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# The Hebrew Translations of Wilhelm Herzberg's *Jewish Family Papers*: Interpretation and Reception in Multiple Layers

Wilhelm Herzberg's proto-Zionist novel was first published in 1868 under the German title *Jüdische Familienpapiere. Briefe eines Missionairs*.<sup>1</sup> Only five years later, it was partially translated into Hebrew and reviewed by Peretz Smolenskin (1842–1885) under the title *Le-khol Zman: Zichronot Bait Yehudi* (“לכל זמן; זמן. זכרונות בית יהודי”) and published in the periodical *Ha-Shahar* (השחר), which was edited by Smolenskin himself (1873/1874; תרל"ג). A reprint of Smolenskin's text was published that same year under the title *Mishpat Uzdakah* (משפט וצדקה). A second translation, which follows the original more stringently, was made by Yechiel Michel Pines (1824–1913), who translated almost half of the book, but never formally published it. This version was then edited, supplemented, and finally published in 1930 by R. Binyamin (1880–1957). Consequently, Herzberg's text was translated by three translators (Smolenskin, Pines, and Binyamin), but only published twice (1868; 1930). As we will elaborate here, a reading of the Hebrew titles used by the translators will demonstrate the different approaches they took towards the text. Smolenskin translated the title as *Zichronot Bait Yehudi* (“memoirs of a Jewish home”), thus emphasizing the Jewish nature of the said household. Pines used *Megilot Beit-Av* (מגילות בית-אב) literally “the household scripts”) in a biblical and ancient sense. Finally, Binyamin, as stated in his introduction, thought that the word “Jewish” was “not needed” when translating the text into Hebrew,<sup>2</sup> hence his translation of the title as *Kitvey Mishpaha Ivri'im* (כתבי-משפחה עבריים; literally “the writings of a Hebrew family”).

In this article, we will explore the history and context of the two different approaches to the text. Moreover, we will discuss specific issues that seemed im-

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1 Manja Herrmann, *Zionismus und Authentizität: Gegennarrative des Authentischen im frühen zionistischen Diskurs, Europäisch-Jüdische Studien – Beiträge 38* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 35. See also Manja Herrmann, “Proto-Zionism Reconsidered: Wilhelm Herzberg's Early German-Jewish Nationalist Novel ‘Jewish Family Papers’ and the Discourse of Authenticity,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 62 (2017): 179–95.

2 R. Binyamin, “מבוא” [Introduction], in Wilhelm Herzberg, *כתבי משפחה עבריים*, trans. Yechiel Michel Pines and R. Binyamin (Jerusalem: B'nai B'rith, 1930), 7–25, here 25.

portant in the eyes of critics and translators and consider the individual characteristics of each translation in order to shed light on each translation's status as an "independent" text. Firstly, we will analyze Smolenskin's text as a "critique-translation," which presents itself as a collage of genres and thus widens our often narrow understanding of translation. The term "critique-translation" picks up on Smolenskin's translational approach: not only did he translate the text, but he also included his own voice as commentary or critique.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, we will address Pines and Binyamin's translation, which was presented in 1930 as a complete translation of the book. However, as we will demonstrate here, this single text is composed of two distinctive parts, with Pines's translation on the one hand and Binyamin's on the other, written with a thirty-year gap; moreover, it is missing a major section towards the end of the book, which Binyamin decided to omit.

These two independent translations by three different translators demonstrate the ways in which the genre of translation presents itself in very distinct forms. Furthermore, in this case especially, the texts also add many layers to our understanding of Herzberg's *Jewish Family Papers* and its reception. The simple fact that three different people worked on translating Herzberg's novel over extended periods of time and in different contexts and countries proves the influence of this text not only right after its publication in German, but over a long period of time to follow. Thus, our aim is to provide a reassessment of the dialogue between German proto-Zionism and major Hebrew publications of the day, as well as the more established Zionist movement in Palestine, in order to demonstrate its translational impact.

## 1 Peretz Smolenskin: Critic or Translator?

### The Translator and His Translation: A Historical and Cultural Background

Peretz Smolenskin (1840/42, Monastyrshchina – 1885, Meran) was an essayist, writer, and editor of Hebrew texts. He received a traditional Jewish upbringing and studied at the Shklov yeshiva. His brother introduced him to the ideas of the Haskalah, and these encouraged Smolenskin to begin reading secular

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<sup>3</sup> This hyphenated term not only complies with the text itself, but is also characteristic of Smolenskin's writing in general. Yitzhak Barzilai also refers to *Am Olam* (עם עולם) and *Et Lada'at* (עת לדעת) as essay-books (מאמרו-ספרו). See Yitzhak Barzilai, "בין פרץ סמולנסקין ומשה הס," *בצרון: רבעון*, רבון: רבעון, "בין פרץ סמולנסקין ומשה הס," *בצרון: רבעון*, הגות ונחקר לספרות, 51–49 (1992): 57–79.

books.<sup>4</sup> This period of transition occurred at a time when the young Smolenskin was spending most of his time in Odessa, where he had arrived in 1862. Back then, the city on the shores of the Black Sea was a well-known center of the Haskalah movement. It was also there that he first began teaching Hebrew. After having expanded his knowledge of languages to include French, English, and German, he also took up French tutoring.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, this enabled him to translate and critique not only Herzberg's novel, but also various other texts which he published in *Ha-Shahar*, and the more languages he learned, the greater his need for literature became. His biographer, Charles Freundlich, states that "the young *maskil's* quest for knowledge was Faustian and he began acquiring a library of his own."<sup>6</sup> Smolenskin also began his literary career in Odessa, with his first publication appearing in the journal *Ha-Melitz* (המליץ).<sup>7</sup> As the literary scholar David Patterson emphasizes, Smolenskin's first novel, *Simhat Hanef* (שמחת הנף),

couches a series of lengthy expositions tracing the dependence of certain aspects of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Goethe's *Faust* on the singular Hebrew spirit informing the Books of *Job* and *Ecclesiastes* within the framework of a story depicting the shallow and frivolous attitudes of many of the ostensibly enlightened Jewish teachers in Odessa.<sup>8</sup>

This framework of references is rather interesting, since Smolenskin mentions Shakespeare and Goethe several times in his work on Herzberg's *Jewish Family Papers*, embedding these two particularly iconic reference points of Western European literature in his discussions on the Haskalah, modernization, tradition, and Jewish life in Europe.

A second aspect of Smolenskin's life and work that seems important to mention in this context is the fact that he belongs to the early thinkers of Jewish nationalism.<sup>9</sup> His most eminent publication, the periodical *Ha-Shahar*, was known for disseminating the ideas put forth by this movement. Smolenskin founded *Ha-Shahar* after his arrival in Vienna in 1868. The first issue of the periodical – which, as Patterson notes, Smolenskin had "published, edited, and managed, while serving simultaneously as proofreader, distributor, and one of its principal

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<sup>4</sup> David Patterson, "Smolenskin, Perez," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 691–94, here 691; Charles H. Freundlich, *Peretz Smolenskin: His Life and Thought* (New York: Bloch, 1965), 100–101.

<sup>5</sup> Freundlich, *Peretz Smolenskin*, 103.

<sup>6</sup> Freundlich, 104; emphasis in original.

<sup>7</sup> Patterson, "Smolenskin," 691.

<sup>8</sup> Patterson, 691. Smolenskin was quite influenced by Avraham Mapu and his work. Moreover, after Mapu's death, Smolenskin became Odessa's leading Hebrew novelist; see Patterson, 693.

<sup>9</sup> Patterson, 691.

contributors”<sup>10</sup> – was printed in 1868, the same year that Herzberg’s *Jewish Family Papers* was first published.

The translation of Herzberg’s *Jewish Family Papers* appeared in the fourth issue of *Ha-Shahar* in 1873/74. It was with this volume that the journal finally began to make a profit.<sup>11</sup> In the editorial, Smolenskin sets the tone for the following pages, and his discussion of language is particularly revealing with regard to his motivation. Here, Smolenskin emphasizes the importance of remodeling Hebrew as the national language of the Jewish people. He condemns the so-called “assimilationists” for declaring Hebrew a dead language devoid of any existing literature. Patterson maintains that the publishing of this journal indicates Smolenskin’s deep belief in the Hebrew language and its literature as fundamental tools for establishing a Jewish nationalist movement and a substitute for a national territory.<sup>12</sup> However, influences of the later Haskalah are evident as well, especially in the earlier issues of *Ha-Shahar*, which demonstrate Smolenskin’s urge to educate and didactically influence Jews in Europe. Literature was Smolenskin’s central medium in following this path. Consequently, it does not come as a surprise that on the periodical’s cover, the title is followed by a line of text that reads: “May the path of the people of Israel be enlightened in past and present times.”<sup>13</sup> Not only does this quote reveal *Ha-Shahar*’s position between early nationalism (“people of Israel”) and the late Haskalah (“enlightened”), but it could also be read as the motto of Herzberg’s novel.

