

variegated group of individuals, many of whom were captivated by his personality and brilliance. Barzilay cultivated more than a few doctoral students, who wrote on topics ranging from medieval poetry to the work of the early critical Talmud scholar, Tzvi Hirsch Hayyut, the generation of Ahad Haam, the works of the American Yiddish and Hebrew poet Gabriel Preil, and of course, modern Israeli literature. But he also had a profound influence on students who received doctorates in other areas such as Arabic law, Bible and the

ancient Near East, Italian Jewish history, medieval historiography and history of science, comparative literature, Jewish philosophy, and American Jewish history, to name just the sample I encountered during my years of residency at Columbia. For some years Barzilay taught history at the Jewish Theological Seminary, which granted him an honorary doctorate, and his students there spoke of him with much enthusiasm.

Barzilay's associations with scholars in Israel and the United States

through the American Academy for Jewish Research were extensive, and a representative number of articles by these colleagues and students appear in the Barzilay Jubilee Volume, *Bein Historiyyah le-Sifrut* (Israel: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1997). This volume contains a bibliography of Professor Barzilay's writings as well.

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ARTHUR HERTZBERG (1921–2006)

David Starr

Many of the obituaries of Arthur Hertzberg that appeared in *The New York Times*, *Ha'aretz*, and a host of other publications in the aftermath of his death on April 17 charted in considerable detail the path that he traveled from his Orthodox home to the Conservative rabbinate, moral and communal leadership, and great scholarly achievement. Rather than survey once again all of Hertzberg's multifarious activities, I would like to focus on one of the less commonly emphasized dimensions of his career, his accomplishments as an adult educator, the kind of adult educator the likes of which we rarely see. And I would like to reflect a little on the way in which Hertzberg melded in his life and career ideals that are now all too rarely bound together in the same person.

I write these words in June as I prepare to embark on a *Me'ah* study tour in Israel, leading fifteen adults on a two-week exploration of the history of the Zionism and contemporary Israel. In

preparation for this trip, I have asked the participants to read, or re-read, Hertzberg's introduction to *The Zionist Idea* (1959). I have also asked them to bring this book with them. It will be our constant companion as we explore the land of Israel. That we have found Hertzberg's anthology indispensable will surprise no one. But few people remember today that he put it together in the first place, in the 1950s, at the behest of Hadassah, as part of that organization's commitment to adult Jewish education.

A great anthology, like a great performer, makes the difficult look easy. To assemble the material that made up *The Zionist Idea* Hertzberg had to search through the collected works of the key figures in the Zionist movement as well as the ideological writings of innumerable other thinkers and political activists. He had to select from their respective works the essays he judged to be both central to each author's message and accessible to the general reading public. And in many if not most cases he had to translate the essays



himself, typically from Hebrew or German. Like Nahum Glatzer's roughly simultaneous pioneering editorial efforts to bring the work of Franz Rosenzweig to the attention of the English-speaking public, Hertzberg's *The Zionist Idea* reminds us how few of these precious primary sources were available fifty years ago to those who could not read them in the languages in which they were originally written.

As with any anthology, one may take issue with the finished product and the assumptions that drove it. Hertzberg violated the historian's commandment of avoiding anachronism. His very designation of certain early thinkers as "precursors" itself suggests some degree of anachronistic thinking in

his approach to them. A self-confessed “cultural Zionist,” Hertzberg prominently features Ahad Ha’am as a man who represents love of tradition, a modern openness to rebellion against it, the need to make Jewish nationalism as much about Jewish identity and culture as about politics, and at the same time a resolute avoidance of anything that smacked of messianism. He paid relatively little attention to religious Zionism, and barely any to Jabotinsky or Revisionism, which he reviled. But his short shrifting of these two trends reminds us of how relatively unimportant they were in Jewish life, certainly prior to the Six Day War or Begin’s election in 1977.

All of Hertzberg’s books on European Jewish history, American Jewry, and Zionism and Israel covered big topics and themes, drawing a wide and diverse readership into a conversation about the intersection of modernity and Jewish existence, challenging assumptions and theses as he went. *The Zionist Idea* situated Zionist thinkers within the context of European social thought, insisting that Zionism represented a profound break with Jewish history and thought even as it sought to renew Jewish life politically and culturally. Hertzberg’s first scholarly monograph, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (1968), took on what was for most modern Jews the sacred cow of the Enlightenment, arguing that its seamy side—anti-Semitism—cast doubt on secularism as the solution to the Jewish problem. Scholars continue to debate this point, with many suggesting that Hertzberg’s instincts were right in questioning the benevolence of the Enlightenment from a philosophical and historical perspective. His most heavily criticized scholarly effort, *The Jews*

in America (1989), also flirted with normative questions as it wrestled with the question of who came to America, what they built here, and what became of Jewish culture in the realm of acculturation and assimilation. This cut against the grain of scholarship that insisted on the creativity and transformative character of Judaism in America, even as it skirted questions of decline in the level of Jewish culture.

Hertzberg was both a scholar and a rabbi. Though traditionally these roles were often combined in one person, they have become largely separate and distinct professions. Nowadays scholars and rabbis stand for educational visions and methods that are often far apart, and they play different roles in public life.

This separation has come upon us rather abruptly. One has only to look at back volumes of *HUCA* or the *CCAR Journal* or the *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly* or *Conservative Judaism* or especially *Judaism* to see how recently they boasted of the contributions of rabbis who were scholars, scholars who were rabbis. A half-century ago such rabbi-scholars were prominent if not predominant in the rabbinate. Such men chose the rabbinate partly because Jewish studies had not yet found a place in the American academy, partly because the pulpit still seemed a place hospitable to scholarship, a place requiring learning as well as pastoral care.

In this sense, Arthur Hertzberg’s passing reminds us of that now largely bygone era, when scholars and rabbis were often one and same. Y. L. Gordon’s dictum, “Be a man on the street and a Jew in your tent” called upon the Jew to be a humanist and the humanist to be a Jew, creating a new sort of synthesis between the world and

the Jew. Hertzberg’s life represented such a synthesis—however much he himself may have lamented that he failed to live up either to his rabbinic ideals like his father or his scholarly ideals like Levi Ginsberg or Salo Baron. His rabbinate informed and elevated the scholarly choices he made about what to write and what to argue; his scholarship affected his vision for Jewish public affairs, as is evidenced by his famous jeremiad insisting that communal leaders should actually know something about the Jewish culture and civilization they professed to want to preserve for the next generation.

My own personal experience with the *Me’ah* adult education program and with my colleagues from academia who teach in it points to the truth of Hertzberg’s synthesis of learning and leadership. Nothing other than education will save serious Jewishness. Most of my colleagues grasp this simple truth. Indeed, I think that many would acknowledge that inside every devoted scholar there lurks “*a pintele rav*.” Such a person cares passionately for Jews and Judaism and sees his or her knowledge as a tool for serving others and making the world a bit more civilized. Such a person could set himself or herself no higher goal than to live up to the standards set by Arthur Hertzberg.

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