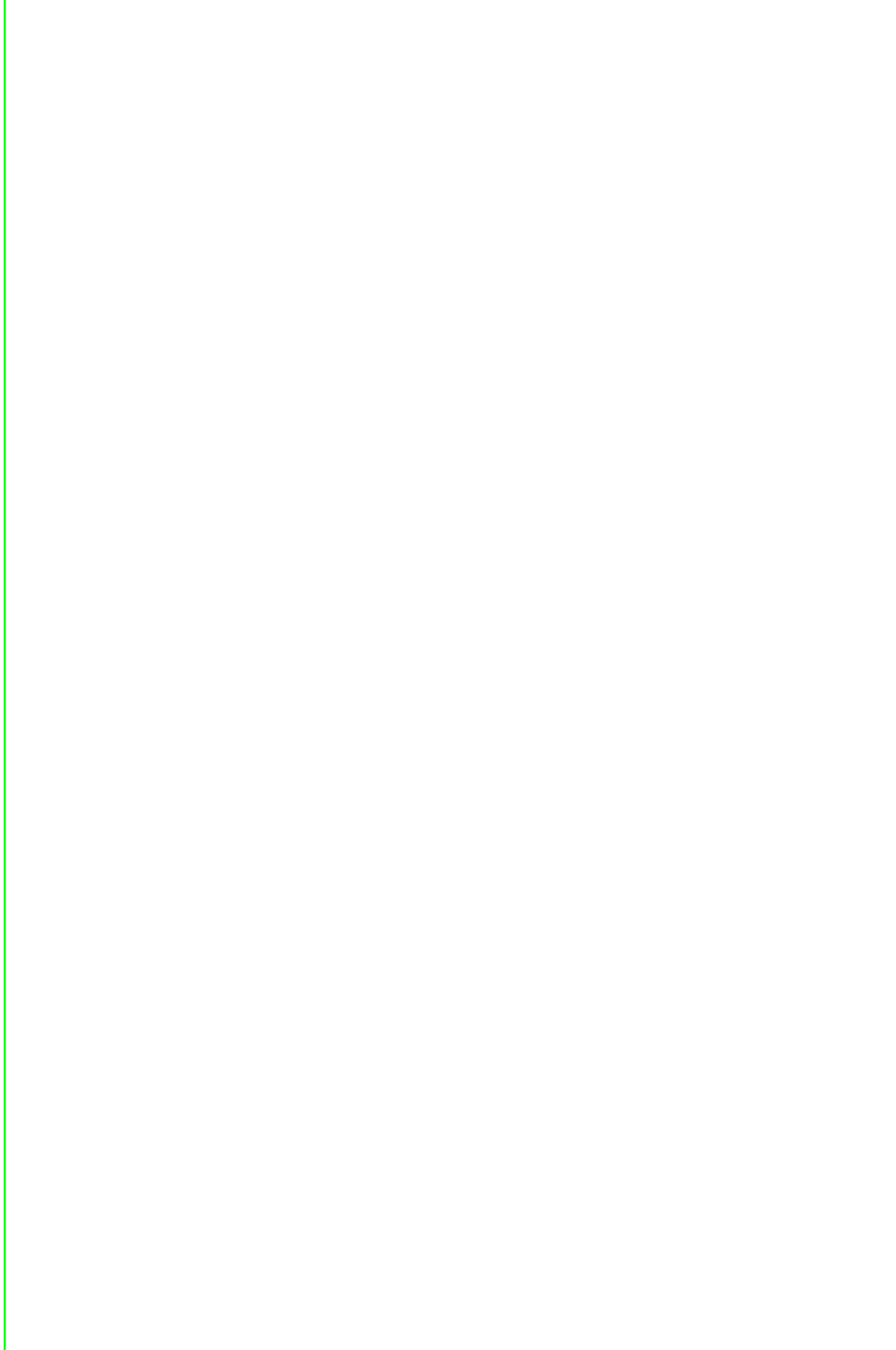


INTRODUCTION



PEOPLE OF THE BOOK, PEOPLE OF THE SEA: MIRROR IMAGES OF THE SOUL

MINNA ROZEN

1. People of the Book, People of the Sea

In April 1991, the cruiser *Spiro*, Argentina's contribution to the Gulf War paid a courtesy visit to Piraeus. There was naturally certain puzzlement in Greece as to how an Argentinean ship came to be bearing a seemingly Greek name. There was considerable interest when it became known that the ship was en route for the island of Hydra, the birthplace of Spyros Petrou, one of the greatest heroes of the Argentine navy. Born in 1784, Petrou had migrated to Argentina where he had come to command an Argentinean ship in the war of independence against Spain. In 1814, rather than submit to the Spanish, Petrou had preferred to blow himself up with his ship... Moreover, Petrou was not the only Greek to have distinguished himself in the service of the Argentinean military. When, at the end of the Falklands War, general Galtieri, the leader of the Argentinean junta, was deposed he was replaced by General Nikolaidis, who had actually been born in Greece and who had an aunt still living in Kavala.¹

The sea has always played a key role in the history of the Greeks — both in the diaspora and in their homeland. The centrality of the sea is reflected in their way of life as well as in their beliefs and traditions.² However the importance of the sea for the inhabitants of the Aegean and Anatolian littoral and the nearby islanders can be traced to the distant past, long before the classical age. The way Aegean and Anatolian migrations of the thirteenth-twelfth centuries BCE are depicted in the historical memory of the ancient Egyptians and Israelites, shows that long before the emergence of classical Greek culture, migrants from these areas were strongly associated with the sea. From the fourteenth through

twelfth centuries BCE the Hittite and Egyptian empires — the greatest empires of the period — began to decline. One byproduct of this process was the emergence of newcomers from the north and west who threatened the Hittite³ and Egyptian empires.⁴ As time went by, some of these newcomers were absorbed into the Egyptian army,⁵ and settled within Egypt and on the Canaan coastline. Already in this early period, one of these groups, the Sherden, were referred to as a seafaring people.⁶ Nineteenth-century Egyptologists labeled the nine groups specified in the Egyptian sources as “Sea Peoples.”⁷ On the walls of his mausoleum in Medinet Habu, Rameses III (ca. 1182–1167 BCE)⁸ boasted his victory over a coalition of ferocious warriors who lived on ships, and excelled in naval warfare.⁹ A document dated late twelfth, or even early eleventh, century BCE, designated by scholars the Onomasticon of Amenope, cites a list of places and peoples in Canaan that link three of the biblical Philistine pentapolis — Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Gaza¹⁰ — with two of these peoples, the Sherden and the Peleset.¹¹ During the reign of Rameses XI (eleventh century BCE) an Egyptian priest named Wen-Amon was sent to Canaan to buy material for ship-building. In a document recounting his adventures, he mentions a stay in the city of Dor, south of present-day Haifa. At that time, Dor was a harbor of one of the “Sea Peoples,” the Sekel (also known as Sikila,¹² or Tjekker,¹³ depending on how one interprets the document and the theories on the origins of each of the “Sea peoples”) — nowadays Sicily or western Anatolia. The provenance of each of the nine “Sea Peoples” became the subject of long and heated scholarly debates. The theories varied from 1. Illyria via the Balkans; 2. The western Aegean region; 3. The eastern Aegean region; 4. The eastern Mediterranean, or various combinations of the above.¹⁴ Most scholars agree that whatever the origins of these groups, they picked up Mycenaean culture or, at the very least, Mycenaean culture in the broader sense (i.e., Aegean culture) before their arrival on the shores of Canaan.¹⁵ The most renowned of the Sea Peoples were the Peleset or Philistines, who gave their name to all the other northern tribes who settled in the coastal plain of Canaan, and eventually to the entire non-Jewish population of the area,¹⁶ as well as to the country. They were notorious for their enmity to the Kingdom of Judea. The royal scribes of the Kingdom of Judea saw fit to immortalize them, as opposed to other “Sea Peoples,” such as the Sekel (or Tjekker) and Sherden, who were of less interest to Judea, and who had lost their distinctive character by the time the Bible was written.¹⁷ According to the Bible, the Philistines came from Kaphtor.¹⁸ The enigmatic Kaphtor was identified by generations of biblical commentators and scholars as the island of Crete, a theory substantiated by the existence of two contingents of mercenaries — the “Cheterites and Pelethites” (הכרתִי והפלתי) — in King David’s army.¹⁹ Today’s scholars tend to identify it with Cyprus.²⁰ Whether Crete or Cyprus, Kaphtor may well have been their last, or one of their last, stops on their lengthy journey to the Canaan coast. Scholars often identify

the Philistines with the Pelasgians, a term designating "natives" in archaic Greek, i.e. those who inhabited present-day Greece, as well as the coasts of Asia Minor and Illyria, before the "Greeks."²¹ While Dor was explicitly identified as a "harbor of the Sekel" (Tjekker), archeologists identify other sites of other "Sea People" who settled on the Canaanite coast as those of the Peleset and the Sherden,²² because their names appear in the Onomasticon of Amenope in connection with the Pentapolis. At the same time, the Denyen who are often identified as the Danaoi (Δαναοί), a Greek tribe living in the Argos plain, or possibly hailing from Anatolia,²³ do not appear in this list, or in any other written source of the period. Consequently, the textual arguments suggesting the possibility of a Denyen settlement along the Jaffa coast or plain, prior to the formation of the Hebrew tribal alliance, and the subsequent absorption of the Denyen within the Israelite tribal alliance as the tribe of Dan, were regarded as speculative.²⁴ However, the strong Aegean features of the Samson legends, his own ambivalent connections with the Philistines, and Dan's biblical description as a seafaring tribe, remain an intriguing enigma. According to the Bible, the Danites, who were given land on the southern coast, were unable to settle there because of Amorite and Philistine pressure, and moved northwards. On their journey northwards they stole the sacred statuettes venerated by the House of Michah, and forced its priest to come with them. Eventually, they took over the peaceful city of Lajish, and renamed it "after their ancestor, Dan."²⁵ The cumulative evidence in favor of the Dan-Denyen theory, is challenged by the archeological findings at Tel Dan. These findings point to the destruction of a highly sophisticated urban civilization in the twelfth century BCE, a civilization that produced fine pottery, and imported pottery from Cyprus and from the Aegean. This refined civilization was replaced by a nomadic society that produced inferior pottery. The invaders' culture lacked the sophisticated characteristics of the other "Sea Peoples" that settled along the Canaan coast. This society, with its nomadic and unrefined culture, resembled other Israelite settlements.²⁶ One explanation for these findings may be the possible deprivation the group had suffered in the past, when it had been challenged by its neighbors, and forced to move from its original area of settlement to the northern region of the country. During this transitional period, it may have lost its original leadership, as well as the means to produce the high-quality pottery that characterized this Aegean-influenced people. It may also have assimilated the physical traits of the Israelite mountain people. This is not the only problem to emerge from the archeological findings. The excavations of Tel Qasile, near the Yarqon River estuary in Tel Aviv, have revealed a Philistine port city, one stratum of which Yigael Yadin ascribed to the Denyen, in support of the Denyen-Dan theory.²⁷ However, further work on the site has revealed a settlement of "Sea People" dating from the twelfth to the tenth century BCE, when the city was captured by the Israelites.²⁸ These findings are not

consistent with the biblical Danite account of their forced emigration from their southern inheritance towards the northern Canaanite coast, unless one accepts the idea of a settlement of "Sea People" before the twelfth century.²⁹ At any rate, the Danites possessed two characteristics that did not typify other Israelites. They were, according to the Bible, a seafaring clan,³⁰ and the archeological findings at Tel Dan attest to their skill as iron-workers.³¹ The Philistines excelled in this occupation and made sure no Israelite engaged in it.³²

Why does the tribe of Dan so capture the academic imagination? The reason is that, even if the Denyen-Dan theory is mere speculation, the Philistines, Dan's biblical adversaries, left a distinct mark on this tribe's culture and, through it, on the entire Israelite historical memory.

Thus, the aforementioned scholarly debate comprises at least three levels revolving around: (1) The provenance of the "Sea Peoples"; (2) whether the "Sea Peoples," or some of them, "qualified" as "Greeks"; and (3) their imprint on their environment and vice versa.

The picture that emerges from these early sources is that of seafaring tribes hailing from the Mediterranean islands, the shores of the Aegean, and the shores of Southern Anatolia. The cults they preserved through the ages right into the Hellenistic period, whether original, adapted, or assimilated, had strong links with bountiful nature, especially with mother earth,³³ but at the same time were strongly connected with the sea and its powers.³⁴ Archeological findings show that they brought with them an entirely new civilization, one that had Aegean characteristics and which was closely related to the Mycenaean culture. These findings also show that they spoke a different language to the Canaanite vernacular, before adopting the local language and other aspects of the local culture. The language they spoke was certainly not a Semitic language, and recent studies substantiate the fact that they spoke Greek.³⁵ In the Bible, the Philistines (in the generic sense) are depicted as the archfoe of the Israelites, and their remote overseas origins and foreign culture are always emphasized. These "Sea Peoples" may not have qualified as "Greek" in the classical or modern sense, but they certainly originated from what would become the defined regions of Greek-speaking populations, as perceived by "others," i.e. Egyptians, Canaanites, and Israelites. Indeed, the Philistine settlement on the Canaanite coast should be considered an early example of later waves of Greek colonization.

