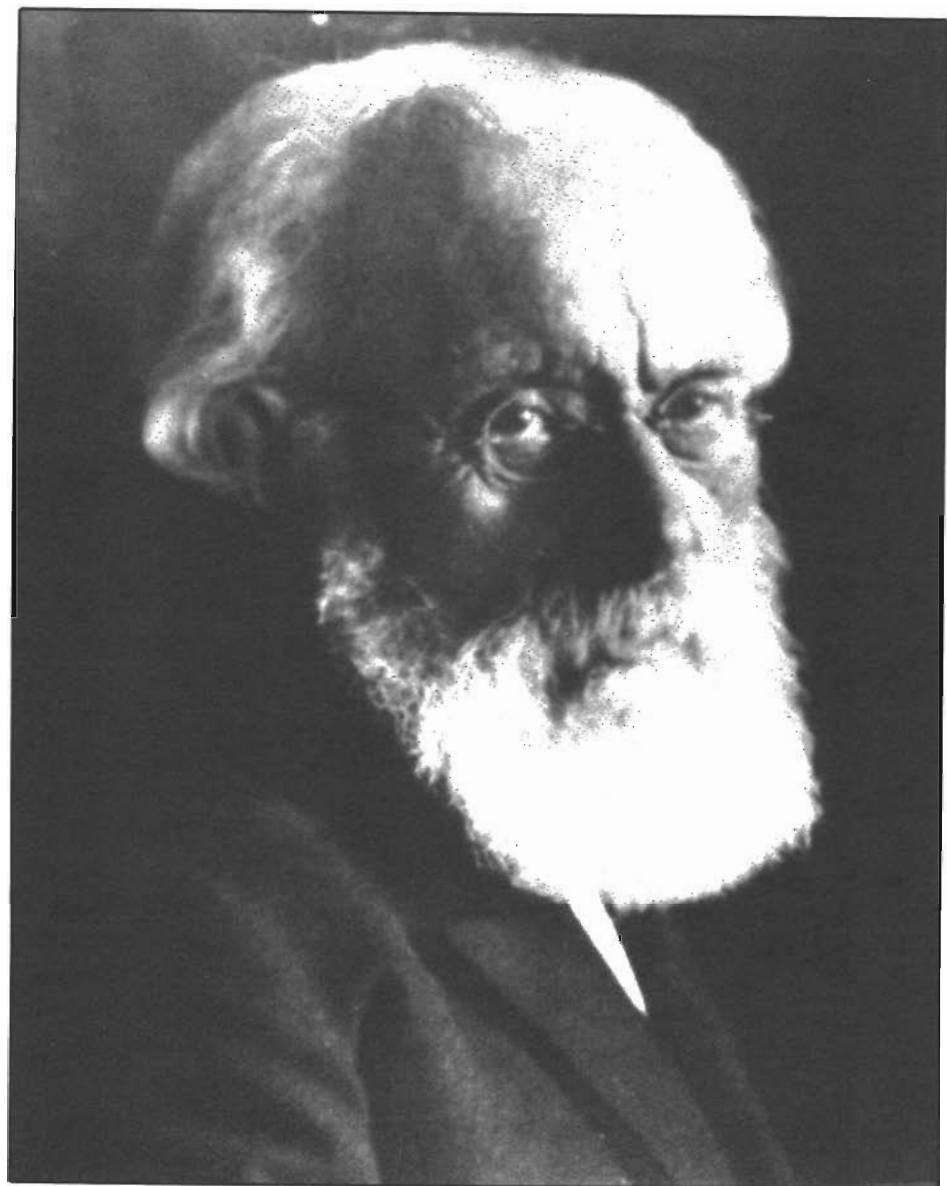

American Jewish Personalities
Kaufmann Kohler and His Attitude
Toward Zionism: A Reexamination

Yaakov Ariel

In 1891 Kaufmann Kohler, one of the outstanding leaders of the Reform movement in American Judaism, signed a petition urging the United States government to take steps that would lead to the restoration of Palestine to the Jews as their "time honored habitation."¹ The fact that Kohler signed this petition, which was initiated by William Blackstone, an evangelical American Protestant, may seem, at first glance, almost incredible. The Reform movement in America in its "classical" period, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has usually been presented as embracing an ideology in which the Land of Israel did not play a role.² Kohler himself was one of the initiators of the Pittsburgh Platform, a declaration of principles that was adopted by a meeting of Reform rabbis in 1885, and which later became the official creed of the Reform movement.³ It reflects a spirit which seems to be totally alien to the idea of a Jewish national restoration. For example, the fifth clause of the declaration reads as follows:

We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect the approach of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine . . . nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.⁴