The translation itself would be more accurately described as a Hebrew critique that contains translations of extended paragraphs and even page-long sequences from Herzberg’s book. It was published under the title *For All Time* (לכל זמן). The subtitle is closer to that of the original, reading *Zichronot Bait Yehudi* (זכרונות בית יהודי; *Memoirs of a Jewish Home*). Thus, from the start, the reader is confronted with the question of genre, especially since letters (in the original title) and memoirs (in Smolenskin’s translation) constitute different kinds of texts. In addition, the word “family” from the original title was transformed into “home”; this, however, is not surprising, since the Jewish house often represents the root of the Jewish family and therefore the two are strongly intertwined and may even be used synonymously.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Patterson, 691.

<sup>11</sup> Freundlich, *Peretz Smolenskin*, 110.

<sup>12</sup> Patterson, “Smolenskin,” 691.

<sup>13</sup> Peretz Smolenskin, “לכל זמן: זכרונות בית יהודי, מכתבי שליח,” *השחר* (1873/1874); unless otherwise noted, all translations are ours. Hebrew original: “יֵאָדָר נִתְּבַּע עַל דַּרְכֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעִתּוֹת הָעֶבֶר וְהַחֹוֹה.”

<sup>14</sup> Especially in times of exile and persecution, the house often loses its function as a place of continuity, stability, and security. For an exemplary study on the trope of the home in post-Hol-

Smolenskin's partial translation of Herzberg's *Jewish Family Papers* is split into three parts. The first appears on pages 249 to 262, the second ranges from pages 305 to 336, and the third from pages 369 to 382. Additionally, the first part is preceded by a broader introduction. In this introduction, Smolenskin contextualizes Herzberg and his novel and positions them in relation to other European-Jewish writers such as Leopold Kompert (1822–1886), Berthold Auerbach (1812–1882), Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875), Ludwig Philippson (1811–1889), Aron David Bernstein (1812–1884), Josef Rabinowitz (1837–1899),<sup>15</sup> Lev Osipovich Levanda (1835–1888), and Moses Hess (1812–1875). He concludes that “not little good is done to Israel by the wise writers who wrote stories in the language of Ashkenaz to enlighten the life of this people.”<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, these writers did not only write fiction. Those who did can be largely identified with the genre of the short story, or rather the village and ghetto story.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the writers Smolenskin mentions belonged to a broader group of nineteenth-century thinkers who introduced new and diverse ideas and who were crucial contributors to various developments within Jewish societies in Europe after the Haskalah. Also relevant to our discussion is the fact that none of these writers wrote in Hebrew; rather, they wrote in many different languages. Moreover, in spite of the fact that they were all Jewish, Smolenskin did not find this worth

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ocaust Jewish literature, see Sonja Dickow, *Konfigurationen des (Zu-)Hauses: Diaspora-Narrative und Transnationalität in jüdischen Literaturen der Gegenwart, Exil-Kulturen* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2019).

15 Smolenskin's text was written and published before Rabinowitz travelled to Jerusalem and became a Messianic Jew.

16 Peretz Smolenskin, “לכל זמן. זכרונות בית יהודי, מכתבי שליח,” *השחר* (1873/1874): 250. Hebrew original: לא מעטה היא הטובה אשר עשו לישראל הסופרים החכמים אשר כתבו ספורים בשפת אשכנז להאר חיי העם. הזה.”

17 Petra Ernst examines ghetto stories within a broader spatial context and discusses their specific role on the threshold between the traditional and the modern world, as well as their continued dispute with concepts put forward by the Haskalah movement. She argues: “Man kann davon ausgehen, dass letztlich alle Autoren von Ghettoesgeschichten in einem solidarischen Verhältnis stehen zu dem von ihnen gewählten Erzählgegenstand, dessen allmähliches Verschwinden sie mindestens bedauern, niemals aber befürworten. Sofern die äußeren Umstände der Unterdrückung und der wirtschaftlichen Not überhaupt thematisiert werden, werden sie immer und einhellig verurteilt. Die spezifische Lebensform, die sich über Jahrhunderte im Shtetl, Ghetto oder Dorf herausgebildet hatte, wird aber selten in Frage gestellt. Einzig der aus der Aufklärung entstandene und politisch vor allem in der Habsburgermonarchie durch Joseph II. wirksam gewordene Bildungsgedanke wird von den meisten Autoren von Ghettoesgeschichten im Sinne der Verbesserung der Lebensumstände favorisiert.” See Petra Ernst, *Shtetl, Stadt, Staat: Raum und Identität in deutschsprachig-jüdischer Erzählliteratur des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*, Schriften des Zentrums für Jüdische Studien (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2017), 95–96.

mentioning, since it seemed self-explanatory, especially when considering that they contributed something “to Israel,” meaning the dispersed Jewish people. In other words, Smolenskin viewed these writers and thinkers as participants in a greater dialogue about Judaism and its future. He consequently established a literary and cultural network in which the reader could situate not only Herzberg’s text, but Smolenskin’s own work as well.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, it is worth noting that the concise way in which Smolenskin introduces the above-mentioned authors, providing no further details on any of them, reveals his intended readership. Thus, it seems that the text is aimed at a readership that is not only able to read Hebrew, but that is also familiar with these names and the ideas and debates connected to them. In other words, Smolenskin’s imagined reader has the ability to situate him or herself within this very specific cultural and intellectual network and to develop his or her individual reading expectations accordingly.

### Peretz Smolenskin’s *Le-khol Zman*

As aforementioned, Peretz Smolenskin’s life and thought were greatly affected by both the Haskalah and nationalism. As the strong influence of the Haskalah gradually subsided, Smolenskin became one of the first advocates not only for nationalism, but also for Hebrew as a national language. This shift is evident in his translation of Herzberg’s *Jewish Family Papers: Le-khol Zman* reflects a similar transition, which in turn culminates in the performative act of translating into a national language. For instance, while in Herzberg’s novel, the references to Moses Mendelssohn’s (1729–1786) thinking are quite obvious and non-critical,<sup>19</sup> in his translation, Smolenskin distances himself from the Haskalah and from Moses Mendelssohn in particular. In *Et Lada’at*, which opens the same issue of *Ha-Shahar* that contains his partial translation of Herzberg, Smolenskin specifically denounces Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem*. One of Smolenskin’s central arguments against Mendelssohn, and against the Haskalah in general, is that German-Jewish thought focuses on European culture alone as opposed to a more inclusive Jewish approach that, in his view, was subsequently favored in Eastern Europe. It should be pointed out that Smolenskin did not condemn people for acquiring knowledge of European culture and literature, as he himself did. How-

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**18** Moreover, Smolenskin refers to Moses Hess as the author of *Rome and Jerusalem* and, by doing so, establishes a national context in which he situates his own work.

**19** For details on Mendelssohnian thought in Herzberg’s novel, see also Ze’ev Strauss’s chapter in this volume.

ever, he concurrently believed in establishing an individual Judaistic culture, and emphasized the importance of its cultural particularity rather than following everything identified as “European.” In his 1965 monograph on Peretz Smolenskin, the historian Charles H. Freundlich notes that Mendelssohn, as an ideal of the Haskalah, became increasingly identified with a period of self-delusion in German Jewry. This perspective was also shared by Ahad Ha-Am (1856–1927).<sup>20</sup> In many respects, Smolenskin was closer to the thinking of Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805) or Nahman Krochmal (1785–1840). This may be due to the fact that they shared particular experiences as *maskilim* in Eastern Europe rather than in Berlin.

