Holy Places as a Fundraising Aid," in *Offerings from Jerusalem: Portrayals of Holy Places by Jewish Artists* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2002), 31.

and into the broader Jewish Diaspora. I argue that, during the early twentieth century, key members of the Zionist movement turned to an earlier tradition based in the visual representation of the land of Eretz Israel. Through the construction of a visual vocabulary that blends the Biblical history of the Jewish people with contemporary efforts in Palestine, producers of Zionist imagery projected a vision of a Jewish state, attempting to articulate the specific role the Diaspora must play in the eventual establishment of an idealized Israel. Two key institutions exemplify this relationship between Jewish settlers in Eretz Israel and the international Jewish community during the first half of the twentieth century: The Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 with offices in Israel, Europe and the United States and the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts founded in 1906 in Jerusalem. Rooted in the Jewish notion of *halukkah*, these major institutions and their key individuals turned to the production of visual artifacts. Ranging from printed pamphlets and functional items to examples of fine and decorative arts, these efforts served as a means soliciting funds and, ultimately, uniting the Jewish people within a larger discourse of religious, cultural, and national identity.

Bezalel and Biblical Zionism

In 1905, at the Seventh Zionist Congress held in Basle, Switzerland, Professor Boris Schatz proposed the idea of opening a school in Palestine dedicated to the production and education of the arts and crafts. From this initial proposal, the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts was opened in February of 1906 in the city of Jerusalem. Schatz, a Lithuanian-born Orthodox Jew, envisioned Bezalel as fulfilling two practical objectives for the Zionist movement and the eventual establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Israel. As an industry of popular craft, Bezalel would provide the local Jewish population with employment, invaluable income and eventual economic stability. As an academic institution, Bezalel would represent a school dedicated to the establishment and promotion of a distinct Jewish art and culture. These primary goals were achieved through Bezalel's unique, three-part structure, comprised of a school, workshops, and a museum. The school of painting, intended for the most talented students, focused on generating original designs. The workshops were dedicated to the production of various crafts and functional objects based upon the designs supplied by the school. Lastly, the school's museum, which included an impressive collection of Jewish art and archeological objects, providing source material and inspiration for the students. Through this interdisciplinary approach, Schatz emphasized the importance of both establishing a distinct Jewish artistic style as well as a commercially viable industry for the decorative arts and crafts.²

In her article "Biblical Zionism in Bezalel Art" and subsequent book *Art in Zion: The Genesis of Modern National Art in Jewish Palestine*, Dalia Manor discusses Bezalel's employment of specific visual iconographies and decorative styles as a means of illustrating the Jewish connection to an ancient history, to the land and people presented in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, Manor, using the writings of influential leaders such as Schatz and Nahum Sokolow as evidence, argues that early Zionist thinkers held Eretz Israel, the soil of the land of Zion, to be the only place where a genuine Jewish art could emerge.³ While Manor's interest in the Jewish artistic connection to Biblical history and the land of Israel marks an important

² The primary reference for information regarding the establishment of the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts is a catalogue from a 1983 exhibition held at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem entitled *Bezalel: 1906-1929* (ed. Nurit Shilo-Cohen, Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1983.) This exhibition and accompanying text remains the preeminent scholarship on the institution of Bezalel addressing its history, philosophy, professional staff, and art production. In addition, the catalogue provides original documentation generated at the school such as student record books and memorandums written by the administration. Scholar Dalia Manor has also written on the subject of the Bezalel School, most notably in her book *Art in Zion: The Genesis of Modern National Art in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005). However, her primary source appears to be the Israel Museum catalogue of 1983.

³ Dalia Manor, "Biblical Zionism in Bezalel Art," *Israel Studies* 6, no. 1 (2001): 55-75.

observation, there are more complex issues of cultural identity at play in the art of Bezalel. Images of the great biblical heroes and redeemers, such as Moses, Samson, and Ruth as well as idyllic landscapes and themes of fertility transcend the simple connection to the past and the physical land of Israel. Zionist artists needed to relate to the conflicted sense of identity within the Diasporic Jewish community. Both rooted in their ancient past as well as plagued by a present state of exile from their land and ancestors, the Jewish Diaspora of the early twentieth century saw Eretz Israel as both a relict of their history as well as a vision for their future. Zionist art production, as exemplified by the Bezalel School, at once presents Israel as a Biblical land, a physical destination for a future Jewish state and a symbol of what still needs to be achieved in order to complete this goal.