The Pittsburgh Platform contributed to the image of the Reform movement in its classical period as being completely opposed to the idea of a Jewish restoration to the Land of Israel, to the building of a national home there, and to the Zionist movement. This image, which does not necessarily correlate with the much more complicated historical reality, is reflected in the historiography of American Jewry and the Reform movement, as well as in the historiography of early Zionism.⁵



Kaufman Kohler
(1843-1926)

In recent years there have been a few attempts to present a more balanced picture of the Reform movement's attitudes toward Zionism,⁶ but the overall stereotypical mythical approach has persisted until this day. In a book published in 1981, dealing with the Reform attitude toward Zionism, for example, the author declared that the negative stand toward Zionism taken by the German Jewish membership of the Reform movement (and not social and cultural differences) was the cause of the gap between the German Jewish elite and the new Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who began arriving in vast numbers in the 1880s.⁷ This approach suggests that the restoration of Zion was a top priority for the newly arrived immigrants and that they were all ardent Zionists. In reality, membership in the various Zionist groups in late-nineteenth-century America did not exceed a few dozen, and later on a few hundred, among them German Jews, including prominent Reform rabbis.⁸

Kaufmann Kohler himself has been portrayed in American Zionist historiography as one of the most ardent anti-Zionists in the Reform camp, and as a persecutor of Zionists while he was the president of Hebrew Union College.⁹ A closer examination of Kohler's position on the Jewish settlement in Palestine and the building of a Jewish national home there reveals a totally different picture, one which can shed new light on the Reform movement's attitude toward the rebuilding of Eretz Israel and perhaps help to change the current stereotypical view of the matter.

Kaufmann Kohler was born in Fuerth, Bavaria, in 1843.¹⁰ The man who eventually became one of the outstanding leaders of the Reform movement grew up in an Orthodox home and was a disciple of Samson Raphael Hirsch, the spiritual father of the neo-Orthodox movement in German Judaism. The change in Kohler's views and religious practices took place when he was a student at the University of Erlangen, from which he graduated with a doctoral degree in 1867.

Like others in the Reform movement of his day, Kohler saw no future for himself as a rabbi in Germany, and in 1869 he emigrated to America. There he became a follower of David Einhorn, a leader of Reform's radical wing, married Einhorn's daughter, and in 1879 inherited his father's-in-law's position as the rabbi of Temple Beth-El in New York.

Like his father-in-law, Kohler had scholarly inclinations: he engaged in research, wrote extensively, and published books and articles

on various issues in the history of Jewish thought. Among other things, he did pioneering work on the Jewish origins of Christianity.¹¹ His major work, *Jewish Theology*, was a systematic and comprehensive exposition of the Jewish faith.¹² This book should be read as Kohler's own interpretation of Judaism and his view of the course it should take in the current age. Naturally, it serves as an excellent source for understanding the place and role of the Land of Israel in Kohler's vision of Judaism.

For Kohler "religion and peoplehood were two indissoluble entities of Judaism."¹³ He saw the Jews as a religious people, a people who had been entrusted with a glorious mission in history.¹⁴ Together with the other architects of Reform theology in its classical period, Kohler considered the Jewish people to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, the chosen people whom God had destined to spread His word among the nations of the earth.

Placing a strong emphasis on the idea that there was a covenant between God and the people of Israel, Kohler viewed Judaism's historical course and mission in the world in light of the covenant theology which he and other Reform thinkers had constructed. In his opinion, not only the spread of monotheism but the achievements of Western civilization in general and the humanistic-universal values it embodied were the outcome of Israel's successful mission among the nations.¹⁵

Kohler's covenant theology reflected the high degree of optimism and triumphalism that typified European and American thinking in the era before World War I. Like the theologians of liberal Protestantism, he believed that the world was becoming better and better, and was improving technologically, economically, politically, educationally, and morally. He too saw the biblical prophecies about an idealized period at the end of time as coming true in his own day, maintaining that science and education had helped to build a society and culture that were the fulfillment of the biblical-humanistic postulates.

The idea of progress advanced by Kohler, however, was distinctly Jewish in one respect. He regarded progress as synonymous with the advancement of the ideals of Judaism and seriously believed, as did many of his fellow Reform rabbis, that Judaism would be the universal religion of the coming new era. The values and postulates of Judaism had brought about the world's progress, and it would be only natural for the Jewish religion to triumph in the ideal future society.

In this Jewish ideal of progress which spoke about a cosmopolitan culture based on Jewish values, there was, of course, no room for the hope of a reestablished Davidic kingdom in Jerusalem. The messianic vision of the prophets would be realized instead by means of education, science, and technology, as well as through new social and political orders. Kohler and other Reform visionaries saw no need to expect a miraculous divine intervention in the form of a national Messiah. Thus the hope for the coming of the Messiah and the rebuilding of the Temple gave way to the new vision of a universal humanistic culture that, in the reformers' view, would be a truer realization of the values of Judaism. The Jews, according to this scheme, would become the priest nation, the brahmins of the new utopian era, and they had to fulfill their divine mission wholeheartedly.