What becomes clear in Smolenskin's translation of *Jewish Family Papers* is that general Haskalah themes, such as a new approach to freedom, knowledge, and belief, appear time and time again throughout the text. Especially at the beginning, the text is characterized by a juxtaposition of the contrasting notions of “belief” (אמונה) and “knowledge” (דעת). Smolenskin contextualizes Samuel's Christian upbringing within these seemingly opposing entities, and we come to see that it is not merely Samuel who is depicting a long-gone scene, but also the narrator, whose interpretation of the situation surfaces in this letter: “Nevertheless, Samuel, though he was capable of thinking in his heart, did not know that the source of this power is God himself that he gave them to his chosen ones so that they, like God, would know good and evil. He was raised to *believe* and not to *know*, since *knowing* was the start of the first man's sin.”<sup>21</sup> The first man was guilty of wanting to be like God and thus to be able to distinguish between good and bad. In other words, he wanted to know the difference between these essential poles of human behavior. However, Adam and Eve were severely punished for this urge for knowledge. This, according to Smolenskin's critique-translation, is the reason many people prefer “not-knowing” and “believing” over “knowing.”<sup>22</sup> Belief and knowledge are thus established as the central rhetorical terms around which the text revolves. Samuel, the protagonist, adheres to this model for a rather long time:

When he [Samuel] thought about the days of his youth, he remembered that he had heard only consolidating words come from the mouth of his teacher, who only read from the New

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<sup>20</sup> Freundlich, *Peretz Smolenskin*, 33.

<sup>21</sup> Smolenskin, “לכל זמן. זכרונות בית יהודי, מכתבי שליח,” 258; emphasis in original. Hebrew original: “אמנם שמואל, אף כי בלבו היה הכח לחשוב מחשבות אך לא ידע עוד כי אך זה חלק אלה ממעל, אשר: נתן בלב בחיריו למען יהיו כאלהים יודעי טוב ורע, יען כי על דרכי האמונה נהלוהו מעודו, רק להאמין ולא לדעת, והדעת הלא היא רשית חטאת היתה לאדם הראשון.”

<sup>22</sup> Smolenskin, 258.

Testament and filled his spirit with the words of the apostles, and his heart was weak and he did not find the strength to think thoughts that he himself conceived, and his mind was too weak and did not find the power to fight the thoughts of others.<sup>23</sup>

When following the narrative, it is evident that Samuel's standing and point of view are influenced first and foremost by his upbringing in Britain. Demanding to *know* – inquiring about situations, topics, and passages from scripture – requires one to invest time and energy, and this Samuel does not do, as the religious system has never taught him how.<sup>24</sup> Hence, his childhood education is criticized in this context: not only does it seem that he is too weak to ask questions and demand knowledge that goes beyond belief, but his wish to know has been sacrificed on the “altar of belief” (מזבח אמונה)<sup>25</sup> by Christianity. Consequently, most people, especially Christians, adhere to a “belief of amen” or “belief of ‘so be it.’” The Hebrew phrasing יאמינו אמונה אמן (*ya'aminu emuna amen*) highlights the linguistic connection between the often untranslated and adopted term “amen” (אמן) and the root of the term “belief” (אמונה; *emuna*).<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, the notion of “belief” becomes equated with the acceptance of a status quo established by a clerical elite.

Samuel, however, soon discovers that his religious identity goes beyond belief, being primarily a Christian concept, and even beyond religion itself. He embarks on a journey which is narrated as a maskilic *Bildungsroman*:

In his weakness, he came to the decision that he had been chosen, from the womb and before his mother called him by his name, to be a beacon of light for his people, who were living in eternal apostasy. God chose him alone, out of all his sibling sons of Israel whose eyelids were cast with darkness, and opened his eyes alone and called to him, you are my chosen one and Israel will return to me. So thought the sick boy.<sup>27</sup>

Through his choice of language, Smolenskin's translation addresses a readership that cannot necessarily read German and is not connected to German culture. Instead, the translation is intended for a readership that is able to read Hebrew and thus shares a deep-rooted connection to Judaism and the contemporary dis-

23 Smolenskin, 254–55. Hebrew original: “ובעת אשר אך החל לשוב לימי עלומיו, בימים האלה שמע רק: דברים נחומים מפי מורו, אשר קרא רק מעל ברית החדשה וימלא רוחו בדברי השליחים, ולבו היה חלש ולא מצא כח לחשוב מחשבות אשר חזן וילדו, ורוחו רפה ולא עצר כח ללחום נגד מחשבות אחרים.”

24 Smolenskin, 256.

25 Smolenskin, 250.

26 Smolenskin, 250.

27 Smolenskin, 255. Hebrew original: “בהיותו במצב כזה גמר אמר ויחליט, כי הוא נבחר מבטן ומטעי אמו: קרא בשמו להיות לאור מאיר לעמו, אשר שובב במשובה נצחת, בו בחר ה' מכל אחיו בני ישראל אשר על עפעפיהם צלמות ורק עיניו פקח ויקרא לו בחירי אתה וישראל אלי תשוב. כה השב הנער החולה.”



courses on Jewishness. Judging from the introductory pages of this critique-translation, the hardship of the Jewish people – in Smolenskin's terms, "every tragedy, every trouble, every suffering,"<sup>28</sup> indicating poverty, of course, but more substantially persecution and ongoing antisemitic violence – lies at the root of the call for a national awakening. Moreover, Smolenskin transfers part of his own experiences of violence and discrimination onto Samuel, who is called "a Jew, a Jew"<sup>29</sup> and is hence rejected by society and identified as an Other in spite of his Christian upbringing. Samuel does not defend himself by inflicting violence or even by talking back, but when confronted with such aggression, he begins to question his surroundings: "But why does this people live in eternal apostasy and why was this man so stiff-necked and displaying to all that he was a man without belief?"<sup>30</sup> This quotation shows that Samuel's approach to Judaism is twofold: on the one hand, he is an Other who is not fully accepted into Christian society, and he eventually discovers that he feels quite close and deeply connected to his Jewish family and to certain aspects of Judaism that he remembers from his childhood; however, he has also adopted Christian prejudices, and thus he does not encounter Judaism open-mindedly and is unwilling to engage in a dialogue at eye level. He is naïve and arrogant at the same time. Nevertheless, regardless of Samuel's ambivalence towards Judaism, his sense of belonging to the Jewish people becomes increasingly significant throughout the narrative. This is one of the central aspects that Smolenskin brings forward in order to establish his idea of nationalism.

In light of the continuous dispersion of the Jewish people all over the world,<sup>31</sup> Smolenskin attempted to establish a common and self-positive narrative that went beyond a perception of Jewishness as the majority's Other. He describes the Jewish people as stubborn and unwilling to give in. Therefore, he assumes, they would not fit into the common narrative that dominated European

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28 Smolenskin, 249. Hebrew original: "כל צרה וכל פגע וכל ענות."

29 Smolenskin, 256; lowercase in original.

30 Smolenskin, 256. Hebrew original: "אבל מדוע שוב העם הזה משובה נצחת ומדוע יקשה האיש הזה את? ערפו ויראה לכל כי בן בלי אמונה הוא?"

31 From the start, Samuel is called "the Hebrew boy" ("הנער העברי", 251), and is described as "son of a man of Israel of those who settled in Ashkenaz" ("שמואל היה בן איש ישראל מהיושבים") ("באשכנז", 251). In this context, *Ashkenaz* refers to a geographical location. Thus, Smolenskin's text and translation point to the novel's nineteenth-century context, when the terms *Ashkenaz* and even *Ashkenazim* were not used in Hebrew texts to indicate Jews coming from Western and Central Europe, but rather to generally refer to the wider geographical area and its inhabitants, whether Jewish or non-Jewish. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the Jewish dispersion goes far beyond *Ashkenaz* when the narrator mentions "the land of America which became the holy land" ("ארץ אמעריקא, אשר היתה בארץ הקדושה", 252).

religious thinking: “A stiff-necked people they are, like Israel that refused to be tempted into believing.”<sup>32</sup> The idiom *k’she oref* (קשה ערף; “stiff-necked”) stems from a biblical context that is also used to describe the people of Israel. In Exodus 32:9, God notices the Israelites worshipping the golden calf and tells Moses they are a stiff-necked people. In Smolenskin’s critique-translation, however, it is considered a positive trait: initially, this stubbornness may have caused anger, but after the Jewish people had accepted monotheism and embraced the role of God’s chosen people, that same stubbornness is what prevented them from giving up their Jewishness for a life that favors belief over knowledge.