Galut: Exile and Identity

The Hebrew term *galut* classically refers to the exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel. As recounted in the Hebrew Bible, there were four such exiles in total, and these expulsions are thought to allude to Abraham's vision for the future of his descendants, destined to be a wandering nation. Within a modern discourse, the term *galut* has come to embody several ideas as related to the Jewish Diaspora. Referring to a literal state of exile, *galut* represents the political, legal, economic, and social condition of the Jewish people. In a metaphorical respect, this biblical term embodies an emotional and spiritual attitude, conveying a constant sense of foreignness and strangeness.⁴ In terms of its religious implications, the *galut* relates to Abraham's biblical vision of the Jewish people, a nation that would be expelled from its home, wandering until the day of its return and redemption, the day the messiah comes.

Each of these enduring perceptions of the Jewish exile played a predominant role in the emerging Zionist movement at the end of the nineteenth century. Influential thinker and Jewish leader Ahad Ha-Am presents the challenge that faced the Zionist movement as it attempted to overcome the ideologies surrounding the Jewish *galut*. "The exile is a very evil and bitter matter, but we must and also can live in the Exile, with all its evil and bitterness. Leaving the Exile, always was and will be a shining national hope for 'the end of days' but the timing of the 'end' is 'a secret of God' that is hidden and unknown to us, and our existence is not dependent on it"⁵ The leaders of the Zionist movement sought to refute this persisting notion of a predetermined wandering, adopting a new term, *Shililat ha-galut*, or the denial of the exile. In 1957, after the declaration of the state of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, the country's first prime minister, declared the movement's triumph as a refusal of previously accepted beliefs.

Each of us stand in awe and deep admiration before the tremendous emotional power revealed by the Jews in the wanderings and sufferings in the Diaspora...I will admire any man who is sick and in pain who struggled for his survival, who does not bow to his bitter fate, but I will not consider his to be an ideal condition...In contrast, the builders of the State of Israel rebelled against the lack of Jewish independence and freedom that characterized Jewish History in exile⁶

Ben-Gurion and his Zionist predecessors refused to define the Jewish nation in terms of its biblical and historical past. Instead, these influential figures adopted a new identity, an identity based on the Jews' future in the land of Zion.

In an essay entitled "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," cultural historian Stuart Hall addresses this subject of cultural identity and its relationship to representation through a discussion of

⁴ Yosef Gorny, "Shililat Ha-Galut: Past and Present," in *Beyond Survival and Philanthropy: American Jewry and Israel*, ed. Allon Gal and Alfred Gottschalk (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2000), 42.

⁵ Gorny, 44.

⁶ David Ben Gurion, "World Ideological Conference" (Jerusalem, 1957).

the Black Caribbean Diaspora. While this particular essay does not directly address the Jewish Diaspora, Hall presents a useful framework for understanding the two competing tensions in the work of the Bezalel School and the JNF as they attempted to shape Jewish identity. He presents two interrelated ways to approach the formulation of cultural identity.

The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self'...Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history.⁷

In these terms, a Diasporic culture's identity is not simply a rediscovery of the past but a new, innovative means of expressing it. As an example, Hall discusses the work of Jamaican and Rastafarian artists such as Armet Francis, a Jamaican-born photographer who has lived in Britain since the age of eight. "Francis's photographs of the peoples of The Black Triangle, taken in Africa, the Caribbean, the USA and the UK, attempt to reconstruct in visual terms 'the underlying unity of the black people whom colonisation and slavery distributed across the African diaspora.' His text is an act of imaginary reunification."⁸ Within the Bezalel School, craftsmen and artists frequently incorporated the image of the temple menorah in their work, symbolically representing the pre-galut identity of the Jewish people, harkening back to the First and Second Temple Periods (figures 1 and 2). Serving no actual religious function, these items directly embody the deep-rooted, static identity suggested by Hall's first approach.

Hall's second, related view of Diasporic cultural identity incorporates not only a group's past but its present and future as well.

This second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather - since history has intervened - 'what we have become'...Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past.⁹

Discussing the emerging art of Caribbean and black British cinemas, Hall presents representation as an integral tool in the conception and formulation of a developing cultural identity. "We have been trying to theorise identity as constituted, not outside but within representation; and hence of cinema, not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak."¹⁰ When members of the Bezalel School employ the temple menorah as symbol of an ancient Jewish past, they recast the image, serving as a tool in the process of redefining the identity that would serve as the foundation of a future, Jewish state.

By continuing to define itself by the notion of exile, by the term galut, the Jewish Diaspora was uniting behind its collective past. Historically, Jews, and the secular community especially, have held a particularly strong connection to Hall's first sense of Diasporic Identity, one rooted in the Biblical and ritual traditions of Judaism. However, the leaders of the Zionist movement sought a means of both embracing this Jewish history while also envisioning its independent and unified future. The Zionist members of the Jewish Diaspora chose to recognize themselves in Hall's terms, as 'what [they] have become' in addition to 'what [they] really are'. And, as we will see, the visual image played a critical role in illustrating this position, in discovering and conveying this vision of Jewish cultural identity.