An ardent exponent of the covenant theology, Kohler saw it as the basis for Jewish self-definition and self-understanding, as well as for the making of all Jewish private and communal choices. He militated against mixed marriages, for example, in the belief that they were a threat to Jewish survival and, as such, destructive to the ability of the Jews to fulfill their role as God's messengers in the world.¹⁶

Kohler did not see the Reform movement's ideology and liturgical innovations as a break with Jewish tradition. On the contrary, he regarded himself and his friends in the movement as part of a long chain of Jewish reformers that included such major figures of the past as Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, who, he claimed, had helped to replace the Temple with the synagogue. Judaism, Kohler contended, was a religious community that developed and matured gradually in accordance with changing communal needs and new developments in society, culture, and values.¹⁷

In Kohler's view, and here too he was in agreement with the theologians of liberal Protestantism, religion had to adapt itself to the spirit of the age, including scientific theories and achievements in the various academic disciplines, if it was to survive as a vital and influential force in the life of the people.¹⁸ Judaism, he insisted, had therefore to update itself and get rid of the "oriental" attributes it had acquired throughout its long history. One aspect of Judaism that needed to be updated was prayer. Meaningless and insincere prayers had to be eliminated, he contended. In particular this included prayers that expressed the hope of returning to Zion. American Jews might mouth

such words but could not possibly mean them, and hypocritical prayers were sacrilegious.¹⁹ For Kohler, prayer was a serious business that required piety and genuine devotion. Thus when he became president of Hebrew Union College in 1903, he insisted that students and teachers alike attend chapel services regularly and demonstrate personal piety and a keen interest in religion.²⁰

Kohler vehemently rejected political Zionism of the kind advocated by Theodor Herzl and his followers. The Herzlian Zionist program, which spoke of the emigration to the Land of Israel of the entire Jewish nation, outraged him.²¹ It contradicted his vision of the role the Jewish people were fulfilling in the world. In his view it was necessary that the Jews disperse among the nations of the earth and spread God's word: Judaism was to become the universal religion and the Jews the brahmins of the coming era. Political Zionism, however, turned its back on the duty and role the Jewish people had been assigned in history. It looked upon the Jews as an ordinary people who had no particular role and mission, and ought to pursue their own interests.²²

In contrast to the way classical Reform Judaism has often been portrayed in Jewish historiography, Kohler did not deny that the Jews were a people²³ or that they were in need of international cooperation to advance their cause. He himself called for the establishment of a world Jewish congress.²⁴ But the *raison d'être* for the Jews as a people was, in his view, their covenant with God and the religion that had evolved from it. Zionism, on the other hand, was a secular movement that confronted the problem of Jewish physical existence but disregarded the covenant between Israel and God and the religious postulates on which Judaism was built.

Zionism is nothing more or less than land hunger such as all the nations of the world manifest today, a desire quite natural and justifiable in the fugitive, homeless Jew of Russia and Romania. . . . What benefit is there in the use of the term Zionism which shelters all such as are only Jews by name while they disclaim having a share in the Synagogical or religious life of the Jew? . . . The present day Zionism is nothing less than a surrender of all the centuries of Jewish history waited and toiled for—the world conquering idea of One God and one humanity.²⁵

Did our fathers suffer, bleed and die on the funeral pyre and under the executioner's sword, bear the badge of shame and the taunt of nations only in order now to have Israel again reckoned among the nations, another Serbia or Macedonia? My friends we all wish and hope that Palestine will again flourish and greatly prosper amidst Jewish toil and become a land flowing with milk and

honey, offering peace and blessing to thousands and tens of thousands of Jews who still suffer from intolerance and race prejudice. . . . It cannot be *our* homeland of the American Jew.²⁶

The Jewish people would find their real fulfillment, Kohler insisted, in the building of the real Zion, a universal culture based on the values of Judaism, and not by secluding themselves in Eretz Israel, a territorial Zion that would be no different from the territories occupied by the world's other nations. He lashed out at Zionists for misrepresenting the meaning of Zion in Jewish tradition. For him, Zion was the kingdom of God on earth, which he believed was about to be realized.

Before the Psalmist's vision, moreover, Zion as the city of God, looms up as the mother city of the nation and the center of cosmopolitan humanity (see Psalm LXXXvi and the Septuagint; compare Shemoth Rabba XXiii, ii). Jerusalem's resurrection ever betokened the realization of the loftiest Messianic hopes and at no time a mere desire of a people for the soil to eat its fruit and enjoy material and political prosperity thereon in the Zionistic sense.²⁷

The Reform leader quoted from various rabbinical sources in order to strengthen his point that the Jewish people could not survive without the Torah, by which he meant the religious postulates of Judaism.²⁸ Ironically, Kohler's criticism of Zionism resembled the attacks on it by many Orthodox Jews.