The quality of being stiff-necked or stubborn – in Smolenskin’s terms and not necessarily according to the biblical understanding – refers to the spirit of a single individual, but also to the spirit of, or within, a wider community.<sup>33</sup> “Spirit” is in fact the third of three terms, following the two negating words “belief” and “knowledge,” that occupy a central role in the text. Indeed, it is these three key words that demonstrate how the text incorporates the transition from Enlightenment to nationalism on a linguistic level. Especially in the maskilic movement, which is based on the German language, we can find a strong focus on education that is further integrated into a general discussion regarding *Bildung* in German culture. As the historian Amos Elon puts it: “In the eyes of the young, the key to integration was through the cult of *Bildung*, as defined in Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meister*: the refinement of the individual self and character in keeping with the ideals of the Enlightenment.”<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, and even though

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32 Smolenskin, “לכל זמן: זכרונות בית יהודי, מכתבי שליח,” 259. Hebrew original: “עם קשה ערף כישראל – אשר ימאן להפתות ולהאמין.”

33 As mentioned above, Smolenskin underlines the crucial impact of being stubborn and stiff-necked, which, in his view, may result in preventing “assimilation” into the majority society and culture and conversion to the majority religion. He achieves this by translating the whole of the story-within-the-story that Herzberg included in his novel, “The Jewess of Tangiers.” For his translations, Smolenskin typically chose only several paragraphs, or two to three pages at most. However, he included “The Jewess of Tangiers” in its entirety. Early on in the text, he links *k’she oref* with martyrdom: “A stiff-necked person will choose death over life” (“קשה ערף”, “בהר מות מהיים”, 259). In hindsight, this sentence reads as a prelude to the following story about Esther, which maintains the notion of martyrdom. The stubborn character of an individual who stands for the entirety of the Jewish people has a crucial standing in Smolenskin’s text. For this reason, the translation of Esther’s story occupies a large amount of space. Indeed, the discordance in proportion and the fact that Smolenskin’s critique and translation are much shorter than Herzberg’s original bestow this story-within-a-story with meaning beyond the retarding effect that such stories regularly invoke while arousing the reader’s attention and suspense.

34 Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A History of Jews in Germany, 1743–1933* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 65–66. For an extensive analysis, see George L. Mosse. *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

Smolenskin's Hebrew translation mirrors this reference by mentioning Goethe on numerous occasions, his text concurrently belongs to another "tradition," as does Herzberg's epistolary novel: one that aims to bridge the gap between the Enlightenment and an early Jewish nationalist movement. Hebrew texts in particular contributed greatly to the debate on maskilic topics. This might seem natural, since Hebrew itself is considered the language of the Jewish people and thus a potential national language; however, these texts took the discussion a step further, as the literary scholar and historian of Hebrew literature Gershon Shaked had previously noted: "From darkness to light, from conservatism to assimilation, from social slavery to freedom – all these were proven false. This change influenced the making of the national movement and the intelligentsia's approach toward the cultural future of the people."<sup>35</sup> Shaked's description not only hints at the strong links between self-awareness and a recognition of the false promises of "assimilation," but also points to a consequential development – from the first maskilic writings in Hebrew to a literary national awakening. We can even go so far as to reject a dichotomizing approach that separates them or characterizes them as sequential and instead understand them as two trends that mesh into each other in different and complex ways, depending on many different factors such as time, place, language, and individual persons.

There is one final aspect that is relevant to our analysis of Smolenskin's translation. In 1806, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* was published. Hegel's writings exerted an enormous impact on nineteenth-century concepts such as *Volk*, state, nation, and nationhood. During this time period, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement developed and set itself the goal of exploring Jewish history by means of scientific works. Judaism was thus conceptualized as a part of European culture, and this simultaneously brought it one step closer to acceptance within this very general culture.<sup>36</sup> Moreover,

Europe, which was now entering the age of spirit and science according to the basic conviction of the time, was, as it were, the symbol of a metaphysical realization, and thus the sociological problem of Judaism became all the more metaphysical, especially since the in-

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<sup>35</sup> Gershon Shaked, *הסיפורת העברית 1880–1980* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz Hameuchad/Keter, 2000), 1:25. Hebrew original: "מחושך לאור, משמרנות להתבוללות, מעבודות חברתית לחירות – נתבדותה. שינוי זה." <sup>36</sup> Sinai (Siegfried) Ucko, "Geistesgeschichtliche Grundlagen der Wissenschaft des Judentums (Motive des Kulturvereins vom Jahre 1819)," in *Wissenschaft des Judentums im deutschen Sprachbereich: Ein Querschnitt*, ed. Kurt Wilhelm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 1:315–52, here 315.

clination towards this question was already outlined in the shifting concern from “how” to “what.”<sup>37</sup>

We can, however, note that the metaphysical realization of Judaism’s participation in world history is soon replaced by a political manifestation and action that are again derived from Hegel’s conception of *Geist*. This concept implies the notion that a people enters history at the point at which it constitutes itself as a nation. The next step would be to establish a state, which, according to Hegel, is the “objectified spirit.”<sup>38</sup> With Hegel, the previously theologically conceptualized *Geist* becomes “the embodiment of historical development.”<sup>39</sup> The turn from spiritual to embodied concepts of community, and consequently to nationhood within a functioning state, can be traced in Smolenskin’s writing.

In other words, the shift of emphasis from religion to historical development, and the concept of a nation-state that manifests itself in the latter, not only led to a national awakening, but also, to a greater extent, formed rather practical ideas regarding nationhood, which had by that time become visible in Peretz Smolenskin’s thinking. Smolenskin pursued a clear nationalist goal, which was to “colonize Palestine” and to reestablish the Jewish cultural center in the land of Israel.<sup>40</sup> However, for most of his life, this plan was not executed, and it was eventually relinquished by him as well. Instead, he dedicated himself to Hebrew literature, the development of which he saw as an essential milestone on the path towards these nationalist goals.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, here again the crucial connection between nation and spirit comes into play, since in Smolenskin’s view, the spirit is the “living” Torah. Thereby, he referred not only to the text of the Torah, but to the Hebrew language as well. Consequently, he evoked the notion that the Torah is more than a religious scripture, and conceived it rather as a text that constitutes the people, the state, and the nation. At the same time, Smolenskin

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37 “Europa, das nun nach der Grundüberzeugung der Zeit – in die Epoche des Geistes und der Wissenschaft eintrat, war gleichsam das Symbol metaphysischer Verwirklichung, und so wird erst recht das soziologische Problem des Judentums zu einem metaphysischen, zumal die Hineigung zu dieser Fragestellung schon in der Problemwendung vom ‘Wie’ zum ‘Was’ angelegt war”; Ucko, “Geistesgeschichtliche Grundlagen der Wissenschaft des Judentums,” 343–44.

38 Erik R. Lybeck, “Geist (Spirit): History of the Concept,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Second Edition*, ed. James D. Wright (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), 666–70, here 667.

39 Fethi Açıkel, “A Critique of the *Occidental Geist*: Embedded Historical Culturalism in the Works of Hegel, Weber and Huntington,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 19, no. 1 (2006): 60–83, here 60.

40 Freundlich, *Peretz Smolenskin*, 55, and Patterson, “Smolenskin,” 693.

41 Freundlich, *Peretz Smolenskin*, 55, and Patterson, “Smolenskin,” 693.

was “convinced that Jewish nationalism was progressive and not reactionary [and thus] he regarded it primarily as a matter of the spirit.”<sup>42</sup> This spirit might have the ability to heal the people of their blows;<sup>43</sup> in particular, Jewish nationalism was supposed to bring new light which would allow the people to finally abandon the exilic notion of imprisonment: “At the time when new light had been slowly appearing over Israel, residing in those lands for over eighty years, even then they did not believe in the power of their souls, and even when they were free, they imagined themselves as prisoners and behaved as expected from such.”<sup>44</sup>

### Language and Genre: “Translating” Herzberg’s *Jewish Family Papers* into Hebrew

Modern readers are used to translations that aspire to be accurate insofar as they convey the intention of the original language. Thus, it may be difficult to view Smolenskin’s *Le-khol Zman* as a “true” translation. The liberty he took in transferring the text to Hebrew does not conform to twentieth and twenty-first-century norms. Nor, however, does it negate Jacques Derrida’s postmodern postulate of “untranslatability.” After all, Smolenskin did not aspire to be a translator in the Benjaminian sense; that is, to remain as close to the text as possible and accept the consequential alienation effect.<sup>45</sup> Rather, he understood his task as a translator not only in terms of transferring the main issues of Herzberg’s novel into Hebrew, but also in terms of reflecting on them and explaining them to his potential readers.