Israel, Land, Symbol

⁷ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," ed. Jim Pines, *Framework* 36: 222-237, 223.

⁸ Hall, 224.

⁹ Hall, 225.

¹⁰ Hall, 236.

The word Zionism has become synonymous with the notion of Eretz Israel, the land of Israel. In the book of Genesis, God presents the land to the patriarch Abraham. “The Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, ‘And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land thou are a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.’”¹¹ Scholar John Rose suggests this passage as the basis for what he terms “the notorious visionary geographical concept of Zionism, *Eretz Israel*, the land of Israel, the bedrock of Zionist ideology, a potent mixture of ancient Judaism and modern nationalism.”¹² In an effort to visually formulate the identity of the Zionist movement and its cause, early Jewish settlers in Palestine turned directly to the land. Images of Eretz Israel came to represent the Jewish Diaspora, but not in terms of its absence and its exile but its future and its redemption. Beginning in the nineteenth century, fundraising and propaganda efforts commenced in Eretz Israel, employing distinct visual imagery in an effort to support the current Jewish community and, eventually, establish an independent Jewish state.

In 1841, the first printing press arrived in Jerusalem and, among its priorities, was the production of images depicting holy places within the city. Reproductions of sites such as the Western Wall, Rachel’s tomb, the Dome of the Rock, and the Mount of Olives were incorporated into a variety of media, including the headings of letters of appeal, thank you notes, and books addressing a wide range of subject matters.¹³ A book dated to 1883 and entitled *Sefer Yerushalayim*, demonstrates this approach to the printed image. An exemplary plate depicts the Cave of the Machpelah, more commonly known as the Tomb of the Patriarchs (figure 3). Thought to be the burial site of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah, the Cave is the world's most ancient Jewish site and one of the holiest places for the Jewish people, perhaps only second to the Temple Mount’s Western Wall. The artist chose to depict this holy site as a collection of stone and bricks structures surrounded by a fertile, thriving landscape. Compared to a modern photo of the site (figure 4), this artistic depiction maintains a resemblance to its actual appearance; however, the artist clearly sought to present an idealized and essentialized portrayal of the Jewish landmark. The dome and two towers of the largest, central structure, perhaps the tombs of Abraham and Sarah, the first leaders of the Hebrew people, loom over the flourishing trees and meadows of the Israeli landscape, presenting an image of authority, strength and fecundity.

In addition to the output of the printing press, the citizens of 19th century Israel saw to the production of non-printed objects as well, including utensils, almsboxes, and embroidery work such as this rosette, which depicts a collection of Israel’s holy places within the decorative roundels (figure 5). Intended for public institutions and private individuals living within Israel and, more significantly, the Jewish Diaspora abroad, these mass-producible items served as a substantial source of financial support, accounting for about 50 to 80 percent of the total income for Jewish community in Palestine during the nineteenth century.¹⁴ This particular use of visual imagery proved to be an effective means of promoting *halukkah*, the donation of funds from the Diaspora to Jews living in Israel, and established a fundraising approach that was easily adopted by the proceeding Zionist movement of the twentieth century.

Bezalel’s International Program

Within the formal regulations of the Bezalel Society, the organization in control of the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Schatz presents school as a vehicle for his vision: “The Society has

¹¹ Genesis 17.8

¹² John Rose, *The Myths of Zionsim* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 7.

¹³ Genachowski, 34.

¹⁴ Genachowski, 35.

for its object the improvement of the economic and the cultural state of the Jewish community in Palestine by means of promoting art and craft without material benefit to its members.”¹⁵ From its inception, Schatz’s Bezalel was both a commercial and philanthropic venture. During its initial six years, the school established itself as a successful producer and merchant of decorative art objects within Jerusalem and greater Israel. However, with the onset of World War I, the school faced immense challenges including the drafting of students and teachers, famine throughout Palestine, and diseases such as cholera and typhoid.¹⁶ Amidst the struggle and chaos of war-ravaged Europe, the sales and revenues produced by Bezalel’s workshops, despite its place as a key institution within Eretz Israel and the greater Zionist movement, were in dramatic decline. In its early years, Bezalel was able to provide financial and spiritual assistance to its fellow members of the Palestinian Jewish community. Now, after the devastation brought on by the war and the precarious situation in Palestine, Schatz and his school sought its own support, which required a well-organized and large-scale fundraising effort.

Returning to the basic tenants of *halukkah*, which proved to be immensely successful in previous centuries, Schatz turned his focus to the Jewish Diaspora, appealing to the international Zionist movement. Beginning in 1914 and continuing through the 1920’s, Schatz organized both local shows in Jerusalem and traveling exhibitions that visited Europe and America with the sole purpose of obtaining monetary support for the school.¹⁷ The works on view at these exhibitions as well as other promotional, propagandistic and organizational materials begin to take on a familiar style and iconography. Students and instructors of the school began producing print works such as postcards, exhibition catalogues and letterhead that could be cheaply manufactured and widely disseminated.