Thus, the sea, the islands, and the mountains produced the "People of the Sea" long before anybody defined them as such, and long before they themselves began reflecting on the significance of their way of life. Much like the ancient Hebrews, the Greeks, too, had a glorified image of life before the reality they knew and had helped create. They imagined a mythological Golden Age in which people did not sail or trade, but rather, were attached to their land. In their imagination, it was "Argo" and the quest for the Golden Fleece that had changed all that, and turned the sea and seafaring into an integral part of their lives.³⁶

The ancient Greeks perceived the sea as a unifying and equalizing factor, merging people, rites, languages, beliefs, cultures, and goods.³⁷ At the same time, it was a degrading or corrupting factor (the “corrupting sea”),³⁸ which, by bringing people together, changed their original characteristics, fashioning and refashioning them time and again. It taught them the undignified business of trade instead of the noble calling of agriculture. For the Greeks, the sea had become a challenge they were used to confronting and felt proud to master and overcome, with all the trophies and dangers this implied. In a Demotic song from Karpathos, the North-Wind warns all ships and sailors on the high seas to find refuge from its fury:

But a Cretan ship answered him:
 I’m not afraid of you Mr. North-Wind,
 No matter how you blow,
 for I have bronze masts and steel antennas,
 for I have sails made of silk from Proussa,
 for I have cables made of blond maiden’s hair,
 for I have choice sailors who are all brave lads,
 for I have a young sailor who knows the elements.³⁹

It was Anaximander of Miletos (ca. 610–ca. 546 BCE) who first formulated the theory of an aquatic descent of mankind.⁴⁰ It was the Odyssey that first gave us our perception of the Mediterranean world, and the Greek historians of the fifth century BCE who depicted the past as a sequence of Thalassocracies.⁴¹ Finally, it was Plato’s *Phaedo* that likened the human species to ants and frogs living around the sea.⁴²

The Greeks, whether ancient or modern, did not invent the notion of the sea as an integral part of their common identity. Rather, it was the dantelesque quality of the sea and land surrounding them that forced them to relate to it constantly in every conceivable way, weaving language, man and sea into a unique culture. By the mid-twentieth century — after decades of strife, violence and instability for modern Greece — its best poets found the sea a useful metaphor for describing how to cope with the anguish of the real world. Nikos Gatsos (1911–1992), for example, wrote of his wretched countrymen:

With their country tied to their sails and their oars hanging in the
 wind,
 The shipwrecked slept tamely like dead beasts on a bedding of
 sponges,
 But the eyes of the seaweed are turned toward the sea
 Hoping the South Wind will bring them back with their lateen sails
 newly painted.⁴³

On a more personal level, Odysseas Elytis (1911–1996) wrote:

— “I was given the Hellenic tongue
 my house a humble one on the sandy shores of Homer.
 — My only care my tongue on the sandy shores of Homer.
 The sea-bream and perch
 — windbeaten verbs
 green currents with the cerulean
 — all that I saw blazing in my entrails
 sponges, medusae
 — with the first words of the Sirens
 pink shells with their first dark tremors.”⁴⁴

On the other hand, for the Jews, both in the early Israelite period and later, the sea has rarely served as a spiritual or physical pivot of identification, and never as an object of intense activity.⁴⁵ Already Josephus Flavius stated: “As for ourselves, therefore, we neither inhabit a maritime country, nor do we delight in merchandise, nor in such a mixture with other men as arises from it; but the cities we dwell in are remote from the sea, and having a fruitful country for our habitation, we take pains in cultivating that only. Our principal care of all is this, to educate our children well; and we think it to be the most necessary business of our whole life to observe the laws that have been given us, and to keep those rules of piety that have been delivered down to us.”⁴⁶ This statement includes both the Jews’ recognition that they lived “with their back to the sea,” and the importance they attached to the transmission of tradition by way of education. In fact, the main historical references to extensive nautical activity within Jewish culture point to external influences, namely, to the adaptation of Jewish culture to a broader ultra-ethnic Mediterranean culture. Thus, the Israelite seafaring tribe of Dan was either a foreign tribe, possibly the Denyen of the “Sea People,” who assimilated among the Israelites while retaining their maritime traditions or, at least, an Israelite tribe that intermingled with its Philistine neighbors and adopted much of their culture.⁴⁷ The nautical activities of King Solomon are connected to his alliance with the Phoenicians.⁴⁸ The port of Dor that operated in the ninth century BCE under the Israelite government of the ‘Omri dynasty, is also associated with a period of strong alliance with the Phoenicians.⁴⁹ The Book of Jonah is undoubtedly a Biblical adaptation of an ancient, Mediterranean sailors’ myth.⁵⁰ Paradoxically, even the nautical activities of the Hasmonean dynasty were a consequence of its economic, political and cultural integration in the Hellenistic world against which it fought.⁵¹ The city of Jaffa became a center of Jewish maritime activity only after it was conquered by the Hasmoneans, a tradition it retained until the great rebellion against the Romans, and the *victoria navalis* Vespasian claimed for subduing it.⁵² Last, but not least, the involvement of Jews in maritime international trade in the early modern period was almost entirely the initiative of the descendants of the “New Christians” who returned to Judaism in various Italian principalities, Bordeaux and the Low Countries.⁵³

Indeed, the passage with which we began this chapter, cited from Richard Clogg's article in *The Greek Diaspora in the Twentieth Century*,⁵⁴ which he edited, could never have referred to the Jews and their diaspora. Nor could any of the other aforementioned citations transmit the Jewish concept of the word. Jews have frequently and more aptly been described as the "People of the Book." Much like the Biblical "Sea People," Jews won this "title" at a later stage of their existence. It was Islam that coined this term as applying to all monotheistic religions.⁵⁵ However, it was only in the early nineteenth century that this theological description metamorphosed into the popular notion of the Jews as "The People of the Book." Thus, although essentially each of these groups could have been identified by its ancient history, in actual fact the epithets describing them were coined in the nineteenth century. The advent of romanticism and nationalism — intellectual movements that called for clear designations of cultures and nations — gave added impetus to this process.⁵⁶

Although the exact dating of the emergence of the "Sea Peoples" in the Middle East is a subject for scholarly debate, clearly its identification as such is connected with their migration and resettlement in "foreign" lands. The same holds true for their successors, the classical Greeks. The more they dispersed, the more they were identified with the sea. Similarly, the identification of Jews as "The People of the Book" has its roots in the emergence of the Jewish diaspora, i.e. migration, dislocation and resettlement. The longer Jewish diasporic existence persisted, the greater the role of "The Book" in their lives. Thus, both Sea and Book may be considered as ancillary to the main survival tool: diasporic existence.

Until the Second World War, it was the Jewish bookcase that kept Jews together as a nation (albeit a dispersed one), and for many it still is. For religious Jews it was, and still is, a question of choice. Secular Jewish intellectuals inadvertently created for themselves a universal bookcase in their respective specialties, using the same tools created by generations of rabbinical scholars before them.⁵⁷ Some of these intellectuals persisted in their belief that this bookcase was their virtual homeland, while others became disillusioned. Both categories, however, built their images of nationhood on books, words, and texts.

It is no coincidence that both Heinrich Heine and George Steiner defined the written word as their homeland. Despite the time interval between them, and the different way they processed their disillusionment with the quest for a terrestrial homeland, they were both *bona fide* members of "The People of the Book." Heine was probably the first to crystallize in words the idea and problematics of "The People of the Book" in the modern sense of the word. Heine, so Jewish and yet so German, defined the Bible as the Jews' "portable homeland," and as the source of both their fortunes and misfortunes.⁵⁸ He himself converted to Christianity in order to escape the Jewish misfortunes and gain admission to German society, or rather, to the Prussian civil service. Alas, his conversion was of no avail. Rejected by Germany, the land to

which he had contributed some of its most famous and beloved poetry, he expressed his disenchantment in the terms of a rejected lover:

Oh, once I had a lovely fatherland
 The oaks grew tall
 Up to the sky, the gentle violets swayed.
 I dreamt it all.
 I felt a German kiss, heard German words
 (hard to recall)
 How good they rang? the words *Ich liebe dich!*
 I dreamt it all.⁵⁹

Heine succeeded in articulating how words defined his identity in both positive and negative ways. On the one hand, there was The Bible — eternal and always connected to Heine's Hebrew roots — and, on the other hand, German — the language of his adoptive homeland that proved to be unfaithful and elusive.

In the hundred and fifty years from Heine to Steiner, European Jewry became emancipated and reached unprecedented heights in every sphere of human activity, followed by equally unprecedented spates of hatred and persecution. Heine's books were burnt in Nazi Germany's town squares (though his famous poem "Lorelei" was included in German text books under the heading "a folk song") while European Jews, whether Orthodox, assimilated or Zionist, were butchered and cremated, exactly as he had predicted.⁶⁰ Although Heine's personal disillusionment was insignificant in comparison with the magnitude of the national tragedy, in nature, his disillusionment was no different from that of the twentieth-century child and "graduate" of its Jewish-European experience, George Steiner.

Although George Steiner transformed this disillusionment into something much more universal and all-embracing than did Heine, he reverted to the same intellectual sphere. His Bible — more symbolic than Heine's — is the crystallization of the written word expressing all that is exalted and noble in human creation. His rejection by Europe did not lead him to reject Europe and its culture, or any other place or culture for that matter. Nor did it lead him to choose another locus for his quest for truth. The "Bible," or the "Word," did not lead him to the Land of the Bible, since words have no territory. Because the locus debases the word, all loci are the same for him, and the only homeland is the text itself:

The locus of truth is always extraterritorial; its diffusion is made clandestine by the barbed wire and watch-towers of national dogma...Locked materially in a material homeland, the text may, in fact, lose its life-force, and its truth-values may be betrayed. But when the text is the homeland, when it is rooted only in the exact remembrance and seeking of a handful of wanderers, nomads of the word, it cannot be extinguished.⁶¹

Another person who takes the “Word” as a mirror of the diasporic condition to its furthest extreme is the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Born in Alger to an assimilated Jewish family, Derrida used all the classic rabbinical tools of deliberation and debate in order to prove that written words do not have only one specific meaning. Since, according to him, words can be interpreted in a number of ways, any word and any of its interpretations have the same importance and validity as any other.⁶² It is important to recognize the origins of Derrida’s preoccupation with words. His autobiographical essay “Circonfession” (Circumfession) indicates the impact his self-styled non-existent Judaism had on his life and intellect. Despite being circumcised, he did not see himself as a confessant in the sense of believer. At the same time, he admitted that his most formative experience was being forced to memorize his Bar-Mitzvah portion without understanding it. This assault on his intellect set in motion his life-long quest for the meaning of words.⁶³ His assimilated background left him torn between three poles: Jewish, French and *pie d noir*. Steeped in an ancient tradition of the quest for the “Word,” but thwarted in this quest at a critical moment of his life, he devised his own theory of the impossibility of establishing a hierarchy of words. He thereby turned the “Word” itself into an eternal exile, in which, and from which, there was no possibility of finding a homeland. According to him, there was none. The diasporic condition, once again, was the only natural mode of existence. Such a grim conclusion could only have been reached by a member of the “People of the Book.”

Choosing the text as homeland, as both Heine and Steiner did, is the only Jewish way of reconciling the need for a home and the diasporic condition.⁶⁴ Denying the word or the text was the choice of one who, in his formative years, was denied the right to make sense of the word, after first having been taught its supreme importance. From the above it is clear that becoming the “People of the Book” was a survival tool for the Jews in much the same way as becoming the “People of the Sea” was a survival tool for the Greeks.

2. Questions of Terminology: Diaspora and Mekhorah

a. Word Games

Stemming from the Greek verb *diaspeiro* (διασπείρω = to sow), the term diaspora (διασπορά) was first used in the Septuagint:⁶⁵ “The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and thou **shalt be removed into** all the kingdoms of the earth” [Deuteronomy 28: 25].⁶⁶ The last part of this verse “thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth” was the translation of the Hebrew expression “*hayita le-za’avah*,” which literally means “thou shalt become a horror to

all the kingdoms on the earth.” Thus, although the Greek word diaspora came to denote the Hebrew term *pezurah* (Jeremiah, 50:17), in essence it was a euphemized translation of another word altogether: horror. The term diaspora still encapsulates the horror of the original biblical expression. In Jewish tradition, diaspora sums up the idea of *galut* — exile — horror.⁶⁷ Since a human being cannot live indefinitely in a state of horror, the word diaspora was invented to render the exiled Jews’ condition more tolerable.

For the Jews, Diaspora signified a state of existence outside the ancestral land after having been exiled by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and finally by the Romans, to all corners of the earth. Since our traditional knowledge of the emergence of the Jewish diaspora derives from the Bible, and the Bible relates history as a function of obedience or otherwise to the divine commandments, in essence the term diaspora denotes a negative condition forced on the Jews by sin.⁶⁸ Moreover, since the advent of Christianity, and especially since the adoption of Christianity by Constantine (324 CE), the diasporic condition was interpreted by the Christian world as the ultimate Jewish punishment inflicted upon the Jews for the specific sin of deicide and heresy.⁶⁹ Islam, too, borrowed the idea of Jewish exile as punishment, with suitable adaptations.⁷⁰ While from the Jewish perspective, the end of diaspora signifies the end of captivity and is totally dependant on God’s will, from the Christian perspective the end of the Jewish diaspora is contingent upon the Jews’ accepting Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Similarly, from an Islamic perspective, the adoption of the true faith (Islam) makes the believer an equal member of the community of Islam, thereby banishing the exilic condition. The obvious conclusion from the above is that the diasporic condition is a product of a power relationship in which the diasporic community finds itself in a situation of subordination vis-à-vis the ambient society.

If the word diaspora bridges both Jewish and Greek cultures, the word for homeland — a far more ancient word — suggests a much wider bridge between the two cultures spanning an immense geographical and temporal space which they shared both physically and, as we shall see, also metaphorically. The Hebrew word for homeland, *moledet* (מולדת), literally birthplace, from the root *y'l'd'* — to give birth), first appears in the Pentateuch (Genesis 1:4, 7). However, a synonym appears in the book of Ezekiel (16:3; 21:35; 28:14), namely, *mekhoratam* [מכורתם], “their birthplace.”⁷¹ The Hebrew philologist, Ibn Shushan, relates the word *mekhorah* [birthplace] to *kur* and *k'r'h'*. The Hebrew word *kur* means furnace, a place where different metals are melted together to produce an alloy — a substance that is different from each of its components. The root *k'r'h'*, on the other hand, means to mine, to dig to the bottom of a place in order to extract its innermost essence. Hence, *mekhorah* is a place where people are created, where they begin, from which they go forth. The Greek word *khora* (χώρα) means both city and country, or “the place,”

the ultimate place, my very own place. In *Timaeus*, Plato defines the word *khora* as the womb within which ideal forms or essences are created.⁷² The dual or even triple meanings of the word in Greek are beautifully exemplified by the early fifth-century CE Khora Church in Istanbul (the present-day *Kariye Camii*), built outside the walls of Constantinople, to the south of the Golden Horn. The full name of the church was the Church of the Holy Savior of the Country (Ἡ Εκκλησία του Αγίου Σωτήρος εν τη Χώρα), where the word *khora* simply means “extra muros,” or “the outlying area of the city.” Inside the church, however, the mosaics in the narthex depict Christ in the *Land of the Living* (Ἡ Χώρα των ζώντων), where the word *khora* designates land, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as the *Container of the Uncontainable* (Χώρα του Αχωρήτου), where the word *khora* designates womb. In this context, therefore, the word *khora* means, variously, “outside the walls,” “land” and “womb.” The connection between the various meanings of the Hebrew root and Plato’s understanding of the word — both heavily imbued with female sexual connotations — might not be fortuitous. It might date back to primeval times plunged in the miasma of millennia, to cultures that preceded those of the Hebrews and Hellenes. The Sumerians were an Indo-European civilization that flourished in southern Mesopotamia during the fifth through third millennia BCE. The Semitic civilizations of the Akkadians, Assyrians, and Babylonians that succeeded the Sumerians adopted the Sumerian orthography and pantheon, as well as many other elements of their civilization, as did the Hittites, another Indo-European civilization that flourished in Asia Minor in the second millennium BCE. The Sumerian word **URU**, for example, was a term denoting a city or city-state. In both the Akkadian and Hittite languages, it denoted a city. Another Sumerian word, **KI**, denotes earth, place, area, location, ground, and grain (‘base’ + ‘to rise, sprout’). **KI-ÚR** in Sumerian denotes territory, residential area (‘place’ + ‘roofs’), and the kingdom or territory controlled by a city or city-state.⁷³

The Akkadian language, albeit Semitic, assimilated many elements from the Sumerian language, including the nuances of the word *ki* combined with *uru*, denoting the area and natural vegetation surrounding a city. These nuances can be traced back to the Akkadian terms *kiriū*, *kirū*, *kiri tu* (orchard, garden), which of course bring to mind the Arabic القرية (little village), or الكرة (sphere), and the Hebrew קרייה, (meaning town, suburb or zone), all of which resemble one of the meanings of the Greek *khora*, i.e., outside the city, countryside, area, territory. The Hebrew word also resembles the Greek word *khora* in its sense of city. Jerusalem, for example, is called קריית מלך רב (the town of a great king).⁷⁴

Bearing in mind that the Hebrew word *mekhorah* first appears in the Book of Ezekiel, which is heavily imbued with Babylonian culture, the assimilation of the term *khora* into the Hebrew through the Akkadian in this period is highly plausible. Its assimilation into Greek is not surprising either, in view of numerous cases of such loans in the Greek language.