In 1905 Kohler recommended to the board of governors of Hebrew Union College that Caspar Levias, who had been teaching there for several years, be dismissed. Kohler has been accused of having had Levias fired because of his pro-Zionist sentiments.²⁹ But an examination of the background to the dismissal reveals a different story.

Arriving in Cincinnati as the new president of HUC in May 1903, Kohler embarked soon afterwards on a campaign to reshape the faculty. He intended to get rid of everyone whose academic credentials he regarded as unsatisfactory and to replace them with new professors who would give the college a more solid academic standing.³⁰ Targeted for dismissal were teachers who did not have doctoral degrees or whose doctorates were not from first-rate universities. For Kohler, the best degrees were, of course, granted by German universities.

Levias did not possess a Ph.D. and could not, in Kohler's view, point to impressive academic achievements; nor, in the president's opinion, was he pious or a competent teacher. By no means an unkind person,

the new president granted Levias a full year's salary to provide him and his family with economic means until he found another position.³¹ Levias was certainly a declared Zionist, but the Reform movement had never treated him as a pariah. In 1899, in fact, the Central Conference of American Rabbis had invited him to expound the Zionist cause at its convention and had published his lecture in its yearbook.³² That same year an article of his on the same topic and with the same title appeared in HUC's official organ.³³

In 1907, three members of the HUC faculty, Max Schloessinger, Max Margolis, and Henry Malter, separately presented their resignations to the board of governors. Kohler recommended that the resignations be accepted, and since then it has often been suggested that the three resigned because their Zionist convictions made him hostile to them.³⁴

In this case too a closer look reveals a different, more complicated story.³⁵ The ideological differences between Kohler and the three professors might have caused some tension, but that was certainly not the only reason the four of them did not get along. The mutual disenchantment between Kohler and the three involved, among other things, a power struggle and unsatisfied salary demands.

The major figure among the three was Margolis, who had joined the faculty in 1905, hired by Kohler as part of his campaign to reshape the faculty of the college. Before accepting Kohler's invitation to come to Cincinnati, Margolis had taught at the University of California, Berkeley. He and Kohler had negotiated at great length over his salary and other benefits,³⁶ and they finally agreed on an annual salary of \$3,600, with increase to \$4,000 by July 1908. Although he was already being paid more than any other member of the faculty, Margolis soon demanded a raise. As Kohler pointed out to the board of governors, he had begun to look for another position even before they openly clashed.³⁷

Oral tradition has it that control of the college was the real issue between Kohler and the three professors. Margolis wanted to be president, and since Kohler was in his sixties, hoped to ease him out and take over his job. Kohler complained that Margolis, Malter, and Schloessinger had stirred up a spirit of "rancor and insubordination" at the college, showing "disrespect and disloyalty" to him as president, and antagonism toward his views. Margolis, for example, had chal-

lenged the daily chapel services begun by Kohler.

Since Kohler felt that Margolis and the others were undermining his authority, he was more than happy to see their backs.³⁸ Perhaps the best proof that animosity toward Zionist teachers was not the real issue was the fact that one of the replacement professors hired by Kohler was David Neumark, a declared Zionist. Neumark remained an active Zionist throughout his career as a teacher at HUC, but this never led to any problems in his relationship with Kohler.³⁹ Moreover, Zionist speakers occasionally visited the college during Kohler's tenure. In December 1906, for instance, Shmaryahu Levin gave a Zionist speech there in Hebrew.

The three professors, however, claimed that it was not just Zionism but conflicts over *Lehrfreiheit* (academic freedom) that brought about their resignations. In response to an article by Judah L. Magnes, Kohler declared that teaching in a theological seminary, at least in some courses, must comply with the basic theological views that the seminary stood for.⁴⁰ This is just another indication, it would seem, that both sides preferred to present their disagreement as evolving from matters of principle rather than to expose the real issues of salaries and control of the college.

Contrary to the manner in which some have presented the matter, Kohler did not treat Zionists, whether at Hebrew Union College or elsewhere, as pariahs. He attacked the movement and described its members as "confused" but did not reject them as friends, colleagues, students, or visitors. Some of his close associates in the Reform movement, such as Bernhard Felsenthal, were Zionists, and for all his severe criticism of Zionist ideology, Kohler remained appreciative and friendly toward friends who sympathized with the Zionist cause.⁴¹ Zionist activists and leaders such as Nathan Strauss, Stephen S. Wise, and later on Abba Hillel Silver maintained close contacts with Kohler for many years. Indeed, it was none other than Wise, the enfant terrible who eventually left the Reform movement on account of, among other things, its rejection of Zionism, who in May 1913 organized a celebration in New York of Kohler's seventieth birthday.⁴²