For example, a title page for a series of postcards dated to the 1920’s depicts a distinctly Jewish craftsman, presumably a student at the Bezalel School, toiling over an oversized menorah, which doubles as the circular base for the sun (figure 6). This fundamental and ancient symbol of Jewish identity is situated within a modern background that includes a photograph of the building that houses the arts and crafts school, a prominent brick structure placed within a larger landscape. On the bottom, the inscription presents the title Bezalel and the artist’s name, Shmuel Ben-Dov, in both Hebrew and English, clearly intended to appeal to an international audience. The visual iconography is familiar and repeated in several other cases, including a certificate for the payment of a model dated to 1913 (figure 7). The message of the particular imagery seems clear: The Bezalel School represents Zion, the land of Eretz Israel where the sun will rise over the Jewish people. Furthermore, as a means of appealing to the Diaspora, this postcard visually and symbolically unites the conflicting notions of Judaism present in the twentieth century, international community. As the artist Ben-Dov suggests, the Jewish craftsman is simultaneously linked to the historical past through the work of his hands as well as the Zionist vision of the future through his presence at Bezalel and within Eretz Israel.

In 1914, Schatz left for the United States, organizing a travelling exposition of works from the Bezalel School, which were exhibited in New York and Cincinnati.¹⁸ Two of the most prominent artists at the school, Ze’ev Raban and Ya’akov Stark, designed a promotional poster for the

¹⁵ *Regulations of Bezalel-A Society for the Promotion of Handicrafts and Home Industry in Eretz Israel*, Berlin, 1906.

¹⁶ *Bezalel, 1906-1929*, ed. Nurit Shilo-Cohen (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1983). 83.

¹⁷ Documentation including catalogues and promotional materials exist from exhibitions in Warsaw (March 1911), London (May 1912), Liverpool (June 1912), Leeds (June 1912), New York (January 1914), Cincinnati (March 1914), New York (1926) and Buenos Aires (November 1926).

¹⁸ *Bezalel, 1906-1929*, 327.

exhibition in 1913 (figure 8). Again, the image presents a pious Jewish man in his workshop crafting a menorah. An ornately decorated arch surrounds him, as the entire poster takes on the form of what appears to be classical architectural structure, perhaps directly referencing the First and Second Temples of Solomon. The roundel in the top left depicts the Bezalel building in Jerusalem, while the one on the right presents another structure, which strongly resembles the image of the Cave of Machpelah that was shown in the nineteenth century *Sefer Yerushalayim*. The poster, including both Hebrew and English text, presents a student at Bezalel toiling away at his craft, supporting the structure, literally constituting the building blocks, of Eretz Israel. However, literally at its foundation is Judaism's ancient, biblical history accentuated by the craftsman's piety and devotion to ancient, Jewish rituals.

Following his tour of America and parts of Europe, Schatz received a significant amount of financial and moral support from the Jewish population abroad. In a communication entitled *A Conversation with James N. Rosenberg at the New York Bezalel Exhibition* recorded by Martha Neumark, the attendee, a prominent New York lawyer, expresses the power of the art on exhibit and its resonance in the American Jewish community. He exclaims, "You have seen these things. That is enough. They speak for themselves. This is sufficient proof that there is a Jewish art, inspired by the very source of Jewish history."¹⁹ Furthermore, supporters of Schatz and his efforts urged those in attendance and the American Jewry in general to provide support for the struggling Bezalel. "The professor gave us a picture of the future of Bezalel- it now depends on our will," writes New York artist Saul Ruskin.²⁰ In a final address to the community after the Bezalel Exhibitions in the United States, Schatz expresses his gratitude as well as hope for the future.

Not with the sword, nor with fire, but with the spirit can we win our rights; only by our spiritual creativeness, with culture can we gain recognition of cultured people. Bezalel is a part of our culture, it is the only Jewish art school in the world and it is the property of the entire Jewish people. These are the things and many more, which American Jews found in Bezalel...I take the privilege here and now, to convey to all of them my deepest gratitude for the splendid support they rendered to Bezalel.²¹

In 1929, the Bezalel Society presented these donors with a gift, an album designed and produced by the crafters at the school. The cover, made of olive wood, again depicts a craftsman, holding his tool in his right hand, leaning on a large vessel, resembling a tomb, perhaps again referencing the Hebrew patriarchs (figure 9). In the background, the Bezalel School is shown on the right while the Western Wall is on the left, surrounded by praying Jews. The image is framed by a decorative border, including floral patterns and leaping animals, suggesting fertility and life. As a gift to those who supported Schatz and his Zionist efforts in Jerusalem, the album firmly establishes the Bezalel School within Eretz Israel, paying respect to the ancient history of the Jewish people while also building the foundation for its future. As fiscal donors and supporters of the Bezalel School, members of the Diaspora were actively participating in the evolution of Jewish Identity, both clinging to historical perceptions of Israel, the patriarchs and the exile as well as aspiring for Bezalel's Zionist goals.