42 Freundlich, *Peretz Smolenskin*, 55, and Patterson, “Smolenskin,” 693.

43 Smolenskin, “לכל זמן: זכרונות בית יהודי, מכתבי שליח,” 250. Hebrew original: “צריך לרפא את ‘העם’ מהמכות.”

44 Smolenskin, 249. Hebrew original: “מעט אשר החל אור חדש להופיע לאט לאט לישראל, בארצות האלה, זה כשמונים שנה, כי גם בעת הזאת עוד לא האמינו בכח נפשם וגם כאשר יצאו לחפשי דטו כי עורם כלואים באבני בור ולטשטעת שר בית האסורים יסורו.”

45 The task of the translator “consists in finding the particular intention toward the target language which produces in that language the echo of the original.” English quotation from Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, 4th printing (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 258. In German: Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers “besteht darin, diejenige Intention auf die Sprache, in die übersetzt wird, zu finden, von der aus in ihr das Echo des Originals erweckt wird.” See Walter Benjamin, “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers,” in *Kleine Prosa. Baudelaire-Übertragungen*, vol. 4, bk. 1 of *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Tillman Rexroth (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2018), 9–21, here 16.



debate wherein representatives of the Christian society do not function as addressees or even readers – with the exception of some theologians who have received sufficient language education. This is in part a consequence of the translation itself and of the language chosen for the critique. Moreover, the Jewish addressees were most likely able to read the original. This explains why Smolenskin's text is often more of a review of, and an elaboration on, subjects discussed by Herzberg rather than an actual translation. The decision to choose this "genre" is consequently reflected in the format: the epistolary form of the original gives way to a continuous text.

It might seem rational and consistent to forgo the epistolary format in the translation and select only specific parts when aiming to transfer only particular contents and ideas from one language into another. However, this method poses new questions and problems. On the one hand, Samuel is looking for his authentic self, and in the German version, his figurative voice tells this story through the letters;<sup>50</sup> the novel's seemingly authentic impression cannot be found in Smolenskin's critique-translation, of course. On the other hand, Smolenskin's text stresses the quintessential importance of a broad variety of topics, since Smolenskin, like the narrator in the original, includes the warnings about and criticism of Christian society and an anti-assimilationist narrative.<sup>51</sup> The latter in particular seems of disproportionate importance, especially when we take into consideration the above-mentioned fact that the most extensively translated part is the story about Esther. In addition, Smolenskin then supplemented this section with his explanation as to why Herzberg included this story: "In this story about Esther, the writer showed, whether intentionally or not, I do not know, the ways of Israel since the beginning of time."<sup>52</sup>

Interestingly, the first part of the text is mostly dedicated to Smolenskin's introduction and to an explanation of the setting, which includes a vast re-narration of the death of Samuel's parents and his arrival at his uncle's house. The second part, on the other hand, contains paragraphs that come closest to a translation in the narrowest sense: dialogues between the characters, as well as extensive parts of Esther's story. The third part is then again conceptualized as a critique and conclusion, articulating Smolenskin's own thoughts and elaboration on the text and beyond.

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<sup>50</sup> Herrmann, *Zionismus und Authentizität*, 37.

<sup>51</sup> Herzberg wrote the novel after his own brother had been baptized, and he aimed for the text to be a call to German Jews not to abandon their faith. See Herrmann, *Zionismus und Authentizität*, 36–37.

<sup>52</sup> Smolenskin, "לכל זמן: זכרונות בית יהודי, מכתבי שליח", 371. Hebrew original: "בספור זה, בדרכי, אסתר הראה הסופר, אם חפץ לעשות זאת או אין, זאת לא אדע, דרכי עם ישראל מעת היותו."

An exemplary reading of the first scene that appears as a translation and not only as a summary reveals some interesting points. Firstly, it becomes obvious that Smolenskin's critique-translation skips large segments of Herzberg's original: apart from the short episode depicting Samuel's father's death (pages 252–53 in *Ha-Shahar*), which incorporates traces of direct speech, the first appearance of a translation in the narrowest sense of the term occurs with the passages taken from the fourteenth letter (from page 315 onward). The second point worth noting is that Smolenskin mostly translated dialogues, which he interlaced into his critique-translation, indicating that he was focusing on the characters' speech rather than on a third-person narrator. Thirdly, we wish to note that Smolenskin translated a scene which "introduces" Samuel to Judaism and thus suggests the young man's return to his faith and his nation. The scene opens with Benjamin entering Samuel's room:

– On Shabbat morning Benjamin came into Samuel's room wearing his finest clothing and saw Samuel sitting at his desk and writing.

– Will you write today? – Benjamin asked.

– Why wouldn't I write today? Is it because you are going to a wedding?

– The bride is coming to us – answered Benjamin – it is Shabbat today. This is why I came here, to ask if you would come with me to the house of prayer?

Samuel stood up reluctantly, hid his writing materials and said: I do not want to.<sup>53</sup>

This dialogue reveals the extent of Samuel's estrangement from the religious way of life, which also becomes clear in Herzberg's version. But Benjamin's response concerning his clothing in particular demonstrates that Smolenskin was writing or translating for a different readership than Herzberg: he did not translate Herzberg's additional explanation about the bride as a metaphor for the seventh day, which derives from a traditional Shabbat song; the bride who is coming to visit is in itself enough of a hint, since Smolenskin expected his readers to understand the context and the metaphorical meaning of the term within these lines. Later on, following Benjamin and Samuel's arrival at the synagogue for the Shabbat service, Benjamin and his father, Samuel's uncle, read from the Torah, or rather "go up to the Torah."<sup>54</sup> Whereas in Herzberg's version, Benjamin simply says a

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53 Smolenskin, 315–16. Hebrew original: "ביום השבת בבוקר בא בנימין לחדרו לבוש במלבושי כבוד. האם יען כי ומצאהו יושב אל השלחן וכותב. אתה תכתוב היום? – שאלהו בנימין. ולמה זה לא אכתוב היום. האם יען כי ומצאהו יושב אל השלחן וכותב. – תלך אל בית חתונה? – הכלה באה אלינו – ענה בנימין – הלא שבת היום. על כן באתי לשאול מפיד אם תלך – אתי לבית התפלה? – שמואל קם בלי חמדה ממקומו ויסתר כלי הכתיבה ואמר: לא אחפון –

54 Smolenskin, 317. Hebrew original: "לעלות לתורה."



blessing over the scrolls, Smolenskin uses the original Hebrew term “going up” in its traditional wording, which of course blends into the text almost unnoticed. The fact that the cantor’s blessing over the scrolls is intelligibly printed in its original language only adds to our observation regarding Smolenskin’s intended readership. It thus becomes clear that especially within the context of Shabbat, Smolenskin chose to translate this scene because he thought of it as a crucial example of the narration of Jewish belonging within Herzberg’s novel. By doing so, he demonstrated that Hebrew was a natural language for this essential moment in the Jewish weekly routine – not only in a religious sense, but in a national sense as well. In other words, Smolenskin transferred the text into a language that seems inherent to crucial aspects of Samuel’s search for identity and added paragraphs that discuss his belonging to the Jewish people.

Many thinkers have previously pointed at the intimate relationship between language and the nation. Thus, it is not surprising that the nineteenth century generated not only the notion of a nation and a wave of nationalistic movements, but also new ideas about the interrelation of language and community. One of the most prominent thinkers of this time was Hegel, whose previously mentioned concepts such as *Volk*, nation, nationhood, and spirit left a mark on intellectuals like Peretz Smolenskin. From the 1860s to the 1880s, Smolenskin began promoting the connection between the Hebrew language and a Jewish national consciousness. As aforementioned, this led to a rather interesting conclusion: according to him, the Torah was the basis of Jewish nationhood. Moreover, since knowledge of Hebrew is necessary for studying the Torah, this linguistic competence is consequently equally integral to the formation of a Jewish nation. For Smolenskin, this did not mean that Hebrew had to be revived as a spoken language.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, *Ha-Shahar* was mostly dedicated to promoting Hebrew and to establishing it – not necessarily as the spoken national language, but as the gateway to the nation and a portal to the national spiritual source, the Torah. In this respect, *Le-khol Zman* demonstrates Smolenskin’s efforts to accomplish these goals in his practical work as an editor, translator, and critic.

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55 Freundlich, *Peretz Smolenskin*, 83.