Contrary to the prevailing myth, Zionism was by no means anathema to the Reform movement in its classical period. Although many in the movement rejected political Zionism, there were leading Reform rabbis who actively supported the Zionist cause, among them presi-

dents and vice-presidents of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Such noted figures as Max Heller, Bernhard Felsenthal, and Gustav Gottheil openly endorsed Zionism, and their convictions never prevented them from obtaining positions of influence and honor within the movement. Nor did holding Zionist convictions prevent students from being accepted by Hebrew Union College or pursuing their studies there.⁴³

David Eichhorn, who surveyed the attitude toward Zionism among the HUC student body during the period under discussion, concluded that at the beginning of the century 17 percent of the students supported political Zionism, 33 percent were neutral on the issue, and 46 percent rejected political Zionism.⁴⁴ The percentage of students who supported Zionism increased in the course of Kohler's years at the college.

As these figures show, Kohler's vision of a universal culture wherein the values of the Jewish religion would prevail was gradually losing its appeal for members of the student body. Although Kohler in no way viewed his presidency of HUC as a failure, his ideological and theological perception of Judaism steadily lost ground among the younger generation at the institution he headed as well as within the Reform movement at large. In fact it was rabbis who studied at Hebrew Union College in Kohler's time who later brought about the changes in the Reform movement's creed stated in the Columbus Platform of 1937.

World War I and its aftermath dealt a severe blow to the Western ideal of progress, but even before the war many students at HUC were unwilling to accept the vision of Judaism propounded by Kohler and his generation. They chose Zionism as the alternative to the universalistic, cosmopolitan vision of their fathers and saw Kohler as the embodiment of the German "old guard," espousing a theology and a spirit that many in the younger generation could not identify with.

Although Kohler tolerated teachers and students who were Zionists, he tried to prevent them from advocating their ideas in the classrooms and the chapel. The issue was brought before the board of governors of Hebrew Union College, which decided that a sermon could contain a Zionist message as long as it was religious in nature.⁴⁵ On one occasion Kohler clashed with a Zionist student, James Heller, over a sermon. Heller's father, the prestigious New Orleans rabbi Max Heller, who had been a member of the board of governors, interceded

on behalf of his son.⁴⁶ In response Kohler denied young Heller's charges of censorship, writing to his father: "It was not a question of Zionism, but one of submitting to the rules laid down for the students who are to preach the sermon upon a text taken from a weekly portion, or of the traditional Haftorah of the same Sabbath."⁴⁷

Kohler vehemently opposed political Zionism, labeling it at one time as "unJewish, irreligious and unAmerican,"⁴⁸ but he supported the resettlement of Eretz Israel as well as the idea of building a Jewish cultural, spiritual, and economic center there.⁴⁹ His objections to political Zionism had much to do with the secular character of the Herzlian program and its call for all Jews around the world to emigrate to Eretz Israel. But he wholeheartedly supported Jewish colonization, the revival of the land's agriculture, and its economic development. In 1899 he wrote:

It is political Zionism that I condemn. Remember that I do not speak . . . of the plan of a simple and gradual colonization of Palestine. . . . There is however another side of Zionism which we heartily endorse. . . . While the hope of a national resurrection worked as incentive and inspiration, the arid soil of Judea was made to blossom forth anew with wheat and wine . . . and who whether Orthodox or Reform, will find fault with a sentiment so sacred and so stimulating as this?⁵⁰

Kohler saw no contradiction between the settling of Eretz Israel and the building of a center for the Jewish people there and his understanding of the role and mission of the Jewish people as the messengers of God's word among the nations. He differentiated between the condition of Jews in the West, where they enjoyed civil liberties and prosperity, and in oppressive "oriental" countries like Russia and Romania, where they suffered harassment and discrimination. Jews in those places, he contended, could not afford to be cosmopolitan,⁵¹ but the resettlement of Eretz Israel would provide them with a haven and make them the instruments of building a center that would serve all of world Jewry.

When Kohler signed Blackstone's petition in 1891, a document that called upon the government of the United States to take steps that would give the Land of Israel back to the Jews, he did not see it as contradicting in any way his vision of the mission of Israel among the nations. The petition spoke explicitly about the oppressed Russian Jews as the ones who would resettle Palestine.

Twenty-seven years later Kohler reacted enthusiastically to the British conquest of Palestine and the Balfour Declaration. Assuming that the victorious Allies would now permit Jerusalem and Eretz Israel to become a spiritual center not only for the world's Jews but for all humanity, a prospect in consonance with his vision of the universal mission of the Jews, he said in his opening address at the college on October 5, 1918:

Nor should we who oppose political Zionism as contrary to the religious world mission of the Jews shut our eyes to the marvelous feats of the British arms in Palestine which hold out promise, not of a rebirth of the Jewish state of nation, but of the rejuvenation of the desolate land of our fathers to open up new opportunities for the tens of thousands of our brethren in search of a life of independence and prosperity, new avenues of commerce and industry for Jewish enterprise . . . ; the purpose of the Allies to render Palestine not the center and homeland of the Jewish people, but, as has been stated, an important international and interdenominational center, with Jerusalem as a prominent source of intellectual and spiritual life for the Jews, alongside of other creeds, offers a bright outlook for world conquering Judaism, with its Messianic hope and its universal ideals.