Additionally, the craft workshops at the school produced decorative objects such as tiles, fabrics art, and plaques (figures 10, 11 and 12) that prominently display images of Eretz Israel. The iconography and imagery utilized in these print and decorative works, most notably the stonework, brick structures, trees, floral patterns and menorahs, belong to the same visual vocabulary that was originally employed in the earlier *halukkah* fundraising efforts of the

¹⁹ Martha Neumark, "A Conversation with James N. Rosenberg at the New York Bezalel Exhibition," in *Bezalel: Its Aims and Purpose* (New York: Friends of Professor Boris Schatz), 30.

²⁰ Saul Ruskin, "To the Bezalel Exhibit of New York," in *Bezalel: Its Aims and Purpose* (New York: Friends of Professor Boris Schatz), 35.

²¹ Boris Schatz, "After the Bezalel Exhibition in America," in *Bezalel: Its Aims and Purpose* (New York: Friends of Professor Boris Schatz), 30.

nineteenth century Palestinian Jews. Strengthening Bezalel's connection to Eretz Israel and its cultivation, these images portray the artists at the school as members of the Jewish community, struggling to overcome their historical past, work the land, and literally lay the foundations for the Jewish state.

Jewish National Fund

While the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts was based in Jerusalem, a significant portion of its fundraising efforts was directed towards Europe and the United States. In 1901, at the 5th Zionist Congress and five years before the opening of Bezalel, the movement's leaders established the Jewish National Fund as specifically international organization, with a Head Office in Jerusalem and satellite headquarters in Europe and America. The organization's charter outlined the main objectives of the JNF, primarily the raising of funds to purchase land in Eretz Israel for cultivation and construction.²² Communication between the Jerusalem office and its branches, specifically the New York headquarters, was essential to the organization of this effort and, in 1902, the JNF commenced an international fundraising campaign that still remains in place today.

As an organization founded in Israel and dedicated to the crafting of decorative, and often traditionally-based, Judaic objects, Bezalel is unquestionably appealing to Hall's first sense of Diasporic identity, a collective past. Conversely, the Jewish National Fund saw itself as the spearhead of the Zionist movement and the standard-bearer for the idea of Eretz Israel, especially within America and the Jewish Diaspora.²³ Therefore, in terms of Hall's approaches to identity, the JNF is innately dedicated to the second notion of cultural representation, to redefining the Jewish identity and fostering a new foundation for the future based in the land of Israel. However, through an examination of their visual programs and agendas, it becomes evident that, in fact, both organizations play off of the tensions between these two concepts of identity and the American Jewish community's persistent desire to connect with both.

JNF and Zionist Fundraising

The JNF established a coordinated propaganda campaign that appealed to its specific audience, employing two popular forms of fund collection that became synonymous with the JNF: blue boxes and stamps. Constituting the heart of the movement, the Head Office recommended the proper distribution of these items. "We must inundate the Jewish public with slogans and pictures, to rivet their attention, to create an atmosphere of unrest...[to distribute the pictures and slogans] in every place a Jew sets foot in: in communal centres, lodges, places of business, society and union centres, the offices of charity organizations, rabbinical offices, libraries..."²⁴

The Blue Box, literally a *tzedakah* or charity box, was the JNF's first attempt at an international fundraising program, intended to be a means of collection, a physical place to put monetary donations. However, nearly immediately, the objectives of the box became blurred, the means of collection became the central propaganda symbol of the JNF. Produced for international dissemination, the blue boxes included a particular decorative program, along with text printed in the language of the target country. The primary colors of the box were blue and white, evoking the nation-to-be of Israel. A box intended for distribution in the U.S. demonstrates the visual iconography commonly employed by the JNF (figure 13). A large map

²² Yaron Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education: The Jewish National Fund 1924-1947* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 4.

²³ Bar-Gal, 10.

²⁴ Bar-Gal, 12.

of Israel serves as the central image, identifying the major cities within the country including Jerusalem, Hebron and Safed. Along the side, the title of the Jewish National Fund, along with the slogan "Redeem and Protect the Land of Israel," is written in English and, on the bottom, the Hebrew name of the organization, *Keren Kayemet Leyisrael*, is included as well. In the center, a Star of David is prominently placed, encircling the word Zion, written in Hebrew. A survey of other blue boxes produced for international distribution, to countries such as Hungary, France and Poland, further illustrates the particular visual vocabulary associated with the JNF (figure 14). The Star of David and images of Israel feature prominently in several of the boxes as well as the inclusion of the Hebrew text for the JNF and the word Zion. Additionally, the box intended for dissemination in Poland, on the bottom right, is in the shape of a prayer book and includes an image of the Lion of Judah within the central Star of David. The Hungarian blue box, on the bottom left, also incorporates the Lion of Judah image in the center and is framed by flowering branches.