The common roots of URU, KI-ÚR, *kariyah* and *khora*, designating land, place, city and city-state, are echoed in the Septuagint,⁷⁵ and in light of the above, are obvious. The question, however, still remains of how both the Hebrew and the Greek languages adopted the feminine connotations of this word. One possible explanation is that the feminine connotations of the word were already known to both cultures when the word was assimilated by them.

In search of support for such an explanation we must once again turn to Sumer. The Sumerian supreme god, Enlil, was once banished for raping his wife-to-be, Ninlil. Ninlil rejected him saying: "My vagina is too small, it knows not to copulate, My lips are too small, they know not to kiss"... Enlil, however, refusing to take no for an answer, "walked about in her KIÚR [Ninlil's private shrine]."⁷⁶ Walking about in Ninlil's "private shrine" was a euphemism for raping her. Thus, KIÚR becomes a euphemism for the female genital organ! Hence, KIÚR — *Khora-Mekhorah* became city, land, motherland!

It follows that in this case, the connection between *mekhorah* and the Hebrew *k'r'h'* and *k'u'r'* is an etiological one, that was created after the assimilation of the term, and molded it into the rather unique morph of *m'k't'l'h'*.⁷⁷

Even if we suppose that the striking similarity between *mekhorah* and *khora* is accidental, and that the above linguistic analysis verges on the far-fetched,⁷⁸ the existence of these words (the Greek *khora* and the Hebrew *mekhorah*), clearly signifies that the conditions of being at home or away from home were familiar to those who lived, sailed or migrated in the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean in ancient times.

Thus, for our purposes, *khora* always signified the ultimate place, home. Its counterpoint, *xeniteia* (ξενιτεία) — living abroad or even in exile⁷⁹ — was an undesirable option only when its subjects were unable to convert it (the *xeniteia*)⁸⁰ into a *khora*. Thus, for the Greeks, living in foreign lands had not been a horrific experience. On the contrary, in many cases it had represented a communal victory and salvation.

A historical study of the Greek diaspora immediately leads one to the conclusion that the early, classical, and even part of the Ottoman Greek, dispersion was not about diasporism in the Septuagint sense at all. It was not about the dispersal of nuclei of Greeks all of whom were connected to a specific center. Rather, it was a network of people who spoke the same language and shared cultural values. Although the end result of this proliferation of Greeks in new places resembled that of the Jewish diaspora, and although both diasporas shared common features, the two experiences stemmed from different sources. The Greek diasporic experience was a complex phenomenon of a society in ferment that saw the diaspora as a solution to its internal political, social and economic problems. This quest was not, however, rooted in a negative, ideological soil. First and foremost, the Greek colonizers left their cities out of *stenochoria* (στενοχώρια), the sense of being cramped, overcrowded. There

were too many people in their places of origin, too many mouths to feed. Even before the emergence of the Greek diaspora in the eighth-seventh centuries BCE, the migrations of the Sea Peoples bore similar characteristics as those of subsequent Greek migrations from the same places. The *pentapolis* founded by the Philistines in Canaan were not settlements built by refugees or expellees, as was hitherto thought. They were large cities, built hastily according to plans brought with from the migrants' lands of origin. The inhabitants of these cities had a refined material culture, never seen in Canaan before, and introduced new cults and burial practices. These people founded new cities not necessarily because they were forced out of their places of origin by others. Indeed, the way they settled in their new places was in no way indicative of expulsion.⁸¹

The Greek cities from which the people who Hellenized a large section of the eastern Mediterranean hailed belonged to a different and much later stratum of Greek history. From the eighth century on, Greek cities sent out groups of citizens on colonization expeditions. After lengthy voyages, these sailors would disembark where the fancy took them, and set up colonies. These colonies ranged from Massalia (Marseilles) to Southern Italy and Sicily, and from Byzantium (Constantinople, nowadays Istanbul) to Odessa and Varna in the Black Sea, and Ephesus and Miletus on the shores of Asia Minor. These colonization expeditions received the blessing of the city's deities. Although the new settlers retained an emotional and physical affinity with the metropolis, eventually, their new polis turned into their *khora*.⁸² Greek they may have been in the cultural sense, but they were citizens of their new polis. Thus, in principle and ideologically the Greek colonial diaspora, unlike the Jewish diaspora, was basically a product of human choice which, as the ancient Greeks perceived it, had divine approval. It was not a divine punishment but rather a human accomplishment that did not require divine intervention to be reversed. In fact, there was no reason to reverse it. This attitude was transmitted to later generations of Greeks to this very day.

b. When Diaspora Turns into Mekhorah

The ideological differences between the two diasporas should not be taken at face value. They are sometimes more literary than real, and always reflect frozen moments in history rather than the complete diasporic experience of both peoples. This experience is far more fluid and diversified than what the aforementioned basic principles might lead one to believe.

While the basic concept of Jewish diaspora is traditionally negative, we tend to forget that the concepts of *khora* and *xeniteia*, and the transformation of *xeniteia* into *khora*, appear already in the founding text of the Jewish people, when the Patriarch Abraham was ordered by God: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy

father's house, unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation" [Genesis 12:1]. In this story Abraham did not abandon his homeland (*khora*) in favor of a diaspora, but rather he left his homeland for a foreign land (*xeniteia*) at a divine imperative, and then proceeded to turn this foreign land into a totally new *khora*. Thus, the origins of the Jewish people, as related by the Kings of Judea probably in the seventh century BCE, began with a typically "Greek" story!

Another shared facet of the two diasporic experiences is that the sense of superiority that should have safeguarded their unique identities within the foreign cultures in which they lived was not always present. The Philistines are a good case in point. They settled in the coastal plain of Canaan bringing with them an Indo-European language and worshipping Aegean deities, and ended up as a near-Eastern people who transformed their Aegean Mother Goddess, (mother of the earth and its bounty) into an Aramaic male deity, Dagon, God of wheat (*dagan* in Hebrew),⁸³ spoke the local Semitic vernacular, and abandoned Mycenaean pottery in favor of Canaanite pottery. This process lasted no longer than five hundred years,⁸⁴ and in many places of settlement appeared much earlier. Over the centuries, and especially following the Macedonian conquests, the majority of the Middle East and Anatolia became Hellenized. The Hellenized people of the first century CE in Gaza, some of whom may have descended from the original Philistines, never dreamt that, in fact, they were "returning to their roots." The coastal plain of Canaan had become their *khora*, and their original homeland had been forgotten. The fortunes of the Philistines did not differ significantly from those of the much later Greek colonists of Poseidonia⁸⁵ (Paestum) in the Tyrrhenian Gulf, immortalized by a modern Greek poet, the Alexandrian Costantinos Cavafy:

The Poseidonians forgot the Greek language
 After so many centuries of mingling
 With Tyrrhenians, Latins, and other foreigners.
 The only thing surviving from their ancestors
 Was a Greek festival, with beautiful rites...
 And it was their habit towards the festival's end
 To tell each other about their ancient customs
 And once again to speak Greek names that only a few of them still
 recognized.
 And so their festival always had a melancholy ending
 Because they remembered that they too were Greeks,
 They too once upon a time were citizens of Magna Graecia;
 And how low they'd fallen now, what they'd become'
 Living and speaking like Barbarians,
 Cut off so disastrously from the Greek way of life.⁸⁶

Cavafy, a great poet who could see through the cloak of time and

articulate the eternal reality it hid, ingeniously revived and captured a frozen moment in time — the moment when the old *khora* was on the verge of slipping into oblivion and the Poseidonians were still struggling to keep its memory alive although painfully aware of its inevitable disappearance.

This same process was repeated countless times in Hellenistic, Byzantine and modern Greek history.

The Roman Empire adopted most of what the Hellenized world offered, and its eastern territories remained Greek rather than Roman. The Hellenized world was not a replica of the metropolis, but rather a new entity that added a new stratum to the perception of “Greekness.” The Roman stratum was not the only one to be added; as time went by, additional strata, such as a polytheistic oriental stratum and a monotheistic oriental stratum, were added. This continued until the *khora* (by now a symbolic region) was so remote that there was no question of the “expatriates” being part of a *xeniteia* or even part of a diaspora. Whoever spoke Greek was Greek, and wherever he lived was his homeland. Once again, Cavafy, better than any historian, depicts the invention and reinvention of Greekness, and the emergence of the new *khora*:

Well, we're nearly there, Hermippos,⁸⁷
 Day after tomorrow, it seems—that's what the captain said.
 At least we're sailing our seas,
 The waters of Cyprus, Syria, and Egypt,
 The beloved waters of our home countries.
 Why so silent — Ask your heart;
 Didn't you too feel happier
 The farther we got from Greece?
 What's the point of fooling ourselves?
 That would hardly be properly Greek.

Its time we admitted the truth;
 We are Greeks also — what else are we? —
 but with Asiatic affections and feelings,
 affections and feelings
 sometimes alien to Hellenism.⁸⁸

In this poem, Cavafy uses a historical theme to describe his own predicament. Although he was Greek, he was an Alexandrian, too, with all that that implied. The tension between the idea of his Greekness and the reality (*realia*) of his Alexandrian life was a leitmotif that ran through his poetry, and was reflected in a realism tinged with pain.

This constant reinvention of “Greekness” is not the only phenomenon relevant to our discussion. Another related phenomenon is the fact that the preservation of Hellenism has not always been successful. The

expansion of the Greek diaspora has not always been motivated by the urge to found new settlements, and bring civilization to the barbarians with the Gods' blessings. The many Gods became one God, and the dispersal was no longer simply a voluntary matter, but rather the result of coercion. Coercion sometimes resulted in the disappearance of Hellenism as it became subsumed in the dominant culture. This happened to the vast majority of the Hellenized, and later also Christianized, populations of what became, in the seventh century CE, the Muslim Mediterranean (the Middle East and North Africa). A large proportion of the Greek population of Asia Minor underwent a similar process after the advent of the Turkish tribes from the eleventh century on.⁸⁹ Thus, one way or another, diaspora turned into *mekhorah*. Indeed, a modern Greek idiom best encapsulates this idea: "Wherever there's soil there's a homeland" (ὅπου γῆς καὶ πατρίδας).

The same was true of the Jews, albeit in the opposite direction. Although the punitive aspect (the horror) of *Galut* and dispersal has always been there, the reality (*realia*) increasingly showed examples of voluntary diasporism, supported by various kinds of ideologies. Voluntary diasporism supported by an approved ideology was exactly what the Greeks practiced over the centuries. Jewish examples of voluntary diasporism do not necessarily belong to the modern period (as in the case of Heine, Steiner, and Derrida) but can be found already at a fairly early stage of Jewish history. An example is the famous prophecy presented by the Deuteronomist, allegedly sent from Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;
Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;
Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. (Jeremiah 29:4–7).

These verses have received only scant attention by the various commentators of the Bible, the Midrash (homiletics) or Jewish legal works. Jews throughout the world understood them as simply granting the exiles permission to continue with their day-to-day life, and even form an affinity with their new places, until the advent of the Messiah. The scarce attention given to these verses in Hebrew literature until the nineteenth century can only be understood as a reluctance to discuss the issue on a deeper level for fear that this might eventually undermine

the diasporic existence of the Jewish people, and thus deprive it of an important survival tool.

The polytheistic world, whether Semitic, Iranian, Hellenistic, or Roman, provided the Jewish diaspora with a comfortable soil in which to flourish. If diaspora is synonymous with Exile, then the invasion of the northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III and his successors, and the exile of the Jews to Assyria (733–701 BCE) marked the beginning of Exile.⁹⁰ This exile of the Ten Tribes (733–732 BCE), and some of the Judeans (701 BCE) considered lost in the course of time and the subject of many legends ever since, may serve as an additional tool in understanding how diaspora turns into *mekhorah*. No-one knows who the descendants of the Ten Tribes are today. The Ten Tribes themselves lost the memory of their exile long ago. Whoever they are today, they are part and parcel of the locality to which their ancestors were taken, namely, the biblical Halah, Habor, the Gozan River and the cities of Media,⁹¹ in Mesopotamia. They existed only in the memory of some Judeans whom the Assyrians had not exiled, and were thus preserved for posterity. A common thread unites the fate of the Ten Lost Tribes with the fate of the Hellenized world that assumed the mantle of Islam after the seventh century. Neither was exterminated. They were simply lost to those from whom they had descended, or whose culture they had assimilated.

The emergence of the Jewish military colony in Egypt further demonstrates the provisional and fluid aspect of diasporic existence. The evidence on this colony was revealed by the discovery of an impressive number of Papyri written in Aramaic,⁹² attesting to its unbroken existence from 495 BCE until 400 BCE.⁹³ The colony was made up of a community of Jewish mercenaries garrisoned on the island of Elephantine in southern Egypt, to protect it against the Nubian kingdom. Whereas the Egyptians stationed in the fortress had their own temple where they venerated Khnum, the God of the Nile, the Jewish soldiers had a temple of their own, where they venerated their god, YHW. Conflicts with Khnum adherents resulted in the destruction of YHW's temple (ca. 410 BCE). It was subsequently restored, with Persian permission.⁹⁴ In 419–418 BCE, the Jewish garrison gathered outside Elephantine information on the correct way to celebrate the Passover.⁹⁵ These documents portray a community that did not consider Jerusalem the only place of worship, and that did not excel in religious knowledge. The papyri do not reveal the date of the colony's establishment.