As in 1891, he took it for granted that it was only the oppressed "oriental" Jews who would emigrate to the Land of Israel and be the ones to build the cultural, spiritual, and economic center there.

Let Palestine, our ancient home, under the protection of the great nations, or under the specific British suzerainty, again become a center of Jewish culture and a safe refuge to the homeless. We shall all welcome it and aid in the promotion of its work. Let the million or more of Jewish citizens dwelling there amidst the large Christian and Mohammedan population attached to their sacred spots, be empowered and encouraged to build up a commonwealth broad and liberal in spirit to serve as a school for international and interdenominational humanity. We shall all hail the undertaking and pray for its prosperity.⁵²

Kohler was careful to note that the building of the national home in Eretz Israel was not intended to take the place of Israel's mission among the nations.

The historic task of the Jew is not to be, and cannot be, accomplished therewith. This would never be the solution of the great enigma of Jewish history, nor a satisfactory end to the awful tragedy. Call Israel, as did Judah haLevi, the great lover of Zion, the heart of mankind whose life sap was to flow through the arteries of the nations, or compare it, as was repeatedly done, to the Gulf Stream, whose warm currents run through the ocean to calm its wild waves, the

Jew will ever remain an international force influencing the world, as it has been influenced by it on its course through the lands and the ages.⁵³

Many non-Zionist Reform rabbis were favorably disposed to Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel and even supported colonization efforts.⁵⁴ But Kohler's vision of a cultural and economic center for world Jewry in Eretz Israel went a step further than the position taken by most other Reform rabbis. Even pro-colonization colleagues like Isaac M. Wise took exception to his signing of the Blackstone petition,⁵⁵ and in 1919 other rabbis spoke against his views concerning the building of a center for the Jewish people in Eretz Israel.⁵⁶

Aware that what he was advocating and Ahad HaAm's vision of a spiritual center in Eretz Israel had some features in common, Kohler was careful to point out that he did not endorse Ahad HaAm's program.⁵⁷ Since Ahad HaAm's position was not grounded in covenant theology and the mission of Israel, he could not accept it. Moreover, he did not wish to be associated with Zionism in any form.

Kohler's attitude toward the revitalization of Hebrew was similar to his position on the resettlement of Eretz Israel. The rejuvenated Hebrew language was a product of the oppressed Jews of Eastern Europe, who could not participate in the culture and literature of the countries in which they lived.⁵⁸ But for the enlightened Jews of the West, Hebrew was merely the language of their religious sources; they had no reason to adopt it as their current cultural language. Not surprisingly, he abolished the teaching of modern Hebrew at HUC and advocated the study of English literature instead.⁵⁹

With all his warm support for the establishment of a spiritual center in Eretz Israel, Kohler remained firmly opposed to the Zionist movement. In addition to his ideological and theological objections to Zionism, he was also concerned about the possible consequences for world Jewry of the attempt to build an independent political state in Eretz Israel. In April 1920, Kohler reacted with alarm to rumors about a declaration issued by the supreme council of the Allies at the San Remo Conference that referred to the civil rights of Jews in their various countries.

The principle thereby expressed that differently from all other people, the Jew can belong to two nationalities and be at the same time an American and a Palestinian citizen, endangers the position and destiny of the Jew in many lands.

. . . it also creates here a hyphenated Jewish citizen, a Jew whose American nationality is "protected" by the Powers but who is at the same time different from any other American citizen.⁶⁰

In the years that followed Kohler's presidency of Hebrew Union College, the Reform movement as a whole changed its attitude toward Zionism. It abandoned much of its universalistic-cosmopolitan aspirations in favor of more particularistic Jewish ones. From the beginning of World War I, Zionism increasingly became an acceptable creed in the American Jewish arena. The attitudinal change was so far-reaching that many American Jews who did not define themselves as Zionists cooperated with Zionists in promoting the cause of the national Jewish home in Eretz Israel.

The revolutionary change in the place of Zionism in American Jewish life was led by Louis Brandeis, a justice of the Supreme Court and perhaps the most respected and honored Jew in the America of his time. Whereas Kohler represented a generation of leaders who did not consider it appropriate for American Jews to support an independent Jewish state in Eretz Israel, Brandeis turned Zionism into a legitimate ingredient in the way American Jews viewed themselves as Americans, maintaining that the acceptance of Zionism was the fulfillment of one's Jewishness and a means of becoming a better American.⁶¹

In essence, the differences between Kohler and the generation that followed him with regard to the establishment of a national home in Eretz Israel were much smaller than has usually been suggested. The version of Zionism promoted by Brandeis, which now prevails in the United States, did not advocate emigration from America; indeed, it took as axiomatic that America was a home to its Jews and that American Jews were proud members of the American polity.