## 2 Pines and Binyamin: The Partial “Complete” Translation

On the occasion of Herzberg’s death in 1897, the writer and translator Yechiel Michel Pines (1843, Ruzhany – 1913, Jerusalem)<sup>56</sup> wrote a eulogy in which he glorified the author’s public and educational work, but gave significant praise to his writing.<sup>57</sup> According to Pines, “as in a magnifying glass that gathers scattered rays of sunshine into one point, so has this book assembled a wide world of sublime ideas regarding Judaism and its literature and theory.”<sup>58</sup> At the end of this eulogy, Pines declared his intention to translate the entire book for the Jerusalem B’nai B’rith lodge,<sup>59</sup> of which Herzberg was a founder and the first president, since “we are obligated to give the audience the gift of his mighty spirit.”<sup>60</sup>

The need for a translation seemed clear to Pines; Herzberg was a well-known figure in the Yishuv, but only for his public work and his German writings. The Hebrew readers in Russia (“אחינו ברוסיה”) and those who had emigrated from there knew Smolenskin’s partial translation from *Ha-Shahar*,<sup>61</sup> but Pines maintained that the change of time and place required a new edition. Furthermore,

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**56** Pines was a writer, translator, and Zionist activist, and he had been a member of the old Yishuv in Jerusalem since 1878. He taught foreign languages and acted as a supporter of such teaching, alongside Herzberg. He was also one of the founders of the “Academy of the Hebrew Language” with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Freidlin wrote of him: “He was a very complex man, [...] he was an ultra-Orthodox Jew, and yet a critic of the Orthodoxy and its establishments.” He was also a controversial public figure, supporting both the old and the new Yishuv in a time of great conflict between the two. See Israel Freidlin, “יחיאל מיכל פינס בין היישוב הישן ל'ישוב',” *קתדרה* 51 (1989): 93–102. Available online: [http://www.ybz.org.il/\\_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/Article\\_51.10.pdf](http://www.ybz.org.il/_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/Article_51.10.pdf).

**57** Yechiel Michel Pines, “ציון לנפש מצוינת,” *העצירה*, May 21, 1897, 1–2.

**58** Pines, “ציון לנפש מצוינת,” 1. Hebrew original: “בזכות המגדלת המקבצת קרני שמש המפוזרים” כמו בשטח גדול בנקודה אחת כן נקבצו ובה בחיבור האחד הזה עולם מלא של רעיונות נשגבים על היהדות ותורתה. המפליאים את הדעת.”

**59** Natan Haefrati, “תרמ”ח-תרע”ט”, *קתדרה* (1888–1919), הפרוטוקולים של לשכת ‘בני-ברית ירושלים’, תרמ”ח-תרע”ט” (December 1988): 140–66. Available online: [https://www.ybz.org.il/\\_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/Article\\_50.4.pdf](https://www.ybz.org.il/_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/Article_50.4.pdf).

**60** Pines not only stated his engagement to translate the book, but also announced to the readership that they should expect Herzberg’s full biography, which David Kauffman was intending to write in Budapest in the near future.

**61** Pines, “ציון לנפש מצוינת,” 1. Hebrew original: “רוב אחינו ברוסיה מכירים את ענין החיבור הזה רק” מהביקורת החרוזה אשר כתב עליו הרפ”ס בהשחר [...] אבל לא אנום אם אומר, כי הביקורת הזו אינה אלא בבואה דבבואה מגוף הדברים, והעיקר חסר מן הספר, לא מפני שלא עמד הרפ”ס על העיקר החסיר, כי אם מפני שגדרו עליו הדרך... ואותה הסיבה עצמה היא גם המעכבת אותי מהרחיב הדיבור על אותו הנדון.”

Pines justified Smolenskin's limited and edited version by claiming that the core of the text was missing not because Smolenskin had not understood its importance, but as a result of the restrictions he had had to follow, thus implying the influence of Russian censorship.<sup>62</sup>

During that same year, Pines translated the first nine letters of the book under the title *Megilot Beit-Av* (מגילות בית-אב), but did not publish them.<sup>63</sup> He translated two more letters in the following years, but then discontinued the work.<sup>64</sup> He died in 1913, and by then the interest of the readership had probably shifted to other texts that required translating. Consequently, the unpublished work remained in the archives of the B'nai B'rith organization. In 1922/23, the Hebrew scholar Eliezer Raphael Malachi (1895–1980) wrote an article about the novel for the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Toren*, which was published in the US. Therein, he described his efforts to obtain parts of Pines's manuscript that were "scattered and partly lost."<sup>65</sup> The article concludes with a note by the editor of *Ha-Toren*, the author and literary critic Reuben Brainin (1862–1939), stating that he himself intended to translate the rest of the novel.<sup>66</sup>

More than thirty years passed before the Hebrew translation was finally published. The Jerusalem lodge of the B'nai B'rith organization initiated the full translation, dedicating it to Herzberg's memory. The mission was given over to Rabbi Binyamin, the pseudonym of Yehoshua Radler-Feldman (1880, Zboriv – 1957, Jerusalem).<sup>67</sup> Binyamin collected the unpublished translation, edited and

62 Pines, "ציון לנפש מצונית", 1. As we have argued in this paper, Smolenskin also had a clear agenda in mind when producing his translation.

63 The unpublished manuscript is held by the national library in Jerusalem and is available to the public here: [https://rosetta.nli.org.il/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE37802600](https://rosetta.nli.org.il/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE37802600).

64 Binyamin suggested that Pines stopped working on his translation due to his character: he was a thorough but slow and impatient translator, and ultimately preferred other occupations: Binyamin, "מבוא", 23.

65 Eliezer Raphael Malachi, "בנימין זאב הרצברג וספרו 'כתבי משפחה עבריים'", 13 *התורן* (1922–1923): 7–16. Reprinted in Reiner Ben-Shamai, ed., "בנימין זאב הרצברג וספרו 'כתבי משפחה עבריים'", "מנגד תראה": 501–10, here 509. Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2001), 501–10, here 509. Hebrew original: "וגם המעט שהיה מסודר, התגולל זמן רב ובמשך הזמן נאבד." "

66 As far as we know, Brainin did not translate the rest of the novel, nor did he publish more of it, even though he declared his intention to do so. Interestingly, he refers to the book by its Yiddish title and contextualizes it within the framework of "foreign" (*loazit*; לועזית) literature: "By publishing the translation of the book 'יודישע פאמיליענפאפערע' in *Ha-Toren*, we are redeeming one of the most important and sublime books created in foreign Jewish literature." Malachi, "בנימין" 501 "בהדפסת התרגום של הספר 'יודישע פאמיליענפאפערע' ב'התורן', מביאים אנו נאולה לאחד הספרים היותר חשובים ונעלים שיצרה הספרות היהודית-לועזית."

67 For more on Binyamin's life and work, see Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History*, trans. Anthony Berris (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012), 81–87. In a recent article, David Ellenson de-

updated it, translated some of the missing parts, and added an introduction and “closing remarks,” which we wish to discuss in the following pages. At the end of 1929, during Hanukkah of the year תר"ץ, the book, titled *Kitvey Mishpaha Ivri'im*, was printed and published in Jerusalem, celebrating Herzberg's one-hundredth birthday.<sup>68</sup> In his introduction, Binyamin shares his gratitude to the organization that enabled the translation: “Thanks to the grace of B'nai B'rith, which remained loyal to the magnificent figure of Herzberg for decades after his death, this book is published now with glory and a sense of duty.”<sup>69</sup>

A thorough examination of the Hebrew text from 1929 – the latest and most extensive translation into Hebrew since 1868 and until this day – reveals two parts and one gap. Letters 1 to 11 are Pines's translation, which includes minor editing by Binyamin.<sup>70</sup> Binyamin's translation begins, strangely enough, in the *middle* of letter 11, continuing until letter 23, and is then followed by the “family papers.” Surprisingly, the text does not include letters 24 to 29, even though Binyamin repeatedly referred to this book as “the complete translation” of Herzberg's *Jewish Family Papers*.<sup>71</sup> As a substitute for the missing letters, Binyamin added another part titled “Ending” (סיום)<sup>72</sup> between letter 23 and the final part of the book, the “family papers.” In it, he presented “the translator's notes,” meaning his summary of letters 24 to 29, which he considered irrelevant for the Hebrew reader.

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scribes Binyamin's approach to nationalism and Jewish life in Eretz-Israel; see David Ellenson, “The 1946 Exchange between Rav Tzair (Chaim Tchernowitz) and Rav Binyamin (Yehoshua Raddler-Feldman) on Bi-Nationalism and the Creation of a Jewish State,” *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2019): 137–49.

**68** This is stated at the beginning of the book, though December 1929 would actually have been Herzberg's 102nd birthday.