Biblical accounts of the years leading up to the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem (597 BCE) and the destruction of the First Temple (586 BCE), describe the emigration of numerous Judeans, motivated by the volatile political situation, from Judea to Egypt. Many of these emigrants not only worshipped the God of Israel, but also the "Queen of Heaven."⁹⁶ This female deity was venerated by the the Assyrians and Babylonians as Ishtar, the counterpart of the Sumerian Inanna, the northwest Semitic goddess Astarte, and the Egyptian goddess Isis.⁹⁷ The cult of Astarte was

very common both in Israel and Judea,⁹⁸ and the transition to the cult of Isis would have been natural for Judeans who immigrated to Egypt.

A glimpse into the origins of this colony is provided by a letter of alleged Judeo-Alexandrine provenance from the third century BCE, ascribed by Josephus to Aristes and addressed to Philocrates.⁹⁹ In this letter the author describes how Ptolemy I (367–283 BCE) sent Judean captives to serve in his garrison. The same source mentions two previous occasions in which Judean soldiers were ordered, or chose, to serve as soldiers in the service of Egyptian kings prior to the Ptolemaic period. One was straight after the Persian conquest of Egypt (525 BCE), and the other before it, during the reign of Psammetichos, who was assisted by the Judean soldiers in his campaign against the Ethiopians.¹⁰⁰ Based on these sources, the debate in the world of academia oscillates between those who date the establishment of the Elephantine colony to 735–701 BCE, between the Syro-Ephraimite war and the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem,¹⁰¹ and those who date it to the mid-seventh century BCE, i.e., the period of Psammetichos I (664–610 BCE). The latter theory suggests that Manasseh, King of Judah (697–642 BCE), might have furnished troops to his Egyptian ally in the struggle against the Assyrians.¹⁰² Other scholars date the influx of Jewish immigrants to Egypt and the establishment of the colony to the reign of Josiah (640–609 BCE), the great reformer, who tried to purge Judea from idolatry and religious syncretism. These scholars assume that the Judeans who refused to renounce their time-honored polytheistic habits left for Egypt.¹⁰³ The thirty year period between Jehoiakim's accession in 609 and the flight to Egypt following Gedaliah's assassination has also been suggested as a possibility.¹⁰⁴ This last theory is supported by Greek graffiti left by mercenaries in the armies of Psammetichus II (595–589 BCE), on one of Abu-Simbel's palaces, ascribing the establishment of the colony to the reign of this Pharaoh. However, the graffiti may also suggest that the Psammetichus of Aristes' letter was Psammetichus son of Theocles, an Egyptian mercenary of Greek origin, who commanded an army of Egyptian and foreign soldiers in the service of Psammetichus II during the Nubian campaign of 593 BCE, rather than the Pharaoh himself. After the campaign, Psammetichus II remained in Elephantine, which may explain the settlement of foreign mercenaries, and according to this theory, also Judeans, in the fortress.¹⁰⁵ The scholars are unanimous regarding the influx of immigrants following the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem. However, what concerns us is the emigration that predated the destruction of the First Temple and the massive exile that ensued. Even if this emigration started only after the Babylonian conquest (597 BCE), it points to a Jewish diasporic existence as a voluntary, rather than as an enforced, state. Although, according to the Bible, this event was situated mid-way through the Jewish People's existence, it actually took place at a time when monotheistic religious rituals had not yet superseded polytheistic ones. Even after the annihilation of the northern Kingdom of Israel, Jerusalem had no monopoly over the Jewish rite. We

must not, therefore, interpret these events as meaning that Jerusalem ceased to be the "Center" for these mercenaries, or that they founded a new temple in which an alternative "Jewish religion" continued to develop independently. Rather, the correct interpretation is that all these events took place before the Jewish religion, as we know it, crystallized, at a time when a temple other than the Jerusalem Temple was commonplace, and people who identified themselves as Jews, venerated YHW, but also the "Queen of Heaven," whether under the name of Astarte or Isis. The Jewish mercenaries of Elephantine continued to serve the Persians who invaded Egypt in 525 BCE, thereby reinforcing the pattern of a labor immigration that did not yearn for the "old country," but rather founded a new settlement, a new *khora*. This new *khora* disappeared from the historical records in 400 BCE, either because the relentless pressure of the mercenaries, who worshipped *Khnum*, the God of the Nile, eventually forced the Jewish soldiers out of the fortress or else because they assimilated among the *Khnum* believers. They also might have left the fortress at some point and been absorbed into the Alexandrine community. At any rate, they ceased existing as a distinct entity, and are remembered only in the papyri they left in the sands of Elephantine.

The major impetus for the creation of a Jewish diaspora in its more conventional sense was the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and the exile of the Jewish elite to Mesopotamia. Babylon was subsequently invaded by the Persians, and King Cyrus allowed the exiles to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the ruined temple (539 BCE). It was the reconstitution of the southern Kingdom of Judea, and the encounter of this mini-state, first with the local population (reinforced by population transfers by the Assyrians from other parts of their Empire immediately after the destruction of Israel), and later on with the Hellenistic world, that bestowed on Jerusalem its immortal status in the Jewish tradition. The necessity of contending with other cults and traditions in a place that, before the exile, had been declared by a heavenly decree as the only possible place of worship, strengthened the pre-exilic political impetus to enhance Jerusalem's importance as a center, and lent it a more spiritual flavor, notwithstanding its modest size. On the other hand, many of the exiles took the prophetic advice given to them upon their displacement literally, and preferred to stay in Babylon until the advent of a heavenly Messiah, rather than a Persian king.

The Babylonian exile marked the beginning of the Jewish communities of Iraq and Iran, which have endured throughout history until only very recently. The creation of the Babylonian diaspora and its significance for Jewish diasporic ideology was repeated later in the settlement of the Jews in Ptolemaic Egypt. This chapter of Jewish history is described in a source known as *Hecataeus* or *Pseudo-Hecataeus*, depending on the scholar's views on its authenticity. The different names given to this source reflect its use by Jewish historians throughout the generations to prove the Jews' ability to legitimately thrive among the Gentiles, and its

use by gentile historians (especially in nineteenth-century Germany), to prove the opposite. Today this source is generally considered a narrative created approximately between the end of the reign of the Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus (135–104 BCE), and the era of Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE) — a time of territorial expansion and great prosperity in Judea, and for Egyptian Jews, too. The letter is assumed to have been written by an Egyptian Jew who wished to portray the legitimacy of Jewish existence in Egypt, from within as well as from without. Thus, the anonymous author ascribed the beginning of the Jewish settlement in Alexandria to a deliberate decision by the High Priest Hezekiah to involve the Jews “in the affairs [of the kingdom]” (namely, the Egyptian kingdom) whereas, in actual fact, the Jewish settlement in Alexandria began with a forced migration initiated by Ptolemy I when he invaded Judea (301/2 BCE).¹⁰⁶ As indicated by the legal patterns of Jewish communal existence in Alexandria in later generations, the Jews became an integral part of the Hellenistic city, thriving in its multicultural and multi-organizational framework as much as other ethnic and social groups. This was true not only of Alexandria, but of other Egyptian cities, too.¹⁰⁷

According to Philo, a Jewish author from the early first century CE, about a million Jews lived in Egypt and Libya in his times (25–50 CE).¹⁰⁸ These Jews had to find a rationale for their diasporic way of life, and for the fact that they spoke Greek (even the Bible was translated into Greek). Thus, a story was invented that aimed at legitimizing Jewish life in Hellenistic Egypt — a story that became part of the Jewish mindset in the ancient world. It also served the needs of much later generations in other parts of the Jewish diaspora who wished to legitimize their own diasporic existence. In other words, already in those times, the Jewish diaspora unintentionally (or may be intentionally) adopted paradigms similar to those of the Greek diaspora regarding its origins (*origo*) and attempts to legitimize its existence.¹⁰⁹ Favoring a diasporic existence in these localities at those times did not necessarily imply severing ideological or temporal ties with Jerusalem. Members of the Jewish diasporic communities came on pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem three times a year from all corners of the earth, and sent the yearly tithe to its coffers.¹¹⁰ Diaspora, therefore, did not imply total immersion in the Hellenistic world.¹¹¹ Diasporic existence seemed a natural state to them, but it did not destroy their affinity with Jerusalem. The concept of loyalty to one’s metropolis did not characterize Jews only, but was very compelling in the Hellenistic world in general.¹¹² Affinity to one’s metropolis was a symbolic tool for consolidating a diasporic identity in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious world.¹¹³ It indicated the success and prosperity of the Jewish diaspora, in which Jerusalem had become a symbolic *khora*, and Alexandria the real *khora*.¹¹⁴

According to Chapter 8 of the First Book of Maccabees, Judas Maccabaeus, immediately after his decisive victory against Nicanor in 161 BCE, sent a mission to establish friendly relations with Rome. The

ambassadors were Jason ben Eleazar and Eupolemos ben Johanan, whose father had once represented his people at the Syrian court. They may have been the first Jews to reach Rome. Twenty years later, there were a substantial number of Jews in the city,¹¹⁵ and in the first century BCE, a permanent community already existed there, which owed its existence largely to the thousands of Jewish slaves sold and eventually emancipated, following the military campaigns of Pompeii (63 BCE). By the dawn of the first century, an estimated 40,000 Jews lived in Rome itself, and their number augmented following the military campaign of Titus (70 CE). The Roman expansion led to a concomitant expansion of the Jewish diaspora. The growing influence of Rome in the Middle East from the first century BCE encouraged Jews to emigrate to even its remotest corners. By that time, the Greek geographer Strabo could write: "These Jews have penetrated to every city, and it would not be easy to find a single place in the inhabited world which has not received this race, and where it has not become master."¹¹⁶ Just prior to the Great Rebellion, the same ability to become part of the surrounding culture while retaining a strong sense of identity characterized Roman Jewry no less than Alexandrian Jewry.¹¹⁷ It was as if the Jewish diaspora was a *fait accompli*, and from that point on its future would be determined by each nucleus' decision to become a new *khora* or to retain its symbolic and physical ties with Jerusalem as its metropolis.

However, the center of this diaspora, Jerusalem, was about to disappear, with the Great Rebellion against the Romans and the destruction of the Temple (70–73 CE). A series of rebellions in Mesopotamia, Kyrenaika, Egypt and Cyprus (115–117 CE), called in the Jewish sources the "Diaspora Rebellion," followed the Great Rebellion, and resulted in the annihilation of the Jewish settlements in Cyprus, the destruction of the impressive Jewish-Hellenistic center in Egypt, and the almost total destruction of Kyrenaika and Libya. This rebellion was soon followed by the last Jewish rebellion against the Romans, led by Shim'on Bar Kokhva (135–137 CE). Its failure marked the end of this era of Jewish existence.¹¹⁸

As long as the Temple in Jerusalem existed, the city's hegemony as a center persisted. This hegemony was both of a political and spiritual nature, as indicated by the tri-annual pilgrimage to the Temple, and the yearly taxes paid to it. Jews from every corner of the diaspora performed these commandments, and were actively involved in the country's political, economic and spiritual life. After the destruction of the Second Temple, centrality was no longer about political hegemony or a designated space. Spiritual activity was transferred from Jerusalem to the lower Galilee, where the *Sanhedrin*, the High Court, and academies in which Jewish law was studied, flourished. This was the period when the "Book" supplanted the locus. The study of Hebrew law became a goal in itself. Explaining and innovating the law became a substitute for political self-determination and replaced the terrestrial *khora*. This process culminated in the codification of the Hebrew Law in 232 CE

by Rabi Yehudah Ha-Nasi in Sephoris. This Code, called in Hebrew the Mishnah (study), was accepted all over the diaspora, thus maintaining at least the Land of Israel's centrality as a spiritual center. An interesting manifestation of this new kind of centrality was the necropolis of Beit She'arim, where Rabi Yehudah Ha-Nasi was buried. A whole funerary industry flourished around his burial site, and rich Jews from all over the Middle East were brought over to be buried alongside him. The tombstones' inscriptions in this necropolis, written mainly in Greek, but also in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Tadmorian, attest to the fact that people were brought there from Tadmor, Syria, the Phoenician coast, and Mesopotamia. This manifestation of centrality was something new. It revolved not around temporal power, since this was granted the Nasi by the Romans, nor around place, but around scholarship and its hidden promise to provide good fortune and eternal peace, both in this world and in the world to come. If so far the Torah had been the word of God, who also defined and empowered the holy place, from now on all that remained was the interpretation of its Sacred Law and its subsequent redaction by mortals. Since the new text was man-made, its continued study and preservation in writing were transferable. From then on, the center shifted with the text, its study and its development, and finally its preservation. From the Land of Israel to Babylon, from Babylon to North Africa, from North Africa to Spain, and then to France, Germany, Eastern Europe and South-East Europe, and finally to America and back to Israel. This process created a Jewish world with many parallel and competing centers, a reticulated world that resembled the Greek world, with one exception: The city of Jerusalem became a celestial, unreal, coveted, and desired homeland (*khora*), that existed only on a transcendental plane in the Messianic era, but not in reality.

From the third century until 1948, the main theatre of Jewish life unfolded in the diaspora. It was the annihilation of the physical center in Jerusalem and Judea that enabled it to be transformed into a spiritual and symbolic center, always yearned for, yet too holy to attain.¹¹⁹ It was precisely this transformation that enabled the continued existence of the Jewish diaspora for two thousand years. Without a physical *khora*, it was much easier to relate to Jerusalem as a spiritual center, to nurture it as a focus of yearning and longing, since it existed only on a spiritual plane and never challenged the premises of the diasporic Jews' life. Had such a *khora* existed in reality, the diasporic Jews would not only have had to aspire to return to it, but also attempt to realize this aspiration (since diaspora was a negative state). In other words, they would have had to make a choice one day, exactly like the protagonist in Cavafi's poem. Turning Jerusalem into a spiritual as opposed to a physical Center liberated them from the need to choose, and they could thus yearn freely and with a clear conscience.

3. More Terminology: Xeniteia, Nostos and Nostalgia

Diasporic existence and experience would be unintelligible without a clear understanding of several concepts indigenous to Greek culture. At the same time, it should be emphasized that these concepts are not specific to the Greek experience only. They are universal and eternal, as are many other concepts from the ancient Hellenic world.