The Zionism that has taken root in America has been, to a large extent, a commitment to support the effort to build Eretz Israel. It has much to do with the way American Jews view their standing within the American polity in relation to Jewish solidarity and Jewish national hopes.⁶² The actual settlement of Eretz Israel was left to those from countries where Jews did not enjoy the same civil liberties and opportunities that American Jews possessed.

Ironically, Kohler's "anti-Zionist" position was very much in line with the form of Zionism that has taken take root in America in the decades since his death. Most American Jews today, like Kohler at the

turn of the century, reject Herzl's views on the place of the Jews among the nations but nonetheless endorse and support the idea of a Jewish national center in Eretz Israel. Thus Kohler can be seen, in many respects, as both a forerunner and a pioneer of the particular form of Zionism that prevails among American Jewry.

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Notes

1. On Blackstone's petition, see Yaakov Ariel, "An American Initiative for a Jewish State: William Blackstone and the Petition of 1891," *Studies in Zionism* 10 (1989): 125-137.
2. E.g., Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 22-59.
3. Waiter I. Jacob, ed., *The Changing World of Reform Judaism: The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect* (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Congregation, 1985).
4. CCAR *Yearbook* 45 (1935): 199.
5. E.g., Samuel Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961), pp. 71-74; Joseph P. Sternstein, "Reform Judaism and Zionism, 1895-1904," *Herzl Year Book* 5 (1963): 11-31. Even Cyrus Arfa, who is trying to lay to rest the myths regarding the Reform movement and Zionism in later periods, writes about this issue in a manner that falls into the stereotypical-mythical approach. See Cyrus Arfa, "Attitudes of the American Reform Rabbinate Toward Zionism, 1885-1948" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1978).
6. Michael A. Meyer, "American Reform Judaism and Zionism: Early Efforts at Ideological Reproachment," *Studies in Zionism* 7 (1983): 49-64.
7. Howard R. Greenstein, *Turning Point: Zionism and Reform Judaism* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981), pp. 1-7.
8. E.g., see Marnin Feinstein, *American Zionism, 1884-1904* (New York: Herzl Press, 1965).
9. E.g., Norman Bentwich, *For Zion's Sake* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1954), p. 35; Marvin Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (Garden City, N.Y., 1975), pp. 95-96; Evyatar Friesel, *The Zionist Movement in the United States, 1897-1914* (Tel Aviv: HaKibutz HaMeuchad, 1970), pp. 5-97 [in Hebrew].
10. On Kohler's life, see Max Kohler, "Biographical Sketch of Dr. K. Kohler," *Studies in Jewish Literature Issued in Honor of Professor Kaufmann Kohler* (Berlin: George Reiner, 1913), pp. 1-10. See also Kaufmann Kohler, *Personal Reminiscences of My Early Life* (Cincinnati: A. J. Eggers, 1918).
11. E.g., Kaufmann Kohler, *The Cradle of Christianity* (New York: Philip Cowen, 1892); idem, *The Origins of the Synagogue and the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).
12. Kaufmann Kohler, *Jewish Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1918).