These functional tools utilized for fund collection feature an established visual iconography, presenting fundamental symbols associated with Eretz Israel and, perhaps more significantly, symbols traditionally associated with Judaism and its followers. As the initial campaign undertaken by the JNF, clearly organizers and designers were still attached to historical images of the Jewish people, including the Star of David, Lion of Judah, and a physical prayer book, a literal connection to the Hebrew Bible. But, despite this conventional and accepted mode of visual representation, the Blue Boxes do present some forward-thinking approaches to Jewish identity including a detailed, modernized representation of Israel, emphasis on the color blue and word Zion, and the JNF title and slogan. In terms of financial value, between the years of 1918 and 1937, the blue box collection constituted 1/6 of the JNF's total income.²⁵ While the actual financial impact was relatively small, the symbolic significance was enormous. The blue box and its visual repertoire became an international symbol of the JNF, Zionism as a whole, and the redemption of land of Eretz Israel in particular.²⁶

In 1913, the JNF offices in various countries started issuing stamps as new form of propaganda and fundraising. This stamp program was actually initiated by the JNF offices within the Diaspora, as a request for new material that could appeal to a wider audience, particularly Jewish youth. A report from the Head Office in Jerusalem explains,

The JNF, knowing the soul of the Jewish child in the Diaspora, prepared several series of stamps for him. The certificate was to bring the Diaspora child closer to the far-off homeland, to its nature and landscape, to its world and animals, to endow him with initial concepts, in a pliable way, through what he saw, of the new reality in the homeland and from the work of its sons.²⁷

The content of these stamps included a wide range of imagery, focusing on the landscapes of Eretz Israel, prominent Jewish landmarks and personalities, and portraits of Zionist leaders and rabbis. Two stamps dated to 1930 depict topographical maps, one of Jerusalem and the other of the larger, settled within Eretz Israel. Each features illustrations of the land's most important sites, including both ancient and contemporary landmarks, such as the Temple Mount, the Dead Sea, the Mount of Olives, as well as the building of the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts (figure 15 and 16). Both stamps are surrounded by a border inscribed with Hebrew lettering, spelling Jerusalem and Eretz Israel respectively. In terms of style, these images appear visually peculiar and seemingly incongruent. The artists employed by the JNF seem to have merged several influences, perhaps referencing early cartographic representations of the land and imbuing the stamps with a sense of antiquity and archaism. However, simultaneously, the maps are depicting a visions of a modern state of Israel, representing the fledging Jewish community and its agricultural and architectural campaigns within the land.

²⁵ Bar-Gal, 38.

²⁶ Bar-Gal 40.

²⁷ Bar-Gal, 46.

Another stamp dated to 1946, depicts the Jezreel valley of Eretz Israel, presenting two pioneers cultivating the land, symbolizing the main objects of the JNF organization (figure 17). Iconographically, the stamp presents two farmers driving a modern tractor, plowing and tending to a vast field of crops as a city can be seen on the horizon. This central image is surrounded by an internal rectangular frame, which includes abstracted portrayals of the harvest. Additionally, there is an outer border that, while evoking the standard image of a stamp, also suggests a rigid, architectural structure strongly resembling the border seen on the Bezalel School's promotional poster (figure 8). In traditional religious practices, the Jewish people are prohibited from farming and physically cultivating the land. By including a realistically rendered image of the settlers in Eretz Israel employing modern, agricultural technology, the JNF is presenting a progressive image of the Jewish people. However, the border suggests an attachment to tradition, to the original structure of the Temple and foundations of Israel. This stamp of the Jezreel Valley visually represents a simultaneously united and dichotomous approach to Hall's two processes of Diasporic identity. In the middle, the JNF forgoes the use of an ancient, nostalgic image of farming for a modernized image of technological advancement. Yet, framing this central image, the borders present traditional, Old Testament-rooted icons of fertility and reproduction as well as of Jewish kingship, structure and stability.