One such term is the Greek word for *stranger*, or for *the one whom I host* — ο ξένος (*xenos*), related to η ξενιτεία (*xeniteia*), meaning *wandering abroad*. This in turn is derived from the deponent verb ξενιτεύω (*xenitevo*), *to live abroad*,¹²⁰ or, rather, *to leave one's homeland in order to live abroad*. In modern Greek, the word *xeniteia* or τα ξένα (*ta xena*) means foreign lands as opposed to homeland or birthplace. It is much more than that, however, designating estrangement of any kind, whether spiritual, mental, cultural, or familial.¹²¹ In our case, we shall study *xeniteia* resulting from a person's physical separation from his homeland.

The Greek word *xeniteia* generally describes a perpetual state, not a circumstantial one.¹²² Although in this respect it differs from the Hebrew *Galut*, with its strong circumstantial implications, it is this very aspect that in effect, and paradoxically, confers on it a flavor and color typical of the Hebrew *Galut*. It is a term describing the existential condition of someone living away from home against his will, simply because, whether he likes it or not, he has to stay abroad and cannot go home. Indeed, in respect of all other types of *xeniteia*, i.e., mental, spiritual, cultural and familial estrangement, there is no way back either. Thus, *xeniteia* can be used to describe a certain type of diasporic situation in both cultures, since in both, the power relationship with the ambient society is what determined whether they remained ξένοι (*xenoi*) or became fully-fledged members of that society. In the latter case, their foreignness would dissipate, and their diasporic characteristics would cease to exist. At the same time, in the long process of adjustment to the surrounding environment, gradual changes may take place in the existential state of *xeniteia*.

One of the main elements nurturing and feeding the sense of *xeniteia* is *nostos*. The Greek word — ο νόστος (*nostos*) means returning after a long absence, or, in a more poetical sense, returning to a place, situation, or person abandoned or left behind. However, from the classical age through modern times, the Greek idea of return has always carried the connotation of the impossibility, or futility of return. Thus, although literally *nostos* means return, in essence, it actually implies the opposite: the impossibility of return. The ideal return — Ulysses' return — was almost impossible to duplicate. All his mates perished in the course of the return voyage. Agamemnon was murdered by his furious wife, Clytemnestra, and she herself was killed by her children Orestes and Electra. Even Ulysses' return could not turn the clock back. To imagine that in the twenty years that had elapsed between his departure for the Trojan War and his return he and Penelope had remained unchanged,

required great powers of imagination. A study of the *Odyssey* shows that its author used this ideal return as a mold in which to cast the figure of the eternal returnee. It was Ulysses' fate to return over and over again.¹²³ Nor did the modern émigré, expellee or deportee experience a happy return. Although Greek tradition equips the potential returnee with the conceptual tools to enable him to "return" (he comes back rich and famous to a woman who kept her vows to him, and preserved his good name), these are artistic contrivances drawn from the Homeric imagination. In reality, a person leaving a person or place knows that he will not find the person or place as he left them. The person or place he left behind will never be the same, even if physically accessible. A person may chase the shadows of the past, but the past no longer exists.¹²⁴ The Greek word *nostos*, together with the word *algos* (άλγος) meaning pain, yields the word *nostalgia*, denoting the pain caused by the yearning to return to a beloved place, situation or person, without being able to do so. By extension, it means the pain of yearning for the distant homeland, sorrow at having had to leave, and the desolation for those who stayed behind expecting the beloved to return. All these feelings stemming from *nostos* create the existential condition of *xeniteia*.

Most Jews throughout their diasporic history were in a state of "alienation," a state of *xeniteia*. This was due not only to the negative connotations of diasporic life, but also to the advent of other monotheistic religions that claimed a monopoly and excluded them from ambient society. Driven from country to country, from principality to principality, from city to city, relying on transitory privileges or the simple good will of a sovereign, Jews had no reason to develop an affinity for the places where they settled. Having an imaginary *khora* to yearn for, they could indulge in this yearning, and express thereby their *nostos*.¹²⁵ The manifestations of Jewish *nostos* throughout the generations adopted literary forms, such as liturgy, poetry, legends, and popular songs. This tradition started in Babylon with the famous lamentation in Psalms 137:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

A series of fasts accompanied by lament and prayers was introduced into the Jewish calendar in order to preserve and commemorate the destruction of the Temple and related events. The Tenth of Tevet was designated as a fast day to commemorate the beginning of the siege by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, on Jerusalem (the First Temple); The Seventeenth of Tammuz was designated as a fast day to commemorate several events, all of them connected with the cessation of worship in the Temple, the most important of them being the breach of Jerusalem's wall by the Romans. The Third of Tishrei was designated as another fast day to commemorate the murder of Gedalyahu Ben Ahikam, who was appointed by the Babylonians as governor of the remaining Jews in Jerusalem, after most of them had been exiled to Babylon. It was hoped that Gedalyahu would hold these people together, but his murder eliminated these hopes. Without him, the remaining Jews were assimilated among the people brought to Judea by the Babylonians, and eventually created a new sect, the Samaritans, thereby abandoning mainstream Judaism.

The last and most important fast is the Ninth of Av, designated to commemorate five events, all traditionally connected with the Exile: On that day, the spies sent by Moses to spy out the holy land came back with a negative report, thus questioning God's ability to give them the land. Both First and Second Temples were destroyed on that day. The town of Beitar, Bar Kokhva's last stronghold, was captured on that day. Finally, the site of Jerusalem was ploughed by the Romans on that day. This last fast day was strictly observed throughout the Jewish diaspora.¹²⁶ Thus, the Hebrew year had four milestones to remind the Jews in the diaspora that their diasporic existence was the result of ancestral sins, and that it was provisional and could end at any moment. The message was that these diasporic Jews should yearn and be prepared for an end to the diaspora.

There were other ways of fostering *nostos*. Worshipers in synagogues were supposed to face east, in the direction of Jerusalem, and special decorative plaques were created to designate this direction.

At the most dramatic point of the Day of Atonement, at the end of the service, after the Shofar is blown, the whole congregation proclaims: "Next year in Jerusalem!" Similarly, at the end of The Passover Seder, the entire family proclaims "Next year in Jerusalem!"

Similarly, on that most joyous occasion of the human life cycle, the marriage ceremony, the groom stamps on a glass, reciting the verses of Psalms 137: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Likewise, when building a new house, a corner of the wall must be left unfinished to commemorate the destruction of the Temple. All the above ensured that the Jew never forgot, and constantly fostered a feeling of something missing. A corpus of poetry and legends expressing the

yearning for Zion grew up over the generations, from east to west, and from south to north. Amazingly, this literature continued until the mid-twentieth century. This painful yearning was expressed at different times and places, and in different words and styles. For example, Rabi Yehudah HaLevi wrote in eleventh-century Cordova:

My heart is in the East, and I am at the end of the west —
 How can I taste what I eat, how can it be sweet to me?
 How can I fulfil my vow of pilgrimage, while yet
 Zion is in Frankish bonds, and I am in Arab chains.
 I hold it light to leave all the bounty of Spain,
 As I hold it dear to see the dust of the ruined sanctuary.¹²⁷

In sixteenth-century Safed, Rabbi Shelomoh Elqabetz wrote the hymn which became an integral part of the Jewish ceremony welcoming the Sabbath:

Lekhah Dodi (Come out my beloved)
 Come out my Beloved, the Bride to meet;
 The inner light of Shabbat, let us greet.

....

Sanctuary of the King, city royal,
 Arise, go out from amidst the turmoil.
 In the vale of tears too long you have dwelt,
 He will show you the compassion He has felt.

Come out ...

Arise, now, shake off the dust,
 Don your robes of glory — my people — you must.
 Through the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite,
 Draw near to my soul, set her free from her plight.

Come out..

Wake up, wake up,
 Your light has come, rise and shine.
 Awaken, awaken; sing a melody,
 The glory of God to be revealed upon thee.

Come out ...

Be not ashamed, nor confounded,
 Why are you downcast, why astounded?
 In you, refuge for My poor people will be found,
 The city will be rebuilt on its former mound.

Come out ...

May your plunderers be treated the same way,
 And all who would devour you be kept at bay.
 Over you Your God will rejoice,
 As a groom exults in his bride of choice.

Come out ...

While Heinrich Heine wrote in Germany in 1822:

A pine is standing lonely
 In the north on a bare plateau.
 He sleeps, a bright white blanket
 Enshrouds him in ice and snow.

He is dreaming of a palm tree
 Far away in the Eastern Land
 Lonely and silently mourning
 On a sun burnt rocky strand¹²⁹

The tension between the reality and the heart's desire is present in all these verses. I use the term "heart's desire" advisedly. Just as love songs provide the lover with an outlet for his passionate feelings, so did what we may term *xeniteia literature* afford a relief for the emotional tension of the exilic condition — a tension that was carefully preserved within the formal ritual. *Lekhah Dodi*, which bears the imprint of Messianic fervor, eventually became the most popular Jewish hymn precisely because it enabled generations of Jews to express the pain of subjugation, and the yearning for the imaginary return (= *nostos*), without having to take any practical steps toward achieving it.

In time, Jewish *nostos* found its partner — rejection. An entirely new ideology was invented to confine *nostos* to the theoretical realm, and prevent it erupting into the real world where it might urge people to physically "seize" the lost homeland. In this ideology, the Holy Land is depicted as being too sacred a place for mere mortals. Precisely because of its sanctity, the evil inclination was strongest in the Holy Land, and thus, only the truly righteous, who were strong enough to resist it, could live there. Since, however, no-one could claim to be truly righteous, the only way to enjoy the milk and honey of the Holy Land was to patiently await the advent of the Messiah.¹³⁰ In actual fact, this trend was yet another psychological tool to ease the tension between the religious requirement to consider the exilic situation as temporary, and the wish to ensure the continued diasporic existence of the Jews.

The Jewish version of *nostos* is not only about yearning for an idealized Jerusalem. In the course of Jewish history, Jews have wandered from one land to another for various reasons, most, but not all, of them negative. Jews were sometimes displaced even after centuries of living

in the same place which they already considered home.¹³¹ Abandoning or being expelled from such a place created an emotional conflict. As long as there was one unattainable *khora* to yearn for, things were simple, but now the diasporic Jew found himself committed to two unattainable homelands. How was he to handle this *ménage à trois*? Salonikan Jews seemed to manage fine. They nurtured feelings of loss and yearning for both Spain and Jerusalem. Whereas *nostos* towards Jerusalem continued to be nurtured in the traditional aforementioned literary and liturgical modes, the expelledes' nostalgia towards Spain was not articulated verbally until the twentieth century, when the changing world forced them to consider themselves a nation with a (former) territory. Even then, explicit references to Spain or places in Spain were rare.¹³² The only time these were mentioned on a regular basis was in the names of the Sephardi Jewish congregations in their places of exile. Originally, they called themselves "Qahal Gerush" (Congregation of Expellees), but as their numbers grew in medium and large cities to ten or more adult males (a *minyán* or legal quorum) from the same city or region in the Iberian Peninsula, a new congregation, i.e., a new synagogue, would be set up and named after their former place of provenance. Thus one would find the "Holy Congregations" of Catalan (Catalunia), Castilia, Aragon, Cordova, Lorca, Toledo,¹³³ Portugal, Lisbon, etc.¹³⁴ They continued to speak Spanish, and to adhere to the customs created in specific places in Spain which gave their names to these customs, for example The Toledo Regulations,¹³⁵ The Customs of Andalusia, The Customs of Castilia,¹³⁶ etc. These congregations and their special customs retained their geographic names until the twentieth century. However, in time, the use of these names became a habit rather than a means of allaying the pain of displacement. Anyone seeking expressions of nostalgia for specific places in the folk songs of Spanish Jews will be disappointed. From 1492 to the age of nationalism, nostalgia was expressed in the preservation of musical and lyrical styles, of entire Iberian lyrics, or of Iberian lyrics adapted to the new environment. Specific places are not mentioned. There are no Sephardic "Odessa Mame"s¹³⁷ in the sixteenth through nineteenth century. Only at the end of the nineteenth century did such songs appear, as part of the "neo-Hispanism" that seized hold of the Sephardi intelligentsia in the Ottoman, and formerly Ottoman countries, as a reaction both to the nationalist movements of the times and, no less important, to their encounters with Ashkenazi Jews in various Zionist activities. For these reasons, they began invoking the memory of the expulsion and reinvesting it with meaning.¹³⁸ As we shall see below, this cultural tendency gained even greater momentum after the foundation of the State of Israel. Things became more complicated when the descendants of the Sephardi expelledes began emigrating from the Mediterranean to the New World. At the height of this emigration there is no evidence of songs expressing the immigrants' *nostos* for the "Old Country," i.e., Turkey, Greece etc. It is, however, worth noting the

incredible similarity of one Judeo-Spanish song prevalent around the Mediterranean at the turn of the twentieth century to the Greek tradition. The song, "Porque llorax blanca ninya?" (Why do you cry fair maiden?), otherwise known as "La partida del esposo" (The husband's departure), is in the form of a conversation between the husband, a knight who is about to leave on a long voyage, and his anguished newly-married wife, at the end of which, he tells her to remarry if he does not return in eight years. The theme, of course, echoes Ulysses' departure, preserved for thousands of years in countless variations around the Mediterranean, only to resurface with fresh appeal during the great emigration to the New World.¹³⁹ It is the song of the wife who is left behind, Penelope's song. It does not express the pain of the person leaving, but rather of the person left behind. One is immediately struck by the similarity of this song to contemporary Greek songs of wives and mothers who are left behind.¹⁴⁰ Jerusalem, of course, has been long since forgotten.

But emigration is not the whole story. In April 1943 the whole Jewish community was deported from Salonika to Auschwitz. On Auschwitz they sang of their yearning for Salonika, not for Jerusalem or Spain.¹⁴¹

By the same token, although with an interesting variation, the 2.5 million European Jews who emigrated to America between 1880–1920 did not write or sing songs of yearning for Jerusalem, but rather for the places they came from. A whole industry of Yiddish theater and radio shows flourished in New York until the 1950s and even later. Borrowing from the musical world of the Jewish liturgy, as well as from Slavic (especially Ukrainian) and Gypsy folk music, Jewish musicians and entertainers worked lyrics into these tunes that catered to the emotional needs of the immigrant community. An important theme in this kind of folk song was the stress of displacement, or *xenitica*. Songs such as "Der ebiker vanderer" (The Eternal Wanderer) (1919), or "Dos Golden rendelet" (The Gold Coin) (1908) flirt with the modern Zionist idea as a means of resolving this stress.¹⁴² Most of the songs though, praise the "Goldene Medine" (the Golden State = *El Dorado*) as opposed to oppressive Russia.¹⁴³ Of great interest are the nostalgic songs dedicated to specific places in the "Old Country." Interestingly, these songs emerged from the 1920s on.