13. Kaufmann Kohler, *Grundriss Einer Systematischen Theologie des Judentums* (Leipzig: Buchhandlung Gustav Fock, 1910), p. 7.
14. E.g., Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, pp. 323-491.
15. E.g., *ibid.* Cf. Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 264-295.
16. Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, p. 446.
17. Kaufmann Kohler, "Backward or Forward," in his *Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers* (New York: Alumni Association of Hebrew Union College, 1931). Cf. Samuel S. Cohen. "Kaufmann Kohler the Reformer," in *Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1953), pp. 137-155.
18. Kohler, "Backward or Forward." See also Ellen Messer, "Franz Boas and Kaufmann Kohler: Anthropology and Reform Judaism," *Jewish Social Studies* 48 (1986): 127-140.
19. "Prayers for return to Palestine are a blasphemy and a lie upon the life of every American Jew." Kohler, "Backward or Forward," p. 232.
20. E.g., Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, pp. 271-277. In 1905 members of the faculty complained to the board of governors about Kohler's demand that they participate regularly in chapel services. See the letter of the committee appointed by the board to investigate the matter, April 25, 1905 (American Jewish Archives [hereafter AJA], Ms. Coll. #5, B 2/2).
21. E.g., Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, pp. 390-391, 395-396.
22. E.g., *ibid.*, pp. 253, 294; Kohler, "Zionism," in *Studies Addresses and Personal Papers*, pp. 453-466.
23. E.g., Kohler, "Zionism," p. 465.
24. *American Hebrew* 77 (1905): 890.
25. Kaufmann Kohler, "The Dangers, the Fallacies and Falsehoods of Zionism III," *Reform Advocate* 33 (1907): 350.
26. Kaufmann Kohler, *Palestine and Israel's World Mission* (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Congregation, 1918), p. 4.
27. Kohler, "The Dangers, the Fallacies and Falsehoods of Zionism III," p. 349.
28. Kaufmann Kohler, "The Dangers, the Fallacies, and Falsehoods of Zionism I," *Reform Advocate* 33 (1907): 259.
29. E.g., Urofsky, *American Zionism*, pp. 95-96; Greenstein, *Turning Point*, p. 12.
30. Michael A. Meyer, "A Centennial History," in *Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), pp. 61-63.
31. See Kohler to Max Margolis, April 12 1905 (AJA, Ms. Coll #5).
32. Caspar Levias, "The Justification of Zionism," *CCAR Yearbook* 8 (1899): 179-191.
33. Caspar Levias, "The Justification of Zionism," *Hebrew Union College Journal* 3 (1899): 165-175.
34. E.g., Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, pp. 73-74; Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984), pp. 294-295; Friesel, *Zionist Movement in the United States*, p. 97, quotes some other accusers.
35. A detailed examination of the resignation incident is given by Naomi W. Cohen, "The Reaction of Reform Judaism in America to Political Zionism, 1897-1922," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 40 (1951): 374-381.
36. See Margolis to Charles S. Levi, April 8, 1907 (AJA, Ms. Coll #5, D3-4).
37. See Minutes of the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College, April 9, 1907 (AJA, Ms. Coll #135). Malter said that he was resigning because of dissatisfaction over salary and other work benefits.
38. Jacob R. Marcus in an interview with Yaakov Ariel, November 1989. Cf. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism in America to Political Zionism," p. 379.

39. Note Neumark's appreciative evaluation of Kohler's work. David Neumark, "Dr. Kohler's Systematic Theology," in *Studies in Jewish Literature Issued in Honor of Professor Kaufmann Kohler* (Berlin: George Reiner, 1913), pp. 30-38. Neumark was one of the editors of Kohler's Festschrift. Kohler, on his part, gave copies of his books to Neumark "with cordial greetings." Neumark later donated them to the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem.

40. "Kaufmann Kohler Defines Lehrfreiheit," *American Hebrew* (1907): 606.

41. E.g., see the appreciative words on Felsenthal in Kohler's *A Living Faith* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1948), pp. 257-259. See also Kaufmann Kohler, "On the 75th Birthday of Nathan Strauss," *Jewish Tribune* 81, no. 5 (1923): 14.

42. See Kohler to Wise, September 8, 1913 (AJA, Ms. Coll #5, 49 3/15).

43. Cf. David Polish, "The Changing and the Constant in the Reform Rabbinate," in *The American Rabbinate*, ed. Jacob R. Marcus and Abraham J. Peck (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1985), pp. 182-191.

44. After a visit to HUC at the beginning of the century, Gustav Gottheil, a Reform rabbi and the first chairman of the Zionist Federation of America, estimated that about a dozen of the school's forty students had Zionist leanings. Friesel, *Zionist Movement in the United States*, p. 96.

45. Minutes of the Board of Governors, February 15, 1915 (AJA, Ms. Coll. #5, D-8/22).

46. See Kohler to Max Heller, March 16, 1915 (AJA, Ms. Coll #5, 1/10).

47. *Ibid.*

48. In a speech to the board of governors, April 30, 1907 (AJA, Ms. Coll #135).

49. Kohler, "The God of History," in *A Living Faith*, p. 165; *idem*, "Zionism," in *Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers*, pp. 461, 463.

50. Kohler, "Zionism," pp. 461-463.

51. Kohler, "The Priestly Blessing," in *A Living Faith*, p. 290; *idem*, "Zionism," pp. 457-458.

52. Kaufmann Kohler, "The Mission of Israel and Its Application to Modern Time," *CCAR Yearbook* 29 (1919): 287.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Cf. Meyer, "American Reform Judaism and Zionism."

55. Isaac M. Wise, "Our Fool Friends," *American Israelite* 37 (April 16, 1891): 4.

56. *CCAR Yearbook* 29 (1919): 288-305.

57. Kaufmann Kohler, "Ahad-Ha-Am-ism and Anachronism," *American Hebrew* (1904): 767-768; *idem*, "The Mission of Israel and Its Application to Modern Time," p. 270.

58. Meyer, "Centennial History," p. 59.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Minutes of the Board of Governors, April 27, 1920 (AJA, Ms. Coll #135).

61. E.g., Louis D. Brandeis, *Zionism and Patriotism* (New York: Federation of American Zionists, 1918).

62. E.g., cf. Marvin Urofsky, "Zionism: An American Experience," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 63 (1974): 261-282.