Lastly, several series of stamps were produced solely for distribution within the Diasporic youth community. Viewed as both didactic and propagandistic tools, these collector's items were meant to instill young Jews with the importance of their own heritage and past, while also looking towards the future. For example, a series of "Aleph-Bet" stamps, produced in 1940, present the Hebrew alphabet, with each letter illustrated by a landscape or architectural image of Israel that starts with the same letter (figure 18). Described as "an aid to learning Hebrew," these educational stamps raise an interesting point with regards to the promotion of Hebrew as an international, Jewish language.²⁸ A unique relationship exists between the religion of Judaism and its official language of Hebrew. Unlike the progression of Latin into the primarily ecclesiastical tongue of the Roman Catholic Church, Hebrew resisted a separation from the national and ethnic identity of the Jewish people and avoided the specification as a solely religious language. In addition, Hebrew was not relegated to a predominantly folk or traditional dialect. The Zionist movement became an integral force in the evolution of Hebrew as a living language in the culture and civilization Jews, becoming synonymous with both a religion as well as an entire population.²⁹ As the written language of the Bible, Hebrew could be considered Judaism's most ancient, enduring tradition. However, through the work of the JNF and the larger Zionist ideologies, Hebrew came to represent the future of the Jewish people, their collective existence and, specifically, the development of their youth.

Conclusion.

At the start of the twentieth century, visual communication became integral to the dialogue between the Diaspora and the Jewish community in Palestine. The founders and promoters of the Zionist movement transformed images of Eretz Israel into an instrument of a global, visual propaganda. As scholars such as Manor have noted, early artists who settled in Palestine, and specifically the members of the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, turned to Hebrew Biblical imagery as a means of generating a distinctive Jewish style of art that could eventually serve as the cultural foundation for the state of Israel. While this visual vocabulary proved powerful within Eretz Israel, it was also employed to appeal to the international Jewish population. Zionist organizations, such as the Bezalel School and the JNF, clung to the Diasporic Jewish

²⁸ Bar-Gal, 51.

²⁹ William Chomsky, *Hebrew: The Eternal Language* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), 2.

community's most ancient connection, the biblical and historical land of Zion. Recognizing the interminable correlation between past, Jewish history and present, Jewish identity, Zionist visual production, including both decorative and functional objects, was intended to appeal to the audience's collective history. Concurrently, the physical sites, historical landmarks, and Jewish citizens of Eretz Israel were imbued with a new sense of modern significance, representing cultural and national progress. By utilizing a visual vocabulary that blends Biblical history with contemporary vision, Zionist advocates surpassed a simple connection to the past and envisioned the Diaspora's future, presenting a literal and symbolic image of both, in the words of Hall, 'what [they] really are' and 'what [they] have become.'



Figure 1
Carpet depicting menorah, Temple
Mount and David's Tower
Workshop at the Bezalel School
1909



Figure 2
Exterior of the Bezalel
School
featuring menorah
ornament
c. 1908



Figure 3
The Cave of the Machpelah from *Sefer Yersushalayim*
Jerusalem, 1883-4



Figure 4
Photograph of the Cave of the Machpelah

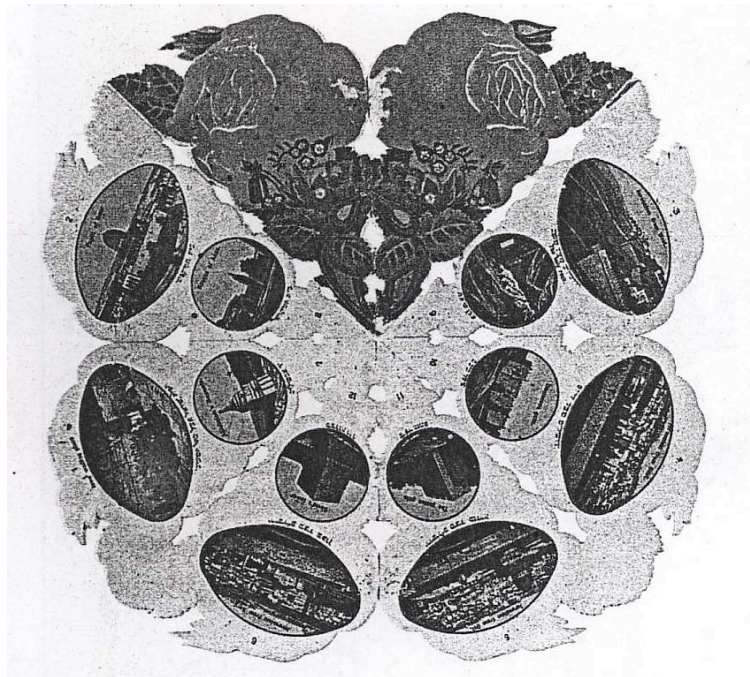


Figure 5
 Royzele (rosette), Challah cover
 Jerusalem, 1862



Figure 6
 Title page for a series of postcard
 Shmuel Ben-David, 1920's
 India ink on paper



Figure 7
 Design for certificate of payment for a model
 Rafael Avraham Shalem, 1913
 Pen and ink on paper

Figure 8
 Poster for Bezalel exhibition
 Ze'ev Raban and Ya'akov Stark, 1913
 Lithograph