These songs did not arise from disillusionment with the Goldene Medine. Such songs do exist,¹⁴⁴ but the majority does not belong to this category. Aron Lebedeff (1873–1960), a Yiddish poet, composer and performer ("a Klezmer"), recorded many songs that he wrote and performed for the Yiddish theater of New York, mainly during the 1920s and 1930s, among them "Slutsk — Mein Shtetele" (Slutsk — My small town) (1925) and many similar songs. His most famous song was "Roumenye Roumenye!" Although Lebedeff appears on the album sleeve as the composer, anyone hearing this song will immediately recognize the gypsy melody aptly chosen to express the comic and joyous words: "Ekh! Rumenye, Rumenye! Geven a mol a land a zise, a sheyne" (Ekh!

Rumania, Rumania! There was once a land, sweet and beautiful!). "Odessa Mame" was written in the 1920s by the famous performer Peysheke Burstein and was very popular in New York. The music adapted to these lyrics was originally written by the famous Russian composer Reinhold Moritzovich Glière (1875–1956), probably independently of the lyrics.¹⁴⁵ Another popular song was "Beltz, Mayn Shtetele Beltz" (Beltz, my little town! The little house where I spent my childhood!), the lyrics of which were written by Jacob Jacobs (1892–1972), and the music of which was composed by Alexander Olshanetsky (1892–1972). The song was written originally for the famous Yiddish singer Isa Kremer, in order to persuade her to participate in a New York production of the play "Ghetto Song" (1930). She did not participate in the production and never performed the song.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, the Barry Sisters performed a very popular version of the song, which became almost a hymn after the Holocaust, when people understood that the *shtetl* was not merely remote, but actually extinct.

The interesting paradox about Jewish nostalgia in America before the Holocaust is the fact that these songs were not sad. The people who wrote and sang them looked back on their old cities and sometimes also countries with love, but also with resignation. These songs were not the product of a compulsory emigration, or of disillusionment with the new country, but rather, of a freely chosen emigration. Indeed, the immigrants were grateful to America, and continued to express their gratitude through the 1920s and 1930s in songs such as "America, du bist all-right!" (A. Lebedeff, 1928), and "Ich Dank dir Got far America!" (I thank you God for America) (Cantor Leibele Waldman).

So, barring those who entertained the modern Zionist ideal (such people formed a minority of the Jewish immigrants in America of that period), the subject of *nostos* was not the formal and imaginary *khora*, i.e., Jerusalem. It was the real *khora*, the place where one was born and raised. In this the immigrants were obeying the universal and timeless rule that one always misses one's last place of origin, not the one that preceded it, and certainly not the one that preceded that. Nostalgia is also closely connected to the degree of contentment in the "new country." Contentment with the present breeds fond memories of the past. Any pain experienced when recollecting the past is the pain felt by all human beings when remembering their childhood and youth. Interestingly, but predictably, I found only a few songs from that period dealing with the longing and pain of those left behind. The most popular song of this genre was, of course, "Papirene Kinder" (Paper Children), written by a New-Yorker street singer, Morris Rund, and set to music by David Meyerowitz (1867–1943). Rund wrote this song in the years leading up to the First World War, and it reflects the guilt felt by the Jewish immigrants for having left their aging parents alone and helpless in a hostile Europe:

Many years ago you sent pictures

And wrote me in addition, that you were delighted,
 somewhere there, far away in the golden country.
 And then, children, I haven't heard from you anymore
 I look at the pictures and my eyes drop tears,
 Paper children, I have on the wall.
 When I lay down to sleep and when I wake up
 I look at the pictures and speak to myself,
 Paper children I have on the wall,
 Paper children — and I break my hand,
 Paper turns out of my flesh and blood,
 I complain, cry and scream and my shouting is in vain.
 The paper pieces, what they do feel?
 Paper children I have on the wall.¹⁴⁷

A few words on the musical aspect of these songs are in order. The use made of the musical heritage of the "Old World," i.e. Jewish liturgy, and Slavonic and Gypsy melodies, was also an expression of *nostos*. This was true even if the subject of the song was not yearning for the "Old Country." Although the immigrant could not return physically, or perhaps even mentally, he could still bring with him some elements from the old world that would ease the pain of separation and displacement. The use of melodies from the "Old Country" expresses the heartache of the composers, singers, and performers and helps define the unique cultural identity of this community as opposed to others.

Music and food were two elements that helped recapture the past.¹⁴⁸ Spanish Jews preserved these cultural elements around the Mediterranean for 500 years, while East European Jews did so not only in America but in Palestine, too. The vast majority of "Israeli" popular music during the first thirty years of the twentieth century are based on the melodies of Slavic folk songs.

Music and food are two ways of expressing nostalgia, but there is a third way — through literature. A number of literary genres, whose function was to numb the pain caused by the impossibility of recapturing the past, emerged throughout the Jewish diaspora, typically in "secondary diasporas," such as America, but not only. *Farewell to Salonika* by Leon Sciaky,¹⁴⁹ written in New York just after the Second World War, is one example of this genre. When the author realized that the world of his youth had disappeared and was about to be erased even from his imagination and memory, he made a last-ditch attempt to recapture it.

Out of Egypt by Andre Aciman,¹⁵⁰ in which the author laments his lost paradise (Alexandria), is another fascinating example. Both the above books are personal memoirs. Another type of literature that laments a world that no longer exists and shall never return, is fiction based on the past. Such literature is not necessarily written in a physical *xeniteia*, but may be written in a temporal one. An example of this genre is Isak Samokovlija's *Tales of Old Sarajevo*,¹⁵¹ a book of short stories written in

Sarajevo during the 1940s and early 1950s.¹⁵² Through the life stories of his protagonists, Samokovlija laments the destruction of Jewish life in Sarajevo while trying to eternalize its memory. Amnon Shamush's *Michel Ezra Safra & Sons*¹⁵³ is another example of this genre. Shamush lives and writes in Israel, to which he emigrated before the foundation of the State (1948) against his parents' wishes. In this novel, which has many autobiographical features, Shamush looks back on the Aleppo of his past with great affection. For him, it is no less a lost paradise than Alexandria was for Aciman, Salonika for Sciaky, or old Sarajevo for Samokovlija, despite the fact that his departure was prompted by ideological considerations!

A very different literary genre commemorating the past is the memorial book, written by Holocaust survivors' associations to immortalize the survivors' home towns — once thriving Jewish cities and villages — most of which currently reject all reminders of their Jewish past. In many of these places the local population actively participated in the murder of their Jewish neighbors, and in all of them, the local population benefited materially from the extermination of the Jews. This is the main reason why the Jewish past of these places has been recreated only through the memory of Jews who hailed from these places, or even their descendants, rather than through contemporary local authors and historians. Immediately after the Holocaust, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, commemoration was one way of processing the colossal loss. One would assume that, given the horrific background of these *memor-buchs*, they would be devoid of idealization and nostalgia. This is not the case. In many of the *memor-buchs* the reader will find nostalgic and idealized descriptions of the places, notwithstanding the fact that some of them eventually turned into appalling mass-murder sites.¹⁵⁴ Even the horrific events could not erase memories of the pre-war world, or suppress the tendency to idealize the past. The nostalgic descriptions in these cases serve not only as epitaphs or farewells, on the lines of *Out of Egypt*, *Farewell To Salonika*, and *Tales of Old Sarajevo*. They also serve to idealize the dead, of whom no evil could be written, especially when they died without rhyme or reason simply for being Jewish. These books idealize the past because remembering the past is therapeutic for the immigrant only if the past was pleasant. If it was not, it, or at least parts of it, must be embellished.¹⁵⁵ A past that was irredeemably evil had to be forgotten and completely erased.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, this last choice is evident in the behavior and attitudes of many holocaust survivors,¹⁵⁷ and even Jewish immigrants to Palestine in the 1930s who left their families behind in Europe. The burden of guilt for having abandoned their families was so heavy that they preferred total amnesia to the effort of using nostalgia as a therapeutic tool. The literary world of the post-war period has attempted to deal with the possibility of *nostos*, in the sense of physical return. Without exception the outcome had been a realization of the futility of such an attempt.¹⁵⁸

History books may also serve to dress the wounds of *nostos*. Amos Elon, for many years “the chief chronicler of the Israeli story,” as Ari Shavit described him in an interview for *Ha’aretz* on the occasion of the publication of his book *The Pity of It All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch, 1743–1933*, is an example.¹⁵⁹

Since Elon’s case is both intriguing and significant, we shall discuss it in detail. In the interview, entitled “Yearning for the Yekke’s¹⁶⁰ Paradise,” Shavit explains that Elon, once a prominent journalist of the daily, *Ha’aretz*, “has ceased to register in the Israeli consciousness. He is much better known to readers of the New York Review of Books than to readers of *Ha’aretz*.” Elon, who was born in Vienna in 1925 and emigrated to Israel with his parents in 1933, currently lives in Tuscany. The book he wrote about German Jews is an ingenious and beautifully-crafted history of rich, educated, highly-cultured people, who for hundreds of years nourished and enriched German culture, and were nourished and enriched by it, until they were cast out of paradise. Elon, does not elaborate on the lot of those who failed to get out in time, and with good cause. His book, although entitled *a history*, is about a lost paradise no less than is *Out of Egypt*. Much like in Aciman’s world, poor, uneducated, lower-class Jews — “Ost-Juden”¹⁶¹ — do not exist in Elon’s Germany. His world is that of an elite that one day found itself undesirable, and could not understand why. Shavit criticizes Elon for omitting a large section of German Jewry from this last book of his. In another of Elon’s books, *The Israelis*, he likewise excludes half of Israel’s population, by focusing on Israelis of European descent residing in the “Gush Dan” (Tel Aviv) area — educated, well-traveled, secular and well-nourished Israelis. His “Israelis” do not include Jews from Muslim countries, poor Jews living in provincial towns, who are poorly educated and receive inadequate services, or religious Jews. Nor do his “Israelis” include Arabs, an omission strange for someone who, at his own admission, emigrated to Tuscany because of his aversion to post-67 Israeli politics.

Shavit, who shares many of Elon’s views, diagnosed him as a European Jew returning to Europe, while Elon saw himself as an exile seeking peace of mind. In fact, Shavit’s diagnosis was accurate. *The Pity of It All* is an idealized description of the role of the German-Jewish elite in the cultural history of Germany, written by an immigrant author whose *nostos* prevented him coming to terms with the reality in which he lived. Aware that he could not change this reality, or rather mold it to the shapes and forms he remembered from the “Old Country,” he clung to the past even more tenaciously, in an attempt to ease his inner conflict. The natural conclusion of this dissonance was his physical return to the continent of his *nostos*. Elon is an interesting example of someone who underwent a triple exile: first, the initial (and in his case, symbolic) exile from Jerusalem to Vienna, second, the personal exile from Vienna to Jerusalem, and third, the final exile from Jerusalem to Tuscany.

Elon's parents did not make aliyah for ideological reasons. They came to Palestine solely to escape the Nazi regime. Like most of their fellow immigrants from Germany and Austria who found refuge in Palestine, they felt they had been cast out of a civilized country into an Asiatic barbaric desert. For them, Palestine was exile, an idea they successfully transmitted to the young Amos. Although his eventual return to Europe should have resolved this dissonance, he now admits that, exile or not, seventy years of living in *xeniteia* (i.e. Israel) have left their imprint on his psyche. He may have felt as a stranger in the Middle-East, but the Middle-East had nevertheless planted its seeds in him, and these seeds demanded sustenance. Once in Tuscany, he found that Europe could not give him things he used to take for granted in Israel, such as an intense interest in life, true friendship, and human contact. *Nostos* began gnawing at him again. He may have detested Israel, but after seventy years of living there, and at the end of his life, it became his unattainable *khora* — unattainable because he would never be able to reach it in the sense he imagined. He, therefore, preferred to cut himself off physically. This physical detachment would allow him to cling to an imaginary *khora* without the dissonance created by reality.

Unlike the Jews, Greeks never had an imaginary *khora* in the sense of one eternal, transcendental, and metaphysical metropolis. If we consider anyone who spoke Greek or adopted the Greek way of life as Greek, then the pagan, and later on the Christian Mediterranean — indeed the whole Eastern Mediterranean and even beyond — qualified as a homeland for the Greeks, exactly as Cavafy implied in his poem "Going Back Home From Greece."

This Hellenic world had no specific center.¹⁶² Even the fall of Constantinople at the hands of the Ottoman Turks did not immediately conjure up the image of a lost *khora* in the sense of a unifying *locus*. On the contrary, the Ottomans, having adopted the apparatus of the Greek Orthodox Church as a tool for governing the *Romioi*, unwittingly built Constantinople's status as a metropolis of the Ottoman Greek-Orthodox community and, as such, even afforded it a much greater significance than it had enjoyed for centuries.¹⁶³

Like the fall of Jerusalem, the fall of Constantinople was attributed to sinful behavior. A common view among Greek Orthodox monks was that the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans was caused by the sins of the Orthodox community. This idea, that parallels the Jewish theological idea of national calamity as a punishment for sin, was further accentuated by the ongoing struggle with the Ottomans. A beautiful and evocative example of the use made of this idea can be found on the frescoes on the walls of the Moldovitsa monastery in Bukovina, commissioned around 1537 by the Moldavian *voivode*, Petru Rareș (1487–1546).¹⁶⁴ One of them is a depiction of the siege of Constantinople. Petru Rareș was engaged in a constant battle against the Ottomans, and his monastic artists took the opportunity to warn the people, through their art, that sin would

bring about their downfall, in the same way as it had brought about the downfall of Constantinople.

The idea of defeat as punishment plays an important part in the Eastern Christian tradition, and is echoed the Hebrew *Musaf* prayer for the Holidays: "Because of our sins we were exiled from our land, we were alienated from our soil."