**69** Pines and Binyamin, כתבי משפחה עבריים, 25. Hebrew original: “הודות לחדש של אמת של בני' הודות לחדש של אמת של בני' אשר שמרו את אמונם לאישיות המפוארה של וילהלם הרצברג עשרות שנים לאחר מותו, יוצא עכשיו ברית', הספר בעברית בהדור ובטפול של חובה.”

**70** That translation was never published, but letters 1 to 9 are available to the public in the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem (see note 63 here). Pines's translation, without the original page numbers or Binyamin's changes, is also available via the *Ben-Yehuda Project* website: <https://bybe.benyehuda.org/read/11350>.

**71** Pines and Binyamin, כתבי משפחה עבריים, 23. Hebrew original: “תרגום שלם של הספר”

**72** Pines and Binyamin, כתבי משפחה עבריים, 203–5.

## Pines's Translation: *Megilot Beit-Av*

Pines was an important and central figure in the revival of the Hebrew language. In 1882, together with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922), he initiated the Israel Revival organization (Tehiyat Yisra'el; תחיית ישראל), and he translated numerous books of science, nature, anatomy, and law. Within these fields can be found various words that Pines invented or restored to the Hebrew dictionary. Pines was a strong advocate for Hebrew, and he condemned the use of non-Hebrew words as part of the Hebrew language. He even published a manifesto for translators in which he argued that the greatness of a new Hebrew word comes from the fact that it is not remotely new.<sup>73</sup> By this, he meant that he would always favor a word that had been used in the Bible or in Talmudic literature and had later been neglected, not known, or misused by subsequent generations. Hence, an awareness of his linguistic ideology should accompany any reading of his translation of Herzberg's text.

Pines's agenda is evident in his decision to specify dates using the Hebrew calendar (כ"ח אלול של חמה), whereas Binyamin used the Gregorian calendar ("28 בספטמבר 185..."). It is also apparent in his usage of new Hebrew words – some of which he himself had invented not long before. Two of the most prominent examples are שעון ("clock") and תקוצה ("awakening").<sup>74</sup> Moreover, all the non-Hebrew words appear only in footnotes. For example, Pines used the term המוחאים, a literal translation of "Protestants"; this is a Hebrew form of a non-Hebrew word, but in the footnote (as in Binyamin's version), the word is simply displayed as פרוטסטנטים – a transliteration of "Protestants" and the accepted form in modern Hebrew. A similar attempt to invent a new word in Hebrew is התחדושות for "reformation," which later appeared in Binyamin's text in its transliterated form as ריפורמציה.

Furthermore, Pines uses Yiddish as a "middle language." When choosing a Hebrew word that the readers may not recognize, he added a footnote that indicated the meaning in Yiddish. For example, in the first letter, when Samuel is surprised to see that the customs officers at the port he has arrived at do not

73 Yechiel Michal Pines, "דבר לעוסקים בתחיית שפתנו," *הצבי* (January 1893): [https://web.nli.org.il/sites/nli/hebrew/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=NNL03\\_EDUSP5374&presentorid=NLI\\_EDU](https://web.nli.org.il/sites/nli/hebrew/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=NNL03_EDUSP5374&presentorid=NLI_EDU) (accessed July 7, 2020).

74 Pines and Binyamin, *כתבי משפחה עבריים*, 13; 28. Hebrew original: "ואביט אל השעון וכמעט עבר" "ליל; אם לא תחוש בלבבך שמחה טבעית בצדק ובמישרים ותקוצה פנימית מפני העול והעשק, בידוע שלא" "עמדו אבותיך על הר סיני, זרע אמת אינך."

bother him, this sentence appears: “אבל לתמהוני פטרונו בלי כל בלישה”;<sup>75</sup> the following footnote consists of an explanation which incorporates Hebrew and Yiddish vocabulary: “אונטערזוכונג. כמו בולשת הבאה לעיר (כתובות) ומקל הבילשין (כלים).”<sup>76</sup>

In another letter, the Hebrew sentence reads: “ואמסר לידה את חרְטְתִי.” In the footnote, Pines added: “לפי דעתי הנה המלה הזאת אשר מקורה ברומית” ווייטען-קארטע. “כרטא' מוצאה משרש 'חרט' העברי ולכן השיבותה לישר הכתיבה העברית”.<sup>77</sup> The text offers many other examples of Pines’s use of Yiddish to explain the new and unique Hebrew words he chose to include. A few are displayed in the following table:

Tab. 1

Pines’s [Hebrew] translation	Yiddish vocabulary in footnotes	English translation
חדר מדעך	שטודיר ציממער	study room
המלעבה	טיאטר	theater
קנאני	פאנאטיש	fanatical

According to Malachi, Pines was “the only one that was capable of this translation.”<sup>78</sup> He was good friends with Herzberg, and they shared a similar perspective on belief and art. Pines was also an enthusiastic and meticulous linguist.<sup>79</sup> Despite all this, however, the translation was never completed, and it was consequently overlooked and almost forgotten. Furthermore, like all translations, it became increasingly old-fashioned with time.

75 The word “בלישה” was not accepted in modern Hebrew, and Binyamin’s translation used the word “בדיקה” instead.

76 Pines, כתבי משפחה עבריים; first letter. The original sentence in German does not use the word “Untersuchung”: “Ich war angenehm überrascht, daß die bei uns so lästige Zollbehörde mich ganz in Ruhe ließ.”

77 Pines, כתבי משפחה עבריים; second letter. The word “חרט” in the sense of “card” was also not accepted in Hebrew, and Binyamin used the word “ברטיסי.”

78 Malachi, “בנימין זאב הרצברג וספרו 'כתבי משפחה עבריים'”, 509. Hebrew original: “ואמנם, היה פינס: “היחידי שהיה מוכשר למעשה תרגום זה.”

79 David Yellin, “זכרונות ועד הלשון העברית, “רבי יחיאל מיכל פינס ז”ל ופעולתו בלשון ובועד הלשון”, 3 (Jerusalem: Lonz, 1913): 3–10. <https://hebrew-academy.org.il/wp-content/uploads/BookletC-Part1.pdf> (accessed July 7, 2020).

## Binyamin's Translation: *Kitvey Mishpaha Ivri'im*

For many years, Binyamin was a fierce critic of the Yishuv's hegemonic Zionism. The historian Avi-ram Tzoreff describes the principal conflict between Binyamin and the hegemonic center as follows:

The focus on RB's [Rabbi Binyamin's] perspective exemplifies the attempts to form a different type of Jewish nationalism that resisted the fundamental distinctions of European nationalism in general and Zionism in particular: the contradictions of nation and religion, religion and secularism, east and west, and Jew and Arab, as well as those of selfhood and tradition.<sup>80</sup>

In an article published in the literary periodical *Moznaim*, Binyamin describes the situation of the Jewish community in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Binyamin's reductive view, "assimilation" was at its peak, no national movement was present, and the only future for the youth was in converting. Against this backdrop, Binyamin introduces Herzberg's *Jewish Family Papers*: "And in those days there came a man from Israel, Herzberg, and he wrote one of the most enthusiastic and exciting books in the literature of Israel."<sup>81</sup> This statement shows that for Binyamin, the German-Jewish community was not autonomous, but a part of "Israel." Thus, Binyamin considered Herzberg's novel to be part of the "literature of Israel," regardless of the language it was written in or its European backdrop. Binyamin further complimented the bravery of this book, admiring the "war against Christianity" in which Herzberg took part as "a free man [...], philosopher, scientist and a poet." Binyamin claims that the book was "a book of between periods of time. It was the herald [...] of the *Tehiya* [revival; תחייה] period."

For his own translation, Binyamin drew on the existing works by Smolenskin and Pines. He attempted to address the translation via what he thought to be a more progressive approach. As opposed to Smolenskin, who had a "warm feeling and gratitude" towards the original text, but "chose only some parts and sto-

<sup>80</sup> Avi-ram Tzoreff, "Jewish-Arab Coexistence against the Secular Discourse: Theology, Politics and Literature in the Writings of Yehoshua Radler-Feldman (R. Binyamin, 1880–1957)" (PhD diss., Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2018), 312.