Figure 9
Album, a gift to members of the Bezael Company
1929
Olive-wood cover



Figure 10
Ceramic Tiles
Ya'acov Einsberg, 1925
Ceramic Tiles

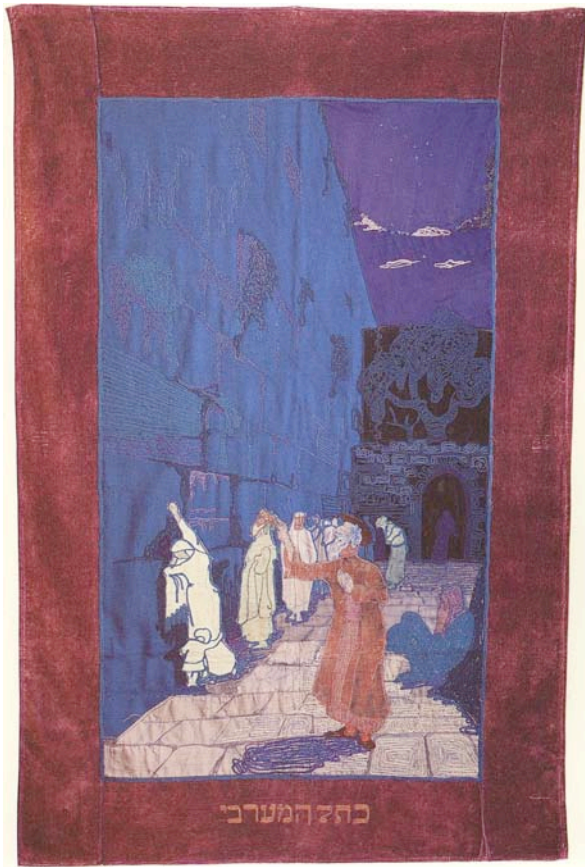


Figure 11
The Wailing Wall
 Shmuel Ben-David, 1920's
 Appliqué and embroidery

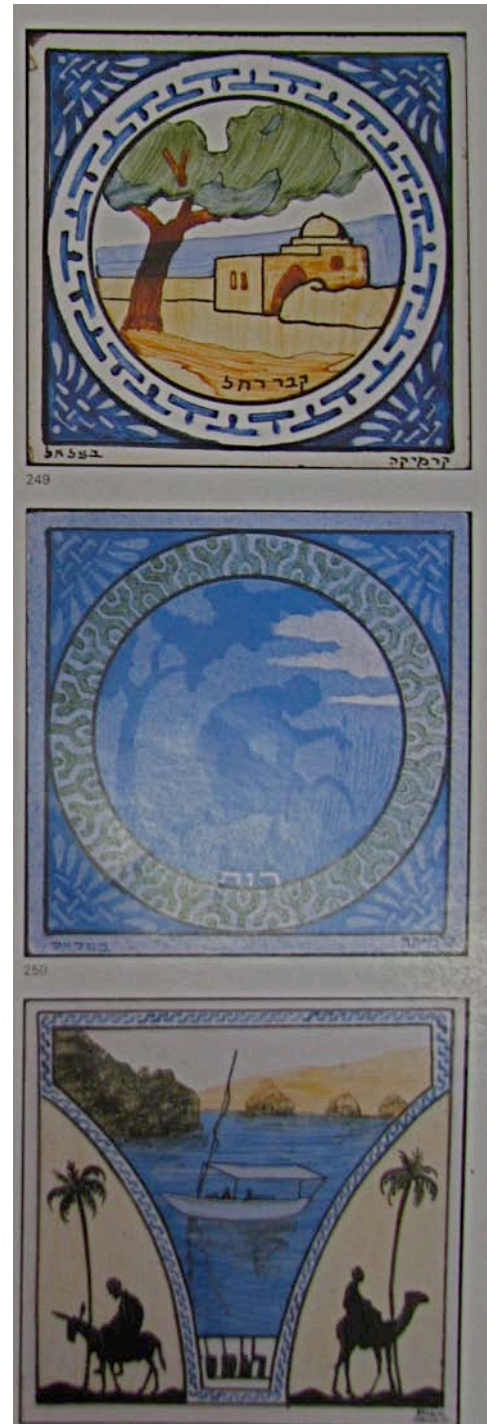


Figure 12
Ceramic Tiles
 1925



Figure 13
Jewish National Fund Blue Box
United States
1920's



Figure 14
Selection of JNF Blue Boxes
Early to Mid Twentieth Century



Figure 15
JNF Stamp of Jerusalem
Drawing by Sapoznikov
1930

Figure 16
JNF Stamp of Eretz Israel
Drawing by Sapoznikov
1930



הוצאת הלשכה הראשית של הקרן הקיימת לישראל. ירושלים



Figure 17
JNF Stamp of Jezreel Valley
1946



Figure 18
JNF 'Aleph-Bet' Stamps
1940

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