Like the fall of Jerusalem for the Jews, the fall of Constantinople for the Christians was followed by the emergence of a series of laments. At least a hundred laments commemorating this event have survived. Although the genre of ritual lament for a destroyed city is an integral part of popular Greek poetry, the laments dedicated to the fall of Constantinople are still outstanding in their number and popularity. Most of these laments were collected and documented in the nineteenth century, following the 1821 war of independence, and in the course of this century. In some cases, the collectors obviously edited the text in order to adapt it to the needs of the national struggle. However, it would be far-fetched to deduce that these were all late nineteenth century inventions. In other words, such editing notwithstanding, most of these laments carry with them the echo of events from past generations¹⁶⁵ At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the trend of documenting this genre of folk song is in itself a product of national sentiment, and the documentation itself was meant to strengthen the national cause.¹⁶⁶ In the following lament, Ares, the god of war and bloodshed, bathes in the blood of Constantinople's people, while Aphrodite and Hermes, both deities of love, weep for the city, thus integrating the pagan past into the Christian present (1453):

Ares came along with glowering looks on Tuesday
by the Church of St. Romanos, all covered in blood,
bathed in the blood of Christians.
Aphrodite stood, her eyes filled with tears,
weeping for the fine young men, for the beautiful girls.
And Hermes, as if lamenting and comforting her, said:
— What is it, my Aphrodite, why are you sulking?
And the Moon keeps her distance and does not come near,
she sees and marvels, and she trembles from fear.
And the elements of Heaven weep and mourn for the City.¹⁶⁷

This anomalous weaving of pagan themes into a fifteenth-century lyric substantiates the theory of a later composition projected on to the past. A popular folk song from the early Ottoman period mourns the surrender of sovereignty to the Muslim foe, and nourishes the hope that this lamentable event will be reversed:

They took the City, they took it, took Salonica
They took St. Sofia, too, the great monastery
Which has three-hundred semandra and sixty

two bells...
 For each bell a priest, for each priest a deacon.
 Near the time the Sacred Vessels come out,
 and the king of all...

A dove came down from heavens: Stop the
 Cherubic, and lower the Sacred Vessels,
 Priests, take the Sacramental and you candles
 blow out...
 For it is the will of God the City should fall to
 the Turks...

Our Lady was disturbed and the icons tearful.
 Hush, Our Lady and you, icons weep not,
 With the passing of years and in time she'll be
 yours again.¹⁶⁸

Two points in this folk song are worth noting. The first is the use it makes of a lament commemorating the fall of one city (Salonika, 1430) to commemorate the fall of another, greater city (Constantinople).¹⁶⁹ The other interesting point is the statement "she'll be yours again," a refrain that is repeated in many laments of this kind in the Ottoman period. It has been argued that these two elements, among others, prove that the lyrics were compiled to lament the fall of Constantinople only in the years following the 1821 Independence War in order to serve the national cause.¹⁷⁰ Others claim to the authenticity of lyrics that were adapted to the fall Constantinople in the second half of the fifteenth century, and that originally, these lines were merely meant to provide the grief-stricken community with a ray of hope and consolation.¹⁷¹ Whichever school of thought is right, the net result is the same: In modern times, these lyrics held within them practical ideas.

In this same context, of great interest is the use made of the legend of the "King who was Turned to Stone" (Ο μαρμαρωμένος βασιλιάς). King Constantine Paleologos, who according to popular myth, "mysteriously disappeared" after the fall of the city, was allegedly turned into marble, to be resurrected when the city "will be ours again."¹⁷² This legend, which combines a patently Christian element (resurrection) with one derived from classic mythology (the king turned into stone), was infused with new life, and at times infused new life into the Greek national spirit in times of existential crisis. It was the inspiration behind Nikos Kazantzakis' play, "Constantine Paleologos" (1944), written at the height of the Greek struggle against the Nazi occupation. It is no coincidence, either, that Manolis Kalomiris began composing his opera based on Kazantzakis' play in 1957, two years after the expulsion of the Greeks from Istanbul — an expulsion that effectively put an end to Greek civic existence in "The City" (η Πόλη), as it was, and still is, called.¹⁷³

The theme of the fall of Constantinople and Constantine's death were used in another way in 1969. In that year, Odysseas Elytis wrote his version of "The Death and Resurrection of Constantinos Paleologos."¹⁷⁴ This poem was written and published (in 1971) amidst a great political and existential crisis in Greece. This time, Elytis did not use the theme of the king who was turned to stone and who would be resurrected when the city would become "ours again," since he had no consolation to offer. For him, Constantinos represented the "Last of the Hellenes."

An interesting angle to the story of Constantinos can be found at an internet site founded in 1996 that has, apparently, since ceased to operate. In an article dedicated to the fall of Constantinople, the anonymous author recounts the story of the king who was turned to stone, claiming that it was recounted by the older generations to the younger ones, along with other traditions of the city's Byzantine past, on the day after Easter, a day Greek-Orthodox families customarily spend outdoors, in nature.¹⁷⁵ The didactic value of such an activity cannot be over-emphasized. Even those who are convinced that nationalism is a modern invention must agree that the transmission of tradition, especially historical tradition, nurtures it. In the Greek case, assuming such transmission actually occurred, it took several centuries for it to come into its own, in the age of nationalism. The problem is that while the day spent outdoors after Easter is verified by many informants, and is still observed in certain places, no written or oral verification of the transmission of tradition on that occasion, throughout the generations, or at any point in time, could be found. The anonymous author of the Poseidon internet site may well have been describing a modern, personal family experience. In any case, the fall of Constantinople became an important element in the Greek national struggle against the Ottomans, an element that is still nurtured in certain circles of Greek society. Moreover, even if the custom described in the Poseidon article is a mere invention, it is a very telling invention that has been skillfully incorporated into the historical and cultural context. In fact, the suggestive similarity between this custom and Jewish Passover and spring rites grants the former more credibility than does an obscure internet site. The Mediterranean Jews have a similar custom of spending the day after Passover in the countryside with their families. Evidently, in both societies this custom dates back to some pagan, spring rite. For the Jews, as well as for the Greek-Orthodox, Passover is the holiday of commemoration. In the Greek-Orthodox Church, Easter, and the week preceding it, commemorates Christ's passion, death and resurrection. It is only logical, therefore, that the Greeks of Istanbul should transmit the traditions regarding the fall of Constantinople on the day after Easter. For the Jews, the transmission of tradition takes place during the festive meal on the Passover eve, at which the story of enslavement, liberation, and future redemption is narrated from one generation to the next, in an unbroken chain of transmission: "In every generation a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt, as it is said:

'You shall tell your child on that day, it is because of this that the Lord did for me when I left Egypt.'"¹⁷⁶ The promise of future redemption, the equivalent of "it shall be ours again," is, of course, the refrain: "Next Year in Jerusalem!"

Unlike the fall of Jerusalem for the Jews, the fall of Constantinople was never marked by an official day of mourning, although today the anniversary of its fall (28 May 1453) is occasionally announced in Greek papers, or commemorated in a sermon by the occasional clergyman. The fact that the fall of Constantinople happened on a Tuesday may account for the Greek tradition of viewing Tuesday as an unlucky day.

Despite the fall of "The City" the Greeks were still in their homeland. They did not require an artificial tool to preserve their affiliation with a specific place. They did not lose their title to the place, only their sovereignty.¹⁷⁷ In fact, on a declaratory level, they still consider Asia Minor part of their homeland, and call it "Our East according to Us" (η καθ'ημάς Ανατολή). *Polites*, Greeks who had to leave Istanbul in 1955 and later, feel that Greeks living in their national state regard the small nucleus of 1800 Greeks who still reside in Istanbul as a *diaspora*.¹⁷⁸

For the Greeks, negotiations concerning the definition of their homeland became a major issue only in the nineteenth century. Before that, they identified with their specific birthplaces, be they a village in the Peloponnese, in Western Anatolia, on the Black Sea coast, or a bustling city such as Constantinople, Smyrna, Alexandria. They even identified themselves with places outside the Hellenistic and Byzantine spheres of influence, such as Vienna, Moscow, or Bucharest.

The emergence of a West-European topography of Hellenism with Athens as the center forced the Greeks to rethink their perception of homeland, a labor they are still engaged in to this day.¹⁷⁹ It was at this point that Constantinople was put forward as another Hellenic center, symbolizing the Byzantine and Eastern face of Hellenism, as opposed, but also as complementary, to Athens, the symbol of "Western" Hellenism as perceived by West Europeans.¹⁸⁰ It was only after the Catastrophe of 1922, and especially after the German occupation and the Greek Civil War, that Greek intellectuals articulated the idea of Hellenism as a cultural-transcendental locus, similar to that of Jerusalem in Jewish tradition.¹⁸¹

The main difference between these two imaginary *khoras* is that the Jewish one is a symbolic city, while the Hellenic one, albeit symbolic, occupies a negotiable portion of the globe. At the same time, it can safely be assumed that renegotiating the homeland's borders did not change the individual's attitude towards the idea of *khora*, and that, until the mid-twentieth century, the Greek immigrant's basic affinity was with his birthplace. This was his *khora* and this was the place he missed.

In light of the above, it is not surprising that the waves of Greek immigrants in South-Eastern Europe (especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and the Greek emigrants from the Ottoman

Empire to the New World during the twentieth century, both prompted by negative reasons, produced a Greek musical and literary tradition that resembles that of the nostalgic Yiddish music and lyrics. Like the Jewish immigrant of modern times, who missed his *shtetl* more than Jerusalem, the Greek immigrant missed his birthplace, not the imaginary "Hellenic world" negotiated on his behalf by the intellectuals of his generation. Moreover, one might have assumed that since in early Greek history, *xeniteia* carried no negative connotations of sin and punishment, there would be no need for nostalgic literature in that period. This, however, is not the case. "*Xeniteia*, orphanhood, sorrow and love, have been weighted; *xeniteia* has proven to be the heaviest,"¹⁸² says a centuries-old Greek popular song, which dates back to the Ottoman period.

Greek society has, for centuries, lived with the sorrow *xeniteia* causes to those who left, and those who remained behind. Death on foreign soil was considered a great *malheur* in ancient, as well as in modern, times.¹⁸³ Leaving the place where one was born and bred, whatever the reason, is painful. An "unpleasant" past may cause the immigrant to conceal his pain, but will not eliminate it.

It is interesting to note the similarities and differences between the way the modern Greek diaspora expressed its nostalgia, and the way the Jewish diaspora did, especially during the period in which the two diasporas displayed the greatest similarities, i.e. the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Most of the Jewish folk songs of *xeniteia* were written in the diaspora, and in most cases, in a second or third diaspora, if these can indeed be counted. As already stated, the immigrants themselves wrote these folk songs. In most cases they were men, and in most of the songs the *nostos* expressed is for a specific place. These songs seldom express the hardships of immigrant life. On the contrary, they praise America. Songs written by those who stayed behind are rare. Even the *Papirine Kinder*, in which a Jewish mother left behind in Europe talks to her missing children, was written in New York by a man. The Greek folk song, on the other hand, mostly express the *nostos* of the women who were left behind by their husbands, fiancées, and sons, and most were actually written by women. Among the *nisiotika* (folk songs of the Aegean islands) is a centuries-old song, *Tzivaeri mou* (My Treasure), which the people of Kalymnos claim is theirs, but which is sung throughout the Greek islands:

Ach! Foreign lands enjoy my treasure.
My fragrant rose, softly, softly, softly and humbly.

Ach! It was I who sent him, my treasure,
of my own free will; softly, softly, softly I tread the earth.

Ach! Damn you foreign land!, my treasure,
you, and your good things, softly, softly, softly and humbly.

Ach! You took my child, my treasure,
and you made him your own; softly, softly, softly I tread the earth.

The theme of this song is the sorrow of a mother who sends her son away overseas, but also her immense love and resignation.¹⁸⁴ Although the theme is comparable with that of *Papirine Kinder*, the authors and locus of writing are not. There are different motives behind the two songs. In the Jewish song, it is the immigrant's guilt, in the Greek song it is the mother's sorrow. Besides this theme, in which the females who are left behind lament the departure of their beloved ones with resignation, the Greek songs contain other themes as well, such as the material and moral experience of life in a foreign land and the high price exacted by the riches *xeniteia* offers. Guy Michel Saunier, who studied these songs, claims that the negative picture of *xeniteia* they convey stems from descriptions by the immigrants in letters and on short visits.¹⁸⁵ This statement should be reconsidered. These folk songs were written by women, expressing their own feelings, but using well-screened information submitted to them by their husbands, brothers, and sons. The fact that most of these songs express the woman's point of view reflects the male character of the Greek emigration as opposed to the Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe, which comprised many young women and entire families. The melancholy mood of the Greek songs reflects the misery of those left behind, a misery they project on to those who left. It does not necessarily reflect the true mood of the immigrants themselves.¹⁸⁶ In the following song, the foreign woman with whom the immigrant consorts is portrayed as a witch, or an opportunist, whose love is never true. Obviously, this description is the product of the imagination of the womenfolk at home:

A foreign woman washes his clothes,
A foreign woman after his gold¹⁸⁷

The woman at home stresses how hard and demanding life is abroad, and draws the obvious conclusion that the man she is singing about would have had a far better deal had he stayed at home with her:

How is it, brother, over there
Where you are in the foreign land?

The foreign land demands
discipline, humility

The foreign land demands the pace
of a hare, the speed of an eagle.¹⁸⁸

In spite of the material advantages of life in *xeniteia*, the price is loneliness and insecurity, without the loving support of a mother, wife, or sister. Therefore, conclude the women, their menfolk should have stayed at home:

Damn you foreign land and all your riches!
 Greater is the grief than your rewards,
 To the foreigner give land, don't give him sickness;
 Sickness calls for a Mom to stand by,
 a woman at his headrest,¹⁸⁹
 Three thousand hourly services sickness demands!

These "female" songs spawned by the enormous wave of Greek immigration to America speak not only of the life of those left behind in the villages and life in America, but also of the journey and arrival in America and, last but not least, the return of the "Americans" in search of their wives, girlfriends, and children, and their rejection by the local society. These songs, just like their predecessors, are songs sung by the womenfolk left behind. It is these women, not the immigrants, who criticize America, as the following song, sung by a mother in Greece about her future son-in-law, the "American," indicates:

You, sixty-five years old man
 With dollars and liras,
 Our little girl you took.
 Boil your dollars to dye your hair!
 Damn a thousand times the son who didn't come younger!
 He returned gray-haired and asks for a young wife!¹⁹⁰

The second genre of folk song of this period is mainly the product of the 1922 Catastrophe, and the ensuing massive population exchange between Greece and Turkey. Here, for the first time in the modern era, Greeks shared the centuries-old Jewish experience of a massive forced migration, or rather, displacement, and even expulsion. They, too, expressed their misery in songs. The *rebetico* genre of Greek songs, as it evolved in the 1920s-1930s, is usually considered to be the expression of this misery. However, a careful reading of this genre suggests the following: If this kind of artistic expression is the product of *nostos*, then the longing for the "other" place is more frequently articulated in the musical style than in the lyrics. The *rebetico* lyric is an amalgam of old rural refrains and popular couplets composed by townfolk and islanders, and finally by the Anatolian refugees. The refugees brought to *rebetico* music their own Anatolian flavor and adapted it to the style of the Piraeus underworld. It was, therefore, the musical traditions of the many ethnic groups with whom the *rebetes* shared their lives in the Ottoman space that gave the *rebetico* its unique character.¹⁹¹ Through this music, the Anatolian

refugees in Piraeus and Salonika created a vocal bridge between their new *khora*, forced upon them by powers beyond their control in places beyond their reach, and their former *khora* in Turkey. The recurring Turkish refrain, *aman, aman*, an expression of sorrow and pain¹⁹² that was incorporated into the *rebetico*, was yet another way in which the *rebetico* linked present to past. The popularity of these songs was so overwhelming that they were almost immediately recorded by European and American record companies through local agents in Salonika and Athens, and monopolized the records market.