<sup>81</sup> Binyamin, "כתבי משפחה עבריים, לצאת הספר בעברית", 33 מאוניים (November 29, 1929), 10–11. Hebrew original: "הימים לפני התחוללות התנועה האנטישמית באשכנז. הימים ימי ההתבוללות בשיא תקפה, לא" היה עדיין זכר לתנועה לאומית בישראל, החיים היהודיים הצטמצמו הלן והצטמצם, הדרך הכבושה לנוער היהודי היתה מן האוהל החוצה, הוא הדרך אשר התווה היינה, ברנה, לסל ואחרים. [...] ובעצם הימים ההם קם אדם מ'ישראל', וילהלם הרצברג, וכתב אחד הספרים הנלהבים ביותר והמלהיבים ביותר בספרות ישראל."

ries,”<sup>82</sup> or Pines, who “did not translate closely, but rather only transferred the context,”<sup>83</sup> Binyamin maintained that the translator should be committed to the original work. Nonetheless, he clearly held great respect for the earlier translators; he reported that Smolenskin’s translation was before him when he worked, and he used Pines’s translation (of letters 1–11) almost “as is,” making only minor changes. He did not, however, integrate Pines’s work completely.<sup>84</sup>

Interestingly, the part of the book that was not translated gives the most substantial and revealing indication of Binyamin’s opinion of Herzberg’s book. As mentioned before, Binyamin summarized letters 24 to 29 under the title “Ending.” He writes:

The story was written with great talent, but with the spirit and sentiment of its time, fifty years ago, and its nuances are more German than Hebrew. It describes the [...] German bourgeoisie of the time, which became obsolete, and in any case the Hebrew reader of our time has no interest in them. Therefore, the translator saw fit to release this Hebrew book from this burden [...] with the intention that this would not harm the book itself and that these antiquated and strange characteristics would not overshadow the book’s thoughts and logic.<sup>85</sup>

Binyamin makes a very clear assertion here: he did not translate the book as a whole, but rather intended to translate only the parts that he thought befitted the Hebrew readership in the Yishuv. He found interest only in the non-fiction parts, since the narratives were “more German than Hebrew,” and as such, “the Hebrew reader of our time has no interest in them.” He would “release the Hebrew book from this burden,” with the declaration that he was redeeming

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<sup>82</sup> Binyamin, “מבוא,” 23. Hebrew original: “יחסו של סמולנסקין אל הספר [היה] יחס של חמימות והתפעלות והכרת-טובה. [...] סמולנסקין הסתפק בבחירת קטעים ופרשיות.”

<sup>83</sup> Binyamin, “מבוא,” 25. Hebrew original: “פינס ז”ל לא תרגם אפילו משפט אחרי משפט, כי אם קרא” כנראה פסקא אחרי פסקא ונסה למסור את התוכן בצורה הטובה בעיניו [...] אמן גדול כפינס ראשי היה לנהוג “במידת-חירות גדולה כזו. כיום אנו חושבים לחובת המתרגם להיות נאמן יותר למקור, לשיטין וגם לאשר בין השיטין.”

<sup>84</sup> For the final chapters of the book, which are written in Biblical Hebrew, he received help from Menachem Bronstein, while Eliezer Meir Lipschütz helped him with the philosophical aspects: see Binyamin, “מבוא,” 25.

<sup>85</sup> Pines and Binyamin, כתבי משפחה עבריים, 205. Hebrew original: “הספור כתוב ברוב כשרון ואולם ברוח” וברגשות של התקופה מלפני חמישים שנה והוא בגווניו יותר סיפור גרמני מעברי. הוא מתאר את ההשקפות והנימוסים ואת היחסים של הבורג’ואזיה הגרמנית של הימים ההם, שנתיישנו במשך הזמן, ושכל אופן אינם עניין לקורא העברי של הזמן הזה. משום כך מצא המתרגם לנכון לשחרר את הספר העברי מן הנטל הזה, שהוא בבחינת ‘כל יתר כנטול דמי’, למען לא יבולא לספר בגללו, וכדי שלא יאפילו הקיום הנושנים והורים האלה על המחשבות וההגיונות של הספר, שיש להם ערך קיים גם כיום. כי מה לתנן וללבוש החיצוני, המקרי, את הבריאם והעיקריים.”



the book from “antiquated and strange characteristics” that could overshadow its valuable features.

Binyamin’s condescending approach indicates more than his literary preferences: it demonstrates how the Hebrew-speaking community thought of German-Jewish literature (as well as other languages) as “Jewish literature in foreign languages,” and therefore, the Hebrew version of “this Hebrew book” had to “release” it from its constraints.

## Conclusion

Malachi describes how Herzberg had to leave the Yishuv for Brussels in early 1891 (אדר תרנ"א) due to medical problems. He was happy to hear from friends that as part of a celebration of his seventieth birthday, the B'nai B'rith association was planning to translate his book. He wrote: “I received your decision [to translate the book] with great pleasure. [...] When it was published, I wanted to add a note stating ‘my permission is granted to any translation in any language,’ but I did not do so, since it could be considered arrogance.”<sup>86</sup>

This statement sheds some light on Herzberg’s general approach, but what is of relevance here is the fact that he thought of this work as one that should be translated and appreciated worldwide. The Hebrew translations that we have discussed in this paper were part of this effort. However, in the eyes of the Hebrew translators, transferring *Jewish Family Papers* into Hebrew was, above all, a way to bring a “lost son” home.

This was the basic motivation behind Pines’s translation, which was then completed by Binyamin. As we have seen, their work comes closest to what we would generally consider an accurate translation, because it tries to imitate the original as much as possible. This is true in spite of the fact that the translation is not entirely consistent and that it clearly shows where one translator’s work ended and the other’s began. We have also identified the ways that the Hebrew language and its context add a new layer to the text which is missing from the original, such as, for example, the suggested dialogue with Yiddish. This connection cannot be found in Herzberg’s text, though he did use Yiddish spelling rules when writing German terms. However, as we hope to have successfully demonstrated, it was Smolenskin who attempted to transfer *Jewish Family Papers*

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<sup>86</sup> Malachi, “בנימין זאב הרצברג וספרו 'כתבי משפחה עבריים'”, 508. Hebrew original: “עונג רב־השבעתוני, אחי, בהחלטתכם [...] אמת אנידה לכם כי בהוציא את ספרי בפעם הראשונה אמרתי להוסיף בו את הדברים האלה: 'רשות נתונה לתרגמו בכל הלשונות', אך נמנעתי מעשות זאת פן תחשב לי ליהירות.”

into an exclusively Jewish realm, not only by detaching it from the German and reinstating it within the Hebrew language, but also by forsaking the epistolary format and thus diminishing the role of Samuel's adoptive father.

Moreover, Smolenskin's critique-translation was published in the same proto-Zionist era as the original itself. Manja Herrmann has emphasized that Herzberg's text was not a Zionist text, but that "in any case, the novel shows that flagrant Jewish nationalist ideas can be found much earlier than assumed, in works from the last third of the nineteenth century that open up important continuities with later Zionist thinking."<sup>87</sup> What Herrmann diagnoses here on the basis of Herzberg's novel was amplified by Smolenskin, as he emphasized yet another aspect of the national discourse: the debate over Hebrew as a national language. Smolenskin supported this notion not only through his own writing and editing, but first and foremost by translating critical texts into Hebrew.

Considering that Herzberg's and Smolenskin's readerships may have overlapped, it seemed reasonable for Smolenskin to renounce the concept of a translation that aims to copy the original. However, this perspective shifted in the time that passed between Herzberg and Smolenskin's publications in the late 1860s and early 1870s and the later works by Pines and Binyamin. Though the context is rather similar, Smolenskin's critique-translation can be viewed as more independent from the original than traditional translations, since it also aims to discuss the author's choices. Nonetheless, if the text was intended for non-German Hebrew readers – whose numbers were constantly increasing in the Yishuv – and was aiming to articulate the content and form of Herzberg's novel, then Pines and Binyamin's translation would doubtlessly have been more useful. In both cases, the translations established a strong dialogue with Herzberg's original work while reflecting the time and circumstances in which they came into being: Smolenskin's critique-translation within a Hebrew journal that was published in Europe and promoted Hebrew as a national language, and Pines and Binyamin's translation as an independent novel within a community that was growing not only in number, but also in its ability to live as a linguistically, culturally, and nationally independent society.

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<sup>87</sup> "Auf jeden Fall zeigt der Roman, dass sehr viel früher als angenommen flagrante national-jüdische Gedanken in Werken des letzten Drittels des 19. Jahrhunderts zu finden sind, die wichtige Kontinuitäten zu späterem zionistischen Denken eröffnen." Herrmann, *Zionismus und Authentizität*, 41.



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