The *nostos* expressed in the lyrics of this period is almost predictable. Andonis Dhiamandidhes (“Dalgas”) (Constantinople 1892–Athens 1945) is an artist who expresses it beautifully in songs such as “Sousta Politiki” (Sousta from Istanbul, ca. 1933), which evokes Constantinople and the Bosphorus.¹⁹³ Another song of his, “Tis Xenitias O Ponos” (The Pain of Being in a Foreign Land, 1935), certainly expresses the feelings of alienation and loss caused by displacement:

It is for you I weep, oh mother dear,
And suffer in this land as one exiled
I beg you, mother, never shed a tear,
But light a candle for your child.

The melody is taken from a Turkish song in the same mood of inconsolable loss, *Her Yer Karanlık* (Everywhere Darkness).¹⁹⁴ The very same theme is the subject of Vassilis Tsitsanis’ (1915–1984) “I Xeniteia” (In a Foreign Land, 1938), while Marika Kanaropulu, also known as “Turkalitsa,” complains in her song “San Filo Marameno” (Like a Dry and Drifting Leaf, 1934):

How much longer will my fate condemn me
To drag myself through foreign lands like a withered leaf —

While these songs express the general theme of the pain of *xeniteia*, most of the lyrics of these songs, contrary to the preceding examples and to the usual scholarly assertions, do not express a yearning for a specific lost *khora*.¹⁹⁵ Rather, they focus on the misery of the individual, and mostly omit the fact that the displacement was what created this misery. The standard themes of these songs are: *mal amor* (unrequited love), orphanhood, loneliness, and poverty. They also focus on the lives of the underground subculture, such as drug addicts, criminals, and prostitutes. Most of them do not speak of lost worlds, or disparage the new land, but are simply an expression of personal deprivation.¹⁹⁶ Nicolas Pappas, who has researched the history of *rebetico* recordings, suggests that the thematic transition to the life of marginal people was the result of competition between the *mikrasiátes* (Anatolians) and the native artists of Piraeus, with whom they shared a low life, if not origins

and musical instruments. By adopting the local bouzouki and common themes, the *mikrasiátes* could compete with the local artists in their own field, while still maintaining their high self-esteem.¹⁹⁷

Thus, a comparison between the *rebetico* and folk songs of East-European immigrants in America in the 1920s and 1930s shows that they used radically different themes. Certainly, both groups of immigrants shared the pain and hardships of displacement, but each expressed it in a different way. Analyzing why this was so, not only has an academic value, but also may shed light on the differences between the two diasporas.

The first distinction is the following: Jewish emigration to America resembles Greek emigration to America only up to 1922 (The Catastrophe). The main Greek emigration of the 1920s was from Asia Minor to Greece. This emigration resembled that of the Holocaust survivors (despite the differences between the two events) far more than it did the Jewish emigration to America of the same period.

In other words, what we should be comparing are Greek lyrics of 1890 (the beginning of the Greek emigration to America) until 1922 (the year of the Catastrophe) and Yiddish folk songs from the 1880s through the 1930s.

One of the issues discussed above was that of the “voice” in the Greek songs as opposed to that of the Jewish songs. In the Greek songs, the voice is that of the women, or at best, of the families, left behind. In the Jewish songs, on the other hand, the voice is that of the immigrants themselves. The reason for this lies in the different character of the two emigrations. The Greek immigrants to America were normally young, single males. Jewish immigrants were of both sexes and included many families. The Jewish immigrants preferred to settle down in America rather than return home to find a bride. The Greek immigrants, on the other hand, had a homeland. They returned to Greece to get married, invest money, or visit their families. The Jewish immigrants, once they left Europe, usually never returned, and had no intention of returning. The Greeks, on the other hand, always carried the vision of Ulysses returning home victorious and rich, finding his beloved ones waiting for his return.

The fact that Jewish immigrants usually married shortly after their arrival in the New World, shortened their acclimatization to the New World, and gave them a support system in situations of sickness or hardship. This, coupled with the fact that they themselves — not family members who stayed behind — were usually the “voice” in these songs, is highly significant. What they saw from the perspective of “here” could not be seen from the perspective of “there.” From the “Old Country,” *xeniteia* seemed far worse than from *xeniteia* itself. The transition from *xeniteia* to *khora* begins the moment the immigrant steps down from the gangway on to the dock.

Unlike the Greek immigrants in America, the *rebetes* and *rebetisses* from Anatolia often lived among members of their families whom they brought over and who survived the war and the long journey, and in any

case were surrounded by their entire surviving community from the “Old Country.” In this respect, despite what we said above, they resembled the turn-of-the-century Jewish immigrants in America, rather than the Greeks who migrated there. They had another thing in common with the Jewish immigrants to America: Going back home, even for a visit, was out of the question — for the Jews, because they had decided not to, and for the Anatolians, because after 1922, it was no longer a viable choice. Herein lies the main difference between the two groups. The *mikrasiátes* population transfer, unlike the Jewish migration of 1890–1930 to America, was mandatory and not circumstantial. There was a huge psychological difference between the two. Those who chose not to return (i.e., the Jews) could afford to nostalgically reminisce about the landscape and scenery of the “Old Country.” Those who were deliberately severed from their roots without being asked (the Anatolian refugees) could not afford to cling to the old images. Doing so, in addition to their personal hardships, would have been too painful to bear. Their memories had to be eradicated as quickly as possible if they were to get on with the business of living. In the same way, no Holocaust survivor wrote lyrics glorifying his home town, or expressing his yearning for it. The following personal anecdote — albeit outside the purview of a scholarly paper — illustrates the point. My late father left his hometown in the Ukraine in 1933, at the age of twenty. He often told us stories about their house on the river, how they used to fish and swim, hold parties and listen to music, and how life was so good. I once asked him if he missed his hometown. His answer was: “I miss it exactly in the same way I miss my youth that will never return!” Places associated in ones mind with atrocities cannot be explicit objects of *nostos*, unless one is prepared to reinvent them. This is exactly what the *mikrasiátes* of Stratis Mirivilis’ “The Gorgon Madonna” did. Upon disembarking on the shores of the island, they glossed over the atrocities they had experienced, and portrayed at length what the natives knew to be a lie, i.e., the wonderful life they had led in Asia Minor. At first the refugees resisted any attempt at being resettled on the island, but in no time at all they all seemed to forget Anatolia. It took Mirivilis more than twenty five years to articulate this insight.¹⁹⁸

More than any other Greek population shift, it was the “Catastrophe” that invested Greek nostalgia with elements characteristic of the Jewish tradition regarding displacement, its reasons, remedies, and the future. Like Mirivilis’ insight into the nature of memory, it took at least two decades for these other insights, too, to be articulated in poetry and prose. For example, the Pontian-Greek playwright, Xenophon Akoglous, in his historical drama *Akritas* (Frontier Guard) about the last days of the Pontian guerrilla movement, put in one of his protagonists’ mouth a fifteenth-century folk song allegedly sung by his grandfather:

“At that time Christians were great sinners,” [my grandfather] used to say.

“For that reason alone God sent the Turks and they came and first took Constantinople, the great capital. Later they also took Trebizond and all of Romania was lost. But the time will come,” he said, “when we will take them back.” He also sang its song:
 Romania is dead, Romania is taken;
 If Romania has died, it will blossom and bear fruit again.¹⁹⁹

The above lines attribute the loss of the homeland to punishment for sin. As to the prognosis for the future, everything would return to its former state, the Greeks would return to Romania (with an emphasis on the Pontos) and the country would blossom and flourish again like the fulfillment of a biblical prophecy of hope and redemption in a perfectly Isaiahan manner. *Akritas* is the product of a number of cultural currents: The Judeo-Christian idea of sin, punishment and salvation, Byzantine elements from the Byzantine epic, *Digenis Akritas*,²⁰⁰ and western ideas of nationalism. At the same time the play is very much about *nostos* for a very specific place and region — the shores of the Black Sea, from which Akoglous’ audience originally hailed. Himself a second generation citizen of the Greek nation-state, he has no “recollection” of his ancestors’ lost birthplace, and thus must invent it in order to assuage his *nostos* for a place he has never seen. He could never have articulated this idea immediately after the Catastrophe. The expression of *nostos* in specifically geographical terms, *ad locum*, requires the passage of time to blur reality before it can be articulated, and in some cases even the passage of time is not enough. As already stated, when the past is irredeemable, there is no such *nostos*. The other reason why such literature could not have been written immediately after the Catastrophe is that the official Greek ideology strove to erase the differences between the various Anatolian refugees and to mold them into “ideal new Greeks.”²⁰¹

The many novels and novellas written by Israeli authors, mostly by the second generation of Holocaust survivors or of European immigrants of the 1930s, testify to a similar process among the Jews. At first there was silence, and an attempt by the newly-born State to mold the survivors and immigrants into “new Jews.” Recalling the past meant recognizing the diversity of the Jewish people — a factor that did not favor the establishment of a nation-state. The world of yesterday was discredited. It took twenty years after the end of the Second World War for some recognition of the past to begin seeping in.²⁰² It took some thirty years after the end of the war and the establishment of the State for literature on this theme to emerge. People who have never seen the places they wrote about, authors who had immigrated as children, as well as those who had only “air roots” in Europe, wove their plots against these imagined roots. However, the detail was missing. The territory they returned to was an abstract territory, that seldom assumed a real shape.²⁰³

Paradoxically, the only author to express a real *nostos* — Aharon Appelfeld — was not the child of a survivor, but rather a survivor

himself. Appelfeld miraculously survived the war as a child, living like a hunted animal in the forests, swamps, back-yards, and stables of the Ukraine. Appelfeld's writing always skirts round the horror without actually defining it. The horror is hidden behind many layers, which render it even more frightening, since it is left to the reader's imagination. His last two novels, *Poland — A Green Land* (2005),²⁰⁴ and *The Flowers of Darkness* (2005), both written after the age of seventy, testify to a change in his attitude to the past. This change was first noticeable in his autobiography, *A Life Story* (1999),²⁰⁵ in which he tried for the first time not only to remember the past in a very personal way, but also to understand the workings of his memory, and how it was molded by the filter of time. This autobiography enabled him to revisit his past. At first he did this in a roundabout way. In *Poland — A Green Country*, his protagonist, a second-generation Holocaust survivor, makes the imaginary trip to the imaginary village of his imaginary parents, exactly as many members of the second generation do at the same age of his protagonist (fifty to sixty). Assuming the role of a second-generation survivor, he permitted himself a "luxury" most of them cannot afford. He lovingly describes past scenes and landscapes which he (his protagonist) became acquainted with for the first time. He effectively made peace with a past that was not his. In *The Flowers of Darkness*,²⁰⁶ he went even further by dispensing with the role of intermediary between him and his *nostos*. He resurrected his own birthplace, his own *khora*, the city of Czernowitz in Bukovina, southern Ukraine, the lost paradise of his childhood, and a glorious cultural center, in which the Jews played a significant role. In this book he resurrected not only his lost paradise, but also the hell, and ultimately the salvation, he experienced there. The salvation he describes in this book takes the same form as the one he describes in *Poland — a Green Country*, namely, the persona of a woman who is half whore, half mother, whose love saves him. This woman is not simply a metaphor, but a real woman, a prostitute, who sheltered him for a long time during the war.²⁰⁷

Appelfeld always felt a stranger in Israel. As a young adolescent, and way into his adulthood, he suffered from the same alienation experienced by other survivors in Israel. This was because their personal experiences were not consistent with the image of the strong and invincible "new Jew" that was being nurtured in Israel until the mid-seventies. His writing was often criticized for being "alien," and it was only from the late 1970s that he gained literary recognition. Although by now he is an Israel Prize Laureate as well as holding other honors, he is not a popular author in Israel even today, and is more widely acclaimed in Europe than in Israel. His last novels revolve around the return to Europe. He did not make the choice Amos Eilon made, preferring to stay in his country of refuge, which he terms "an interesting human experiment that I very much respect."²⁰⁸ Although he doubts its cultural as well as physical viability, he stays on, still hoping to weave his imaginary Europe into the fabric of the Middle East. What he expressed artistically in his last two novels,

he articulated in a very direct manner in an interview he gave to Deror Mash'ani in Ha'aretz, on 29 September 2006: "...Most Jews lived in Europe for two thousand years. Europe molded them, and they molded Europe. Thus, you are talking about a Jewish-European symbiotic element. One cannot get rid of it."

Conclusion

Diaspora is an equation the factors of which are space, time and memory. The diasporic condition is by definition a dynamic state of affairs. It is a temporary situation, in which a group of people still remembers its migration or displacement. As long as the members of this group manage to hold on to the last shreds of their memory of the past, diaspora is still present, to a lesser or greater extent. When memory fades, diaspora ceases to exist. Instead, the migrants come to believe that they have always belonged to their place of residence, that its culture has always existed as such, and even that this culture has been their original creation. In a word, a new *mekhorah* emerges. Human memory and the way it evolves and constantly changes is but another example of the resourcefulness of the human spirit that enables people to survive coercion, humiliation, depression, war, loss, and displacement.

Overviewing thousands of years of what both Greeks and Jews choose to see as their history, it is obvious that two contradictory and yet intertwined elements exist: The ever-changing and the eternal. The first part of this contradiction was best expressed millennia ago allegedly by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (ca. 535–475 BCE): "Everything flows on, and we cannot cross the same river twice." On the other hand, some particles manage to stay in the water longer than others. Just by immersing a foot in the water, we can feel some of these particles brought from far and wide. They were there yesterday, some of them have been there for thousand of years, some since time immemorial. Others will be swept away today, tomorrow, or in a thousand years. Sensing the particles that are here for a while is what makes us part of a nation. Sensing the particles that are immutable and eternal is what makes us part of the family of mankind.